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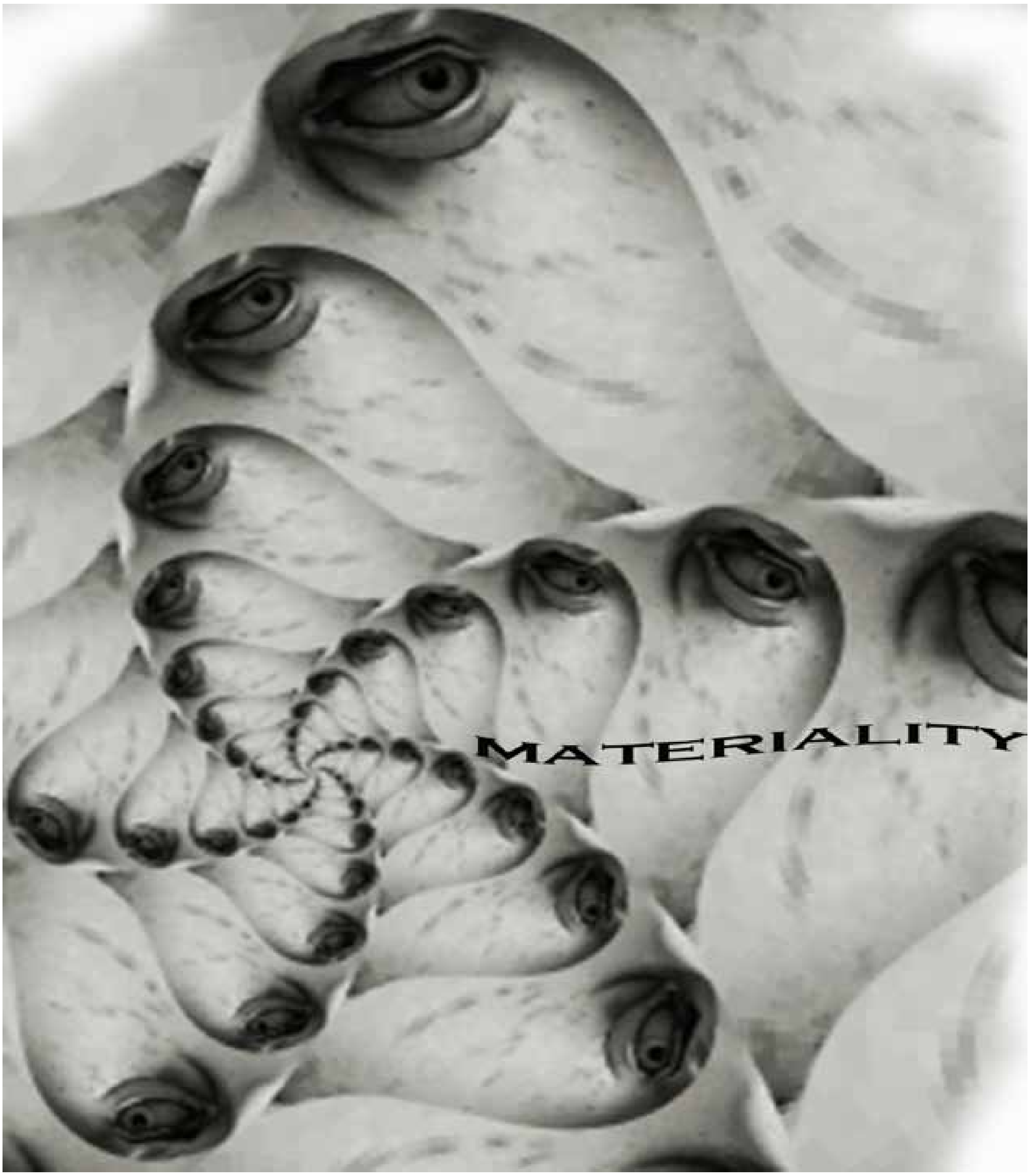

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Contents

Editorial: Materiality

For this special issue of the *South African Journal of Art History*, submissions were invited from the visual arts and design disciplines on the theme of materiality. Articles could deal with manifestations of materiality, transcendence of materiality, or the possibility of a dialectical relation between materiality and transcendence. Submissions from an array of fields were received, including architecture, landscape architecture, art history, media studies, and the visual arts. The choice of materiality as a major theme was motivated by the idea that art, architecture, and other related disciplines and practices entail highly varied perceptions of and approaches to materiality. At times, they exhibit tendencies toward drawing close to, emphasising, and appreciating the materiality of objects or artefacts, and yet in other instances involve great efforts to move away from materiality as such, and strive toward transcendence. These efforts may then entail either conceiving materiality as an obstacle to transcendence and thus trying to do away with it, or perceiving materiality as a potential medium through which a transcendent state or vision can be attained, or at least momentarily glimpsed. Still other approaches are underpinned by the notion of a dialectic between materiality and transcendence, suggesting that these two conditions necessarily exist in a constant and complex relation – that the tactile and the abstract are both indissociable and reciprocal.

The articles that were accepted for publication evince the centrality of the issue of materiality to both critical reflection upon, and the further development of, art-related disciplines and practices.

The editors wish to thank the contributors for their rich explorations of materiality in relation to their respective fields.

Adrian Konik (guest editor)
Inge Konik (guest editor)

Conspicuous display: stairs historical and modern
Part I: A theoretical introduction and examples of historical stairs in stone, masonry and wood

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It is the purpose of this article to explain how the stair as an architectural element not merely serves the function of vertical movement in a manner requiring physical safety, but has often, especially in monumental and ceremonial architectural settings on the outside or inside of historical buildings, been elaborated structurally and embellished as a focal component. Monumental and ceremonial stairs often served as a conspicuous part of the display of power of the patrons, as well as the structural and artistic ability of their appointed designers. By expanding Thorstein Veblens theory of "conspicuous consumption" to include conspicuous material creations throughout the ages, especially in the form of prestigious buildings and structures such as stairs, it will be argued that powerful clients and their architects often created splendid architectural displays which serve as event-spaces, made to the measure of the human body.
Key words: conspicuous consumption, conspicuous display, stairs, human scale

