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Contents

Research Articles

Yolanda van der Vyver

The human body in death, exhibited as art.....1

Derick de Bruyn

Atavism of skin markings: Surface patterns in architecture.....21

Inge Economou

Sexualised, objectified and “branded” bodies:
The media and South Africa’s youth..... 39

John Steele

Prehistoric Southern African ceramic figurines from
Kulubele further contextualised – some links and discontinuities.....62

Bert Olivier

Different “percepts” of the human body in cinema.....79

Adrian Konik

The tortured human body: the politico-aesthetic significance
of ritualistic martyrdom in Kim Ki-duk’s *Spring, Summer,
Autumn, Winter...and Spring* (2003)..... 98

Nico Botes

Towards demystifying the ‘black box’: body as site.....130

Tijen Roshko

Body + space: studio aesthetics.....141

Runette Kruger

The global body in sites: stasis and flow.....154

Nina Joubert, Heidi Saayman Hattingh

The female figure as a representational character within the
autobiographical picture narrative.....182

Virginia Mawer

Re-performing baptism: liquid transformations and the dissolving self.....193

Ingrid Stevens

Body, psyche and symbol: the paintings of Kevin Roberts.....206

Walter Peters	
The women at Winburg's Voortrekker Monument.....	220
Estelle Alma Maré	
El Greco's representation of the body of Christ in the <i>Crucifixion with Donors</i> : its mediation between the divine and the human.....	237
Leoni Schmidt	
Body construction and representation: anatomical waxes in the <i>Museo La Specola</i>	248
Gerald Steyn	
Le Corbusier and the human body.....	259
Ralene van der Walt, Ida Breed	
The mindful landscape: a healing outdoor experience for Weskoppies psychiatric hospital.....	273
Ariana van Heerden, Marth Munro	
Reflecting on the art making process.....	295
Myer Taub	
Becoming the body, approaching the body, re-enacting the body: Jew in Venice.....	310
Chris J. van Vuuren	
Iconic bodies: Ndebele women in ritual context.....	325
Gert van Tonder, Thomas Hare	
Geomantic mapping of the human body in Japanese landscape design.....	345

The female figure as a representational character within the autobiographical picture narrative

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This article represents an investigation into the central concept of reflecting the female figure as a representational character within the genre of the autobiographical picture narrative. The methodological approach consists of a theoretical underpinning of commonalities in female autobiographical narration, which will provide a point of departure for the visual social semiotic reading interpreting selected autobiographical picture narratives of Eastern Cape narrator-photographer Nina Joubert. Harrison's visual social semiotic framework reflecting the work of social semioticians Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen is introduced and briefly situated as an appropriate methodological framework for the reading of autobiographical picture narratives with particular reference to the female figure as a representational character. The semiotic reading analyses the representational aspect of the self and reads the autobiographical picture narratives with reference to the female figure and the relationship of the female figure and the environment in which she is situated. The significance of the research lies in the ability to reflect on the narrator-photographers recollection and perception of South African society, particularly issues relevant to the Eastern Cape Karoo area, through the use of the female figure as a representational character.

Key words: autobiographical picture narrative, autobiography, narrative, visual social semiotics, female figure

Die vroulike figuur as 'n verteenwoordigende karakter binne die konteks van 'n autobiografiese beeldverhaal

Hierdie artikel verteenwoordig 'n ondersoek na die sentrale konsep van die vroulike figuur as 'n verteenwoordigende karakter binne die genre van die autobiografiese beeld verhaal. Die metodologiese benadering behels 'n teoretiese verstandhouding van die gemeenskaplikhede onderliggend aan vroulike autobiografiese vertellings. Dié benadering verskaf ook die beginpunt vir die visuele sosiale semiotiese interpretasie van geselekteerde autobiografiese beeld verhale van die Oos-Kaapse verteller-fotograaf Nina Joubert. Die visuele sosiale semiotiese raamwerk van Harrison, met verwysing na die werk van die sosiale semiotiste Gunter Kress en Theo van Leeuwen word uitgelig en word verder aanbeveel as 'n toepaslike metodologiese raamwerk vir die interpretasie van autobiografiese beeld verhale met spesifieke verwysing na die vroulike figuur as 'n verteenwoordigende karakter. Die semiotiese interpretasie fokus op die verteenwoordigende aspek van die self en lees die autobiografiese beeld verhale met spesifieke verwysing na die vroulike figuur en die omgewing waarin hulle hul bevind. Die belangrikheid van die navorsing word gevestig met verwysing na die herinneringe en persepsies van die beeld-verteller met betrekking tot die Suid-Afrikaanse gemeenskap, meer spesifieke aangeleenthede van toepassing tot die Oos-Kaapse Karoo area, en die gebruik van die vroulike figuur as 'n verteenwoordigende karakter.

Sleutelwoorde: autobiografiese beeld verhaal, autobiografie, vertelling, visuele sosiale semiotiek, vroulike figuur

According to theorist Maurice Halbwachs (1992: 7), "it is in society that people normally acquire their memories" and it is also in society that people recall, recognise, and localise their memories. Halbwachs is of the opinion that autobiographical memory is made up of events that an individual personally experiences, and that memory can therefore not be separated from society, as society influences and shapes the very construction of memory.

The narrator therefore does not function in isolation during the process of constructing an autobiographical narrative; he or she is strongly influenced by, and grounded in, the socio-cultural environment.

This article presents an investigation into the central concept of the female figure as a representational character within the genre of the autobiographical picture narrative. The aim is to reflect on the narrator-photographer's recollection and perception of South African society, particularly issues relevant to the Eastern Cape Karoo area, using the female figure as a representational character. The methodological approach will therefore firstly reflect on the term autobiographical picture narrative; secondly contextualise the research by means of a theoretical underpinning of commonalities in female autobiographical narration, and lastly conduct visual social semiotic readings to interpret an autobiographical picture narrative of Eastern Cape narrator-photographer Nina Joubert. Claire Harrison's visual social semiotic framework reflecting the work of social semioticians Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen is introduced and briefly situated as an appropriate methodological framework for the reading of autobiographical picture narratives. The semiotic reading discusses the representational aspect of the self and reads the autobiographical picture narratives with reference to the female figure as a representational character as well as the relationship between the female figure and the environment in which she is situated.

Defining the autobiographical picture narrative

Ruth Frost (n.d.: 2) summarises the complexity of autobiographical memory by suggesting that autobiographies are attempts to construct narratives, which can readily result in a measure of tension between reality and fiction. It will be argued in this paper that the constructed autobiographical narrative may reflect the past but that it is more likely to suggest a constructed reality and a constructed central character, which means that neither reality nor the character are simply reflected; they are interwoven into a new stage of remembering.

This new stage of remembering can be explained in part by the fact that an autobiographical memory tends to fade gradually, particularly because it is not always collectively remembered and maintained, as is often the case with collective social memory. It can therefore be argued that a measure of memory disintegration takes place in all people, allowing for one memory to be replaced by another (Frost, N.d.: 11). Constructing an autobiographical narrative, therefore, involves a continual process of recollecting fragmented autobiographical memories and combining a number of factors in order to create a new, somewhat fictional reality (Steiner & Yang, 2004: 16). Craig Barclay (N.d.: 15-20) notes that, "[w]e build a sense of self from our autobiographical memories, evaluating experiences and constructing stories". However, the newly created and interpreted version of the autobiographical narrative cannot be said to be wholly "untrue" – interpretations of events may arguably also stand in for versions of said events.

The process of constructing an autobiographical narrative allows the individual to shape his or her character or persona through the process of both augmenting and recalling memories, experiences, and stories. As such, an autobiographical narrative can be considered as an "interpretation" that involves both real events as well as enhanced autobiographical memory, which works towards distorting, commenting on, and fabricating a constructed reality. This reality, in turn, helps to recreate and construct the individual's character or persona. Therefore, while autobiographical photographs or images may be associated by some with empirical "truth",

or with a reflection of events, another dimension of verity is possible when a constructed reality and character are introduced: it can be argued that a more profound and subjective version of the truth is communicated that conveys more than (empirical) appearances and may therefore include memory and highly subjective interpretations.

According to Paul Jay (cited in Smith & Watson 2001: 186), “the attempt to distinguish ‘autobiography’ from ‘autobiographical fiction’ may ... be ‘pointless’ for if by ‘fictional’ we mean ‘made up’, ‘created’ or ‘imagined’ – something, that is, which is literary and not ‘real’ – then we have merely defined the ontological status of any text, autobiographical or not”. Although the character who tells the story exists and is real, the process of narrative storytelling, however, tends to incorporate fictional tactics.

Lynne Warren (2006: 319) proposes that autobiographical image-making can be divided into photographs [or images] that fabricate autobiographical reality, and photographs [or images] that are constructed and staged. Warren (2006: 319) further explains that, “fabricated imagery is produced by techniques like combination-printing, montage, and photomontage”; these techniques are used “to invent a scene or event that never existed or took place”. “Set-up” or staged photography, as Warren explains (2006: 319), also “refer[red] to as tableaux or directorial photography, involves the artist creating a ‘reality’ or ‘stage’ upon which they organise and arrange subjects and/or props in a particular way for the intention of photographing it” .

Prominent artist-photographers such as Lori Nix (1969-), Maggie Taylor (1961-), Samantha Everton (1971-), and Cindy Sherman (1954-) have, since the 1980s and thereafter, begun to explore the potential of constructing a photographic world where fabrication and reality are merged, in order to create a narrative that may also involve a constructed central character or persona. For example, the famous *Untitled* series by Sherman shows a central character who is always a different person/constructed version of one woman (Steiner & Yang 2004: 66-67). Constructed personas as well as constructed spaces or environments may point to a reinterpretation of a type, or of an issue in society (as found in the work of Sherman and Kruger) or to the reinterpretation of a series of actual events. Samantha Everton (1971) and Sherman’s photographic narratives illustrate the perception or memory of the lived experience as a constructed fabrication, instead of as a “factual” representation.

Maggie Taylor’s work stems from her personal experience and, as such, is derived from her “own memories and dreams – from [her] psyche” (Taylor cited in Standen 2005: 7). Her work incorporates aspects of “childhood memories and impressions: the fear of the dark; the sensation of being out of place; deflated expectations; or sibling relationships” (Standen 2005: 7). Even though Taylor’s work is autobiographical, it also draws on popular culture, specifically television and its consumption. This strange combination of source material means that her work defies obvious interpretation: “I work very spontaneously and intuitively, trying to come up with images that have a resonance and a somewhat mysterious narrative content”, (Taylor 2006: 336). Furthermore, Standen (2005: 9-10) describes the artist as an introvert who was content being on her own as a child, and who spent excessive amounts of time watching television and reading fiction books – these childhood activities would strongly influence her constructed narratives. During Taylor’s early years she obviously, given her love of television and fiction, developed a passion for narration. Taylor refers to people appearing in her images as “characters”. She generally makes use of pre-existing images of people - these anonymous people are like objects that can become characters assigned with a new identity so as to portray her own autobiographical narrative. Standen (2005: 7) describes these characters as follows:

Like her well-worn toys and dolls, these long-dead faces are the detritus of human relationships, of childhoods grown out of, marriages celebrated and ambitions realised. They imply a history and a context, but they hold their secrets close.

The fabrication or interpretation of events allows the narrator-photographer more autonomy in taking ownership of the remembered event and therefore producing an image that reflects a highly subjective interpretation, one that however may still be shared within a particular cultural group or identified with in a particular nationality. The subjective interpretation of particular events allows a more nuanced understanding of how differing cultural groups may be affected by an event. The following section reviews autobiographical narrative, both in written and image form from the perspective of a female narrator.

Reflect on commonalities in female autobiographical narration

The current undertaking of reading and constructing the autobiographical narrative is grounded in a female perspective. The intention is not to present a feminist autobiographical interpretation, but instead to highlight the female narrator's approach to constructing a narrative of the self situated within a specific socio-cultural environment.

It has been noted that the 1980s saw a heightened exploration of narrative and constructed approaches to photography. During this era, it also became evident that autobiography was not restricted to the literary arts, but was instead, "a symptom of a much wider phenomenon cutting across and linking a diversity of fields, including literary theory and practice, sociology, ethnography and history, and sponsoring a widespread blurring of distinctions between established genres" (Stephens 2000: 195). According to Stephens (2000: 195), "class, gender, and ethnicity emerged among the most significant elements in the production of individual and cultural identities to which autobiography could contribute". As a result, autobiography combines fiction with discourses such as, "biography, sociology and ethnography to explore class, gender and family" (Stephens 2000: 195).

Michael Sheringham (2000: 187) in *Changing the Script: Woman Writers and the Rise of Autobiography* argues that, "[w]here woman writers are concerned [...], the turning point with regard to autobiography occurs in the 1980s". Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (1998: 5) concur that it was not until the 1980s that interest in female autobiographical practice was acknowledged, not only as part of feminist theories, but also more inclusively as "women's life experiences".

Sheringham (2000: 188) highlights a number of key points in terms of the global change evident in autobiographical narrative writing (and photography) since the 1980s: the prominence given to the relationship with significant others, especially parents; empowerment through narration; the search for new autobiographical forms; and the grounding of individual experience in historical and material reality.

Although the first two points recur throughout literary genres of female autobiography, new developments characterise work produced since the 1980s. These are exemplified by the point, "the grounding of individual experience in historical and material reality" (Stephens, 2000:188) which seems to have emerged as a forerunner in autobiographical work since the 1980s. Furthermore, Sheringham (2000: 190) asserts that female autobiographical narratives tend to, "define the self in relation to significant others rather than in terms of self-creation" and unlike male autobiographers, "women do not tend to perceive themselves as representative of

their epoch, nor as possessing essential and sovereign selves enjoying a privileged existence”.

Estelle Jelinek (cited in Smith & Watson 1998: 9), editor of the first anthology of essays dealing with the subject of female autobiography, titled *Woman's autobiography: essays in criticism* (1980), maintains that male and female autobiographies should be read differently. She argues that not only are noticeable differences evident in terms of the content, but also in terms of the style of the narrated autobiography. She further argues that this state of affairs can be ascribed to the, “long-term restriction of women to the private, personal world and the prevailing view that women’s lives are too insignificant to be of literary interest”. Jelinek (in Smith & Watson 1998: 9) proposes that female autobiographical narratives tend to “mime the everyday quality of their lives” and female autobiographical narratives normally reflect the following characteristics: women’s life writings usually emphasise personal and domestic details and describe connections to other people; women are likely to seek to authenticate themselves in stories that reveal a greater measure of self-consciousness and a need to sift through their lives for explanation and understanding, employing understatement to mask their feelings and play down public aspects of their lives.

Traditionally, gender roles have been fairly rigidly determined by social convention; this rigidity and prescriptiveness are even more apparent in the case of roles ascribed to females. This might, according to Felix, Kohler and Vowinkel (1995: 39), explain why females in particular tend to opt for a staged presentation of the self: “[f]or women artists, trying on alter egos represents palpable emancipation, a step toward liberation from the rigid role expectations with which they are confronted daily in the mass-media and in everyday life”. These alter egos do not necessarily have to represent the identity/identities or real dimensions of the self, but in many cases they become fictional and assume the role of an imaginary character, as demonstrated in the works of artists such as Eleanor Antin (1935) and Lynn Hershman (1941) and therefore represent a range of selves that can be safely explored.

Theoretically, the female autobiographical narrator tends to incorporate her environment as part of her narration. The narrator decides to what extent she will incorporate and be influenced by her socio-cultural environment and, as such, may tend to express aspects of socio-cultural relevance through the narration, furthermore deciding to what extent she will rely on incorporating a fabricated persona.

Introduction to and reflection on the principles of the social semiotic framework

Social semiotics is a relatively new approach to reading the image within the field of semiotics and was proposed by Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996). As is the case with contemporary approaches to investigative strategies, social semiotics entails a mode or a process of enquiry instead of a series of ready-made answers. In particular, social semiotics, according to Van Leeuwen (2005: 1), “offers ideas for formulating questions and ways to search for answers” and therefore encourages interdisciplinarity. Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996: 8) propose that, in the context of social semiotics, the sign-maker has to bring the signifier (the form) and the signified (the meaning) together to form a new sign. Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996: 18) developed their model of visual social semiotics in order to facilitate the interpretation and communication of visual language; they believed that, “the visual component of a text is an independently organized and structured message, connected with the verbal text, but in no way dependent on it – and the other way round”. Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996:1) explain that, “despite the very large amount of work done on images, not much attention has been paid to the meanings

of regularities in the way image elements are used – in short, to their grammar – at least not in explicit or systematic ways”. It is the “focus on meaning” that Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996: 1) seek to explore in visual social semiotics, providing “usable descriptions of major compositional structures which have become established as conventions in the course of the history of Western visual semiotics” in order to “analyse how they are used to produce meaning by contemporary image-makers”.

Kress and Van Leeuwen’s method of visual analysis “provides essentially a descriptive framework” and, as such, does not “offer all that is needed for sociological interpretation of images” and in certain instances might need to draw from related theories; the method is “effective in bringing out hidden meanings” (Van Leeuwen & Jewitt 2002: 154). In accordance with Harrison (2003: 47), the visual social semiotic framework as an approach to analysing images:

[I]s unique in stressing that an image is not the result of a singular, isolated, creative activity, but is itself a social process. As such, its meaning is a negotiation between the producer and the viewer, reflecting their individual social / cultural / political beliefs, values, and attitudes.

In *Visual Social Semiotics: Understanding How Still Images Make Meaning*, Harrison (2003: 46) proposes a visual social semiotic framework, based on Kress and Van Leeuwen’s research in *Reading images: the grammar of visual design* (1996), focusing on the three metafunctions: the representational metafunction, the interpersonal metafunction, and the compositional metafunction.

The “representational metafunction” refers to the people, places, and objects within an image and, consequently, according to Harrison (2003: 50), answers the question “what is the picture about?”. The aspect of visual social semiotics that deals with interactive meaning, or what Harrison (2003: 53) refers to as the “interpersonal metafunction”, answers the question “how does the picture engage the viewer?” Compositional meaning, according to Harrison (2003: 55), asks the question “how do the ‘representational meaning’ and the ‘interpersonal meaning’ [what Jewitt and Oyama refer to as “interactive meaning”] relate to each other and integrate into a meaningful whole?” Within the context of this article the social semiotic reading discusses the representational aspect of the self and reads the autobiographical picture narratives with reference to the female figure and the relationship of the female figure and the environment in which she is situated.

Reflecting on female figure as a representational character

South African narrator-photographer, Nina Joubert’s autobiographical narrative is influenced by her upbringing in the Eastern Cape, Karoo area. Her autobiographical narrative explores constructed and interpreted versions of events and memories in order to introduce subtle experiences that arise from the tension of merging fabrication and reality. The autobiographical picture narrative consists of a multifaceted construction that contains elements of riddles and hints of symbolic meanings. The constructed images rely on these metaphoric strategies in order to narrate the autobiographical content presented; events and the like are not unfolded in a chronological fashion.

Joubert relates her narrative from the viewpoint of a female, within her socio-cultural environment. She grew up in the Eastern Cape on a Karoo farm at the foot of the Cockscomb mountain, a rich and diverse landscape and a sanctuary in her formative years. Her environment

was multicultural, sheltered from the political turmoil and unrest that characterised the country at the time, where racial differences did not feature prominently and people were not differentiated in terms of colour or race – perhaps quite unusual for the time in South Africa. As such, this body of work does not intentionally reflect features of the underlying racial tension that existed or that currently exists. Joubert's narrative of childhood and youth is strongly interspersed with tales from her parents, grandparents and the media such as television and radio. The constructed autobiographical narrative therefore does not stand in isolation, but is influenced by Joubert's specific experience of her socio-cultural environment, and enhanced by autobiographical reflection and memories of childhood. Personal feelings, emotions and opinions are freely incorporated into the essence of the narrative presented in the work. Ultimately, the autobiographical narrative becomes a highly subjective interpretation of past events and narrates the individual's perception of events that have been experienced and witnessed.

The following discussion reflects on Joubert's recollection and perception of her childhood in the Eastern Cape Karoo area, through the use of the female figure as a representational character in the photograph *Fennel and Coriander* from the series *Journey* (figure 3).

The series *Journey*, merges fabrication and reality in order to narrate selected aspects of the researcher's life, illustrating her feelings, dreams, nightmares and fears. The incorporation of masks in this particular series implies that the self, presented as a blurred figure, conceals her persona and/or alternatively, considers the notion of alter egos. In this manner the narrator-photographer escapes from reality and enters a fabricated realm, exploring dimensions of the memory and understanding of self and social environment. The process of constructing an autobiographical memory therefore provides the narrator-photographer with the option of escaping *into* and not from memory, thus allowing for unique possibilities in terms of interpretation, fantasy and construction.

Discussion of the image *Fennel and coriander*

Similar to narrator-photographers, Taylor and Nix, Joubert refrains from explaining the autobiographical concept of the images, as it is ultimately the viewer who interprets and deciphers the content of the constructed images and in doing so reads the image from his or her frame of reference adding a new dimension to the autobiographical reading of the narrative.

Within the image, *Fennel and Coriander*, a female figure, a possible representation of the narrator, approaches a storage facility or central collection point. A place that figuratively holds constructed personas and fragmented memories from a past childhood. These memories, fears and nightmares are presented as masked characters and broken toy dolls. The impression is created that a doll's head and/or body is potentially selected from the wall display (also the storage facility for the dreams and nightmares) to form part of the narrator's dreams or nightmares – a fleeting or passing encounter represented by the ethereal nature of the representation of the female figure.

Dolls are generally given to girl children to provide a form of entertainment, or alternatively to create a nurturing environment. Children tend to bestow the doll with an imaginary identity to provide either comfort or in order to fulfil the role as a companion. As the child grows older the dolls are left behind, the dolls' imaginary identity are removed and they become empty and cold objects in a lost, forgotten and abandoned environment.

Symbolically, abandonment can refer to death, guilt or the loss of contact for instance with nature. In this constructed autobiographical image, the abandoned farmhouse signifies a “storage facility” or “place of memory” for the narrator-photographer’s childhood dreams and her fears. She has moved away from the place where she grew up and as a result, lost contact with her roots, creating a sense of abandonment in her narrative.

The impression is created through the constructed autobiographical narrative that the possibility of a mask being selected from the storage facility reflects a capacity to hide and/or conceal emotions and feelings, protecting and preventing the narrator from revealing her persona until she feels less apprehensive and perturbed by her surroundings. These camouflages are representational of the masks worn by the Represented Participants (RPs) in the foreground. Symbolically, the mask creates the assumption of a different personality or the entrance into a new stage of life.

The two masked RPs in the foreground symbolise the duality of all things. The white outfit symbolises peace, purity, detachment from worldliness and perfection, while the black outfit symbolises possible mourning, punishment and death. The two masked figures in the foreground, that provide the narrator-photographer with an “escape” from reality once she wears the masks, constitute a combination of things positive and negative. It can therefore be interpreted that the narrator’s masked “stage” becomes an act of balancing.

The masked hybrid figure in the foreground (half human, half horse) has a resemblance to Centaur, the Greek mythology where the creature with the head, arms, and torso of a human possesses the body and legs of a horse. The South African artist Jane Alexander (1959-) is also known to sculpt figures, replacing the human head with that of an animal, a surrealistic hybrid that Julie McGee has termed “humanimal” in her essay “Canons” (cited in Allara 2011: 6). In *Notes on African Adventures and Other Details*, Alexander (n.d: 71) has the following to say regarding her work:

The experience and structure of apartheid as a social system was a significant source in my early work and a foundation for research for my later production in which I reference a broader view of discrimination, colonialism, displacement, security, etc., and the concomitant and pervasive conditions and relations of social control and political power... All my figures, male/ female, hybrid or doll-specific, are intended to act, with a degree of realism, representation, and invention, as an imaginative distillation and interpretation of research, observation, experience, and hearsay regarding aspects of social systems that impact the control and regulation of groups and individuals, of human and nonhuman animals.

A theme exists throughout her sculpted figures of “becoming animal/becoming human” (Allara 2011: 71). Her work engages with the political situation in South Africa.

Similar to the dolls and limbs displayed on the wall in *Fennel and coriander*, the hybrids as Allara (2011: 5) explains that are created by Alexander become “‘ghosts’ of the past or ‘harbingers’ of the future”. According to Allara (2011: 5) “[w]e do not, like a child, provide metaphorical life to these dolls; rather, they have a life of their own.”

In contrast to Alexander’s work, the masked “humanimal” reflected within *Fennel and coriander*, does not reflect on the political situation within South Africa, but acts as a “vessel” that “transports” the narrator-photographer in a child-like disguise between inept and surreal situations. The characters reflect on childhood innocence and corrosion thereof or awaken from within a retrospective viewpoint.

The possible persona of the narrator-photographer is represented as a blurred female figure to the right of the image. By representing the female as a blurred figure suggests a transient state as reflected in a dream or alternatively presents the viewer with a figure in the process of action in an otherwise static composition. The figure is therefore immediately designated the role of active participant. She is unmasked, walking towards the “storage facility” or “place of memory” and as such suggests that her current state is that of tranquillity, however, she might be approaching the said storage facility in order to again mask herself with an appropriate attire in order to escape or deal with her current state with the use of a less venerable outer appearance. Alternatively she may be in the process of piecing together fragments from her past treasured objects and understanding of “other” selves.

These two contrasting choices left open to the transient female figure presented in *Fennel and coriander* are expanded on in the images such as *Gilded cage* (Figure 2) and *Paper tiger* (Figure 3) from the series *Journey*. This work focuses on exploring the expanding narrated role of the female figure. *Gilded cage* places the female figure as having chosen a mask and so presents an alter ego within a typical Karoo farm environment. *Paper Tiger* on the other hand presents the process of piecing together a fragmented past. The concept of collecting the fragments of the narrator’s personal thoughts and memory is explored in the assembled but not quite complete dolls, while the constructed location of the autobiographical image is a resonance of her inner environment. These contrasting opposites become an act of balance throughout the constructed autobiographical narrative series, leaving the female figure as the active participant within the conscious relating of the fabricated narrated experience.

Conclusion

This article set out to reflect on the central concept of the female figure as a representational character within the genre of the autobiographical picture narrative. This was achieved by firstly contextualising the term autobiographical picture narrative and secondly by reviewing commonalities in female autobiographical narration. And lastly interpreting selected autobiographical picture narratives of Eastern Cape narrator-photographer Nina Joubert using Claire Harrison’s visual social semiotic framework as a guide to reading narratives with reference to the female figure and the relationship of the female figure and the environment in which she is situated.

It was argued that the constructed autobiographical narrative may reflect the past but that it is more likely to suggest a constructed reality and a constructed central character, which means that neither reality nor the character are simply reflected; they are interwoven into a new stage of remembering. Although the character that tells the story exists and is real, the process of narrative storytelling, however, tends to incorporate fictional tactics. It was further argued that the fabrication or interpretation of events allows the narrator-photographer more autonomy in taking ownership of the remembered event and therefore producing an image that reflects a highly subjective interpretation, one that however may still be shared within a particular cultural group or identified within a particular nationality.

When reflecting on commonalities in female autobiographical narration it was found that women are likely to seek to authenticate themselves in stories that reveal a greater measure of self-consciousness. From a general perspective it seems that women express a need to sift through their lives for explanation and understanding, employing understatement to mask their feelings and play down public aspects of their lives.

The autobiographical narrative constructed by Joubert in *Fennel and coriander*; *Paper tiger* as well as *Gilded cage* presents an attempt to come to grips with fragments of past experiences, memories, dreams and traumatic events. However, Joubert, similar to female autobiographical narrators such as Nix and Taylor, also suppresses feelings and instead relies on metaphors to convey personal emotions. Joubert's work is based on memory of events that she personally experienced and therefore does not function in isolation during the process of constructing an autobiographical narrative. She is strongly influenced by, and grounded in, the socio-cultural environment of the Karoo during her childhood spanning the 1980s and 1990s.

The narration of an autobiographical picture narrative intended generally to illustrate and reflect on past experiences, however the female narrator combines fabrication and reality, thus forming a constructed central character. Joubert creates what Felix, Kohler and Vowinckel (1995:39) classify as a "staged presentation of the self" which allows her the independence to explore the notion of alter egos and to liberate herself from society's prescriptions. Although Joubert positions herself within the narrative she does so using a representational female figure who's identity is never revealed. Rather the figure is assigned distinct roles in the process of retrospective reflection such as a transitional active participant, a masked hybrid alter ego in order to escape or deal with her current state with the use of a less venerable outer appearance, or a vulnerable and totally exposed self, piecing together fragmented childhood memories from a retrospective viewpoint. The work therefore deals with assuming and understanding the self, possible role playing to adapt to particular situations and trying to piece together the significance of particular events which may have only become apparent from a retrospective viewpoint.

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Re-performing baptism: liquid transformations and the dissolving self

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If our origins are in fact aquatic, as evolutionary theory suggests, then the idea of journeying below the surface of the water should seem like a return to the source. Beyond evolutionary metaphors, there are a multitude of historical, cultural and religious associations embedded within water, many to do with transition and transformation. As a symbol of flux, it is an ideal platform from which to explore existence itself, including the transition from death to the afterlife. Drawing on a range of beliefs, water is seen to represent a place from which life emerges and to which all life returns. The deeply spiritual work of Bill Viola can be employed as a lens through which to examine theological, but not specifically Christian, expression. In relation to theological reflections, I have explored loss and spiritual transformation in my performance, *Vičnaja Pamjat*, (2011-12), which references personal history and loss through the re-birthing rite of baptism. Layers of billowing white baptismal robe become translucent during immersion and the 'cloth' membrane that separates the self from the world becomes compromised. By accentuating the transformative nature of meaning through form (in this case, clothing), it is revealed that the self, can be experienced as an ever changing process rather than a fixed entity.

Key words: Baptism, transformation, drapery, water, Bill Viola

Her-uitgevoerde doop: vloeibare transformasies van die oplossende self

Indien ons, volgens evolusionêre teorie, uit water ontstaan het, dan skyn 'n onderwaterse reis 'n terugkeer na die bron te wees. Afgesien van evolusionêre metafore bestaan daar 'n veelvoud van historiese, kulturele en godsdienslike assosiasies met water, waarvan baie met oorgang en transformasies te make het. As 'n simbool van verandering, is dit 'n ideale plek vanwaar die syn, met inbegrip van sterflikheid en lewe na die dood, ondersoek kan word. Uit vele gelowe kan afgelei word dat water lewegewend is, maar ook dat alle lewe weer daarheen terugkeer. Die diep geestelike werk van Bill Viola word gebruik as 'n lens waardeur teologiese uitdrukking, wat nie noodwendig Christelike is nie, ondersoek word. In my aanbieding, *Vičnaja Pamjat* (2011-12), eksplorieer ek verlies en geestelike transformasie met betrekking tot my eie lewe deur middel van die hergeboorte-bewerstellende ritueel van die doop. Verskeie lae van wit, wapperende doopkleed word gedurende die proses van afdaling in die water deurskynend en die "drapering" wat die self van die wêreld skei, word dubbelsinnig. Deur die transformerende aard van betekenis by wyse van vorm (kleding in hierdie geval) te beklemtoon, word onthul dat die self as 'n gedurig veranderende proses ervaar kan word; nie as 'n vaste entiteit nie.

Sleutelwoorde: doop, transformasie, drapering, water, Bill Viola

When we do come to see that there is no ultimate good, no ultimate reconciliation, we can begin to accept the fact that we are rather marvellous animals that emerged out of the soup of the universe, that the accident of life will someday vanish, but that the brief history that is ours is worth the ride, and hopefully for a while longer (Harris, 2006: p26).

I find this pragmatic statement strangely comforting when I am confronted with the transitory nature of existence. This paper will address my investigations into this question, through the immersive rite of baptism, which is part of my family history. Recent performance work, a multi-channel video installation and photographic stills, entitled, *Vičnaja Pamjat* (2012) starts from a narrative of baptism and develops into an investigation into transcendence. The water I enter became a metaphor, a material, a methodology and a stage for which to explore the idea that life and loss are inextricably linked (see figure 1).

It is dawn. A lone figure walks meditatively along rocks, waves crashing, flanked by an ominous cliff face. The figure is me. Dressed in a white baptismal robe, I proceed slowly, deliberately over rocks, shells, pools of residual water from the fullness of the night's tide. The austere robe I wear has a stiffness and formality that harks back to a time long passed. I walk, hands clasped as if in prayer. It is a pilgrimage, of sorts. As with all pilgrimages, this walk to the water's edge suggests a leaving behind one's attachments to belongings, behaviours and even people. These are the things we must ultimately leave behind anyway.



Figure 1
Virginia Mawer, *The Very Thought of You (I)* 2012,
digital photograph (image courtesy of the artist, photography by Mark Tipple).

The lone figure in landscape is a well documented trope of the literary and artistic production known as the sublime, seen in European and American painting from the late 18th century to the early 20th century. The genre “often purported to depict its subjects realistically, but perhaps it depicted more accurately the needs, values, and aspirations of its viewing audience” (Oravec, 1996: p59). It can be referred to as “a perceptual screen through which to see nature” (Oravec, 1996: p58). This theatrical element brings romantic notions of the sublime into play and introduces the separation between subject and object. Often a lone figure is dwarfed by a powerful, picturesque landscape. The figure often stares out towards the landscape (away from the viewer) with an emotional reaction implied, often awe. This self-reflective positioning of the figure gives “the feeling of both being in the scene and also being outside of it, viewing it (and oneself) from a higher or more distant perspective” (Oravec, 1996: p65). This call to philosophical contemplation brought on by a sense nature’s magnificence highlights a chasm between inner and outer worlds. This in between state, or *liminality*, from the latin *limin*, a threshold, means one is now “outside the established order.” A pilgrim, and here, a lone figure, steps symbolically and physically between worlds (Solnit, 2000: p51). The sublime recalls a cultural lens through which to explore philosophical matters, particularly life and loss.

As I stand on rocky coastline, I am reminded of the sense of existing between worlds.

My maternal grandmother, Lydia, first arrived in Australia by sea in 1948. She left behind her war-torn life in Ukraine. When asked if she ever wanted to return, she would invariably reply, “What for? There’s nothing there.” She and her family were marched from their home, never to return. She lost her grandmother, who had raised her, and the rest of her extended family. Now an alien in a new country, she had to make a life in a language and a land she did not understand. When pressed, she would tell me stories about her childhood. Her own grandmother

had been the village's herbalist, who used to send her to the forest to find herbs and plants for her healing balms and treatments. To this day, she still struggles with the English names for plants.

Faded photographs document her baptism in Australian waters only 8 months after her arrival (figure 2) capture her just moments before entering the water, and with head bowed in reverence, she seems hauntingly distant and ghost-like. Knowing what she had left behind, this spiritual cleansing baptised her into an entirely new life.

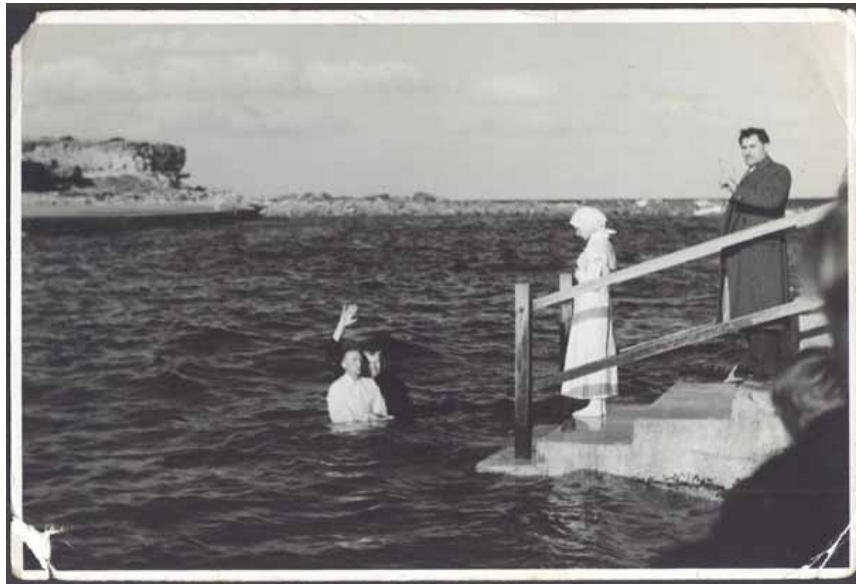


Figure 2
Black and white photograph, 1948
(image: Mosczko family archive).

The traditional Ukrainian Funeral Song, Vičnja Pamjat, which translates as ‘Memory Everlasting’, sings its lament out along the cliffs, singing of loss of loved ones, but also of country.

Peter Skryznecki's poems speak of a longing for lost country. Also of Polish and Ukrainian heritage, his work holds personal significance for me, given that it mirrors my grandparents' heritage. His poem, *Wallamumbi* (Skrzynecki 1972: 17) speaks of land and loss:

.....Grandfather and father, remembered
From an old time, old country where it rained all summer
And native bees carried the smudge of fires
From the black honey of stumps and hollows.
Grandfather and father-man I never knew-
The name falls softly across the ranges
And paddocks that were once part of your flesh:
Falls like my shadow did before the sun
On the winter morning of your death.
The chapters are still not finished
But a page is written in the Book of Change.

The idea of “paddocks that were once part of your flesh” makes beautiful reference to a deep connection with the land and culture in which you exist. To be separate from such corporeal knowledge can be nothing short of heartbreaking.

Exploring similar ideas about migration and loss is Martha McDonald, an American born performance artist who now lives in Australia. Her work employs elements of craft and women's work in the medium of performance. *The Further the Distance, the Tighter the Knot* (2009) was a performance installation at Linden Centre for Contemporary Art in Melbourne, Australia where McDonald led a tour of the centre, which was built in the 1870's as a family home. Using elements of the building's architecture and history, she created sculptural interventions through knitting and other traditional mourning rituals (including the making of Victorian mourning jewellery with intricately plaited human hair), in order to reflect on ideas of migration and memory.

During the performance 'tour', McDonald knit and unravelled her work constantly, in response to the "deeply comforting and totally maddening" (McDonald, 2010) experience of spending over 8 months isolated in her studio making her handiwork. During mourning periods in Victorian times, women were required to isolate themselves. It was common to engage in such handiwork to alleviate boredom and to deal with loss.

Earlier performance work, *Drown'd in Mine Own Tears* (2004), also engages historical notions of women and loss. Using knitting, sewing and embroidery to "transmit stories and ideas" (re-title.com, 2007), McDonald explores the pain involved in waiting through the Greek myths of Penelope and Ariadne.



Figure 3
Martha McDonald, *The Weeping Dress* 2011, installation view
Craft Victoria, Melbourne, March-April 2011
(image courtesy of the artist. Photograph by Christian Capurro).

In McDonald's most recent work, *The Weeping Dress* (2011) (figure 3), she wore a black Victorian mourning dress, and sang a song of lament, accompanied only by a fiddle. In a pared back performance in the white-walled gallery of Craft Victoria, "the dress *became* the site; an emotional crucible, 'activated' and ultimately transformed not by fire but instead by water." Initially she stood very still, restrained, but as she began to sway, water dripped from above her, slowly soaking her gown. Dye bled from the dress, staining the floor and seeping along its' surface. The dress was, in fact, made of *crepe* paper lined with stiffened calico. Playing

word games with its namesake, *crepe* fabric was commonly used for women's mourning attire. When the illusion of the *crepe* was washed away by the tears of rain, the transformation became apparent (Gray 2011-12). Like purging away the pain of grief, McDonald's dress released its dark colour-the sting of grief. *The Weeping Dress* saw a departure from the constant working and re-working of pain evident in earlier performances. It signalled a catharsis, a letting go.

Ritual immersion also signals a release of the past. As I in white stand at water's edge, I contemplate the step forward that will take me out of myself and into an unfamiliar world. The water beckons, lapping at my feet. It slips over my skin and teases my senses.

Paused now, in quiet reflection, I gaze out to sea (figure 4).



Figure 4
Virginia Mawer, *The Very Thought of You (II)* 2012
film still (image: the artist).

“Life originated in the oceans, and the salty taste of our blood reminds us of our marine evolutionary birth.”

If our origins are in fact aquatic, as Suzuki suggests, and given that our bodies are largely composed of water, then the idea of journeying below the surface of the water should seem like a return home. Beyond evolutionary metaphors, there are a multitude of historical, cultural and religious associations located around water, many to do with transition and transformation. The Greek philosopher Heraclitus observed that through water, “everything exists in a state of flux.

Situated between shapelessness and form; or potential and reality, it is perhaps the perfect lens through which to consider ideas about who or what we are, and where our place is within the world” (Kent 2003: 13). The writer, Philippe Diolé, an experienced deep sea diver, describes his ever deepening sensations of renewal after each dive, freed from former (earthly) sensibilities. He says, “by changing space, by leaving the space of one’s usual sensibilities, one enters into communication with a space that is psychically innovating.” In such expansive spaces, one’s spirit cannot remain sealed and the change of place brings about a change in our nature (Bachelard 1994: 205).

Juan Rudolfo speaks beautifully of the ocean; about giving oneself over to it and also about the idea of cleansing (Rulfo and Peden 1994):

I went back. I would always go back. The sea bathes my ankles, and retreats; it bathes my knees, my thighs; it puts its gentle arm around my waist, circles my breasts, embraces my throat, presses my shoulders. Then I sink into it, my whole body. I give myself to its pulsing strength, to its gentle possession, holding nothing back.
'I love to swim in the sea,' I told him.
But he didn't understand.
And the next morning I was again in the sea, purifying myself. Giving myself to the waves.

Transformation, including the transition from death to the afterlife, is understood in many cultures through water. In the Congo, reflections on the water’s surface are associated with the passage of this life to the next, and the Ganges is believed to have healing and spiritually restorative qualities. Drawing on a range of beliefs, it can be seen that “water symbolizes the whole of potentiality: it is the *fons et origo*, the source of all possible existence. Water symbolizes the primal substance from which all forms come and to which they will all return” (Jasper, 2004: 184).

Many of water’s symbolic associations have been incorporated into Christian rites. Baptism, for example is an important rite of initiation that symbolises re-birth. Until the end of the second century, baptisms were usually held outdoors, to take place “at cock’s crow” (Jensen, 1991: 197) and were always presided over by a (male) baptiser. Nearly every representation of Christian baptism shows a male figure of authority beside the candidate (Jensen, 1991: p229). Being a social rite, one cannot baptise oneself.

I, however, perform the rite unsupervised. In place of a ritual designed to receive entry into Christendom, I baptise myself into an experience of the ocean without the need for the authority of another.

By either sprinkling or immersion in water, baptism is “historically both as an act of purification and also of rebirth in which the font was the symbol of the immaculate womb of the Virgin from which the initiate was born again” (Hall 1979: 38). The water into which initiates wade, however, is both a symbol of the womb of the Madonna *and* a symbol of the tomb of Christ. Therefore, plunging into the waters is a symbolic drowning before it is a re-birth (Jensen, 1991: 364).

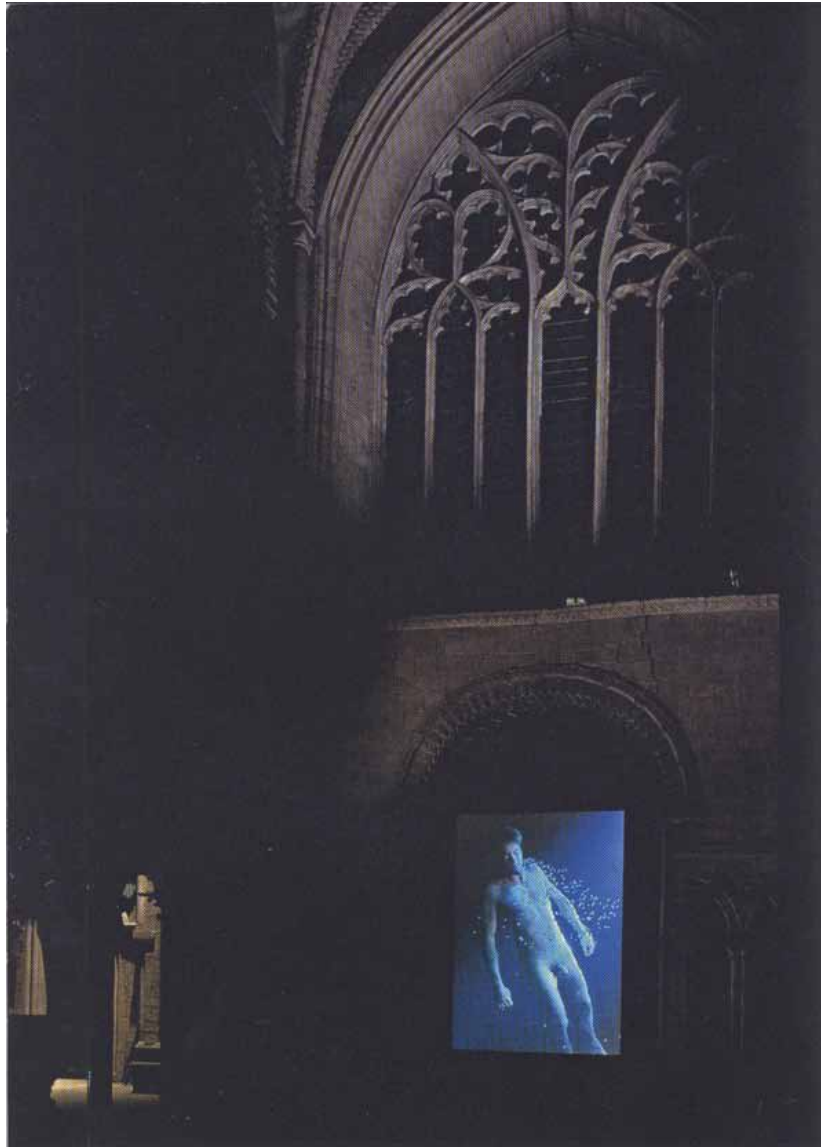


Figure 5
Bill Viola, *The Messenger* 1996, installation view,
Durham Cathedral (source: Jasper, 2004).

Bill Viola's work is deeply spiritual and draws on religious rituals, such as immersive baptism. His work provides a 20th century perspective of spiritual transcendence, drawing on a variety of eastern and western philosophies (Morgan 2008). Many of Viola's film works feature transcendence through water. *The Fall into Paradise* and his earlier work, *The Messenger* both feature figures that emerge from primal darkness and pass from shapelessness to human form. They burst out of the water into the earth's atmosphere and finally recede to continue the cycle. Shown on the great west wall of Durham Cathedral, *The Messenger* (figure 5) could be seen through the font-the very site of baptism. This film, and many of Viola's other works are shown in churches, as well as museums and galleries because Viola says reverence can be associated with both sacred and secular space (Bond 2008). Viola's "central concerns provoke the possibility of theological reflection and elude to the extremes of human experiences that theology seeks to articulate" (Jasper 2004: 187-188). By using culturally significant buildings, Viola intends to remove visitors "from the ordinary world for the sake of a few moments of meditation" in order to "leave the present and return to the archetypal past" (Davidson 2005: 10).

“...the real place I’m after is not visible, not material, and so the metaphor of looking under the surface is very important. It’s been my guide. Water itself is such a deeply symbolic and spiritual force in our lives, far more than just the material element described by scientists. Water presents us with a separate world that we can enter; the threshold there is not hard, it’s not closed. It’s a soft membrane that you can easily penetrate. Obviously this has a lot of resonance and connection to our bodies, which are primarily made up of water. Water is essential for human life-for all life on the planet. When you enter the water you’re entering a space that is primal, not just in terms of evolution but in terms of your own being. It is where we were gestated-floating around in amniotic fluid that has the same salinity as sea water. And those memories stay within us, so it didn’t seem to be that much of a stretch to look for angels under the water. It is the space between heaven and earth.”

Now our chaste figure takes her first steps into the metaphorical space between heaven and earth. She is tentative at first, the hem of her garment begins flirting with the surface of the water. This moment signals both an entry into another world and exit from this world. Now the voice singing Vičnja Pamjat is joined by a choir of generations of women who urge her forward. Past ankles and now calves, the gown begins billowing with her movements as it swells with life-giving water. Each step creates a freedom in the gown, now akin to the diaphanous flow of the drapery of a classical sculpture. At first with soft steps towards new depths, she soon gains a rhythm that leaves swallowtail folds of drapery in her wake. Steps become bolder, more victorious and the white gown appears alive, dancing freely around her body. No longer a pious initiate, this woman is now the product of her liberated drapery (figures 6 and 8).



Figure 6
Virginia Mawer, *The Very Thought of You (II)* 2012,
film still (image: the artist).

The liberation of re-birth is echoed in the animation of ancient Greek and Roman sculpture largely though the technical application/mastery of ‘wet drapery.’ It was employed for two reasons: to bring a life-like quality, that is, to accentuate movement, and also as a structural support of the marble. A fitting example of such animation is Victory of Samothrace, the winged goddess of Victory. Seemingly caught in a gust of wind, she is forever in that moment of sculpted energy (figure 7).



Figure 7
Greek, *Victory of Samothrace*, marble, ca. 190 B.C.
Paris, Musée du Louvre
(image: Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, NY).

Susan Sontag's, *The Volcano Lover*, foregrounds notions of life and death through a lens of antiquity. In the novel, an ancient sculpture is brought to life by being imbued with bodily senses: "so now the goddess of the hunt can smell." In a beautifully composed list of odors, including shoe polish, burning bacon and freshly cut lawn, Sontag adds that Diana can "smell the rain-lashed erosion of the marble of which she is made, the odor of death (though she knows nothing of death)" (Sontag 1992: 46). As cogniscent time passes for the now conscious sculpture, she wishes to store up the smells, both good and bad, for they represent her own 'existence'. Without these smells, she is lost in oblivion, and she becomes aware that each pleasurable smell "becomes an experience of anticipated loss" (Sontag 1992: 47). Diana's existence itself creates the possibility of death. It is such a paradox to be so acutely aware of death, yet to need it to live.



Figure 8
Virginia Mawer, *The Very Thought of You (II)* 2012,
film still (image: the artist).

As depth increases, the flowing gown begins to show signs of decay. That which brought it to life has also begun its degradation. Shreds of the hem tear away from the body of the dress, and rips infiltrate the integrity of the skirt. Like disintegrating lace, the dress, made of crepe paper, fragments. The irony that being in water animates the material, but weakens it to the point of destruction. I walk free of my robe, my former skin. It dissolves like a slipping of faith. If our souls are clad in bodies, they melt away as this cloth melts away from skin (figure 9).



