

**ILIZWE
LIFILE**
Inga Somdyala

University of Cape Town

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ABSTRACT

LIZWE LIFILE is a tactile exploration of the aspects of cultural history *kwaXhosa* within South African political history that intersect with my own lived experience. Through drawings, installations, sculptures and video, I explore how cultural, social and political narratives within the South African post-apartheid landscape are negotiated. In this explicatory document, divided in three parts, I focus on interrelated personal and collective histories. *Part I* establishes a broad overview of the personal experiences driving my studio practice and research enquiries. Drawing from Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness* (2000) to explore readings of history, displacement, education and landscape, I elaborate on a negotiation of my cultural identity within the contentions about collective history and national identity. *Part II* looks at the negation of black cultural identity through covert impositions of Eurocentric culture and epistemology within education systems in my experience and within history. I employ concepts from Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2017) to develop socio-political readings of the television series *Yizo Yizo*, linking its thematic universe to heterogeneous black identities in post-apartheid South Africa. *Part III* presents how aspects of an oppressive history are manifest in the present, while offering more explicit interpretations of my body of work as a means for exploring the residue of history in the present.

GLOSSARY

The root word is presented in bold type to distinguish it from the prefix. Each plural form of the noun has been indented below the singular form of the noun. Although only the prefix is changed and the root word remains, the inferred meanings can change in context, i.e. the meaning of the word 'ama-thamba' has its root meaning in the singular 'i-thamba', but is used to refer to the intended meaning in the context of the cattle killing history.

Most of the definitions found here are cited from The Greater Dictionary of isiXhosa, Volume 1–3 (1989 – 2006). I have paraphrased or only included the definitions as they are used in this text.

i-gogotya [n.]

- 1 – An unyielding, stubborn person
- 2 – Stingy individual

ama-gogotya [pl.]

the 'unbelievers' who refused to kill their cattle in the Nongqawuse episode of 1856-57

i-gqoboka [n.]

A Christian convert, so named, by the 'heathens', expressing their belief that the word of God has pierced the convert's heart

uku-gqoboka [v.]

- 1 – Be perforated, pierced so that a hole is made, break out, burst forth
- 2 – Accept the Christian faith; be converted

i-mbola [n.]

Ochre (used here to refer specifically to red ochre)

e-Komani [n.]

Queenstown (named after Komani, son of chief Qwesha and chief of the amaNdungwane, whose great place was in the vicinity)

i-qaba [n.]

- 1 – A person in the Xhosa-speaking area who wears the traditional dress consisting of a blanket reddened with ochre
- 2 – One who has received only a little education and on whom civilization has had little influence; an educated person who behaves like an uncivilized one
- 3 – Unconverted person who has no church connections

ubu-qaba [n.]

- 1 – The traditional mode of life of Xhosa society before westernization, i.e. when people still wore blankets and skirts reddened with ochre and followed their traditional customs, mores, religion and mode of living
- 2 – Crude, uncouth, barbaric behaviour in one who is supposed to be civilized

uku-qaba [v.]

Smear with a liquid or a moist or greasy substance, e.g. mud, ochre, fat; paint; smear (such a substance on something); spread (butter etc., on bread)

i-thamba [n.]

A meek, submissive person

ama-thamba [pl.]

Those who in 1856-57 obeyed Nongqawuse's command and slaughtered all their cattle

isi-xhosa [n.]

- 1 – The 'Xhosa' language
- 2 – Anything characteristic of the ama-Xhosa, e.g. custom, dress, building style, dances etc.

um-xhosa [n.]

- 1 – a 'Xhosa', descendant of the original tribe as it existed under Chief Tshiwo
- 2 – A member of the wider family of Xhosa-speaking peoples; a person whose home language is isiXhosa

ama-xhosa [pl.]

- 1 – The nation, descended from Tshiwo's Xhosas
- 2 – Xhosa-speaking peoples collectively

kwa-xhosa [n.]

- 1 – Refers both to the set of cultural practices among the *amaXhosa* as well as the place in which the *amaXhosa* are found (what is often referred to by historians as 'Xhosaland').
- 2 – Can be used to refer to the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. This is where a large population of the *amaXhosa* people originate and reside.

INTRODUCTION

Forget the past. Don't only forgive it. Forget it as well. The past did not happen. You only dreamt it. It is a figment of your rich collective imagination. It did not happen. Banish your memory. It is a sin to have a memory. There is a virtue in amnesia. The past. It did not happen. It did not happen. It did not happen (Mda, 2000: 157).

In seeking to construct common narratives, the post-apartheid government strove for displays of restorative justice through platforms such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The TRC, however, did not adequately address issues of reparations and the legacy of dispossession that transpired through a history of colonial violence. This is because the South African collective imaginary, as espoused by the African National Congress (ANC) government, was focused on reformist, unifying conceptions of history that would not 'rock the boat' during a volatile time of identity-construction and nation-building (Marschall, 2010: 29).¹ This precarious position was particularly related to South Africa's desperate need to reposition itself within the global economy through investment, and re-enter the international trade from which it was exiled because of the human rights violations of the apartheid government. This is one of the reasons that the rhetoric of nation-building became a tool for placating South Africans during this political transition; a tool that undermined concrete change or reparative justice within South Africa.

If, as David Attwell (2005: 48) speculates, the link between an Enlightenment ethos and oppressive institutions is never truly broken, each generation of postcolonial subjects is obliged to attempt to break it. The 1976 student uprisings, the 2015 – 2016 Rhodes Must Fall, Fees Must Fall and Shackville protests are a generational attempt to disrupt the cycle of amnesia.² By addressing the imbalances in racial representation in the university and its built environment, students challenged the institution's exercise of power through language, symbols and images.

1. Concerned with commemorative monuments in post-apartheid South Africa, Marschall (2010: 39) points out how the views on colonial and apartheid histories differed among political parties. The African National Congress government, which focused on re-establishing a relationship with international investors, maintained largely cautious and unclear positions within the debates around sites of collective memory such as monuments during the early period of transition in the 1990's.

2. Rhodes Must Fall (2015) is a student movement whose central concern was with the persisting colonial ethos and neoliberal agenda within the university. Fees Must Fall (2016), a broader national wave of student protests, addressed fee increments in higher education institutions that economically and socially exclude the black majority in South Africa. Shackville (2017), a protest in which a shack was installed on campus, was a way of addressing broader socio-economic inequalities with regard to a lack of affordable housing, not just in university residences, but in South Africa generally.

Considering South Africa's uneasy relationship with the past, I investigate what is forgotten; what is remembered, revealed or concealed in the multi-layered histories of *amaXhosa*; and what bearing such historical omissions and misrepresentations may have on all South Africans in the present and future. In the collective quest of South African youth to achieve concrete epistemic shifts, I find myself asking if collective identity, constructed through dominant historical narratives, is threatened by the act of remembering. Can the recollection of personal histories or lived experience serve as a form of resistance against singular conceptions of collective identity? Can the memory of a violent past serve to guide a peaceable postcolonial society? How can art making be an evocative rather than literal interpretation of history, through which we can reflect on the past while leaving space for (re)interpretation? These are some of the enquiries that inform my creative work.

My artwork is a material response to *isiXhosa* history within South African history and in relation to my lived experience. My project, titled *ILIZWE LIFILE*, consists of illustrative and abstract landscape drawings, paintings and video work in which I use red ochre (*imbola*), soil and chalk. The project also comprises sculptural and tableau works which include bronze, found desks, maps, sea salt and soil. I consider these a tactile exploration of aspects of collective South African history, specifically in relation to the history of *amaXhosa*.

In recognizing the vastness of history in relation to my experiences, what has become apparent through research is that writing about the black experience in South Africa has become an important mode of questioning history-writing. My work forms part of the existing practice of black self-writing, in literature and in the arts generally.³ By intentionally drawing from my lived experience to reflect on the construction of history and knowledge, I bring attention to the de-legitimization of black South African subjectivity. In doing this, I seek to reclaim specific forms of historical representation while exploring the possibilities to adapt, reinterpret or contradict it.

For example, in *isiXhosa*, the word *uku-qaba* means to rub, smear, lather or paint a substance onto any surface. In historical and anthropological accounts, *amaXhosa* were known as the 'red-blanket people' because it was a highly regarded custom to dye clothes with *imbola* (red ochre) and also apply it to the skin. With the introduction of Christianity and the gradual conversion of *amaXhosa* by the mission societies, this custom became associated with 'backward', 'unsophisticated' or uneducated ways of being. The word *i-qaba* exists in *isiXhosa* today as a derogation denoting a crude or ignorant person. Another related derogatory term in *isiXhosa* is *umntu*

3. Similarly, see Achille Mbembe's *African Modes of Self-Writing* (2001)

obomvu. It means 'a red person' and equates redness to a similarly 'crude', 'ignorant' person or someone who is the antithesis of being modern.⁴ While today the term is considered derogatory, it was not always the case, the 'red people' often wore *imbola* to deliberately distinguish themselves from the converted or 'school people'.⁵ The application of *imbola* was a resistance to assimilation.

My use of *imbola* and chalk symbolizes the antinomy that underlies the following of cultural practices *kwaXhosa*, while simultaneously being 'educated' in the conventional Western sense or adhering to a Christian/European ethos within the institutions I find myself in. This is the 'dichotomy' I negotiate in my work through these materials.

The issue of agency or subjectivity is partly why I turn to South Africa's black literary history to engage the contradictions and predicament inherent in my own subjectivity. In the book *Rewriting Modernity*, Attwell (2005) discusses the work of several black South African literary scholars, linking their work to the social and political paradigms that critique and engage the South African predicament since the 19th century. Attwell refers to this predicament as an effort to 'modernize tradition'. These historical attempts to negotiate one's position between 'traditional' and 'modern' life; indeed, to revise European modernity within African terms, can be seen as analogous to the contemporary predicament. This is the contemporary struggle to historically and philosophically position black identities in the formation of a national or collective identity. Attwell's book traces this negotiation from Reverend Tiyo Soga's journals in the mid-19th century, all the way to the seminal works of contemporary South African fiction by, among others, Zoë Wicomb, JM Coetzee, Njabulo Ndebele and Zakes Mda in the 21st century.

Selected texts from South Africa's literary history have been an invaluable source to which I can relate my lived experience and position myself as thinker and maker. In this document, I refer to particular works of South African literature, as they are instrumental to my conceptual framework. I also draw from other thinkers who have been influential in developing my creative work. These resources range from fiction to history, to anthropology and popular culture, specifically *Yizo Yizo* (Markgraaff, D; Gibson, A; Mahlati, T. et al, 1999–2004), an important South African television series that was broadcast in the early post-apartheid years. It is through my lived experience that I locate the intersections of the literature across disciplines. I demonstrate how an intertextual analysis of *The Heart of Redness* by Zakes Mda (2000) alongside *The Dead Will Arise* by Jeff Peires (1989) intersects with my personal and collective histories, as well as with *isiXhosa* cultural identity

4. 'Being modern' in this context indicates conversion into colonial culture and being colonially educated.

5. See James Ferguson (citing Philip Mayer), *Expectations of Modernity*, 1999: 87.

and the South African landscape. I will also demonstrate how history as narrative, the interaction between past and present, and the convergence of cultural, social and political landscapes in both books translates into the production of practical work through visual and conceptual analyses.

The Heart of Redness is a novel by Zakes Mda (2000). Set in Qolorha-by-Sea, an actual coastal village in the Eastern Cape, the novel is a non-linear narrative of past and present. Qolorha-by-Sea is the place in which the prophet Nongqawuse lived and prophesized during the 1856–1857 cattle-killing movement. The historical accuracy of the novel is owed greatly to historian Jeff Peires' research about the cattle-killing, during which a fifteen-year-old Nongqawuse prophesized that if *amaXhosa* slaughtered all their cattle and burned their crops, the dead would arise and chase the colonists back into the sea from whence they came. This failed prophecy is what led to the famine and subsequent death of the *amaXhosa* nation, resulting in their absolute and irreversible domination by the encroaching colonial forces.⁶ Although most *amaXhosa* are at least vaguely aware of this oral history, Peires' *The Dead Will Arise* (1989) is the first comprehensive historiographic account of this historical episode.⁷ *The Heart of Redness* builds on this historiographic research by bringing it into dialogue with the tensions of contemporary South Africa.

Although Peires' research is an important historiographic reference, Mda's novel is central to my work because it resonates with my present experience. In some of the chapters that follow, I use Mda's *The Heart of Redness* for a number of reasons: there is the interaction of past and present, and European historiography and *isiXhosa* oral tradition; and there is also the interplay between myth, fiction and fact, as well as between belief and disbelief. Both forms of writing correlate history-as-fact and fictional narrative. The novel, set in the same landscape of Qolorha-by-Sea, presents an equally important historical interpretation; one with which *umXhosa* can identify. It easily fills a critical gap in the historical perspectives on South Africa.⁸

6. I refer to the *amaXhosa* 'nation' in so far as they are a cultural group bound by social customs and language, but also hail from many different clans. A single chief *kwaXhosa* ruled over a large population comprised of many kraals or homesteads, which spread over large areas of land. Essentially these were small sovereign states. For example, *amaRarabe* and *amaGcaleka* were two distinct chiefdoms that collectively made up a significant portion of the *amaXhosa* nation.

7. In *The Dead Will Arise*, Peires (1989) remarks that "There has never been a book about the Cattle Killing, not even a bad one. Several historians have commenced the topic, but none has completed it." By filling this missing link by transcribing historiographic and oral sources, Peires's book becomes a crucial historical reference for Mda's novel.

8. While it would be idealistic to think that the presentation of such a story in *isiXhosa* would be more accessible, it is also questionable how accessible that may be to a generation of 'born-frees' who are increasingly educated in English and only speak *isiXhosa* at home or with elders. However, even though the history does lend itself to narrative, I only wish to express the availability of Mda's story outside of academic historiography, as well as its capacity to evoke the impact of history on contemporary lived experience.

In an analysis of *The Heart of Redness*, Siphokazi Koyana (2003: 52) points out Mda's ability to evoke 'elements of our past that restrict our progress while he suggests ways in which we can engage with the present in a manner that will be valuable for the future'. This conception of history as a way of understanding the present and building the future is a principal motivation in my own work. Koyana (2003) discusses how Mda-as-writer uses this history to make commentary or observation of South Africa's current post-apartheid predicaments in relation to the 1856-7 historical episode.

Regarding myself as artist and as a subject of this history, this work is an endeavour to confront what this means today. It is undeniable that such a task takes its cue from a growing class of black South African visual practitioners, such as Mohau Modisakeng, Mawande Ka Zenzile, Buhlebezwe Siwani, Athi Patra-Ruga, Kemang Wa Lehulere, Lungiswa Gqunta, Xhanti Zwelendaba, Bronwyn Katz, Dada Khanyisa, Asemahle Ntlonti and Sikhumbuzo Makandula. While all of these artists are highly individual in their respective visual practices, one cannot help but notice familial threads, a clear entanglement with both the symbolic and the material mediation of the past in the present. Thematic links can be observed in, for instance, Patra-Ruga's walking wound avatar and Modisakeng's recurrent use of sjambok in sculpture, video and performance; even with Gqunta's fixation on alcohol bottles and Wa Lehulere's porcelain dogs standing at attention beside a message in a bottle. For me, these all speak to personal experiences of a shared history of dispossession.