Indrukwekkende vertoning: historiese en moderne trappe
Deel I: 'n Teoretiese inleiding en voorbeelde van historiese trappe in klip, baksteen en hout
Dit is die doel met hierdie artikel om te verduidelik hoe die trap as 'n argitektoniese element nie bloot funksioneel dien om veilige fisieke vertikale beweging moontlik te maak nie, maar dat dit dikwels, veral in monumentale en seremoniële argitektoniese situasies, aan die buite- of binnekant van historiese geboue, struktureel uitgebrei en versier is om as 'n fokale komponent te dien. Monumentale en seremoniële trappe het dikwels gedien as n indrukwekkende onderdeel in die magsvertoon van opdraggewers, sowel as bewys van die strukturele en kunssinnige vernuf van die aangestelde ontwerpers daarvan. Deur Thorstein Veblen se teorie van "indrukwekkende verbruik" uit te brei om indrukwekkende materiële skeppings deur die eeue heen in te sluit, veral in die vorm van geboue en trapstrukture as vertoonstukke, word aangevoer dat maghebbende kliënte en hulle argitekte dikwels indrukwekkende argitektoniese skouspele volgens die skaal van die menslike liggaam geskep het om terselfdetrtyd as gebeurtenis-ruimtes te dien.
Sleutelwoorde: indrukwekkende verbruik, indrukwekkende vertoning, trappe, menslike skaal

The phrase "conspicuous consumption" was formulated by the economist and sociologist Thorstein Veblen in 1899 to describe the way in which members of the upper class spend their great wealth to manifest their social power and prestige publicly. Since the industrial revolution the ostentation of the affluent elite has been interpreted and debated in various ways as a symptom of the consumer society. By expanding Veblen's theory to include conspicuous material creations throughout the ages, especially in the form of prestigious buildings and architectural structures, it will be argued that powerful clients and their architects often created splendid architectural displays, of which a selection of the most felicitous historical examples of stairs are selected for analysis, focussing also on the cultural context of their creation. These, like all stairs that of necessity express the human scale (as the Italian word *scala* implies), are formally innovative, and serve as an expressive link in the spatial composition of buildings, creating a sense of space-time sequence.

Introduction: the stair as an architectural element

There is no better definition of a stair than the statement by the Greek philosopher Heraclitus, (535-475 BCE): "The way upward and the way downward are the same."[1] We do not know the context of this fragment or what Heraclitus actually referred to, except that his worldview made provision for the complementarity of opposites. Indeed, a stair reconciles opposites in a manner that other architectural elements are not capable of to the same extent. Besides its dual direction the stair is both material and symbolic, especially when it becomes an architectural exhibit in its own right.

The stair as architectural element not merely serves the function of vertical movement in a manner requiring physical safety, but is often, especially in monumental and ceremonial architectural settings, elaborated structurally and embellished aesthetically as a focal component on the outside or inside of buildings. Monumental and ceremonial stairs are a conspicuous part of the display of the wealth and power of the patrons and the structural and aesthetic ability of their appointed designers. The stair is an artifact that is often an open-air entity, not attached to a building, but generally it is attached to a building on its exterior or in its interior. Since the time of the Sumerian ziggurats great stairs abound as imperial exhibits. They testify to the tremendous investment of time, effort and ingenuity, amounting to countless man-hours. Therefore, one may surmise that the effort would have been somewhat meaningless without a symbolic meaning attached to the result.

As human beings our upright position necessitates a fine balancing act when we undertake a vertical climb or a descent that poses the challenge of counteracting gravity. Since the earth is not even we are often in a precarious position as bipedal beings when having to ascend or descend a steep incline. *Homo sapiens*, the artificer, solved this problem by inventing a tool in the form of a ladder to move up natural heights where the going was very steep, as evidenced by the remains of a timber exemplar dating from as long ago as the Last Glacial Age, *circa* 110,000 to 10,000 years ago (figure 1). Since *homo sapiens* does not only invent artifacts the ladder became mythologised as the symbol of ascent, as attested by Jacob's dream described in the Old Testament and vividly portrayed by Marc Chagall (1889-1985) (figure 2).

Figure 1
A timber ladder dating from the Last Glacial Age
(source: internet).

Figure 2
Marc Chagall, *Jacob's Dream*, 1973, oil on canvas, 73x92cm, private collection (source: http://jungcurrents.com/jacob-ladder).

More permanent than the ladder as a tool that can be moved, if necessary, is the constructed stair consisting of steps hacked into hillsides where there is an incline. An impressive example is found at Simatai in China, where the Great Wall crosses a hill (figure 3). Such ancient stairs, almost as steep as ladders, are found all over the planet at hilly sites; they often have a more or less straight line of movement but are irregular and hazardous, with steps of varying width and height.

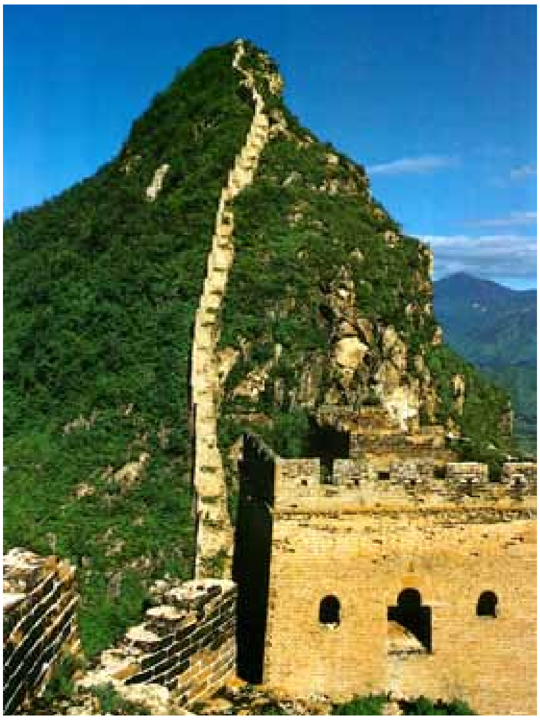

Figure 3
Stair at Simatai, China
(photograph by the author).

Ascent and decent on ladders and stairs require poise, balance and a degree of fitness from users since it demands a kinetic disposition that alters a person's walking rhythm, as demonstrated by Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) in his *Nude Decending a Staircase*, *No. 2* (figure 4). Vertical movement is unsafe because a fall, if not fatal, can cause a broken limb or concussion.[2] Therefore, designers and builders have tried to standardise and codify the risers and treads of stairs according to an average human scale, calling to mind the Italian word for stair, *la scala*, that also refers to scale or measurement. Safeguards like hand railings or banisters, both in the open and inside buildings, are a requirement and all stairs should be well lit. The standard indoor stair, constructed according to building regulations, is designed for safety, not display. Such stair patterns are conventionally fixed; they prescribe the pitch line, the rise height (*circa* 125cm), the tread depth (*circa* 225 cm), a broad landing after a number of risers or flight of steps, as well as a balustrade for the steadying of balance (figure 5).

Figure 4
Marcel Duchamp, *Nude Decending a Staircase*, *No. 2*, 1912, oil on canvas, 147x89.2 cm, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia (source: http://en.wikipedia/wiki/Nude_Descending_a_Stair).