Figure 9
Virginia Mawer, *The Very Thought of You (II)* 2012,
film still (image: the artist).

Clothing, and fabric in general, that touches the body, that comes in contact with the heat of the skin, recalls the body itself. Like shedding skin, a discarded garment holds the trace of the body. This trace, like a fingerprint, suggests both presence *and* absence, “like a fleeting shadow doomed by its fatal attachment to something that is irretrievably lost” (Merewether 1999: 170). Freud speaks of a desire to recover a presence that has been lost, “driven by a desire to trace the archive back to its inaugural moment just prior to the separation...an irreplaceable and unique moment of truth” (Merewether 1999: 167).

A remnant of debris is gently laid to rest on the ocean floor. Without a body, the cloth membrane certainly indicates absence but its very survival serves as a residual reminder of essence (figure 11).

Ann Hamilton deals with the body in its absence in *Whitecloth*, her exhibition at the Aldrich Museum in 1999. The gallery was formerly a general store, post office, a stately home and a church (Hamilton, 1999). As both the title of the exhibition and the name of one of the installations, *Whitecloth* (1999) (figure 10) is a square of white fabric that flies about the rooms and between floors of the museum. It ghosts the spaces, darting along corridors then pausing, before continuing its flight. *Tablecloth* (1999), a billowing cloth that hovers above a wooden dining-hall table. Both works beautifully exploit the physical and symbolic properties of the material used. Nancy Princenthal notes that Hamilton’s white cloth acts as “an abundantly symbolic form” (Hamilton 1999: 36-37) reminiscent of a seemingly endless list including a maiden’s veil, a magician’s scarf, billowing washing, a sign of surrender, purity and seduction. In religious terms, such fabric is associated with rituals of birth and death and in other terms, is “a metonym for every painting ever painted on a blank white canvas” (Hamilton 1999: 38). Hamilton says, “Like human skin, cloth is a membrane that divides an interior from an exterior. It both reveals and conceals” (Wakefield 1994: 39).



Figure 10
Ann Hamilton, *Whitecloth* 1999, installation view,
the Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Ridgefield (image: Hamilton, 1999)

The membrane-skin between interior and exterior posits the trace as “something like a hinge between inner and outer experience” (Best 1999: 173), being the intertwining of subject and object. It is when both forces engage, that is, when looking invokes internal sensation and the body, in turn, welcomes them. This point of engagement is in fact a crossing over into the body, and a linking it to the external world. Merleau-Ponty describes it as a ‘carnality’ of their presence (Best 1999: 175). A *bodily* experience of presence inevitably heightens a sense of continual decay, and therefore death. We are both alive and dying simultaneously and continuously.



Figure 11
Virginia Mawer, *The Very Thought of You (II)* 2012,
film still (image: the artist).

Meditations on life and death reveal an implicit tension; one cannot exist without the other. As the site of baptism, the sea is a place of death and birth through which water can provide a connection to our ancient past (and to my recent past), and also to an infinite future. We are connected to our genesis and our potential, but never without sight of “loss, the passage of time, and of human frailty” (Bond, 1999: p20). One must, however, be willing to proceed ever forward, with no plans for return. Just as my grandmother came to a new country, and as a baptismal candidate sought never to return to an old life. This journey as seen through baptism is in fact a proxy for our daily experience of living, loving and losing.

Notes

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| <p>1 I have used paragraphs in italics to indicate personal responses to my work.</p> <p>2 David Suzuki in Kent R. (2003) <i>Liquid Sea</i>, Sydney: Museum of Contemporary Art. p7</p> <p>3 From interview with Bill Viola, Sullivan E. 2005, Bill Viola. <i>Artonview</i> 42: 18.</p> | <p>4 This is a term used by art historians to describe cloth that “appears to cling to the body in animated folds while it reveals the contours of the form beneath.” Koda H and Metropolitan Museum of A. (2003) <i>Goddess : the classical mode</i>, New York; New Haven: Metropolitan Museum of Art ; Yale University Press, p133</p> |
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Body, psyche and symbol: the paintings of Kevin Roberts

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According to Jung, everything is a manifestation of the psyche: thus the body in art is a manifestation of psyche, embodied in symbols. In the close link between body and mind, symbols relate to processes of human development. Kevin Roberts (1965-2009) was a well-known South African painter of beautiful, serene female figures in recognisable local landscapes, surrounded by ordinary objects that contribute to a layering of symbolic meanings. Although it makes a specific contribution to South African art, his work has been little investigated from a scholarly perspective. In order to interpret selected paintings, this paper uses a Jungian approach, because Jung's theories on the collective unconscious, archetypes, anima, nature and symbols are well established and provide suitable frameworks or 'myths' for rich interpretations that elucidate the connections between personal and universal meanings. A theoretical framework concerning mind and body from writings by Jung and the writings of neo-Jungians, evolutionary psychologists and psychoanalytic critics, is used to interpret selected paintings by Roberts, taking into account the body and its inter-relationship with the mind.

Key words: Jung, body, psyche, archetype, symbolism, Kevin Roberts.

Translated heading needed

Volgens Jung is alles 'n manifestasie van die psige, en dus is die liggaam in kuns ook 'n manifestasie van die psige soos vergestalt in simbole. Simbole verwys, in die hegte verwantskap tussen liggaam en syn, na die proses van menslike ontwikkeling. Kevin Roberts (1965-2009) was 'n bekende Suid Afrikaanse skilder wat aantreklike, rustige vroulike figure vasgevang het in herkenbare plaaslike landskappe, omring deur gewone objekte wat bydra tot die simboliese lae van die visuele beeld. Alhoewel sy bydrae tot Suid Afrikaanse kuns beduidend is, is sy werk nog skrams ondersoek deur die akademie. Hierdie artikel maak gebruik van 'n Jungiaanse raamwerk om geselekteerde skilderye te interpreteer aangesien Jung se teorieë oor die kollektiewe bewussyn, argetipes, anima, die natuur en simbole ingegrawe is in psigoanalitiese teorie, en 'n goeie raamwerk aangaande "mites" voorsien vir 'n gul interpretasie van kuns wat ook die verband tussen die persoonlike en die universele na vore bring. 'n Teoretiese raamwerk aangaande die liggaam-syn verband, gebaseer op Jung se skrywe sowel as die skrywe van neo-Jungiaanse teoretici, evolusie sielkundiges en psigoanalitiese kritici, word ingespan om geselekteerde skilderye deur Roberts te interpreteer. Hierdie interpretasie neem die nou verband tussen die mens se liggaam en syn in ag.

Stelwoorde: Jung, liggaam, psige, argetipe, simbolisme, Kevin Roberts.

This article aims to construct a psychoanalytic reading of selected paintings by artist Kevin Roberts. A psychoanalytic interpretation, it should be said at the outset, is not a doctrine or a specific strategy, but an outlook and an approach. From a Jungian perspective (Jacobi in Jung 1978: 253), everything is a manifestation of the psyche, which in Jungian terms consists of the conscious, the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious. For neo-Jungians and evolutionary psychologists, the psyche is as much biological as psychological (Stevens A 1982, 2000), incorporating body, psychology, genes, thoughts and senses in a psychobiological whole. Jung suggested that the psyche, this psychobiological entity, is manifest in our dreams, myths, psychoses and cultural artefacts.

So the body, one's considerations about it and the manifestations of it in art, are all manifestation of the psyche, or the 'self', and this often manifests in symbols. It has been largely as a result of Jung that any significance has been attached in the West to symbols in relation to the processes of human development (Cirlot 2002). "[T]he symbol functions as a psychic

mirror in which we perceive our human energies reflected...” (Stevens A 1999: 81). According to Arnheim (1966: 219), “... the psychoanalytic approach has reminded modern man of the fact that in a work of art every element, whether it pertains to perceptual form or to subject matter, is symbolic, that is, it represents something beyond its particular self”. The notions above, taken together, suggest a close link between body and mind, or body and ‘self’, and the act of making images, or producing symbols.

This paper will make use of a variety of inter-related psychoanalytic theories from both psychoanalysts such as Jung (1957, 1961, 1978, 1989), neo-Jungians such as A Stevens (1982, 1993, 1995, 1999) and Hollis (1995, 2004), and psychoanalytic critics, such as Arnheim (1966), Fuller (1988), Kuspit (1993) and López-Pedraza (1996), in agreement with Kuspit’s (1993: 301) view that “[b]ecause of [its] cultural situation, and its own history, the psychoanalysis of art has many theoretical options, and must take advantage of them all... for none are completely satisfactory and none privileged over the other...”.

The personal context

A psychoanalytic reading should be most concerned with analysis of the artworks and not the artist, as argued by Jung (1989: 86) amongst others, who says this reduces creativity to a mere symptom, detrimental to both the work and the artist. It nonetheless seems appropriate to start with the artist as a subject, taking art, along with religion, mythology and psychology, as “mirrors of the Self” (Stevens A 1995: 319). Kevin Roberts (1965-2009) was a highly regarded South African (Pretoria) painter of serene, dreamlike and very symbolic female figures, situated in recognisable local landscapes and surrounded by a variety of ordinary objects that contribute to the layering of symbolic meanings in the work. His work has been relatively little investigated from a scholarly perspective, perhaps because of his early death, and the fact that his works were sold to collectors and corporations almost as soon as they were produced.

A Stevens (1995: 57) argues that a first step in interpreting artefacts, dreams as well as art works, is the personal context. From this more personal perspective, it seems worthwhile to note three aspects: Roberts was kept apart from his mother for a considerable time in his early youth due to family circumstances; he painted obsessively and repeated certain themes many times, and he said his aim was to find “the poetic”, by which he meant both the lyrical, as well as that ambiguity that could create webs of associative meanings, feelings and atmosphere (Stevens 1995: 154). Roberts’ use of images, such as the woman, could “as easily have been dreamt as turned into poetry” (Stevens A 1995: 155).

What does one see in these images? Almost always there is a centrally placed figure of a woman, and one who seems inevitably to be the same woman, although in related and matched paintings there might be two women, ‘twins’. (Figures 1 and 2) There are the merest suggestions of rooms, semi-interiors, and man-made objects like chairs, veils, hangings, pools, bowls, tables, as well as landscapes that are usually dry and recognisably South African, juxtaposed with cultivated fields or flowering plants. Animals appear, sometimes mysteriously: fish, cows, birds, insects. Minute images reveal details of fossils, embroidery, thorns, feathers, piles of salt, with words and numbers, and signs like arrows, dots, hourglasses and circles. Dense patterns, whether of cloth, grass, skies or foliage, cover everything in a web-like mirage of miniscule marks. All exist in a clear but soft half-light, and all seem more icon than reality. Never nightmarish, these are dreams of quiet paradise.



Figure 1
Kevin Roberts, (*Title unknown*), 1999-2004, oil on panel, size unknown, private collection.



Figure 2
Kevin Roberts, (*Title unknown*), 1999-2004, oil on panel, size unknown, private collection.

López-Pedraza (1996: 73), in a Jungian reading of the work of German artist, Anselm Kiefer, suggests that this artist has become “submerged to the point of obsession” with certain themes.¹ So, in a personal interpretation, one might see Roberts’ repetition of the female figure as a search for the mother, an attempt to assuage the separation from the mother, a symbolic recreation of the mother, a reflection of that “primary, affectively charged imago of one’s life” (Hollis 2004: 43). Because this search can never really re-create ‘the good mother’, it is bound to be reiterated constantly. This compares to Fuller’s notion (1988: 41) that Michelangelo’s *pietas* and sculptures of the Virgin and child were a manifestation of his longing for his lost or absent mother. Roberts’ women might furthermore be seen as a psychological attempt to make himself and his world whole: to “repair, through his artistic activity a harmonious internal world... [so] he has to externalise the completed object, and to give it a life of its own in the external world” (Segal in Fuller 1988: 116).

Roberts himself, however, in notes that accompany some of his works, did not necessarily see this as a primary meaning, but refers to the woman as muse, poetess, Madonna or other mystical or mythical females, but he is mainly concerned with a “poetic generation of meaning” (Roberts S.a: sp), in a process of meaning-making that is “non-logical, non-verbal and poetic, almost like a piece of music transferred onto a two-dimensional plane and frozen into an instant of time”.²

An artwork naturally has many personal meanings and might tell the viewer something about the artist’s life and psyche, but Jung sees an artwork as supra-personal: “[p]ersonal causes have as much or as little to do with a work of art as the soil with the plant that springs from it. ...Indeed, the special significance of a ... work of art resides in the fact that it has escaped the limitations of the personal and has soared beyond the personal concerns of its creator” (Jung 1989: 71). This brings one to the archetypal context.

The archetypal, collective and psychobiological context

According to Jung (1961: 411; 1978: 57-59), the psyche, in terms of the personal and collective unconscious, is hidden but manifests in the archetype, the “irrepresentable, unconscious, pre-existent form that seems to be part of the inherited structure of the psyche...”. Archetypes are instinctual and primordial, and are unconscious, inherited psychological structures, which may manifest with a variety of content, as ideas, themes or as images that recur in the myths, tales, art and dreams of people everywhere, and always in the form of metaphor and symbol (Hollis 2004: 7-8).³ Archetypes are not themselves images, but are rather “the inherent psychic structures responsible for the production of... images” (Stevens A 1982: 51). Furthermore, they have emotional content and are “both images and emotions” (Jung 1978: 87), which makes them dynamic, powerful and energetic, to use some of Jung’s phrases. Some typical symbolic manifestations of archetypes are the hero, anima and animus, wise man, great mother, the shadow, the self, the child, the trickster, the devil, animals and even landscapes (Olivier 2011: 108).

According to the neo-Jungian evolutionary psychologist, A Stevens (1982: 82), archetypes are biological entities, in other words, they are the products of evolution. They are the “characteristic patterning of the mind”, whereby certain adaptive psychological patterns are passed from generation to generation. Using a similar approach, López-Pedraza (1996: 87) states that Jungian psychotherapy is a movement of the psyche towards the body, thus a way of integrating mind and body. So, for example, all people would experience, either as child, mother or both, the mother-child bond which gives rise to images such as the anima, mother nature and the great mother and other related symbolic images. Archetypal images are collective, symbolic and multi-valent, or even ambiguous in their multiple meanings.

Fuller (1988: 12-13, 22, 106) discusses this archetypal mind-body, or what he terms the psychobiological, response in detail, as a means to answer his core question, “How can a work of art outlive its origins?” and resonate across time and across different cultures.⁴ He argues that all individuals have a relatively constant underlying biological condition and experience similar sensations and emotions: bodies and their function are the same across generations and societies; all individuals experience motion, gravity and space in similar ways; all have sexual instincts, fear death, mourn, etcetera. So all understand some collective aspect of the human condition and art that speaks to this, whether consciously or unconsciously, will therefore resonate with artist and viewer. This can be argued to be the case without resorting to a notion of an essential human condition, which poststructuralist theories have done much to question and overturn.

In Roberts’ work *Continuum-Point*, (Figure 3), two women sit on the edge of a pool with their feet in the water. In the water fish swim, and behind the pond is a trellis, a dry ploughed landscape, a sapling and foliage. Because everything, in a Jungian sense, is psyche, all the elements in the painting are the artist, so the central figures of the women, as well as the water, landscape, fish, are the artist and are archetypes from his psyche. But equally, as archetypal images, they resonate with the collective unconscious of many other psyches.



Figure 3
Kevin Roberts, *Continuum-Point*, 1999-2004, oil on panel, 114 x 114 cm, private collection
(Stevens 2005: 11).

The women, in a Jungian analysis, represent the archetype of the anima. This is the supreme or essential female (Henderson in Jung 1978: 150), as well as the “personification of all feminine psychological tendencies in a man’s psyche...and his relation to the unconscious” (von Franz in Jung 1978: 186).⁵ This is much more than the actual mother, although it may be grounded in her, but is a psychological aspect whose realization leads to a more complete actualization and individuation of the psyche. Jung (1978: 69) associates the anima with symbolic females such as Eve, Helen, Mary and Sophia, as well as the Great Mother, who epitomises Mother Nature or Mother Earth, whose symbol is the tree. She is in her totality a symbol of love, nurture, union, fruitfulness. There are two women in this painting (twinned with indications of natural growth), one looking outwards, the other downwards: introversion and extraversion. This duplication points to duality as well as union: life and nature; the conscious and the unconscious, inner and outer or even different aspects of the seasons.⁶

The women are both protected by the trellis which suggest an interior, and are simultaneously in a landscape, or exterior. This suggests a dual position in space, balanced between interior and exterior, and thus a kind of integration in space. Landscape is itself, according to Jung (Stevens A 1995: 173), an archetypal given and so people relate to landscapes with intensity. López-Pedraza (1996: 82) refers to a ploughed landscape as the mortification of the earth,⁷ which suggests a mortification of the psyche and thus a transformation of it. While Roberts' landscape is indeed barren, a ploughed landscape also symbolises potential growth, as well as male authority, in contrast with López-Pedraza's reading, especially in view of the symbolic reading of the earth as female (Cirlot 2002: 260). Cultivated land is nature "partially surrendered" (Arnheim 1966: 320). Together with the water, it can refer to rituals such as harvest and baptism (or purification and cleansing), which are not only Christian but also Dionysiac (Henderson in Jung 1978: 138). In the sapling, foliage and the leaf pattern on one woman's dress, one can read the fecundity of nature, in which case, the trellis pattern on the other dress becomes a sign for the order of culture. The small, detailed fossils in the stone of the pond refer to time, life and death, and evolution (Cirlot 2002: 112). The fish is traditionally a symbol of the unconscious, but is also phallic and sensual (Cirlot 2002: 106), suggesting a balance between the female anima and the male animus.

Additionally, in this painting, the combination of elements is quiet and, in a sense, idyllic. As an embodied viewer, one understands what it might feel like to sit in a dry landscape with one's feet in cool water, and experience a sensation of pleasure and ease. As Jung (1989: 22) writes: "[i]n every human being...there is a special heaven, whole and unbroken", and this might be the *Continuum* of the title, the sense of an unbroken, ongoing integration of psyche, body and environment.

The banal, man-made, industrially-produced objects that are usually present, the plastic chairs and bird feeders, the labels, hosepipes, metal runners and wires, can be read as references to everyday life and the ordinary surroundings of the artist, but are also a means of grounding these otherwise very romantic, idealised images in a local context. They are points of connection, perhaps the *Points* of the title. So, in the male-female, nature-culture, interior-exterior, dryness-fecundity, stillness-motion, life-death balances of this work, one might experience a sense of wholeness and integration.

Water is an archetypal element that appears in many of Roberts' paintings, such as *Lady with trellis and two cows*, (Figure 4) where it fills the bowl, flows in the stream and is suggested by the clouds. Water is an element essential to all life on earth, and all can relate to images of it. For most cultures, water symbolises life itself, as well as the spiritual and the unconscious (that which is under the surface). In many of Roberts's works, the water appears in a round bowl or pond, the "pool of the psyche" (Hollis 2004: 72): the circle is a perfectly balanced and harmonious form and a sign of wholeness, as well as a symbol of the womb. For Arnheim (1966: 217) vases, pots, rooms, are all wombs. In this work, flowing in the stream amongst other, more static elements, water could represent the flow of time itself, and in movement of the clouds, the transience of everything.



Figure 4
Kevin Roberts, *Lady with trellis and two cows*, 1999-2004, oil on panel, 200 x 110 cm, private collection
(Stevens 2005: 22).

Roberts frequently depicts animals, birds and fish, and the cow is one of his much used symbols. While it might be difficult, in a post-modern and multi-cultural world, to support the notion of universal symbols with universal meanings, nevertheless, animals are primal symbols in many cultures, ancient and modern.⁸ All animals represent nature as well as the instinctual aspect of human psychology (Jaffé in Jung 1978: 265). The cow, an animal associated with the female principle, and with the earth and the moon (Cirlot 2002: 65), often has the horns of a lunar goddess in ancient depictions, as in this painting. The female principle is here depicted again and again, in echoing symbols.

Another aspect of the collective or archetypal potential of art could be said to be culture and cultural artefacts. Art can refer to other forms of cultural or collective endeavour: to myth, to other art, to history. (Figures 5 and 6) In this way, in looking back at history, art speaks to art and one artist speaks through time to another. This is an act of memory and a memorial. It can also suggest that a going back equates to a going down, i.e, into the unconscious, the psyche and the collective unconscious. Through recalling and reviving symbols from art history, the artist connects not only himself but potentially the viewer to a collective memory and a collective unconscious.

For example, in *Lady with unicorn II*, (Figure 7), Roberts makes associations with two other cultural artefacts: myth and art, particularly western art. He depicts a woman seated in a plastic chair, holding a pendulum, with a second woman behind her who is half-woman, half-cow, as if clothed in an animal suit. She holds a unicorn horn. They are inside-outside, protected from dry grassland and looming hills by a decorated canopy and a circle of sticks. Signs of nature are close to them: a bird's feather, a vine, a bird and a pattern of flowers.



Figure 5

Kevin Roberts, *For good measure*. 1999-2004, oil on panel, 72 x 58 cm, author's collection (Photo Stevens).



Figure 6

Fra Filippo Lippi, *The feast of Herod, Salome's dance*, 1460-1464, oil on panel (free internet).

This theme refers to an ancient myth first recorded by the Roman writer, Pliny, and a theme of medieval western art; the lady and the unicorn, as seen for example in the tapestries in the Musée de Cluny, Paris (Kearney 2011: 1-13). According to Kearney, this has a number of interpretations and traditionally represents the lady and her guest: the female and the seductive male; the Virgin and Christ; the tradition of Courtly Love; Beauty and the Beast, but in addition, and in a psychological sense, the familiar and the unfamiliar, the normal and the uncanny, the known and the unknown, the mind or soul and the body, sensuality and purity, good and evil. The unicorn is a liminal figure, “crossing borders and boundaries...: resisting definition and capture” (Kearney 2011: 2), and can be seen as ‘dark’, as the shadow, in Jungian terms.

In Roberts' painting, the woman herself (for both figures appear to be the same woman) is a liminal figure, in the process of startling change and transformation, halfway between human and animal, but both her aspects are part of the female principle. This might suggest one phase of the personality changing into another, a symbolic representation of transformation. This is balanced against the unicorn horn, a male, phallic symbol. One could say that the woman's instinctual and cognitive aspects, her conscious and unconscious aspects, her self and shadow, are becoming integrated in an individuated whole. Furthermore, the female-mother archetype, according to Hollis (2004: 48) signifies life and death, home and journey, because the same force that creates life also ends it, as personified by the Hindu goddess, Kali.

Even the two birds are dual: in the painting there are both a painted ‘real’ bird and a painted bird within the tapestry. Symbolically, the bird is a messenger, and in Renaissance art represents an angel, therefore is spiritual. In another duality in this work, culture, in the beautifully patterned hanging and brightly coloured structure, is in contrast to the barrenness of nature, and provides a place of beauty and safety, but is itself filled with references to nature. The landscape is dry savanna, or what Hollis (1995: 142) calls “the savanna of the soul”.⁹



Figure 7
Kevin Roberts, *Lady with Unicorn II*, 1999-2004, oil on panel, 160 x 160 cm, private collection
(Stevens 2005: 3).

Such a space almost seems mysterious and even sanctified, a *sanctum sanctorum* (Hollis 2004: 70).

So, in an archetypal reading, the painting balances two women in transformation, with aspects of human-animal, male-female, interior-exterior, body-spirit, nature-culture dualisms. The three paintings discussed combine personal narratives with cultural and collective myths, and suggest wholeness and the integration of dual and multiple aspects of the psyche, embodied in symbols and their combinations. The interpretations above do not, however, yet deal with the meanings of technical and formal elements in the works.

The visual context: form, means and the act of painting

While psychoanalytic interpretation has dealt and can deal in detail with the themes and imagery of cultural artefacts such as art, it is less easily able to analyse the technical and formal elements of art. According to Kuspit (1993: 314), psychoanalytic interpretation “can never disclose aesthetic immediacy”, so it cannot elucidate the aesthetic experience of the viewer nor the aesthetic intentions of the artist. Arnheim (1966: 220) further argues that the visual form of a work is far more immediately present, both in a sensory and a psychological way, to the viewer than its symbolic aspects.¹⁰ I will briefly attempt to show that a psychoanalytic approach can indeed be used with regard to aesthetics, both in terms of the artist as maker and the viewer as recipient of the artwork.

One of the most striking aspects of these paintings is their order: the compositions are balanced and organised on clear horizontal-vertical, left-right, up-down axes; objects and figures are evenly placed across the surface; objects reflect in and refer to other objects. Most importantly, patterns create order and unify all surfaces (Figure 8). The artist could be said to create his own cosmos, a word which means ‘order’ (Hollis 2004: 27), and he creates meaning by “imposing pattern upon chaos” (Hollis 1995: 21). While Nietzsche spoke of the will to power, and Dostoyevsky of the will to destruction, one might see here the will to order, a “patterning energy” such as manifests in all archetypes (Hollis 1995: 74). For Arnheim (1966: 128), symmetry, order and pattern are rational, and are models for certain types of art, as well as for the mind that shapes such art. Patterns and a will to order can be found, not only in all Roberts’ paintings, but in the art and artefacts of many cultures in many different times, and could therefore be said to be collective, if not universal.

The patterned surfaces are reminiscent of weaving, stitching and embroidery, and have a symbolic significance, reaffirming women’s arts (Stevens 2005), just as the patterns formed by ploughing can be seen as masculine. Both are creative and have ritual significance. This ‘threading’ and ‘stitching’ of every surface suggests the interdependence of all elements in the paintings, thus the interdependence of all things.

Order here is allied to complexity as, according to Arnheim (1966: 124), it must be, for “complexity without order produces confusion; order without complexity produces boredom”. For him, high order and high complexity are requirements of good works of art. The repetition of elements, marks and patterns across the surfaces of these works creates a “...constancy provided by the regularity and evenness of change... a stationary flux... duality within unity” (Arnheim 1966: 225), so, I would argue, the symbolic depictions of duality and unity are enhanced by the duality in unity of the formal elements of the paintings.

The act of painting itself, particularly in crafting such densely patterned and detailed works, could be said to be ‘heroic’, in that it demands great dedication and commitment. The hero is another Jungian archetype, and refers to one whose task is “inescapable. It is renewed every day... . Showing up, and dealing, with whatever must be faced in the chasms of fear and self-doubt, that is the hero task” (Hollis 2004: 62). Producing such paintings requires an act of concentrated craftsmanship and intense focus in an almost meditative experience that might be compared to painting an icon. Temple (In Brewerton 2011: 13) states that “[t]o paint an icon is to bring about a transformation of matter that is only real as a result of a transformation in the inner being of the painter”. Making art is a personal mission, a transformative task when undertaken in this spirit.

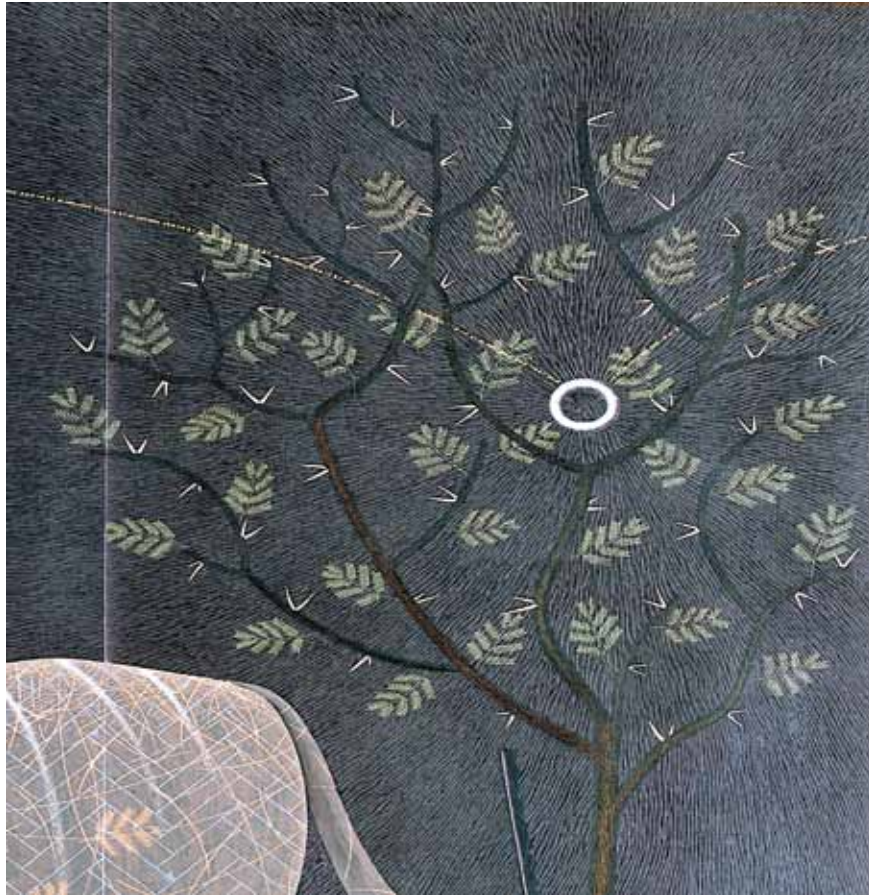


Figure 8
Kevin Roberts, Detail of *Tree song and kudu cow*, 1999-2004, oil on panel, 150 x 150 cm,
private collection (Stevens 2005: 37).

The purpose of art: the personal and the universal

Art unarguably has a personal function for the artist who creates it, even if one dismisses the simplistic Freudian notion of the purpose of art. It is certain that Roberts was obsessed with painting and with certain themes. He had an inner vision and a way to express this, and it could be assumed that he was psychologically fulfilled by this activity.¹¹ As he expressed it, “I continuously want to create and am searching for the beautiful”. For Arnheim (1966: 339), “art is a way of dealing with life, [and a means by which the artist is able] to scrutinize and to understand the world, to find order and law outside and within himself”. Just as art needs order balanced with complexity, so too the functioning individual must balance the richness of complexity with the predictability of order.

According to Jung (A. Stevens 1982: 315), “creative formulation” (which could be active imagination, creative fantasy, dreams, symbol construction and art making) has a transcendent function and encourages integration of conscious and unconscious. It furthermore has the function of increasing individuation. According to A. Stevens (1999: 33), individuation is the elevation of psychic energies and potentials from their lowest origins to their highest modes of expression.

While making art is a psychological process for the artist, it is simultaneously a “material and highly bodily process. ...[It is] intimately enmeshed with the body” (Fuller 1988: 232).

For Fuller, this psychobiological aspect of art makes it potentially universal, i.e., a work of art can arouse deep and meaningful responses in the viewer, and so has a collective function in addition to a personal function. It provides some satisfaction of a basic human need – the need to perceive meaning and to comprehend it (Stevens A 1982: 35). The experience of art can arouse a psychobiological response in the viewer, which Fuller (1988: 197) terms the “aesthetic experience”, an arousal of emotions, sensations and psychological reactions:

...that fleeting instant, so brief as to be almost timeless, when the spectator is at one with the work of art. He ceases to be his ordinary self, and the picture or building, or statue, landscape or aesthetic actuality, is no longer outside himself. The two become one entity.

For Fuller, as for Roger Fry (1920) before him, this experience depends more on the formal qualities than the imagery and iconography of the artwork, or at least depends on all aspects of the work. Although the imagery does indeed have the psychological potential to bring the viewer into contact with the archetypal realm, the formal qualities arouse the psychobiological response. The healing potential of art is arguably psychobiological and might relate to the viewer's potential sense of the restoration of wholeness, of completion:

We are intact only in so far as our objects are intact. Art of whatever kind bears witness to intact objects even when the subject-matter is disintegration. ... whatever the projection of narrow compulsions... whatever the primitive and enveloping relations that ensue, the reconstitution or restoration of the outside and independent whole object... remains a paramount function in art (Segal in Fuller 1988: 116).

Psychoanalytic interpretation: a critical overview

Kuspit (1993: 304), while using psychoanalytic interpretation, nonetheless acknowledges that “psychoanalysis of art privileges and elevates psychoanalysis while sharply delimiting and diminishing art”. A psychoanalytic approach to the interpretation of art has limitations, and cannot ever fully explain all the features of artworks. Creative decisions, achievements and effects cannot always be rationally explained, a fact accepted even by psychoanalysts (van Franz in Jung 1978: 378), and this resistance to explanation is compounded in much contemporary art. It could even be argued that a psychoanalytical interpretation, or indeed any interpretation, robs art of the very mysteriousness that makes it worth making and viewing. Art must not be reduced, in a psychoanalytic analysis, to a mere symptom or an attempt at self-healing.

So it must be acknowledged that the interpretations above only touch on some potential meanings in these works, for example the reading of symbols is in no way exhaustive. In order to interpret and contextualise such dense paintings I might have used various interpretative strategies, from art historical to semiotic, structuralist or post-structuralist, but I decided to limit my approach to a psychoanalytic perspective, largely a Jungian and neo-Jungian one, because Jung's theories on the collective unconscious, archetypes, anima and animus, man and nature, symbols, dreams and myths are not only well established but they would seem to provide suitable frameworks, narratives or ‘myths’ that could offer the possibility of rich interpretations that elucidate the connections between personal and universal meanings in such works. Precedents exist for such Jungian interpretations of complex art works, for example López-Pendraza's readings of the works of Anselm Kiefer (1996). The assumption is that a rich interpretative strategy is appropriate for rich ‘texts’, such as Roberts' paintings, and that a psychoanalytic approach can offer subtle and differentiated interpretations (Jacobi in Jung 1978: 377).

In conclusion, and in spite of the limitations of any interpretation of art, I would argue that the analysis above shows the usefulness of Jungian and neo-Jungian psychoanalytic approaches in enabling rich interpretations of certain kinds of art, such as the paintings of Kevin Roberts, and in exploring potential connections between personal and collective meanings of both the imagery and the formal qualities in artworks. It is in this inter-relationship of personal and collective meanings, in exploring and establishing both collective and personal symbols and their combinations with particular formal qualities, that the work makes a specific contribution to South African art, and thus is worth such an investigation.

Notes

- 1 According to Freud, the artist obsessively repeats images, because art making is not sufficiently therapeutic to resolve conflicts permanently. However, it must be noted that, in spite of Freud himself producing somewhat tentative psychoanalytic interpretations of the psyches of Leonardo and Michelangelo based on their work and information about their lives, he later doubted his views. His views on art have been recised on at least one ground: his focus on subject matter rather than on any aspects of form, of which he admitted to having little understanding (Fuller 1988: 36).
- 2 Generally Roberts would not interpret his works, but preferred to leave interpretations up to the viewer of the work. He did occasionally write, in a markedly poetic and philosophical way, about certain works, avoiding specific interpretations.
- 3 The Jungian and neo-Jungian view of archetypes and their manifestations in symbols can be compared to the structuralist view of language and words: according to A Stevens (1999: 28), structuralists posit that all language, which manifest in words and grammar, arise from a universal structure embedded in the human brain. So, too, archetypes are deep structures embedded in the brain, which manifest in symbols.
- 4 Fuller (1988: 16, 20, 109-110) relates the psychobiological response to a number of concepts: Fry's "esthetic emotion" which is an emotion about form; Williams' biological response to form; the aesthetic experience as in Kleinian psychoanalytic theory, amongst others.
- 5 The animus is the equivalent male aspect of the female psyche.
- 6 The two women might symbolise the anima and the shadow, that negative aspect of the female embodied in the witch, femme fatale or siren, for example, although the women in this painting are too alike to make this a very convincing interpretation.
- 7 This 'dark' interpretation of ploughed earth should be seen in the context of Kiefer's work, which explores the darkness of German history and the German psyche.
- 8 The argument that universals exist can be found in folklore, mythology and in the works of many cultural anthropologists, evolutionary biologists, Jungian analysts, art historians, art critics, structuralists and others (Stevens A 1995: 180).
- 9 Interestingly, research has been done on the kinds of landscapes most people prefer, and this corresponds to the savannahs of Africa, which could be considered an archetypal landscape, given man's origins in Africa (A. Stevens 1995: 267). This preference is marked in children.
- 10 Freud (In Gedo 1985 :44) himself later doubted his ideas about the psychoanalysis of art, writing, "[w]hat if... [we] have taken too serious and profound a view of details which were nothing to the artist, details which he introduced quite arbitrarily or for some purely formal reason with no hidden intention behind?" This indicated the limitations of psychoanalysis with regard to formal and visual concerns, a limitation that psychoanalytic art critics such as Arnheim, Kuspit and Fuller have attempted to address.
- 12 I acknowledge flaws in the assumption that the art directly reflects the mind of the artist. If the art is ordered and rational, the mind behind it is not necessarily equally so. As Gedo (1985: 20) points out, a tragic life may not necessarily produce 'tragic' art, but may produce 'happy' art as a defence mechanism.

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The Women at Winburg's Voortrekker Monument

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The Voortrekker Monument at Winburg resulted from an open architectural competition held in 1964. This monument followed the national Voortrekker Monument depicting a shrine surrounded by a literal ox-wagon laager by Gerard Moerdijk at Pretoria, 1938-49, and its procurement, architecture and architect could hardly have been more different.

Entries were to symbolize, the *ordeliewende gemeenskap* as well as *die vrou in die Groot Trek*, and, to everyone's surprise the English-speaking, Durban-based, liberal, young modernist architect, Hans Hallen, won the competition from 36 entries. His was an abstract design that acknowledged each of the five leaders of the trek parties in an orderly assembly of towering, chamfered half-pipes of off-shutter reinforced concrete in a circular arrangement. These were turned to open outward while their backs symbolically defined a laager, and the submission proposed that a statue of a woman be the focus of the enclosed space for which one half-pipe was misaligned and the roof cut back that the figure would bask in natural daylight. But, the statue was never commissioned. This neglect left the monument itself - the body - to communicate the role of the women, the focus of this research.

Key words: Hans Hallen, Voortrekkers, abstract monuments of commemoration.

Die Frauen am Voortrekker-Denkmal in Winburg

Das Voortrekker-Denkmal in Winburg ist auf Grundlage eines offenen Architekturwettbewerbs entstanden, der im Jahre 1964 ausgeschrieben wurde. Dieses Denkmal steht in der Nachfolge des 1938-49 vom Architekten Gerard Moerdijk geschaffenen Schreins in Pretoria, der buchstäblich im Zentrum einer Wagenburg positioniert ist, doch sind seine Beschaffenheit, Gestalt und Architekt kaum unterschiedlicher denkbar.

Aufgabe der Wettbewerbsteilnehmer war es, eine 'ordnungsliebende Gemeinschaft' sowie die 'Rolle der Frauen' im Treck zu versinnbildlichen. Zur allgemeinen Überraschung setzte sich der liberale englischsprachige, junge und modernistische Architekt Hans Hallen aus Durban mit seinem Beitrag unter den 36 Konkurrenten durch.

Sein abstrakter Entwurf zollt allen fünf Anführern der Wagenzüge in einer regelmäßigen kreisförmigen Anordnung turmhoher, oben schräg auslaufender Halbröhren aus Sichtbeton Anerkennung. Die Öffnungen der Betonschalen weisen nach außen, während ihre gerundeten Rücken den Raum eines imaginären Lagers begrenzen, in dessen Zentrum im Entwurf die Aufstellung einer Frauenstatue vorgesehen war. Um diese im natürlichen Tageslicht erstrahlen zu lassen, wurde eine der umgebenden Betonschalen aus dem Kreis gerückt, so daß das Dach hier nicht bündig anschloss.

Die Statue wurde jedoch nie in Auftrag gegeben. Daher muss das Denkmal selbst - also der Baukörper - die Rolle der Frau veranschaulichen. Wie dies gelingen kann, darauf liegt der Schwerpunkt dieser Untersuchung.

Kennwoorte: Hans Hallen, Voortrekker, abstrakte Gedächtnis-Denkmaeler

Those who have visited the Voortrekker Monument at Winburg in the central Free State might be intrigued by the title of this paper. To put everyone's minds at ease, there are no women at the monument, certainly none figuratively, yet an acknowledgement of the role of the women in the Great Trek was a condition of the design competition and this pursuit was adhered to by both entrants and sponsors and forms the basis of the discourse of the article¹. However, before casting light on the visibly missing component, it is necessary to first set the context for the monument.



Figure 1
Voortrekker Monument, Winburg,
(Photograph of January 2012).

Context for Voortrekker monuments

In 1931 the Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Organizations ²(FAK) established the *Sentrale Volksmonumentekomitee* (SVK), a committee delegated with the custodianship of all markers of Voortrekker history and most importantly, the realization of a national Voortrekker monument to coincide with the centenary of the Great Trek (Ferreira 1975: 4-5). This was the migration of thousands of descendants of Dutch settlers, Afrikaners, who in an act of self-determination organized themselves in a number of parties under various leaders, Voortrekkers, and during the decade following 1835 trekked from the eastern Cape northwards into the interior of South Africa in search of freedom and independence from what they saw as oppressive British administration.

The SVK appointed a sub-committee with architect Gerard Moerdijk (1890-1958) as advisor, to inspect all sites with a claim to Voortrekker commemoration³ of which all but four were discarded because of their inaccessibility (Ferreira 1975: 26). While the map of the Trek clearly shows that five parties traversed the Free State up to Winburg, by 14 votes to 12 the choice of site for the national Voortrekker monument fell to Pretoria, which only the Potgieter party had passed through, and the government as patron confirmed this as the most appropriate location (Ferreira 1975: 46).



Figure 2

The routes of all seven Voortrekker leaders

[Aldbridge, B (1973) *Die Geskiedenis van Suid-Afrika in Beeld*. Cape Town: Struik: p105].

The design of the Pretoria monument resulted from a public invitation for proposals following which the SVK chose the submission of a laager, a circular formation of wagons arranged by trekkers as a shelter while invading and conquering the land and virtually impossible to

penetrate, which Moerdijk was then briefed to combine with his own, a building. The foundation stone was laid at the termination of the re-enacted Great Trek (*Eeufees*) from Cape Town on 16 December 1938, the centenary of the Battle of Blood River, a conflict in (KwaZulu-) Natal between trekkers and Zulus, which in overcoming the numerical odds had confirmed for the former the justness of their cause. Eleven years later the 40m cubic shrine which owes much to the *Völkerschlachtdenkmal* at Leipzig, Germany, 1896-1913, was inaugurated when at noon on the same date in 1949 in a sense of immanence the sun shone through the oculus in the vaulted roof of the great hall and a ray of light illuminated the inscription *Ons vir jou, Suid-Afrika* carved upon the sarcophagus in the basement symbolizing the Voortrekker heroes (Picton-Seymour 1989: 162).

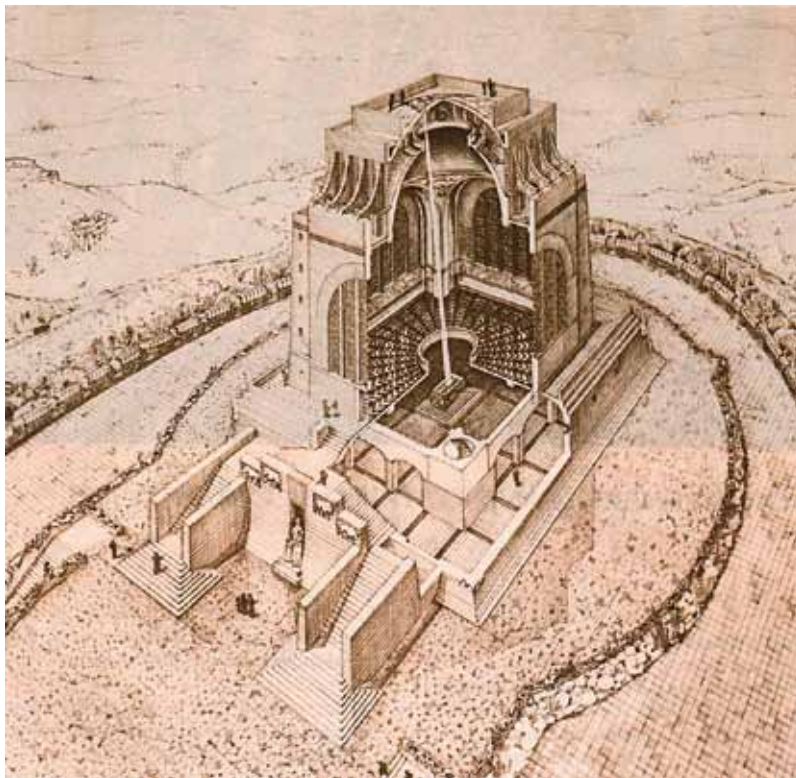


Figure 3
Cut-away section of the national Voortrekker monument, Pretoria, by Gerhard Moerdijk, 1938-49. Note the statue of mother and child on the axis of arrival and the oculus in the dome with the ray of sunlight falling on the sarcophagus in the basement.
(Heymans, R *The Voortrekker Monument, Pretoria*. Voortrekker Monument Board of Control, 1986: p7)

During the realization of the Pretoria monument, the SVK oversaw the second by sculptor Coert Steynberg at Blood River, inaugurated 1947. This monument depicted a kakebeenwa, the wagon the trekkers set out in, literally a jawbone wagon, because of the crescent-tilted shape to its side elevations which resembled the jawbone of an animal. Architect Paul le Roux of Stellenbosch erected the third monument in the form of a modern commemorative church within the precinct of the Church of the Vow (believed to have been made before the Battle of Blood River) in Pietermaritzburg which had long assumed the use of a museum. What remained was the realization of the promise of a minor (kleiner) Voortrekker monument at Winburg upon which completion the SVK disbanded in November 1968 (Ferreira, 1975: 265).



Figure 4

Monument at Blood River in the form of a *kakebeenwa*, the wagon the trekkers set out in, literally a jawbone wagon, because of the crescent-tilted shape to its side elevation which resembled the jawbone of an animal, by sculptor Coert Steynberg, 1947

(*Afrikanerbakens*, 2006: 119. Photographer: Hendrik Oosthuysen).

The site at Winburg

Following an approach by the SVK, the Provincial Administration of the (Orange) Free State accepted the responsibility for the realization of the monument and established a dedicated committee, the *Vrystaat Voortrekker Monument Kommittee* (VVMK) under the chairmanship of the Administrator of the province, the honorable JWSL (Sand) du Plessis⁴ (Ferreira 1975: 241-2).

Winburg was the first town to be established in the Free State in 1835 and served as its capital (Floyd, 1960: 18, 25). It also commemorates the Voortrekkers who in 1837 camped there in the largest gathering of the Great Trek, constitutionally and ecclesiastically united (Ferreira, 1975: 244), before dispersing in various directions. As the map shows, Piet Retief lead a party across the Drakensberg eastward into (KwaZulu-) Natal, to which destination the parties of Gert Maritz and Piet Uys Retief later followed, while Hendrik Potgieter trekked northwards and Louis Trichardt north-eastward.

However, what sealed the choice of site on the farm Rietfontein, 2.5 km south of Winburg, east of the N1 national road then in the planning stages, was the survival of a cottage, interesting for historical and architectural reasons. MT Steyn, the last President of the Orange Free State Republic was born in the cottage on the farm of his uncle in 1857 (*SESA*), a stone building replete with *brakdak* and peach-pip floors which had been declared a National Monument, and was now restored and accessible to the public. This heritage cottage resulted in the 85 ha site bordering on the Rietfontein Dam, which supplied Winburg, being donated to the Province by the Winburg municipality (Ferreira 1975:245).



Figure 5
Cottage in which MT Steyn, last President of the OFS Republic, was born in 1857
(Afrikanerbakens, 2006: 96. Photographer: Hendrik Oosthuysen).

Brief for the design and its procurement

The VVMK meeting held in Bloemfontein in September 1963 set the ground rules, namely that the monument would be non-utilitarian; should express the Voortrekker striving for freedom; and be located in the Winburg area (VVMK Minutes of 20 Sept 1963). Subsequent meetings noted that as far as was known, no other monument had yet honoured the “gigantic contribution” (*reuse-aandeel*) of the Voortrekker women to the settlement of the interior of South Africa [VVMK Minutes 28.10.63 8(a)] and resolved that designs would be procured in competition for the monument, sculpture with appurtenances, and the planning of the site and the immediate surrounds (VVMK Minutes of 21 April 1964). In deference to the public invitation extended for the design of the Pretoria monument, approval for the Winburg competition was sought from the Institute of South African Architects (ISAA) and participation was thus restricted to members.

As is known, a competition is a good means to gather designs from which to make a choice, but everything stands and falls with the jury. Consequently, the choice of the design is, in effect, already made when the jury is selected (De Haan & Haagsma 1988: 13). For that the VVMK sought the advice of the Orange Free State Provincial Institute of Architects (OFSPIA), which nominated Dr Barrie Biermann (1924-1991), lecturer in Architecture at the University of Natal in Durban, and Professor George Quine-Lay, inaugural head of the Department of Architecture at the University of the Orange Free State (UOFS) (VVMK Minutes of 3rd June 1964), who on declining was substituted by architect Leon Roodt (1924-1995) then practising in Welkom. Biermann was the first Afrikaner architectural scholar and Roodt the incumbent OFSPIA-President, 1964-6, and would succeed Quine Lay at UOFS in 1970. The Commission for the Preservation of National and Historical Monuments, Relics and Antiques nominated Prof J.J. Oberholster, historian, academic at UOFS, and Free State Commission member. After inspecting the site, and confirming its appropriateness, the three-man-jury attended the VVMK meeting at which the committee resolved to place its full confidence in the jury for the preparation

of the conditions for the competition, on its adjudication of entries and selection of the winning design, points insisted upon by Roodt (VVMK Minutes of 23.6.1964, Point 4.6).

An invitation to compete was advertised in the journal of the ISAA (*SAAR*, Sept 1964: 27). The competition documentation could not be found but according to Ferreira, the role of the women in the trek was to be acknowledged, the possibility of a symbolic representation of the five trekker parties by streams of water explored, and explanatory notes were to accompany each submission (1975: 247).