The use of oil paint and cow dung in Ka Zenzile's practice is particularly resonant with my own use of soil and ochre as mediums for drawing and painting. *KwaXhosa* cow dung is not only used to fertilize soil, but to paint the walls of the distinct round-thatch huts of *amaXhosa*. The cow dung serves to protect, insulate and decorate the hut. Ka Zenzile describes cow dung as a 'predominant cultural material... and a language to communicate with creatively' (2015: 76). The use of dung and oil allow for what he terms an 'aesthetic dichotomy to unfold' (2015: 77). A shared *isiXhosa* cultural experience, along with an interest in using the 'cultural material' as a visual language is the familial thread here. Further, Ka Zenzile's work is focused on the inherent knowledge system of the *amaXhosa* customs, and how this knowledge challenges Eurocentric epistemological domination within education institutions. It is within the aesthetic dichotomy apparent in Ka Zenzile's work that I situate my own creative work, which is broadly concerned with the place where two cultures rub up against each other.

These artists, whose work is related to my own in visual and conceptual ways, formulate a response to the 'formal' features of art functioning within the aesthetics of Western art making. To adapt Ka Zenzile's (2015: 77) words, contemporary visual art practice in South Africa challenges viewers through visual and material references specific to the cultural experiences of people and place. Subjectivity, in the philosophical sense, is therefore the common thread and the appropriate place to begin.

PART I

A SUBJECT OF HISTORY

ILIZWE LIFILE is drawn from lived experience. This phrase, which literally translates into 'the nation is dead', is a declaration that a state of war exists (Soga, 1932). In *isiXhosa* the word 'ilizwe' can refer to a collective group of people, be it a politico-geographic group, such as a nation state, or a social or cultural group bound by language or custom. The word can also be used to refer to the land or place in which a particular cultural group can be found. This term encapsulates my concerns with personal and collective identity, dominant historical narratives in relation to the South African landscape, contemporary social conflicts, as well as political and cultural tensions. As the term suggests, the 'death of the nation' is characterized by conflict and battles in various forms, which may be describes as a state of war: whether declared or not. Such conflict is both personal and collective – it plays out in nuanced ways in contemporary South Africa, and is buried deep in the subtlety of everyday interaction. For me, and as part of *my* interpretation, this 'war' or conflict is rooted in an interaction between history, personal history and lived reality, which are the catalyzing experiences informing my research and underpinning my creative work. This conflict, or tension, is most evident in our schools. Having learned more about my *isiXhosa* heritage through initiation, the history of systematic exclusion of black African cultural knowledge within 'formal education' became evident in my experience of education institutions (both at school and in the university).

Although my grandmother and grandfather did not receive a 'formal' education, I grew up in a family of educators. Half of my aunts were teachers. My grandparents sacrificed a great deal to ensure that their children received an education, and as such, placed significant value on education and the 'acquisition' of it. While they viewed an education as the only way to alleviate poverty, they faced a number of political, social and cultural barriers restricting them from receiving an education. However, through their own experience as black people living in apartheid South Africa, they realized the capacity of education to empower or disempower. Aware of a changing political landscape, they did their best to ensure that theirs would not be a family of ill-equipped black South Africans.

For about ten years of my schooling career, I changed schools almost every year; never spending more than two years at the same school. This exposed me to vastly different levels and approaches of 'formal' education in South Africa. I went to public schools for the most part, all varying in size and quality. The schools to which my mother sent me were different to the schools in which she taught for almost 15 years. In what used to be called Model C schools, the entire ethos: the codes of conduct, the ideas of what was right and wrong, the forms of discipline, and the mode of instruction were largely drawn from European culture and Christianity.¹

In grade 3 my homeroom teacher, Mrs. Venter, had a worn pictorial Bible from which she would read us a scripture story and show us an image related to the story. These stories included Daniel in the lion's den, Jonah and the whale, Jesus cleansing the temple and Moses and the golden calf. We were then asked to draw an image related to, but not copied from, the illustration in the book. This relationship between school and religion persisted in weekly events, such as school assembly, during which a prayer was said followed by the national anthem and the school anthem, all of which had overlaps in meaning and all made reference to Christianity.

Such practices were rare in what are termed 'mud schools' (or rural schools) and 'township schools', which are prominent in the Eastern Cape. This is the type of school my mother and most of my aunts taught at. Before I was old enough to attend school, if my mother could not find a child minder, I would accompany her to one of these schools. It was a long time before I started questioning the physical and experiential disparities between schools of this type and the model C type. There was always this shift between the different schools I attended, and experiences of the schools in which my mother and aunts taught. Thinking in the framework of this research and considering my personal experiences as a subject of history, I realize that this

1. Model C schools generally refer to former whites-only, often suburban government or semi-private schools during apartheid South Africa. These received more funding, and had higher quality education, along with an inherited European ethos. For further reading on the complexity of South Africa's education policy during early transition into democracy, see: Christie, 1995.

shift between 'good' and 'bad' schools is also evident in my experience of moving between the rural and town or city landscape.

I have travelled long distances by bus most of my life. These are usually overnight trips. From a young age, it has always felt like the unfolding of a narrative to me, the landscape gradually shapeshifting before me at the window seat. From as early as eleven years of age, I travelled alone by bus between eKomani and Johannesburg. Leaving rural Eastern Cape and moving further into the Highveld, crossing the barren, farm-town lands of what Sol Plaatje invariably prosecutes as the 'so-called "Free" State', to the electric Johannesburg centre was always a thrill. As a teenager, I dreaded the trip back from the city. I realize now that there was a difficulty in this shift. While I was perfectly content once settled back at home, but the adjustment was part of something social, cultural and environmental that I was yet to grasp. I was aware that there was a disparity in these places in terms of what was accessible, but I was only able to articulate big questions later.

It was during the fourteen-to-sixteen-hour bus rides moving between iKomani and Cape Town that I first started asking the questions that would motivate this research project. The disparity that existed, even on a most basic domestic level, between these two places prompted some questions in me that my 'broken sense of history' could not adequately address.² The cultural shifts that I had to perform were not getting easier in Cape Town and within the University. This alienation of my cultural sense of identity was heightened by the experience of the initiation rite *kwaXhosa* during my first year of study at the University of Cape Town.

'Where are you from?' was a question I felt I constantly had to over-explain. Since I grew up in a small-town that most people have barely heard of, it was as if I had come from no place at all. This obscurity made it difficult to connect with others when I arrived in Cape Town. 'Which school did you go to?', asked those who insisted on grasping at some semblance of familiarity in the act of getting acquainted. Being from 'no place', and a good school, but one with no historical or national repute, alienated me further.

While experiencing the rite of passage deeply rooted my sense of self, my sense of identity became alienated as I moved further west by bus to return to the University of Cape Town. At the window seat, I was acutely aware of the changing landscape. It told the story of the generational exodus of migrant labour as a result of the 'destruction of the political and economic independence' of native people (Peires, 1989: 313). Having been the most omniscient of historical witnesses, this landscape narrated the histo-

2. In her review of Sol T. Plaatje's record of the implementation of the Natives Land Act, titled *Native Life in South Africa*, Bessie Head (1982) remarks that 'most black South Africans suffer from a very broken sense of history. *Native Life in South Africa* provides an essential missing link. This book may have failed to appeal to human justice in its time, but there is in its tears, anguish and humility, an appeal to a day of retribution'.

ry of its own death through objectification, plunder and eventual capture. It detailed the humanitarian injustice and structural violence it had sustained in the name of 'civilization'. It was the history of heartbreak – to paraphrase Kemang Wa Lehulere – that contextualized this journey as a journey of the landless in their country of birth, as part of their 'compulsory unsettlement' (Plaatje, 2007: 65).³ When the sun came up in the morning, the landscape lamented the evidence of a prevalent segregationist past as we cruised past the northern edge of the Cape Flats. Arriving early at Old Marine Drive train station, at the edge where District 6 met the Cape Town harbour, I observed as workers arrived and migrated up towards Table Mountain. In recognizing the persistence of spatial and structural oppression evident in the landscape, another set of questions emerged: why is racial and class segregation still so stark in South Africa? How were the structural systems that continue to exclude the historically oppressed erected? Why had the political promise of social cohesion failed? What further prompted my line of questioning was that my education had not adequately equipped me to understand this reality, or to at least address the matter of history – that is, how the oppressive system emerged.

My exposure to different schools revealed a disparity in the quality of education in South African schools. My work arises from a dialectical experience of the 'formal' and 'informal' education space (or 'good' and 'bad' schools), as well as my experience of the rite of passage practiced *kwaXhosa*. These experiences of different education spaces, coupled with an increasing understanding of how the landscape is structured as a consequence of political history, have shaped my enquiries regarding the tensions between history and the present.

Mda uses fiction to draw attention to and mediate these tensions. Working against the act of 'forgetting', Mda suggests ways in which a historical perspective can enrich our understanding of the present social and political predicaments, and how this can be beneficial in the process of reconciliation. I see the tactility of my practical work as a parallel undertaking. My use of *imbola*, soil, compost and chalk in drawings, paintings and tableau works is a way to draw attention to aspects of history as a way of understanding the present situation. I have done this by staining canvas or cotton paper and using found desks, bronze sculptures and other objects related to the classroom, the landscape and the shoreline, to represent history on land and sea.

3. Published in the artist's 2015 monograph, which coincided with his Standard Bank Young Artist Award (SBYAA), Wa Lehulere remarks that "history will break your heart" in letter correspondence with curator and writer Khwezi Gule regarding his work. This is also the title for Wa Lehulere's touring SBYAA exhibition *History Will Break Your Heart* (2015).

The use of soil is related to my investigation of landscape as a site for mediation; this will be addressed fully in the section titled *LANDSCAPE AS PORTRAIT* below. The white chalk is representative of the 'formal' education context or institution. Chalk is ubiquitous in classroom spaces, its transient and impermanent quality often leaving an illegible white residue on a surface. In contrast, the permanent 'staining' redness of *imbola*, which I consider as a marker of cultural inheritance, was associated with 'informality' or 'ignorance' and distinguished *amaXhosa* who rebelled against colonial assimilation.

I consider the use of these pigments a subversion of some of the ideas regarding 'formal' and 'informal' education spaces, cultural dominance and historical erasure. The loaded historical significance of *imbola*, which fixes easily and stains any surface it touches, is contrasted with chalk as this evasive tool of education and modernity. In a sense, playing with this idea of fixing the residue of history onto an elusive and volatile present, I associate the materiality of this residue, from *imbola* and chalk, with both the erasure and the preservation of some aspects of history or collective memory.



Figure 1

Doris and Phindiwe attend Kutala's graduation ceremony.

My mother Kutala Somdyala (middle) receives a Further Diploma in Education from the University of Pretoria (2004). My grandmother Doris Somdyala (left) and aunt Phindiwe Somdyala (right) accompany her.

THE DARKNESS OF REDNESS

There exists a rift in Mda's Qolorha-by-Sea. The Unbelievers, descendants of the portion of *amaXhosa* that rejected Nongqawuse's prophecy, are in support of the development of a casino and watersports theme park that will supposedly bring the village people employment, the spoils of 'civilization' and infrastructure.⁴ Led by Bhonco, the Unbelievers ironically believe in the promise of the capitalist splendour of 'civilization'. The Believers, descendants of Nongqawuse's proponents, see this as a threat to their cultural and historical heritage. Led by Zim, they understand that such a development will privatize the land from which they make a living as well as threaten the sanctity of the sea 'in which they play and from which they feed their bodies and their collective memory' (Koyana, 2003: 56). This is the 'backwardness' of the Believers of the fictive present Qolorha that Bhonco, leader of the Unbelievers, colorfully denounces as 'the darkness of redness'.

4. It should be noted that here the term 'to civilize' is a problematic euphemism for the conditioning of people to what is considered superior cultural practice.

Peires explores the historical conflict between Nongqawuse's Believers and Unbelievers, and fleshes out its complexity thoroughly. The rift within the *amaXhosa* nation ran deeper than divisions of religious inclination or the dichotomous adversity between the 'civilized' and 'uncivilized'; it was a response to a national, political, economic, cultural and spiritual crisis. This was and still is a difficult matter to disentangle, and Mda's characters are sensitive to this complexity in their own ways. With regard to Nongqawuse's prophecy, Peires reveals that believers and unbelievers were categorized by *amaXhosa* as the 'hard' and the 'soft'. *Amathamba* (soft, Believers) were proponents of the prophets of the Gxarha.⁵ *Amathamba* submitted to the belief that slaughtering their cattle was for the greater good of all, a great number of which were firm believers in the old order *kwaXhosa*. *Amagogoty* (hard, Unbelievers) were considered self-serving and inconsiderate by *Amathamba*. Though simply unwilling to kill their cattle, *Amagogoty* considered themselves to be sensible men 'who realized they could not eat grass' (Peires, 1989: 180).

The prophecy failed. But what stuck in my mind after reading *The Dead Will Arise* was the projected future reality of the believers described in the event of the prophecy being fulfilled.

On the appointed day, the sun would rise blood-red with a terrible heat until it turned back at midday to set again, turning the earth pitch-black. (An alternative version had two suns in the sky at once.) A terrible storm would follow complete with thunder, lightning and hurricanes... the believers were to wait... while the burning sun and fearsome winds destroyed the unbelievers, the impure cattle...

After the storm would come the rising of the dead and the appearance of the new cattle... The blind would see, the deaf would hear, the cripples would walk, and the old would become young again. Peace, plenty and goodness would reign on earth. (Peires, 1989: 311–312)

This passage, transcribed by Peires from historiographic accounts and oral history, captivated me. I realized how deeply it must have affected the imagination of *Amathamba* (soft, Believers) in the midst of political and cultural upheaval during the Frontier Wars of 1856–7. The red sun, the pitch-black landscape and raging storm of apocalyptic proportion became a focal site of material interpretation for me. Using red ochre, soil and compost, this imagined 'cleansing' of the landscape by the storm became inspiration for a series of abstracted paintings in which a muddy darkness and redness dominate.

5. Since they lived near the Gxarha River, this is a term Peires uses to refer to Nongqawuse, her uncle Mhlakaza and sister Nombanda

Drawing from Peires' account of the prophecy in *The Dead Will Arise*, this series of paintings is a visualization of these moments in the collective imagination of *amaXhosa* in 1856–7. *The First Disappointment* is a muddy canvas depicting a minimal red landscape and a red sun floating high above. *The Second Disappointment* is a plainer surface suggesting ghostly activity in the sky-space. This artwork is disrupted by a minimal suggestion of a landscape below two suns, revealing raw canvas underneath its muddy surface. *Nzulu Yemfihlakalo*, a dark and swirling surface, is a visualization of the ensuing storm. Pieces of soil, bark and compost debris rage across the surface, above the muddy red landscape. Titled after an *isiXhosa* Christian hymn, *Nzulu Yemfihlakalo* makes further reference to the theological syncretism of Christianity *kwaXhosa*.