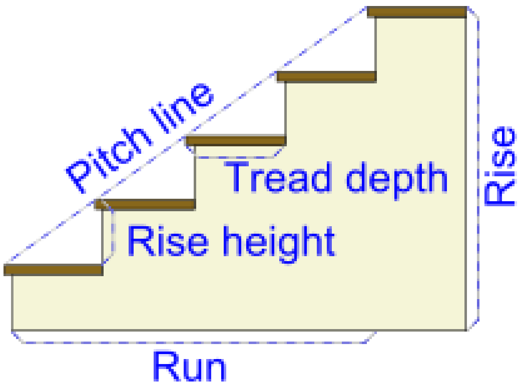

Figure 5
Typical design of risers and treads of a domestic stair.

However, some stairs are actually dangerous, for example the stair of an office building in Switzerland (figure 6). Also a stair, decorated like a psychedelic painting, needs to be approached with caution (figure 7).

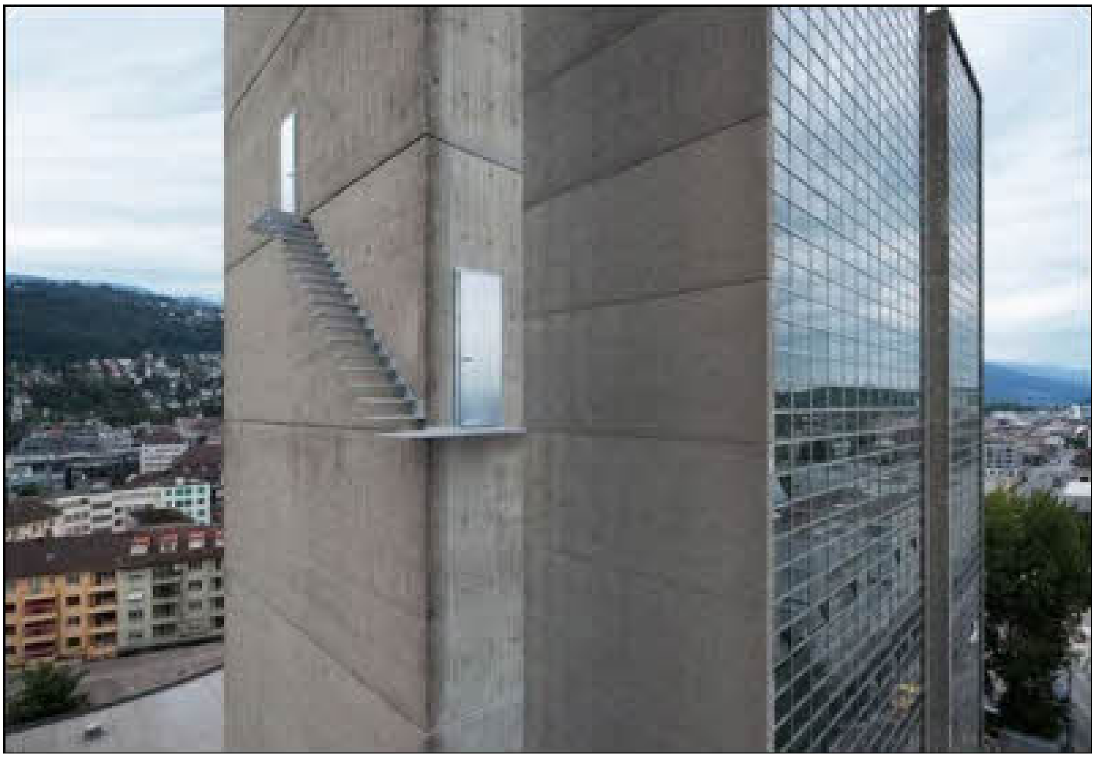

Figure 6
Exterior stair of an office building in Switzerland (source: internet).

Figure 7
A stair decorated like a painting (source: internet).

In the design of stairs creativity and imagination play an important role. However, the rational analysis of all details is extremely important to ensure the safety of a stair, requiring of the designer the need to apply scientific knowledge of materials and mathematics to the analysis of the problem of how best to structure the technological requirements regarding materials, form, labour, cost, etc., involved to construct a stair in a given context. Psychologically a person without a pathological fear of heights will feel comfortable on a stair that is solid, aesthetically attractive and offers views of an upper and a lower landing. However, not all stairs are straight with a vision of upper or lower landings. They can be made to twist and turn in their allotted space on the inside or outside of buildings, thus obscuring the way up and the way down and aggravating the danger of ascent and descent, but adding to structural complexity and visual attractiveness to satisfy the human need for exploration and discovery. Therefore, designers may devise imaginative conjunctions without transgressing on safety regulations for stairs. Clients or patrons who have the vision and means to commission an elaborate stair to enhance a building's spatial design and visual aesthetics will require special skills from designers, be they architects or engineers, as well as from builders. The Roman architect, Vitruvius (*circa* 80-70-after *circa* 15 BCE), stated in his *De architectura* (I.iii.2) that the ideal building has three elements: it is sturdy, useful, and beautiful. An ideal stair has the same qualities.

The modernist architect, Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969), famously condemned any ornamentation or nonfunctional addition to an architectural structure when he stated that "Less is more", a precept for minimalist design. In response, Robert Venturi (born 1925) punned the refutation that "Less is a bore".[3] I am not partial to the works of either architects, but stairs designed according to the less-is-more motto will undoubtably be a bore. I therefore purport to show a limited selection of the best designed and most inviting stairs on display throughout history, stairs that to a large extent enhance the spatial designs of city spaces or works of architecture and create an event-space, made to the measure of the human body.

Unfortunately the invention of lifts and escalators that are seldom spectacular because of their standardised design, have had a bland effect in the foyers and lobbies of most modern public buildings, in which equally bland, often hidden, stairs are installed, mainly as obligatory escape routes. However, there are exceptions in modern architecture in which the tradition of conspicuous display of stairs enhance movement on a human scale, in spite of the vast spaces in which they may be situated - a topic for the second part of this research dealing with modern stairs.

Ceremonial stairs

When viewing ceremonial stairs one tends to agree with a statement by Peter Smith (1976: 112),"that man has always found emotional satisfaction in the presence of the gigantic. From earliest times he has created artefacts extravagantly larger than life, perhaps to touch the threshold of the heavens... To reach the threshold of heaven the Sumerians graced the city of Ur with a ziggurat, an Akkadian term meaning 'built on a raised area', of which the function was ceremonial and religious. It was constructed as a symbolic mountain with a regular stair, meant to overawe the users by suggesting an ascent to the abode of the gods (figure 8). This stepped pyramid, measuring 46 metres in length, 46 metres in width and 30 metres in height, was built by King Ur-Nammu (*circa* 2112-95 BCE) in honour of the goddess Nanna/Sîn.[4] It is composed of several levels, constructed of mudbrick, faced with baked brick, set in bitumen. Its greatness can still be recognised in the ruined monumental stair that has been partially restored by Saddam Hussein, but damaged in the Gulf War in 1991 (figure 9).