Competition outcome

The competition closed in Bloemfontein on 4th December 1964 by which time it had attracted 36 entries. It is clear from the jury report (*SAAR*, Aug 1965: 29-30) that only a design free of overt historic references would be acceptable. The report mentions that few entries had used the topography of the site to inform their designs, most had reshaped it and that the biggest challenge was the representation of the necessary symbolism. The jury looked for designs which distilled the essential in the monumental, incorporated water without being reliant on it, had a strong visual appearance and evocative character and concluded that the successful entries were designed in the spirit of the time and rebuked, perhaps in reference to the Pretoria monument, that any recreation of a monument of the past would be anachronistic and lack the vitality of the original. These are the ideals of modernism which saw the first prize being awarded to Hallen & Dibb, a practice based in Durban.

Winning architect

Hans Heyerdahl Hallen was born in Durban in 1930 to Norwegian parents. Once his considerable artistic talents had been revealed, his art teacher advised on Architecture as a career whereupon Hallen enrolled at the University of Natal in the inaugural cohort, 1949-53. The Department was headed by Professor Paul Connell who in 1952 attracted two UCT PhD-graduates to the staff, Barrie Biermann in August 1952 and who would later serve on the Winburg competition jury, followed by Ron Lewcock. This complement laid the foundations for Hallen's ascendancy as an architect.

On graduating, Hallen spent 1956 in the employ of the Architects' Department of the London County Council. The department had absorbed and modified ideas imported from the Continent e.g. Roehampton in which it made credible reinterpretations of Le Corbusier's Unité (Curtis, 1996: 153) and, it was at this time that Hallen gained experience in working with off-shutter concrete (e-mail, 26 Jan 2012).

Once in private practice in Durban with Maurice Dibb from 1959, Hallen's architecture followed the London trajectory and he distinguished himself with a series of medium-rise apartment blocks on Durban's Berea e.g. Stellenberg (1962), Drostdy and Musgrave Mews (1963) and Riebeeck and Bellevue (1964). The last mentioned made extensive use of reinforced concrete and was contemporaneous with the Winburg competition which Hallen entered because it was ISAA-approved and he believed the jury was capable of judging a modern design (e-mail, 26 Jan 2012).



Figure 6
Voortrekker Monument, Winburg,
location and site plan of winning entry by Hallen & Dibb, 1964 (BBAL).

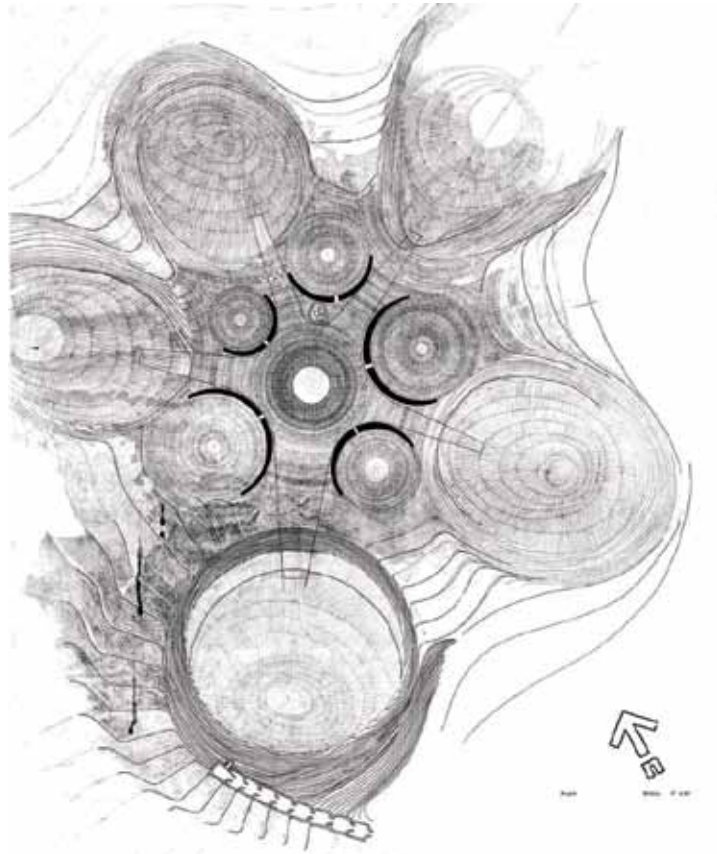


Figure 7
Hallen's plan of crescents defining a laager surrounded by bowls into which the spouts of the roof would discharge. Note the water chain aside the access path at bottom of image (BBAL).

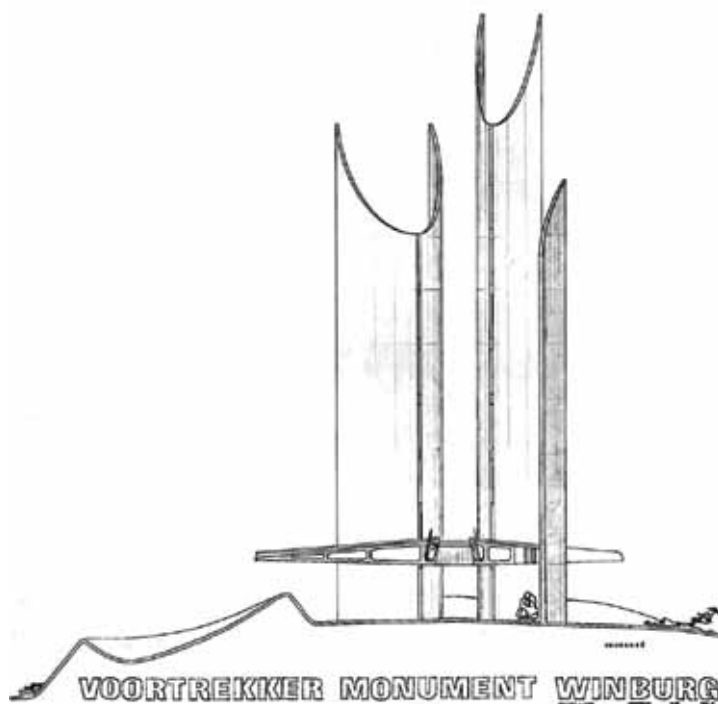


Figure 8
SW-NE Section showing from left: water chain at foot of the largest bowl; spout discharging from the roof with oculus over the bronze tableau on floor and the cut back at right with vertical baffles to angle daylight to fall directly on the statue below (BBAL).



Figure 9
Spouts emerging like cannons through the intercolumniations to discharge into the surrounding rubble-lined bowls.



Figure 10
View up through the oculus into the shafts and the heavens above.

Winning concept

Hallen located his monument on the knoll on the 4525m contour which would allow it to be the natural focus of the site while its stature should allow for easy visibility from the N1 in the position then proposed. Visitors would enter from the west and park in a lot at the foot of the monument before ascending the knoll by way of a meandering pathway.

The monument was conceived as a sculpture in off-shutter reinforced concrete to be experienced in the round. As there were five main parties, Hallen literally circled five wagons. However, these were not drawn as rectangles as their plan-form would dictate, but as crescents opening outward, a form which had its origins in the side elevations of the *kakebeenwa*, and these were tightly assembled around a central space symbolic of a laager. Hallen cut a slit in the centre of each crescent as a virtual loop hole to emphasize the defensive role of the laager. These crescents were then projected vertically as shafts, the heights of which were determined with reference to the largest tall objects nearby, grain silos (e-mail, 7 Feb 2012), and their terminations were chamfered, unusually, upward from the curved inside of the half-round shafts to the cusps of the crescents to evoke the horns of trekker draught oxen.

The five shafts were bonded by a low roof designed to harvest rainwater and thus conceived as a cistern from which five spouts cantilever and decant into large oval, rubble-lined bowls surrounding the group at the foot of each intercolumniation. The water would reticulate to the largest bowl and cascade along a water chain on the inside of the meandering ascent before being re-circulated by a pump embedded in the southern slope of the knoll, with supplementary water from the Rietfontein Dam.

The space defined by the five backing crescent-shafts would contain a central bronze plaque set in the floor upon which natural daylight would fall through the oculus in the roof, and this position would intensify the spatial character of the space less compactly closed in. Like its Pretoria counterpart the oculus and ray of light could provide for a sense of immanence, but in addition, at Winburg it would allow for a view up into the cluster of shafts and the heavens above.

Symbolism of the winning design

The language for the notes of explanation was not prescribed but Hallen chose Afrikaans ably assisted by his Afrikaner wife. These stated that the symbolism was “complex” and cannot be described exactly, but resulted essentially from the following: the shafts were symbolic of the five main treks, each of which was identified at the base by the surname of a leader; the cluster was symbolic of the orderly community united in faith, which like the spouts would spiritually water the land; the striving of the pioneers was expressed in the cusped terminations to the shafts while the roofed, protective space (*beskutte ruimte*), at the heart of the composition changed the scale from the massive to the intimate to speak of the role of the women in the trek. To this Hallen added that the design should not only succeed in its symbolism but also in its intrinsic architectural values (*SAAR*, August 1965: 30).

The women in the winning submission

Besides the symbolism of the protected space, Hallen’s entry proposed the inclusion of a figurative statue of a seated woman embracing a child, visible on both the plan and section. In the laager, the whole family was drawn into military defence and attack, and accustomed to facing danger and privation.



Figure 11
Artist’s rendering of the inside of the laager during the Battle of Vegkop, south of Heilbron, Free State, 1836. As can be seen, the women were as active as the men in defence and attack [B. Aldbridge. 1973. *Die Geskiedenis van Suid-Afrika in Beeld*. Cape Town: Struik].

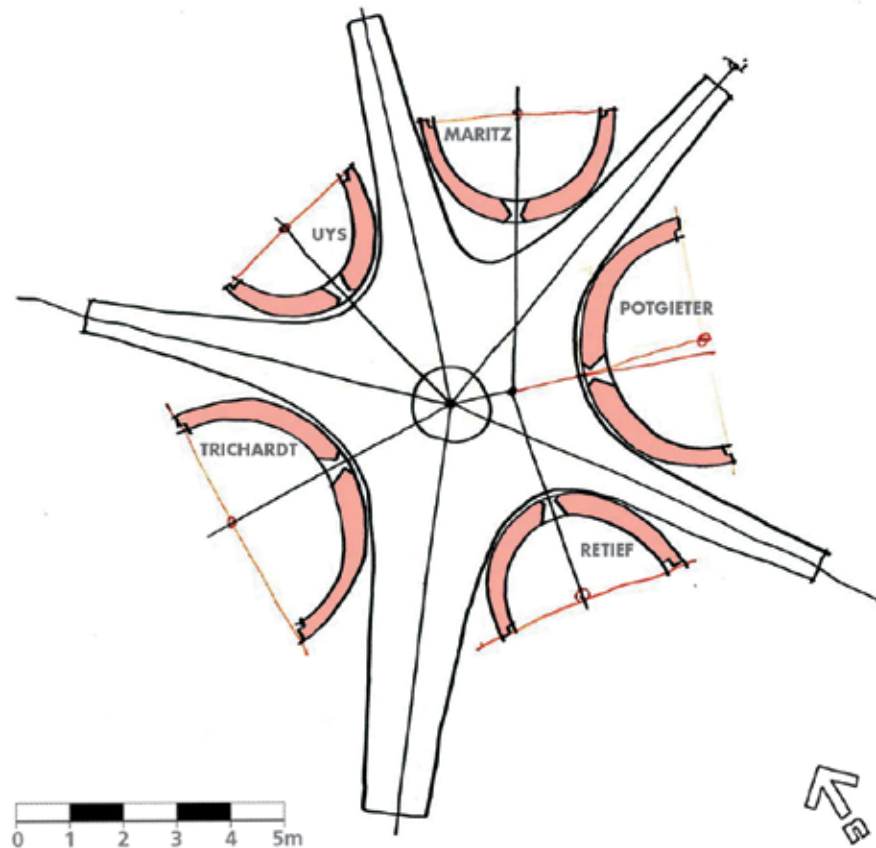


Figure 12
Tracing of plan showing shafts and pentagonal star-shaped roof by Hallen. Note the layout with the radii of three half-round shafts concurrent with the oculus and plaque on the floor, the northern and southern shafts radiating from a point eastward, the wider aperture on the south beneath the most pronounced gargoyle, and the distance in spacing between the outline of the roof and the northern half-round shaft (BBAL).

To give cognizance to the indispensable back-up, the statue was to be formally positioned and illuminated in the following way. The plans of the crescent-shaped shafts were arranged externally tangential to an egg-shaped interior, the symbolic laager, and the axis is aligned roughly south-north, the direction of the trek through the Free State. In detail, three crescents were set radially concurrent with the oculus and plaque (Potgieter, Uys and Trichardt), while the north-eastern (Maritz) and southern (Retief) crescents were set out from a point on the axis of the eastern (Potgieter) crescent, some 1250mm from the centre of construction where the two rays meet at an obtuse angle of 165° . This shift in points of geometric ignition allowed for a wider opening in the south-east under the most pronounced spout which became the main access from the car park, while providing a solid backdrop for the proposed statue on the north-eastern (Maritz) crescent because the slit was not aligned with the geometry of the oculus and plaque. However, while the pentagonal star shape of the roof with spouts is scribed to the plan forms of the half-round shafts, and supported on a set of brackets off each with shims like bridge construction, the roof is cut short from the northern (Maritz) shaft, to create an aperture for daylight to fall on the statue. Excepting for the baffles shown on the section of the sketch design this was how the monument was realised.



Figure 13

Detail of the space which the statue of the Voortrekker woman and child would have occupied against the solid wall space left of the slit and symmetrical beneath the brackets. The roof otherwise scribed to the shafts is here cut back to allow for daylight to penetrate (Photograph by Chris Jooste).



Figure 14

Detail of aperture for daylight to fall on the space reserved for the proposed statue.

An uncomfortable statue

Following a press release, the Oranje Vrouevereniging wrote to the Administrator to compliment the VVMK on its decision that the monument would acknowledge the contribution of the *Voortrekkervrou* and requested to be consulted on the details but the reply while friendly was deferring (FSPA letters of 21 and 22 November 1963 respectively). At the first meeting with the VVMK, Biermann advised that competing architects would approach artists with whom they were in contact but Oberholster explained that artistic considerations would be secondary to the architectural design (VVMK Minutes of 23 June 1964). Hallen denies having taken up discussions with any sculptor, the brief did not call for a statue (e-mail 28 Feb 2012), and it appears the statue shown in his drawings was more indicative of a possibility rather than a firm

proposal. While the jury did not comment on the statue, strangely, it deemed Hallen's placing of one "arbitrary unless it could be brought into a sensible association with the plaque" (SAAR Aug 1965 p300). Yet the technical development for the realization of the monument proceeded as per the competition drawings, without amendment.

At the VVMK meeting of 22 August 1967 at which the tender for construction was accepted, the committee resolved that Hallen was to put forward proposals with a budget covering a "*maquette*, artist's fees etc". However, while it was again emphasized that the statue was to symbolize the contribution of the women in the trek, it was resolved that the matter be kept in abeyance until completion of construction including paving (Minutes of the VVMK, 22 August 1967).

The *Souvenir Programme* issued at the inauguration of the Monument on 10th October 1968 includes a page headed "The Woman (sic) in the Great Trek" written by Oberholster. It opens with the statement "Without the woman the Great Trek is unthinkable", sings her praises and concludes by informing that a place has been set aside in the 'courtyard' for a work of sculpture of a Voortrekker woman. According to Oberholster, "the profound symbolism of the monument (would thereby once again be) enhanced" as the woman was (the) "central, sheltered, unassuming source of power that turned the wheels of the Great Trek".

However, in February 1969, a few months after the inauguration, the VVMK disbanded (*Die Volksblad*, 6 Feb 1969). Whether the question of a statue to commemorate the role of the Voortrekker women ever resurfaced could not be established. According to Hallen the item was "endlessly deferred until it was generally agreed that the statue was not needed" (e-mail, 26 March 2012). The climax of a visit is thus not a shrine like the Pretoria monument, but the "intimate and protected space" which Hallen had conceived to speak of the "*Vrouens in die Trek*" (SAAR, August 1966, p30) and Ferreira qualifies as the "... *pretensielose bron van krag waarom die groot Trek gewentel het*" (the unpretentious source of strength around which the Trek revolved) (1975: 252).

Communicating the heart

A granite tablet affixed to the right of the space designated for a statue explains the symbolism of the monument. Interestingly, it is silent on both the women and the significance of the interior space. All it tells is that the light from the oculus which falls on the bronze plaque in the courtyard is symbolic of divine light. This begs the question, while the depiction of the role of the women appears genuine, was the committee ever serious about the inclusion of a statue?

In the New South Africa, the 16th of December remains a public holiday, no longer as "Day of the Vow" but as the 'Day of Reconciliation'. Regardless of name, it is long since the site has seen any celebration of *Gelofdefees*. Custodianship remains in the hands of the provincial authorities and the site is inaccessible as the gates are kept locked without any note of explanation. The water chain lies unused, the pump room accommodated in the banks of the knoll abandoned, and the outdoor theatre, also by Hallen, overgrown. To the uninitiated the sight of open trenches must look weird but as these were dug to facilitate the theft of the cables, the absence of the floodlights affixed the sides of the bowls is thus of little consequence. But the theft of the central bronze plaque is unconscionable and deeply lamentable. Faced with such disregard, one can only imagine what a statue might have suffered.



Figure 15
The abandoned water chain
of precast elements.



Figure 16
The deserted open-air theatre of low parallel seating walls
east of the monument, also designed by Hallen.



Figure 17
Stolen: the outer brass ring
marked the commencement
of the project in 1967
and the inner disc the
inauguration in 1968
(*Afrikanerbakens*, 2006: 119.
Photographer: Hendrik
Oosthuysen).



Figure 19
Current day photograph of the *beskutte ruimte* at the heart of the
monument designed to acknowledge the role of the women as "the
unpretentious source of strength around which the Trek revolved"
(Ferreira 1975:252).



Figure 18

Barefoot Voortrekker Woman on a farm in the Harrismith district looking back to (KwaZulu-) Natal. On accepting the capitulation of the short-lived trekker-founded Republic of Natalia, the women let the British officer know in no uncertain terms: “We would rather walk back over the Drakensberg barefoot than bend (again) under the British yoke” (Afrikanerbakens, 2006: 256-7. Photographer: Hendrik Oosthuysen).

Besides Van Wouw’s statue at the Pretoria monument, another exists on farm astride Retief Pass in the Harrismith district, unveiled 1977. This woman looks eastward, back to (KwaZulu-) Natal in which much blood was shed. [figure 18] She is known as the ‘barefoot woman’ who after the short-lived Boer Republic of Natalia, 1840-2, realized that the British annexation of Natal had concluded to the eastward Trek. The Voortrekker women then privately conferred with Henry Cloete, the British officer-in-command, surprisingly Afrikaner-born. They informed him of the tribulations endured, and that as co-trekkers they had earned the right of representation before startling him with their determination: “We will rather walk back over the Drakensberg barefoot than bend (again) under the British yoke” (*Afrikanerbakens*, 256-8). A good number of trekkers retreated in that direction, but probably shod.

Whatever statue might have been envisaged, was the location in the body of the monument the right place? What insults might the statue have had to suffer before being relocated, for example into the refuge and surveillance of a museum, either indoor or outdoor like the National Women’s monument in Bloemfontein, opened 1913. To boot, as proposed for Winburg, adult visitors would have looked down on the statue where woman and child would have been crouched on the floor bereft of even a pedestal.

However, if the place of the women is represented by the intimate and secluded heart of the monument, one can only hope that once a sizable circle of friends is rekindled, it will give priority to the appropriate communication of this space.

Notes

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| <p>1 Bunn makes no mention of this condition.</p> <p>2 In 1929 the <i>Afrikaner Broederbond</i>, a secret organization founded in 1918, spawned a public ‘front’, the Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniging, an umbrella body to coordinate and guide the work of Afrikaner cultural groups (Worden, N. 1998. <i>A Concise Dictionary of SA History</i>. Cape Town: Francolin).</p> | <p>3 Pietermaritzburg, Weenen, Danskraal at Ladysmith, Blood River, Blijdevoornitzicht at Harrismith, Thaba Nchu, Winburg, Vegkop at Heilbron, Potchefstroom, Pretoria and Ohrigstad (Ferreira 1975: 27-28).</p> <p>4 After serving as mayor of Bloemfontein, 1949-50, and rising up the ranks of the provincial National Party, sand merchant JWJC (Sand) Du Plessis was appointed Administrator of the Orange Free State in 1959, a position he held for a further term until 1969.</p> |
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El Greco's representation of the body of Christ in the *Crucifixion with Donors*: its mediation between the divine and the human

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The focus of this research is El Greco's representation of Christ on the cross in the *Crucifixion with Donors* (circa 1577-80, Musée du Louvre). This painting shows the semi-nude body of the centrally placed Christ figure gazing heavenward over his right shoulder. Notwithstanding the fact that crucifixion meant fatal torture, El Greco's representation of Christ's body, elegantly posed on the cross, omits references to violence, suffering and death, except for the shedding of a few drops of blood. It is argued that El Greco's depiction of the Christ figure's heavenwards directed gaze may be attributed to Plato's belief that love should transcend physical reality and move upward to the great love of God. By transforming the sensual beauty of a semi-naked male figure into a spiritually exalted body the artist conformed to the dictate of the Council of Trent regarding decorum. However, the sensual beauty of the Christ figure in the *Crucifixion with Donors* may also be ascribed to El Greco's tendency – as a presumably gay man – to sublimate male physical attraction in his paintings.

Key words: El Greco, *Crucifixion with Donors*, exalted body, mysticism, gay sublimation

El Greco se voorstelling van die liggaam van Christus in die *Kruisiging met skenkers* as tussenganger tussen die goddelike en die menslike

Die fokus van hierdie navorsing is El Greco se voorstelling van Christus aan die kruis in die *Kruisiging met skenkers* (circa 1577-80, Musée du Louvre). Die skildery toon die semi-naakte liggaam van die sentraal geplaasde Christusfiguur wat hemelwaarts oor sy regterskouer kyk. Nieteenstaande die feit dat kruisiging 'n noodlottige vorm van marteling was, toon El Greco se voorstelling van Christus se liggaam wat elegant op die kruis geposeer is, geen aanduiding van geweld, lyding en dood nie, behalwe die storting van enkele druppels bloed. Daar word aangevoer dat El Greco se uitbeelding van die Christusfiguur se hemelgerigte blik toegeskryf kan word aan Plato se opvatting dat liefde die fisieke werklikheid behoort te transendeer en opwaarts na die groot liefde vir God te beweeg. Deur die sensuele skoonheid van 'n semi-naakte manlike figuur in 'n verheerlikte geestelike liggaam te transformeer, het die kunstenaar 'n diktaat van die Konsilie van Trente ten opsigte van dekorum nagekom. Nitemin mag die sensuele skoonheid van die Christusfiguur in die *Kruisiging met skenkers* ook toegekryf word aan El Greco – wat waarskynlik 'n homoseksuele man was – se neiging om manlike liggaamlike aantreklikheid in sy skilderye te sublimeer.

Slutelwoorde: El Greco, *Kruisiging met skenkers*, verheerlikte liggaam, mistiek, homoseksuele sublimasie

In a significant number of El Greco's (1541-1614) paintings the figure of Christ is represented at their compositional centre. These expressive religious works invite the viewer to engage with the Christ image in the context of surrounding personae on various levels: physical, aesthetic, psychological and spiritual. This engagement requires an understanding of the late sixteenth-century historical framework of ideas relating to Roman Catholic sponsored religious art, as well as El Greco's personal manner of figural expression.

At the time of the Counter Reformation in Italy religious art was taken to be a serious means to deepen the encounter between the individual soul and God. At its last session in December 1561 the Council of Trent, the 19th Ecumenical Council of the Roman Catholic Church, defined the role assigned to the visual arts. Its recommendations regarding religious art, of which the Church was the main patron, can be summarised under three headings: 1. clarity, simplicity, and intelligibility; 2. realistic interpretation (unveiled truth, accuracy, decorum), and

3. providing emotional stimulus to piety.¹ It was avowed that piously correct images – i.e. those images that conformed to the dogma of the Catholic Church – should not only draw the faithful to devotion and appeal to their pious emotions, but also required a didactic approach to subject matter based on Biblical evidence.²

The question put forth in this research is how El Greco's representation of Christ on the cross in the *Crucifixion with Donors*, dating from *circa* 1580 (figure 1) conforms to the required decorum in a post-Tridentine context. The Catholic sensibility was clearly not offended by the scene in which El Greco's represents Christ's semi-nude body displayed on the cross at the moment of his encounter with death, since the picture was accepted as an altarpiece,³ and the Roman Catholic Church in Toledo continued its patronage of the artist.



Figure 1
El Greco, *Crucifixion with Donors*, oil on canvas, *circa* 1580, 250x180 cm,
originally from the Jesuit Church or San Juan Bautista Toledo,
Musée du Louvre, Paris (source: <http://www.wga.hu/index1.html>).

This attempt at an interpretation of the painting as religious art follows previous references in my research regarding the bodies of various semi-nude male figures in El Greco's oeuvre that may be called glorified or exalted.⁴ However, an equally rewarding enquiry would be one focussed on the personal meaning that El Greco evoked, albeit non-explicitly or "veiled", when representing a semi-nude male figure in a religious work, such as the *Crucifixion with Donors*.

The exalted body of Christ and its ideal beauty

Nowhere in the New Testament is there a physical description of Jesus. In the Gospel of John the divine masculinity of Jesus is emphasised, giving rise to the formulation of the Council of Chalcedon in 541, of Jesus as "perfect in Godhead and [...] perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man".⁵ This implies a Jesus figure of exceptional beauty. Beauty as the unity of the physical and the spiritual inspired many Medieval and Renaissance artists to contemplate this relationship in their representations of the idealised male figures endowed with grace (*grazia*⁶), especially that of Jesus.⁷ Moreover, beauty in Christian art can be formulated in terms of the mystical understanding of Saint John of the Cross (1542-91), a contemporary of El Greco (whom he most probably never met):

[The beholder] takes the contemplation of beauty, both in the created world of nature and the man-made world of art, as a serious means to help deepen the encounter between the individual soul and God. However, the object of beauty is to be seen as a means to an end and the Christian is not encouraged to remain with the object of love but continually to move onwards and upwards to the great love of God.⁸

The complex meaning of El Greco's crucifixion scene that merits detailed analysis visually echoes the metaphysics of Classical Greek and Christian beauty and love. Contemplating the exalted body of Christ on the cross in the *Crucifixion with Donors* should thus be a means to move the soul of the viewer to the great love of the transcendent God, that is "to a higher ontological level of glorious communion and union with God".⁹ This echoes Plato's metaphor of the "ladder of progression", also referred to as the "ladder of love", that leads to the realisation of ultimate beauty and love. In the *Symposium* Plato's argument is that *éros*, or erotic desire, should not be spent on the gratification of the flesh, but channelled to higher pursuits. Even though physical love and the admiration of beauty starts on a material level these pursuits should be developed to a spiritual level.¹⁰

El Greco's *Crucifixion with Donors*

The nude body of Christ on the cross has been variously portrayed by Western painters, most often in a realistic way to suggest the agony of death inflicted by crucifixion as the most inhumane of cruel tortures. However, during the Italian Renaissance painters have also portrayed the body of Christ on the cross in an idealised way, suggesting the perfection of the male nude without undue contortion, for example Michelangelo's depiction of *Christ on the Cross*,¹¹ that shows a well-proportioned muscular figure in a *contrapposto* pose and elongated proportions that is typical of Italian Mannerism.¹²

El Greco depicts the body of Christ on the cross against a backdrop of stormy clouds, witnessed by two donors. This is clearly not a realistic representation of the man who was tortured and demeaned to suffer the death of a criminal as described in the Gospels. The depicted body bears no marks of the lashes he received before being crowned with thorns, then nailed to the cross and, as a final blow, his side pierced by a spear to ensure his death (John 19:34). The Christ envisaged by El Greco barely sheds any blood – only a few drops trickle down his hands

and feet that are penetrated by nails, while the effect of the crown of thorns seems harmless.

As noted above, the depiction of the Christ figure in the *Crucifixion* that does not reveal the extent of the gruesome agony of the most cruel torture of crucifixion has various precedents. However, El Greco's painting is unique in its mystical meaning.

An analysis of this painting should start with its initial setting as an altarpiece, originally from the Jesuit Church or San Juan Bautista Toledo. It is contextualised as an altarpiece by the placement of the portraits of the two donors on both sides of the lower part of the painting on the level of the priest officiating during mass, thus forming a backdrop to the ritual. The congregation viewed the priest and the complete painting consisting of the portraits of the donors who view the body of Christ on the cross, and the crucified figure of Christ whose gaze is directed at a vision beyond human perception. The painting represents two visions: first, the vision of the donors beholding Christ, not as a mortal who is subject to the death of the flesh, but transformed as a spiritual being with an exalted body, and second, the vision of Christ whose gaze is fixed on His transcendent destiny.

The didactic message of the *Crucifixion with Donors* is clearly according to the dictates of Trente. It also conforms to the Platonic ideal that love should transcend physical reality and move upward to the greater love of God.

However, a secondary viewing may reveal a "veiled" subversion of a dictate of Trente – that the unveiled truth should be accurately and decorously represented.

El Greco's personal sexual identification and its relevance to the figure of the crucified Christ

In a petition of 1631, reference is made to the legitimate children of Jorge Manuel, being the grandchildren of "Dominico Greco and an unmarried woman" (Wethey 1962: 12). This statement leads to the consideration of the possibility that El Greco was a gay man who did not marry the mother of his son. If the artist indeed expressed his psychological attitude in the images of the semi-nude male bodies he created, the context and meaning of the elegant body of Christ in the *Crucifixion* changes.

After El Greco's death 400 years ago it cannot be finally proved that he had homo-erotic tendencies. However, Richard Mann (2011) writes:

Several subtle references to documents relating to El Greco affairs hit at the closeness of their relationship [that is with his Greek companion and assistant], although we, of course, have no firm proof about what they did in the "matrimonial bed" listed in the detailed inventory of El Greco's estate. Because sodomy was routinely punished by execution in Counter Reformation Spain, it is unlikely that any complete details of their relationship will be forthcoming.

Mann continues:

El Greco's depiction of the nude male figure is infused with intense sensual energy, as one can note in examining his many paintings of such religious subjects as Saint Sebastian and Christ on the Cross, as well as his occasional mythological themes, such as *Laocoön* (1610).

Sebastian (died 268 AD), a captain of the praetorian guards, was martyred under Emperor Maximian because of his conversion to Christianity, by being shot with arrows. Declared a saint he is the patron of archers, athletes, soldiers and is appealed to for protection against plagues.¹³ Ultimately he became the gay icon who is depicted with his flesh penetrated by "arrows of

desire”.¹⁴ He figures prominently in El Greco’s oeuvre.

In his first depiction of this saint, the *Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian*, it is notable that his source for the martyred figure might have been Michelangelo’s *Crucified Haman* on the Sistine Chapel ceiling, as pointed out by Harold E. Wethey (1962: 37). The figure of a crucified man, or Haman, on the east side of the Sistine Chapel ceiling, aspires upwards, seemingly unaffected by physical agony.¹⁵ The body type and pose of El Greco’s saint are variations of the Haman figure, but his tortured expression and twisted torso have been modified. While the crucified figure raises himself into space, El Greco’s St Sebastian is bound to a tree, following the traditional iconography of depicting the saint, mostly alone in a landscape, whose body is penetrated by arrows, but reveals no agony (figure 2). Also in El Greco’s presentation the archers are absent after having delivered their arrows from the left side of the figure, a fact suggested by the angle at which the arrows penetrate both the tree and the figure. Instead of showing the saint riddled by arrows as in various representation by other artists, only one arrow penetrates his heart, while one which has missed his body has landed in the tree.



Figure 2

El Greco, *The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian*, circa 1576-1579, oil on canvas, 152x191 cm, Sacristy of Palencia Cathedral, Spain (source: <http://www.wga.hu/index1.html>).

Images of the martyred saint by Tiziano Vecellio (1488-1576), Il Tintoretto (1518-94)¹⁶ and earlier Renaissance artists, such as Carlo Crivelli (1430/5-94) (figure 3), and Antonello da Messina (1430-79) (figure 4). While the Saint Sebastian figure in Crivelli’s painting is standing to the left of the enthroned Madonna, he shows no sign of agony; on the contrary he casts a sly glance to his left, while Saint Francis gazes at the Madonna and her Child. Antonello’s representation is more conventional than that of El Greco, who conforms to the iconographical

practice only in so far as he represents the saint as bound, his flesh penetrated by an arrow in his heart, but still alive. El Greco's interpretation of the martyr conforms to the standard practice by not revealing any signs of physical suffering. In this respect, J. Gudiol's (1973: 53) words are appropriate: "El Greco shows restraint in depicting cruelty. Compared with other versions, which are literally held together by arrows [figure 5], he presents us with a youthful figure wounded by a single dart." It seems valid to say that El Greco deliberately denied the passivity of captivity in his representation of the figure of St Sebastian, since the bound figure's pose is neither completely passive or static. Rather, in emulation of the Haman figure whose ascending movement reveals a transcendental urge to overcome death, he is not passively resigned to his fate – which is a deviation from the standard iconography. The suggestion in El Greco's *Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian* is that resurrection occurs at the instant of death, as suggested by the figure's stance: he is set to rise upwards. This anticipated movement is evident from the positioning of his feet, and the direction of his gaze towards the source of light. Both knees are bent, and the displacement of the body's mass onto the toes implies that he is at the point of standing up in order to move to freedom. Thus his action calls to mind that the crucified Christ in the *Crucifixion* – whose flesh had also been penetrated, by nails and a spear – aspiring to spiritual transcendence.



Figure 3
Carlo Crivelli, *The Madonna Enthroned with Child and Saint Francis and Saint Sebastian*, 1490, egg and oil on poplar, 175,3x151,1 cm, National Gallery, London (source: <http://commons.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:CarloCrivelli>).



Figure 4
Antonello da Messina, *Saint Sebastian*, 1477-79, oil on canvas transferred on table, 171x85 cm, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden (source: <http://www.wga.hu/index1.html>).

Paradoxically, the later figure of St Sebastian depicted by El Greco is bound and cannot rise to escape as the power in his muscular legs, tensed in preparation for activity, would suggest. This irony is noted by Camón Aznar (1970: 415) who describes his depiction of Saint Sebastian as follows:

Su rostro no indica sufrimiento, sino éxtasis, del que no le arrancan las flechas clavadas en su carne. Su torso, admirablemente dibujado, es lo más escultórico de toda la figura. El vientre, las piernas y el brazo izquierdo tienen una movilidad y fluencia, una cierta violencia de escorzo, un inquietud de líneas y de planos que acreditan la personalidad del Greco y presagian sus posteriores temblores.

In the above quotation, Camón Aznar suggests a trait in the work of El Greco which superficially resembles the ambiguity in representations of stillness and movement in Mannerist paintings.¹⁷

While no depiction of Saint Sebastian by any artist reveals any suffering, the ecstasy that Camón Aznar notes in El Greco's saint, depicted as the paragon of male beauty, is unique.¹⁸

Conclusion

Near the end of his life, in 1612, El Greco depicted a different Saint Sebastian figure who may evoke an assessment of his portrayal of what Mann designates "the nude male figure are infused with intense sensual energy". In this mutilated painting the martyr is standing alone in a Toledan landscape as a passive man, bound and penetrated by arrows (figure 5). Was this lonely, muscular figure who invokes heaven with his gaze El Greco's bearer of the final sublimated message of his homo-erotic disposition that could never be acknowledge in Spain, where homosexuals were persecuted by the Inquisition and burnt at the stake?

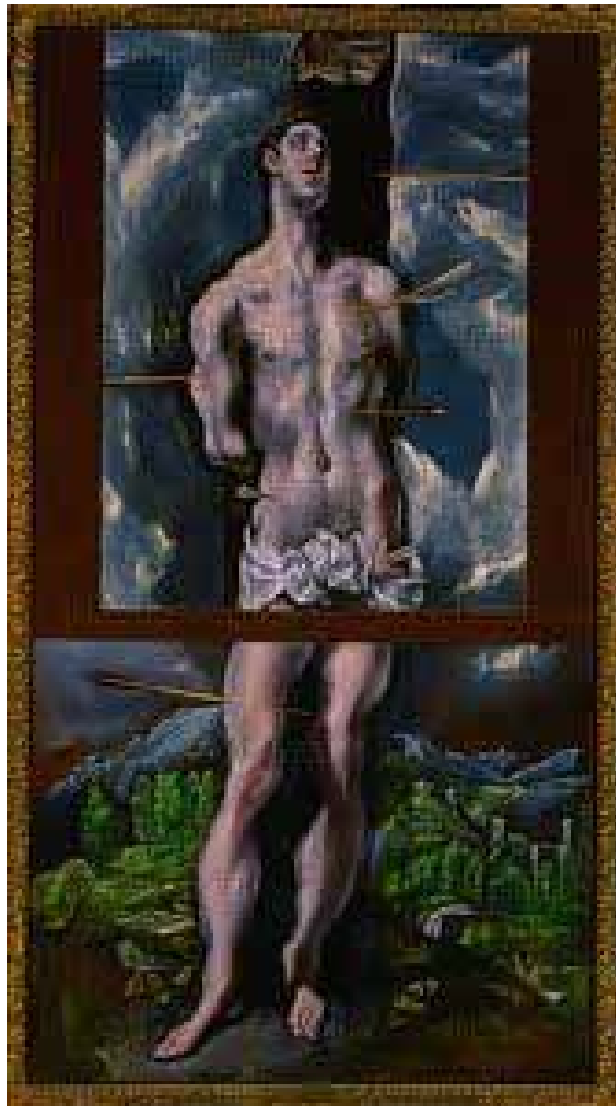


Figure 5
El Greco, *Saint Sebastian*, 1612, oil on canvas, 115x87 cm,
Museo del Prado, Madrid (source: <http://www.wikipaintings.org/en/el-greco.st-sebastian-2>).

In the context of gay eroticism it may be postulated that in El Greco's depiction of the body of Christ on the cross in the *Crucifixion* the male body is presented as an object of contemplation that follows the Platonic process of spiritual achievement: love as *éros* should transcend the

physical attraction and move upward to the greater love of God. However, the painter's vision of Christ's ascent toward God becomes a simultaneous descent into himself – a self-revelation.

It seems like a contradiction that eroticism be a means to a spiritual end; that contemplating the sensuously depicted body be an act of mediation between the divine and the human. This speculation raises various questions: Is the body more important than the soul in the *Crucifixion*? Clearly Christ's body is the most prominent feature in the painting and its viewing raises the question if its elegantly composed *serpentinata* form is actually spiritually exalted. How does the semi-nude sensuous male body exclude the beholder's engagement with its sexuality? If the Tridentine recommendation that art be an "emotional stimulus to piety" is subverted in El Greco's painting, to become a "veiled truth" of his personal disposition, the resulting paradox is difficult to resolve.

Notes

- 1 These recommendations are summarised by Witcombe from the interpretations of various art historians.
- 2 See Maré (2009) and (2011).
- 3 Various erroneous theories about its origin have been advanced, but according to Wethey (1962, volume II: 45) "the picture is known to have come from the Jesuit church in Toledo".
- 4 The term "exalted" was first used by the present author in relation to semi-nude figures in El Greco's religious paintings (Maré 2011).
- 5 See Conway (2008: 143-57).
- 6 In this regard the statement by Rogers (2010: 129) is pertinent: "The general notion found in Aristotelian physiognomy theory, and elsewhere in physiological and medical writings, that the outward forms of the body in one way or the other indicated its inward character was all pervasive in the Renaissance, however, and came to be reinforced by the later cult of physical beauty as related to inner grace."
- 7 Bull (1965: 20) defines *grazia* as "a quality suggesting softness, facility, and appropriateness."
- 8 Formulated by Tyler (1908: 120) to explain the mystical understanding of beauty in Christian art, more specifically in the poetry of Saint John of the Cross.
- 9 Novello (2011: 9) states that in Christian theology "[T]he purpose of the Incarnation of the Word [that is of Christ assuming a human body] [...] must be elaborated in terms of the constructive work of elevating the whole of reality to a higher nature, that is, to a higher ontological level of glorious communication and union with God".
- 10 El Greco was an intellectual Greek and was most certainly versed in Plato's ideas. The artist had an extensive library. During his lifetime, El Greco was considered to be a philosopher, a scholar and a humanist, and the contents of his library testify to his wide range of interests. He read works in classical Greek, Italian and later also in Spanish. As one might expect of a painter in the service of patrons such as Diego de Castilla, the Dean of Toledo Cathedral, El Greco was well versed in the history of the Roman Catholic Church and its liturgy.
- 11 Therefore, one may also assume that he kept in his possession the Resolutions of the Council of Trent. See San Román (1910: 1957), San Román (1927a: 139-95) and San Román (1927b: 275-339).
- 12 Michelangelo, *Christ on the Cross*, 1540-41, black and white chalk drawing, 36,8x26,8 cm, circa. 1540, British Museum, London.
- 13 The *contrapposto* pose is typical of Italian Mannerism. It is "a type of pose in which the different parts of the body are disposed along contrasting axes to create a complex, highly artificial and graceful equilibrium" (Hope 1980: 42). It is usually also characterised by the elongation of the body to enhance its artificiality and gracefulness. It is therefore understandable that in his annotations to Vitruvius's *De architectura* El Greco noted that he admired the elongated proportions of Michelangelo's figural canon (Boubli 2003: 214 and note 13).

- 13 For a description of Saint Sebastian's see The Catholic Encyclopedia Online, retrieved 2012/05-20 from http://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?sant_id=104. The historical man who became the patron saint of soldiers and athletes actually survived the ordeal of being shot at by Roman soldiers. Since he survived the ordeal Sebastian also became the plague saint during Roman and Medieval times.
- 14 See Darwent (2012).
- 15 Wind (1937-38: 147) explains the Haman figure as follows: "Michelangelo recognized in this image the metaphor of the act of redemption: from a parodistic copy Haman rises again to the tragic role of a forerunner of Christ."
- 16 There is reason to doubt the possibility that El Greco had seen the representations of Saint Sebastian by Tiziano Vecellio in the Resurrection polyptychs, Church of Saints Nazaro and Celso, Brescia, or Il Tintoretto, because the Scuola di San Rocco paintings had not been completed late in 1570 when he left Venice for Rome and most probably never returned there.
- 17 A typical example of this phenomenon is the stance of the figure holding the body of Christ in Jacopo Pontormo's (1494-1557) *Deposition from the Cross* (1525-28, oil on wood, 313x192 cm, Church of Santa Felicità, Florence). This figure, with bent knees, maintains his crouching position under the load of a dead body in a seemingly effortless way that may be interpreted as either or neither passive or active. This ambiguity also persists in various of El Greco's figural representations.
- 18 This may be a veiled allusion to the sado-masochist erotic pleasure of pain symbolised in this figure. This psychological attitude amongst gay men was first expressed by Yukio Mishima, the Japanese writer. See Darwent (2008).

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Body construction and representation: anatomical waxes in the *Museo La Specola*

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The *Museo La Specola* in Florence houses a large collection of anatomical waxes, an art developed in that city under the patronage of the Medici family in the 17th century for the purpose of teaching medicine. This article explores the waxes as representative of diachronically a key moment in the history of body construction, and specifically one where art and medicine interface; and also synchronically as a key strategy in body representation. In *Fragments for a History of the Human Body* (1989) Michel Feher distinguishes body construction on three axes: top to bottom – proximities between divine and human bodies; transversal – relationships between the inside and outside of bodies; and horizontal – connections between organs and the social functions of the body. This article argues that the anatomical waxes in Florence display aspects of all three axes and that they do so in surprising ways which can only be experienced within the context of their presentation in the *Museo La Specola* situated in Florence.

Key words: body, construction, representation, anatomical waxes

Liggaamskonstruksie- en representasie: anatomiese wakswerke in die *Museo La Specola*

Die *Museo La Specola* in Florence huisves a groot versameling anatomiese waswerke, 'n kuns ontwikkel in daardie stad as gevolg van die ondersteuning van die Medici familie in the 17de eeu met die oog op mediese opleiding. Hierdie artikel ondersoek die waswerke as verteenwoordigend van 'n diakroniese oomblik in die geskiedenis van liggaamskonstruksie en spesifiek van 'n samekoms van die kuns en die mediese dissipline; maar ook sinkronies as 'n kernstrategie in representasie van die liggaam. In sy *Fragments for a History of the Human Body* (1989) onderskei Michel Feher tussen drie verhoudings met betrekking tot liggaamskonstruksie en -representasie: van bo na onder – verhoudings tussen goddelike en menslike liggame; transversaal – verhoudings tussen die binnekant en buitekant van liggame; en horisontaal – verhoudings tussen organe en die sosiale funksie van die liggaam. Hierdie artikel poneer dat die anatomiese waswerke in die *Museo La Specola* al drie tipe verhoudinge vertoon en dat hulle dit doen op maniere wat slegs ondervind kan word binne die konteks van hul aanbieding in the *Museo La Specola* in Florence.

Sleutelwoorde: liggaam, konstruksie, representasie, anatomiese waswerke

A year ago I went to Italy to explore the *Museo La Specola* at the University of Florence. In this museum one can see the famous anatomical waxes created for the instruction of medical students in the 18th Century. The waxes were created within a context where the study of anatomy was flourishing in the Age of Enlightenment. Nowhere was this more true than in 18th-Century Florence, where a school of ceroplastics was founded and linked to the Medical School of Bologna through the intervention of the surgeon and child-birth specialist Giuseppe Galetti working alongside the founder Felice Fontana, who – together with his apprentices and successors (such as Giuseppe Ferrini and Clemente Susini – created many of the most spectacular anatomical waxes during the heyday of the ceroplastics school in the years around 1771-1831. The waxes were intended for medical study and the assistance of surgeons when operating on real bodies. At *La Specola*, documents show that more than two hundred corpses were necessary

to learn the anatomy necessary for producing one of the waxes. Nearby, the Hospital Santa Maria Nuova provided these corpses in an age prior to refrigeration when they could not last more than a few days of scientific scrutiny. (See *Encyclopaedia Anatomica*, s.a.: 12-13.)

It is unknown where the waxes were actually made and only some indications of instruments and other tools used are now extant. Alongside displays of these, the waxes in *La Specola* on exhibition today count 513 of the human anatomy. There are 26 whole figures, 18 of which are life-size; and there are 800 framed drawings and 900 explanatory notes. Although many of the notes and drawings are now facsimiles to protect the originals from light degradation, the museum still acts as a scientific repository for teaching purposes. Apart from this function, the anatomical waxes also prompt reflection on the history of body construction and representation. This article considers some issues around body construction and representation, returns to the anatomical waxes in this respect, and concludes with some thoughts around a direct and embodied experience of the waxes *in situ* at the *La Specola*.

Where he introduces a series of publications on the body entitled *Fragments for a History of the Body* (1989), Michel Feher distinguishes three axes according to which the series is presented in three parts. One axis involves the *vertical* body through which relationships between the human and the divine are intimated. Feher writes: "...a vertical axis begins at the top and measures the distance and proximity between divinity and the human body. The question is: what kind of body do the Greeks, Christians, Jews, Chinese endow themselves with – or attempt to acquire – given the power they attribute to the divine" (Feher 1989: 13).

What kinds of metaphors, metonyms, gestures and directions are deployed to connect the human with the divine? Wings, proximities to the gods, depictions of miracles emanating from the head, mortifications of the flesh, upward gestures and eyes staring to the heavens are some of the ways in which bodies have been represented to construct a relationship between the human and the divine, with the vertical of the cross being the central directional device in Christian art.

A Medieval fresco depicting *The Miracle of Bolsena* in 1263 shows the Consecration of the Host by a German priest, Peter of Prague, who had found it difficult to believe that Christ was actually present in the Host. While delivering the Mass, blood was said to emanate from the Host to trickle across the altar and over the priest's hands in a miraculous event which connected him directly with Christ. The fresco makes a direct vertical link between the priest and the spiritual realm in the upper part of the work and does so through a tiny figure of Christ holding his Cross and held on the head of Peter of Prague by the priest's own hands. This is an example of body construction and representation on an axis involving the *vertical* body through which relationships between the human and the divine are intimated.

In this fresco, the upward movement of the priest's arms, the lances and candlesticks positioned diagonally and vertically, as well as the upward glances of the faithful and the perspective of the altar table contribute to the vertical axis of the representation of the miracle. All these elements combine to steer the viewer's focus towards the relationship between the human body and the divine realm.