The hymn to which the title refers is about the miracle of Jesus Christ. In discussion with my grandmother, she explains that the hymn praises the miracles of Christ that are beyond what we are able to perceive. Directly translated, *ubu-Nzulu* refers to depth and *i-Mfihlakalo* refers to that which we cannot see. Thus, the title *Nzulu Yemfihlakalo* (which could be translated to 'the hidden depths') plays on this idea of inconceivable the miracle of resurrection in relation to the imagined landscapes of the fulfilled cattle killing prophecy. Peires (1989) speculates that the idea that the dead cattle and the fallen *amaXhosa* would rise again was adopted from Christian beliefs or the resurrection of Christ in the Bible. The choice of title then is my way of conflating the imagined resurrection propounded by the cattle killing prophecy and Christ's resurrection as told in the Bible.

Among the two groups that had split over the spread of Nongqawuse's prophecies, Peires notes that the little available archival evidence suggests that the large number of *Amathamba* (the 'soft', Believers) who adhered to the prophecies were a social class of common people 'whose material subsistence was largely eroded by (colonial) conquest, drought and lung sickness, and for whom Nongqawuse's prophecies were probably the last chance to avoid migrant labour and the final disintegration of the old way of life' (1989: 180).⁶ *Amagogoty* (the 'hard', Unbelievers) on the other hand had (generally speaking) greatly benefited from allying with the colonial government, having 'towed the colonial line' and having been rewarded with land and cattle they therefore saw no need to, or greater benefit in going along with Nongqawuse's prophecies. Peires further remarks that 'the division between *Amathamba* and *Amagogoty* ran much deeper than the simple division between Believers and Unbelievers, and the [ama]Xhosa, in conferring these names, seem to have recognized the fact' (1989: 181). The point is that perhaps the idea of the 'hard' and the 'soft' further complicated

6. Lung sickness is an infectious and fatal disease affecting cattle. Also known as Bovine Repertory Disease.

and magnified the pre-existing tension between *ubuqaba* (backwardness, or 'the darkness of redness') and *ubugqobhoka* (education, Christianity and enlightenment).⁷ These given names also invite an even greater complexity in the interpretation of belief *kwaXhosa*. The idea of 'softness', as with Nongqawuse's Believers (*Amathamba*), suggests that they are made of mouldable or permeable heart or spirit, making them susceptible to the prophecy. The idea of 'hardness' suggests that *Amagogoty* were the 'hard headed' of the *amaXhosa* nation, rigid or impermeable in spirit. However, how is it that *Amagogoty* could be susceptible or inclined to the Christian mission or Western education as *Amagqobhoka* – a word which literally translates to 'the ruptured'? In my view, this suggests an understanding of the ontological heterogeneity of belief among *amaXhosa*.

As Peires suggests, there is a more complex conflation of theology and spirituality in this historical moment than meets the eye. This is because much of the cattle-killing prophecies, and even their precedents via the *amaXhosa* prophets Nxele, Ntsikana and Mlanjeni, had adopted Christian elements such as the resurrection.⁸ The contention between *ubuqaba* and *ubugqobhoka*, although a subtler negotiation in the present, has persisted since the 19th century.⁹ This tension is also central to the negotiation between past and present reality in *The Heart of Redness*. Mda's 'present-day' characters, Camagu, Xoliswa Ximiya and Qukezwa, aptly represent this complexity for me, this constant negotiation of belief and disbelief.

The character Camagu, having been in exile in America during the Middle Generations, is led to Qolorha by a stranger. Failing to find work and settle in Johannesburg, he takes a detour on his way to the airport with the intention to return to his country of exile. Qolorha-by-Sea is a beautiful place, geographically, and historically rich. Although somewhat out of touch, Camagu recognizes this cultural history. There is a notable moment in which Camagu, a Western educated exile, recognizes the totem of his patrilineal clan

7. Interestingly, the term '*ama-gqoboka*' is derived from the word '*uku-gqoboka*' meaning 'to rupture' in *isiXhosa*. This rupture within *amaXhosa* is also symbolic of social and political fragmentation within the community or nation-space, caused by the imposition of Eurocentric ideas and Christian beliefs among the *amaXhosa*. (Each word is hyphenated here to clearly show the change in prefix; with 'ama' functioning as a collective form of the word and 'uku' which refers to the verb form.)

8. The ideas around the resurrection are mentioned as permeating the *amaXhosa* imagination through key figures such as King Sarhili and Chief Mhala. Sarhili in particular is recorded to have engaged quite passionately with the Missionary H. T. Waters regarding the biblical story of Lazarus' resurrection. See: Peires, J. B. 1979; Peires J. B. 1989; Mostert, 1992.

9. See, for example, Nontsizi Mgqwetho *Amaqaba! Pulapula!*, or 'Reds! Listen!' (translated by Jeff Opland), in *The Nation's Bounty: The Xhosa Poetry of Nontsizi Mgqwetho* (2007).

name in his hotel bed – the snake.¹⁰ This suggests that his cultural and spiritual knowledge retains its value in this 'urbane' exile. Camagu's relationship with Xoliswa Ximiya, 'the western-educated descendant of the Unbelievers', is suffocated by her blind adherence to 'the superficialities of western culture' (Bell, 2003: 70). Instead he finds love with Qukezwa, a 'direct descendant of her namesake of the Believers', whom Koyana (2003: 58) calls 'a reservoir of the past'. Qukezwa's 'harmonious relationship with the land, her love for swimming in the ocean and her knowledge about the spiritual quality of Qolorha-by-Sea in relation to its cultural heritage represents the true heart of redness' (Lloyd, 2001: 36).

If Mda's character Qukezwa is considered the true heart of redness by David Lloyd (2001), then her character is represented by *imbola*, ringing true with all its significances as a 'reservoir of the past' (Koyana, 2003: 58). And if this is so, then, for me, Xoliswa Ximiya's character can be interpreted as representing the chalk; an evasive, impermanent measure of 'civilization' or progress encapsulated by the 'American Dream'.¹¹ In this case, Camagu would be represented by the soil, the ground on which these two meet, the arena of contestation – a site for the negotiation of the past within the present that reflects their respective value within a heterogeneous future.

To engage the case for the complex relationship between identity and geography, or what Dirk Klopper (2010: 171) calls 'an entanglement of subject and place', I further examine Mda's *The Heart of Redness*. The following section addresses the cultural inscriptions inherent in our readings and experience of the landscape.

10. Clan names are derived from long patrilineal lines of descent. The totem of the snake reveals that Camagu is a descendant of the *amaMpondomise-Xhosa*, over which the patriarch uJola ruled. *AmaJola*, meaning the descendants of uJola's clan, consider their totem to be the brown mole snake. For *amaJola*, seeing this snake is a symbol of blessings. This can also be interpreted as part of the Christian and African theological interaction in the book if one considers the biblical symbolism of the snake in the Eden story. See Tyatyeka, D. M. (1995) for clan names, and (Koyana, 2003) for this interpretation.

11. Xoliswa Ximiya studied in the USA on exchange. She is therefore enamoured by American life and the ideals of first-world civilisation encapsulated by the 'American Dream'.



Figure 2

Kutala attends a Cultural Day event

My mother Kutala Somdyala at a Cultural Day event hosted by SADTU at the Cofimvaba town hall (circa 2002)

LANDSCAPE AS PORTRAIT

As Camagu drives his Toyota Corolla on the gravel road he concludes that a generous artist painted the village of Qolorha-by-Sea, using splashes of lush colour. It is a canvas where blue and green dominate. It is the blue of the skies and the distant hills, of the ocean and the rivers that flow into it. The green is of the meadows and the valleys, the tall grass and the usundu palms (Mda, 2000: 61).

Making use of Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of 'dialogism', Siphokazi Koyana (2003) discusses the novel's dialogue with Qolorha as a place and landscape, as well as the dialogue between its past and the present reality of the book.¹² Koyana's interpretation of the term, in the context of the novel, is encompassed by the idea that the interaction between Qolorha's (and by extension South Africa's) past and present can suggest its heterogeneous future possibilities. She states that 'Mda-as-writer uses Qolorha as an experimental site in which to help us see more clearly those elements of our past that restrict our progress while he suggests ways in which we can engage with the present in a manner that will be valuable for the future' (2003: 52). This means that since Mda's Qolorha-by-Sea is a fictional community that draws from an actual place, Qolorha becomes a landscape of history and the site of its negotiation in the present. The landscape, in the actual past and in fictive present Qolorha-by-Sea, becomes a site in which the broader issues of identity construction, social and political tensions are explored.

12. For Mikhail Bakhtin's 'dialogism', see: Zavala, 1990

In keeping with the idea of a fictional Qolorha as a dialogic microcosm, it is interesting to note that actual Qolorha of the past (1856-57) and Mda's fictional present-reality Qolorha is faced with an external pressure or intrusion that threatens its fate. Similarly, I see this decisive historical moment in relation to the exogenous pressure faced by the South African government in relation to the formal abolition of apartheid. Although this miraculous political transformation 'involve[d] both moral questions of justice and equality', it is also crucial to note that the 'pragmatic and instrumental questions of power and social engineering' were largely concerned with re-establishing South Africa's relationship with international investors (Mbembe, 2008: 7). These questions, as argued extensively by academics such as Marschall (2010) and Sparks (1996; 2003), were not adequately addressed in terms of sufficient redress through wealth and land distribution to historically disadvantaged groups.¹³ I make note of it here in order to speak about this idea of the exogenous pressure facing the *amaXhosa* nation during the 1856-7 cattle killings in the form of a spiritual upheaval. A similar set of factors faces the fictive Qolorha of *The Heart of Redness* in the form of capitalist or neo-colonial enterprise. It links this historical fact and microcosmic fiction with South Africa's recent political past. This way, Mda's novel provides useful 'analysis of a society in crisis' (Bell, 2003: 68).

But what is at stake in Qolorha-by-Sea in *The Heart of Redness* is a cultural repository, a national heritage of spiritual and historical significance. In this case the negotiation of 'traditional' and 'modern' life is simultaneously past and present, personal and collective. Although I do not argue that Qolorha should remain in the past, or in the 'darkness of redness', I do feel that any Eastern Cape village deserves appropriate infrastructural development that responds to the endogenous needs of its people. This involves memory. Learning about history has helped me understand how there is no 'natural inferiority', as espoused by the colonial and apartheid era or Mda's 'Middle Generations'. Understanding that the imposed idea of a 'natural' inferiority or superiority in culture or spirituality is only an historical construct, has helped me subvert the dichotomizing judgement of history and see the value of my cultural heritage.

Thus, Mda makes evident that the democratic ambitions of the political and therefore economic, social and cultural landscapes involve the negotiation of place and identity politics as well – the inner landscapes. This negotiation, positioning black identities in a previously white supremacist nation-space – effectively a redress on all levels or spheres – is evident in the construction of South African national identity. These negotiations are part of the contentious debate around what to remember, how to remem-

13. See: Marschall, S. 2010; Sparks, A. 1996 & 2003

ber and what richer conceptions of national identity non-dominant historical narratives can contribute to 'overcoming whiteness and blackness' (Mbembe, 2008: 7). Memory is indeed a crucial part of the reconciliation process. Therefore, the use of historical landscape as a site of fiction or intervention in the present lived reality, and its significances as a microcosm of a South African society in transition and in crisis, is the link between Mda's book and my work.

This idea of memory, in relation to an 'inner landscape' and the external properties of the land, manifests in a series of ochre drawings titled *The Deep History, The Long Past*. In these, I stained a piece of cotton-based paper with a deep orange pigment, moving in a gradient from rich tangerine at the bottom to a pale peach at the top of the paper. The orange pigment evaporates a few centimeters short of the deckled top edge of the page. On top of the orange gradient is a series of lines drawn in charcoal moving horizontally across the page, reminiscent of a distant landscape cutting across a skyline. These horizon lines could read like text, with one below the other, becoming disconnected and less distinct as they sink deeper towards the bottom of the page. When drawing these overlapping horizon lines, I was vaguely aware that I should sharpen my charcoal pencil – but I didn't. When looking at the image again, I realized that the fading and less distinct or disconnected lines have a similar gradual disintegration to the way I had applied the pigment. The clear or coherent lines at the top become incoherent until they vanish at the bottom, moving from the lighter to the darker shade of the pigment underneath. These lines, in relation to the pigment-stained surface, became a metaphor for memory and the relationship of history to landscape.

Conceptualizing this series of drawings as a minimal and abstract landscape, I use the horizon line as a continuous but broken timeline. This is related to Mda's *Middle Generations*. In *The Heart of Redness*, the *Middle Generations* began with the complete colonisation of *amaXhosa* after the Hundred Years War, continued through the apartheid era and ended in the recent past, with the abolition of apartheid. Mda's *Unbelievers* perform a ritual dance that induces a trance, transporting them to the past, where they interact with the ancestors. Through this dance, they induce sorrow as a way of lamenting the curse of oppression brought on by belief in Nongqawuse's prophecy and the colonial era that followed. The *Unbelievers'* act against amnesia is what this work suggests, as a similarly abstract meditation on history in relation to the present through a visualization of the land's memory as layers of sediment.

The diptych *QAMATA* employs a similar visual language. The surface of the landscape is at an incline in this work. Titled after the village between Queenstown and Cofimvaba in the Eastern Cape, Qamata Basin is where my mother taught intermediate phase at Nyongwane Senior Secondary School. The Qamata River runs through the area, from which the river's tributaries branch out between the sloping hills. Qamata is just off the R61 between Queenstown and Cofimvaba. My mother and I would take a taxi, which would drop us off at the junction where the gravel road meets the tar-

mac. Walking the rest of the way downwards towards the school on a slope, I remember a vast and nearly barren landscape on a particularly hot summer's day. Qamata is also the pre-colonial name by which *amaXhosa* knew their god. Now a largely unused name for the *amaXhosa* conception of god, the relationship between Qamata as a place, Qamata as landscape in my memory and the history of Qamata in the theology *kwaXhosa* all intersect in this work. The chalk in *QAMATA* is applied to look as though it is coming down onto the surface of the landscape, like rain or hail. The place where the chalk meets the ochre is blurred. This can be read as a play on the syncretism of theology *kwaXhosa* discussed as the *STRUGGLE OF THE GODS* in the following chapter.

Returning to this idea of subject and place, my artwork *QAMATA* is an investigation of the interaction between internal and external landscapes, personal and collective history. Here I discard illustrative articulations of landscape in favour of expressing a sensory recollection of place through materiality. Through the title I suggest landscape, *isiXhosa* history and personal memory.

My lived experience (enriched by Mda's work), the materiality of soil, ochre and chalk, are what drew me to the desire to subvert this idea of *ubuqaba* or 'the darkness of redness' and *ubugqobhoka*; by using *imbola* or soil to stain cotton paper or canvas, as a tactile exploration of identity, history and landscape. There is a deeply personal negotiation that I wish to examine through an investigation of the interaction between internal and external landscapes, personal and collective history. Thus, the landscape as portrait idea in my project means that the landscape, both past and present, fictive or actual, becomes a site for engaging with identity, both personal and collective. Further, that the present, imagined and actual, is part of the 'consequences' of the past. A dialogic understanding of such consequences can enrich personal experiences of the present and contribute constructively to collective ambitions for a socially heterogeneous future.