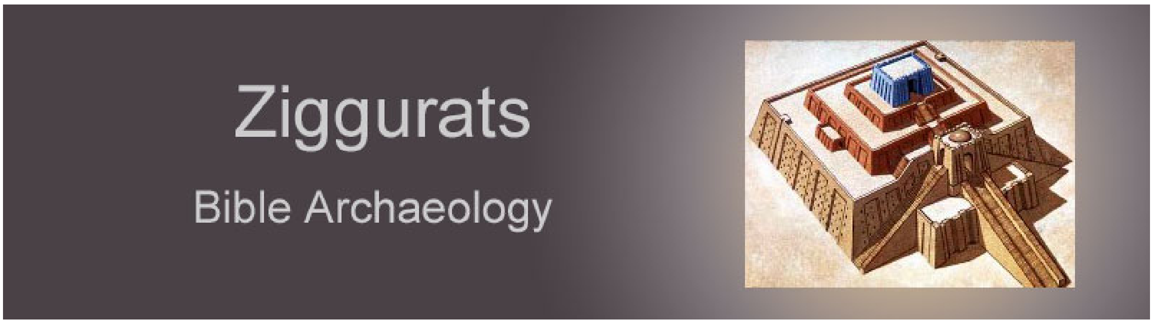

Figure 8
Reconstruction of Ur-Nammus ziggurat at Ur, based on the 1939 reconstruction by Sir Leonard Wooley (source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ziggurat of Ur, accessed 2013/05/07).

Figure 9
United States soldiers climb the ruined steps of Ur-Nammu's ziggurat (source: http://en. wikipedia.org/wiki/Ziggurat of Ur, accessed 2013/05/07).

Other notable pyramid temples, reaching heights of up to 45 metres, with steep ceremonial stone stairs were built by the Maya in Mesoamerica whose architectural history spans almost two thousand years (300 BCE - 1500). Like the Sumerians, the Maya were keen astronomers and their elevated temples on the uppermost platforms of the pyramids were most probably also used as observatories for calender calculations, as at Tikal (built between 740 and 750 ACE) where the temple was reached by 365 steps (Kirchner1985: 31) (figure 10).

Figure 10
Monumental stair, Tikal temple pyramid Mesoamerica, built between 740 and 750 CE (source: http://en.wikipwdia.org/wiki/Maya_architecture).

At the third century BCE Sanctuary of Lindian Athena at Lindos, Rhodes, the monumental stair replaced a previously seven metres wide stepped pathway to the temple of Athena. The rebuilt flight of 37 steps, 21.03 metres wide, connects the lower propylaia with an upper stoa, changing the view of the elevated temple at the far end (figure 11). According to Hollinshead (2012: 38), the significance of the sanctuary layout "lies in what was new, especially the scale of the stair and the integrated complexity of the building". Furthermore she states: I would propose that broad steps themselves promote symmetry, as most users will choose a path up the middle of a monumental stairway..., and also describes the function of the broad stair: "Given the steep and uneven terrain, the exceptionally broad stair captured and concentrated the drive of a procession that probably needed gathering for the final ascent" (2012: 39).

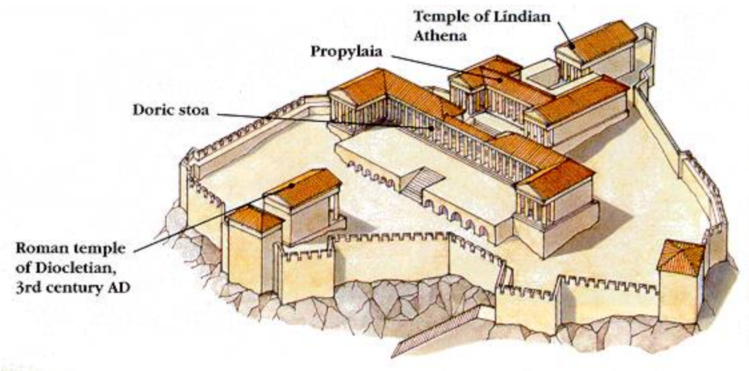

Figure 11
Reconstruction of the sanctuary of Lindian Athena at Lindos, Rhodes, third century BCE (source: http://www.godess-athena.org/Museum/temple).

The monumental stair on the east side of the audience hall, called Apadana, of the palace of Persepolis, Persia (present day Iran), inspired by King Darius I the Great, was built from 518-460 BCE. Its main feature is the sculpted reliefs representing gift-bearers from the king's domain (figure 12). The repeated pattern of figures in a ritual procession along the flanking east wall enhance the sense of spatial sequence to a destination that merits this splendid approach to the palace interior. It was designed not only to impress the viewer with the power of the ruler who occupied the palace, but also to impress all visitors by its display of artistry. The frieze represents the invention of the processional genre that later influenced the Greek sculptors when they decorated the Parthenon with the Panathenaic frieze.

Figure 12
The Apadana stair, palace of Persepolis, Persia, built from 518-460 BCE (source: http:depts.washington.edu/arch350/Assets/Slides/Lecture15, accessed 2013/03/25).

Another stair decorated with sculpture to celebrate the power of the ruler is the so-called *Scala dei Giganti* (Giants' stair) in the internal courtyard of the Doge's Palace in Venice (figure 13). It was designed by Antonio Rizzo (born before 1440-died after 1499) and built after 1483). The two gigantic sculptures at the top of the stair by Jacopo Sansovino (1486-1570) that represent Neptune because Venice ruled the sea, and Mars because Venice was triumphant in war, were put in place in 1565.

Figure 13
Antonio Rizzo, *Scala dei Giganti*, Doge's Palace, Venice, built after 1483 (photograph by the author).

This stair was probably Tiziano Vecelli's (1488/90-1576) inspiration for the setting of his painting, *Presentation of the Virgin Mary at the Temple* (figure 14). The ascent of the small girl seems arduous on the high stair; the scale of her figure is contrasted with the monumentality of the stair.

Figure 14
Tiziano Vecelli, *Presentation of the Virgin Mary at the Temple*, 1534-38, oil on canvas, 775x345 cm, Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice (source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presentation_of_Mary).