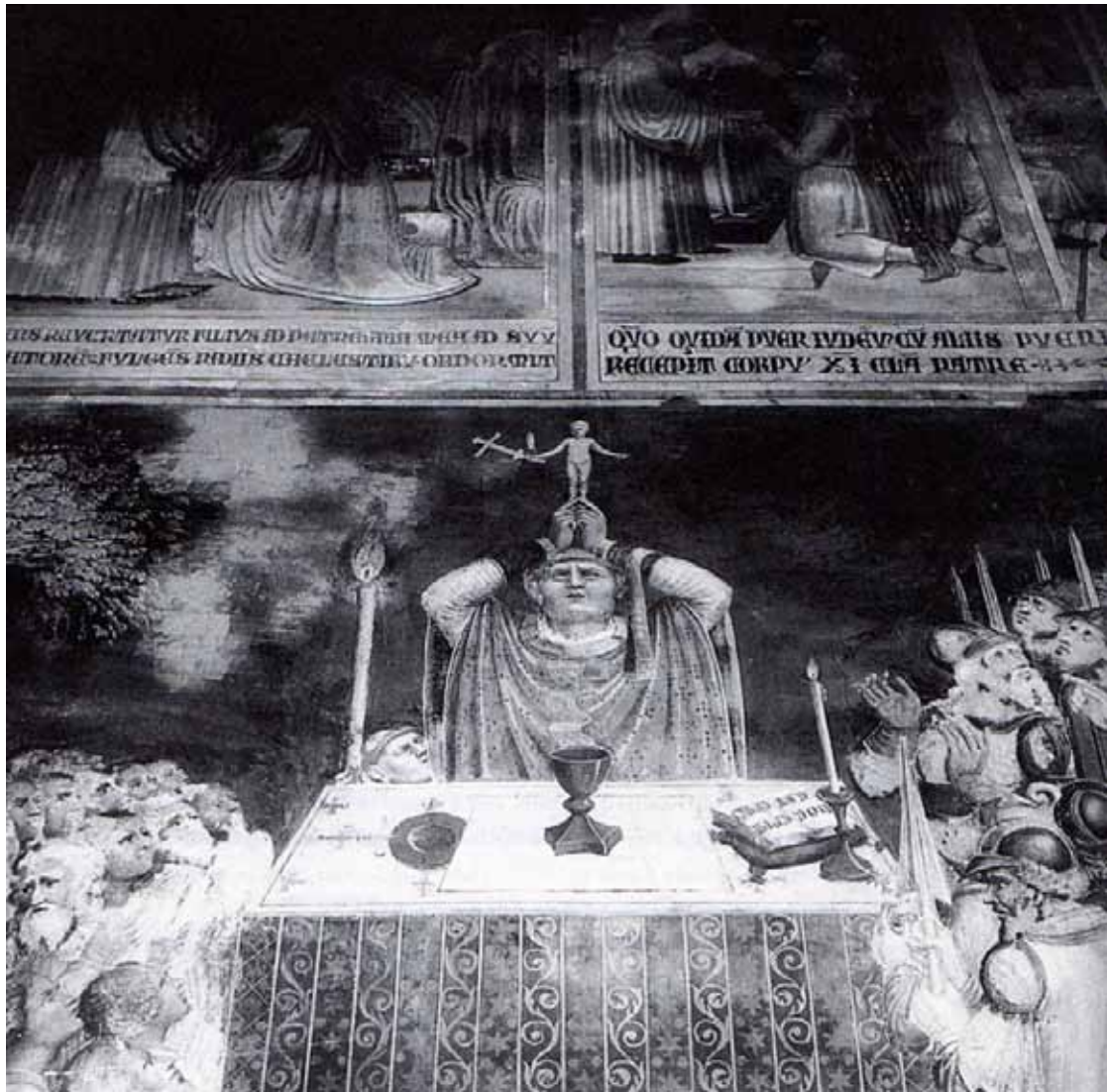


Figure 1
Anonymous, *The Miracle of Bolsena*
 (1263, fresco, Cathedral of Orvieto, Italy).

A second axis is called the *transversal*, “how the ‘inside’ relates to the ‘outside’”(Feher 1989: 14). In the Islamic world of the late Middle Ages and later in Christian Europe, dissection to investigate the relationships between outside and inside advanced medical knowledge of the body. These efforts are reflected in the visual arts, with Leonardo being a well-known protagonist in the history of anatomical visualisation. In 1600, Ludovico Cardi made the first anatomical sculpture of which the Italian title translates as “flayed man”. The Dutch were not far behind in their fascination with dissection of the body, with the famous dissection theatre at the University of Leiden finding its way into many depictions and stories such as where W. G. Sebald discusses the relationship between dissection and the criminal body sent to such theatres from the prisons of Europe. Sebald’s 2002 novel entitled *The Rings of Saturn* considers the relationship between anatomist, cadaver and spectators in situations where the inside of the body is exposed to the outside for the onlooker to stare at. Natalie Alvarez focuses on the same issue in 2011 in her article called “The Early Modern Anatomical Theatre and the Danse Macabre of Theatrical ‘Looking’”. Both authors highlight the macabre aspects of this kind of looking into the body of the absented individual represented by the flayed or partly flayed cadaver.



Figure 2
Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp*
 (1632, oil on canvas, 300 x 225 cm, Mauritshuis, The Hague).

Throughout the 17th and the 18th Century the act of dissection was then recorded in the aforementioned anatomical waxes when Italian artists such as Gaetano Zumbo and later Fontana and Ferrini and Susini bridged the gap between process and its documentation in the pliable medium of wax. The anatomical waxes in *La Specola* are the results of their endeavours. These waxes take the transversal relationship between inside and outside further than any works preceding them. In Rembrandt's *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp*, there is still a measure of reticence about displaying the flayed cadaver, with the dissected part the furthest away from the viewer of the painting. *La Specola's* waxes show nothing of this reticence, rather the opposite, as their waxen bodies display every detail of the human body as studied from the hospital corpses. In some instances, however, we see an attempt at aestheticisation, where the female body is only partly dissected with the rest idealised and presented in the manner of the trope of the classical nude in Western art.



Figure 3
Gaetano Zumbo, *Dissection of a Head*
 (1701, wax, Museo La Specola, Florence).



Figure 4
Clemente Susini, *Reclining Female Figure*
(late 18th Century, wax, *La Museo Specola*, Florence).

From Italy, such practices spread to England, while other materials were used in other countries. Nearer and into our own time, the fascination with the relationships between the outside of the body and what lies beneath continued in the life class which is still taught in art schools across the world. Depictions of the dissected body also gained momentum after World War 1 when reconstructions of broken bodies became a major focus for the medical profession, while artists such as Georg Grosz and Otto Dix relayed their bitter critique of the war's effects on the transversal body through the cut and slash and bite of printmaking tools and materials. On a wholly different level, plastic surgery such as rhytidoplasty for the removal of wrinkles have now become an everyday occurrence for some, signalling a trajectory of inside-outside manipulations of the body harking back to early prototypes on the dissection table of anatomy theatres and the critical practices of artists like Grosz and Dix.



Figures 5 and 6
Jacques Joseph (Surgeon) *Reconstructive Plastic Surgery post-World War One* &
Otto Dix, *Transplantation*
(1926, photograph and etching from *Der Krieg* Series, whereabouts unknown).

Michel Feher also focuses on the *horizontal* body where relationships between organs and society are paramount. He writes: “organs and bodily substances are metaphors or models for the functioning of human society and the roles people play in society” (Feher 1989: 15). Mappings of the body often ascribe particular social functions to organs and body parts or connections between the inside of the body are made to the outside to indicate the body’s situatedness within a larger societal network. Organs and gender roles are depicted – Feher talks about a politics or rivalry of the body where uterus and penis, female and male seeds compete within an embryo. In other works they are shown as complementary and central to the cycle of the seasons. Bodies, body parts and their measurements and appearances have also undergone phrenological interpretations and we are left with whole histories of prejudice based on the constructed connections between body parts and social behaviours.

The endeavours of Alphonse Bertillon of the *Préfecture de Police* in Paris late in the 19th Century are a case in point. He set out to document the body parts and bodily imprints of all known French criminals at the time in order to construct a theory of common denominators of the criminal appearance for early detection or prevention of future crimes. The relationship between body and social crime is also the central theme of George Franju’s film entitled *Eyes without a Face* (1959) in which a renowned surgeon kidnaps young girls and removes their faces to graft onto his own daughter’s head after she was brutally disfigured in an accident. In the film he transforms from surgeon to torturer.



Figures 7 & 8
Alphonse Bertillon, *Left-hand Print of Arthur Joseph Mallet*
(1885, Archives of the *Préfecture de Police*, Paris)
George Franju, *Eyes without a Face*
(1959, movie still).

Many other artists have explored the horizontal body, i.e. the body and its social relationships. Billy Wilder’s film entitled *Fedora* (1978) comments on the relationship between aesthetic surgery and film itself as a medium. Tony Oursler’s series on the body and mental states come to mind as do John Isaacs’s bodies and society series, Marc Quinn’s interpretation of the body and the seven deadly sins, Beth B’s work on obesity and anorexia, Terry Gilliam and David LaChapelle on surgery and the social body, Bill Viola on the extraction of rotten teeth as a metaphor for the cleansing of society. And, last but not least of these examples, Damien Hirst’s monumental vitrine with surgical equipment – a kind of anti-monument to our times and its history stretching back to early anatomical analysis and dissection.



Figure 9
Damine Hirst, *Still*

(1994, glass vitrine with surgical instruments, Collection of the Tate Modern, London).

Earlier, two examples of the anatomical waxes to be seen in the *Museo La Specola* at the University of Florence were reproduced. A focus on the waxes now follows in relation to the contention that the anatomical waxes display aspects of all three axes identified by Michel Feher and that they do so in surprising ways which can only be experienced within the context of their presentation in the *Museo La Specola*.

Firstly a few notes on the exhibition context of the waxes. *La Specola* consists of 34 rooms packed with literally millions of specimens: fossils, rocks, minerals, shells, insects, and taxidermied birds, fish, and mammals. Oddly, the collection even include a stuffed hippopotamus which used to be a family pet of the Medici household and which lived in the Boboli Gardens behind the Palazzo Pitti, which is now a museum for Italian art around the corner of *La Specola*, which of course means ‘observatory’. One walks through room after room, row after row, observing specimens of species in ascending order: from minerals through shell fossils through butterflies through antelopes, to lions. There is only one entrance and one exit. Near the exit, near the height of the experience, one comes upon the species ‘mankind’. Ironically, after all the taxidermy, humans are not shown in this way but represented in the medium of wax. Real flesh and feathers and fur are behind us in the building and now wax is everywhere. Even in a collection of famous art works replicated in wax, one’s attention is held by the substitute for human flesh: wax. All the famous anatomists and modellers connected to the Medical School of Bologna and to the University of Florence School of Medicine are represented. Their knowledge of the human body and their skills in replicating its intricacies are on display. Materials, tools, registers and models for the making of the waxes are exhibited. Lists of corpses provided by the hospital nearby can be read on the walls. These corpses are now absent and *in memoriam* represented by the waxes. Trying to find a way to simplify one’s reporting on this enormous collection, one strategy is to focus on skull, eye, torso and hand.

In strands of 18th-Century thinking – such as in Antonio Genovesi’s ideas around psychoscopy – the mind is paramount and housed in the skull which protects it; an idea lovingly executed by the wax modeller, Giovanni Zumbo. Genovesi’s ideas were known in Florence at the time when the waxes were made as his main patron, Bartolomeo Intieri, lived there and was visited by Genovesi (see Steiner, 1999: 77). The paramount mind looks up *vertically* through the eyes towards the divine and away from the earth.



Figure 10
Giovanni Zumbo, *Specimen of a Head Looking Upwards*
 (1703, wax, *La Specola*, Florence).

Rene Descartes's emphasis on the *horizontal*, social functions of the eye, on observation in the arrival at the truth about the earth and all its creatures, also circulated in 18th-Century Italy, so much so that the Italian Enlightenment philosopher Giambattista Vico remarked on his return from Spain that Descartes's ideas about the centrality of vision had become entrenched in Italian intellectual and artistic circles (see Hueglin, 2007: 16). The emphasis on the eye is almost obsessive in *La Specola*'s final rooms. Many models of eyes and eye-balls are to be seen in vitrines and one finds oneself being looked at at every turn, sometimes through half-closed eyes which seem in the act of opening fully in a beautiful face attached to a flayed body.



Figures 11 & 12
Anonymous, *Various Models of the Eye-ball* and detail of a *Male Torso*
 (late 18th Century, wax, *La Specola*, Florence).

Many of the waxes focus on the torso and the vital organs contained therein: womb and mammary glands, heart and lungs. Leslie M. Whetstine points out in her book entitled *The History of the*

Definition(s) of Death from the 18th Century to the 20th Century (2008) that ideas about organ failure leading to death in the 18th Century were confused. Some believed that death resulted from heart failure; some believed it was due to heart *and* lung failure and some believed the kidneys were the culprits. In some wax works the whole body is shown but with an emphasis on the torso. The organs contained within the torso spill out to create a sense of their extended scale outside the confines of the body. The modeller used this opportunity to suggest a flowering of organs, a benedictory attention to the body which has been laid open to *transversal* scrutiny. If the inside has to come outside, it is in need of dignification.

Arguably one of the most surprising aspects of the waxes is the attention to the hand. We know from Renaissance art theory how important the hand and its gestures were. Andrea de Jorio (1769-1851) compiled 380 pages of text with 19 pages of small thumbnail sketches to document hand gestures derived from Roman art, developed further in the Renaissance and evident in Italian art after the Renaissance. In Florence, the wax modeller bestows the object for medical instruction with subjectivity through attention to its particularity: only a human hand can look like this, only a young woman's finger can bend like this: I recognise my daughter's hand in such an image.



Figure 13
Anonymous, detail of a *Body with Hand*
 (late 18th Century, wax and human hair, *La Specola*, Florence).

Three axes of body construction and representation in *La Specola*: transversal, horizontal, vertical. This article concludes with an image of a full body anatomical wax, roughly three quarter size of the bodies we know today but probably a full body size for the 18th Century. Within the context of *La Specola* with its 34 rooms of specimens, the ontological status of this object is clearly further away from representation and closer to construction: it is not the corpse which arrived from the prison hospital, it is not a taxidermied variant of that corpse; it is an instructional tool fashioned according to the pedagogical needs of its time. But it is also a sculpture, a work of art; because it manifests the ideas of its time and embodies the artistic conventions they were connected to. One may remember here that it was Giambattista Vico who insisted in late 17th- and early 18th- Century Italy that human endeavours do not only represent the natural world, they also construct according to cultural convention (see Pompa 1982: 22-28). In this wax model we see – through the reflections of the glass vitrine inside which it is entombed – the *vertical* yearning for connection between the human and the divine; the *transversal* link between inside and outside; and the *horizontal*, social appeal to us as interlocutors to share a conventional language of gestures.



Figure 14
Anonymous, *Figure of a Man*
(Late 18th Century, wax, *La Specola*, Florence)

I left *La Specola* strangely moved. I imagined corpses arriving at the University of Florence in the 18th Century from the prison hospital of Santa Maria Nuova. I envisaged the clinical actions of dissection. A forensic curator at the museum explained some of these actions and also pointed out that only a severe disciplining of normal responses to a body one recognises as belonging to one's own species can make these actions possible. Later, walking in the Boboli Gardens on the hill behind *La Specola*, I imagined the Medici hippopotamus pet living there amongst the trees. And, I wondered about the modellers of the *La Specola* anatomical waxes and their dignifying of the transversal, dissected human body through its vertical and horizontal relationships with the divine and social realms.

Gunther von Hagens' recent exhibition entitled *Body Works* throws an uncanny perspective on the *La Specola* waxes. Where they dignify, his works seems to debase. The line between the represented or constructed and the real is overstepped; the line between art and life, so to say. Von Hagens was an anatomist at the University of Heidelberg where he developed a technique of plastination in the late 1970s, through which actual human bodies are treated to reveal anatomical structures. These items have been exhibited in various major centres since 1995, including a 2010 show at the *Telus World of Science* in Vancouver. Purportedly aimed at education towards better health awareness, the collection curiously includes a plastinated giraffe in direct reference to the Boboli Gardens' hippopotamus. But again debasement rather than dignifying occurs: no covering skin, no protection against the brutal invasion of the all-seeing eye. In contrast, the *La Specola* anatomical waxes, and the taxidermied animals preceding them in that space, reverently remain within the domains of science and art as frameworks for body construction and representation wherein a distance from 'life' is maintained.

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Le Corbusier and the human body

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Le Corbusier (1887-1965), the famous Swiss-French artist, architect and town planner – celebrated as he is – is also widely criticised for allegedly dehumanising cities, ignoring the dignity of the individual and for introducing an alienating architecture and urbanism. Although the “Modulor” system he developed in the late 1940s in order to relate the human body to dimensions in the built environment is well known, in numerous manifestos and writings spanning fifty years, he also consistently confirmed his compassion for the human well-being and quality of life at all levels. Since his ideology is so diametrically opposed to that of which he is accused, this article explores the actual role of the human body in his work.

Key words: Le Corbusier, human body, Modulor

Le Corbusier en die menslike liggaam

Le Corbusier (1887-1965), die beroemde Switser-Franse kunstenaar, argitek en stadsbeplanner – vereerd soos hy is – word ook wyd gekritiseer omdat hy na bewering stede ontmenslik het, die waardigheid van individue geïgnoreer het en omdat hy ’n argitektuur en stedelikheid van vervreemding ingelei het. Alhoewel die “Modulor”-stelsel wat hy in die laat veertigerjare van die vorige eeu ontwikkel het om die menslike liggaam in verband te bring met afmetings in die bou-omgewing goed bekend is, het hy ook in talle verklarings en geskrifte, wat vyftig jaar gedek het, bestendig sy deernis vir menslike welstand en kwaliteit van lewe op alle vlakke bevestig. Aangesien sy ideologie geheel en al teenoorgesteld is waarvan hy beskuldig word, ondersoek hierdie artikel die werklike rol van die menslike liggaam in sy werk.

Sleutelwoorde: Le Corbusier, menslike liggaam, Modulor

Few architectural statements have been so persistently misunderstood and misquoted as Le Corbusier’s statement that “a house is a machine for living in”. First published in French in 1923 (*Vers une Architecture*), his critics have ever since been relentlessly accusing him of dehumanising architecture and town planning, of alienating the public, and of neglecting basic human needs. Now, nearly a century later, we still read (Gratz and Mintz 2000: 72): “Le Corbusier changed the view of cities. Buildings became machines. Cities were dehumanized.”

Sometimes the language is melodramatic. Bangs (2006: 3-4) writes that Le Corbusier considered the Pavillon de l’Esprit Nouveau (1925) a “minimum living unit” which he – “appropriately”, according to Bangs – called the “cell”. The author continues: “The arrogance and ignorance expressed in this statement are appalling, and the implications for the dignity of human life are fearful.” Bangs apparently did not realise that the “cell” referred to is the biological analogy for Le Corbusier’s basic urban building block. Rob Krier (1988: 11) is considerably more acknowledging:

Despite severe economic restraints, Le Corbusier created a living-cell for a family with several children that enjoyed the luxury of a double-height living room in his Unité d’Habitation. It was an achievement that upgraded social housing enormously.

Also, Hugh Pouliot (2011: 2) states disparagingly: “The social environments formed out of [Le Corbusier’s] style were mechanistic, alienating, and structured more toward industrial efficiency than human habitation”. This judgment is particularly puzzling, since the author, Pouliot (2011: 10), also notes that:

One of Le Corbusier’s close colleagues, André Wogenscky, with whom he collaborated on the Unité at Marseilles, remarked that “deep down it was not architecture that interested [Le Corbusier], but people. Architecture was simply his means of affecting them.

Since he worked in Le Corbusier’s Paris studio for twenty years (1936–56), André Wogenscky is unquestionably a reliable source. A formidable architect in his own right, he was perhaps echoing Le Corbusier when he described architecture as a “physical milieu [into] which the body is plunged” (quoted in Postiglione 2008: 466).

Balkrishna Doshi (in Takhar 2002: 57-8), the celebrated Indian architect who worked with Le Corbusier as Senior Designer for four years (1951-54) in Paris and four more years in India to supervise his projects in Ahmedabad, is obviously equally trustworthy. He relates how Le Corbusier drew a beautiful, but obviously poor Indian woman, “full of grace and dignity holding on her waist a child” and then commented poignantly: “In our cities, somehow we must see that opportunities which offer such dignity are provided”.

Wogenscky and Doshi both allude to an intense and enduring relationship between Le Corbusier’s architecture and the people for whom it is intended. They simply affirm what Le Corbusier (1954: 111) declared previously: “Only the architect can strike the balance between man and his environment (man = psycho-physiology; his environment = the universe: nature and cosmos).” It is significant that he recognises that “man” consists of psychological (emotional) as well as physiological (physical) dimensions. Ferreira, De Mello and Duarte (2011: 138) comment that Le Corbusier tried to express this in his work, and added that his position was “a rather holistic view that also recalls humanist thinking.”

These various insights motivated me to pursue the present research. The main purpose of this article is nonetheless not to refute negative commentary, but rather, to use some of the critique to frame my message: The human body influenced Le Corbusier’s work significantly. I present my reasons in the form of an overview under the following headings: (1) The human body and the Modulor, (2) Anthropometric analogies and city form, (3) The human body and the public realm, (4) Claiming and inhabiting space, and (5) The human body and mythical space.

The human body and the Modulor

Le Corbusier’s earliest travel sketches are already evidence of a life-long interest in the dimensions of spaces and in proportions (figure 1). He (1954: 32) claims that “the desire, the urge, the need to build to the human scale” emerged between 1925-33, when his interest in measurements and requirements for the human body (“resting, sitting, walking”) began.

Leonardo da Vinci’s depiction of the “Vitruvian Man” (ca 1500) was perhaps an early inspiration, but gradually Le Corbusier’s principles for ergonomics and spatial requirements for functionality culminated in a proportioning system that he called “the Modulor”.

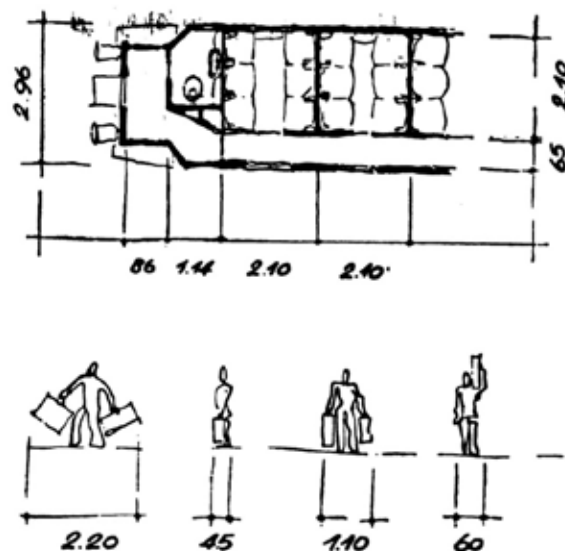


Figure 1
Le Corbusier, dimensional requirements in a train carriage
(Le Corbusier 1954: 208).

Although Le Corbusier commenced work on the Modulor in 1942, it was only after World War II that the system was published and extensively applied (figure 2). The Modulor was a measuring tool, based on the human body and mathematics, specifically the rules of the Golden Section and the Fibonacci Series (Le Corbusier 1954: 55). In 1948, he published *Modulor* in French, a theory of dimensions and proportions for which he claims research evolved from primitive huts and nomadic tents (1960: 160-161).

Le Corbusier was obviously immensely proud of this system, writing extensively about it in two books (English editions were published in 1954 and 1958 respectively). Of the *Unité d'Habitation*, where the Modulor was first applied in a major building, Jo and Choi (2003: 139) succinctly write:

In the residential unit of Marseille, all scales in the entire building are derived from the figure, which not only gives the proportions of the human body but a number of smaller measurements based on the golden section. The boundary between the body and architecture is blurred in many of his works where either the scale figures take on mechanical, architectonic characteristics or the built forms have figural, human qualities. These attempts at blurring the distinction between architecture and the body seem to aim at overcoming the existential abyss which lies between an individual and the objects which compose her world. Le Corbusier is intent on making a clear formal connection between these realms, and his method of relating them has some potential implications with regard to the effects and significance of architectural form for the human inhabitant. These include the breakdown of a strict division between the living human presence and the inert passive object.

Referring to the Modulor, Le Corbusier also propagates “the full-scale application of mathematics in building: three-dimensional urbanism (on the ground and in space)”, adding that “measures enter into everything: pilotis, highways and roads, swimming pools, buildings, from top to bottom and in every object of the interior, car parks ...” (1954: 168); that is exactly what he did in Chandigarh (figure 3).

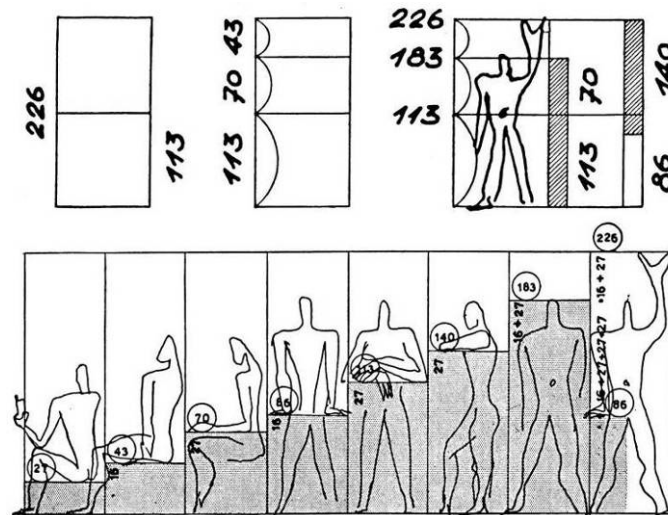


Figure 2
Modulor
(Le Corbusier 1954: 66, 67).

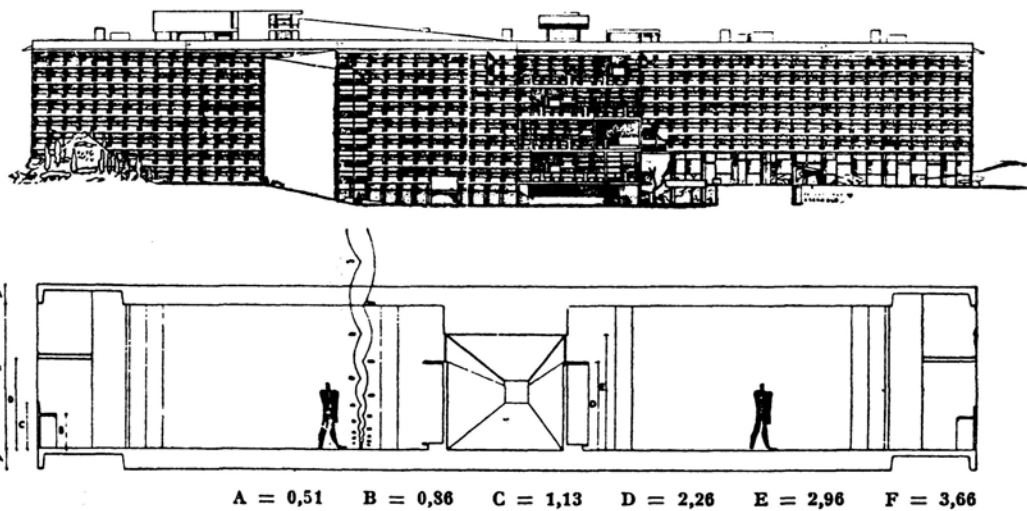


Figure 3
Palace of Ministries in Chandigarh, also known as The Secretariat
(Le Corbusier 1958: 220).

Anthropomorphic analogies and city form

In *The City of Tomorrow* he already refers to cities as “organs” and to open spaces as “lungs” (figure 4). He describes the Contemporary City as a compact and lively “organ” with a “well-organized centre” (1929: 166). In this regard, he became increasingly assertive and would later state flatly that “towns are biological phenomena” (1947: 48) and “the biology of towns must conform specifically to their functions” (1947: 52). From this he never wavered: “Biology! The great new word in architecture and planning” (1960: 155). He now suggests that a plan “arranges organs in order, thus creating an organism or organisms”. Accordingly, Industrial Centres, Linear Cities, Unités d’Habitation – these are all organisms.

Accordingly, he intermittently also conceptualised cities as the representation of the human body. Whereas Contemporary City (1922) was distinctly neo-classical, the Radiant City of 1930 was clearly based on an anthropomorphic metaphor (figure 5). And as taxi drivers, waiters, in fact all locals are keen to tell visitors, Le Corbusier also conceived the master plan of Chandigarh as analogous to the human body, with the Capitol Complex as a clearly defined head (Figure 6). Statements by Le Corbusier in this regard are absent in his writings, but the official website of the Chandigarh Administration (2011) is unambiguous:

Le Corbusier conceived the master plan of Chandigarh as analogous to human body, with a clearly defined head (the Capitol Complex, Sector 1), heart (the City Centre Sector-17), lungs (the leisure valley, innumerable open spaces and sector greens), the intellect (the cultural and educational institutions), the circulatory system (the network of roads, the 7Vs) and the viscera (the Industrial Area).

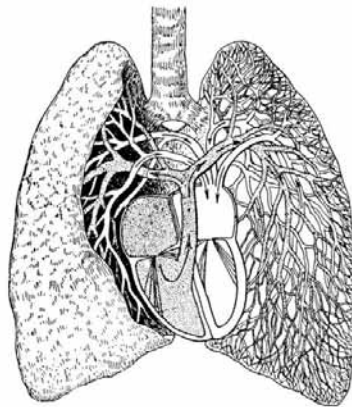


Figure 4
A drawing of lungs in *My Work*
(Le Corbusier 1960: 154).

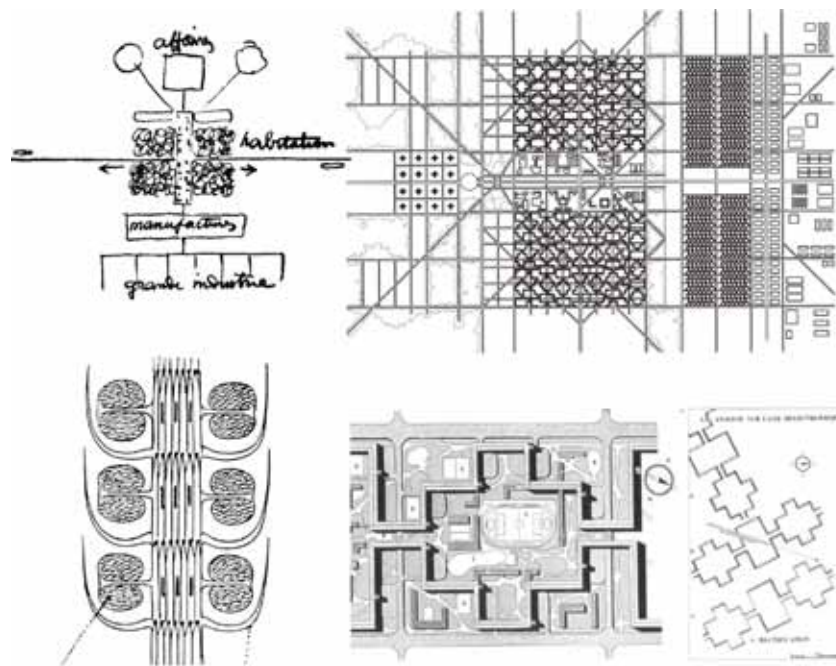


Figure 5
Radiant City diagram by Le Corbusier and the city plan showing anthropomorphic inspiration, 1930
(redrawn by the author after Le Corbusier 1964: 141).

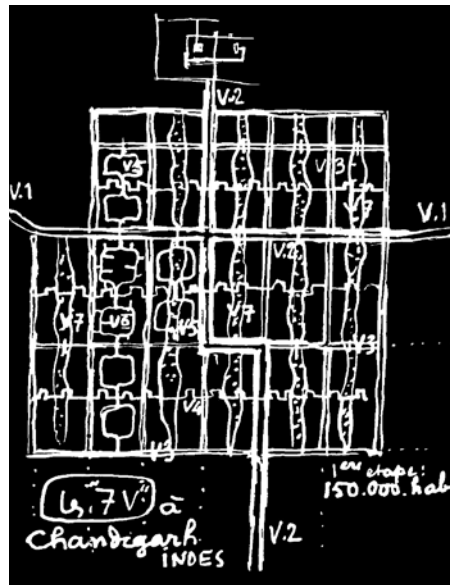


Figure 6
Plan of Chandigarh Phase 1
(Le Corbusier 1958: 211).

The reasons for Le Corbusier's anthropomorphic affinities are difficult to gauge; did he envisage a more familiar environment, one with which people could readily associate, or merely a framework for spatial organisation? Did he actually believe the analogy of the human body could improve the appearance and function of architecture (as somebody once suggested)?

He pursued the biological theme in other ways too. Jencks (2000: 188) notes a change in Le Corbusier's subjects in 1928 when he started to paint shells, rocks and people, and other "natural subject matter and biological forms". While the correlation between the curves of the thighs of fat women (Figure 7) and his series of proposals for South American cities (figure 8), as proposed by Jencks (2000: 189), is totally unsubstantiated, it is an amusing idea, with a serious following; for example, Jo and Choi (2003: 142): "The biological analogy extends so deeply into the forms of the city planning that when Le Corbusier sees the topography as a female body in the Rio de Janeiro, he introduces curvilinear forms into his city planning."



Figure 7
Le Corbusier, drawing of two women on a beach in 1928, crayon, 21 x 31 cm
(In Jencks 2000: 190).

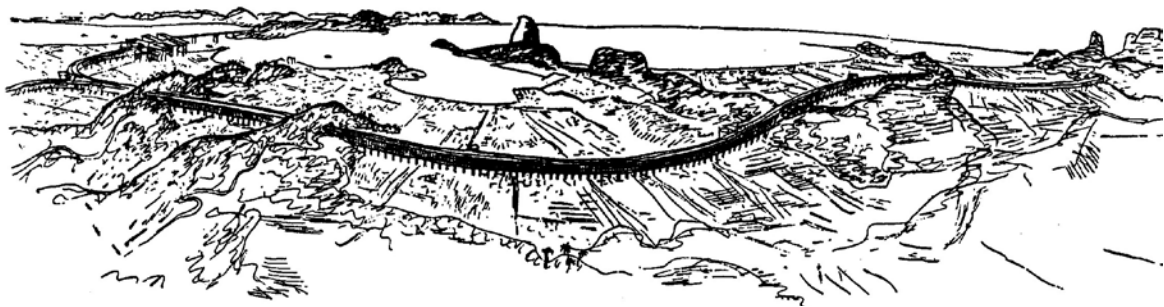


Figure 8
Le Corbusier, sketch of a proposal for Rio de Janeiro, 1929
 (Le Corbusier 1964: 225).

Public realm - pedestrians and parks

Since Le Corbusier is often blamed for our car-orientated anti-cities and the destruction of the pedestrian realm, two aspects seem relevant to this discussion: pedestrians and parks. Spiro Kostof (1992: 237) claims that the Modernist vision of a streetless urbanity failed because CIAM (Congrès Internationaux de l'Architecture Moderne, co-founded by Le Corbusier in 1928) could not achieve a separate system of pedestrian movement that would supplement high-speed traffic networks. "What was called for in Modernist theory was a continuous network of paths and streets that, rather than duplicating each other at different levels, diverged entirely to create two distinct realms: one for people, one for cars".

This, however, was precisely what Le Corbusier envisaged (Boesiger and Girsberger 1967: 332). The Radiant City was largely a layered city on pilotis, and allowed uninterrupted and independent pedestrian movement at ground level. Chandigarh again has a completely different circulation system. With major traffic restricted to the roads defining the sectors, the sectors themselves are interconnected by a comprehensive network of commercial streets and pedestrian promenades and strips of parkland, forming an alternate grid shifted a half module. Intermittently, he also used totally different geometries for the vehicular and superimposed pedestrian networks (figure 9).

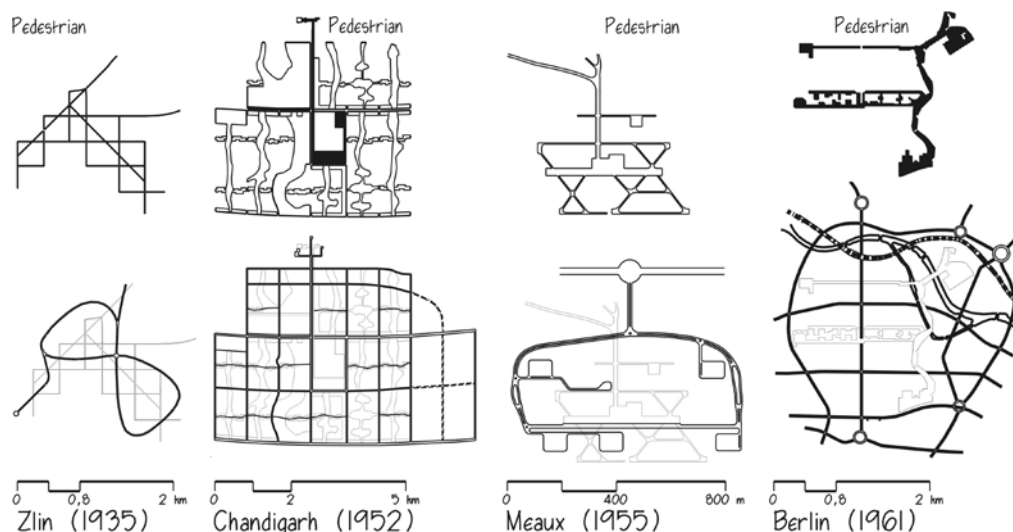


Figure 9
Some distinctive city plans showing the separation of vehicular and pedestrian networks
 (redrawn by the author after plans in the *Oeuvre complète*).

The other area of criticism is parks and gardens. Here comments by Steven Pinker, are applicable (quoted by Salingaros 2003: 2):

Ornamentation, human scale, green space, gardens, and comfortable social meeting places were written out of the cities because the planners [of which Le Corbusier was the clearest example] had a theory of human nature that omitted human aesthetic and social needs.

Spiro Kostof was an authoritative commentator. Since he did not mention Le Corbusier by name, this oversight could be due to a generalisation. It seems as if Pinker, a world authority on cognitive neuroscience, erroneously discredits Le Corbusier, who always pursued, in theory and practice, exactly the opposite of that which Pinker is accusing him, proclaiming throughout his life that “We must increase the area of green and open spaces”. Originally published in French in 1925, this was one of Le Corbusier’s four urban principles (1929: 99-100). He justified this principle as follows: “This is the only way to ensure the necessary degree of health and peace to enable men to meet the anxieties of work occasioned by the new speed at which business is carried on”. I find his depictions of green spaces convincing and not Utopian at all (figure 10). He wanted a vibrant public realm, writing:

We are fond of the crowd and the crush because we are human beings and like to live in groups. In such a town as I have outlined, with a denser population than that of any existing cities, there would be ample provision and opportunity for close human contact; there would be trees, flowers and spreading lawns (Le Corbusier 1929: 240).



Figure 10
Le Corbusier, sketch of Buenos Aires, 1929
(Le Corbusier 1960: 294).

As a comparison, the main public recreational space envisaged for the Contemporary City, what Le Corbusier called the English garden, measures nearly 300 hectare serving a population of around 600,000. By way of contrast, the combined Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens, the largest of the great parks of Central London, home to about 2.3 million people, measures about 200 hectare, a third less than Le Corbusier's park. At the residential blocks, he provided open space at a very generous ratio of 28 square metres per person (calculations by the author).

Staying with green space, the above statistics and drawing stem from hypothetical projects. How did Le Corbusier plan green space in Chandigarh, his only built city? Sector 22 was the first residential area. There, most of the dwellings surround public squares, either as clusters or row houses. Apart from a comprehensive mix of educational, commercial, health care and public service facilities there are 48 parks and greens spread throughout the sector (figure 11). They occupy 19 hectare or 20 per cent of the sector's area. The smallest is just 570 square metres, the largest being nearly four hectares, while the average is 4,000 square metres (measured by the author). The resemblance between the drawing above and the photograph below is intriguing.

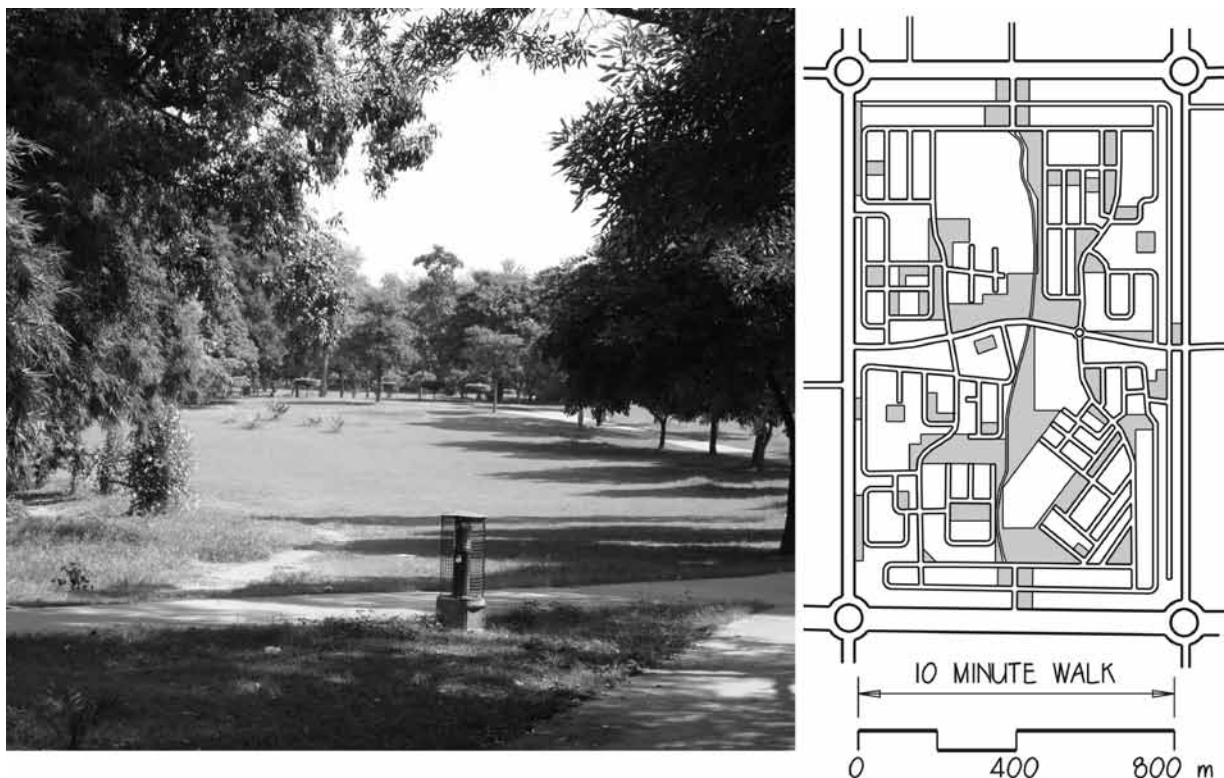


Figure 11
Plan of green spaces (hatched) in Sector 22, Chandigarh, and a photograph of a park
 (source: the author).

Claiming and inhabiting space

Le Corbusier never shared Derrida's need to debate the "contract between architecture and habitation", as reiterated by Ross King (1996: 241). Le Corbusier (1958: 25) was absolutely adamant: "Taking possession of space is the first gesture of living creatures, humans and animals, plants and clouds, a fundamental manifestation of equilibrium and duration. The first proof of existence is occupying space".

The strategies Le Corbusier employed to enable the claiming and inhabiting of space and territory emerged partly as the Modulor, whereby the proportional system allows the human psyche to associate aesthetically and psychologically with space, whereas the order of measurement is physically aligned with the dimensional requirements of the human body and its activities. These relationships are intended to be intense and intrinsic to the extent that Michelle Negus (1998: 118) reminds us that Le Corbusier claimed architecture “as a part of the mechanical system that surrounds us and functions as an extension of our limbs...its elements, in fact, artificial limbs”.

He has been criticised for adopting six feet tall English policemen as the norm for Modulor Man, to which Le Corbusier (1954: 63) replied: “It is better that a measure should be too large than too small”. Catherine Millet (1981) summarises this issue succinctly: “Like the ancient Greeks, Le Corbusier laid out the architectural space so that the body can find its bearings in it.”

Le Corbusier’s drawings clearly demonstrate the concept of relating the body to space. Figure 12 contains no human bodies, but unmistakably suggests that people have claimed the space. The chairs, tables, wine and food all allude to convivial social interaction in a tranquil, quiet, unpolluted urban environment.

The scenes of domesticity in figure 13, on the other hand, embody the quest for security associated with inhabiting private space (just as figure 10 illustrate people inhabiting public space), with inhabited space alluding to the concept of sanctuary.

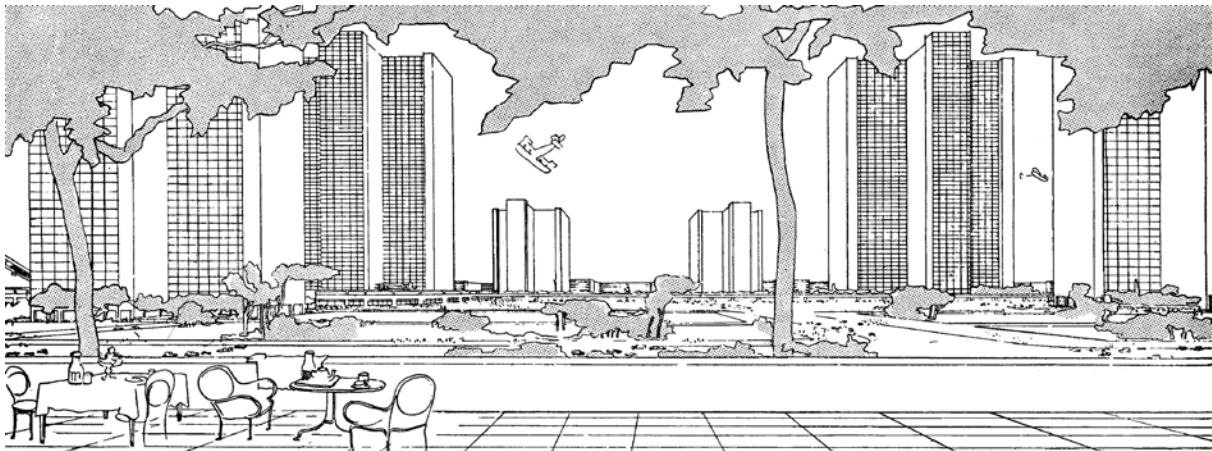


Figure 12
Le Corbusier, Contemporary City, 1922
(Le Corbusier 1960: 64).

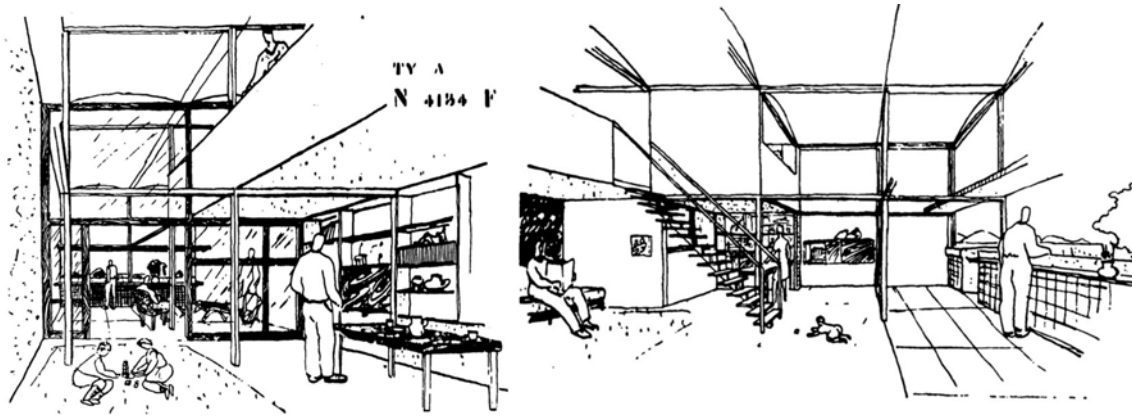


Figure 13
Le Corbusier, interior views of Roq et Rob, 1949
(Oeuvre complete, volume 5: 57).

The human body and mythical space

The overview is concluded by briefly returning to the unfortunate legacy of that early statement. Alexander Gorlin (2008) suggests that Le Corbusier's "machine for living" left "no room for the spiritual, the mythic, or the irrational". However, he acknowledges that Le Corbusier "subsequently incorporated multiple mystical themes". Most adverse commentators fail to bridge that gap. Pinker (quoted in Salingaros 2003: 3) is typical:

Le Corbusier was the clearest example [of planners designing optimal cities according to so-called scientific principles]. He and other planners had a minimalist conception of human nature. A human being needs so many cubic feet of air per day, a temperature within a certain range, so many gallons of water, and so many square feet in which to sleep and work.

There are many commentators that would agree. Herbert Bangs (2006: 3) resents what he calls "a narrow, mechanistic vision of human life", adding that "the most influential 'scientific' architect of the 20th century and the apostle of alienation was undoubtedly Le Corbusier".

Jo and Choi (2003: 140), both senior academics whose article entitled "Human figure in Le Corbusier's ideas for cities" eloquently argue the view of the opposing camp:

Central his work was his fervent desire that his cities and his buildings provide the appropriate framework to satisfy human needs and interests, and to advance human ideals. He held and advocated enthusiastically throughout his life the strong belief that architects and city planners should be more than technicians, that they should take the lead in order for the new machine civilization to bring to people not only material things but social and spiritual progress and the real joy of living in this extraordinary century.

What were Le Corbusier's views on all this? Wogenscky (2006: 46) quotes Le Corbusier: "For me, the term architecture has something more magical about it than rationalism or functionalism"; and further on (2006: 81): "[Ineffable space] does not depend on dimensions but on the quality of its perfection. It belongs to the domain of the ineffable, of that which cannot be said". This concept (also referred to as inexpressible or indescribable space), which Le Corbusier termed *L'espace indicible* in French, has been widely discussed in literature. King (1996: 100) asserts that "It is a redefinition of the role of architecture and urban meaning, as being to establish the place of the mythic in human experience". What exactly is that "meaning"? Le Corbusier (1924: 110) himself frames the question with slightly more clarity: "Architecture has another meaning

and other ends to pursue than showing construction and responding to needs (and by ‘needs’ I mean utility, comfort and practical arrangement”. Eventually he (1929: 58) also provides the answer: “More important than the mechanism of the city, [is] what we may call the soul of the city ... it is, quite simply, its poetry”.

There can be no doubt that for Le Corbusier that inhabiting space is clearly not just an existential necessity. For him a relaxing ambience or a pleasant view are also spiritual experiences (Figure 14). What is then interesting is that Le Corbusier uses technical and rational (rather than intuitive) means (sight lines) to ensure good views (Figure 15) – and to achieve “poetry”. Nevertheless, he ventured further than that; he explored “the nature and the quality of the relationship between eye and spirit” (1954: 78-80), again using his “harmonious scale” in order to understand perspective (Figure 16).

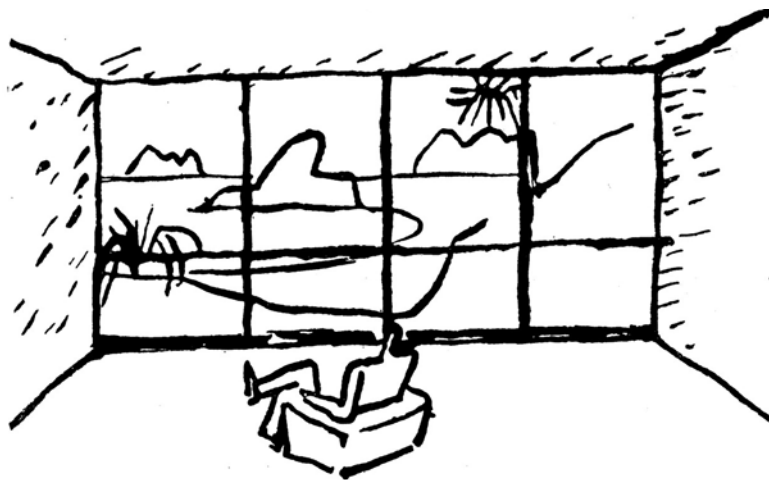


Figure 14

Le Corbusier’s sketch of a man admiring the view in Rio de Janeiro. The caption: “The whole sea-landscape enters your room” (Le Corbusier and De Pierrefeu 1948: 87).