STRUGGLE

OF

'Who were the Strangers, my child?' asked Twin. 'I do not know, father,' replied Nongqawuse. 'They said they were messengers of Naphakade, He-Who-Is-Forever, the descendant of Sifuba-Sibanzi, the Broad-Chested-One.' People were confused. They had not heard of the Broad-Chested-One. Obviously these must be the new names of the god of the amaXhosa people... the one who is known by everyone as Qamata or Mveligqangi... the one who was called Mdalidephu by Prophet Nxele. (Mda, 2000: 59)¹⁴

THE

GODS

14. Historian William Gqoba, who Peires credits for providing historical accounts with the language used by the Believers, interprets the Believers' use of the names *Naphakade* (Eternal One) as God, and *Sifuba-Sibanzi* (Broad-Chested-One) as Christ. This dichotomous relationship of deity was at the time a new religious conception among the *amaXhosa*; likely adopted due to an adoption of Christian theological elements. See: Peires, J.B. 1989, and Gqoba, W. W. 1888

Even an uncritical reader will notice that *The Heart of Redness* is not simply concerned with plain dichotomy. There is an unshakable sense of in-betweenness throughout the book, a resolute dwelling in the grey-area that obscures clear distinction.

The *amaXhosa*'s response to, and interaction with, Christianity is documented. Perhaps a suitable place to begin a general account is where most academics start, with Makana Nxele, Ntsikana and then to Mlanjeni, Mhlakaza and Nongqawuse, towards Tiyo Soga. According to Peires (1979), Nxele and Ntsikana emerge from historical obscurity between the Fourth (1811-1812) and Fifth (1818-1819) Frontier Wars. Although easily considered influential prophets of their time, it has also been argued that their emergence into historical narrative was a response to a set of practical and conceptual crises facing *amaXhosa*. Along with being banished from a particularly fertile piece of land between the Bushmans and Great Fish Rivers there were the spiritual concerns regarding what the colonial expansion, or *abantu bamanzi* ('the people of the sea'), meant for the future of *amaXhosa*.¹⁵ The influence of Christianity on the cosmology of *amaXhosa* had already presented itself through missionaries such as Johannes van der Kemp, who preached among the Ngqika Chiefdom. Although differing in their trajectories, to their followers, Nxele and Ntsikana provided 'acceptable explanations of past events and prescriptions for future action'; which fused selective elements of Christianity with spiritual concepts *kwaXhosa* (Peires, 1979: 61). These prophetic 'explanations' were often sought by the *amaXhosa* nation at the heights of political crises, providing rationale and hope where political leadership could not. Thus, as observed by author M. Gibeon Khabela (1996), the struggle to reclaim the land was not only a political struggle but a fundamentally religious one. The struggle of the gods involves the political, cultural and economic struggle that is essentially a spiritual struggle.

While Nxele and Ntsikana themselves represented opposing schools-of-thought, both of them can be seen as representing the interaction of religious ideology and the 'struggle of the gods', a tension that still prevails today. Although both Nxele and Ntsikana employed selective elements of cosmological ideologies, Khabela (1996) notes that they represent two opposing traditions. This is what Khabela terms the 'accommodationist tradition' of Ntsikana, and the 'non-accommodationist tradition' (or revolutionary tradition) of Nxele, later adopted by Mlanjeni. Nxele's revolutionary tradition rejected all forms of assimilation into Victorian culture, positioning itself against colonial religion and education. Ntsikana's accommodationist teachings, although also

15. For more on the 'Ceded Territory' from which *amaXhosa* were pushed out of, and the political and social upheaval of the *amaXhosa*, see Mostert, N, 1992 and Peires, J. B. 1979

Abantu Bamanzi meaning 'people of the water'. In his article about the initial Response to Christianity by *amaXhosa*, Peires (1979) notes that the prophet Nxele believed that white people had killed the son of their own God (the story of Jesus), and had been banished to the sea from where they emerged in search for land.

heavily syncretic in the quality of hymns and dance, emphasized an 'adaptation to the material and historical order of the colonial system' (Khabela, 1996: 48). The author goes further to contend that Tiyo Soga followed in Ntsikana's footsteps (by fully accepting Christianity), and that Nxele's militant resistance was adopted by Mlanjeni (which led to the War of Mlanjeni in 1850-3) (1996: 48-50).¹⁶

Nxele, in particular, is credited with perceiving the adversity between *uThixo*, the God of the whites, and *Mdalidephu*, the God of the blacks. *Qamata*, or *uMdali* (short for *Mdalidephu*), which means creator of all things, was a term already existing in the theology of *amaXhosa*. This, before *Naphakade* or *Sifuba-Sibanzi* entered the spiritual imagination of *amaXhosa*, was the name and conception of God; with the realm of the ancestors as their go-between. *uThixo*, the Christian God, is the common term by which God is referred to *kwaXhosa* today. So, I grew up knowing of *uThixo*; I have always been brought up under this understanding of our spiritual knowledge – functioning within Christian theology, but never interacting with our conception of the ancestral realm in the way of *uMdalidephu*.

Tiyo Soga's accommodationist sentiment was that the only way for *amaXhosa* to surmount colonial oppression and regain their land was through education at the Christian mission; which resonates with my grandparents' view of education. There was never any visible 'clash' in my family's beliefs. It could be observed that my grandmother had a stronger conviction in the Christian faith, although she abided firmly in our cultural customs as well. And although my grandfather respected prayer when practiced, it was also clear that *izinto zesintu* were the spiritual beliefs that he resonated with more.¹⁷ In growing up, I experienced a continuous shifting between the two systems of belief, an applicable example being the two ceremonies conducted shortly after birth in my family: a baptism as well as *imbeleko*.¹⁸ It is therefore my contention that due to a dominant European ethos in South African institutions, contemporary customs *kwaXhosa* involve varying degrees of this accommodationist tradition.

There are some ontological tensions here that I wish to explore. The material response to *imbola* and chalk also lend themselves to these readings; that is, a concern with the spiritual knowledge and religious practices *kwaXhosa* today. Furthermore, I am interested in how this fundamentally religious struggle is manifest on social, cultural and political levels. I have observed these conflations, tensions, struggles and even clashes of belief and the fundamental tools with which we understand the world. I also think that this negotiation, this clash, is at its most evident in our schools.

16. For the War of Mlanjeni, the eighth frontier war, see Mostert (1993) and Peires (1989)

17. *Izinto Zesintu* means the customs and practices of the *amaXhosa* people.

18. *Imbeleko* is a ceremony conducted after the birth of a child *kwaXhosa*. The umbilical cord is severed, and buried inside a hut or house. The ceremony is also for the introduction of the child to the family, community and the ancestors of the clan. This was done for me and my younger brother (b. 1997) at birth.



Figure 3 A black choir, ND

PART II

THE PEN

Attwell (2005: 33) asserts that it was through the civilizing mission that the Enlightenment of 18th century Europe reached the 19th century Cape Colony.

Attwell's observation is consistent with the Cape colonial governor George Grey's desire to 'instruct and civilize' indigenous people (quoted in Peires, 1989: 57). In a speech to the Cape legislature, governor Grey, the principal antagonist in Peires' account of the cattle killings, expresses a wish for 'economic integration [of *amaXhosa*] with its clear implication of black subordination to white domination' (Peires, 1989: 57). In Grey's vision, it was primarily the task of the missionaries, long starved of colonial approval since the earlier 'Age of Reason', to educate and civilize indigenous people in the wake of colonial domination. This is the hypocrisy that corrupted the 19th century evangelical liberalism (Attwell, 2005: 32).

The mission schools insisted on a total 'conversion' of the indigenous people. All who wanted to learn and work among the missionaries were required to cast away red blankets, wash off ochre and leave all *isiXhosa* cultural practices behind. They were then given European clothes, shoes and so on. In these schools, education, Christianity and European culture were inextricable from one another. The pen, only accessible through the doors of the missionary institutions, 'represented the grounds on which autonomy and social emancipation would be sought' (Attwell, 2005: 33).¹ Thus, Christianity can be seen as being at the threshold of this epistemological oppression.

1. 'The pen', referenced from I.W.W Citashe's 1882 poem, is representative of some aspects of modernity, namely education, Christianity, journalism, and political organisation (Attwell, 2005: 5).

This meant that only those who 'accommodated' European culture and religion were able to receive 'formal' European education. In *Rewriting Modernity*, Attwell (2005: 32) remarks that 'the cross was indistinguishable from the flag'. He further contends that this may be an argument that does not consider the nuances of African nationalism's use of the Enlightenment era's own 'reason' to critique the hypocrisy of the very institutions from which it emerges. However, the argument about the inextricable link between the cross and the flag serves to provide an understanding of the relationship between the church and the school. This also provides a grasp of the historical conditions under which the English language became entrenched as the 'sine qua non of African self-expression' (Attwell, 2005: 32).

It was only within the confines of the 'deeply entrenched foreign language', ethos and religion of Victorian culture that people like Tiyo Soga and subsequent generations of the black African intelligentsia could acquire social elevation or self-expression (Coetzee, 1993: 7; Attwell, 2005: 32). This is attested to in Sol Plaatje's incisive observation: 'The key of knowledge is the English language. Without such a mastery of it as will give the scholar a taste for reading, the great English literature is a sealed book, and he remains one of the uneducated, living in the miserably small world of... the untaught natives' (quoted in Willan, 1984: 36).

The abstract sculpture *Uphengululo Lolwimi* deals with the cultural, spiritual and epistemological qualities of language. The title roughly translates to 'the comprehension of language'. In the work, I used the metal legs from a two-person school desk and displayed them as four distinct objects. The objects have been bent at ninety-degree angles to create what look like incomplete geometric cubes. The four pieces of rusted metal legs retain some of their original paint, the dull blue-green reminiscent of school desk and chair metallic paint. These pieces, arranged alongside one another on a wall, are also reminiscent of text; a foreign and unreadable word. Their small details, such as the cylindrical metal parts found at the feet of an old school desk to keep it stable, could be read as accent symbols (also called diacritic marks) found in most European languages. Diacritic marks are added to Romanized letters or glyphs to mark inflection or distinguish pronunciation. The short metal 'arms' on which the seating part of the school desk rests also give the objects this accented or diacritic glyph quality. Viewed as a wall-based installation, such details give these glyphs the sense that there is a code of letters that the viewer is unable to read – one shape is highly reminiscent of the letter 'C' or 'G', one glyph looks derivative of an incomplete 'F'. Their arrangement and physical relationship with a viewer even lend themselves to being read from left to right, as if this unreadable or unpronounceable dialect is somehow also Romanized.

Aside from the ideas about 'the pen' as inextricable from a Christian and European ethos in South African history, this work responds more broadly to ideas associated with foreignness, learning and language, writing systems, knowledge systems, as well as epistemological imbalance.

There is also the consideration that the epistemological imbalances of the formal education environment can be seen as a form of pacification.² Paulo Freire's (2017: 44) discussion of the 'banking' concept of education describes this clearly:

The teacher talks about reality as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable. Or else he expounds on a topic completely alien to the existential experience of the students. His task is to 'fill' the students with the contents of his narration – contents which are detached from reality, disconnected from the totality that engendered them and could give them significance. Words are emptied of their concreteness and become a hollow, alienated, and alienating verbosity.

Pitted against Freire's concept of 'problem-posing' education, which is based heavily on Marxist theory, 'banking' education becomes the pacification rather than the conscientization of students and teachers.³ The qualities of the 'banking' concept of education, in which knowledge is prescribed and memorized and removed from lived reality, are a form of pacification that Freire links to the ideology of oppression. The sculptural work, *Ntyilo Ntyilo [After Makeba]*, a school desk on steel cradle legs, plays on this idea. The title of the sculpture is derived from the Miriam Makeba song *Ntyilo Ntyilo*, a lullaby about a singing bird. The research title, *ILIZWE LIFILE*, is drawn from one of the lines in this iconic South African jazz number, which was written for Makeba by the late Allan Mzamo Silinga. In the song, a beautiful melody draws the narrator closer to a bush to find a red and white canary singing 'the land is dead' or 'there is trouble in the land'.⁴ The work is informed by the aforementioned ideas around 'banking' education and pacification, paired with the sweet lullaby that makes reference to the underlying crises that this body of work grapples with.

2. For example, the Bantu Education Act of 1953, which conferred a lower standard of education for black South Africans, is a critical feature of apartheid era oppression. The Bantu Education Act is discussed further in a section titled *CLASS* below.

3. 'The term conscientization refers to learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality' Freire, P. (2017: 9). Conscientization also has its roots in South African political history, forming an integral part of the Black Consciousness Movement of the 1960's and 1970's.

4. See full translation: <https://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/ntyilo-ntyilo-bird-song> [accessed: 20-07-2019]



Figure 4 Senior students at Fort Hare Native College, ND



Figure 5 Cookery class at Lovedale Mission, Cape Province, ND

CLASS

Some of my work draws directly from the classroom space. The qualities of authority, regimentation or cultural dominance in the classroom reflect the greater systemic oppression within a society. For me the classroom becomes indicative of the divisions of class at the social, economic and cultural level. This is due to my experience of different schools in the Eastern Cape, as well as the historical remnants of the divisions in the quality of education in South Africa.

The disparity of education quality in South African schools is evidenced by Dr. Thobeka Ncanywa's 2014 paper titled *The State of the Eastern Cape Schools in a Period Almost the Second Decade of Democracy*. The province of the Eastern Cape consists of twenty-three school districts, these are grouped into three clusters according to geographic location (Ncanywa, 2014) (PECE, 2012). **Cluster A:** Libode, Lusikisiki, Maluti, Mbizana, Mt Fletcher, Mt Frere and Qumbu; **Cluster B:** Butterworth, Cofimvaba, Dutywa, Lady Frere, Mthatha, Engcobo and Sterkspruit; **Cluster C:** Cradock, East London, Fort Beaufort, Graaff-Reinet, Grahamstown, Queenstown, Uitenhage and Port Elizabeth' (Ncanywa, 2014: 3). Cluster A and B, consisting of a great portion of the apartheid era homeland of the Transkei, is a largely rural, underdeveloped and overpopulated region in which 99.9 percent of schools are found in villages or small towns. Cluster C consists of 'rural, urban and farm schools', in addition to having a number of 'former Model-C schools' (Ncanywa, 2014: 3). The former Transkei and Ciskei homeland regions (now incorporated the Eastern Cape Province) are where a large number of underdeveloped 'mud schools' are situated, in which mud huts or inadequate infrastructures are used as classrooms and school grounds.⁵

5. Homelands or 'Bantustans' were areas allocated to specific ethnic groups by the apartheid government, as part of apartheid racial segregation. The Transkei (which means beyond the Kei River) and Ciskei (which means preceding the Kei River) were largely inhabited by *amaXhosa*.

The small town of iKomani is geographically positioned as a small-town centre for many of the surrounding townships and villages that my mother and aunts taught at. I was able to experience different schools both as a student, and when visiting my aunts; as well as crossing paths with different schools for sport or debate teams. I saw this disparity and have understood some of its historical precedents through this research. Other than my personal experience of different schools and conditions, the 2015 student uprisings further evidence the persistent power of education institutions to oppress, empower, classify or declassify people. The criteria for inclusivity are largely economic, but also essentially cultural, through symbols and images that negate certain identities while validating others. Beyond this, what we are taught is also indicative of this psychological oppression that permeates throughout a still stratified democratic society.