The ceremonial stair in the Escorial

A renowned ceremonial stair is that by Johann Balthasar Neumann (1687-1753) in the Würzburg Residence which was completed in 1774. The stair is part of a formal reception room in which the 23 metres high stair spans an area of 18x30 metres. Not only is this stair a magnificent engineering feat, but its architectural embellishment and the ceiling fresco by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (1696-1770) makes this one of the most notable stairs ever built (figure 15).

Figure 15
Johann Balthasar Neumann, ceremonial stair, Würzburg Residence, completed in 1774 (photograph by the author).

A further elaborate Baroque stair is the imperial stair in the Winter Palace, St. Petersburg, Russia, built for the Empress Elizabeth I by Francesco Bartolomeo Rastrelli (1700-1771), restored by Vasily Stasov (1769-1848) after a fire in 1837, but retaining the eighteenth-century rococo style, even though massive grey paired columns were added in the mid-nineteenth century (figure 16). In a vast palace with 117 stairs, the principle or imperial stair is called the "Jordan Stair" because on the Feast of the Epiphany the Tzar descended it in state for the ceremony of the "Blessing of the Waters".

Figure 16
Francesco Bartolomeo Rastrelli and Vasily Stasov, imperial stair, Winter Palace, St. Petersburg, Russia, restored after 1837 (photograph by the author).

The royal seat of San Lorenzo de El Escorial comprises a monastery and the historical residence of the King of Spain, in the town of San Lorenzo de El Escorial, about 45 kilometres northwest of the capital Madrid, in Spain. The complex was conceived by Philip II who reigned Spain from 1556-98 and used the wealth accrued to the state from the New World to build the Escorial as a symbol of Spain's central position in the Roman Catholic world.

In 1559 Philip II engaged the Spanish architect Juan Bautista de Toledo (1515- 1567) to design the Escorial in collaboration with himself. After the death of this architect Juan de Herrera (1530-97), who had assisted him at the Escorial since 1562, was appointed the director architect. He modified his predecessor's plans and his austere design found favour with the king. However, the architect responsible for the imperial stair is in dispute (Wilkenson 1975: 65). It has been attributed to Giovanni Battista Castelli (1500 or 1509-1569 or 1579), a painter who was also involved in architectural work at the Escorial., but the main candidate is Herrera. In this regard Cathrine Wilkenson (1975: 83) states: "The most important element in Herrera's design of the impertial staicase was the arrangement of three parallel flights in the extant stairwell. The [thee-part] plan does not appear earlier in Spain... ." She further notes that "The plan of an interior staircase with three parallel arms originated with Leonardo [da Vinci], makes s[poradic appearances in both Italian and French architecture before the Escorial. It is much more difficult to determine how these designs are related and which, if any of them, might have suggested the [thee-part] plan to Herrera" (Wilkenson 1975: 86). The main flight is isolated within the building; it fills the stairwell and becomes a "self-contained composition" (Wilkenson 1975: 86), removed from spatial continuity with its courtyard.

Figure 17
Juan de Herrera, imperial stair, Escorial, Spain
(photograph by Concha Diez Pastor).

A last example of a ceremonial stair was constructed by the Beaux-Arts educated Dutch architect, Sytze Wopkes Wierda (1839-1911), who became the state architect and head of Public Works in the South African Republic (figure 18). This stair is in the Ou Raadsaal on Church Square, Pretoria, of which President Paul Kruger laid the corner stone in 1889. It is a timber construction, of which the central flight leads to the council chamber with its pedimented door.

From the landing at the door of the council chamber two parallel flights on the left and the right go to an upper level, as if imitating the three-part open-well design of the Escorial's imperial stair, albeit on a modest scale.

Figure 18
Sytze Wopkes Wierda, ceremonial stair, Ou Raadsaal on Church Square, Pretoria, completed after 1889 (photograph by the author).

Monumental stairs linking city spaces

The Scalinata della Trinità dei Monte, called the Spanish Steps, in Rome is the most renowned open-air stair, a testimony to the of elegance of Rococo Rome (figure 19). It was designed by Allesandro Specchi (1668-1729) and Francesco de'Santis (1679-1731) and constructed from 1723-26.[5] Its main function is to link the Piazza dei Spagna with the church of SS. Trinità dei Monte (built in 1459; facade by Domenico Fontana in 1595).[6]

The steps consists of 135 steps, made up of multiples of three, which number symbolises the Trinity to which the church on the upper level of the Piazza della SS Trinità is dedicated. It is a symmetrical, albeit irregular, cut stone structure, consisting of changing shapes that open many vistas to a person who has multiple choices of the pathway up and the pathway down, which directions are not visually identical, but offer (figures 20a and b). At the level of the lower piazza the stair starts with three steps and proceeds to a stretch of three parallel flights of twelve steps, proceeding to a convex section in which the steps divide into opposite directions, linked again after a landing in a concave section, after which there is another separation, forming two separate convex stairs that reach the upper piazza.[7] This is an unprecedented stair and Bruno Zevi (1978: 208) refers to it as "An extraordinary, antiperspective invention...".

The design ingenuity manifest in the structure and shape of the Spanish Steps entices pedestrians to pleasurable movement, as Lotz (1969: 41) attests: "Ihre Stufen, Absätze und Läufe machen den Aufstieg leicht und bequem" (figure 21). Not only does it fulfill its function superbly, it is one of the most splendid architectural displays in a cityscape. Paul Zucker (1955: 16) describes the integration of stair and piazza as a unique spatial and visual experience that "represent the climax of stage effects in Roman city planning on a larger scale".

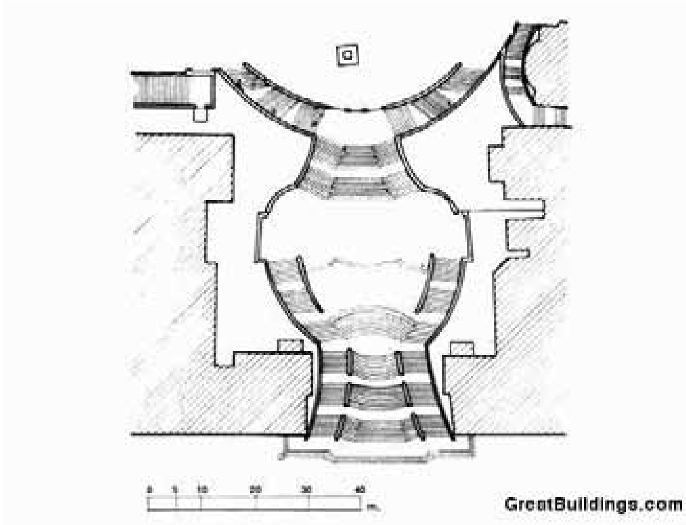

Figure 19
Plan of the Spanish Steps, Rome, designed by Allesandro Specchi and Francesco de'Santis, constructed from 1721-25 (source: http//www.google.zo.za/search?q=spanish+steps).