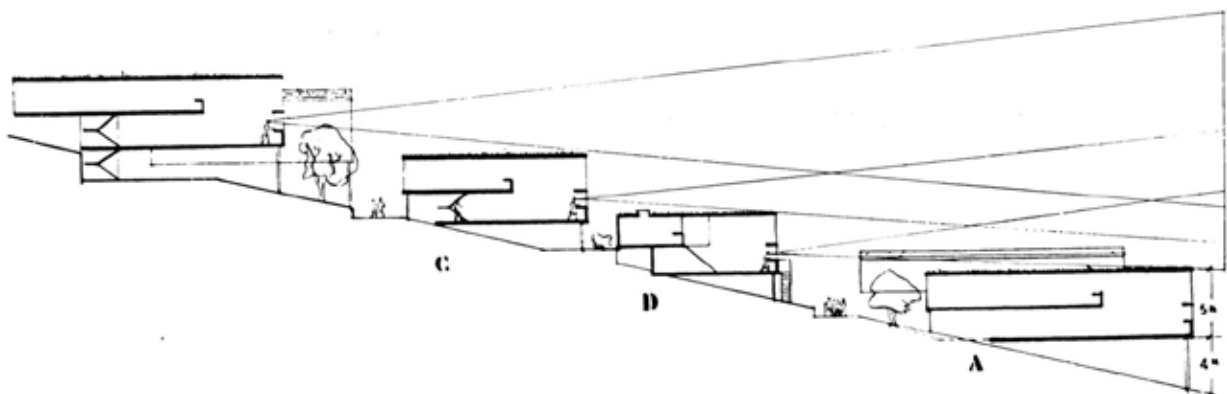


Figure 15

Roq et Rob at Cap Martin. Site section
(*Oeuvre complete*, volume 5: 56).

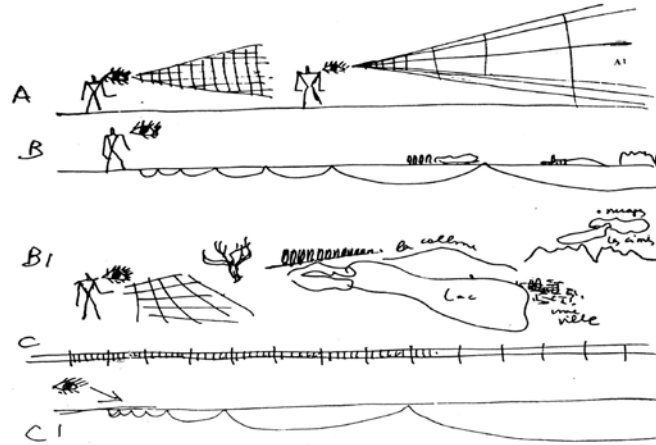


Figure 16
Le Corbusier's analysis of visual perception
(Le Corbusier 1954: 79).

Conclusion

Le Corbusier is still hugely influential, but he is also regularly criticised and challenged. For the conclusion, I will rely on the judgement of Catherine Millet (1981): "It is primarily the inclusion of man, which guides the architectural choices of Le Corbusier". She is a courageous author and fiercely independent critic, as evidenced by the fact that she also wrote what a reviewer for Amazon.com describes as "the most explicit book about sex ever written by a woman".

Of his humane intentions there can be no doubt. The success of their application in his theories and practice is more debatable; after all, different people have different expectations from buildings and cities. The weakness in Le Corbusier's approach was certainly his paternalistic attitude and his firm conviction that he knows best how the human body should fit into his architecture.

Finally, although this overview is rather brief, and although the headings are not definitive, it can be stated unequivocally that the human body conceptually pervades every conceivable aspect of Le Corbusier's work at all scales and in all its manifestations, from the purely physical, to perception, and to the spiritual.

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The mindful landscape: a healing outdoor experience for Weskoppies psychiatric hospital

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According to the World Health Organisation mental illnesses have consistently increased over the past century, resulting in undisputed social and economical consequences. The confinement of patients to mental institutions results in isolation, stigmatization by society and ultimately unemployment after treatment. The paper demonstrates how landscape design can aid people with mental disorders and even facilitate the process of healing through the creation of therapeutic outdoor environments. Weskoppies Psychiatric Hospital established in 1882 and situated in Pretoria West, South Africa, serves as a study area. A historical review of outdoor environments at psychiatric hospitals indicates that a restful physical setting with activities like farming, gardening and social outdoor interaction effectively assists in the healing process, and that this enlightened approach was followed at Weskoppies in the early days. Through theoretical and empirical research the specific needs of the mentally ill are investigated. Applications were then sought in which the physical environment can be designed to stimulate specific experiences that enhance psychological comfort and healing. The study recommends the limited confinement of patients, provision of work opportunities and greater social interaction with the public. Various forms of outdoor elements and activities are suggested that foster consciousness, independence, connectedness, a sense of purpose and rest.

Key words: Landscape Architecture, mental illness, psychiatric hospitals, healing, environmental psychology

El paisaje a considerar: una experiencia de saneamiento al aire libre en el Hospital Psiquiátrico de Weskoppies.

De acuerdo a la Organización Mundial de la Salud, las enfermedades mentales han aumentado en el último siglo con consecuencias incuestionables en el ámbito económico y social. La derivación de pacientes a instituciones de salud mental resulta en aislamiento, discriminación social y en última instancia, tras el correspondiente tratamiento, en desempleo. Este artículo demuestra como el diseño del paisaje puede ayudar y facilitar el proceso de recuperación a través de espacios terapéuticos al aire libre. El Hospital Psiquiátrico de Weskoppies, establecido en 1882, situado en Pretoria Oeste, Sudáfrica, sirve como el caso de estudio. Un recuento histórico sobre espacios al aire libre en hospitales psiquiátricos indica que un entorno tranquilo que cuente con actividades como agricultura, jardinería e intercambio social exitosamente asiste en el proceso de saneamiento, y que este inteligente método fue usado en Weskoppies en sus comienzos. A través de la investigación teórica y empírica, requerimientos específicos de personas con desórdenes mentales son establecidos. Programas son luego delineados donde el espacio físico puede ser diseñado para estimular experiencias específicas que mejoran el bienestar psicológico y la recuperación. Este estudio recomienda limitar el confinamiento de pacientes a espacios cerrados, proveerlos con oportunidades de trabajo y aumentar el intercambio con la sociedad. Diferentes tipos de equipamiento y actividades al aire libre son sugeridas para desarrollar la conciencia, independencia, pertenencia, propósito y descanso.

Palabras claves: Arquitectura del Paisaje, enfermedades mentales, hospitales psiquiátricos, saneamiento, psicología ambiental

Mental illness is argued to be one of the world's greatest public health epidemics with undisputed consequences in social and economic health. According to Torrey & Miller (2001: IX), the occurrence of mental illness cases tripled over the course of

the 19th century and consistently increased since then. Currently the World Health Organization estimates that 450 million people worldwide suffer from mental illness. South African studies reveal that one in five people suffer from life altering mental disorders locally (Dlamini 2006).

This rise in 'occurrence' of mental illness could arguably be attributed to many contemporary and fluctuating situations. Among these are diagnosis, recording and treatment methods that go hand in hand with altered medical and social perceptions and attitudes regarding mental illness. The confinement of patients that is still practiced today reflects a stigmatized perception held by society which leads to candidates refraining from seeking treatment (Dlamini 2006).

Environmental psychology has developed in the last fifty to sixty years as a field of research focussing on the role of the material and immaterial environment on people's mental health. From an architectural and landscape architectural point of view, this research enable designers to influence and aid mental distress. This paper will explore the possibilities and potential of the external environment to affect and improve healing of people suffering from mental disorders. Weskoppies Psychiatric Hospital (referred to as Weskoppies hence forth) served as a case study for the research. The research methods, historic, theoretical and empirical findings will be discussed. The aim was however to go beyond a list of findings and explore the practical implication of these guidelines in a physical landscape application. The outcome was an open space framework, master plan and sketch plan design proposal for the Weskoppies premises that will be briefly touched on focussing on the main design decisions made.

Research methodology and methods

When considering the design of an outdoor environment for human use, it is important to consider and address both basic human needs (functional) as well as the more specific socio-cultural needs (aesthetics and meaning). The research accordingly took on the form of a general theoretical enquiry as well as a specific empirical focus on Weskoppies Psychiatric Hospital.

As a point of departure, historical research regarding outdoor environments at psychiatric institutions (and Weskoppies specifically) was done to gain a better understanding of how outdoor environments were utilised throughout history as part of the healing process. Theoretical research was focused on the potential therapeutic benefits and inherent positive emotional effect of outdoor environments on human wellbeing. Specific challenges and needs of the mentally ill and psychiatric institutions were identified through personal interviews at Weskoppies in March 2009 with the C.E.O, the facilities manager, two occupational therapists, a psychiatrist, a psychologist, two nurses, and three medical students in training. Since permission could not be attained to formally interview patients, observation served as the main informant. Observation sessions (of two to four hours each) at different times of the day for a period of seven days were undertaken. However, approximately ten informal conversations (initiated by patients) did take place around the Cafeteria. The physical context analysis was done through collection and assimilation of available desktop data as well as on site observations. Typical movement patterns, behaviours and current land uses were identified through the in situ site investigation. This information was used to determine possible land uses, circulation patterns, conservation areas, stormwater runoff management systems and ultimately make optimal use of the available resources.

The theoretical and empirical findings were used as a platform to establish landscape design guidelines that support and accommodate the emotional healing of mentally ill individuals. These

guidelines were meant to inform the design decision-making process and guide the landscape design at different scales (Porter 2004: 22).

A brief history of outdoor environments at psychiatric institutions

Throughout history the way the outdoors was used to assist in the healing process of the mentally ill was directly influenced by the way the mentally ill was perceived at the time. During the 1400's colonial America regarded and treated the mentally ill as demoniacally possessed individuals and kept them in workhouses or prisons. In Europe the mentally ill was similarly classified as prisoners at the time, and was subject to beating and confinement. An exception for this period was the Hospital in Zaragoza, Spain, which followed a different approach by allowing patients to work in vegetable gardens, on farms and in vineyards, and serves as a historic example (Sachs, 1999: 237).

The 18th and 19th century Romantic Movement was a turning point in psychiatric care and sought to unite human emotions with morality and nature. The outdoors was highly valued for its ability to improve the mental health of psychiatric patients (Sachs 1999: 237). By this time nature was viewed as physically and spiritually restorative and hospitals were designed to allow patients contact with nature through decorative gardens, vegetable gardens, farming programs and views of nature from the building interior. Philippe Pinel (1745–1826) a French psychiatrist played a significant role during this time and advocated what he referred to as 'moral treatment', in which the social and physical environments at mental institutions were viewed as resources in the healing process. He believed that the physical setting should be restful and should accommodate activities that aim to 're-socialize' the patient, like farming, gardening and daily walks (Sachs 1999: 239). The Schleswig Asylum (1792–1820) in Germany and The Retreat in York, England (1796–present) are examples of asylums inspired by these views (see figure 1).



Figure 1

Aerial photograph of The Retreat, York, U.K (c. 1960) showing the buildings and extensive grounds. Over the 200 year history of the facility patients were encouraged to go outdoors in various ways. The historic photographs shows a farm area, bowling green , cricket pitch and tennis courts as well as several smaller more protected courtyards (images from Sachs 1999: 238).

During the same time in the United States, Dorothea Linde Dix and Horace Mann's writings about the philosophy of public welfare gained popular acceptance and led to establishment of many Mental Hospitals across the country. These hospitals were clearly inspired by the European model for mental institutions which included farming and other outdoor activities as part of the site design while characterized by rolling hills, groves of trees, paths and more intimate gardens close to the buildings (Sachs 1999: 241–242).

By 1880 the mental hospitals became larger, highly populated and more hastily constructed due to a significant increase in demand for hospital beds. Once again access to the outdoors became limited resulting in the increased use of physical and chemical restraints. After World War I occupational therapy and horticultural therapy became increasingly used in mental institutions and general care hospitals with the intent that veterans would turn their thoughts from their experiences of destruction toward acts of creation (Sachs 1999: 244). By World War II all aspects of the patient's surroundings came to be considered as therapeutic. This approach was referred to as milieu therapy. Scientific advances in health care as well as socio-cultural and economical forces in 1950 led to a shift from the emphasis on the physical and outdoor environment to technology and medication for the treatment of mental illnesses (Sachs, 1999: 246).

In the late 1950's and early 1960's the new academic discipline Environmental Psychology emerged. Its focus rests on the interplay between humans and their surroundings and stresses the profound impact the physical and social environment can have on human behaviour and mental health. This discipline laid the foundation for the growing interest in outdoor environments as part of the therapeutic environment for the years that followed (Sachs 1999: 247).

Outdoor environments and emotional wellbeing

The historical review clearly indicates that the importance given to outdoor environments for physical, emotional and intellectual wellbeing is not a new concept. Numerous writings have been published on research undertaken regarding the positive effects the outdoors can have on the human spirit. Similar to Victorian city planners that established their public park systems on the basis of this belief (Stoneham 2000: 23), the Tshwane Open Space Framework (2006: 26) today acknowledges that the natural environment (and open spaces) can increase self-esteem and reduce stress. Mankind has an overall positive response to nature which seems to be universal and not merely a cultural or learned one. The authors are of the opinion that this intense preference for nature indicates that a need for nature originates in mankind's deeply rooted collective unconscious (Gerlach-Spriggs, Kaufman & Warner 1998: 36). It is important for the designed outdoor environment to satisfy this need for contact with nature.

The main research question asks: how can Landscape Architecture through design elevate and highlight this inherent positive emotional effect of outdoor environments specifically for psychiatric institutions? When trying to answer this question one first needs to establish why humans in general have this innate preference for the outdoors and if certain kinds of environments are preferred over others. Environmental psychologists have done detailed studies over the last few decades to identify and explain the relationship between people and the landscape.

In a collective reading, outdoor environments give a sense of freedom because certain behaviours that are unacceptable in indoor environments are acceptable outside. Social expectations are different, it is acceptable to shout, run about and sit on the ground while indoors

these behaviours are generally unacceptable (Hagedorn, 1990: 21). Preference studies ¹ indicate that landscapes where information (needed to function properly) could be easily extracted were preferred. These include scenes that direct the attention to important areas through contrast, natural borders or lines that focus the attention on a particular point ² (Cave 1998: 120). This indicates that a healing landscape should be clearly legible and easily understandable to the patient which can reduce stress levels and increase comfort.

A large number of studies confirm that wilderness experiences have therapeutic benefits. One example is a study on psychiatric patients taken on a five day hiking trail. The patients showed improvements in less dependency and fewer feelings of helplessness (Cave 1998: 129). A study by Roger Ulrich has also shown that patients with a view of nature had reduced delusions and depression and recovered more quickly and easily (Gerlach-Spriggs et al. 1998: 35). These universal positive influences that can be derived from outdoor and natural environments, (including the readability thereof) were optimised in the design approach.

Mental illness is however as much a social problem as it is a physical problem. It is therefore important to realize that the focus should not only be on the physical environment but also the social environment. Landscape Architects should thus aim to design landscapes with a positive impact on social interaction. Through theoretical research, interviews and observations (see section on research methodology and methods) social problems were identified that are unique to mentally ill patients and psychiatric hospitals. Ways in which the landscape can assist in overcoming these problems were then sought.

Possibly most common and widespread is the social practice of group rejection. The stigmatization of mental illnesses negatively affects patients while they are ill, in treatment and in the process of healing. According to Scheffer (2003: 3), once the stigmatization has occurred it invades the identity of the one who experience it even after recovery. It not only prevents mentally ill persons from seeking the necessary treatment but changes the way those that do seek treatment perceive themselves and are perceived by others. This subsequently has a negative impact on a patient's ability to facilitate the emotional healing process. Public views about the dangerous nature of mentally ill persons are often exaggerated. For example, the majority (80-90%) of people with mental illnesses never commit violent crimes and are more likely to have acts of violence committed against them (Scheffer 2003: 6).

Changing this stigma is a difficult and complex process because it involves changing people's attitudes and understanding about mental illness. Scheffer (2003: 7) argues that the most promising strategy to change negative perceptions about mental illnesses is increasing contact between the public and persons with mental illness. Attitudes can be positively changed by increasing contact with mentally ill persons who fulfil 'normal social roles'. Contact and integration between the public and mentally ill persons can be facilitated through activities, job creation and unique aesthetic or meaningful experiences in the landscape design. This can lead to positive publicity, changed perceptions and increased understanding.

Being institutionalized is dislocating, and the patient is overwhelmed by the distortion of perception, sapping of identity and loss of connectedness to the external world. Due to heavy medication and a lack of understanding, psychiatric patients are often further emotionally distanced from the people around them. Rehabilitated patients often have no community support system to return to when they leave the institution. Many long term chronic patients have lost complete contact with any family or friends. This often has a further negative effect on the patient's mood and condition. Outdoor environments that encourage both formal and informal

social interaction between patients, staff and the public can assist in creating a sense of belonging or familiarity and establishing a support system. There is an opportunity for Weskoppies to accommodate more fundraising social events (for example outdoor music festivals) that involve the public.

Due to the inability to adapt in society, as well as difficulty in finding an appropriate job for the patient's mental condition and abilities, many rehabilitated patients end up on the streets or relapse after rehabilitation. To ultimately establish a sense of purpose and responsibility, it is important to include a skills and job creation component in the landscape design whenever possible. The advantage is that employed rehabilitated patients will learn to sustain themselves in a supportive and understanding environment.

Lack of motivation as a symptom of mental illness makes it difficult for staff members to get patients involved in activities and community projects (De Beer 2009). Vincent (2009: 24) states that an outdoor environment with a positive, inviting character and identity could provide an additional motivational component, a key ingredient to emotional healing. How to create this visual and emotional affirmative identity in the landscape is thus the challenge.

As another symptom of institutionalization, many psychiatric patients completely lose track of time, and have difficulty to determine how much time have passed since first admitted. An outdoor environment that emphasizes time and change can improve the patient's perception of time and prevent this from happening. Informal conversations with patients also revealed that a lot of patients experience boredom, due to their monotonous outdoor environment and daily routine. There is thus a need for a variation of exiting outdoor experiences and daily activities. Currently annual events like Christmas, Valentine's Day, Easter and Spring day are celebrated at Weskoppies and these events assist in animating patients and keeping track of time. However, daily and seasonal cycles need further emphasis and can be aided through events that also bring further mental stimulation.

Psychiatric patients also experience tiredness as a result of the medication, and often need to sleep or rest for longer. The outdoor environment can provide individuals with comfortable areas that accommodate rest during the day.

Contextual background and current outdoor activities at Weskoppies

The importance of Weskoppies as a precinct lies in its significance in the context of South Africa. The inaugural buildings of the Pretoria Lunatic Asylum date back to 1892 and have historical significance as the first and only psychiatric institution in the *Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek*. Weskoppies is today one of the largest psychiatric hospitals in the country and has played a significant role in South African history and psychology. In May 1896 Dr. Smeenk from Holland was appointed as the medical director for the hospital. His approach required that every effort should be made to promote the eventual cure of patients (Plug & Roos 1992: 219). Proper physical care led to significant improvement in a number of patients. Yet, after a while it was noted that the patient's physical conditions improved during the first two months and stayed constant thereafter due to their unemployed existence. Dr. Smeek and Dr. Messum, a physician at the hospital, stressed the importance of various forms of work and recreation as part of their treatment (Plug & Roos 1992:219). Their aim was to counteract the harmful effects of institutionalization and the success of their approach was reflected in the amount of patients that passed through the institution.

The hospital was described as “*a beautiful building very healthily situated, with large gardens and cultivated fields*” (Plug & Roos 1992: 219). However, a lack of resources would later during the Anglo Boer war prove to be a limiting factor of the enlightened approach and was subsequently never truly reinstated (Plug & Roos 1992: 219).

Situated in the ‘Old Botanical Garden’ of Pretoria, the site still provides the ideal setting for a therapeutic outdoor environment but its inherent potential remains largely untapped. Today the 149-hectare campus contains a patchwork of 274 old and new permanent buildings, while vast underutilized open spaces remain. The view of the Langeberge Mountains to the South reiterates the natural tranquillity of the immediate natural landscapes.

In terms of activities, the patients and staff members at Weskoppies are currently involved in a variety of sport activities and the sports fields are also occasionally used by the general public. It is a common sight to see patients doing some physical exercise like push-ups and sit-ups on their own. Patients that need supervision are taken for walks in groups or individually, the frequency (daily or weekly) is based on safety considerations and the severity of their illness (Breedt 2009). Patients are often seen wandering around and strolling on their own or in pairs although there is currently no formal pedestrian walkway system.

As part of industrial therapy at Weskoppies, patients assemble plastic funeral flowers (for a plastic company named Pearl Plastics) for which they are remunerated (Mabena, 2009). This activity highlighted the opportunity to incorporate the production of real flowers through cut flower farming, due to the vast open spaces at Weskoppies. Other individual activities of patients include smoking, sleeping, contemplating, playing guitar, singing and pacing. The landscape can further provide patients with private areas that accommodate individual activities, personal reflection and contemplation which form an important part of the healing process.

Landscape design guidelines that support healing

The above findings inspired the establishment of six landscape design guidelines that aim to address the problems and needs of the mentally ill as identified through the research. These guidelines can assist Landscape Architects when designing outdoor environments that support and accommodate the emotional healing process at psychiatric hospitals or institutions. The guidelines are summarized under the following headings that describe their objectives: Independence; Connectedness; Consciousness; Purpose; Physical activity and Rest. The following section will explain the implications of each of these guidelines (or goals) in terms of landscape design decisions.

i) Independence

Institutionalized individuals are not only dependent on medication but also dependent on staff members for orientation, satisfaction of basic needs (possibly including feeding, medication and sanitation) or for permission in terms of actions, access and activities. The designed landscape should grant the users a sense of independence by augmenting their confidence to maintain their roles as independent individuals (Tyson 1998: 34). This implies in first place a sense of orientation and requires the landscape to be legible to the user. The landscape should thus be simplistic in layout and hierarchy and this should be clearly visible to minimize stress and allow patients to move through the landscape comfortably and independently. Besides the effective use of signage, attention and movement can be directed to important areas by making use of continuity and contrast in materials. Natural borders and sight-line views (encouraged by placement of

structures or planting) located along paths can lead the eye to an important focal point for visual connections between places (figure 2). In second place but equally important, this landscape should enable people from different abilities or disabilities to function independently. This can be achieved through the inclusive design of walkways that accommodates wheelchair users, and other differently abled individuals (figure 3). The inclusion of places where patients can sit in private, on their own or in groups, somewhat concealed from passersby while they can still have a view over the landscape and outdoor activities (prospect versus refuge theory) not only aids in establishing a sense of privacy but also safety and independence. Additionally, a landscape that visually communicates sense of freedom through the use of soft boundaries prevents patients from feeling caged in and controlled.



Figure 2

A visual illustration indicating how orientation and legibility can be enhanced through planting and change in paving colour or material, thus encouraging the user to explore (illustration: Van der Walt, 2009).

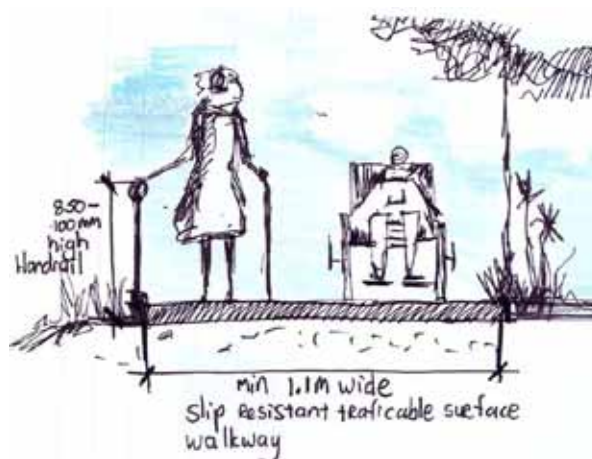


Figure 3

Walkways should be inclusive and accommodate independent functioning for differently abled individuals (illustration: Van der Walt, 2009).

ii) Consciousness

The landscape should also assist in making patients aware, attentive and conscious of their

physical surroundings. This can be achieved by stimulating the senses through the use of bright colours, different textures, calming sounds and fragrant and edible plants. These sensual experiences can make for an exciting and inviting landscape, offering the user a variety of experiences that counteracts boredom. The landscape should also heighten the user's awareness of time. This can be achieved by utilizing plants that accentuate daily (through shadows or flowering) and seasonal change throughout the year. A clock or outdoor calendar can directly communicate date and time, while a sundial has a more direct connectedness with the elements in the outdoor landscape.

iii) Connectedness

To counteract the physical and social isolation that is typical to psychiatric hospitals, the landscape should be designed to encourage a sense of connectedness by accommodating accessibility, social interaction and support, as well as contact with natural systems. This sense of connectedness can be triggered by design decisions that frequent chance encounters between patients but also patients and the public. Areas where people can meet or sit in groups to eat or participate in communal activities such as gardening or sport are essential for organized social interaction. The landscape design should allow and provide space for family members (or friends) of patients to be accommodated. This will help patients to adapt to their environment more quickly and also reassure the family member (or friend) that their loved ones are in good care. The public and surrounding community (including family and friends) can have planned access to the outdoor environment at Weskoppies, they can also be involved in the outdoor activity program. This will help overcome the stigmatization and skewed perceptions about psychiatric institutions and patients. However this should be well designed and managed to not compromise the safety of patients or the public.

Connectedness to natural systems should also be included to satisfy the basic human need for contact with nature. This can include hiking trails with lookout points in areas with natural vegetation which allow people to experience nature in its pure form. Stormwater runoff management and attenuation can create seasonal 'wetland areas' with bird hides that also bring people closer to natural systems. These are all opportunities which can be accommodated on the large premises of Weskoppies.

iv) Purpose

A sense of purpose should be encouraged in the landscape to assist the patients in establishing their role in society. To ensure continued life and growth the landscape needs the involvement of people. Besides the option for patients to be involved in the general maintenance of the outdoor environment, productive landscapes can provide further stimulation from boredom and provide possible income opportunities. The Blackthorn Medical Centre in England's garden project is a good example of how this can be implemented at a mental institution (figure 4). It provides a valuable social/physical setting that relieves the patients from the distressing symptoms of mental illness (Sachs 1999: 288). The landscape can thus provide patients and the surrounding community with work opportunities and responsibilities. One way to achieve this is to include an area dedicated to horticultural therapy where a therapeutic program can be accommodated. Patients can thus be encouraged to take ownership and responsibility for the garden. As part of the occupational therapy program, patients could also be involved in the construction and implementation process whenever possible. All of these have the potential to strengthen the healing process by providing the patient with a sense of purpose through responsibility, achievement and pride.



Figure 4
A co-worker in the garden at the Blackthorn Medical Centre
(photograph by Clare Cooper Marcus in Sachs 1999: 291).

v) Physical activities

Physical activities and exercise are as essential as a balanced diet in terms of basic health requirements for all people, but can also be specifically therapeutic for those suffering from mental disorder (Tyson 1998: 34). The landscape can provide opportunity for movement and activities at different intensities (meeting different abilities). Enough flat open space should be provided to allow for multipurpose sport fields and organized, active occupational therapy activities. The design can include a network of routes (for wheel chairs, walking or jogging) that expose the pedestrian to a variety of experiences and a degree of physical challenges throughout the site.

vi) Rest

Accommodating rest in the landscape is another important factor that should be considered at psychiatric institutions. Rest is vital for patients' wellbeing but requires comfort and safety to take place outside. In terms of basic comfort a combination of shaded and sunny seating areas should be provided for summer and winter conditions. Materials selected for seating should be comfortable to sit on for long periods of time, while hard materials should not cause glare. Patients and staff often need time alone for reflection and contemplation to regain composure after stressful situations. The landscape should have quiet places where people can comfortably sit in privacy away from the mainstream activities (Tyson 1998: 35). The patients' need for sleep during the day can be satisfied by including designated quiet outdoor sleeping areas with benches or mounds shaped for this purpose.

An intensive site analysis of the Weskoppies campus (see Van der Walt 2009) indicated that the site has all the potential to accommodate and enhance the psychological healing process through the application of the above design guidelines.

Design application for Weskoppies psychiatric hospital

The guidelines were applied at urban, campus framework and sketch plan level, to illustrate

their potential at different landscape design scales. Each of these scales at Weskoppies produced various challenges that will be discussed briefly to point out their importance in terms of the design guideline application. (For a more detailed discussion of the design proposal, see Van der Walt, 2009).

Urban scale

The isolated position of the Weskoppies campus within the city context (still today) reflects general perceptions about psychiatric hospitals. While most residents of Pretoria know what Weskoppies is about, very few know where it is located and what the actual campus looks like, since they have most likely never visited the premises.

On a regional urban scale Weskoppies is physically isolated from the rest of the city with the railway line and industrial zone at the northern boundary and the Langeberge Mountains on the southern boundary of the campus (figure 5). These boundaries will be difficult to overcome physically due to financial implications and the current established nature of the railway and industrial zone. This physical isolation of patients from the rest of the city results in social isolation which has negative effects on the psychological healing and rehabilitation process of patients.



Figure 5

The location of Weskoppies: the Pretoria Show Grounds are situated 500m to the north, Pretoria Railway Station 2km east and the Langeberge Mountains directly to the south. (map illustration: Van der Walt 2009).

At a city scale, the pedestrian movement system can be improved to establish a connection between the recreational activities at Weskoppies and activities at the Pretoria Show Grounds (for example). Another possible connection is the heritage buildings at Weskoppies. These have the potential to draw visitors and be linked to other surrounding places with cultural significance such as Freedom Park, the Voortrekker Monument and Church Square (figure 6).

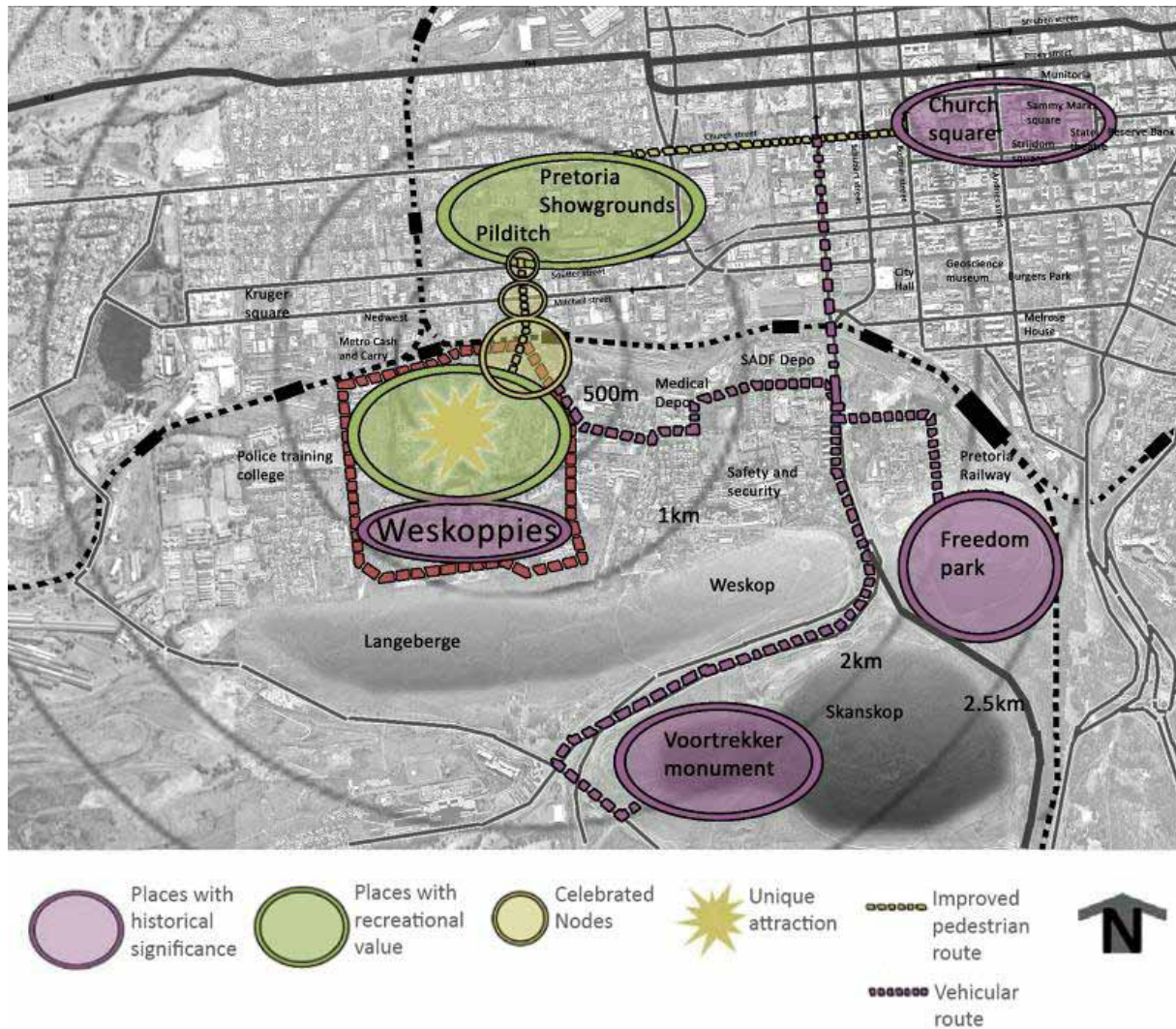


Figure 6
Urban opportunities and challenges for integrating Weskoppies
into the open space system of Pretoria
(map illustration: Van der Walt 2009).

Campus scale

To achieve a sense of connectedness, the open space framework at campus scale should aim for social integration between the patients and the public outside Weskoppies. Due to the nature of the institution, it is best that the campus should remain enclosed for the protection of patients. However, the open spaces at Weskoppies need to provide visitors with an exciting unique outdoor experience different from other open spaces in Pretoria to attract and encourage the public (up to regional scale) to cross the current physical boundaries. An open space framework was developed within the 149ha campus with the aim to attract the visitors over weekends when the campus will be open to the public and the necessary security measures are in place.

A variety of positive experiences and land uses were proposed such as: a wilderness trail and experience, cut flower farming, wetland areas with bird hides, social-cultural and sport activities (figure 7). The aim is to change negative perceptions about Weskoppies and mental institutions in general.



Figure 7
Proposed open space framework indicating land uses, vehicular movement, pedestrian movement and boundaries (open space framework: Van der Walt 2009).

On campus, the current road layout appears haphazard and does not promote legibility for visitors. The framework proposes that the highlighted route (figure 8) will be developed as a primary vehicular route with a tree boulevard, a pedestrian walkway, lighting and several bus stops adjacent to it. This will improve access to and inside the campus at different levels. All the secondary routes that lead to the semi-private outdoor areas surrounding the buildings are located along this route.

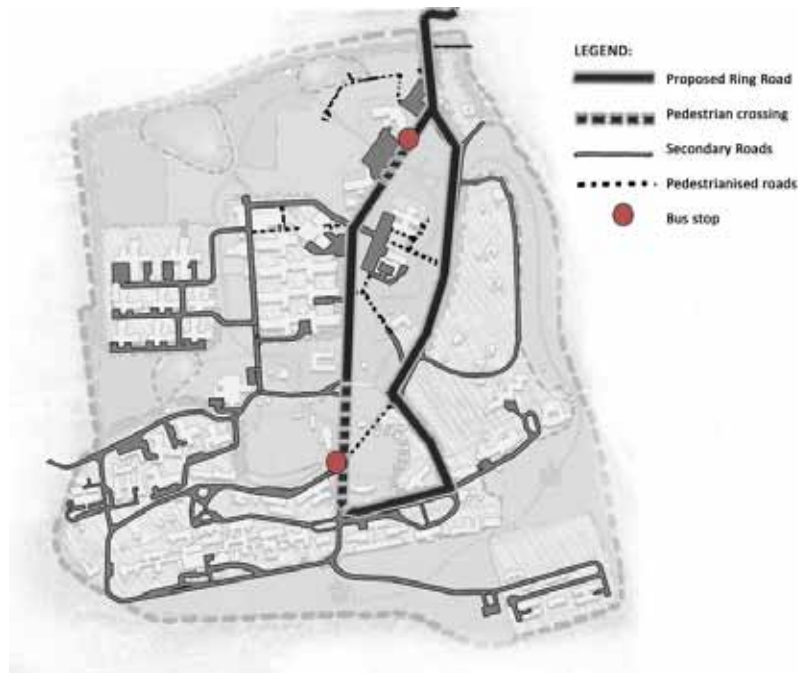


Figure 8
Map indicating the proposed primary and secondary vehicular routes with bus stops (map: Van der Walt 2009).

There is currently no formalized pedestrian movement system and pedestrians have to make use of vehicular routes and informal paths to reach destinations. The framework proposes that the different land uses will be connected by means of a pedestrian movement system to aid movement, orientation and legibility, and to expose the pedestrian to a variety of experiences (figure 9). The proposed circular primary walkway will provide the user with access to a social kiosk area, contemplative seating and sleeping spaces, a multifunctional sports field, a horticultural therapy garden, a flower experience, bird hides, a wilderness experience and lookout points. The secondary pedestrian routes connect pedestrians from all over the site to the primary route (figure 9).

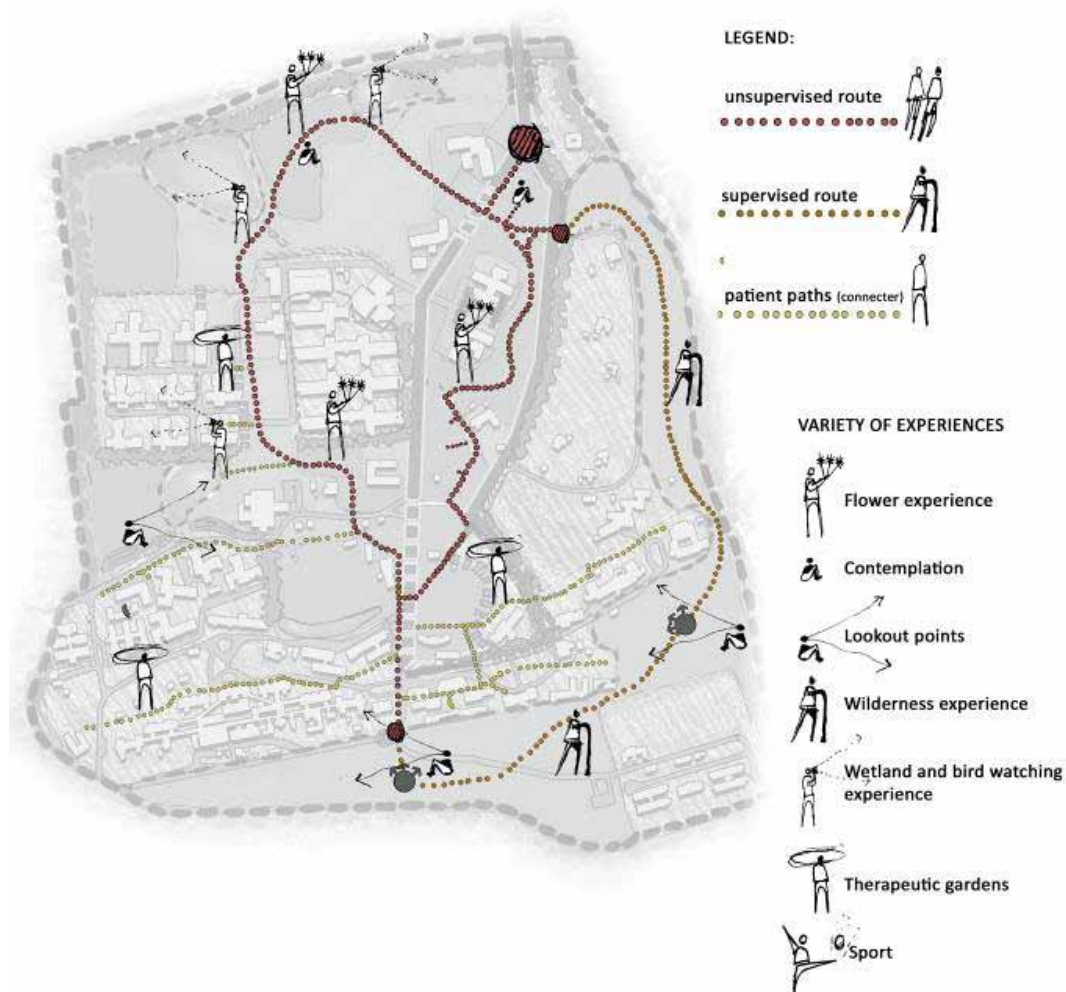


Figure 9
Pedestrian movement system that promotes physical activities and exposes the user to a variety of different experiences (illustration: Van der Walt 2009).

The campus was not developed according to a master plan, resulting in an unstructured current layout with no differentiation between public and semi-private areas. Therefore the framework proposes that the areas around the buildings with semi-private functions (like wards, staff housing and treatment facilities) will be developed as semi-private outdoor rooms (as an extension of the buildings) with soft boundaries which maintain a sense of freedom yet allow for privacy. Boundaries can be visual (like mounds and vegetation screens), physical (like ha-ha fences and retaining walls, figure 10) or emotional (the areas surrounding the buildings should have a distinct character with clear visible thresholds to communicate the fact that these areas are not free for all to enter).

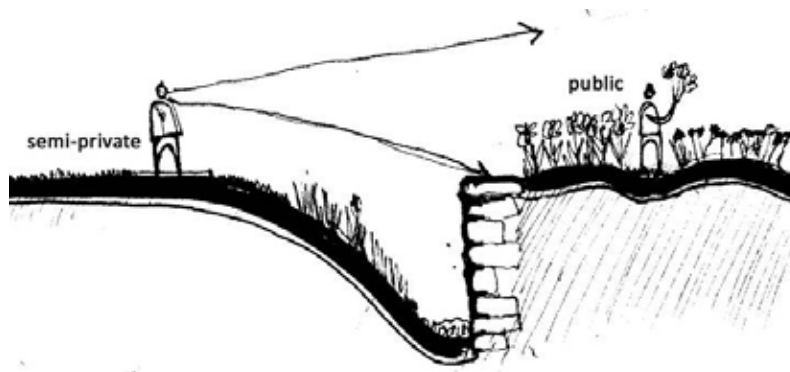


Figure 10

The ancient concept of ha-ha fences was combined with storm water detention systems. Although a person cannot physically cross this boundary, there is still the desired unobstructed view of the landscape (illustration: Van der Walt 2009).

The area at the southern edge of the campus which is currently covered with undisturbed bushveld vegetation (figure 7). is proposed to be rehabilitated and developed as a wilderness experience. This will include a hiking trail and lookout points (figure 11) over the city that can attract members of public but also provide contact with nature and physical activity for staff and patients.



Figure 11

Design vision for the wilderness experience: a lookout point on a trail provides a panoramic view over Weskoppies campus and the city in the distance (illustration: Van der Walt 2009).

Patients should be encouraged to work for remuneration at Weskoppies (as currently practiced in the industrial therapy program where patients assemble plastic funeral flowers for Pearl Plastics). It is proposed that the open areas currently covered with disturbed natural vegetation and invader plants are developed as a cut flower farm and community project. A cut flower farm will not only provide patients and the surrounding community with work opportunities, but will also be a unique attraction in the city over the weekend where people can picnic between the flower fields, buy flowers, or pay to pick their own flowers (figure 12). This will also encourage integration between the public and patients and give Weskoppies a strong positive identity allowing people's perception to change about psychiatric hospitals in general.



Figure 12
Sketch showing the design vision for the open space areas with pathways among the cut flower fields (illustration: Van der Walt 2009).

The three lower lying areas to the south and west of the campus (figure 7) are proposed to be developed as retention dams where stormwater runoff can be retained and used for irrigating the cut flower fields. However these dams should be enclosed with fencing to prevent accidents. The fences are proposed to be hidden in ha-ha fences (figure 10) and bird hides can bring patients closer to the water and birdlife.

The area between the different sports fields around the kiosk (figure 13) is proposed to be developed as the active and social heart of Weskoppies. Most social interaction between patients, staff and visitors are currently taking place here. Apart from sport activities other current social activities in this area include: socializing, gambling, eating sleeping, smoking, singing, playing guitar and contemplation. A detail design was done for this area due to its potential for acting as a catalyst for the open space implementation at Weskoppies. It is proposed as the gathering and meeting place for patients and staff, while being the arrival point for the public on weekends, from where they will explore the rest of the site. This catalytic area was also selected due to its prime location, roughly centrally situated on the site and in close proximity to most sport activities. It is at the furthest point of the proposed primary road and becomes its final destination. Its position is ideal to illustrate the transition between public and semi-private areas due to its proximity to the male ward.

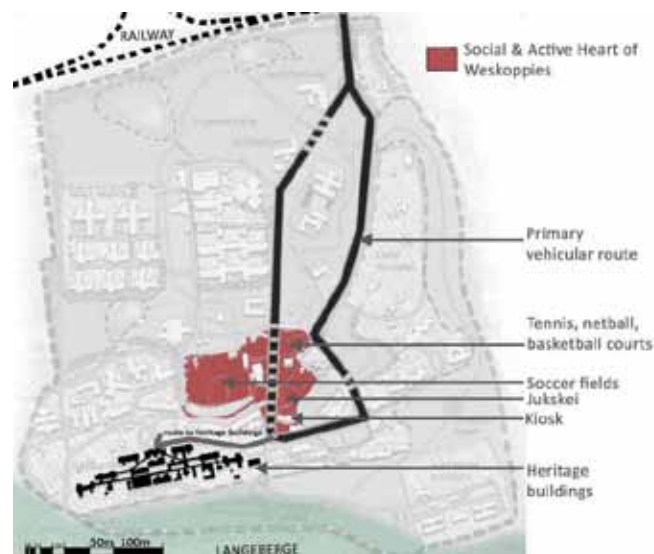


Figure 13
Map indicating the proposed primary and secondary vehicular routes with bus stops that will provide easy access to the proposed catalytic and social heart (map: Van der Walt 2009).

Catalytic sketch plan

The sketch plan proposes an improved kiosk exterior integration, seating and sleeping areas, a designated area for horticultural therapy, colourful private contemplation areas within the cut flower fields and a semi-private area as an extension of the male ward. These areas will be connected by means of a hierarchical pedestrian movement system (figure 14).



Figure 14

The proposed sketch plan shows the application of the road and pathways as structuring elements. The main experiences and spaces take place at the kiosk, sport field, horticultural therapy pavilion, cut flower pockets and male ward (plan: Van der Walt 2009).

The kiosk is currently facing towards the old jukskei court (to the north, figure 14) which is being used as a multi functional sports field, however the direct northern sun exposure makes this area extremely harsh and uncomfortable. The sketch plan proposes that the northern facade of the kiosk should be opened to activate it and allow better transition between the interior and exterior (figure 15). People can purchase food and snacks directly from the outside of the building on the primary route. Shading at this area is proposed by means of a pergola with fragrant climbing plants that stimulates the senses. At the eastern side of the kiosk exterior (figure 14) the facade is proposed to be softened and seating to be provided. This can be shaded in summer and sunny in winter by planting indigenous deciduous trees.

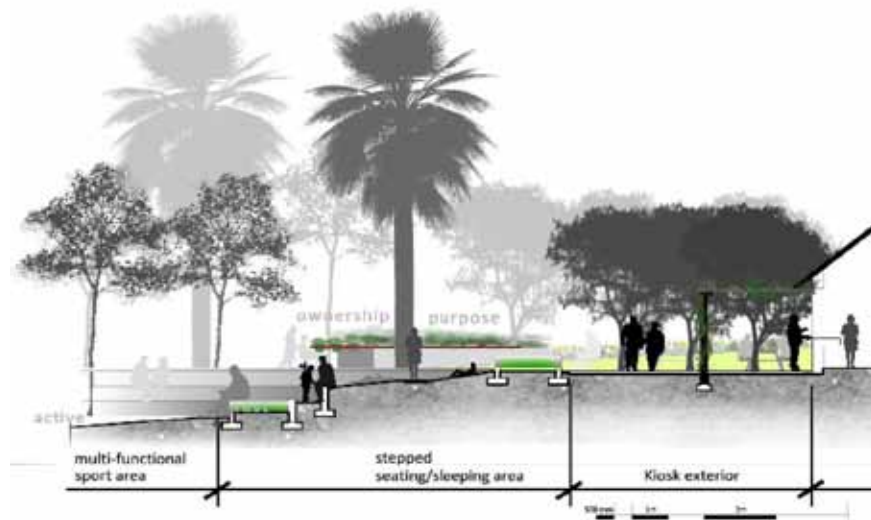


Figure 15
Illustration showing the relationship and thresholds between different spaces and experiences accommodated in the sketch plan area. From the kiosk (right) to the multi-functional sports area (left) (section: Van der Walt 2009).

A stepped seating and sleeping area is proposed to separate (and connect) the social kiosk exterior and the multifunctional sports field (figure 15). This area can provide a space where people can sit or lie comfortably while observing others participate in sport activities. Seating is accommodated by making use of terraced lawn with retaining walls. The lawn and retaining walls are proposed to be undulated at some places to provide comfortable beds for patients to sleep or lie on. Mosaic work with positive slogans (potentially done by Weskoppies patients) can be encouraged on the retaining walls.

The horticultural therapy garden will facilitate activities as part of the occupational therapy program. Herbs, vegetables and fragrant plants are proposed to be planted to maximize the sensory experience: touch, smell, taste and sight. The horticultural therapy garden will include a central gathering pavilion with working tables shaded with a pergola that is covered with fragrant climbing plants. The central pavilion is proposed to be enclosed with planters at various heights. Precast concrete slabs with holes for pots are proposed to be attached to the edge of the planter, where patients starting with small responsibilities can place their individual pots (figure 16).