As I trace history in the present and within my own lived experience, it has become clear that this metaphor of the classroom, this psychosocial arena, is where these tensions play out within my work. This is more obvious in the works where I use found desks, desk legs, green chalkboard paint, chalk and even mud (because for some, this is the space of formal education). There are other works, whose relevance comes from an associative response; objects that are reminiscent of the classroom space but play a part as avatars or narrative totems that are informed by this history. That is, icons or figures that I consider manifestations or incarnations of significant historical events relevant to my work. These are largely the components of a tableau, such as the paper boats, the axe, the desk and the flag. Each is representative of central historical episodes or personal experiences associated with the psychosocial elements of the classroom space.

The bronze calf is an avatar within the thematic universe of my body of work. The calf stands in for my own body, and a sorrowful reflection on a violent history. I consider the calf an avatar because I use it to represent both my own as well as a collective grief. Cattle have a deep spiritual significance within the customs *kwaXhosa*. Other than being a sacrificial link between the physical and the ancestral realm, cattle signify health and wealth within traditional society *kwaXhosa*. This work does not constitute a deification of the calf; rather it is a figure that I choose to manifest my own reflection on history. The bronze calf is a small but heavy memorial, as if weighed down by a monumental sorrow. Although related to the events of the cattle killing movement of 1856-57, namely the death of cattle due to lung-sickness and the deliberate killing of cattle in the wake of Nongqawuse's prophecy, the seated calf sculpture is more of a lamentation of this history.

The calf holds a similar significance to that of the dance of grief performed by Mda's Unbelievers in *The Heart of Redness*.⁶ It is a symbol against forgetting this sorrowful history, mourning the death of the independent *amaXhosa* nation. It becomes witness to these historical episodes within the classroom tableau and the context of this body of work, a monument to the grief embedded in memory.

Other works that represent the school or class include *Ntyilo Ntyilo* [After Makeba], *Izandla Ezingcolileyo Act I & II*, *100 Chairs*, and *Uphengululo Lolwimi*. These artworks as well as the tableau *Zwelitsha* reflect my research concerns in relation to the broader education system. This is intended to shed light on the subtle interplay of these histories in my experience of education, by visualizing its regimented conduct (*100 Chairs*, *Uphengululo Lolwimi*), its prescriptions of 'good' or 'bad' behaviour in 'educated' and 'uneducated' bodies (*Ntyilo Ntyilo*, *Izandla Ezingcolileyo*), and the adherence to it as a barometer for cultural assimilation.

For the tableau work *Zwelitsha*, I applied green chalkboard paint to a wall of cement blocks to construct a makeshift classroom. These cement blocks are a literal and metaphorical signifier of the building block as a fundamental component of structure. Further, they signify the 'formal' or Model C school as opposed to the 'mud school'. The green chalkboard paint suggests the structure or regimentation of the classroom; suggesting the teacher-student relationship described in Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2017). Freire (2017: 43) discusses how this relationship between the 'instructor' and the 'instructed' can be likened to the 'oppressor and the oppressed'. This is related to the structure of a classroom space, with the instructor as bearer of knowledge standing in front (of a chalkboard), and the instructed seated passively and facing the instructor as empty vessels or students being filled with knowledge.

This wall is erected in front of a bed of soil, with an array of cement blocks scattered on top of and around the soil. The tableau derives its name from eZwelitsha, a black settlement created by apartheid segregation outside of King Williams Town in the Eastern Cape, from which the soil is sourced. The scatter of blocks is furnished with paper boats, bronze toy soldiers, an axe and the bronze calf.

Here, within this makeshift classroom, are a number of concerns. I am exploring the psychosocial space of the classroom through an associative response to aspects of *isiXhosa* and South African history. I also consider war, land, erasure, and historical residue using selected objects.

6. In *The Heart of Redness*, the Unbelievers perform a ritual dance that transports them to the past, where they interact with the ancestors. Through this dance, they induce sorrow as a way of lamenting the curse of oppression brought on by belief in Nongqawuse's prophecy and the colonial era that followed.

The toy soldiers are military surveyors, equipped with binoculars. These, in relation to the red-handled axe, are avatars for a particular historical episode during the One Hundred Years War. In *Frontiers* (1993), Noël Mostert gives an account of the series of events that led to the War of the Axe. As part of a treaty between the colony and *amaXhosa* in order to bring peace on the frontier, a ceded or buffer territory between the Cape Colony and indigenous people was demarcated. According to the treaty the ceded territory, with *amaXhosa* to the north-east and the colony to the south-west, was not to be occupied without the consent of both parties. Essentially abrogating their own treaty, the Cape Colony deployed a military surveillance crew beyond the ceded territory, into Xhosaland, where they began surveying for a new fort post. In light of the anxiety felt by *amaXhosa* over the capture of their land, this act catalyzed a rapid decline into disaster on the frontier.

Due to the tensions that had already been simmering on the frontier, the War of the Axe, the seventh of nine frontier wars which lasted one hundred years, actually started over a trivial matter of a stolen axe. After *umXhosa* from the Dange chiefdom stole an axe, he was arrested and escorted by a Khoi colonial officer to Grahamstown (now Makhanda) to be tried. On the way to trial, a group of Dange-Xhosa rescued the axe thief, killing the Khoi escort he was handcuffed to. The colonial authorities demanded that the murderer of the Khoi escort be handed over by the Dange chiefdom. When the senior Dange chief refused to surrender the murderer, war broke out. Although the case of the stolen axe was the final straw, the surveillance of land beyond ceded territory between colonists and *amaXhosa* was a prior event that aggravated existing tensions.⁷ This came at a time during which *amaXhosa* had become aware of the gradual capture of their land, the surveillance and potential for further occupation of which exacerbated the situation.

I found this interesting in relation to the toy soldier as object, and became particularly focused on the military surveyor in relation to war and the objectification of territory or land. I consider the toy-soldier surveyors to be avatars of the intrusive colonial presence within the makeshift classroom.

The red-handled axe, because it is an object instead of a representation of a figure, is a totem rather than an avatar. However, the axe is not a totem in the spiritual sense of the term, rather it is an emblem I have adopted to represent the historical conflict that preceded the War of the Axe in 1846. It is an object that is symbolic of this historical episode, as well as establishing significance with the motif of 'redness' within the thematic universe of my work; the axe functions as a loaded 'residual' object. In a sense, the red-handle becomes the residue of the 'red-handed' axe-thief.

7. For details, see: Mostert, N. 2003: 868 – 874.

The paper sailing boat is another totem object. This object is manifest in different forms within the work, and stems from the child-like wonder or novelty of turning a piece of paper into a three-dimensional object. The boat is not, however, quite a ship. Nonetheless, I think it finds its relevance here as being in the imaginative reach of a school-boy, visualizing some of history's grand narratives using the available materials. The ships are what I attempt to evoke, the HMS Geysler, the SS Mendi, The Lady of the Lake, and others occurring as motifs in various historical episodes.⁸ I use maps of South Africa, atlas pages, significant historical or educational texts and images to fold these paper boats. These all make reference to broader ideas around alienation (as with Nxele's idea of *abantu bamanzi* (the people of the sea), the relationship between ocean and land, colonial expansion and the transportation of black bodies on ships.

In relation to this idea of *abantu bamanzi* and the land, the origins and use of chalk in my work is suggestive. Formed by the settling of calcium sediment over millennia on the ocean floor, chalk is a limestone deposit that emerged above sea-level because of the movements of the earth and the formation of the Alps. Found below and above the ground, chalk is mined or quarried (Cobb, 1981). Today the longest stretch of chalk cliffs or chalk rock can be found in England. Its use became popular as an instruction or teaching tool in 19th century European classrooms because it is a convenient way of conveying information to many students at once. It is also easy to apply and erase. Thus, in the context of my work, the chalk is not only a signifier and an accoutrement of 'formal' learning, but suggests a palimpsest of historical erasure, and makes further reference to the ocean and land relationship.

I have observed that the persistent contestation of the 'formal' and 'informal' is an underlying thematic concern in my work. The classroom is an important space for me because in my experience I have found this to be a fundamental arena for this contestation. As a young black South African, grappling with what this really means, I see this negotiation reflected in the literature that I make reference to in this text. However, a thematic investigation of the South African television show *Yizo Yizo* deepens our historical awareness of the psychosocial, political and cultural undercurrents implicit in the process of education and how these underpin the space of education itself. I will argue that the first season of *Yizo Yizo* is representative of many of South Africa's past and present social predicaments.

8. At the height of the Cattle-Killing movement, when most Believers were beginning to lose faith in the prophecies, a colonial ship entered the mouth of the Key River. This was the HSM Geysler. Although on its usual supply route from Natal to the Cape Colony, this ship was met with a war cry by amaXhosa. It was intended, by the colonial governor Sir George Grey, to scare amaXhosa at their weakest point. When the soldiers aboard this ship realised that the vessel would not make it any further up the channels of the Key, it turned around. This was interpreted as a military victory by amaXhosa and gave momentum to the movement. For details of this historical episode, see: Peires, 1989 and Mda, 2000

During the First World War, an army of 10 000 men from the South African Native Labour Corps was sent to France on the SS Mendi in 1917. This ship was hit by a larger ship, the SS Darro, and sank. The ship's bell was mysteriously and anonymously found and returned to South Africa in 2017, after one hundred years. For further reading on the Mendi disaster, see: Clothier, N. 1987; Grundlingh, A. 2011; Nasson, B. 1999.

The Lady of The Lake is the ship on which Tiyo Soga returned from Scotland to South Africa, toward the final wave of the catastrophic Cattle-Killing movement in April 1857 (Attwell, D. 2005: 35).



Figure 6 A rural school

THE MEANING- FUL

Collective dialogue, which Freire (2017: 141) describes as a fundamental aspect of freedom, is both visualized and negated by the art work *100 Chairs*. The image is drawn from the experience of mass student meetings during the 2015–2016 protests at the University of Cape Town. The arrangement of a field of chairs facing a speaker was a common sight during these shut-downs or occupations of campuses in the university. The work *100 Chairs* both visualizes and negates the idea of this mass dialogue. While the chairs suggest an assembly of bodies, the bodies that constitute this dialogue are absent. The chairs hover in a vacuous space; the omission of context further suggests the absence of collective dialogue in articulating the 'growing chorus of discontent among the multitudes of disadvantaged and disaffected' youth of the 'born free' population (Mbembe, 2006).

100 Chairs signifies a particular quality of regimentation, present in the uniform arrangement of bodies oriented towards a speaker during an assembly in church and the school space, or the regimentation of bodies in the military, even prison. This strict order is evident throughout my work. *100 Chairs* also suggests an overcrowded classroom, which is an issue facing many black learners in South African 'township' schools. In a sense, this refers back to the negotiation of the 'formal' and 'informal'. In some cases, I use 'formal' language of discipline or order to articulate the 'informal'. This can be observed in the deconstructed arrangement of cement blocks on a carpet of soil, the use of soil and compost on stretched canvas or even the making of the heraldic symbol of a flag with mud and *imbola* on raw canvas. This is the aesthetic dichotomy, remnants of a constantly re-negotiated hybridity.

Leading with a delineation of the relevant historical context, the following section is a discussion of the thematic links in my work in relation to an analysis of *Yizo Yizo*.

THEMATICS OF YIZO YIZO

When *Yizo Yizo* first aired in 1999, South Africa was in the throes of reconciling over five decades of an overtly violent and oppressive society. The year of South Africa's second democratic elections, 1999, was the turn of the century and the rainbow nation was still sanguine. One of the apartheid regime's quite definitive measures was to segregate black and white people geographically. This separation entailed forced removals of black people and communities from central city areas (which were reserved for whites) to designated homelands or 'townships' that were often on the periphery, and from which they would have to migrate in order to work in white residential or city areas.⁹

9. Although finding its precedent in the Natives Land Act of 1913 (which prohibited black South Africans from acquiring land), the Group Areas Act of 1950 is what assigned racial groups to different residential areas during apartheid. This act reserved affluent areas for a white minority, while pushing the black South African majority into small and unfavourable 'homelands'. For more on the Natives Land Act, see: Sol T. Plaatje's *Native Life in South Africa*

Employing this idea of the 'principal markers of the township landscape' mentioned by Achille Mbembe (2004: 499), the drawing *Compulsory Unsettlement* grapples with issues of dispossession and disenfranchisement within the township space. The drawing, visible as part of the installation *Zwelitsha*, is an imagined aerial-oblique view of this urban formation 'that is... deeply embedded in the nation's social imaginary and political unconscious' (Mbembe, et al., 2004: 499). It represents an endless landscape of what can be read as identical residential units, reminiscent of the ANC's Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) housing units. These were part of an ambitious economic restructuring scheme to provide housing and basic amenities to South Africa's largely black impoverished population, and tended to provide four-walled four room houses with flat or pitched roofs. *Compulsory Unsettlement* is a title derived from Sol Plaatje's writings in *Native Life in South Africa*, an impassioned plea against the implementation of the Natives Land Act of 1913. Although largely attributed to the divisive measures of the apartheid regime, this drawing makes reference to the precedence of displacement in South Africa through the title.

Following implementation of the Bantu Education Act of 1953 (later renamed the Black Education Act), education was also separated into different departments under apartheid with black Africans receiving the lowest standard of training. White South Africans received the highest standard of training from the Education Department, with the majority of resources reserved for the white minority schools. By also being barred from historically white universities, which were better resourced (and to an extent still are), the black majority would struggle to be academically competitive. Some of those who faced these constraints and obstacles – often in the toughest personal conditions – nonetheless succeeded and went through the challenges of gaining admission into historically black universities like Fort Hare University.

The first season of *Yizo Yizo* (1999) follows a group of students attending a fictitious high school in a township outside of Johannesburg. In the SABC edutainment style which characterizes a lot of mid-to-late 1990's South African television, the characters (although all black) are of varying backgrounds; with each character representing or dealing with a set of intersecting values, beliefs, ambitions and challenges.¹⁰ These stories address contentions around culture, gender, sex and violence in black communities; the role of education in the reconciliation of conflict; drug abuse; love; justice and pedagogy, to name a few themes. In as many ways as a television show can honestly represent, it encompasses a wide spectrum of the present

'consequences' of history and how black South Africans interact with those consequences. Of particular interest to me is how these play out within the backdrop of a school; particularly how the school comes to represent the broader attempt at reconciliation within the South African post-apartheid nation-space.

The fictitious Supatsela High School in *Yizo Yizo* is a township school. Due to its proximity to the urban city, a township school often has slightly better infrastructure and more resources in comparison to a rural 'mud' school. However, township schools (being predominantly black schools) fell under the Bantu Education system and in many ways continue to suffer these historical disadvantages. As noted by one of the lead characters, Hazel, Supatsela High has a good academic reputation among other schools in the area.

We are introduced to the story on the first day of school, as the principal arrives to find the school has been vandalized over the holiday. One acutely observational scrawl of graffiti reads, 'going to school is like serving a long term in prison'. The principal, Mr. Mthembu, whose golden rules of the school are to enforce 'smart dress, cleanliness and discipline', runs a tight ship. After a corporal punishment incident gets out of hand and the principal receives backlash from parents and students, he resigns. At this point the excessive violence, drug abuse and disruptive behaviour that the principal had worked to suppress for over thirty years, finally erupts. Drug abuse, bullying, violence, sexual harassment and destruction of school property threaten the school, while spilling over into a general corruption of the community. This is the crisis moment, under the negligent interim principal, Ken Mokoena, that prompts a serious reflection on the condition of the school and community, as well as ways to address the clamour.