Figure 20a
Aerial view of the Spanish Steps, Rome (source: http//www.google.zo.za/search?q=spanish+steps).

Figure 20b
View of the Spanish Steps, Rome, decorated with azaleas in May (photograph by the author).

Figure 21
Spanish Steps, detail of steps constructed of cut stone (photograph by the author).

In modern cities lower and higher geographical areas are often linked by means of stairs where a street would be impractical, for example the renowned Primorsky Stair, better known as the Potemkin Stair,[8] in Odessa, Ukraine. It was designed in 1825 by Francesco Boffo who worked for a St Petersburg firm, and constructed between 1837 and 1841 by John Upton, a British engineer (figure 22). The initial 200 steps, of which only 196 remain, connect the Odessa harbour with the city that is situated on a high plateau. This stair is not particularly artistic, even though it has some built-in optical illusions. A person looking down the stair sees only the landings, but a person looking up sees only the steps. The stair is 27 metres high, but extends for 142 metres. A century after the Spanish Stair the designer reinvented perspective, albeit a built-in false perspective, caused by the fact that the bottom step is 31,7 metres wide and the top step is 12,5 metres wide. Once again, the way up and the way down are not visually the same.

Figure 22
Francesco Boffo (architect) and John Upton (engineer),
Potemkin Stair, Odessa, Ukraine, constructed from 1837-41
(source: https://www.google.co.za/search?q=potemkin+stair).

Turning movement: spiral and helical stairs

A discussion of winding stairs should start with the mention of the one that spirals up the interior of Trajan's Column on Trajan's Forum in Rome, a monument completed in 113 ACE, that still testifies to the greatness of Imperial Rome (figure 23). Designed by Apollodorus of Damascus (*circa* 50-130 CE), the column, placed on a 6,3 metre high square plinth, with an interior space intended to hold Emperor Trajan's (98-117 CE) ashes, reaches up to a height of 34,4 metres. It is topped by a gilded sculpture of the emperor standing on an almost five metres high circular pedestal that is placed on the viewing platform. The exterior surface of the column shaft is covered by a spiralling band of relief sculpture, recounting his victories in the Dacian Wars (101-2 and 106-6 ACE) in a realistic manner. The continuous exterior sculptural spiral band has a counterpart on the inside in the form of an interior stair which is a great engineering feet (figure 24). Its 185 steps are carved with great precision from solid marble drums from Luna (a site close to Carrara), each weighing 32 tons. This stair affords a climbing experience within the length of the column shaft that involves a long, twisting ascent, punctuated only by rectangles of light from which only the sky is visible. On reaching the viewing platform wide vistas of Rome open to the spectator. Higher up the glittering sculpture of Trajan was the highest element in Rome, befitting a ruler whose divinity was undisputed.

Since it is difficult to see the rising exterior sculptures from the ground, the real purpose of the column, might have been the ascent to the viewing tower from which vantage point the newly constructed market of Trajan, excavated into the Quirinal Hills, is viewed directly below.

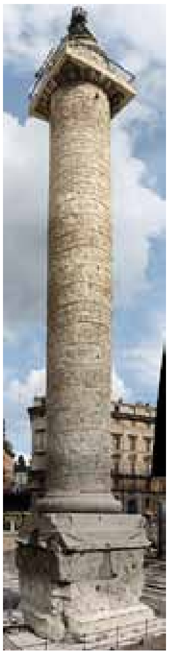

Figure 23
Trajans Column, Trajan's Forum, Rome, completed in 113 CE
(source: http://en.wikipwdia/wiki/Trajans_Column).

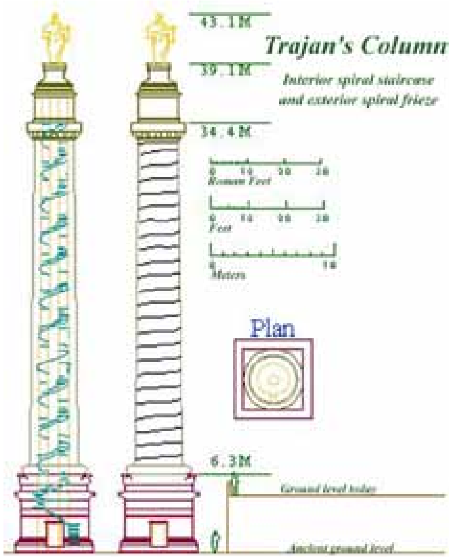

Figure 24
Diagrammatic representation of the interior stair of Trajan’s Column, Rome (source: www.mmdtkw.org).

An exemplary medieval spiralling stair is that of the Leaning Tower of Pisa (built from 1173-1319). The 296 well worn stone steps winding around the interior of the *campanile* has broad treads and relatively low risers (figure 25). Why would the Church build such an elaborate bell tower adjacent to the cathedral, requiring an exorbitant amount of material and thousands of skilled labourers? The answer is: to be visible and audible to the faithful.

Figure 25
Interior stair, Leaning Tower of Pisa, built from 1172-1319 (photograph by the author).

On the outskirts of Venice a small palace is given a special status with an exterior stair (figure 26). This palace is called Palazzo Contarini del Bovolo, because of the snaillike shape of the stair. The palace was designed by Giovanni Candi (1440-1506), but the stair that gives the building its distinctive character is attributed to Giorgio Spavento di Pietro (1440-1509).

Figure 26
Giovanni Candi and Giorgio Spavento di Pietro Palazzo Contarini del Bovolo, Venice, built from 1499 (photograph by the author).

Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) was a versatile inventor and empirical researcher of natural phenomena, including human anatomy. He also made sketches of kinetic movement showing the human figure in the act of climbing upwards as well as a figure at the top of a ladder.[9] He furthermore made sketches of stairs, among which is one of a crossed stair, a sketch that is of importance for the investigation of stairs attributed to him (figure 27).

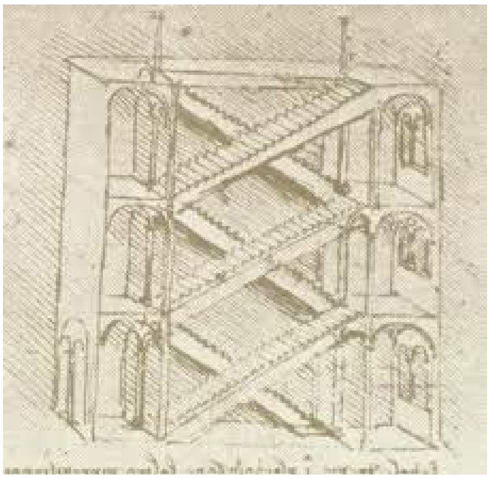

Figure 27
Leonardo da Vinci, sketch of a crossed stair, Manuscript B, 68v (source: http://www.leonardo3.net/leonardo/machines_eng.php).