Figure 16
Design vision for the horticultural therapy garden with working tables and a central gathering pavilion shaded with a pergola at the back (illustration: Van der Walt 2009).

The sketch plan also proposes three colour pockets: yellow, red and blue (or purple) connected to each other with a flower walkway. These colours were selected because they fall within the colour range of most open air cut flower species. These pockets are somewhat removed from the mainstream activities to provide more private intimate places for reflection and rest (figure 17). Each of the pockets is proposed to have a seating and undulated sleeping bench and a lawn area adjacent to the flower walkway. Brightly coloured strips of semi-glazed ceramic-tile-inserts heighten the colour experience of each individual pocket. These colour strips can also visually lead people from the primary pedestrian route to the colour pockets through strips of colour tiles at the perpendicular crossings of the secondary path.



Figure 17

Colour pockets in flower fields proposed to have a seating and undulated sleeping bench for private reflection and rest (illustration: Van der Walt 2009).

At the male ward, a retaining wall combined with a vegetation screen and a terraced lawn is proposed to function as a visual, physical and emotional soft boundary between the public and the semi-private outdoor room around the male ward (figure 18). Patients can still have a view over the public landscape from the top terrace of the outdoor room, while being invisible to the public at the lower terrace. By means of this, patients have choice and control over when they want to participate and explore activities at the public area or stay within the familiar boundaries of the semi private outdoor room.



Figure 18

Semi-private ‘outdoor rooms’ at the male ward, providing patients with choice and control over when they want to participate and explore activities at the public area (illustration: Van der Walt 2009).

The design proposal illustrates the application of the design guidelines (at different scales) that aim to develop an outdoor environment at Weskoppies that enhances and supports psychological healing. The focus of the proposal was mostly on social sustainability by encouraging social integration, ownership and a sense of purpose through job creation and other participative practices. The proposed cut flower community project can contribute to economic sustainability. Indigenous trees and shrubs are proposed that with the cut flowers can be irrigated from onsite stormwater runoff captured through the proposed retention ponds. This will also create new wetland habitats. These design proposals will thus work towards environmental sustainability in the long run, optimizing and using the resources on site sustainably and creating economic viability where possible (see Van der Walt, 2009 for more detailed explanation of these components).

Recapturing

The human body is and has forever been connected to the landscape that it inhabits. The pleasures brought about through experiencing natural or manmade landscapes and the art and gratification involved in making these landscapes are equally ancient in different cultures and traditions. In a time where modernity beseeches the functional nature of produced goods in terms of pressing needs, we sometimes forget the emotional value and greater power of *that* which is perhaps *as* valuable, but in a less direct or measurable way. The qualitative value of landscapes seems to weigh less than ever before and the way its importance can be quantified in terms of foreseen urban population explosions are currently at the forefront of research and attention.

Although the possible real quantitative value of landscapes for human health cannot fully be fathomed the research has focussed (following the current paradigm) on qualitative aspects that can be quantified and made practical for design purposes. The paper demonstrates that landscape design can aid people with mental disorders and even facilitate the process of healing through the creation of outdoor environments that address the physical needs of the mentally ill for exercise and additional rest. The restorative value of nature as a wilderness or horticultural therapy experience was reiterated as well as the importance of time, change and other sensory experiences that are so prominent in nature and connect the user to the here and now. Various ways were explored to create therapeutic outdoor environments that can attend to the main emotional needs that were found to be: consciousness; independence; connectedness and a sense of purpose.

The main hypothesis however suggested that the outdoor environment can improve the social environment and thereby enhance the psychological healing process. The study therefore specifically considered the social needs of the mentally ill and further recommends the limited confinement of patients, provision of work opportunities and greater social interaction with the public to break the destructive influences of stigmatization and isolation that ultimately leads to unemployment after treatment.

Through focussing not only on physical human needs but also specific emotional and social requirements, Landscape Architecture through the aid of environmental psychology can improve human health and wellbeing in both direct and indirect ways. The aesthetics of nature (encompassed in these landscapes) have the power to further develop our understanding of this world through our experiences that influence our knowledge, our conscience and our perception (Middleton & Breed, 2010: 69).

Notes

- 1 In terms of preference studies, a large body of work exists on 'space syntax' which explains how spatial configuration alone can account for human movement rates in diverse locations in both urban and building interior space. Space syntax analysis represents and quantifies aspects of spatial pattern and has found that spatial arrangement compare convincingly with observed movement by pedestrians (Pen 2003: 31). Space syntax theory was not used in our study but rather observed movement, yet it can possibly contribute in similar research undertakings. For further reading see Hillier, B., Hanson, J., Peponis, J., Hudson, J., & Burdett, R. 1983. Space syntax: A different urban perspective. *The Architects Journal* (30, November):47–63.
- 2 Studies in medial axis transformation have shown that empty space or distance between objects (as much as the objects themselves) have an impact on our visual perception. Medial axis transformation was not dealt with in this research. For further reading see: Van Tonder, G. J. & M. J. Lyons. 2005. Visual perception in Japanese rock garden design. *Axiomathes* 15 (3): 353–371.

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Reflecting on the art making process

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This article reports on a mixed method study of painting and drawing activities of professional artists utilizing semi-structured interviews documenting affective states. The experiential data was supplemented with empirical data utilizing experiments. In experiential data gathering, due to many complex layers of processing, people often intellectualise or censor their responses between an emotional reaction and a verbal report. In this study the empirical assessment options of skin conductance, peripheral skin temperature, respiration and heart rate (blood-volume-pulse) measured physiological reactions whilst making art. The rationale for conducting such empirical assessments is to establish whether a correlation can be found between artists' affective descriptions of the art making experience and physiological responses of participating artists.

Key words: affective descriptions, physiological responses

Nabetragting oor die verloop van kunsskep

Hierdie artikel gee verslag oor 'n gemengdemetode studie van die emosionele stemming van professionele kunstenaars tydens teken- en skilderaktiwiteite deur gebruik te maak van semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude. Die ervaringsdata is aangevul deur empiriese eksperimente. Tydens ervaringsdata-insameling, as gevolg van etlike lae komplekse verwerking, is mense soms geneig om hulle antwoorde in die tydsverloop tussen 'n emosionele reaksie en 'n verbale verslag te intellektualiseer of sensor. Hierdie studie gebruik empiriese bepalings om velkonduktiwiteit, omtreksveltemperatuur, asemhaling en hartklop te bepaal. Die grondrede vir hierdie empiriese bepalings is om vas te stel of daar 'n korrelaat bestaan tussen kunstenaars se emosionele beskrywings en hul fisiologiese respons tydens die verloop van kunsskep.

Sleutelwoorde: emosionele beskrywings, fisiologiese reaksie

The debate that C.P. Snow (1965) initiated when he referred to a comparison of “the two cultures”, best understood as art (in particular the literary) versus science (the physical sciences), and literacy versus numeracy, was not new at the time, and continues to this day. As recently as 2000 the art historian Gombrich (2000) challenged the neuroscientists Ramachandran and Hirstein's theory of human artistic experience and the neural mechanisms that mediate it (1999). The authors of this article do not set out to explain art per se, but rather investigate aspects of the art making experience. We argue that neither qualitative nor quantitative research paradigms need to be mutually exclusive, and that a multimethod approach is needed to make the art making experience more understandable. This article reports on a mixed methods study, utilising experiential research methods and enhancing the study with supplemental empirical data, utilising experiments, in which we investigate possible correlates between artists' affective descriptions of the art making experience and experimental data of physiological responses.

Van Manen (2007: 11) describes phenomenology of practice as being formative of sensitive practice, issuing from the pathic power of phenomenological reflections. “Pathic knowing inheres in the sense and sensuality of our practical actions, in encounters with others and in the ways that our bodies are responsive to the things of our world and to the situations and relations in which we find ourselves”. He suggests that the phenomenologist directs the

gaze towards the regions where meaning originates, in order to reflect on the lived experience of human existence, "...free from theoretical, prejudicial and suppositional intoxications. But, phenomenology is also a project that is driven by fascination: being swept up in the spell of wonder, a fascination with meaning" (van Manen 2007: 11). It is from such a position that semi-structured interviews were conducted and recorded – not intended to record technical understandings or cognitive perceptions, but rather to explore the deeply intimate relational, corporeal and temporal 'lived' experiences of the artist. Van Manen suggests (2006: 713) that when writing on others' experiences, "[I]t requires that we be attentive to... subtle significations in the way that things and others speak to us... These words need to touch us, guide us, stir us".

It is reasonable to suggest that people often intellectualise or censor their responses between an emotional reaction and a verbal report - Ramachandran (2011: 70) explains that this is due to many complex layers of processing. This is where empirical methods may complement experiential data gathering. Equally, over-reliance on direct quantitative methods to measure emotional reactions of experiences could skew research findings. In principle the authors concur with Farah's caution (2004) (when she refers to brain imaging techniques), that methods that can measure affective and physiological reactions of the Autonomic Nervous System share concerns of firstly privacy, and secondly, the overreliance on information due to an illusory accuracy and objectivity. She states that even though brain waves do not lie, neither do they tell the truth. Following Farrah's trajectory we offer that like brain waves, empirical measurements of physiological responses should be interpreted with caution. There is not necessarily a direct correlation between the empirical data and the personal experience. Researchers should not allow the impression of accuracy and objectivity provided by the quantitative data to overshadow subjective experiences, nor should the quantitative and qualitative information be directly equated.

Norton and Asmundson (2003), in studies conducted to assess the effect of pain-related fear, describe physiological arousal as being characterized by accelerated heart rate, elevated blood pressure, increased respiration, gastrointestinal activity, increased muscular tension, and increased circulation to skeletal muscles as well as dermal and cerebral vasoconstriction. This suggests that the phenomenological experience may correlate with empirical responses. In this study responses may coincide with a general understanding of arousal, but equally, may include recordings of suppression, such as slowed-down heart rate or a decreased level of micro sweating. D'Mello et al. (2007), in studies about affective trajectories during complex learning, refer to changes in physiological arousal when affective states such as boredom, flow, confusion, frustration, delight and surprise are experienced. This study will reflect artists' actual affective descriptors such as irritability, excitement, and so forth.

Previous research

Hergenhahn (2009: 250) suggests that the difference between what is physically present and what is experienced psychologically has been agonized over for centuries. Indeed, it was this discrimination that had caused Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) to state that psychology could not be viewed as a science, and David Hume (1711-1776) to conclude that the physical world could not be known with certainty. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and Hermann von Helmholtz (1821-1894) stated that the mind tended to embellish sensory experience, and later developed theories of inference. Thus, the notion is not new that research as to the lived experience (such as art making) expressed as science, is viewed with circumspection. "Ernst Heinrich Weber and Gustav Theodor Fechner were the first to measure how sensations vary systematically as a function of

physical stimulation” (Hergenhahn 2009: 251), and could thus be viewed as the founding fathers of experimental psychology.

Silvia (2005: 342) states that emotions and art are intimately related. Whereas this statement may seem overly obvious, “[T]he study of art and the study of emotions, as areas of scientific inquiry, both languished during much of the last century. It is not surprising that the behavioral emphasis on observable action over inner experience would lead to a neglect of research on aesthetics”. In a review of developments vis-à-vis emotional responses to art, the same author (2005) explains that both art and emotion resurfaced in psychology at about the same time during the 1960s and 1970s, as psychologists began developing theories of basic emotions¹ and experimental studies² were conducted focusing on hedonic qualities of art. “Since then, the psychology of emotion and the psychology of art have had little contact” (Silvia, 2005:342). A breakthrough in the study of emotional responses to art, which did not include recorded responses of art making, came about with Daniel Berlyne’s “new experimental aesthetics” in the 1960s and 1970s – the development of a tradition in research on art which emphasized controlled laboratory research involving advanced behavioural science methods. In short, Berlyne’s experiments, which typically included skin conductance, revealed over time that the hedonic qualities of artistic stimuli were traced to changes in arousal, and that the hedonic qualities of art came from two biological systems of reward.³ Research since then has indicated that markers of arousal are decoupled within different arousal measures, such as electro-dermal and cardiovascular responses; and also within the same system, such as low correlations among heart rate, systolic blood pressure, and diastolic blood pressure (Sylvia, 2005). In other words, increased heart rate, for example, does not automatically follow increased respiration rate, and so forth. The same author suggests, further, that emotions are not merely states of high arousal, but rather that emotions arise from subjective appraisals of events. He conducted various experiments in which he applied an ‘appraisal model’ to the study of artistic expertise and concluded: “[I]f people with training in art find some kinds of art more interesting, then it must be because they are more likely to appraise the art in ways that generate interest. Knowledge about art will affect the emotional experience of art” (Sylvia 2005: 347). The latter statement is significant in how it has influenced subsequent research, but will not be explored in this article. With regard to art making and quantitative research in general, and physiological activation in particular, there had been no further significant developments, yet quantitative research of physiological response and sport started to pave the way for other disciplines.

An interest in sport performance can possibly be explained by its inherent competitiveness and general popularity. Furthermore, physiological responses in sport can be measured against sporting outcomes (Filho & Moraes 2008). This is not the case with art making, which is not measurable against performance outcomes per se. Whereas much research on sport performance is based on imagining outcomes (for example imagining a perfect golf swing as opposed to actually performing it), Dietrich (2008) cautions against relying on such research. He explains that imagined and actual motion do not share the same neural substrates, nor does imagining an action correspond to a subliminal activation of the same brain areas required for its execution.

We suggest that research on art making and commensurate physiological activation is scant for much the same reasons – body movement causes unreliable data readings, and such readings cause, and are referred to, as artifacts. Quantitative research in creativity using neuroimaging have included studies in art making, where art making and creativity are used synonymously (Dietrich & Kanso 2010) - note that the authors do not necessarily subscribe to such a view. In reviewing the entire literature that relates creativity to brain activity (1,910 in total), Dietrich and Kanso (2010), after pruning down the list of brain imaging studies on

creativity to 72 experiments reported in 63 articles published until February 2010, show that creativity, in all genres, “simply cannot be captured with any of the relatively coarse theoretical proposals currently in circulation...”. Of these 63 articles reviewed by Dietrich & Kanso (2010), the following used art making activities in experiments: Jung, Segall, et al (2009), where MRI: proton spectroscopy was employed; Martindale et al (1984), where EEG was employed; Petsche et al (1997), where EEG was employed; Bhattacharya & Petsche (2005), in which EEG was employed; Solso (2001), where fMRI was employed; Kowatari et al (2009), where fMRI was employed. The low representation of art making experiments could be due to the general restraint on head movement allowed, after which artifacts are produced (and recorded unless specifically programmed to eliminate such) utilizing the above neuroimaging methods. No quantitative experiments were reviewed where physiological responses were recorded using methods such as peripheral skin temperature, electrodermal responses (or skin conductance), heart rate (blood-volume pulse), and respiration. There were also, noticeably, no reports on multimethods studies, incorporating both empirical as well as experiential research methods.

The motivation to do research is usually due to a problem that requires elucidation or solving. Previous qualitative studies of artists’ perceptions of the art making experience coupled with physiological activation have been documented in research on art making and healing, especially in the treatment or rehabilitation of cancer patients (Lane 2005a; Lane 2005b; Lane 2008), or in the treatment of chronic pain (Norton 2003). Lane (2005b) states that, from a healing perspective, when people engage in creative work, it alerts parasympathetic activation. “Heartbeat slows, blood pressure drops, breathing slows, blood goes to the intestines, and the body shifts into deep relaxation” (Lane 2005b: 122). This study has taken cognizance of prior studies in order to establish best practice, yet the combination of methods employed in this particular study have, to our knowledge, hitherto not been recorded and published.

Materials and methods

Participants: In order to narrow the potential for variability, the sampling population was homogenized as far as possible. Three experienced, middle-aged artists participated in this study. They were identified as artist A (AA); artist B (AB), artist C (AC).⁴ They were deemed experienced artists, with individually, no less than 35 years of professional art making experience. Prior to conducting the experiments, semi-structured interviews were conducted to establish relevant aspects regarding their subjective experience of the quality of their art-making experience.⁵ In order to limit variables, all three produced two-dimensional artworks, either through drawing or painting (whilst standing or sitting at an easel). If the artist was sitting during the first session, the artist was requested to sit during the remaining sessions. The same applied to the artist standing during the first session. This was determined by their personal preference as well as the size, style and genre of the artwork. All participants underwent three sessions during which physiological responses were measured and recorded through non-invasive quantitative physiological assessments, specifically electro-dermal response (also referred as skin conductance), peripheral skin temperature,⁶ respiration and heart rate. For each session, a pre-baseline was established by recording the artist-participant ‘at rest’ for a duration of 70 seconds⁷ immediately prior to the commencement of the artistic activity, followed by an active drawing or painting phase of 30 minutes, followed immediately by a post-baseline of 70 seconds ‘at rest’. The Thought Technology ProComp Infinity 8-channel system and equipment were used for all recordings. A studio of personal choice was used for each artist-participant. The same studio per artist-participant was used for all three his/her sessions. Each participant’s sessions took place during more or less the same time of day.

Experiential investigations of artists' reflections: The investigative question in conducting semi-structured interviews was to establish whether artists' subjective, affective and/or physical descriptions of the art making experience had any correlates. Lane (2005a: 286), refers to Max van Manen's hermeneutic, phenomenological method of research concerning the lived experience, which she refers to as preceding scientific schematization. The phenomenology posture "...is one of a perpetual beginner, which means the researcher takes nothing for granted". It is from such a premise that semi-structured interviews were conducted in this research, where the artists' experiences were documented with regard to perceptions of the art making experience as a life choice, as well as perceptions before, during and after art making sessions where physiological experiences were recorded. In their hermeneutic phenomenology investigations, Ajjawi and Higgs (2007) explain that the semi-structured interview format provides the advantages of both structured and unstructured interviews. Semi-structured interviews allow for greater scope and depth, especially considering the intimate, and often layered nature of narrating the art making experience. The interviews, which lasted one to two hours, were conducted in a place chosen by the artist and recorded in writing by the interviewee. The types of semi-structured questions that were asked "...facilitated the likelihood of people responding with stories and memories of body sensations, rather than with intellectual theories" (Lane 2005a: 287). The formal list of questions was: "You have chosen art teaching and art making as a life profession, so we are not questioning the obvious. Are you aware of other possible reasons why you make art? Are you aware of any sensations – physical or emotional – before making art? During art making? After art making?"

Empirical measurements of physiological responses: The rationale for conducting the various non-invasive physiological assessments was to trace any possible changes in physiological responses when the artist is actively engaged in the art making process. The investigative questions were: is there a pattern emerging for each artist comparing idiosyncratic data collected from his/her three sessions; is there a potential pattern when comparing the outcomes of the three individual artists? The recordings and measurements reflect the complete physiological response profile of each of the participants during the pre-baseline (duration 70 seconds), the active phase (30 minutes) and the post-baseline (70 seconds). It is acknowledged that, due to movement involved in the active process, artifacts, thus "...the recorded noise that is created by a stray or unwanted signal that is not generated by the biological system being monitored" (Peper et al 2008: 407), will be present and influence the readings. In other words, in all physiological responses recorded during these experiments, there are two possible ways to interpret readings: 1) as a change in the autonomic nervous system; 2) as physical movement. We decided to interpret and present the data with the artifacts included as this provides a composite reflection of all the physiological responses, whether due to autonomic nervous system activity, or movement (thus artifacts) during the active process. We further acknowledge that this can provide a skewed reading of autonomic nervous system activity.⁸ It should, however, be emphasized that the movement used by an artist during painting or drawing activities will remain more or less the same during each session of art making. As such, artifacts will be more or less the same during each active phase. It is important to remember that the human body as a psychophysiological construct is constantly in a state of flux. If the emerging pattern is indicative of increased activity, it merely indicates that during the time of the particular measurements, in the body's search for homeostasis, there was relatively more increased than decreased activity.

Electro-dermal response: A way to measure a subject's autonomic response is to monitor the degree of 'micro sweating' or the changes in sweat gland activity – "...the moment-to-moment fluctuations in the electrical resistance of your skin" (Ramachandran 2011: 70). Peper et al. (2008: 162) indicate that the more intense the activity, the higher the sweat gland

activity and thus the higher the skin conductance. The skin conductance report (SCR) is as such measuring an autonomic reaction and is linked to an affective experience. Ramachandran (2011: 70) explains that when something that is emotionally evocative is viewed, the amygdala signals the hypothalamus to prepare the body for action.

This fight-or-flight reaction is not all or nothing; it operates on a continuum. A mildly, moderately, or profoundly emotional experience elicits a mild, moderate, or profound autonomic reaction, respectively. And part of these continuous autonomic reactions to experience is microswetting: Your whole body, including your palms, becomes damper or dryer in proportion to any upticks or downticks in your level of emotional arousal at any given moment.

The skin conductance measurement is done by taping two passive electrodes to the skin in order to monitor electro-dermal response. In this specific project, we placed the skin conductance electrodes on two noncontiguous fingers, on the non-dominant hand thus not interfering with the movement of the artist-participant's dominant hand activities. The unit of measurement is micromhos.

Peripheral skin temperature: Peripheral skin temperature was measured through the use of a thermistor (Peper et al. 2008:108) being placed on the “pulp of the distal portion of the little finger” (Thompson et al. 2003: 231). The more relaxed a person is the higher the skin temperature can be, the more stressed or excited, the lower the skin temperature. These changes in the peripheral skin temperature are due to the effect of the nervous system on the arterial blood vessels i.e. in a tense situation the sympathetic nervous system causes the “arterial blood vessels in the finger to constrict” (Thompson et al. 2003: 231). This thermoregulatory process is one of the core aspects of homeostasis (Saladin 2012: 1025; Peper et al., 2008: 110). The measurement of peripheral skin temperature provides a good indication with respect to the “blood flow through the vessels under the skin” (Peper et al. 2008: 107) – these vessels are also known as the arterioles. An increase in sympathetic nervous system activity decreases blood flow and as such skin temperature, whereas a decrease in sympathetic activity increases blood flow and skin temperature (Ibid: 108). Similarly, an increase in parasympathetic activity is indicative of a sense of general relaxation and an increase in skin temperature. Cognitive activity stimulates the sympathetic nervous system and thus leads to hand cooling (Ibid: 109).



Figure 1
A non-dominant hand ready for measuring physiological responses
(photograph: the authors).

Heart rate: A state of arousal is reflected in a higher heart rate and a state of relaxation is reflected in a lower heart rate (Thompson et al. 2003: 298). The same authors further posit that increased heart rate and skin conduction may "...be related to improved attention and short-term memory" (Ibid: 232). Low body temperature may slow the heart rate down. Heart rate is measured as beats per minute. For this project, heart rate was determined by measuring the blood volume pulse, which is done through the use of a plethysmograph with a photoelectric transducer (Ibid). The sensor, which makes use of an infrared light, measures "changes in the blood volume in the arteries and capillaries that correspond to changes in the heart rate" (Peper et al. 2008: 284). During this project the sensor was attached to the middle finger of the non-dominant hand.

Respiration: Respiration rate can reflect a person's holistic state of wellbeing. A person's respiration rate is determined by placing at least one, but preferably two strain gauge sensors around the trunk. More specifically one sensor is placed directly under the arms to measure the rate and displacement of the thoracic area and the other is placed on the area where most expansion is observed in the abdominal region (Peper et al. 2008: 227). The movement of the gauges is calibrated to reflect the rate of breath per minute (Ibid). Thompson et al (2003: 232) indicate that the breath rate is in an interrelationship with the "partial pressure of CO₂ in the blood stream". The less carbon dioxide (which is a waste product of the body) in the blood, the slower the rate of breathing and the more relaxed the person. Various breath rates and rhythms reflect various emotional states (See Bloch et al. 1995: 202-203; Bioten 1998).



Figure 2
The thoracic and abdominal areas ready for measuring respiration rate
(photograph: the authors).

Discussion of results

In order to discuss the results, we consider firstly, the idiosyncratic data pertaining to each artist, and secondly, we consider patterns as they emerged from data pertaining to all three artists.

Semi-structured interviews: It should be noted that the interviews were conducted prior to any experimentation. Thus, all responses are affective descriptors of perceptions based on previous (and ongoing) art practice, and integral to the lived experience. The first formal question was: “You have chosen art teaching and art making as a life profession, so we are not questioning the obvious. Are you aware of other possible reasons why you make art?” The purpose of this question was primarily to set the interviewee at ease; to set down his/her context for making art. It was thought that more detailed questions that followed, would flow from such a context, and thus not seem to be directly invasive of a practice which is highly personal and intimate. What follows is firstly a verbatim response from each artist (respectively AA, AB and AC), followed by an extraction of key words best describing his/her affective experience. Thereafter, overlapping key words extracted from all three artists are offered.

AA: It's a creation thing. Before there is nothing, then there is something! I'm doing what I'm meant to be doing. I can manufacture landscapes that don't exist – I can magnify and shrink things, it's endless. I'm manipulating reality. I can do anything and even make dreams happen. What I make is unique to me – nobody else has thought of this or done this. I therefore make history. I make art for a selfish reason – it's MY personal thing, where nobody can criticize me – the art is there as validation. It makes me feel good, and centred, balanced.

Key words AA: The overriding reason for making art is to reaffirm a sense of control; to make something where there was nothing; to feel good; to reaffirm a state of uniqueness.

AB: It makes me feel as if I'm in control. It is like therapy - it calms me down and makes me feel good. When I mix colours it brings serenity, and there is huge satisfaction in watching colours dry and how they change. It is like engaging in mystery, creating mystery. It also gives me a sense of excitement - I feel energised! I do it for sharing – for people to realize something, for them to respond to the artwork. It therefore brings meaning to my life – it brings validity to the ordinary in life.

Key words AB: The overriding reason for making art is to reaffirm a sense of control; to bring meaning to the artist's life; to share the product with others; to feel good.

AC: For me it's less about what I am specifically doing, but rather like a place that I go to – that I need to go to – where I can shut off from the world. I'm rather cynical, but here is one 'space' where I can make magic – something that doesn't and hasn't before existed. It is good for me – a sacred place where I can go and emerge feeling good, sometimes for a long time.

Key words AC: The overriding reason for making art is to make something where there was nothing; to shut off from the world; to feel good. A comparison of key words used by AA, AB and AC reveals that all three artists make art predominantly to feel good; to make something where previously there was nothing. The second question was: Are you aware of any sensations – physical or emotional – before making art?

AA: Impatience to get going – sometimes feel irritable inside, even upset. Firstly I need to create order – prepare for it and that requires effort to reach that point. I first have to complete chores. This is a ritual – like preparing for sacred time where I won't be disturbed in the space I create to be focused in.

Key words AA: Affective descriptors are feeling irritable, upset.

AB: It's like a negative irritability, even a depressed feeling – as if I'm being withheld from access to the process. I sometimes feel stubborn towards myself – there is often an anticipation of failure, which doesn't happen.

Key words AB: Affective descriptors are irritability, depressed.

AC: I can't wait to get it going. I sometimes feel deprived and out of kilter.

Key words AC: Affective descriptors are impatience, deprivation. A comparison of keywords used by AA, AB and AC reveals that during the preparatory phase, or before art making commences, all three artists described the affective experience as either irritability; impatience; or being upset. The third question was: Are you aware of any sensations – physical or emotional – during art making?

AA: It feels as if it could go on forever. I override bodily awareness until I know I have to stop due to outside 'stuff', or perhaps light fails. Yes, outside circumstances force me to stop. I feel a calm energy whilst making art. The challenge keeps you there – you are in the 'here and now'. You are making mystery. It is a good feeling, even though it can feel like you're walking a tightrope – pushing the envelope. It is like seeing beyond the labyrinth – it takes you to an elevated level.

Key words AA: Affective descriptors during art making are feeling challenged, calm, overriding bodily discomfort, elevated.

AB: For me there are two phases: The first is meditational, somewhat mindless, like a ritual, no commitment to (re)solving a problem. It feels challenging. I spontaneously work with colour, intuitively, 'hands-on'. Then it shifts to a planning mode. Now there's no turning back. There's no judging. I forget about my body, excepting when I experience pain. I'm aware of challenges. During this phase I'm often aware of invoking other energies, other people, artists. It is exploring the new, creating something unique. I have a sense of pushing the envelope – what I do must be fresh. I feel a sense of freedom and I feel sharp!

Key words AB: Affective descriptors during art making are feeling mindless, challenged, intuitive, overriding bodily sensations, explorative, feeling free and sharp.

AC: It's like coming home. Yesyesyes., everything feels as if it is falling into place. I often get a sense of a perspective on the greater scheme of things – somehow holistic – the 'small stuff' falls away. I feel safe – it's just me. I feel utterly focused, sharp as a razor, yet strangely not quite in control. I feel excited when things start taking shape. I'm often unaware of the duration of time and can continue until I NEED to stop.

Key words AC: Affective descriptors during art making are perspective on things, holistic, safe, focused, sharp, not in control, unaware of duration of time. A comparison of key words used by AA, AB and AC reveals that during the art making, all three artists described the affective experience as feeling challenged; calm; overriding bodily discomfort; elevated; intuitive or holistic; focused; free or not quite in control. The fourth and last question was: Are you aware of any sensations – physical or emotional – after art making?

AA: I feel calm satisfaction; calm accomplishment. However, I sometimes feel peeved if I have to stop. It is a unique feeling – there's no competition with anybody. A sense of peacefulness. Gratefulness. Sometimes the next picture comes into my head. Generally it feels like a ritual that has run its course – it gradually dies down.

Key words AA: Affective descriptors after art making are satisfaction, accomplishment, peacefulness, gratefulness.

AB: I feel a sense of satisfaction; justification. I feel a sense of being rewarded and well-being. I feel special and autonomous.

Key words AB: Affective descriptors after art making are satisfaction, justification, sense of wellbeing, feeling special.

AC: I feel totally calm, yet often energized. It feels as if I have perspective on things. Yet, I can feel excited because there is now a link to the artwork – a relationship is established.

Key words AC: Affective descriptors after art making are a sense of calm and perspective, feeling energized, excited. A comparison of key words used by AA, AB and AC reveals that after art making all three artists experience a sense of satisfaction; peacefulness; calm or wellbeing.



Figure 3
An artist during an art making session
(photograph: the authors).

Experiments: As indicated earlier, the investigative questions were: is there a pattern emerging for each artist comparing idiosyncratic data collected from his/her three sessions; is there a potential pattern when comparing the outcomes of the three individual artists? In order to answer the first question, a detailed report was done vis-à-vis average measurements of heart rate, respiration rate, skin conductance and peripheral skin temperature. These reports compare ‘pre-baseline’ measurements with ‘during’ measurements; ‘during’ measurements are compared with ‘post-baseline’ measurements; ‘pre-baseline’ measurements are then compared with ‘post-baseline’. It is important to note that during the pre-baseline phase the artist was requested to remain still but to move open eyes over the canvas/paper; during the active phase, there was eye and body movement; during the post-baseline phase, there was again no bodily movement, yet there was eye movement at will. With regard to a comparison of measurements, it should be noted that any shift, regardless how big or small, was categorised as either an increase or a decrease in order to trace possible patterns. Some of these shifts can be seen as too small to be of any significance. As stated, these readings are indicative of physical movement (thus an artifact) as well as autonomic nervous system activity. Proceeding to the second investigative question, the artists’ profiles were then compared.⁹

Correlations: Artists’ descriptions of perceptions before art making can be summarized as follows: impatience; irritability; and feeling upset. An average of three experimental recording

sessions per artist was done for 70 seconds before art making commenced – referred to as ‘pre-baseline’. Artists’ perceptions whilst actively making art (referred to as ‘during’) were: feeling challenged; unaware of bodily discomfort; feeling elevated, holistic; focused. This study does not provide a direct correlation between such perceptions and experimental readings, yet we take note of the following when comparing the individual pre-baseline and during average profiles: Heart rate average compared amongst artists – six out of nine potential shifts between pre-baseline and during measurements reflected an increase in heart rate. This indicates that when comparing the pre-baseline measurements of each of the artists with the during measurements, that heart rate average (which reflected marginal to minimal changes) during the active phase of all three artists, had more moments of faster heart rate than slower, compared to the pre-baseline phases. The increased heart rate average reflects more activation and is potentially more indicative of activity of the parasympathetic nervous system. Respiration rate average amongst artists – eight out of nine potential shifts between pre-baseline and during measurements reflected an increase in respiration rate. The increased respiration rate may be indicative of more excitement, as all three artists appeared to move from feeling irritable; impatient, to feeling challenged, elevated, or focused. It may also reflect more physical activity (which of course it did, as all three artists started drawing or painting) and thus on a physiological level a need to breathe faster – which will here be categorized as an artifact. On the other hand, if a decrease in reading is observed, it is indicative of the artist experiencing as sense of calm, or as expressed by the artists, a sense of holism, feeling focused. Skin conductance average amongst artists – eight out of nine potential shifts between pre-baseline and during measurements reflected an increase in skin conductance. Skin conductance average minimum increase reflected five out of the nine times and a decrease four out of the nine times. Skin conductance average maximum increased nine out of the nine times. An increase in skin conductance reflects activation of some kind. The skin conductance average minimum increase is evident of overall more arousal than suppression during the ‘during’ than the pre-baseline phase. The skin conductance maximum increase possibly reflects more intense arousal moments. Peripheral skin temperature average amongst artists - six out of the potential nine shifts between pre-baseline and during measurements reflected a decrease in peripheral skin temperature. Peripheral skin temperature average minimum decreased nine out of the potential nine times. Peripheral skin temperature average maximum increased eight out of the nine times. When comparing the pre-baseline measurements with the during measurements of skin temperature, skin temperature minimum and skin temperature maximum correlate – this possibly indicates more activity and more moments of more intense excitement. The increased activity of the sympathetic nervous system resulted in the decrease of the peripheral skin temperature. The decrease of the minimum and increase of the maximum peripheral skin temperature average reflects a wider swing in the flux of sympathetic and parasympathetic activity, although all over, the moments of sympathetic activity possibly overshadowed the moments of parasympathetic activity during the active phase.

Comparing the individual ‘during’ (described by artists as feeling challenged; unaware of bodily discomfort; feeling elevated, holistic; focused) and ‘post-baseline’ average profiles (described by artists as feeling satisfied; peaceful; calm, sense of well-being): Heart rate average compared amongst artists – five out of potential nine shifts indicated an increase in heart rate average. The overall pattern indicates that with reference to heart rate, the artists experienced an increase in excitement during the post-baseline phase more often – this could indicate that the phase of excitement (as described by artists during art making) requires more time to ‘calm down’ after art making has physically stopped (recall also that two of the three artists indicated that they often start thinking of the next art work, or experience a bond with the current art work, after they have stopped working). Respiration rate average amongst artists – eight of the

potential nine shifts indicated a decrease in respiration rate average. Slower respiration rate is indicative of a more relaxed and calm state (again borne out by descriptions of artists as to how they tend to feel), and thus possibly reflects an increase of parasympathetic activity. It also has to be taken into account that there was no physical movement in the post-baseline phase. Skin conductance average amongst artists – six out of the nine potential shifts indicated an increase in skin conductance between the during and post-baseline average profiles. Skin conductance average minimum increase was nine out of the nine times. Skin conductance average maximum decreased six out of the nine times. An increase in skin conductance reflects arousal of some kind – the artists were all more excited, even though at this stage they were not moving at all, but rather just observing the art work that had been done. Thus, this indicates that all activity was due to sympathetic arousal. There was thus a smaller flux between arousal and suppression activities. Peripheral skin temperature average amongst artists – six out of the nine potential shifts indicated a marginal increase in peripheral skin temperature between the during and post-baseline average profiles. Peripheral skin temperature average minimum increased eight out of the potential nine times. Peripheral skin temperature average maximum decreased marginally eight out of the nine times. An increase in peripheral skin temperature reflects increased relaxation (again borne out by what the artists described). The increased peripheral skin temperature average minimum and decreased peripheral skin temperature average maximum indicate a narrower flux between arousal and suppression activities.

Comparing the individual ‘pre-baseline’ (described by artists as impatience; irritability; and feeling upset) and ‘post-baseline’ (described by artists as feeling satisfied; peaceful; calm, sense of well-being) average profiles: Heart rate average compared amongst artists – seven out of the potential nine shifts indicated an increase in heart rate between the pre-baseline and post-baseline average. The tendency observed in the overall heart rate profile is thus more arousal reflected in the post-baseline average than in the pre-baseline average – again this could be ascribed to more time being required to ‘calm down’ after art making phase has been completed, and visually engaging with the art work in front of them. Respiration rate average amongst artists – five out of the potential nine shifts indicated an increase in respiration rate between the pre-baseline and post-baseline average. The tendency observed in the overall respiration rate profile is more arousal reflected in the post-baseline average than in the pre-baseline average. Skin conductance average amongst artists – nine of the potential nine shifts indicate an increase in skin conductance between the pre-baseline and post-baseline average. Skin conductance average minimum increased eight out of the nine times. Skin conductance average maximum increased marginally to significantly nine out of the nine times. The tendency observed in the overall skin conductance profile is more arousal reflected in the post-baseline average than in the pre-baseline average. Both the minimum and maximum skin conductance average increased, thus reflecting a more aroused state in the post-baseline average than in the pre-baseline average. Thus, this indicates that, as there was no physical movement, the arousal noted was due to sympathetic arousal alone. Peripheral skin temperature average amongst artists – five out of the nine potential shifts indicated a marginal decrease in peripheral skin temperature between the pre-baseline and post-baseline average profiles. Peripheral skin temperature average minimum decreased marginally six out of the potential nine times. Peripheral skin temperature average maximum increased seven out of the nine times. The tendency observed in the overall peripheral skin temperature profile is more arousal reflected in the post-baseline average than in the pre-baseline’ average. The overall minimum peripheral skin temperature average decreased and the overall maximum peripheral skin temperature average increased, indicating more intense arousal and suppression responses.

Conclusion

In our introduction, we conceded that there is not necessarily a direct correlation between the empirical data and the personal experiences of artists described in this study. As researchers commencing from a phenomenology posture, we have, indeed, taken nothing for granted. We further conceded that researchers should not allow the impression of accuracy and objectivity provided by empirical data to overshadow subjective experiences. With regard to art making and quantitative research in general, there have been very few research mechanisms to follow, especially since the production of artifacts remains a factor to take into account in research where bodily movement is involved.

In this study the empirical data was comprised of 24 recording phases, of which five conclusively overlapped for all three artists – thus indicating significant patterns or ‘tendencies’ relevant to this research. In our pre-baseline to during recordings temperature minimum decreased and skin conductance maximum increased. We can thus conclude from the empirical data that there was more physical activity, and evidence of more moments of excitement due to sympathetic arousal. This correlates with artists’ perceptions of feeling challenged, elevated and not quite in control when making art. Directly after art making, skin conductance minimum increased which indicates that the artists were still excited after the art making phase. Comparing the moments before art making to moments directly afterwards, skin conductance average and maximum readings increased. This indicates that all three artists were more excited after the art making session than when they started.

The shortcomings of the methods employed in this research can be summarized as follows: since we generally worked with averaged readings and results, increase and decrease shifts in physiological activation were often negligible, yet were taking into account. This can be overcome in future by adapting the research methodology by triangulating real time measurements of, not only the physical responses, but also real-time video recordings of the active art making process. Furthermore, markers should be placed on the recordings when the artist uses one or more of a selection of key words to describe his/her affective experience, during the recording process.

This study was not intended to be conclusive, but rather to contribute towards an ongoing longitudinal study. Findings from this study will form new baselines for future research. Rose (2003: 378), when referring to the brain and memories offered “...that they need not be lost even if they cannot be found; they may be difficult to access because we can’t find a key to how we have classified them, because we need a cue to recover them...”. The authors are of the view that searching for correlates between descriptions of affective experiences and physiological reactions is much the same – it is as if we have not yet found the key to how we can classify them. It is with a mixture of excitement and trepidation that we are, in effect, joining a queue of many people who have pondered this question from as far back as Aristotle (384-322 B.P.).

Notes

1. For more on developments in psychology vis-à-vis emotions see Aristotle (384-322 B.P.); Plato (ca. 427-347 B.P.); Democritus (ca. 460-370 B.P.); Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677); John Locke (1632-1704); David Hartley (1705-1757); David Hume (1711-1776); Charles Darwin (1809-1882); William James (1842-1910); Edward B. Titchener (1867-1927); William McDougall (1871-1938); Carl G. Lange (1834-1900); John B. Watson (1878-1958).
2. For more on experimental psychology see Charles Bell (1774-1842); François Magendie (1783-1855); Ernst H. Weber (1795-1878); Gustav T. Fechner (1801-1887); Hermann von Helmholtz (1821-1894); Wilhelm M. Wundt (1832-1920); Franz C. Brentano (1838-1917);

- Edmund Husserl (1859-1938); Hugo Münsterberg (1863-1916); Mary W. Calkins (1863-1930); Robert S. Woodworth (1869-1962); Clark L. Hull (1884-1952).
3. For more on these biological systems of reward, see Berlyne, D.E., 1967. *Arousal and reinforcement*. In Levine, D. (ed.), Nebraska symposium on motivation, 15: 1-110. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. Also see Berlyne, D. 1971. *Aesthetics and psychobiology*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.
 4. A research project in which the physiological states of three archers were recorded was used as a candidate mechanism (Filho & Moraes, 2008).
 5. A potential conflict of interest is noted: one of the authors was also a participant. Interviews and experiments were coded so as to ensure objectivity in interpreting the results.
 6. Also known as 'shell temperature' (Saladin, 2012: 1025).
 7. Thompson & Thompson (2003: 244) indicate a 1- 3 minute baseline recording.
 8. Numerical recordings with commensurate descriptions are copious. These are available for perusal from the authors.
 9. The authors express their sincere gratitude to Dr Chris Steinmann from University of Limpopo, vis-à-vis caution when interpreting quantitative results.

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Becoming the body, approaching the body, re-enacting the body: Jew in Venice

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This paper considers several examples of creative work specifically situated in the city of Venice as an amplification of otherness made apparent through the city's metonymy of the physical body. This is an attempt to present an argument around the relationship between enclosures and the physical body—of what might be signified when body meets body within the enclosure. The creative works include *Video Walking Venice (Rimini Protokol, Venice Biennale 2011)*, *Crystals of Resistance* (Thomas Hirschhorn, Venice Biennale 2011) and 'Pound of Flesh' from Mary McCarthy's *Venice Observed* (1961). These works provide a socio-historical context situated around identity, the enclosure of the city and the body; when applied, indicate how external representations of the body become fixed onto the body but that can also be subverted.

Key words: Jew, Venice, identity, enclosure, performance.

Benadering tot die liggaam: Jood in Venesië

Hiermee word verskeie voorbeelde van kreatiewe werk, spesifiek geleë in die stad van Venesië, in ag geneem as 'n versterking en beklemtoning van andersheid, duidelik gemaak deur die stad se metonimie van die fisiese liggaam. Dit is 'n poging om 'n argument aan te bied rondom die verhouding tussen die argitektoniese omhulsels/afbakings/heinings/algemene stads areas en die fisiese liggaam—van wat te kenne gegee en gesuggereer kan word wanneer liggaam en liggaam binne so 'n omhulsel ontmoet. Die kreatiewe werke sluit in *Video Loop Venesië/Video Walking Venice (Rimini Protokol, Venice Biennale 2011)*, *Kristalle Van weerstand/Crystals of Resistance* (Thomas Hirschhorn, Venesië Biennale 2011) en *Pond van Vlees/Pound of Flesh* van Mary McCarthy se *Venesië Waargeneem/Venice Observed* (1961). Hierdie werke bied 'n sosio-historiese konteks rondom identiteit, die omheining van die stad en die liggaam, wanneer dit toegepas word en dui aan hoe eksterne voorstellings van die liggaam, vasgestel word op die liggaam, maar dan ook ondermyn kan word.

Sleutelwoorde: Jood, Venice, identiteit, omheining, optrede.

This paper is about resistance. In it, I will attempt to explain resistance to forms as a deconstructive act of resistance, which mirrors the resistance of the body. The physical body is a form that in my case appears to resist on itself as itinerant in the reflexive performative space.¹ These are difficult conjectures: performative, reflexive and form. All three, I have experienced, in an auto-ethno methodological context. A context that partly entails personal observations of recording and reflecting whilst researching and manipulating my own physical body as it explored encounters with resistance. The auto-ethno methodological method, in my own work, is an ongoing personal narrative of practice led research that assumes a position of self-reflexivity as it detours from practitioner to witness to researcher and thereafter to analyst of the research itself. It is a method not completely demonstrated in this paper. This paper instead assumes a comparative and theoretical trajectory, based upon other examples of other persons' creative work specifically situated in the city of Venice as an amplification of otherness made apparent through the city's metonymy of the physical body, in order to locate and embed my own admissions of disruptive thematic forms that suggest a premise to an auto-ethno methodological method of inference based upon the relationship between enclosure and the physical body that performs resistance.



Figure 1
“Muscle Jew”: an ongoing project in remaking and intervention’
 (source: courtesy Dr. N. Falkoff, 2012).

Resistance is presented and represented through various definitions, considerations and motifs throughout this paper, as part of that reflexive space. In fact, the paper itself performs resistance and in doing so continues my exploration of how writing can perform.²

The first motif of the paper is the emerging body. The paper as its title suggests becomes something as it encounters and performs resistance. The title, ‘Becoming the body, approaching the body, re-enacting the body: Jew in Venice’, signifies the active centrality in the enclosure of physical spaces. This might occur in the inter-relationship between body and the enclosure; one outcome that suggests the theme of the body is a site of resistance, informed and formed by enclosed space. The enclosure of the physical space is predominant in a city like Venice for two obvious reasons. It is city of islets. Secondly it founded the first European ghetto for its Jews in the sixteenth century. The later reason exemplifies why this paper is an argument about the imposition of identity upon the physical body. It is an argument that considers how the body resists when it assumes an enforced identity — an outcome that has multiple dimensions. The body in flux is part of the itinerant heterogeneous system, what I relate to later—and refer to—as part of the rhizome.³

The merging body, (along with its emerging identity), belong to my first motif of the emerging body. The calculated interest here is how ‘becoming’ as physical method might in creative practice sublimate resistance while it aggravates identity. This is done to prove that identity is fluid. It follows the biological tract of how the physical body might be the key that unlocks it’s own resistance as it also embodies resistance, which is an argument that stems from various readings made from three creative works: “Pound of Flesh” from Mary McCarthy’s *Venice Observed* (1961), *Crystals of Resistance* (Thomas Hirschhorn, Venice Biennale 2011) and *Video Walking Venice (Rimini Protokol*, Venice Biennale 2011), and then relating the works to corresponding themes of Resistance, Jew and the Body.

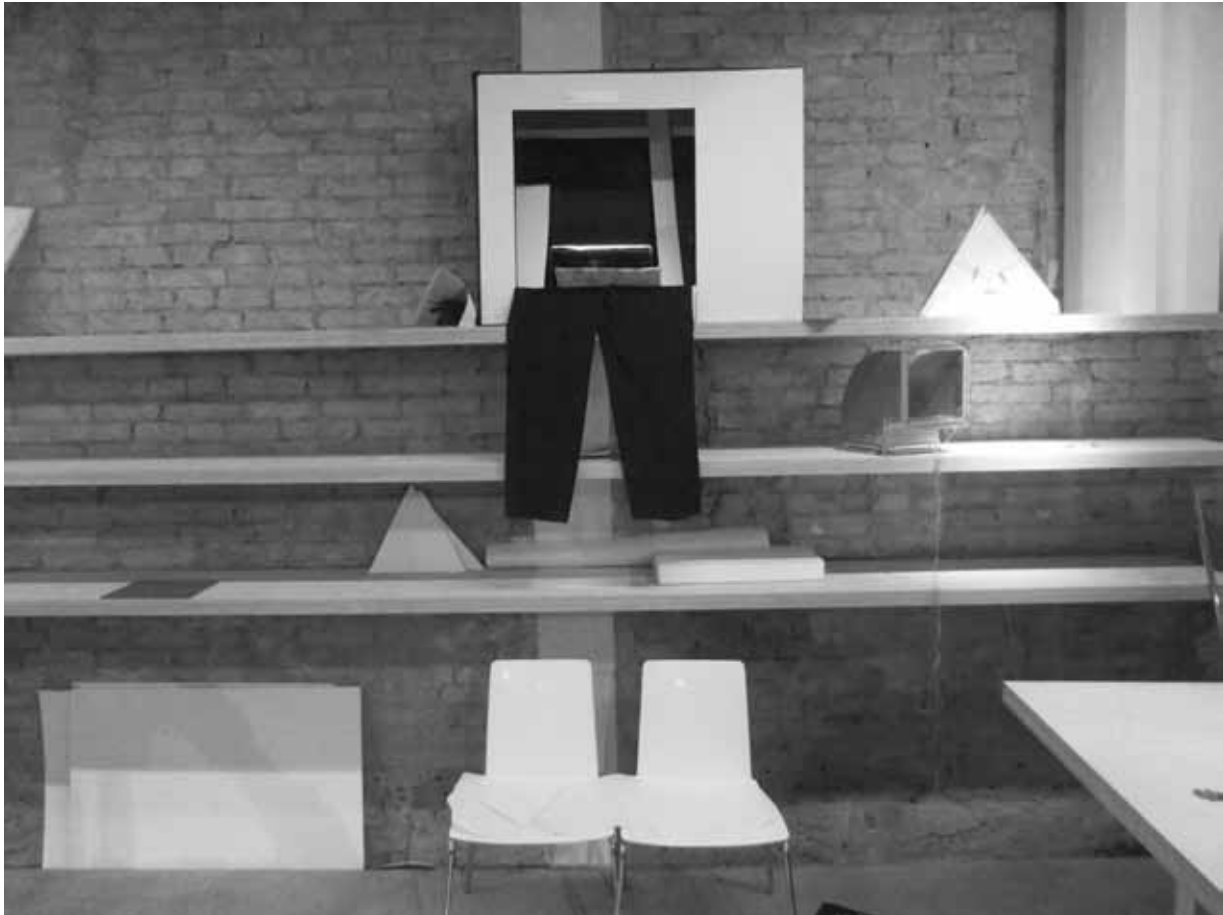


Figure 2
Identity meets the enclosed space: *Video Walking Venice*
(photograph: Taub, 2011)

In each of these works there is something that contributes to why and how the body actively remakes itself in resistance to the imposition of forms. How does the body perform resistance? It is this question that lies at the heart of this paper. The paper also acts out its own resistance in defining its own categorization of the body. The central question, also an idea, of how a body performs resistance is stated not at the paper's structural center (several pages later on) even though it declares itself to be the paper's heart. The paper does not assume to be a biographical entity but rather inverts the notion of itself through becoming a corpus of ideas: thinking and practicing in constellations (see Wolin 1982: 92) presents and encourages a process of reading theory and making practice that delves into a vast array of ideas and combines "diverging motifs, yet without actually unifying them" (Habermas, 1979: 32). It is by resistance to homogeneity of thought that a body of ideas might assume a corporeality of emerging meaning by becoming an accordant to the narratives upon which the paper moves through rather than assuming a fixed form.⁴

Defiance to norms like presenting an oppositional text or by implicating resistance into the progressive notion of research itself is what might contribute to the understanding of the discourse created between fixed forms and itinerant heterogeneous systems.⁵ I want to consider here, Sander Gilman's pursuit of categorization and the Jewish body, whereby Gilman's argument includes the one of "ever-expanding body" and restriction (1995: 4). In the tension of texts, he cites "Baudrillard's failure to understand the subtlety of the constructed body — the profusion of meanings that the same sign can have for differently situated individuals — leads

to his claims for a universal body” (Gilman 1995: 4). What is of interest here though is that it is the constructed body that continues to reconstruct itself. It is the body that subverts normative codes not only to assume “control or mastery over the body” (see Richardson 2010: 45), but also to assume its own abject self so as to become “the in-between, the ambiguous, the composite” (Kristeva 1982: 4). It is the body in flux but also in resistance.