It is a difficult process but a new principal is finally appointed, Grace Letsatsi. Employing Freire's philosophical approach in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2017), she responds to the lived reality of the community, is able to communicate with parents, teachers and students and create a vested collective interest in improving conditions at the school. The process is challenging, but it is uplifting to see the school, the lead characters and the community push virtuously against the social ills implicit in a dehumanizing living situation for the education and future well-being of their society. Grace Letsatsi's mediation between the school governing body, the teachers, the parents, the students and the community requires an open dialogue among all parties involved in the reconciliation process.

10. Another example of this SABC edutainment style can be seen in the day-time television shows *Soul Buddyz* and *Dynamite Diepkloof Dudes*, which were aimed at South African youth. *Soul Buddyz* engaged many of the same concerns as *Yizo Yizo* by following a cross-cultural and multi-racial group of friends in primary-to-high-school level.

THEMATIC

As with *Yizo Yizo*'s first season, this is the fundamental theme of the early democratic epoch in South Africa – *reconciliation*. The definitions offered by Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* are useful to understand my analytical approach to the existential situation in *Yizo Yizo* outlined above. Freire (2017: 74) defined epochs as:

characterized by certain ideas, concepts, hopes, doubts, values and challenges in dialectical interaction with their opposites ... The concrete representation of many of these ideas, values, concepts, and hopes, as well as the obstacles which impede the people's full humanization, constitute the themes of that epoch.

The complex of interacting themes of an epoch constitutes its thematic universe.

Freire also notes that epochal themes are always in dialectical interaction with their opposing historical themes. These past antithetical themes are precisely what the themes of a new epoch emerge from, thus producing a 'fundamental condition of history' – continuity (Freire, 2017: 82). For instance, the series disrupts singular representations of black identity imposed by a colonial and apartheid past by presenting, in their wake, the complex negotiations of identity construction within black South African communities. Therefore, we can consider some of the 'themes' within *Yizo Yizo*'s 'thematic universe' to be *reconciliation, representation, cultural identity or hybridity* and the *psychosocial* in the context of education. This is the definition I use here for this idea of the 'theme', with the 'thematic universe' constituting the complex interaction of these themes. Further, this is the analytical approach I have employed to link *Yizo Yizo*'s thematic universe to that of the post-apartheid landscape.

UNIVERSE

Beyond the drawing of thematic links between *Yizo Yizo* and the South African political landscape, I consider the thematic universe within a broader endeavour to confront dominant historical impositions on black identities. Litheko Modisane argues thoroughly for the application of Paul Gilroy's work *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993) in readings of *Yizo Yizo*. Modisane examines expressions of the black diaspora, assertions of the hybridity of black identity construction, textual import and the

buttressing of the cultural, social and political affinities between South African black 'experience' and the encounter with oppression by blacks from the Diaspora. These intertextual references stand alongside the disavowal in the series, of the colonial and apartheid ideas of black identity. (Modisane, 2011)

This disavowal resonates with Freire's dialectical interaction of epochal themes. Modisane makes the connection between *Yizo Yizo*'s intertextual references and the stylistic parallels with black film culture in the diaspora; such as Spike Lee's black neighbourhood films, John Singleton's *Boyz n the Hood* (1993) and others. These films, he argues, respond to the social reality of the black experience within oppressive societies, and assert nuanced representations of young black (masculine) identities. These are only some of the bubbling cross-cultural representations that inform the series – from 2 Pac posters, references to Erykah Badu or Isaac Hayes, the release of *Men in Black* (1997); to Javas (a character in *Yizo Yizo*) reading Isaac Asimov's *The End of Eternity* (1955) and wearing Italian sportswear brand *FILA*. The series is sensitive to negotiations of identity on both local and global levels, and grapples with the ways in which young black South Africans 'engage, contest and enter modernity' (Modisane, 2011). In this light,

Mthembu becomes representative of a thematic dimension of an oppressive past from which this contestation emerges. This is because he does not believe in this inherent hybridity, but sees things one way – that epistemological authority cannot be challenged, negotiated or plied, only enforced. This rigidity, 'the old way' as Javas puts it, negates the black South African milieu.

This brings us to the theme of context. Much like Modisane's observation of the stylistic influences of black neighbourhood films on *Yizo Yizo's* directorial strategies, the way in which the series represents the black South African urban landscape gives it the quality of verisimilitude. Shot in Daveyton, a *kasi* or 'township' outside of Johannesburg in Gauteng, the show responds to its context in a way that relates significantly to my experience of some schools and life *ekasi*. At the age of ten, I attended a school bordering Komani (Queenstown) that is comparable with the fictional Supatsela High School. These responses to context include the depiction of the 'principal markers of the township landscape' within the postliberation imaginary; particularly this sense of cultural hybridity expressed through *kwaito* music, and the new registers of fashion (Mbembe, Dlamini & Khunou, 2004: 499).

In 2004, South Africa celebrated ten years of democracy and *Yizo Yizo's* final season aired on SABC 1. This was also the beginning of former President Thabo Mbeki's second term, which marked the third democratic election in South Africa. In relation to the country's economy, Mbeki's efforts to further establish diplomatic relations with other nations were commendable. Mbeki also contributed to the ongoing negotiations of identity politics in South Africa and the continent at large. Making the call for an African Renaissance a central governing ideology, Mbeki advocated a revitalization of African cultural ideals and the edification of a new political culture (Bongmba, 2004).

For me this is the backdrop of a growing transcultural assertion of black identity in South Africa, a sentiment that can be located as far back as Tiyo Soga's journals on returning to Xhosaland in 1857.¹¹ However, by 2004 many of Africa's nations had been independent since the 1960's. South Africa was still emerging out of isolation; still resplendent in the imaginations of a 'born free' youth like myself. Tremors of the Kwaito boom still resonated and, in the same stride, *Yizo Yizo* can be seen as a representation of the complex negotiation of black identity, the challenges facing black schools and communities, as well as the hope for a liberal democratic culture in the South African context.

11. The effort to 'Europeanize' African ideals among the black South African intelligentsia during the 19th Century is a notable assertion by David Attwell in *Rewriting Modernity: Studies in Black South African Literary History* (2005). Of particular relevance to this point, see Chapter 1 titled *The Transculturation of Enlightenment: The Journal of Tiyo Soga* (pp. 27 – 51)

In my research, I have observed that only certain symbols and rituals that amount to a sense of nationhood have changed. While political power has shifted to a black ruling party, many of the systems that exclude the black South African majority are still in place. These include, but are not limited to, the Eurocentric content of education institutions, the costs of higher education that makes it inaccessible to the majority of lower to middle income South Africans, the dominance of English as a language of instruction in most major institutions and so on. This is part of the inherent contradiction of the post-colonial, post-apartheid, so-called born free rainbow nation. A lot has changed on the surface, but a sense of national identity that does not take the length, breadth and height of history into account has made it difficult to articulate much of the psychosocial impact of history in everyday life. A nuanced understanding of this predicament is evident in the 2015–2016 Fallist movements. Following Benedict Anderson (1991), the symbols and rituals we internalize conceal the struggle between narratives, the conflict and disaster that is the essence of the 'nation'.¹²

The above sections offer an interpretation of the conceptual framework informing my work. Representative works of sculpture such as the bronze calf, the toy soldiers, and even the landscapes and drawings on the 'chalkboard' in *Zwelitsha*, exist as avatars of my microcosm within the historical macrocosm or thematic universe in which education plays a significant role.

12. The struggle of conflicting histories and identities in the process of creating a collective national identity, observed by Benedict Anderson (1991), is addressed fully in the following section.

PART III

THE BELOVED

In grade 8 and 9, I was one of three flag bearers at my school. Each morning before first period, we were tasked with hoisting one of three flags and lowering them at the end of the day. This was a responsibility I took great pride in. Reflecting on the internalization of this symbol and the ritual of hoisting it each morning, the flag becomes a focal object in critiquing the remnants of history within the 'rainbow nation'. My art work *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* grapples with these concerns.

In making this work, I painted a horizontal triband flag onto a piece of raw-edge, unprimed canvas. The three-colour bands are an ochre red, a dirty or off-white, and brown soil colour. There is a visible difference in the way that I have applied these three pigments to the surface. The deep, earthy red pigment looks as though it has been applied by rubbing, repeatedly layered onto the surface so there is a build-up of fine and rough chunks of soil and pigment – this is also evident in areas of small wrinkles and cracks that reveal the thickness of this layer on closer inspection. The white pigment, which I applied by drawing or colouring in a constant horizontal motion, also shows patchy and 'muddy' areas revealing the under-layer of brown soil. The consistency of horizontal application gives the chalky pigment the look of television static, stimulating the eye to make out indistinguishable or evasive shapes. I applied the bottom soil band by hand in a consistent circular motion, reminiscent of the application technique of cow-dung on the floor and walls of the round-thatch huts of *amaXhosa*. The soil and compost are the only materials I have used to prime the canvas, as the thick cotton-duck weave is visible on the soiled canvas.

COUNTRY

This flag, incorporating three central materials used throughout this body of work in conceptual ways, brings together a set of thematic concerns into one symbolic and historically reminiscent object. The flag looks like that of South Africa's ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC), which has a green, yellow and black triband color flag. It resembles other flags as well, such as the apartheid era South African flag (with its orange, white and blue triband colours). It also resembles the Transkei flag. The Transkei was an apartheid bantustan largely inhabited by *amaXhosa*.¹

Many nations in the world use this heraldic symbolism, for example, the horizontal tricolour was used for the old Dutch national flag (from which the old South African flag was derived), as well as the French, German, and Sierra Leone flag. I reproduced this triband flag's design three times with little variation, meaning they are all made of the same three pigments – *imbola*, chalk and soil. This is symbolic of the passing of time, or the political 'chronicle', with little change regarding symbolic shifts in power.

My art work, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, is titled after a 1981 novel by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, a Latin-American author credited as one of the pioneers of the literary genre known as magic realism. This style of writing is heavily employed in Mda's *The Heart of Redness*. Literary works of magic realism are characterized by an interaction between reality and magic, or the real and the surreal, as well as non-linear narrative. The 'chronicle' in the title of the flag work further alludes to the passing of time: with the repetition of the same heraldic symbol I am suggesting a similarly non-linear or circular reading of time. Simply, I make reference to the adage that history repeats itself.

1. The Republic of Transkei was the first of four territories to be declared independent of South Africa. Complete with its own Military Defense and Police Force, it operated as an independent parliamentary democracy from 1976 until 1994 when it was reintegrated into South Africa as part of the Eastern Cape Province.

Throughout this document, I challenge the notion of a collective 'national identity' from a cultural and historical point of view. The idea of a national culture in South Africa is fraught with contradiction, and laden with the idiosyncrasies of a colonial past. What was heralded by the 1994 democratic elections as a unified 'rainbow nation' has largely proved equivocal. I have discussed this socio-political predicament through my own relationship with education. I further engage with the way the dominant Eurocentric cultural inscriptions in the education institution permeate political and religious institutions. I analyze artworks, such as *Zwelitsha*, *100 Chairs* and *Ntyilo Ntyilo*, to suggest how the classroom can be seen as indicative of broader socio-economic class imbalance. I am critical of a singular or homogenous sense of national culture that suppresses my cultural identity and knowledge systems.

Historically, the grouping of different socio-linguistic Nguni clans into a single 'South African' nation/country emanates from a violent colonial past. In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson (1991) contends that a nation is unable to articulate itself when it considers all of the competing or divergent histories. Therefore, certain historical narratives are used to forge a national history as something that has existed for eternity, in order to create a sense of collective identity where none existed before. This is why the idea of nationhood itself is haunted by its own inability to consider the full dimensions of history.

The very definition of a national group is marked by a violent drawing of borders on the landscape (creating an 'us and them'), a characterization of 'national identity' that ascribes certain sensibilities to people and institutions (a 'South African-ness'), all of which emerge from a finite and linear representation of the past with a beginning, middle and end. This is how the struggle between conflicting histories and divergent narratives or identities is concealed by the modern nation in an attempt to unite different people under a single flag.

Flags, like national anthems, the names we give roads, buildings or institutions, the monuments we erect, and the images on the currency we exchange, all form part of the set of symbols that define this national identity. The muddy surfaces of *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* represent the symbolic arena of cultural contestation and stratification in South Africa's past, as well as the murky or impermeable confinements of history's impositions.

The three flags that comprise *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* also make reference to the title of my body of work, *ILIZWE LIFILE*. With this work, I make reference to a current state of conflict and war, a dead or dying nation in three ways. The flag alludes to the colonial encounter with the Dutch flag, from which the violence of the apartheid era flag was derived. Secondly, the destruction of *isiXhosa* independence through the Hundred Years War, the forced labour following the 1856-57 cattle killings, and the dissolved independence under the Transkei flag. Lastly, the persistence of the same colonial heraldry and the perpetual struggle against the remnants of a colonial past under the ANC flag.



The herald of the black soul went to white schools, following the old rule that forbids the oppressed any weapons they have not stolen from the oppressor; it is through the clash with white culture that his negritude switched from immediate existence to the state of reflection. But more or less he has stopped living. By choosing to see what he is, he has split himself in two, he no longer coincides with himself. (Sartre, J.P. 1948, quoted in Njami, S. 2011: 201)

THE SURFACE OF RESIDUE

In the video work *Izandla Ezingcolileyo Act I & II*, I use my body to mediate the concerns I explore in my work. In an article titled *Imagined Communities*, Simon Njami (2011) discusses representation of the black body in contemporary art. Njami engages this idea that a black body is representative of all/ other black bodies because 'the body becomes a metaphor. As an instrument of mediation through which the artist speaks to the other, the body is the first concrete element by which we are perceived. It is the seat of a permanent conflict, because through it, the contradictory question of perception is played' (2011: 202). That is, to paraphrase, the way in which we present ourselves to others versus what they perceive of us.

Figure 7 ANC Flag

Figure 8 Apartheid South Africa flag

Figure 9 Republic of Transkei flag

Act I is a single channel video in which I peel a stubborn layer of ochre off of my forearm. My seated body, only visible from the shoulders to the knees, becomes the site of contestation, or 'the seat of permanent conflict' (Njami, 2011: 202). I wear a plain school uniform, white shirt and grey shorts, to further allude to the 'educated' body as I strip a layer of ochre representing my cultural identity. This layer of ochre, which is literally and figuratively 'glued' to my body, strongly resembles a red skin since the wood glue is transparent when it dries and only the pale ochre color remains.

The greater part of my work is born out of a series of tactile experiments. Through landscape drawing and painting, I use ochre in other works to evoke the surface of land. In other works, the orange ochre, whose colour deepens, represents sedimentary layers of the earth, with the outer-most layer being lightest. Thus, the ochre evokes both the surface of the land which, in this work, I locate on the surface or skin of the body. In conceptualizing the landscape as outer-most layer or skin, I further motivate for readings of landscape as portraiture; even body as landscape. Njami also contends that representing oneself in photography or video becomes the 'embodiment' of an idea that is no longer abstract. 'The slightest landscape becomes a manner of self-portrait and takes shape or acquires body' (Njami, 2011: 201). Here, an internal landscape in which the 'permanent conflict' between my cultural identity and 'educated' body plays out, is enacted externally or 'on the surface'.