It has been suggested that Leonardo may have designed the Château de Chambord in the Loire Valley for Francis I, since the structure of the remarkable double spiral stair at its centre points to an extraordinary architect (figures 28a, b and c).[10] What in Leonardo's oeuvre would make it plausible to ascribe the design of the double or crossed spiral stairs to him? Perhaps the idea phrased by Martin Kemp (2006: 176) that, in Leonardo's estimation, the principle that informs the work of the human designer is "to work in perfect concord with natural cause and effect [...]". Defining a spiral stair calls to mind a growth pattern, as described by (Hemenway 2008:139): "As a spiral progresses up a stem a certain number of leaves are formed before the spiral arrives back at a point directly above where the first leaf has emerged and creates another leaf. The relationship of the number of turns a spiral makes to the number of leaves that emerge can be written as a fraction and is called ranking." The spiral represents a growth pattern that can be rendered in precise mathematical terms and applied to a stair that winds around a central supporting column. The crossed spiral stair is an innovative construction since its two spiral flights wind in opposite directions, as in the case of the crossed stair above (figure 29). In Chambord that would have made it functionally possible for the king and the members of his household to use different stairs in the same space without encountering each other.

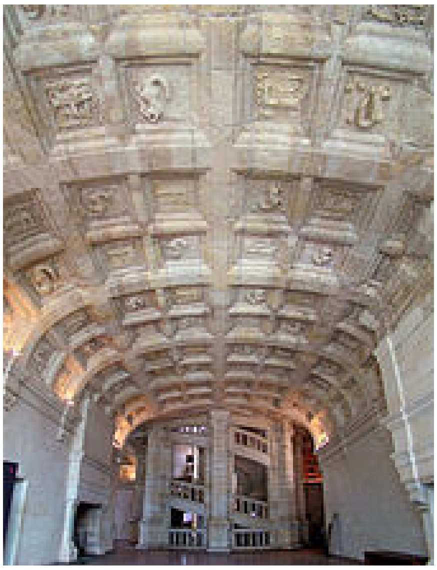

Figure 28a
Attributed to Leonardo da Vinci, interior view of the double spiral stair, Château de Chambord, 1519-47 (photograph by the author).

Figure 28b
Attributed to Leonardo da Vinci, view of the double spiral stair from below, Château de Chambord (photograph by the author).

Figure 28c
Attributed to Leonardo da Vinci, view of the double spiral stair from outside, Château de Chambord (photograph by the author).

Figure 29
Diagrammatic model of the crossed double stair of the Château de Chambord (source: http://www.leonardo3.net/leonardo/machines_eng.php)

The exterior spiral stair at the Château de Blois, rebuilt by Francis I from 1515-19, is also attributed to Leonardo since its mathematical calculation of a spiral growth pattern structure once again points to an extraordinary architect (figure 30).[11] This stair enhances the facade of the castle and makes the interior spatial design intelligible from the outside.

Figure 30
Attributed to Leonardo da Vinci, external spiral stair, Château de Blois, rebuilt by Francis I from 1515-19 (photograph: the author).

A helicoidal stair

This stair is a remarkable element in the Palazzo Barberini, Rome, that at present houses the Galleria Nazionale dArte Antica, Rome. The site in Rione Trevi was purchased by Maffeo Barberini who became Pope Urban VIII. Three great architects were commissioned to design the Palazzo, Carlo Maderno (1556-1629), assisted by his nephew Francesco Borromini (1599-1667), and Gianlorenzo Bernini (1598-1680). The work that Maderno started in 1627 was finished by Bernini in 1633.

After the death of Maderno Borromini collaborated with Bernini as the appointed architect. However, Borromini left his mark on the building in the form of a stair that leads from the central two-story hall to the *piano nobile*. This small stair, called the *scala elicoidale* (helicoidal stair), is a work of genius (figures 31a and b). It is similar to a spiral stair, but elliptical and has no central support.[12]

Figure 31a
Francesco Borromini, helicoidal stair from below, Palazzo Barberini, Rome, completed 1633 (source: http:en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palazzo_Barberini).

Figure 31b
Francesco Borromini, helicoidal stair from above, Palazzo Barberini, Rome, completed 1633 (source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Borromini-treppe).

On the other side of the great hall Bernini's winding stair is on a square plan with a less complicated winding form (figure 32).

Figure 32
Gianlorenzo Bernini, stair from below, Palazzo Barberini, Rome, completed 1633 (source: http:en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palazzo_Barberini).

The symbolism of the winding stair

In a painting, entitled *Philosopher in Meditation*, Rembrandt Hermanzoon van Rijn (1606-1669) depicts an elderly man seated at a window, with to his left a stair, winding from a patch of light on the floor into a dark space above (figure 33). Seemingly the stair symbolises the ascent of the man's thoughts, from the known to the unknown, since in the case of a turning stair the destination above is not visible. Enhanced by the chiaroscuro effects Rembrandt's rending of the winding stair refers to a complex artefact with a symbolic purpose.

Figure 33
Rembrandt, *Philosopher in Meditation,* 1632, oil on oak panel. 28x34 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris (source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosopher_in_Meditation).

A sculptural stair

The Biblioteca Laurenziana in the Monastery of San Lorenzo, Florence, was designed by Michelangelo Buonnarotti (1475-1564) in 1523 for Guilio Medici (later Pope Clement VII) to house his collection of manuscripts and printed books. Work commenced in 1524, was only completed in 1560 by Bartolommeo Ammanati according to Michelangelo's plan.[13] It consists of a double volume vestibule with a centrally placed free-standing triple stair evolved in April 1525, the middle one projecting beyond the sides, leading to a longitudinal reading room on an upper level (figure 34).[14] More so than Michelangelo's other works it difficult to interpret stylistically; it has a quality that was referred to as *difficoltà* by his contemporaries. The massive stair occupying a restricted floor space is an enigma. It has the appearance of a sculptural object placed centrally in the high, confined vestibule space, leading to the longitudinal library space on a higher level. The central steps are rounded, bulging towards the visitor on ground level; the flight then continues in an irregular series of seven and five, while the steps of the symmetrical flights abutting on both sides are straight and joins up with the last five steps of the central flight. These side stairs are especially uninviting and dangerous looking without outside balustrades.

Figure 34
Michelangelo Buonnarotti, stair in the vestibule of the Laurentian Library, Florence, started in 1524 and completed in 1560
(source: http://www.atttav.com/florence/laurentian-library).