This is what produces, and hopefully what sustains, an ongoing research argument located in a body of work that includes a cultural and socio-historical context situated around identity and its resistance to enclosure. In South Africa there has been an increased privatization of public spaces marked by the emerging enclosures of the gated community, boom estates, increasing high walls, barbed wire, metal fences and the increasing presence of security guards (see Bremner 2004; Landman 2006; Taub 2011). These kinds of privatized enclosures may perhaps hinder the perpetration of crime, but they also perpetrate segregation.

One object of the original enclosure of the Venetian ghetto was to incur ‘spatial marginality’ upon its Jewish inhabitants:

The establishment of the ghetto was, therefore, the coherent and logical outcome of the city planning process. Jews – at least in Venice – similarly to Greeks, Albanians and Turks were positioned on the margins of the city, away from the centre, according to the logic of “spatial marginality”. “Spatial marginality” was implemented in order to control and discipline religious, cultural and ethnic diversity (Faccini 2011: 14).

Thus, ghettos are associated with separation and control, according to Faccini’s theory, even though the definition originates from a geo-historical context than one that pertains to segregation.

This particular kind of enclosure originated a name derived from a Venetian word relating to the area of the *fonderia* where copper was thrown and melted (*gittata* and therefore *geto* in Venetian) (Faccini 2011: 14).

Ghetto as a word is implicated in difference, reinforced by separation, as noted in the Hebrew word for the praxis of divorce: ‘ghet’.

Ghet is the Hebrew word for divorce document. According to Jewish law, a marriage is not dissolved until a bill of divorce, *get*, is exchanged between husband and wife (Online: Jewish Virtual Library 2012).

Once Europe began to separate its Jews their divorce occurred. How did the Jew resist this enclosure is too general a question. How did the Jewish body bring itself to reject the very tropes inscribed onto its body through enforced separation? These anti-Semitic tropes affected by separation simultaneously and, subsequently historically, produced stereotypes of pollution, disease, de-emasculation and feminization.⁶ Perhaps the resistance is evident in Judaism’s continuum of pedagogy, cemented and preserved in enforced hermeneutics.⁷ Or perhaps as Gilman sees it by exemplifying Franz Kafka who:

To separate himself from racial categorization, Kafka selects from the grab bag of various discourse available to him. Like a bricoleur, Claude Lévi-Strauss’s image of the creator of myths and legends, he shops about, taking bits and pieces from various discourses that have deep meaning for him. By sublimating them he can control them or believe that he can (Gilman 1995: 4).

It is these kinds of consequences of containment that point to a multifarious positioning whereby resistance is not merely a fixed opposition to conformity but rather is both precarious and heterogeneously active. This can be affirmed by the position that, “It is essential that Jews be excluded in order that what they taken to have begun may continue” (Benjamin 1991: 84). It is

a position of an enforced yet also generative dependency made upon the Jew, which “excludes only to include....” (86) And this exchange whereby, “The Jew remains the Other in order for the same to remain the same” (Benjamin 1991: 86) is similar to how McCarthy might embellish her observations about the Jew in Venice, in her chapter, ‘A Pound of Flesh’, from her novel *Venice Observed* (1961) with seemingly Orientalist considerations; but in finding the Jew in Venice she also finds Venice in the Jew.⁸

The Jews were the last representatives of the Eastern bazaars to remain in Venice; when the Star of David set in the eighteenth-century ghetto, Venice herself was extinguished (McCarthy 1961: 211).

The Eastern Bazaar in McCarthy’s terms engages with resistance – as much as it does with representation, with what Gilman presents as, “this ideological construct, the Jews as ‘oriental’ are as marked by the color of their skins, by their yellowness or their blackness, as Africans” (1995: 16). Here mysterious ‘East’ meets with coloring of racist considerations that are also by their terminology prescribing to points of further research. Arendt suggests how, “Mysteriousness as such became the first criterion for the choice of topics. The origin of mystery did not matter, it could lie in a reasonable, politically comprehensive desire for secrecy” (1951: 351), that supported in producing “age old superstitions which had woven legends around certain groups” (351).⁹ McCarthy’s Eastern Bazaar provokes resistance because it resists dormancy, because it engages with Arendt’s observations about ideological dominion and because it stimulates historical interest. It resists whilst it remains within McCarthy’s idiomatic observations about Venice but points to how Venice made as an “estate of outcasts” (Faccini citing Pullen 2011: 14) also inverted the lines of the city into a space for its own marginal — the Jew.

These lines of inversion are important to consider when regarding notions of resistance as they point to a non-static position in the rendering of resistance. McCarthy observes how, “The Venetians...were hated in much the same the Jews for being outside the compact” (1961: 206). By inhabiting their own sense of marginalization the Venetians enforced a double marginalization on their own marginal, redoubling and inventing “a typical piece of Venetian machinery, designed to contain their Jews while profiting them, just as the doge was contained” (1961: 208). I want to argue that the Jew as marginal, self consciously realized this kind of double-edged containment and resisted against its presence by retreating into “their quiet corners there to preserve the illusion of liberty and unchallenged humanity” (Arendt 2007: 296). They reconstituted their semi-isolation in order to create out of a fixed “sense of imposed difference a meaningful sense of one’s own identity” (Gilman 1991: 1). The effect of this kind of sublimation as Gilman suggests led to “a productive and successful means of resistance” (Gilman 1991: 24).

Resistance engages as a conservative tract but rebounds with perforation. Resistance is like an *enciente*. This is castle within a castle, whose walls now function not only as protection but also in providing its own multiple interdependent system. Resistance might yield to notions of the ‘other’ in a particular space and place that is, in this context, McCarthy’s time of 1961. Using Arendt might activate further re-reading so as to understand how resistance as a notion exists in McCarthy’s text. What I want to do is extract a terminology from my observations made from within a city that urbanized the other into the resistance of an ‘Eastern bazaar’ or ghetto. In McCarthy’s text the author presents the containment of an exiled race, semi-tolerated by another exiled race that has found a natural resistance to being made vulnerable from resistance. Mythologies about the legacy of both their exiles produce an engagement between the two that startles resistance into its perplexity. This condition is re-read so to set this idea of a modified template of analysis as both containment (or reduction) and deconstruction (or proliferation) — actions onto texts, in this case applying an active critical reading of outdated historical texts and

outdated physical bodies that sets another kind of resistance in already contemporary terms into motion. And it is here that bodies matter most in this argument. Once the Jew was nominated from and within the ghetto, his body changed. His resistance was his sublimation of his own othering.

Max Nordau said:

In the narrow Jewish street our poor limbs soon forgot their gay movements; in the dimness of sunless houses our eyes began to blink shyly; the fear of constant persecution turned our powerful voices into frightened whispers, which rose in crescendo only when our martyrs on the stakes cried out their dying prayers in the face of their executioners. But now... at least we are allowed space enough for our bodies to live again. Let us take up our oldest traditions; let us once more become deep-chested, sturdy, sharp-eyed men (Melvin Konnar [O]: 2009).

Nordau wanted to utilise the strong physique of the muscled Jew —“shaping of the new Jewish body” (Gilman 1991: 53) as a symbol of the regeneration of Jewish identity. He wanted to defy the prevailing stereotypes of Jews, presented as weak, effeminate and racially other. ‘Muscle Jew’ is a term that is attributed to Max Nordau, who was the deputy to Theodore Herzl, founder of Zionism. But it was Nordau who then applied this symbol as strength as part of the project for the Zionist movement’s colonization of Palestine (*see* Gilman 1991: 54–55; Kleeblatt 2000; Presner 2003). What made Nordau so supportive of the body reconstructed as resistance is that up until his call for the ‘Muscle Jew’ the preconceived body of the Jew was a weak one. Nordau’s term might be interpreted as “evolving from the anxious attitudes towards masculinity and the male Jewish body” in nineteenth-century Europe (Kleeblatt 2000: 89).

Resistance under this light becomes a complex rendition of embodying multiple tensions that can be seen projecting both multiple frictions and multiple struggles. Thus, presenting an active if not fluid narrative. It is a narrative that signals a sense of disconnection in the juxtaposition of things, joined and isolated, simultaneously expressing what they might and have become. This is what Hirschhorn does by producing his motif of crystals in his installation: *Crystals of Resistance* at the Venice Biennale in 2011. Here Hirschhorn projects the crystal as an alternate form that “creates the condition for thinking something new...to create a truth that resists facts opinions and commentaries”. It is as if this “Resistance is always connected with friction, confrontation, even destruction – but also with creativity” (Hirschhorn 2011: 4).

This all becomes apparent in what Hirschhorn both presents from his manifesto *Crystals of Resistance* (2011) and the installed work itself. (His manifesto was presented alongside his installation in the Swiss Pavilion during the Venice Biennale.) The work, like the manifesto, talks to surprise, commodity, fragment and resist:

Art resists political, cultural, aesthetic habits. Art resists morality and topicality. Art – because it is art – is resistance. But art is not resistance to something, art is resistance as such. Art is resistance because it resists everything that has already existed and been known. Art, as a resistance is assertion, movement, belief, intensity, art is positive. Art resists tradition, morality and the factual world. Art resists every argumentation, every explanation and every discussion (Hirschhorn 2011: 3).



Figure 3
Inside Hirschhorn's *Crystals of Resistance* at the Venice Biennale, 2011
 (source: courtesy Mr. J. Trengove, 2011).

Surprise and not yielding to resistance, according to Hirschhorn, is a function of contemporary art practice. His terminology, like McCarthy's, resists as it encloses but resists as it informs surprise. Hirschhorn says: "Resistance is conflict between creativity and destruction" (2011: 5). His installation of a crystal cave presented constant reflection of human resistance under historicizing terms at the Venice Biennale. The work is a body of parts, of crystal-meth laboratories freely nominated and of mountains of magazines meditating upon "something, which created its own body" (Hirschhorn 2011: 5). Creating one's own body is human destiny. Here we might take the challenge from were mortality left off. There is something unfamiliar and recognizable set in Hirschhorn's ... "cave of the giant crystals of the Naica Mine", yet unoccupied in an original form provokes thoughts about resistance, and how generative engagement might be made. This is also the body.

This is a body we sometimes don't guide or trust. A body we discipline sometimes too cruelly, sometimes not at all. No matter what engagement we have with the body, the body will always surprise its own occupant rather than its occupant surprising the body. This paper considers several examples of creative work specifically situated in motif of emerging body as much as the city, in this case of Venice, as an amplification of otherness made apparent through the city's metonymy of the physical body. From an aerial perspective Venice looks like a fish. Thus, the city is a body.

The desire to see the city preceded the means of satisfying it. Medieval or Renaissance painters represented the city as seen in a perspective no eye had yet enjoyed. This fiction made the medieval spectator into a celestial eye. It had created gods. Have things changed since technical procedures have organized an “all seeing power”? The totalizing eye imagined by the painters of earlier times lives on our achievement. The same scopic drive haunts users of architectural productions by materializing today that utopia was only painted (De Certeau 1984: 92).

In order to attempt to present an argument around the relationships between enclosures and the physical body — of what might be signified when body meets body within the enclosure — the very names of aerial strategy, chance and the enclosure might provoke resistance. Many engaging actions, theories and practices, or, in others, a proliferation of categories will produce drama so as to engage with emerging paradoxes. And even more extensively as Arendt suggests how drama is:

The specific revelatory quality of action and speech, the implicit manifestation of the agent and speaker is so indissolubly tied to the living flux of acting and speaking that it can be represented and ‘reified’ only through repetition, the imitation or *mimesis*, which according to Aristotle prevails in all arts but is actually appropriate only to the *drama*, from the Greek verb *dran*-to act) indicates that play-acting actually is an imitation of acting (Arendt 1958: 187).

The enclosure of the city and the body, when applied to each other, becomes dramatic and indicate how external representations of the body become fixed onto the body. These fixities can be amplified through mimesis: “From *mimesis*, we should understand how the capacity to identify or establish similarities with something else while at the same time inventing something original” (Mbembe 2008: 39). In turn, I am trying to comprehend how the body as a conduit of the narrated self is a vehicle for performing identity when it also becomes mimetic representation or mimetic fixing of shared identity along with its inhabited city.

In performance, the body is fluid and fixed. This double-like presentation as it appears in its live-ness becomes even more reflexive. Hence, the process of mimetic fixing and becoming might seem like an endless transmission as the body approaches another body. It is through the meeting between bodies that thought might be reenacted and translated onto another. An outcome of this is a series of trajectories of research in and about Venice that includes the position that a city embodies the metonymy of the physical body itself and is heterogeneity of tactile experience. Herein, the enclosure of the city: the body approaches body; the body reenacts body; and the body becomes body. And through other bodies the body knows what its city is because of this mimesis.

I now want to trace this mimetic conjecture through a project called ‘Video Walking Venice’ (2011). In November 2011, I was invited by the *Festival International del Teatro* as part of the *2011 Venice Biennale* to attend and work alongside Stefan Kaegi, a founding director of *Rimini Protokoll* (www.rimini-protokoll.de) in making a performance work as part of the festival/biennale. I, along with twelve other international performance practitioners, theatre makers and cultural theorists, worked with Kaegi for ten days in making a particular kind of video/ performance project.

The making of the project ‘Video Walking Venice’ (2011) included working with the iPod as an instrument in video, recording a first-person narrative of a walking experience in Venice.



Figure 4
‘Video Walking Venice’ (2011) participants working in laboratory with iPods
(photograph: Taub, 2011).

In the project, each participant’s narrative was five minutes long, focused around a simple walking experience. The experiential intent of the project meant finding a reciprocal response via the audience when embodying these narratives, meaning that when the project was made public the audiences attending would pick up the iPods as instruments that would inform and generate narratives that were simulacra to the original walking experiences of the group. These narratives then became the audience’s own experience generated through live-ness and the body meeting the body an experience whereby the narrative witnessed via iPod became the audience’s own first person experience. These narratives were units that were linked to the larger group’s narrative forming a composite whole.

My video narrative from the above project focused on replicating a character that I had originally been developing for a project based in Johannesburg. The character’s name was called *Greedburg*.



Figure 5
Greedburg in Joubert Park, *Florence*: 2011
 (photograph: Taub, 2011.)

Greedburg had been created as a figure of marginality situated specifically in a performance project called *Florence* (University of Johannesburg 2010/2011). He was a Jewish/Victorian art thief. Below this is a description of activation of Greedburg in performance:

I performed as a mumbling, mutated hybrid of Soho Eckstein and Clement Greenberg and Uncle *Mlungu*. This hybridised, white, Jewish, clown-like figure performed an external route between the park and the gallery, the gallery and the exhibit, the collection and the recollection. The body in this performed piece became a projectile of both stereotypical misrepresentation and the re-mapping of sand and dust. The character's external costume was an old, gangster pin-stripped suit along with an additional internal costume, which had my body, wrapped in plastic filled with mine dust that began to leak out of the three-piece suit. These costumes along with the Uncle *Mlungu*'s mask intended to suggest both ideas of misrepresentation and remapping. The representation of stereotypes as in foreigner, outcast, gangster and Jew (as examples of Kristeva's abject and Arendt's pariah) were also aesthetically distressed and therefore the representations were remapped as misrepresentations (Taub 2012: 110).

When I was selected to Venice to participate in the Video Walking Project I wanted to continue working with this character, replicating the possibilities Greedburg as a figure of marginality in interplay with the traces of the original Jewish ghetto.



Figure 6
Greedburg's jacket on synagogue door in Venice 2011
(photograph: Taub, 2011).

In preparing my five-minute segment for the walking project I videoed myself in Venice with an iPod putting on part of Greedburg's costume: a pin-strip gangster jacket. The jacket was hung over an abandoned synagogue door during the *Yom Kippur* fast. The jacket in the video was removed of the door and then worn by myself. I filmed this activity as a symbolic motif of my own research in locating the origins of the point in enclosure when two bodies meet/differentiate and/or resist: Jew and Venetian; European and Non European; Performer and Audience. The costume itself became the medium for engaging with my concerns about difference and resistance. "In French, the verb *separare* means to dress and also to arm (to dress for battle). To dress is to prepare oneself, to procure oneself, in Lacan's view, to give birth to oneself" (Howell 2000: 14). Thus, the costume became an extension of the body and projected an emblem of resistance. Once the jacket was removed, the door of the synagogue was not opened but remained shut. Jacket on, Greedburg almost dissipates, but by chance, becomes another passerby, is absorbed into this similar body, into Venice city life and disappears. "The logic of the synagogue therefore constructs the Jew as continually enclosed with an epistemic foreclosure" (Benjamin 1991: 87). But in this case putting on the jacket meant perforating through the enclosure and becoming another of the city.



Figure 7
Audience looking and becoming
(photograph: Taub, 2011).

The video of this activity at the synagogue was then incorporated into a further instructional video on the iPod that was made in a first-person narrative. Translation of this narrative occurred when the audience picked up the iPod and began to watch a particular kind of record, that was connected to many other five minutes narratives in one room, by simply occurring in the same room and occurring as simultaneous simulacra. Affecting the story as a shared and embodied narrative meant making it simple and inclusive. Although my story was loaded in allegorical devices about marginality and resistance, it was also a simple narrative that instructed an audience to remove Greedburg's jacket off the wall and wear it while watching the clip of the jacket being removed off the synagogue door through the enclosure of a model theatre. Through a series of physical gestures, that included removal, putting, walking, looking and taking off, meant reenactment by another to become the experience. The experience was the narrative of the body embodying the metonymy of the city itself. Similarly the body was activating an experience not personally experienced but still embodied. The body was repeating and imitating. The body was being informed. The body was multiple and singular. This is heterogeneity of tactile experience. Herein the enclosure of each and every temperament the city: the body approaches body; the body re-enacts body; and the body becomes body. The experience of the emerging body meant translation through text, in this case, this paper making the point of how positions about the body become inscribed in language which continue to "dominate and resist" (Gilman 1995: 24), as part of the proliferation in researching and translating ideas of the body.

Notes

- 1 Reflexive is critical reflection. Performative in this context is similar to that what Derrida considers how the "dimension of performative

interpretation, that is of an interpretation that transforms the very thing it interprets..." (Bell citing Derrida citing Austin 2007: 89).

- 2 I did this previously in a published paper titled, 'The practical epistemology of seeing oneself while listening to others' (Taub 2010). In it, I argued that the paper itself could embody the argument being pursued of research into the body and its relationship to rejection, and used such performative tactics like frivolity that was a departure from Maggie Maclure (2006) who recommends "frivolity as something that researchers might seek out and help to set in motion rather than contain" (6) and suggested that frivolity is a strategy of resistance because it "won't or can't behave itself, or absent itself, to allow the serious business of producing truth, knowledge, self or reality — of making them present — work itself through to completion" (6). In this paper, besides for a reflection on various case studies, there was also a resistance to closure embedded in the prescribed tactic of scrutiny. This action was particularly inscribed its footnotes itself thus heralding an action of reading and seeking further. This action contributes to an embedded allegorical framework embodying exchange between the concealment of meaning and the active recovery of meaning. By doing so, I wanted to suggest, as I do now in this paper, of an alternative mode of writing that reflects upon performance as it embodies performance.
 - 3 Study of the rhizome is subject to the writings of Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari who introduce rhizomorphic as post structural description of text, body, movement and dimension in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987). Their reconfiguration of narrative likened to "The radicle-system, or fascicular root,." (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:2) and also configures to "Principles of connection and heterogeneity: any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be" (7). In my own practice I first encountered the rhizome with its multiple possibilities in the aftermath of a post 9-11 narrative and I applied this experimentation as it occurred in my doctoral research (Taub 2009). The rhizome as a methodological system occurs in both my ongoing practice and research.
 - 4 Another deliberate choice imposed on writing this body of text is not have headings between sections so as to de-structure the text against a logic corpus. Rather what is inherent is an embodied model of horizontal schemata
 - 5 The idea of systems stems from creating models of active mechanisms working together to create and reproduce further systems.
- Nominating heterogeneity onto the systems provides both a shape and objectives implying decentralization, expansion, sediment and non-linearity. Derrida's call in his 'Structure, sign and play in the discourse of human sciences' (1978) indicates: "The centre is not the centre" (1978:109) and therefore there is rupture to the sense of structure. One such consequence is the heterogeneous system of the rhizome. Here I would like to cite a more formal entry from *The Encyclopedia of Post Modernism* in order to further prescribe the practice of the rhizome alongside eventuality and freedom and, in this case, the shaping of interconnecting lines without a beginning or an end that makes the characteristics of the rhizome useful in performance: "Like crabgrass grows horizontally by sending out runners that establish new plants which then send out their own runners in eventually forming a discontinuous surface without depth (and thus without a controlling subject) or center (and thus free of limiting structure)" (Taylor and Winquest 2001: 345–346). Other post structuralists like Baudrillard present heterogeneous systems like "the fractal, and is of a viral, exponential or 'metastatic' order. This order describes the tendency of systems or models that have supplanted reality to extend endlessly in dimensions intrinsic to their logic, yet with unpredictable and often chaotic outcomes" (Horrocks 2000: 6).
- 6 Norman Kleeblat (2000: 76) offers examples of these enforced tropes in *The Body of Alfred Dreyfuss*: "as a standard, somewhat paradoxical picture of the male Semite" . "This image identified a stout, paunchy, hunched, and disheveled body, with fleshy face, tightly curled hair, large nose and protruding lips" (76) ... "a deficiency which had become a major element in the racist mythology surrounding the Jewish male: a deficiency in virility. This was attributed in part to the ritual practice of circumcision and its ultimate connection with the claim that the Jewish male was effeminate" (2000: 84).
 - 7 Faccini refers to the cultural and pedagogical development that occurred in the ghetto at its onset: It is precisely at the intersection between the city and the ghetto that two of the most important books on Judaism were created, written and published. *Historia de' riti Hebraici* written by the renowned polymath, rabbi Leon Modena (1571–1648), and the *Discorso circa il stato de gl'Hebrei*, composed by his younger colleague, rabbi and philosopher

Simone (Simcha) Luzzatto (1583-1663), were both printed in Venice in 1638 (2011: 17).

- 8 Orientalism as defined by Said includes how: ... it not only creates but also maintains, it *is*, rather than expresses, a certain *will* or intention to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what

is a manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world... (2003: 12)

- 9 Hannah Arendt spent some time with Mary McCarthy in Venice while McCarthy was writing *Venice Observed* (see Brightman 1995: 37–38).

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Iconic bodies: Ndebele women in ritual context

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Ndebele women of South Africa have become prominent visual artworks in the international world of commodity tourism and African art. Pictures of women clad in ritual beadwork against the backdrop of their art on homestead walls have spread since the 1950s. Some of them, like Esther Mahlangu, rose to fame as an individual mural artist. It will be illustrated how this bodily image of the Ndebele woman emerged from a small village north of Pretoria. Evidence will show how the Ndebele tourism body became completely estranged from the ritual bodily context. Following on this, it will be explained how Ndebele women use ritual to raise their statuses within the domain of a male dominated society. It will be contended that these women were not merely passive victims of marginalization but they have become powerful agents to manipulate and advance their own destinies. Arguments have been informed by discourses on the anthropology of the body, the efficacy and power of ritual, the notion of identity, ideas on commoditization and the anthropology of tourism.

Key words: Ndebele, KwaMsiza, body, beadwork, mural art, tourism, initiation ritual, traffic cops, commodity

Ikoniese liggame: Ndebele-vroue in rituele konteks

Ndebele-vroue van Suid- Afrika het prominente visuele kunswerke geword in die internasionale wêreld van kommoditeitstoerisme en Afrikakuns. Foto's van vroue geklee in rituele krale-uitrustings teen die agtergrond van muurkuns op woningmure, het, veral sedert die vyftigerjare van die vorige eeu toegeneem. Sommige van hulle, soos Esther Mahlangu, het roem verwerf as 'n individuele muurkunsenaar. Daar sal aangedui word hoe hierdie liggaamsbeeld van Ndebele-vroue sy ontstaan gehad het vanuit 'n klein woonstede ten noorde van Pretoria. Argumente word aangevoer dat die Ndebele toeris-liggaam totaal vervreemd geraak het van die rituele liggaamskonteks. Voorts sal daar verduidelik word hoe Ndebele-vroue ritueel gebruik of manipuleer ter bevordering van verhoogde statusvlakke binne die domein van 'n mans-gedomineerde samelewing. Daar word aangevoer dat hierdie vroue nie bloot passiewe slagoffers van marginalisasie was nie, maar inderdaad kragtige agente wat in staat was tot manipulasie en die bevordering van hulle eie lotgevalle. Argumente word gestaan deur diskoerse aangaande die antropologie van die liggaam, die werksaamheid en mag van ritueel, die gedagte van identiteit, idees rakende kommodifikasie en die antropologie van toerisme.

Sluitelwoorde: Ndebele, liggaam, kralewerk, muurkuns, toerisme, KwaMsiza, inisiasieritueel, verkeersbeampies, kommoditeit

The social body constrains the way the physical body is perceived (Mary Douglas 1970:65).

From 1952 to 1957 the South African artist Alexis Preller exhibited his well-known Ndebele figures. Preller's Ndebele women are clad in full ritual or ceremonial costume (figure 1), mostly in seated positions, and in "Mapogga women" (figure 2) three women are seated inside the courtyard facing each other also wearing ritual costume. The ritual costume consists of beaded aprons, traditional blankets, arm, ankle and neck rings and other artifacts associated with Ndebele ritual.¹



Figure 1
Alexis Preller Ritual Mapogga (1951, oil on canvass, 76.5cmx41cm, Private Collection)
 (source: free internet).



Figure 2
Alexis Preller, *Mapogga Women* (1952, oil, 30x75cm, Private Collection)
 (source: free internet).

At around the same period Walter Battiss was influenced by the Ndebele bead and mural art motif when he produced his “Ndebele village” in which images of Ndebele mural art foreground the Ndebele women. Ritual attire appears less prominent.



Figure 3
Walter Battiss, *Ndebele Village* (c.1950, oil on canvas, 51 x 61cm, Private collection)
 (source: free internet).

Since then and even before these productions, numerous photographic reproductions and other images have spread around the country and the globe. Countless images in the post-card genre in particular, have carried the pictures of beaded Ndebele women and their mural art across the globe. Two categories of images blended into a single aesthetic unity -women dressed in elaborated beadwork against the backdrop of the multi-coloured homestead mural art by the same women. The visual image of the Ndebele developed into a tribal, female and an exotic African artist icon. Both local and international tourism paradigms kept feeding this image and this has since its inception in the mid-1950s not dwindled. The South African 2010 Soccer World Cup and the marketing strategies of the National department of Tourism and its many arms, are proof of this. Almost all the media images were inspired by a single site, the Msiza village north of Pretoria (Meiring 1955, Bakker & Van Vuuren 2004).

Since the mid-1980s the success of another Ndebele icon has received further impetus when a single mother, Esther Mahlangu, accepted an invitation by the French embassy in Pretoria to paint a mural in the Pompidou centre. Steadily the Ndebele image shifted to the prowess of the individual creative artist, as other Ndebele women also received international invitations. Esther Mahlangu, in all her travels abroad, never parted from her ritual attire- beaded anklets and armbands, beaded aprons and blanket- during exhibition time.

In this article it will be illustrated how this bodily image of the Ndebele woman emerged from this small Ndebele village north of Pretoria, and how this site inspired among others the conservation efforts of an academic architect. Simultaneously protagonists of the apartheid ideology worked on a different agenda. Evidence will show how the Ndebele tourism body became completely estranged from the ritual bodily context. Following on this I will explain how Ndebele women use ritual to raise their statuses within the domain of a male dominated

society. Finally, it will be contended that these women were not merely passive victims of marginalization but became powerful agents to manipulate and advance their own destinies. My arguments will be informed by discourses on the anthropology of the body, the efficacy and power of ritual, the notion of identity, ideas on commoditization and the anthropology of tourism.

KwaMsiza and the creation of Ndebele bodily art

During the aftermath of the 1883 Mapoch War, when the Ndzundza-Ndebele royals were imprisoned, Speelman Msiza and his family settled on the farm Hartbeestfontein (now part of the Sinoville suburb of Pretoria) as labour tenants. The farm belonged to a white farmer known as Oubaas or “Vet” Wolmarans. Among others the Msizas were tasked to pay regular visits to their imprisoned leader Nyabela and provide food and moral support. After his release Nyabela settled close to the Msiza homestead and he was also buried there (Bakker & Van Vuuren 2004: 128).

Wolmarans had apparently maintained sound relations with his farm tenants. Most importantly, he allowed foreign tourists to visit the Msiza family, photograph the village and its mural art, purchase beadwork, and he had the Msizas “dancing and singing” and supplying sorghum beer for the tourists. The mainly Afrikaner residents of the Waverley suburb across the mountain nearby, whose anti-Ndebele sentiments harked back to the Ndebele wars of the late 1800s, protested against the presence of the village so close to a White suburb. They feared the kind of racial interaction that took place at the Msiza village between tourists and the villagers. Their lobbying saw the eventual removal of the Msiza family and the torching of their village in 1953 (Bakker & Van Vuuren 2004:129). The irony of the removal was that the Nationalist Government by means of its State Information Bureau, had made fruitful use of the village to promote tribal Africa and the ritually dressed Ndebele woman (Meiring 1955: 35).

University of Pretoria architecture professor, A.L. Meiring, intervened in the removal of the original Msiza village by documenting the architecture with his students since 1944 (Meiring 1955:27-28). Meiring’s supervision was to ensure the “authentic” reconstruction of this settlement and to preserve it as a tourist and curio attraction, as eventually proved to be the case over the next three decades (Van Vuuren 1983: 159-175).



Figure 4
The original Msiza settlement
(source: photograph by Meiring 1955:30).

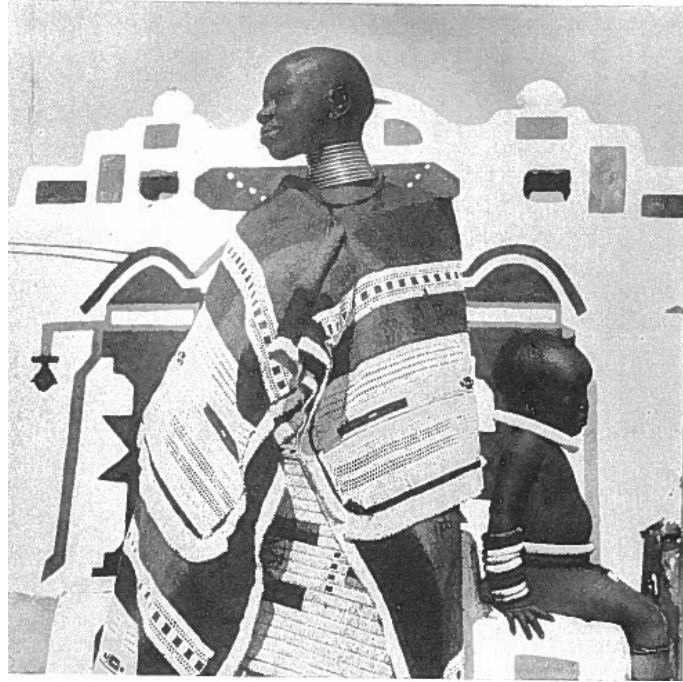


Figure 5
Ndebele woman and child at KwaMsiza
 (source: photograph by Constance Stewart, Meiring 1955:33).



Figure 6
Aerial photo of the Msiza complex before resettlement
 (source: photograph by Dotman Pretorius, Bowen 1957).

In the ensuing years a number of popular publications (e.g. in *Huisgenoot*, *Lantern*, *Outspan* and *Brandwag*) found inspiration in this attraction and visitors photographed dancing women, clad in ceremonial dress with aprons such as the *itjorholo*, *umaphotho*, *isiphephethu*, brass rings (*iidzila*) and of course the robust and fascinating *iirholwane* ring around the neck. Against the multi-coloured backdrop of painted courtyard walls, visitors could buy an assortment of beaded curios and have themselves photographed with “real” Ndebele – or “Mapogger” (derived from Mabhoko) tribals. The post-card trade flourished and in the process the local and national government used every opportunity to promote the Ndebele as an example of a “volk” who loved their heritage in a primordial or primitive sense (Bakker & Van Vuuren 2004).

The Msiza village, however, also inspired academics, art historians, architects and anthropologists. Apart from Meiring’s architectural drawings, there were the publications of Grossert, Franz, Battiss & Junod (1958), Spence & Bierman (1954) in *Architectural Review*, the Spanish born architect Guedes (1962), Frescura (1984), the Volkekunde MA dissertation of Weiss (1963), and from the art history fraternity, Berman (1974), Bruce (1976), Knight & Priebatch (1977). There were others as well.

Beaded bodies and writing on the wall: the stereotyping of the Ndebele body

The beaded Ndebele did not escape the lens of iconic ‘ethnic’ photographer Duggan-Cronin who (1935: Plate XXXI) published photographs of Manala-Ndebele women who posed in ritual costume as part of a bridal group. Whether he photographed them at the time of the ritual is open for speculation. It should be noted that Van Warmelo published similar photos of the village in his publication in 1930 (Van Warmelo 1930:43, 58). The predominantly white colour of worn beads is noteworthy in terms of the chronology of designs, motifs and colour combinations, since these are probably the earliest photographs on record (figure 5).

Brincker (1961: 54-55) contributed with an article entitled “Kleurrykste Bantoestam in Transvaal” (Most colourful Bantu tribe in Transvaal). The focus is on photographs presenting women in ritual attire - some posed and others in tourist performance mode many against the backdrop of the murals of the Msiza village. *The Outspan* magazine in 1955 illustrates the Ndebele tourists’ gaze in a powerful way, with tourists lining up to photograph Ndebele women in their beaded costumes. Another photo is entitled “The village belle knows music hath charms” featuring a woman playing the *isigubhe* instrument for entertainment (Moss 1955: 35-36).

Berman’s entry (1974: 206-7) on the Ndebele contains a similar ritual photograph of a bridal party with the face of the bride covered by the veil called *isiyaya*. It seems that the occasion was captured at the Msiza establishment. The anthropologist Isaac Schapera (1949: 408-412) used photographs by C L Stewart in a scientific publication on the Ndebele in 1949. At least three of the photos can be tied to the Klipgat village. Stewart’s work on the Ndebele is well-known. There is the probability that his photographs were taken at the site of the original Msiza village on the farm Harteestfontein. Before the relocation of the village in 1954/5 it served as a tourist site and women regularly posed in full ritual attire, as is visible in Stewart’s photographs. Spence and Bierman’s article (1954: 35-40) featured the same pre-resettlement site. There is not a single reference to the living residents, whose images were captured for use in the article.

One of the few exceptions emerged from an article in *Die Huisgenoot* in 1953. Entitled : “Sy nooi haar gaste met ‘n steentjie seep!” (She invites her guests with a bar of soap). Although the tone of the article was clearly paternalistic and wrapped in the cultural “other” blanket, it provided a brief overview of the girls’ initiation ritual. Although one would not know how

the ritual participants were choreographed by the land owner and /or the white journalist, the article stands as the only one in this genre which contains three photographs of Ndebele women wearing ritual attire at the time of the actual performance of the *iqhude* ritual (Verster 1953: 40-42).

The National Party Government engaged with the Ndebele message at KwaMsiza to further its own ideas. Among a number of official mouthpieces were *BaNtu*² and the *Bantoe-onderwysblad* (Bantu education magazine)³. The former bilingual journal in 1960 featured an article 'Homeland of the Ndebele' with photographs which were taken at the Msiza village. Apart from the regular tribal dress images in the article, the contribution had one clear message namely, preparing the reader to recognize the unique ethnic identity of the Ndebele, strongly supported by photos of the Msiza settlement (1960: 367-376). Surprisingly the caption "Homeland" received no further written attention as one would anticipate, advocating a new and separate Bantustan for the Ndebele.

The Msiza village almost disappeared into obscurity during the 1980s to 1990s mainly due to political uncertainty and population movements in the area. During the late 1970s threats by the previous homeland government of Bophuthatswana to expel all Ndebele, caused a major exodus of Ndebele from the area, including the village's residents. The promotion of the village as a tourist attraction was most probably not on the homeland's agenda. This isolation resulted in a lack of tourist income with residents seeking other job opportunities and consequently an inability to conduct any maintenance on the structures. During the periods of unrest (the 1976 and 1985 uprisings in particular), peri-urban areas around the area were considered no-go zones to mainly white tourists (Van Vuuren 1992: 487).

During 1997/8 the village received a second life line when the former National Cultural History Museum (now Ditshong) secured funding to revitalize the village and include it as a component of its community orientated greater Tswaing museum project. The village is now promoted as part of a regional museum circuit route for the area (Naude 2000: 26-27). The existence of this apartheid resettlement village as an ethnic enclave, will always be unique, as it would never have had any significance had it not been promoted to serve the tourist market. Its socio-cultural dynamics are even more bizarre as it operates in a somewhat dichotomous way between immediate Tswana and remote Ndebele references.

Origins of Ndebele beads and murals

Existing scholarly writing on the origin and dating of Ndebele beadwork, is still speculative. Archaeologists and historians suggest the entering of glass beads into the subcontinent via east coast trading networks (Schoeman 2007). The possibility of indigenous forms such as wooden, plant or clay beads cannot be ruled out, in particular since evidence of these is today still found amongst older Ndebele in the form of carved wooden necklaces (the *umthamboti*) and necklaces of beads manufactured from plant pulp. Van Warmelo (1930: 42, 58) depicts Manala-Ndebele women (at Wallmannstal north of Pretoria) wearing blankets and predominantly white beads. This being the earliest known photographic document, Levy (1989: 25) suggests that beadwork might have originated with this group and not the Ndzundza. However, the presence of multi-coloured beaded garments with which the Ndebele have become popularly associated, might be as recent as the 1950s, in particular as a result of the Msiza village.

Ndebele beadwork and mural art are closely related as far as design and colour usage is concerned. Motifs associated with this proliferation period resemble clear and distinctive

syncretistic and urban influence: number plates, light fittings and lamp posts, lettering, the well-known razor blade (*itjhefana*), aeroplanes, etc. (Van Vuuren 1983: 337, Schneider 1985: 60, Levy 1989: 29). This period (roughly 1950/60) also saw a clear deviation from earlier paint pigments with the increased usage of commercial acrylic paints.

Ndebele mural art, like beadwork, is characterized by certain regional differences. Murals in remote rural areas such as Dlawulale (Nebo) and Stoffberg (Mahlungulu) near the former heartland in the Mpumalanga province, today still consist of mixtures of natural pigments (ash, clay, dung, plant pulp, etc.), occasionally mixed with synthetic colorants. Nebo residents are generally economically marginalised (poor, unemployed) and have often lacked the urban network ties of other Ndebele. The Nebo murals are predominantly black and white, and resemble step and diamond-type motifs which are more typical of Pedi and Ntwane murals. Schneider (1985: 64) suggested that these murals represent original Ndzundza-Ndebele-style wall decoration.

The fact is that these early, probably pre-1883 and pre-indenture origin type murals, and the corresponding predominantly white beadwork, whether they bear Sotho influence or not, did not make the same statement as the multi-coloured Ndebele examples of the 1950s. The diversity in colour in beads emerged at the Msiza village. During interviews elderly Ndebele women explained that their close proximity to traders in the Pretoria area, e.g. Marabastad, exposed them to greater varieties in colour glass beads. Ndebele aprons such as the *itjorholo*, *isiphephethu* and *umaphotho*, as well as ankle rings and arm bands (*iirholwane*) of the 1950s and 1960s, bear in addition to white also colours such as purple, pink, dark green and black. These corresponded with painted surfaces in their mural art. Gradually colour diversity in beads (*imincamo*) and mural art (*ukugwala*) diffused to the rural heartland of the Ndebele on farms and on the Nebo plateau. By the late 1970s glass beads were replaced by plastic beads and a great variety of colours emerged (red, yellow, lime green, orange) in the process. This trend repeated itself in the mural art (Van Vuuren 1983: 159-175).

The Esther icon

Esther Nostokana Nagiyana Mahlangu was employed at the Ndebele Museum at Botshabelo near Middelburg as a mural artist. In 1982 the French Embassy in Pretoria contacted the author with the idea to commission a Ndebele mural artist to visit France and paint a mural at the Pompidou Centre. With the assistance of the curator and family Esther volunteered, since the other women perceived the idea as either too alien or challenging (Personal Communication: E Mahlangu, 1985). Accompanied by her son, this venture was the beginning of her international career as a mural artist which to date include numerous international as well as local commissions. Her work became internationalized with commissions in Paris, Tokyo, the Netherlands, as well as locally such as at the Johannesburg Civic centre and the iconic BMW automobile, painted in Ndebele colours. She diversified her talent to the extent that she could vary her media from murals to canvas, ostrich egg shells and motor car bonnets. As a live performer, Esther Mahlangu chose to wear full ritual attire. She would even travel wearing the Ndebele blanket (*umbhalo*) and beaded aprons. One of the reasons for her son being her co-traveller has been to manage his mother's clothing, dress her for the occasions, as well as to take care of the painting materials and instruments. She explained: "When I paint, I paint (*ukugwala*) as Ndebele woman, painting the way I know wearing the Ndebele clothing, people must know who I am" (personal communication: E Mahlangu, 1985).



Figure 7
Esther Nostokana Mahlangu
 (source: free internet).

She is marketed as an individual and she is transformed into an icon of African genius by her brokers and marketing agents. This previously exhibited anonymous Ndebele artist becomes script writer, actor in “her own theatre” at once and obtains the power to rewrite and immortalize the final product. However, what Esther Mahlangu has achieved, one could argue, many other Ndebele painters could probably also do. At home in KwaNdebele, she established her own art school teaching local girls and boys, as well as the occasional foreigner, the detail of Ndebele mural art. She also entertains them with local food and beverage. Her own modest art gallery is stocked with bead work, mural art canvasses, and other Ndebele artworks produced by her neighbours and other locals. Her studio is well signposted next to the tarred road and it appropriately reads: “Esther es aqui.”

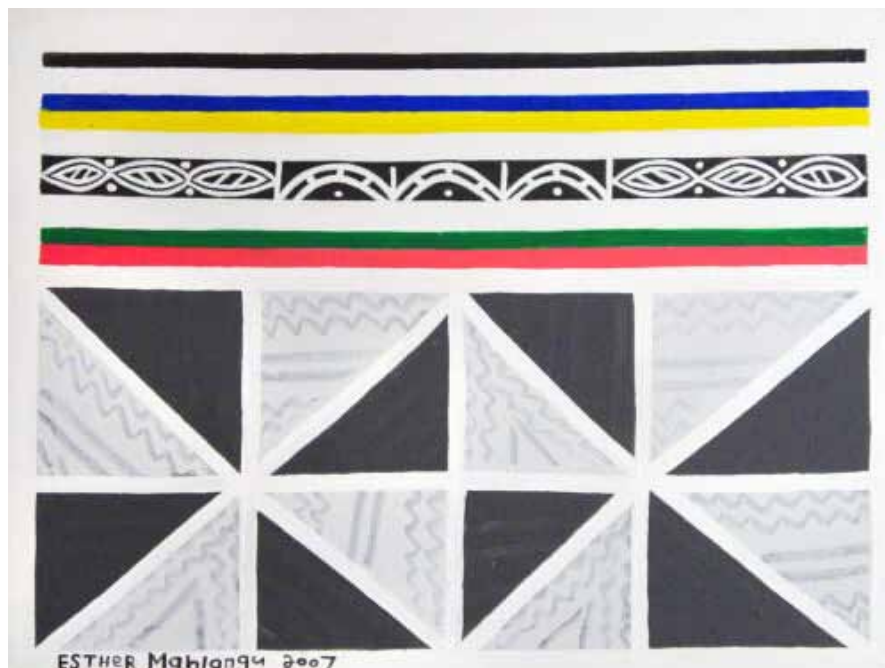


Figure 8
Esther Mahlangu, *Untitled*, 2007, acrylic on canvass, 60x80cm)
 (source: free internet).

The irony of the Esther Mahlangu enterprise lies in the fact that the Western world is still largely ignorant and lacks an understanding of the real plight and context within which Esther Mahlangu operates: her own domestic and household predicaments, the burden she carries to support her household as a single mother, the male dominated rural world within which she earns her living and the meaning of her ritual Ndebele clothing. Not one promoter or agent whom she worked with has made the effort to understand Nostokana, as she is affectionately known amongst the Ndebele, within her own context.

Not only the aesthetic, artistic and tourist bodies of the Ndebele interested the West but also physical differences or tribal scarification.

The burden of the neck rings and the curiosity of physical deformation

Bead and brass neck rings are not alien to Africa for use as ritual attire. Elsewhere in the world the women among the Padaung of Burma wear similar stacked metal rings around their necks. A French team of journalists from *Le Figaro* magazine visited South Africa in 1990 with a mission to photograph Ndebele women who were still wearing beads and brass rings. Having filmed and photographed the Padaung they intended publishing a comparative perspective in particular to the visual aspect. In the case of the Padaung women the downward pressure caused by the weight of the metal rings, resulted in visible deformation of the collar bones as well as some deformation on the vertebrae of the neck.

Among Ndebele women who wear both metal rings and the large bead neck rings it was proposed that similar deformation took place. The *Le Figaro* team thus travelled to Botshabelo near Middelburg and commissioned some women whom they invited to the local hospital and had their necks and shoulder bones X-rayed. The local media saw an opportune moment and a journalist reported accordingly: “Ndebele necks in the European spotlight”.⁴ The curiosity of the French team was probably also inspired by an earlier article on the Ndebele in the *National Geographic Magazine* (Jeffery 1986: 260-262), where the journalists embarked on a similar venture.

Ndebele women used to wear bulky necks rings (*iirholwane*) which were weaved from a specific grass species which was coiled and covered by strings of beads. The final product, when squeezed into an oval shape, would fit over the head of the person. A young married woman (the *umakhothi*) wore these rings until the birth of her first child (see figure 9). Elderly women wore brass and copper rings (*iidzila*) around their necks. These were made by male craftsmen and custom-fit for each individual (Van Schalkwyk 1982: 15-20). By the 1980s these weighty rings were replaced by coiled plastic beading which could be readily fit and detached like an ordinary necklace. Now women make these garments themselves. There are hardly any men left who could still manufacture and fit the original rings.

The X-rayed necks phenomenon once again proved, that the western obsession with the exotic and strange “other” body, stretched beyond every imagination. Thus, how do we comprehend the KwaMsiza women and the mediated impact that they and their bodies had in the tourism domain, on the art and craft genre, or the western curiosity of a physical deformation? What do we know about the everyday Esther Mahlangu? How do we link and contextualise this self-commoditised body with the private body and socio-cultural body of the same Ndebele in her own society?

Beads, aprons and the life stages of a woman

In Ndebele society men and women are categorised in terms of social and biological stages. In western society we recognise both categories. These are not particularly marked - certainly not by ritual and ritual clothing. The range of clothing and bead garments among Ndebele women is quite extensive, and these create sharp visual distinctions among the age groups as is illustrated below.

Age stages in years	Category terminology in Isindebele	Dress code during ritual	Meaning of age status
(1) birth to 3 years	<i>umdrazanyana</i>	small beaded frontal apron(<i>irhabi</i>)	an infant
(2) 3-13	<i>Umdazana</i>	larger apron (<i>irhabi</i>)	a young girl participate in domestic tasks
(3) 13-15	<i>Umthombi</i>		extensive domestic tasks, to be prepared or initiation
(4) 15+	<i>umalokzana</i>	beaded rings around ankles and legs, arms, waist, neck (<i>iirholwane</i>), apron called <i>isiphephethu</i>	to be married and become known as ...
(5) 20 and older	<i>Umakhothi</i> (young married woman)	same as above, although less elaborative	a bride who resides at her in-laws.
(6) adult married mother	<i>Umfazi</i>	copper and brass anklets and armlets (<i>iidzila</i>), front apron (<i>umaphotho</i>), hind apron(<i>isithimba</i>)	an adult woman/ mother
(7) 50-60 +	<i>isalukazana</i>	same as above, <i>umaphotho</i> replaced by <i>itjhorholo</i> type apron	an elderly woman with senior status in regular and ritual activities

Figure 9
Female age categories and dress codes
 (source: the author).

The garments and beads above are normally worn during rituals and not as part of everyday life. The only exceptions would be essential clothing such as skin aprons, permanent brass and beaded neck rings, and often arm and ankles brass rings. Even if they perform their domestic work, women would remove these rings. As a rule blankets (previously made from animal skin) are worn if a woman leaves her homestead or when travelling, as is still the case. The age markers and clothing distinctions manifest only during ritual, except if these are worn at tourist venues such as KwaMsiza, and the Ndebele Museum at Botshabelo, Middelburg, or at Esther Mahlangu's art venue.