Act II, also a single channel video, is a similar crop of my body standing. The clip opens with my hands at my sides, after which I present my hands, palms out, to the viewer. One hand is covered in *imbola*, the other in chalk up to my wrists. Slowly, my hands move away from one another, and then towards one another as I enact a vigorous clap. When my hands meet in the middle, ochre and chalk dust burst into the air in front of my body and then slowly settles. I separate my hands and present them to the viewer again, palms out. The residue of chalk can be observed in the hand with ochre, and ochre residue in the hand with chalk.

Act II is, in a sense, a demonstration of the clash described by Sartre in *Black Orpheus* (1948) (see this section's introductory quote) – a conflict that is inherent in a what Freire terms a duality of self (2017: 68). The idea of residue speaks to this idea of 'housing' the 'other' self through bearing 'the mark of both groups' (Freire, 2017: 123), as described in the duality inherent in postcolonial subjects. That is, adopting the characteristics of both the oppressor and the oppressed, or subconsciously 'housing' certain entrenched oppressive ideas about oneself and society. Further, that postcolonial identity is wrought with the trauma of a violent past, its residue transferred subconsciously over time.²

Residue is an implicit consideration in my studio practice. Working with soil, compost and ochre means that there is often a lot of residue when drawing, rubbing, smearing or painting with these materials. The surfaces of most works are heavily textured. Due to their unpredictability, the works either retain or shed this texture when drying. This texture is important to me because it is the history of contact with the surface. Whether rubbed or painted or allowed to react and dry, the fixing of this residue of application on the surface is an integral consideration in the process of making. This residue is either re-worked on subsequent layers of the same work or applied to another surface.

Paintings in which the soil or ochre is applied by hand make reference to the application of cow dung on the floors and walls of the round-*amaXhosa* huts. This was always done in a specific semicircular motion, which leaves a certain finish or memory of application. The application of chalk in a static and mechanical horizontal motion in *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* also evokes the prescribed regimentation of the school or formal education space. There is the residue of chalk in the tableau *Zwelitsha*, the residue of use on the desk in *Ntyilo Ntyilo*, even the residue of bodies in *100 Chairs*. This contemplation of residue in my work is directly related to attempts to locate it in the landscape and in my body, linking these as interacting sites of 'permanent conflict' on which the residue of history is embedded.

The *isiXhosa* title *Izandla Ezingcolileyo* directly translates to 'dirty hands', also interpreted as 'impure hands', in English. However, this is meant to invite a layered set of readings since 'impurity' is related to several ideas. It derives from a section in Peires' account of the cattle-killing in which he engages the *amaXhosa* conception of lung sickness. *AmaXhosa* perceived the emergence of lung sickness to be a punishment for the spiritual transgressions of what was considered 'witchcraft'. This formed an integral part of the rationale of Nongqawuse's prophecy; that cattle were dying because they 'have been herded by defiled hands' (Gqoba, 1888 quoted from Peires, 1989: 126). Therefore, the call for the killing of cattle and the casting away of witchcraft was seen as the redemptive act. Further, after visiting a gravesite, it is insisted that one washes their hands before re-entering the homestead. This custom is still practiced today *kwaXhosa*. This idea of impurity is related to Simon Njami's notion that the formation of black (or African) identity involves 'a partial synchronization, a commitment that crosses cultural borders, a merging of different cultural traditions, negotiations between dominant and subordinate positions... ' (2011: 200). Njami further remarks that 'all these forms are impure; all are, to some degree, hybrids of a vernacular basis' (Njami, 2011: 200).

2. For more on postcolonial subjectivity, see Merleau-Ponty, M. 1962; Fanon, F. 2002; Sartre, J-P. 1948.

CONCLUSION

Your time on time
 Has creased history's arse
 There are no crossroads
 Your passage through here
 Teaches us weight of mission
 Teaches us slime of promise
 From mouths greased with stench
 Of crimson dollar or rand
 Or whatever currency demands
 Floods of your blood
 All over this land
 You must reclaim

In this world
 There are no children's wars
 You are man now
 Patriot and comrade now
 You now know
 The slime of race
 The brutality of class appetite
 You now know
 Who must bleed and drown
 In the fire of your mission
 And resolve

IHLOMILE!

Kgositsile (2017: 116)

For me, this research project is an investigation into what it means to be a subject of history in present day South Africa; how the intersections of my identity (and potentially other people's identities) interact with the past, what bearing such knowledge has and what its capacity is to shift the epistemological, political, cultural dimensions we seem to be confined to. As intended by the chosen title, ILIZWE LIFILE, this research project uses as a point of departure an acknowledgement of the inherent conflicts, contradictions and residues of a violent history. The title is a declaration of the 'trouble in the land' that Miriam Makeba's *Ntyilo Ntyilo* alludes to. This trouble is reiterated in South African literature, music and poetry. The 'fire of [my] mission', to borrow from Kgositsile (2017: 116), burns brighter with each encounter of black South African literary history, those who share my experience. This is because their work guides me in my 'resolve', granting clarity to my presence within history.

I have demonstrated how Peires' (1989) account contextualizes the history of *amaXhosa* within South Africa. Mda's (2000) mediation of this account through fiction, which includes a contemporary post-apartheid narrative, further contextualizes my lived experience of the complex impact of history on the people and landscape. Analyses of the work of both authors has enabled me to explore certain aspects of my body of work, giving an indication of how some material associations have translated into an examination of landscape. These include the use of *imbola*, which is evocative of my own *isiXhosa* heritage through an experience of my rite of passage, as well as the use of chalk as a reference to my experience of 'formal' education or institution spaces that tend to exclude African systems of knowledge. I have discussed some of the ways in which education plays a role in empowering or disempowering and classifying or declassifying individuals within a society. Regarding the social, cultural and religious nuances of education, I have also engaged with some of the constant tensions I have experienced in institutions of education.

I have used the three 'pigments' *imbola*, chalk and soil, as emblematic of the historical tensions reflecting present day cultural and structural oppression as well as symbolism and power. The emblematic qualities of these materials also relate to more personal experiences as *umXhosa* in contemporary South Africa; and the feeling of constantly re-negotiating my cultural identity, as well as my shifting and often contradictory positionality within the contesting systems of knowledge *kwaXhosa* and institutionally ratified ideas of knowledge within 'formal' education. In this way, I also demonstrate readings of aspects of my work as critical reflections on national identity. I analyze my artwork *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* in order to examine the unifying conceptions of the 'rainbow nation' campaign in the early 1990's, in considering its promises and disappointments regarding concrete change in matters of wealth and land redistribution. In subtler ways, I argue that with the evidence of social, cultural and economic stratification in the nation-space there are many of the same historical problems persisting in contemporary South Africa. As a vivid expression of experience throughout history, South African literature, poetry, music, political discourse and art are all testament to this.

I conducted a thematic investigation of the South African television show *Yizo Yizo* through the lens of Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy* (2017) in order to extend readings of some of my work into the media representations of the post-apartheid black experience. There are other relevant sculptural and installation constructions in response to this negotiation. These include found desks, soil, bronze sculpture and cinderblocks as thematic avatars within a tableau. Following an analysis of the tableau *Zwelitsha*, I develop an explanation of the thematic universe, locating my work within a local and global contestation of history's impositions on contemporary black identity.

Grappling with this complex interaction of themes within the thematic universe, I draw parallels between popular culture representations of the school space in *Yizo Yizo* in relation to my experience as a learner, within the cultural and political landscape of post-apartheid South Africa. The thematic universe is a case for intertextual readings of the television show, which employs a historical perspective related to my reality and my body of work. In this section I discuss aspects of cultural hybridity in relation to this idea or theme of the 'formal' and 'informal' in my work.

I use description and interpretations of the video works *Izandla Ezingcolileyo Act I & II* to expand my concerns with the residue of history, specifically on the black body. Alluding to the LANDSCAPE AS PORTRAIT section, I consider the idea of the landscape as skin or outermost layer and propose that history's residue on the body is reflected on the landscape. Finally, through a discussion of the cultural and spiritual syncretism of the cattle-killing movement, I conclude with the hybridity inherited because of this residue.

Giving the historical context of the contention between belief and disbelief among *amaXhosa* provides an understanding of my own somewhat syncretic up-bringing and lived experience, in which Christianity and formal education were not considered superior in my family, but practiced harmoniously with the customs *kwaXhosa*. In this way, I contextualize the difficulties the majority of South Africans face in today's democracy where on a practical, educational and economic level, not much has changed. As an artist, I provide a form of interpretation of this shared experience, that others can potentially gain from or identify with in the way that I have found value in Mda's (2000) writing. By offering my work as a form of interpretation, I also aim to concretize aspects of excluded knowledge systems and experience.

Literary works by writers such as Mda and Kgositsile, as well as works of visual art by Wa Lehulere, Ka Zenzile, Patra-Ruga and so others, have helped me to contextualize my experience and position in this environment. The things that I initially felt had alienated me, such as the questions of my origin, where I went to school, and my experiences as a black South African and *umXhosa*, now represent grounds of opportunity. It is from this vantage point that I draw from my lived experience, personal memory and identity to level critical reflections on aspects of the violent history that marks the present.

I do not wish to provide definitive answers to the social, political and cultural issues facing present day South Africa. Rather, through my creative work, I am concerned with drawing attention to some of the underlying *historical* precedents of present day conflicts. Some of these concerns include conflict and war, the warped legitimization of knowledge and cultural superiority, racial domination, plunder and structural oppression. My work is a way of honestly acknowledging 'the stark divisions and inequalities that are the lived realities of the majority of South Africans' (O'Connell, 2018: 185). I have done this in a manner that I hope challenges the viewer to (re)interpret the visual and material references underpinning my body of work; through an evocative rather than literal invocation of history as it intersects with the present and my identity.

This is why I chose to use *imbola* and chalk, in order to suggest something more than a personal negotiation of identity. The cultural histories with which these materials are embedded play out against the post-apartheid South African political landscape. This tension only becomes evident for me through an investigation of the landscape, in which history is embedded, and which becomes a tool for a tactile mediation of the present. Moving beyond dichotomy, understanding the nuanced intersections of the personal and the collective memory, as well as the complex interactions of the past within the present all provide valuable points of reference in the act of reconciliation, and the construction of a heterogeneous future within the South African context. These are the fundamental concerns with which I am grappling in this body of work.

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SELECTED WORK





QAMATA [diptych] | 2019 | Chalk, ochre on raw canvas | 113.5 × 79.5 CM each



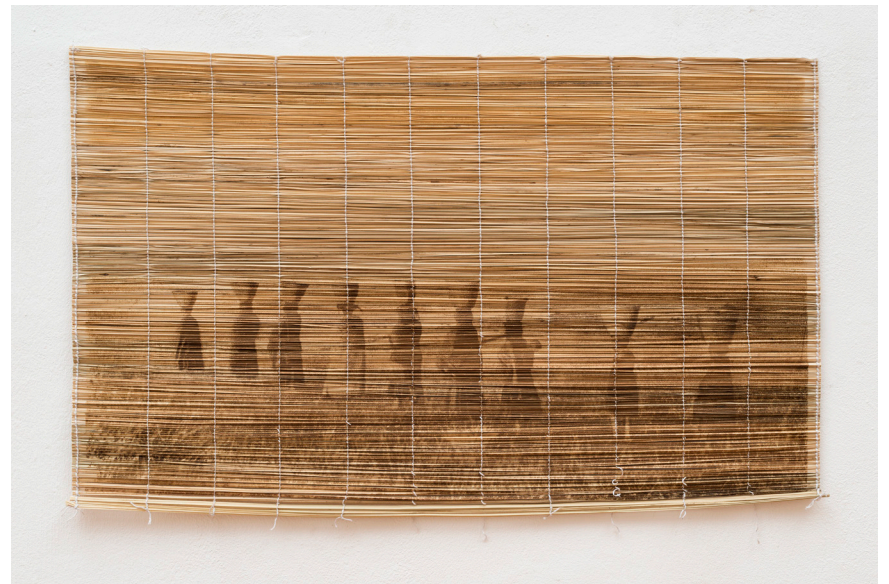
Not Yet Titled | 2019 | Chalk and glue on raw canvas | 113.5 × 79.5 CM



Field | 2019 | Chalkboard paint on primed canvas | 113.5 × 79.5 CM







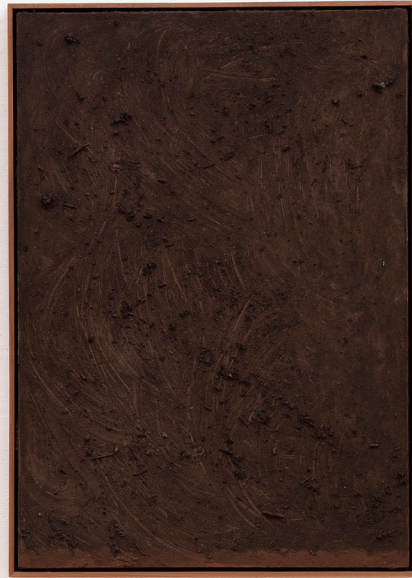
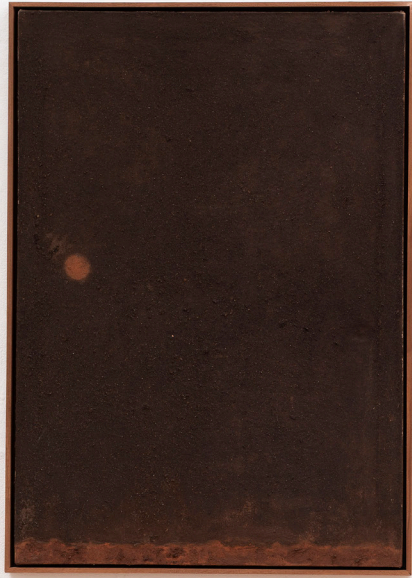
Untitled (Carrying Grain) | 2018 | Engraving on ikhukho (grass mat) | 72 × 44 CM