Initiation at puberty dominates ritual life in Ndebele society. Male initiation (*ingoma*) is a large scale quadrennial institution while female initiation (*iqhude*) is performed on an individual basis whenever a girl reaches that stage. In both rituals women perform in full beaded attire. The male initiation ritual has no less than seven consecutive sub-rituals which are spaced over two months. Women in beaded outfits play an important role in these performances. When male initiates “graduate” after this period of seclusion, they are dressed in elaborate beaded outfits (called *amazipha*) which are manufactured by their mothers and sisters (Van Vuuren 1992: 375-377).



Figure 10
Women in full ritual attire performing the *igwabo* dance during male initiation at Matjhirini, KwaNdebele, Mpumalanga (photograph by the author, 1985).



Figure 11
Women control and distribute the beadwork of the newly initiated males at the Mthombeni homestead, Tshaluza, KwaNdebele (photograph by the author, 1985).

The work of female initiation ritual

Girls’ initiation lasts for almost three days. Other than the initiate and her instructors, close relatives, friends, neighbours and casual visitors attend this ritual. The entire ritual also consists of minor performances which are demarcated by way of announcement, change in dance, song and ceremonial garb, slaughtering and eating.

Certain preparations for the initiation may start months in advance, amongst others the collection of a large quantity of canned jam (usually syrup and a few others- as many as 31 boxes by the mother of the initiate). This jam and a similar quantity of bread loaves are handed out to the many women guests as gifts on the Saturday of the proceedings. Other earlier preparations entail the preparation of a variety of beadwork costumes, and meetings held by the particular “initiation women’s club” of which the mother would be a member.

Immediate pre-initiation activities, involving neighbours, kin and the novice’s initiated age mates, commence on the Tuesday before the weekend ritual. These include brewing beer and painting the courtyard walls around the homestead of the initiate. From this day the initiate (the *umthombi*) is isolated in a room in her mother’s house. The next two days (Wednesday and Thursday) see the continuation of beer making, baking, buying of groceries, and the plastering of the *iqhude* hut floor with cow dung. Ritual engagements commence at sunset on Thursday with singing and the beating of an initiation or *iqhude* drum.



Figure 11
Neighbours of the initiate’s mother cooking during the *iqhude* ritual. They are not wearing ritual attire (photograph by the author, 1996).

Friday is spent on last minute preparations and the arrival of female relatives and neighbours, who assist the mother of the initiate. Friday is perceived to be “dangerous” for men to come too close to the homestead (in particular the backyard, *esibuyeni*). Trespassers run the risk of being the target of derogatory verbal assaults. The first slaughtering takes place during the afternoon when the father offers the *umhlonyane* goat as a gift to the initiate and her entourage (Van Vuuren 1992: 393-395).

The ritual proceedings are marked by strong sexual differentiation and re-engagement over the three main days of the event. The entire event is also characterized by spatial differentiation and even performances are similarly tenderized. The final rite of incorporation is called *ukuhlubula* - the initiate’s father slaughters a goat for homestead members, she receives the *umbhalo* blanket, the *isiphephethu* apron and relevant adult ceremonial attire (figure 9) and her hair is shaven - to mark her departure from the order of the girlhood. She then enters the new adult threshold. After guests have dispersed on the Sunday the initiate stays under her mother’s protection, obeys certain rules, and is still partly isolated for another three weeks after the main ritual (Van Vuuren 1992: 403-405).

Ritual clothing: ranking, identity and traffic cops.

Ndebele women, normally without local and tribal political authority and rank in the male dominated world, create their own hierarchies and levels of domination. Within the paradigm of the ritual context, this hierarchy reflects lower levels of entrance into the system and promotion after time to the upper ranks of the internal ritual ranking system. Suffice to say this promotion runs parallel to that of a woman's rising socio-biological status: through marital status, motherhood, etc. A ritual participant enters the *iqhude* dressed in traditional costume as part of a contingent (called *idwendwe*). After a few years she is eligible for promotion to the level of a traffic officer (*ispitikopi*) who authorizes entrance to the *iqhude*; many years later she may reach the highest level, i.e. that of a custodian (*ikosi leqhude*). They are normally drawn from the ranks of respected mothers and grandmothers. Custodians receive and protect the banners of newly arrived contingents for the duration of the ritual (Van Vuuren 1992: 399).

Women dress in a variety of beaded garments, determined by generation and social status, and sing and dance frequently throughout the time that the *iqhude* lasts. These various statuses firstly cross-cut and strengthen ritual rank, secondly, determine placement and movement within the ritual arena, and thirdly, determine verbal participation.

Initiated and unmarried girls, who assist the initiate throughout the ritual, are called *abangenisi*, and wear the prominent *isiphephethu* apron. Their public participation in the audience is marked by frequent flute (*ifengwane*)-and-clap dancing. All married participants exercise their right to wear "full uniform", including the *isithimba*, *umaphotho*, and *itjhorholo* aprons as well as *iidzila* brass anklets. They participate in all song and dance performances outside the initiation hut, as well as attain the role of announcer (of gifts) if requested upon (Van Vuuren 1992: 400).

The innovation (date of inception uncertain) called *amaspitikopi* (the traffic cops) begs particular attention. The traffic cop rite was allegedly instituted during the late 1980s. The arrival of guests on the Friday evening of the weekend's proceedings is announced by a display of authority when each contingent - a minibus taxi with singing women from urban or rural areas - is stopped by whistling women dressed in a combination of Ndebele ceremonial dress and traffic cop outfit: caps, white gloves, sunglasses, police whistles, note books and pens, torches, and even embroidered sashes with the words "spitkop" or "speedcop".



Figure 12
Women 'traffic cops' stopping and fining a vehicle. Note the uniform
 (photograph by the author, 1996).

In imitating a road block, the taxi is ordered to enter the premises, then to reverse, to re-enter the gate to the homestead, only to be ordered out again, before finally being allowed to re-enter. At the gate an imitation of a traffic light is erected. The vehicle is then fully inspected for road-worthiness and the driver "fined. The fine may include cash or a crate of beer. More often

it is a mock fine. The arrivals are ordered to line up and their outfits are inspected before they are allowed into the courtyard where they engage in song and dance. The entire proceeding is continued throughout the night and the next morning, with the newly arrived guests joining the original traffic cop line-up for inspection of new arrivals. There is little dialogue throughout the mock inspection and the arrivals stop singing as they disembark from the minibuses.

The significance of the traffic cop performance manifests on a number of levels. The reversal of female-male roles is salient, firstly in the ritual empowerment of women, who transform themselves into authoritative law enforcers within the Ndebele male dominated and patriarchal society. Secondly, by means of ritual, they shunt people about to take charge of resources such as money, food and vehicles (compare Lincoln 1969: 105, Bell 1992: 204).

On the political-historical level, ever since Ndebele women and men can remember buying their own motor cars, they have frequently been subjected to road blocks, inspections, fines and court appearances for failing to pay fines. As elsewhere in apartheid South Africa, black motorists had to bear the brunt of rude intimidation, often with the option to bribe their way out of a road block (Mathako: personal communication, 1987). Traffic officials were perceived to be an extension of the “long arm of apartheid’s “law”. Ndebele women, through adopting the reversed role in performance ritual, are symbolically eradicating more than three decades of injustices by white traffic officials.

Within the economic domain, travel by minibus taxis has become a harsh reality for thousands of Ndebele migrants between the former KwaNdebele, Mpumalanga, and urban Gauteng and between rural Nebo (former Lebowa) and urban Gauteng. Rural Ndebele women, who have become the silent and powerless victims of strenuous long distance daily commuting, are often the innocent passengers in taxi-association disputes, are subjected to tariff hikes and have perished in high-speed accidents. Thus, the girls’ initiation provides them with an opportunity to take command and control of this mode of transport, through stopping the vehicle and inspecting it, and fining the driver and its occupants.

Discussion

Societies construct two bodily orders, the biological-physical and the socio-cultural and these are interlocked. The social categories of a society modify the physical experiences of the human body and they uphold a particular view of society as the anthropologist Mary Douglas argued (1970: 65). The body is a restricted pathway or medium of expression. The socio-cultural “processed idea” of the body regulates the ways in which our bodies are taken care of, are groomed, fed and received treatment and therapies. These include ideas of sleep, rest and exercise, stages and cultural categories it progress through, as we have seen in Figure 9, as well as the pain the body can withstand and emotions (Douglas 1970: 63).

Thus, while the physical body manifests as a social control of the body, it is rendered abandoned during ritual (Douglas 1970: 70-71) and in particular as Willis (1991: 279) argued in non-Western thought, where the body manifests as a pathway for mind, spirit, self and the cosmos. Through the ritual body a society expresses ideas on a multiplicity of identities such as female/male, ethnic/modern, generation, views and sentiments on loyalty, community, etc. Victor Turner has showed us (1957, 1967, 1989) how the social drama of ritual, liminality and communitas establishes regular opportunities for affirmation, social control, creativity and the moulding of identities.

The notion of identity begs further attention. Beadwork and mural art and the ability to express an individual's sense of belonging, need further discussion. Ndebele women contrast "ways of doing" or *isikhethu* (ours), with "foreign ideas" or *isikhuwa* (those of Whites). Elaborating on this concept, *isikhethu* became synonymous with *isiNdebele* (as culture) and *isindru* (that of a human nature, meaning Ndebele) in daily usage. Studies by Coplan (1987) and James (1990) on women migrants in southern Africa led to informative discussions around the concept of *sesotho* (tradition), as contrasted with *segoa* (the ways of Whites)

Observations by the author during the late 1970s were that *isikhethu*, in its polarized inclusive /exclusive application, appeared to belong to female vocabulary. Ndebele women classified early mural paintings and beadwork (e.g., those sewn onto goatskin of an *umaphotho*) as "real Ndebele" or *isikhethu*, as opposed to modern influences where plastic (see Levy 1989: 30) and canvas were introduced- the latter being *isikhuwa*. In the same way, earlier bead types are *isikhethu* while recent types, colors, and even motifs are *isikhuwa*. Ndebele women today still talk about whether certain items are suitable for buyers who prefer *isikhethu* (for the gallery market) as opposed to *isikhuwa* (items for the informal market). It is striking that it is often during the course of the *iqhude* ritual proceedings that women discuss the costume of arriving contingents in terms of adherence or non-adherence to *isikhet hu*.

Peterson (2007: 5) argues that as the body becomes more politicised, there emerges a growing interest in the nature and presentation of the body in culture and the regulation of bodies among diverse authorities. The body becomes more prominent in advertisement, fashion, health, youth, virility, etc. The body is reduced to an aesthetic/erotic exchange value. The body becomes increasingly mediated in popular culture (Peterson 2007: 15) "Bodies tend to be classified according to their worth within the capitalist market-place". The body rise prominent in advertisement, fashion, health, youth, virility, and it is reduced to an aesthetic/erotic exchange value. As the body is increasingly mediated in popular culture (2007: 15) its status as a commodity rises significantly. The service industry has expanded and the consumer world repackages the body of sign which is "pampered, exercised, tanned, pierced, tattooed" (Sweeney & Hodder 2002: 1-4). The commoditised body has become prominent, it trades its own commodity value and it tends to have a "social life" of its own (Appadurai 1986). Ndebele women have reacted favourably to these dynamics in a number of ways.

Commodities such as Ndebele beads and murals are transplanted through commodity phases, commodity candidacies and commodity contexts. Ndebele beads are transplanted accordingly. In the 1960s women started to weave their beadwork around glass bottles, calabashes, walking sticks and cow horns, and the market diversions were lucrative. By the 1970s these were considered "kitsch". Upon the release of Mandela in the early 1990s Ndebele women were the first to add the three ANC colours to aprons, other garments and artworks. They also read and prized their goods on various markets, from large scale curio and African art purchasers to flea and morning markets to the odd visitor to the remote rural villages. What they understood less was what Appadurai termed the "diversion of commodities" or the "complex blends of plunder, sale and inheritance" (1986: 26). Individual collectors have since the late 1980s embarked on a relentless quest to "sniff out" old invaluable Ndebele garments which belong to the early 1930-1950 period (see figure 5). These priceless items were kept as heirlooms by grandmothers for the exclusive wear during initiation rituals. The glass beads in these garments are irreplaceable. The tragic irony is that their unemployed grandchildren often participated in the sale and negotiated the tough bargaining conditions.

The removable artefacts of the body were traded whether these were sentimentally intimate or meaninglessly detached in relation to the body. The tourist and curio commodity world traded beads and art “away” from the body. Yet, Ndebele women were not merely passive onlookers to this phenomenon but they became agents in their own right. They managed to detach the elements of the ritual body (the artefacts) and transform these to the extra-somatic and commoditise these themselves.

In the commodity world the camera plays a pivotal role. The camera democratizes and liberates the body, and commercialise it at the same time (Sweeney & Hodder 2002: 2). Post-modern society sees the collapse of the boundary between art and everyday life and the real and the image, and the difference between high-art, mass or pop culture and so-called taste cultures. While aesthetic experiences are embodied, not all embodied experiences are aestheticized (Mascia-Lees 2011: 5-7). The “post-card Ndebele” at KwaMsiza has since the 1950s have become the hyper-real internet Ndebele and young Ndebele women now promote their bodily artefacts either detached from ritual or as the ritual artefact- body. The debate on intellectual or property right of heritage provides impetus to the degree of control which Ndebele women themselves exercise over visual material. Kasfir, with reference to Samburu souvenir spears, describes these as “potent badges” and an “identity inscribed within the material world”. Thus the “artefact becomes detached from social/ritual roles” and is reinvented as art (1999: 82-3). The transplanted beads on curios and the mural art on canvass exemplify these abilities.

With reference to the image of the postcard Samburu (Maasai), she (Kasfir 1999: 67-68) argues that photos and souvenirs (or curios) “exist as fragments of something else as metonymic references”. She refers to a “plethora coffee table books” (1999: 69), the exact medium which made the tribal Ndebele dominate all other works in that genre in South Africa, ironically even in the post democracy (e.g. Courtney-Clarke 1986, Elliot 1989). The postcard acts as a mnemonic which calls for the safari experience and an encounter with the exotic in the East African case (Kasfir 1999: 470) - the phenomenon of Maasai worship and a lost world. Latour’s application (2002: 125) “negrophiliac Europeans” seems appropriate.

Postcards and photos in e-media format also create the “wish- you- were-here-syndrome”. While Kasfir’s Samburu (Maasai) are reported to be impervious to the tourist gaze (1999: 72), Ndebele women at KwaMsiza have since the tourist encounter in the 1950s engaged physically and spatially with tourists. They allowed tourists to pose with them against the backdrop of their murals. This close encounter obviously was not to the liking of the conservative Nationalist politicians at the time. As an undergraduate student in the early 1970s, I once heard that the place was a “breeding ground for racial mixing”. As with Esther Mahlangu and women around her, true ethnic and adventure tourists have become mural artists and bead makers themselves. They are even invited to adopt similar body postures when painting murals or a canvass, use traditional brushes, eat and drink while seated on the woven grass mat - the authentic Ndebele experience. These tourists have transcended what Bruner (2001: 901) calls the questioning gaze and now do not critique the standards of authenticity, credibility and accuracy which are regularly offered at other ethnic venues. In the tourist art world Ndebele women seemed to have survive decades of being inscribed upon and are now writing their own scripts. Tilley (1999: 259) calls it the transformation and negotiation of objectified culture.

Finally: the only body which is not discussed here is the everyday body, the one in ordinary working clothes, the nurturing mother, the commuting body who leaves her home at Matshirini at 04:00 and returns at 20:00- if she cannot afford to overnight in a nearby township. The same body that cooks for her family, cleans her own house, also fulfils the same duties in the home of

her employer in the city. If she is unemployed she has to devise alternative survival strategies for her household, even though she might be proficient in the production of beadwork, mat making, and even be regarded as a senior officiator at the girls' initiation ritual. She is the antithesis of the ritual woman.

Conclusion

The 1950s postcard-body, the coffee table book-body, travelling--body of Esther Mahlangu, the deformed--body, the initiation- ritual and traffic cop--body and the ordinary and everyday labouring--body, all relate narratives of the same Ndebele woman. The symbols of ritual, verbal and non-verbal, are the most powerful messages to convey the deeper significance of identity, status and transformation of both the initiates of ritual and the onlookers. As the ritual body informs the outside world, so does the extra--somatic symbolic efficacy of the painted mural. The ritual social body, which previously emphasized transition and transformation of status from girl to woman, obtained secondary and tertiary narratives and messages. The pre-1950s, pre- KwaMsiza body was less impressive in terms of costume. But, the Msiza family first at Sinovile and then at Klipgat elevated and rendered the ritual body to be considerably more impressive and colourful. Through existing networks, new aesthetic codes were introduced, to the farms and tribal regions rendering the female body colourful. Thus, ritual attire became more colourful and expanded. Simultaneously, at another level, Ndebele women entered the world of the commoditised African artefact, which was disguised as African art and curio.

Yet, they brilliantly and in an uncanny way commoditised the ritual body into an extra-somatic medium by selling off previous bodily ritual artefacts as commoditised goods. KwaMsiza was the generator. Ndebele women became both agents and agency. The ethnic message was not the primary goal. Yet, the KwaNdebele homeland politicians, in which new elites and the royals played an active role, grabbed the opportunity to raise the urgency for a return to land they lost in 1883. Ndebele women might have had little interest in the politics at the time, but their primary goal was to get access to curio markets and endeavour to become financially independent, a daunting task considering the dominating patriarchal system within which they had been living their daily lives since indenture in 1883. The labouring body endeavours to survive in a world of insecurity of unemployment, often aggravated by the challenges of single motherhood.

Notes

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| <p>1 Source: http://www.mutualart.com/Artwork/-Wa: 2012/05/15.</p> <p>2 <i>baNtu</i> 1960. Tuisland van die Ndebele/ Homeland of the Ndebele, June:367-370</p> | <p>3 <i>Bantoeonderwysblad/Bantu Education Journal</i> 1962. Die Ndebele of Transvaal, 8:33</p> <p>4 Bezuidenhout, J 1991. Ndebele Necks in the European Spotlight, <i>Middelburg Observer</i> 25 (January): 8.</p> |
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Geomantic mapping of the human body in Japanese landscape design

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Harmony between the forces of nature and human activity was of great concern throughout the history of Japan. The divination of these important forces were governed through a canon of geomantic landscape design principles that developed significantly during the medieval Heian era (794-1185). In a nutshell, spaces for human occupation – whether at the scale of an entire city or an individual household – are divided into two bilateral symmetrical halves organized around a central longitudinal axis. Spaces are ranked hierarchically along the central axis. This type of physical setting intuitively albeit very loosely resembles human anatomy. One possible interpretation is that the central axis of symmetry typifies the central axis of the body from head to feet, with the highest function placed at one end. We suggest that the resemblance of this mapping to the human body, and its repetition at various spatial scales enable its human inhabitants to more intuitively relate to their surroundings, whether in their own dwellings, neighborhoods or at the level of the city as a whole.

Key words: landscape design, Kyoto City, geomancy, human body, Feng-Shui

Geomantiese kartering van die menslike liggaam in Japanese landskapontwerp

Om harmonie tussen natuurkragte en menslike aktiwiteit te bewerkstelling, was nog altyd vir die Japanese van groot belang. Die toekomsvoorspelling van die uitwerking van hierdie belangrike kragte op landskapontwerp is deur 'n kanon van geomantiese beginsels beheer, wat tydens die middeleeuse Heian-era (794-1185) aansienlik ontwikkel is. Kortliks gestel, word dat ruimtes vir menslike bewoning – hetsy op die skaal van 'n volledige stad of 'n individuele huishouding – verdeel in twee bilaterale simmetriese helftes wat om 'n sentrale lengte-as gerangskik word. Ruimtes word hiërargies langs die sentrale as geplaas. Hierdie soort fisiese rangordelike rangskikking toon 'n losse ooreenkoms met menslike anatomie. Een moontlike interpretasie is dat die sentrale as wat simmetrie bepaal, op die middellyn van die liggaam van kop tot voete dui, met die hoogste funksie aan die een eindpunt. Vandaar ons afleiding dat die ooreenkoms tussen hierdie kartering en die menslike liggaam, asook die herhaling daarvan op verskillende ruimtelike skale, die menslike inwoners in staat stel om hulle meer intuitief met hulle omgewing, hetsy in hulle eie wonings, woonbuurtes of ten opsigte van die stad as geheel, te vereenselwig.

Slutelwoorde: landskapontwerp, Kyoto-stad, geomansie, menslike liggaam, Feng-Shui

Geomancy refers to the belief that humans can control the outcome of events by affecting the flow of the forces of nature. In a sense, our modern world is steeply grounded in a form of geomancy, given our preoccupation with the environment, our impact on its ecology, and the consequences for us as a species if our natural environment were to be devastated. The system of geomancy that dictated the organization of the human designed environment in medieval Japan was strongly influenced by Chinese geomancy, the latter arriving from the mainland in various waves of influence. By the 11th century ACE, in medieval Japan, these principles are firmly absorbed into a system that attempts to appease and control the flow of the forces in nature by observing various rituals and taboos (see the writings of *Zōen*, 11th century, as recounted by *Shingen*). The original Chinese version of geomancy developed into what today still remains as *Feng-Shui* (風水 (*Fūzui*) – literally wind and water), or in Japan as *Fūzei* (風情 – feeling or atmosphere of place). Both systems are mainly characterized by

aligning given elements and forces of nature with the main directions (i.e. north, south, east, west) and as constituted of balanced but opposite aspects, such as negative and positive, or *Yin* and *Yang* (Stein 1990).

Of particular significance in this conception of the world are the gates of heaven and of earth because prosperity would be bestowed on the diviner able to control the access to these gates. The opening of the gate of heaven brings good fortune, while the gate of earth should remain closed to prevent demons from entering this world. By securing the gate of heaven one has a better chance of achieving prosperity. The gate of heaven is an opening in the roof of a dwelling, typically the open courtyard in the centre of a house, and it is secured by tying it via the pillar of heaven to fixed vantage point. The mountain of paradise signifies the pillar, and it ties the gate of heaven to the North Pole Star (Thomas 1948). A north-south axis thus naturally emerges in Chinese geomancy, connecting the centre of a space intended for human occupation with the North Pole Star via a ritualistic device, such as a mountain (Stein 1990). Similarly, devices exist to ensure that the gate of earth remains closed. Other rituals and taboos guides the balancing of *Yin* and *Yang*, that is, the various opposing aspects of natural forces, often embodied by male and female characteristics, opposing directions, such as north-south or east-west and seasonal cycles.

From geomancy to city layout

In 794 ACE, Emperor *Kammu* founded the city of Kyoto. It was named Heiankyō (平安京, literally Capital of Tranquil Peace), constructed in emulation of the classical cities of China (see Keane 1996 and Nitschke 1993a, for an overview). In particular, Kyoto was modeled on the Tang period Chinese capital of Chang'an (modern day Xi'an).

These idealized cities were constructed in close observation of the geomantic principles of *Feng-Shui*. It featured a rectangular grid centered on a prominent longitudinal avenue aligned with the north-south axis. The axis had to point towards the North Pole Star and ideally had to terminate at the foothills of a significant mountain or mountain range on the north side. The imperial court, housing the supreme diviner, was situated at the north of this axis within the city perimeter, at the end of a wide central avenue that divided the grid into a right and left capital. The two lateral halves were initially intended to be mirror symmetrical, each with a large guardian Buddhist temple to allow for the performance of rites and ceremonies deemed important to the wellbeing of the city. There were also symmetrically arranged areas designated to various guilds of craftsmen, and marketplaces from which goods brought into the city could be traded among the populace. The temples, artisan workshops and merchant markets, which performed functions such as purification, construction, reconstruction, repair, production and refinement of goods for daily use and consumption, and waste removal, were located towards the south, close to the large central city gate.

The city perimeter was divided into grid cells that constituted an indexing system for addresses. Generally, grid cells decreased in size away from the central avenue, and also decreased in size from north to south. The lower ranks – craftsmen and merchants – were assigned the smallest units in the grid. The size of the property allocated to a household scaled up with increasing social rank, with by far the largest cell assigned to the emperor, in the upper (northern) middle of the rectangle. It was so large that the emperor was able to hunt deer in the garden placed on the south side of the main court. The Imperial Palace grounds resembled the entire city design in miniature. The exact scale of grid cells and the indexing system is discussed in greater detail in many references (see for example Ponsonby-Fane 1931: 14-29). Lateral distance away from the central avenue, and longitudinal placement lower towards the south, signified degrees of separation from the emperor. Grid locations were thus indicators of the rank of its occupants and the degree of the perceived “purity” of its occupants and their occupation. The rank and size of estates were also in line with duties related to the observance of geomantic taboos. For example, the highest ranking nobility after the emperor were assigned to the northeast corner of the city, to prevent evil from entering the city. Landmarks were chosen to agree with these taboos. Water moving through the urban rectangle, for example, had to flow from north to south, and from east to west, to ensure the purity of the natural forces entering the city.

Evolution of the city grid over time

Below is a 1696 map of Kyoto, known as *Genroku 9 Kyoto Daiezu* (元禄九年京都大絵図) held by the International Research Center for Japanese Studies (*Nichibunken*). It shows the city, as reconstructed after being razed during the 1477 *Ōnin* civil war. The southwestern parts of the city were slightly marshy, and were eventually abandoned and used as agricultural fields, a practice not originally permitted within the city boundaries. Instead, the city developed most towards the northeast, up to the banks of the *Kamo* river. The original Imperial Palace and the spacious leading central avenue approaching it from the southern gate had vanished. The Imperial Palace of today is located on what previously was the household estate of the Marquee *Konoe*, a large aristocratic residential unit allocated within the northeastern corner of the original city perimeter. On this map, the silting up of the southern lake is still underway, but the prominent original central south gate no longer exists. Note how the city snugly fits into the “armchair” setting of protective mountains, with two rivers flanking it on both sides. Nitschke (1993a: 35) refers to such a layout, with a tall protective barrier at the back and lower fortifications flanking the sides of a central flat region for occupation, as an “armchair” setting. The northeast corner shows mount Hiei. *Kamigamo* shrine is located in the foothills, north of the city (appearing as a small building painted red, close to the exact middle at the top of the map). It is decorated in colour to indicate its elevated status, and is accompanied by a short description of the illustrious Thunder Deity.

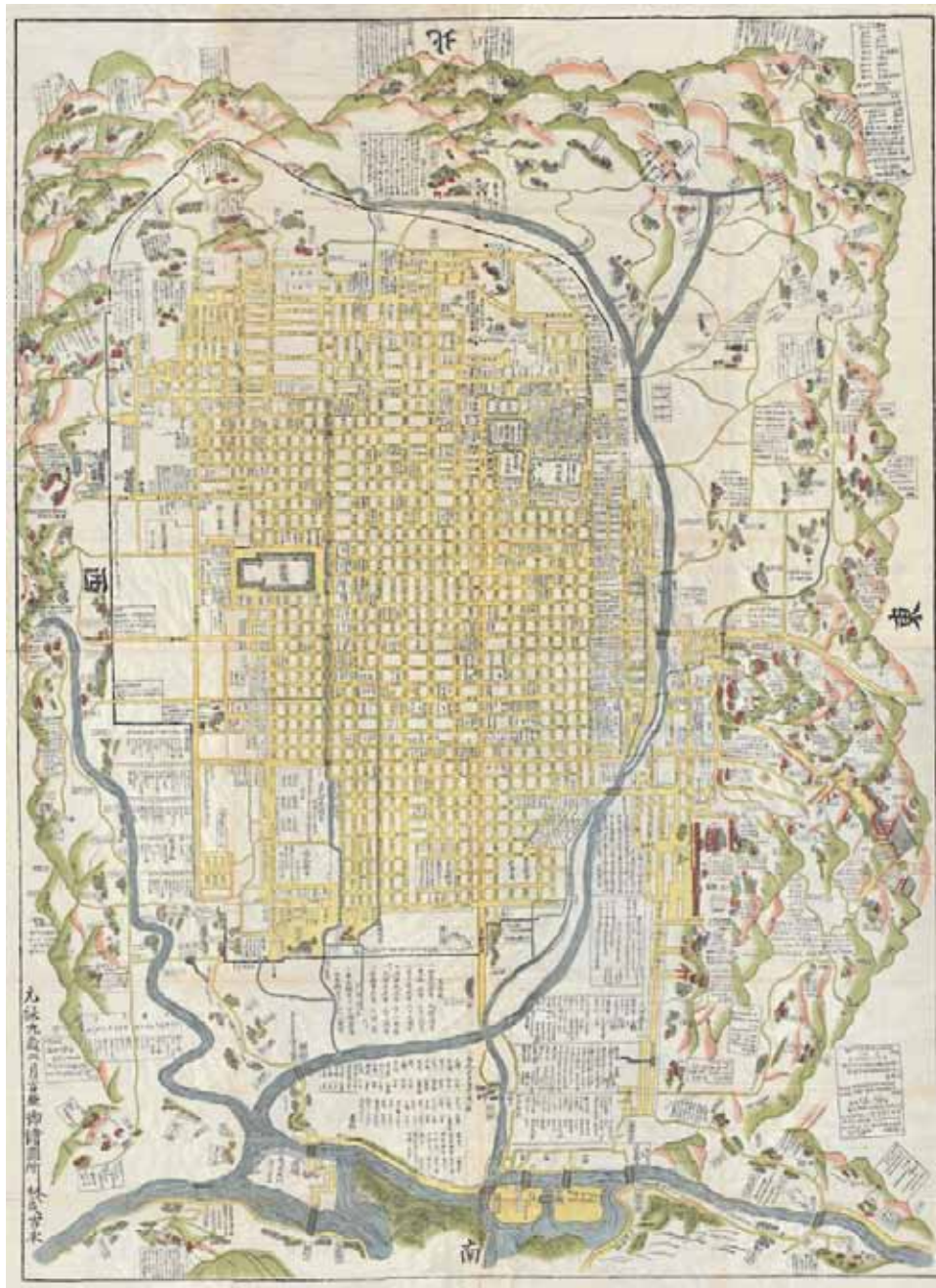


Figure 1

1696 map showing Kyoto 902 years after the founding of the capital .

The vertical orientation indicates the north-south axis, with north towards the top.

(A high resolution image of the map is available on the Wikipedia page on the history of Kyoto City.)

Left-right, east-west symmetry at smaller scales

Individual residences of the nobility from the Heian era (794-1185) onwards followed the same geomancy and therefore shared a layout very similar to the city as a whole, with an east-west symmetry around a north-south axis along the central axis of the property (Nitschke 1993a: 34, Schingen 1966). The only remaining example of an original Heian residence built in this style (known as a *shinden* style hall) is the *Byōdōin* (phoenix hall) in Uji, near Kyoto. The north of the estate would be planted with high growing evergreens such as cedar trees, acting as a screen against winter wind and a sun screen in summer. Flowering cherries were planted on the eastern flank to greet the rising sun, and maples to provide cool shade against the afternoon sun or

blazing autumn colours as the seasonal sun went down earlier and earlier as the seasonal cycle matured. The east, west and south were mostly planted with deciduous trees, to ensure access to the winter sun. In strict adherence to geomantic taboo, water was to flow from the northeast corner of each estate, towards the southwest, to purify the residence from evil influences (Shingen 1966). A protective shrine was erected on the northeast corner of the estates – often containing the effigy of a monkey-deity – to prevent evil from entering from this ominous direction. The possible evolutionary origin of the monkey statue, acting as a decoy against real predators, is a tantalizing even if improbable speculation. To the south of the main residential hall, an open plain covered in feldspar gravel opened towards a pond garden further south, while a left and right pavilion flanked the main hall, recreating the armchair setting surrounding a flat plain. The water of the southern pond garden must flow out of the court at the southwest corner of the estate, in agreement with the belief regarding the proper outflow of impurities.

The Zen temple complexes in Kyoto, mostly founded after the end of the Heian period, follow a similar north-south longitudinal axis with east-west symmetry, with the different parts of the complex resembling various stages of spiritual attainment as one moves from south to north. This layout is commonly referred to in the Zen community as the “composition of the seven compounds”, with each main building in the temple complex assigned to a body part. In fact, diagrams showing the names of the various buildings inscribed into a silhouette of a human figure (Masuno 2008: 150~) occur in the so-called *kirigami* annotations to various old texts.

Arriving at a Zen temple complex, entry commences through the main gate at the south, followed by passage along a bridge across a lotus pond. The path then continues through the garden of paradise, a planted grove of old pine trees. This constitutes a set of three gates, associated with the bodily functions related to excretive, sexual and reproductive orifices. Walking up further north, one reaches the first meditation hall and the Dharma hall for teaching, designated as the stomach and chest of the torso. The central avenue is flanked by the more practical components of monastic life, for example, the sleeping bunkers with kitchen on the upper east and storehouse to the west, functioning as the arms. Ablutions on the lower east and a bathing complex on the south-west are assigned to the left and right legs. At the northern most end of the complex is the abbot’s residence.

Inside the main halls of most classical Kyoto Buddhist dwellings and meditation halls, a statue of a Buddhist deity on an altar is usually found centered on the northern wall of the hall and looking out towards the south, over the southern courtyard. In itself, therefore, even the main hall of an estate echoes the armchair setting that is enclosed on the north and open towards the south. As if to echo the valley plain on which Kyoto City is built, the gravel court to the south of the main hall is deliberately built to slope to the south, away from the building. A good example of this arrangement is the Ryoanji temple rock garden. This arrangement has the functional benefit of draining rainwater away from the building, thus protecting the foundations. It also serves a perceptual purpose, creating the impression that the courtyard is more spacious than its actual physical perimeter.

North-south axes in the Kamigamo neighbourhood

The last geomantic aspect discussed here relates to indigenous Japanese beliefs regarding natural deities. The common belief – possibly with neolithic origins – was that deities infused all aspects of life surrounding us, present as a life force flowing through stones, trees, water and so forth. One of the most powerful deities, the God of Thunder, or *Kamo Wake Ikazuchi no Ō-Mikoto*, would

depart from earth in autumn, whereupon the green would wither and the land would turn cold and barren. In early spring, the Thunder Deity could be enticed to return to earth through special divination rites, to reinvigorate the land and restart the natural cycle of growth. As the deity returned, it would alight upon a special rock pedestal (*iwakura*). In the case of Kyoto, a sacred neolithic rock pedestal is found in the northern suburb of Kamigamo, a village with a known history of at least 1500 years, thus predating the founding of Kyoto as capital. In the periods preceding the Heian era, emperors would send for divination at the Kamigamo deity in times of hardship and famine. One such a divination rite, recorded in 567 ACE, has become installed as the oldest festival continuing into the present in Kyoto. It is known as the *Miare* Festival, through which the thunder deity is enticed back into the land through elaborate nocturnal rituals (Nitschke 1993b: 19). (For an intriguing account of the myth and history surrounding the origins of the Kamigamo shrine, see Ponsonby-Fane 1964: 3~ and Nelson 2000: 221~).

Returning to the rock pedestal, it is literally pedestal shaped – a natural rock outcropping with a roughly flat top (Keane 1996). A smaller rock resembling the flat-topped trapezium-shaped pedestal was commonly placed in the gardens flanking the northern side of dwellings of Kamigamo Diviners (*Kannushi*).

The shrine dedicated to the thunder deity is located directly south of the pedestal rock, placed so that the central axis of the shrine (also with east-west bilateral symmetry) and pedestal rock is aligned with the northern North Pole Star. This arrangement is therefore reminiscent of the pillar of heaven, connecting the gate of heaven to the North Pole Star. Similarly, diviners' dwellings are on the south side of the garden pedestal rocks. The entire Kamigamo village is placed south of the shrine, the paddies into which the deity would pour its life force are located directly south of the village, and in turn, at a much larger scale, the entire city of Kyoto is placed directly south of the Kamigamo community (Ponsonby-Fane 1964). A recurrence of the same north-south axial relationship between the seat of the life-giving divinity and the worshipper/good peasant of the land is therefore found at many layers. Bearing witness to the awareness of this relationship, the Kamigamo shrine appears at the top (north) centre of many old maps of the capital. In figure 1, for example, the structure of the shrine at Kamigamo appears coloured in vermillion, with a square text box hailing the thunder deity (directly beneath the script for “north”), at the top centre of the map, above the rectangular city grid.

An interesting feature at the Kamigamo shrine is the construction of two identical sand cones on the south flank of the complex. With tiny pine needles stuck upright into the tips of each cone, the sand symbolizes both the return and departure of the deity, and is a symbol of rebirth. Aligned with the east-west axis, these can be interpreted as symbols of *Yin* and *Yang*. A similar arrangement of male and female – of *Yin* and *Yang* – rocks or rock arrangements can be found on the southern garden courtyard flanking the main halls of Zen sub-temples, such as Ryanji and Rygenin in Kyoto. Here, a rising *Yang* rock is placed on the east of the garden courtyard, and a lower *Yin* rock is placed towards the west. This practice is described in the opening passages of the 1466 garden design manual written by Shingen.

Discussion

Nowhere except the *kamigiri* annotations (Masuno 2008) do the details presented above prove an undisputable link between classical Japanese geomancy and its embodiment in human anatomy, but we deem the topic worth presenting for various reasons. First, the prevailing inaccessibility of Far East Asian culture in South Africa suggests that the general audience of this journal may

be unfamiliar and thus sufficiently interested in the notion of Japanese geomancy in the spatial layout of anthropocentric landscapes.

Second, we are not aware of any research that conclusively addresses the possibility that geomantic principles in the above in fact lead to a physical environment that materially benefits its human occupants. Speculatively considering the physical implications of the geomantic guidelines, a number of potential advantages for human occupation can be noticed.

For example, the directional associations of “upper” and “lower” with “north” and “south” is still used in Kyoto today, 1200 years after the founding of the city as capital of Japan. One possible religious connotation with this directionality may be the role of the Pole Star as an important deity in medieval Chinese geomancy (Stein 1990, Inoue 1994). In this sense, “north” also had a connotation with “elevated” or “exalted”. However, the up-down connotation with north and south can be a purely pragmatic denotation, directly related to the fact that the longitudinal axis of the city is placed on a valley plain that slopes about 80 meters from its northern end down towards the south.

In fact, the exact location of Kyoto was chosen for this physical feature of the landscape, among others. Chinese geomancy dictates a number of landmark features that denote a prosperous setting, related to the five colours, the five elements, and the five guardians (Shingen 1466.), and determine a complex set of rules and taboos of interaction between the elements that, if the city layout were to ignore or disregard them, would lead to a disastrous outcome. Chief among these features were the presence of a large guardian at the northeast corner of the city, a series of mountains at the north that could act as the Black Turtle guardian, and two rivers flowing alongside the rectangular frame of the city – the Blue Dragon in the east and the White Tiger in the west, with finally, the Red Phoenix guardian to the south, and of course, the Yellow Earth of man in the centre (Shingen 1466, Slawson 1987: 206, Nitschke 1993a, Keane 1996).

The necessity for a guardian against evil in the northeast corner of the city does not yield to rational thought as easily, except that we could reason that at the most challenging time of the year – winter – the direction to go dark first at dusk is the northeast. The probability that a hungry nocturnal predator would attack from this direction may be slightly higher, and hence it would make sense to remain attentive to this direction in winter. In purely pragmatic terms, mount Hiei, the northeast guardian of Kyoto City, functioned as a lookout post that could spy approaching enemies.

The above “guardians” towards each of the principle directions around Kyoto comprises a geological setting that holds various potential advantages for a human settlement in the northern hemisphere. Mountains towards the north provide shelter from the fiercest prevailing winter winds, while shading the settlement against the sharpest summer sun. A slanting central plain keeps water and air flowing, with fresh air and water replenished constantly from mountainous forests and mountain ice. The central part of the valley plain is slightly raised, making it unlikely to succumb to even serious flooding. Households allocated to the northernmost grid cells in the city therefore enjoyed the purest air and water. The central axis of the capital was safeguarded against flooding by virtue of its slightly raised elevation with relation to the major rivers flowing down along the east and west flanks of the valley. The plains consist of a thick layer of feldspar gravel, ideal as a filter against impurities, sweetening the water and acting as water storage layer that ensured that clear wells could be dug virtually anywhere within the city.

The absence of mountains on the south means that the valley receives good sunlight during winter and that airflow is maintained towards the south relatively consistently. Usually, a city

located at low altitudes in a valley can potentially become a smothering heat trap. The opening towards the lower-lying south improves air circulation in the city. Even so, Kyoto can be very hot and humid in summer. Originally, the presence of many huge trees would help ensure that the city remained at a bearable temperature even in summer, although the lack of green space in present day Kyoto has significantly altered this situation. It is easy to forget that above every river of water there is also a stream of cooler air flowing, a vital part of the circulation of airflow.

The above described “armchair” setting of mountains surrounding the north, east and west of the valley (Nitschke 1993a: 35) provides physical shelter against attacks on the city, while the large shallow lake towards the south further restricted access to the city. Access to the city was restricted to a number of narrow mountain trade routes, and a strictly guarded entry point towards the south at the city, where the lake drainage formed a river delta that drained towards the southwest. It was further important that the northeast was properly protected against the inflow of evil, and that water in particular had to leave any setting throughout the southwest, as this was the proper direction through which impurities were supposed to leave. The natural presence of all the various elements required by the geomancy made Kyoto the locale of choice when it was founded as the new capital. The fact that it has endured as a city for so long provides circumstantial evidence that the geomantic principles also bear on the physical environmental settings that shelter humans from the elements and engender material prosperity.

The most sought after neighborhoods in Kyoto City today are the parts inside the city rectangle, or in the valley plain directly north of it, that were occupied throughout the longest span of the history of the city and even before its foundation. Intuitively, or from long experience living in the area, people at different ages knew where the areas most conducive to prosperous living were located. Areas lying outside of these perimeters often suffer from excessive humidity in summer (on the east and west) or prohibitive exposure to the afternoon sun (east), or a lack of clean air or good air circulation (south). Large modern architectural incisions into the landscape – most notably the goliath new Kyoto station - have obstructed the north-south flow of air to the extent that residential areas south of the station have seen a noticeable increase in year-round temperatures. After 1200 years, the lake and delta has silted up, and is now a fully built up suburb towards the south of the city.

The third reason why we deem this presentation as sufficiently interesting is the fact that the resemblance between the layout of classical Chinese cities and the human body has not yet received the attention that we believe it deserves. Even though direct links between geomancy and the human anatomy are admittedly speculative, we believe that at least at a metaphorical level it is of tremendous potential significance. The resemblance between the structure of the city and the human body suggests that there would be an intuitive understanding of the flow and importance of events.

The original mapping of Kyoto corresponded macroscopically to the left and right halves of a bilaterally symmetrical “body” with a central spine. The most important formal messages, carried towards and from the Imperial household, would be carried along the central avenue of the city, thus resembling a spinal chord for communications between senses, body and head. The longitudinal axis with a clear upper and lower end is reminiscent of the relationship between the highest seat of consciousness and its direct connection with divinity, and the body that both sustains and depends on the ‘head’. The body also depends on physical sustenance. The imperial household, allocated in the highest central positions, resembles the nobler bodily functions, such as the heart and seat of consciousness. Just as with a vertebrate body, the fact that it consists of two identical halves with duplicate functions means that there is a latent ability to retain some

form of functionality after sustaining serious unilateral damage. For a city with this layout, we would like to speculate that there should be a greater chance of maintaining the continuation of its usual services even in the event of disaster, such as fire or an earthquake devastating the city partially. The fact that the same functional layout recurs at many spatial scales further increases the chance that functionality would remain even when natural disasters occurred.

In comparison to the human body, the geological features of the setting surrounding the city also resembles a protective skull from which the world can be observed. For the city, the daunting northern mountain range functions like the solid dorsal bone of the cranium, acting as protective barrier against the northern 'back' that is not visually accessible, while providing good visual access towards the south, as if giving the city eyes in the same orientation that a skull would be endowed with vision. The city proper was traditionally also surrounded with rice paddies and agricultural fields that provided the bulk of sustenance for the citizens. The north also functions as the point of intake of fresh water and air flowing into the body. Veins of air and water flow downwards from this entry point, and leave the city - likely in a less pure state - towards the south, the lower end of the city. The mountains flanking the city towards the east and west function like protective arms on the flanks of the city, and the lake towards the south is reminiscent of kidneys and a bladder. The Southern half of the city was allocated to various craft guilds (that can still be discerned today), like woodworking, weaving and metal working, reminiscent of the organs that build up and sustain the body, such as the stomach, intestines, liver, pancreas and so forth. The central spine of the city constituted the major axis of approach towards the Emperor, reminiscent of the spinal chord that carries messages from the far perimeters of the body towards the central seat of consciousness. The two great temples situated symmetrically, close to the southern end of the city, seem like two organs that could guard and purify the spiritual energy of what enters the body along the central axis on its way to the imperial household. Interestingly, the pleasure quarters of the old capital were also situated on the south perimeter of the city.

As with the human body, the left-right symmetry of the city is a clear external feature, yet left and right halves were not assigned equal values. The quarters of highest nobility were assigned to the northeast quarter of the city, closest to the guardian against evil, and in a sense dealing with the more delicate taboos on behalf of the entire city.

The above shows a loose resemblance of embodiment in the organizing principles of landscape in medieval Japan. It is such that in these environments one would find oneself intuitively understanding head and body, up and down, left and right, centre and laterality in a way afforded by our own bodies. The intuitive relation between this geomancy and the body is perhaps more clearly felt when compared to another commonly applied geomantic theme, the mandala. Here, the body and its physical relation to space, e.g. distinctions between left-right, up-down, as the sense of gravity, seasonal cycles, the placement of organs and so forth, seem negated in favour of an all encompassing symmetry, where there is only centre and periphery, as if to intuit a state of pure mental being. That the geomancy of Kyoto does not negate the physical presence of the body bears witness to the fact that it was a pragmatic system intended to engender a prosperous existence for its residents.

Some scholars may argue here that we read a dualism into a system that had no concept of a mind-body dualism, but in all honesty, considering the care with which the communities of divination would purify the body so that it would not have any degrading effect on the purity of spirit, can one honestly claim that there was no concept of dualism? Buddhism is an equally dualist practice, forfeiting the body in favour of the mind, and hence the clear structures of dualism in the cities and temple compounds laid out within the full realm of Sino-Buddhist-

Shint geomancy.

Interestingly, in some of the older Buddhist meditation techniques, breathing is considered a method of renewal where, even though the nose, lungs and body are essentially symmetrical, the cycle of breathing switches so that at one stage one is breathing in through the left half of the nose and later on, the right half. These cycles are thought to coincide with shifts in consciousness. The occurrence of left-right symmetry and duplication of structure in Shint buildings is similar to the same type of symmetry found in Buddhist complexes, and may even have been inspired by Buddhist architecture. In any event, the presence of left-right, east-west symmetry engendered many levels of overlap between Shint and Buddhist concepts of geomancy in the multi-layered structuring of Kyoto as capital. A wealth of additional geomantic beliefs exist that we cannot address here due to limitations of space, but it is nevertheless intriguing. The interested reader can find more in Slawson (1987) and Nitschke (1993a, 1993b), and for those able to read Japanese, Masuno (2008).

It also might be compared to the way much classical Japanese poetry engages in the natural landscape. If the geomantic mapping analogizes the city as a version of the body, the emotional dispositions of the body can be found in sympathy with the landscape. Feelings of melancholy and sadness (far more commonly treated in classical poetry than happiness or optimism) seem to pervade the natural world. Thus, in verses from the celebrated noh play, *Nonomiya*, the lead character is described in the following manner:

*kokoro no iro wa onozukara
chigusa no hana ni utsuroite
otorôru mi no narai kana.*

The colors of my heart depart
And of themselves suffuse the autumn's wildflowers.
Yes, this is the rule with ruined souls.

Although this is not the place to go into detail about such figuring of human emotions, it is yet another example of a harmony observed between the human subject and the natural world, something long admired in Japanese aesthetics and philosophy.

The observed resonance between landscape geomancy and the human body is reminiscent of the design concept of natural mapping (Norman 1988). Users can intuitively use a design on the first fly, without labels, manuals or prior training, if the physical structure and behavior of the object for use is mirrored in the physical layout and behavior of the controls. A secondary natural mapping is implemented if the controls of the design map intuitively to the physical body of the user. For example, a lever that should be pulled should be shaped in such a way that it is easy to grip by hand while pulling on it. Similarly, a designed landscape that emulates a the experience of viewing the world from within a sheltered skull and where the flow of clean water and air emulates breathing and drinking provides an intuitive mapping to the body. With this mapping repeated at various spatial scales, humans can potentially extend familiarity with the environment any scale to intuit appropriate interaction at any other level. This system of multi-scale human infrastructure organized in bilateral symmetrical halves around a central spine is not unique to the described system of geomancy. An even more strictly fractal system with a suggestive armchair structure is found in the *Ba-ila* villages of southern Zambia (Eglash 1998: 27). Here, the layout recurs over at least four scales, even down to the level of utensils used in the kitchen. The gates to villages, compounds and the entrances to individual dwellings face towards the lower end of the axial structure, while a protective barrier at the back – analogous

to the northern mountains in the geomancy described above – points towards the head of the axis. The directionality of the central spine is indicated by placement of the most important compound – that of the chief – towards the protected back of the village, with the hut of the chief towards the back of his compound, and the most important ancestral deity placed on a small altar towards the closed end of his hut. This pattern shows a startling analogy with the placement of deities in Japanese Shint shrines and Zen Buddhist temples (not to mention the placement of Christ above the altar at the closed end of cathedral buildings). *As* for a natural mapping, it bestows a great advantage on any member in its society, because whether in their own abode, or that of co-inhabitants in their own compound or when visiting other compounds or villages, only a very minimal map is required to successfully navigate the entire infrastructure, strongly underlining the potential benefits of a natural mapping in urban design, generally construed. We would finally like to suggest that if, in addition, such an infrastructure were to resemble key features – a central spine, up, down, left right, symmetry - of our own familiar bodies, it would constitute an especially intuitive natural mapping for human occupation. If this possibility were to be proven as fact, the geomancy behind classical Far East Asian city such as Kyoto could be interpreted as a greater environmental lesson for urban design today, not merely the superstition and taboo of an incidental moment in its long history.

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