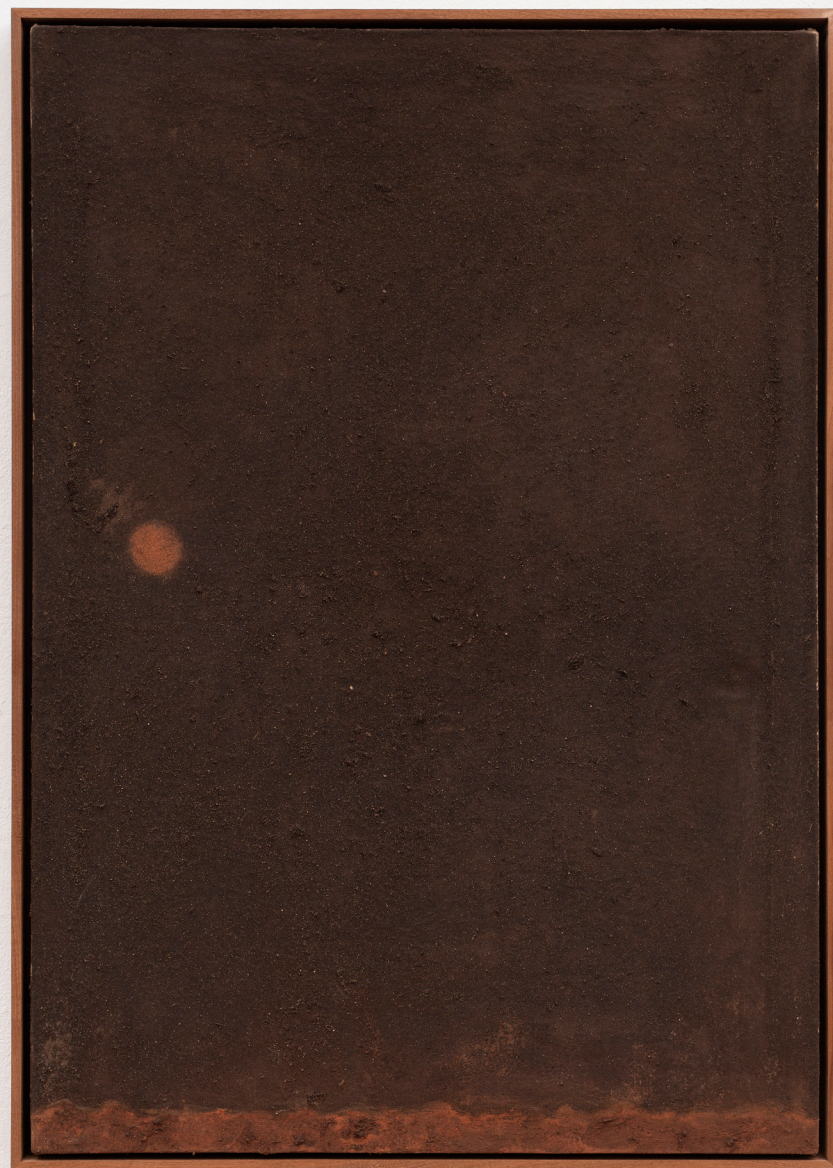


Untitled (Umzimvubu River) | 2018 | Engraving on ikhukho (grass mat) | 72 × 44 CM



Untitled (Transporting Cattle) | 2018 | Engraving on ikhukho (grass mat) | 72 × 44 CM



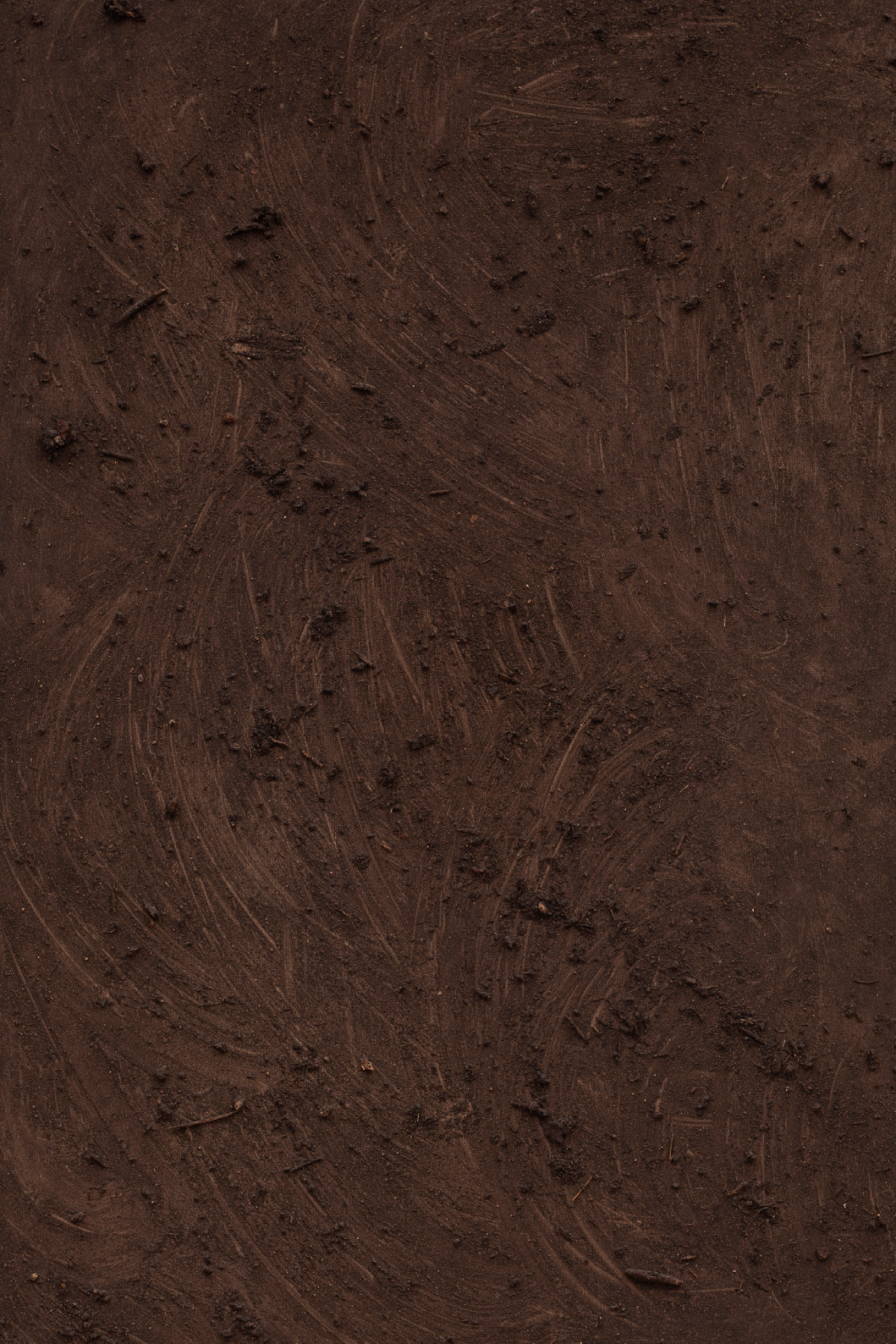


The First Disappointment | 2019 | Soil, compost, ochre on raw canvas | 113.5 × 79.5 CM



The Second Disappointment | 2019 | Soil, compost, ochre on raw canvas | 113.5 x 79.5 CM





Nzulu Yemfihlakalo | 2019 | Soil, compost, ochre on raw canvas | 113.5 × 79.5 CM



Not Yet Titled | 2019 | Soil, compost, ochre on raw canvas | 113.5 x 79.5 CM



Ntyilo Ntyilo | 2018 | School desk and rusted mild steel | N/A



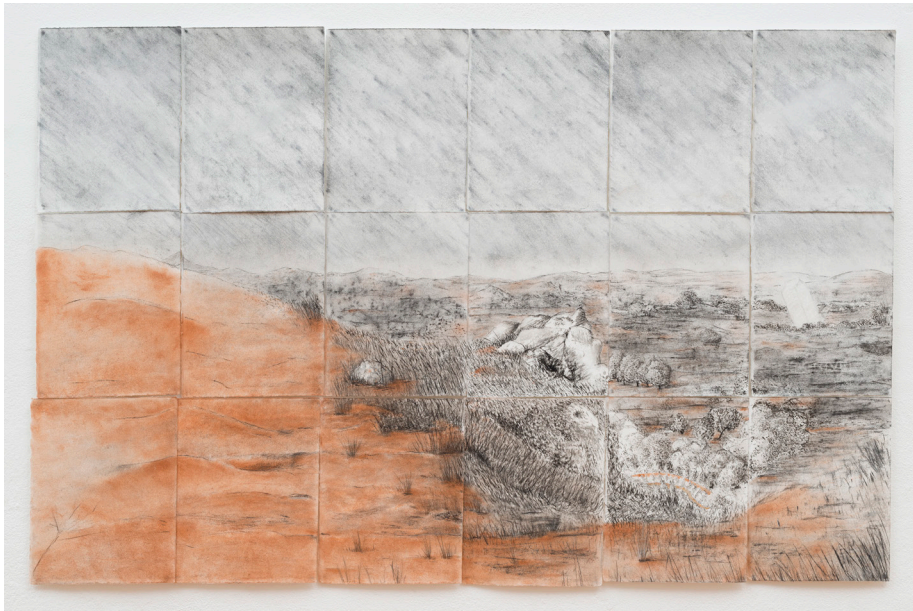


The Deep History, The Long Past II | 2019 | Ochre, charcoal and soil on Fabriano | 70.5 × 44.5 CM



The Deep History, The Long Past III | 2019 | Ochre, charcoal and soil on Zerkall | 76 × 55.3 cm





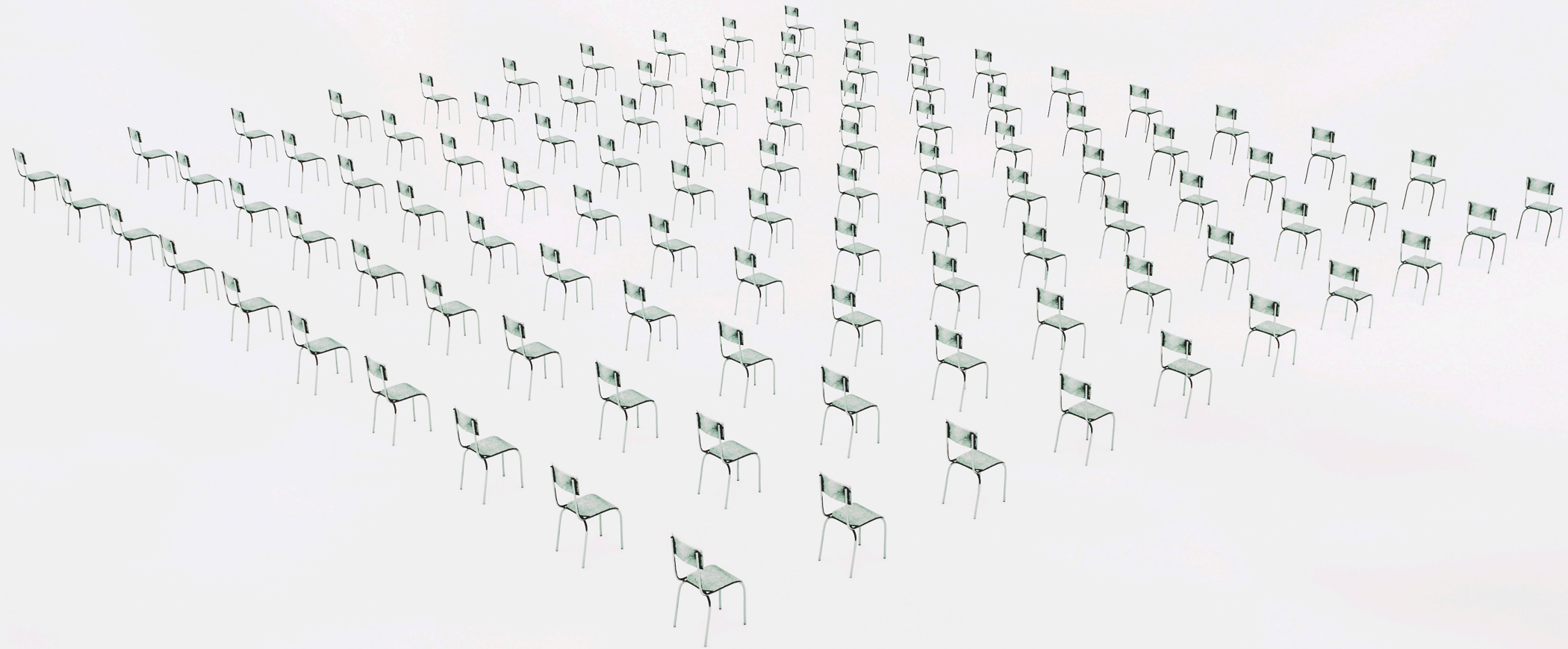
Untitled | 2018 | Ochre, charcoal and chalk on BFK Rives | 61.5 × 93 CM



Untitled | 2018 | Ochre, charcoal and chalk on BFK Rives | 61.5 × 62 CM



Untitled | 2018 | Silkscreen on raw canvas | 82.5 × 105 CM



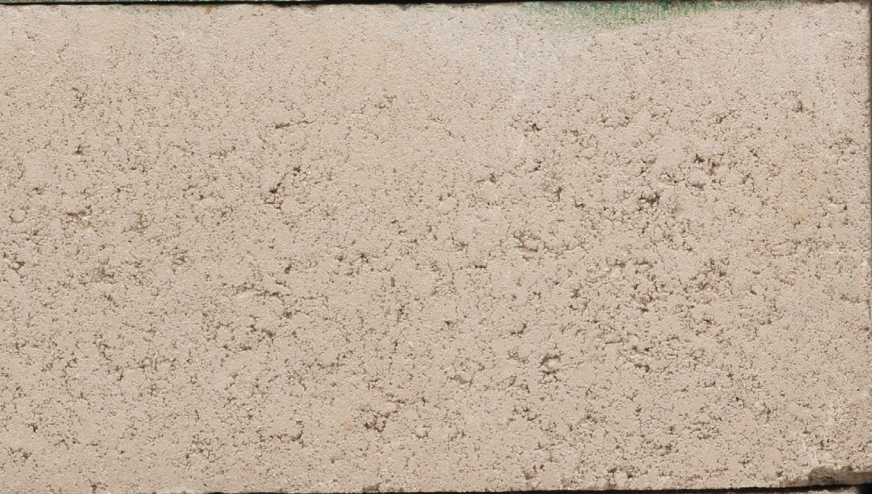
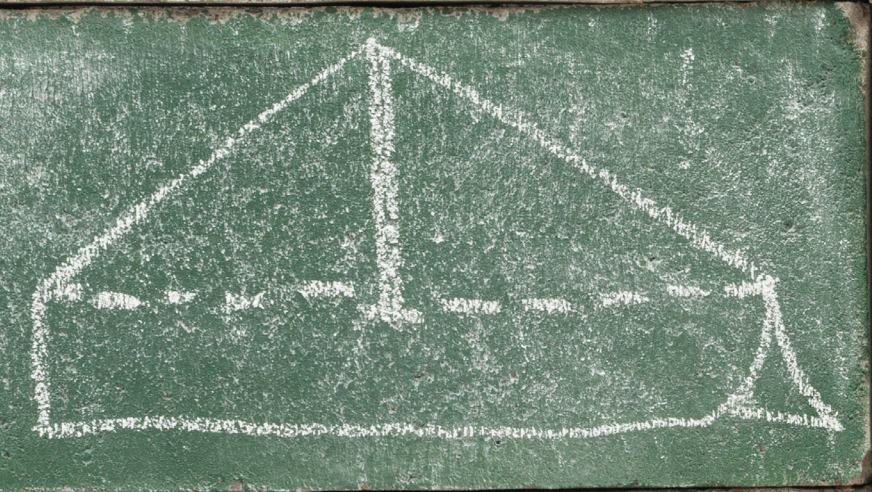


Chronicle of a Death Foretold | 2018 – 2019 | Soil, compost, chalk and ochre on raw canvas | 120 × 180 CM





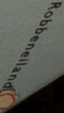
Zwelitsha | 2019 | Cement blocks, chalkboard paint, chalk, soil, bronze, axes and maps | Variable





CAPE TOWN
KAPSTAD

Romeo Landhuis
1977
Hout Bay
Dalepark
Sny
Kaps
Nop
Kaps
Sny



Robbenland