According to Charles de Tolnay (1975: 135), "instead of indicating an upward direction, [it] seems in the centre to run down and spread like a cascade of lava, contained only by the secondary stairs on either side". It links the vestibule space into a field of forces in which the architectural elements defining the wall – the volutes, double columns, and architrave – seem to act independently, contrary to their traditional architectural function. The strangeness of the vestibule design is explained by De Tolnay (1975: 135): "This architecture is not in proportion to man and is not made for him. It has independent dimensions and carries within itself a peculiar and more powerful life. It is the spiritual preparation for entrance to the reading room."

James S. Ackerman (1961: 117) has a further interpretation: "To anyone familiar with Michelangelo's sculpture it should be no surprise to find the evocation of compression and frustration in his architecture as well. Here, in an enclosed space [the vestibule], he had the opportunity to engender in the visitor the ambivalence between action and immobility which we imagine his *Moses*, for example, to be experiencing." Even if not refuting Ackerman's insight, it is proposed that a more meaningful interpretation of Michelangelo's design could be opened by comparing it to his slave figures, especially the so-called *Awakening Slave* (figure 35), an unfinished sculpture intended for the tomb of Pope Julius II. It represents the human body as composed of inert matter against which an inherent spiritual force strives for release. Likewise, the stair leading to the Laurentian Library is made to appear heavy and sagging downward. Upward movement to the library on the first floor will afford the spiritual release. It is indeed "the spiritual preparation for entrance to the reading room", as De Tolnay states.

Figure 35
Michelangelo, *Awakening Slave*, Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence, 1525-30, marble, 2,76 high (photograph by the author).

Going to the opera

There is a vast difference between going to the opera and going to a library. "Going to the opera" implies a leisurely *passegata* to view the other guests and enjoy the surroundings, especially when ascending by means of a ceremonial stair in a vast foyer. This should not be a case of *gradus at Parnassum*, implying that the path to Parnassus, that is to learning or the practice and understanding of art, is arduous. Unlike the effect of the stair in the vestibule of the Laurentian Library, the ceremonial stair in the Palais Garnier, housing the Opera de Paris, seems to diminish gravitational heaviness and affords the ascending visitor a visual experience of the opulent design as a counterpart of the expected music in the hall (figure 36).

There is a long time interval between Michelangelo's stair in the cramped foyer of the Laurentian Library and that in the Opera de Paris, by Jean-Louis Charles Garnier (1825-1898), which was inaugurated in 1875. In the design of the grand stair in the Second Empire style[15] the architect expressed the insight visually that the path to pleasurable entertainment like opera is light. He sublimated the heaviness of stone, masonry and iron of which the stair is constructed in the way it sweeps up gracefully from the foyer to the hall, affording the ascending guests in their evening dresses an opportunity to show off their status.

Figure 36
Jean-Louis Charles Garnier, ceremonial stair, Opera de Paris, inaugurated in 1875 (photograph by the author).

Postscript

The end of the nineteenth century concludes the era of stairs built in stone, masonry, timber and iron. A new era of design was inaugurated in the twentieth-century by means of new structural materials such as concrete and aluminium. Consequently the design of stairs meant for display changed – as will be discussed in the second part of this research to be published in a later issue of this journal.

Notes

1 Quoted from: http://www.brainyquotes.com/authors/h/heraclitus.html.

2 See "The characteristics of stair falls and injuries", in Templer (1992).

3 See Venturi (1966).

4 For further information about ziggurats, see Gill (2011: 42).

5 For a synopsis of the history and form of the stair, see Norberg-Schulz (1980: 28).

6 It is probable that a sketch by Gianlorenzo Bernini (1598-1680) showing the *Scalinata di piazza di Spagna* in the Nationalmuseum, Stockholm (CC 790) "deeply affected the eventual appearance of the Spanish Steps..." (Marder 1980: 289).

7 For a full description of the stair, its symbolism and history, see Lotz (1969).

8 The Odessa stair was made famous in Sergei Eisenstein's 1925 silent film, *The Battleship Potemkin*. According to the fictionalised account in the film soldiers opened fire on the people on the stair on June 1905.

9 This sketch is housed in the Royal Library, Windsor.

10 For an overwiew of the work, see De Tolnay (1975: 227).

11 Leonardo illustrated his skill in designing double stairs with square plans (Manuscript B, folio 68 *verso*, and Manuscript B, folio 47 *recto*), and also a double spiral stair on a circular plan (Manuscript B, folio 69 *recto*).

12 Tanaka (1992: 85).

13 For an overview of the progressive stages of the design of Michelangelo's Laurentian stair, see Wittkower (1978: 26-43).

14 A helicoid, defined as follows: "The (circular) helicoid is the minimal surface having a (circular) helix as boundary. It is the only ruled minimal other than the plane... . [...] The helicoid is the only non-rotary surface which can glide along itself..." (quoted from Weisstein 2013: 1). Borromini's stair obviously has no relationship to a helicoid which is shaped like Archimedes's screw.

15 The Second Empire style is a decorative mixture of neo-Renaissance and neo-Baroque styles, combined with Beaux-Arts symmetry. For a detailed description of the construction and style of Garnier's Paris Opera see (Mead 1991).

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Material, Motif and Memory

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Gottfried Semper's contribution to modern (and contemporary) architecture has been inadequately explored. This is unfortunate, because Semper's ideas on materiality and 'artistic appearance' (Semper 1989: 190) provide – or so it will be argued – a concept that moves between material 'honesty' (that is associated with Modernism), and the arbitrary application of styles and symbols (that is associated with Post-modernism). Unfortunately, the somewhat detailed, and at times fragmented, nature of Semper's thought has lent itself to the misinterpretation that he was, tectonically speaking, a 'materialist' – which is not the case. This paper presents a theoretical reconstruction of Semper's primary thesis regarding the role of artistic motifs in the process of material transformation (*stoffwechsel*), through which materials are linked to metaphor and to tectonic memory. The paper extends these ideas via a conversation with Richard Wollheim (1987) and Arthur Danto (1981), and finally returns to the question of Modern versus Post-modern representation. The paper concludes that *material metaphor* (as derived from Semper) is cogent for architecture in that it supports a liberal imagination, and a mode of representation that is mediated by histories of material/tectonic culture.
Key Words: Gottfried Semper, material, motif, tectonic memory

Izonto zokwakha, Umsebenzi kaGottfried Semper, Ushintjo Olukhulu Alwenza
Sekusobala ukuthi umsebenzi waGottfiried Semper awenzele umphakathi webadwebi bezindlu awukavezwa ngendlela efanele. Ngaloku kwabaningi uSemper ungumuntu othatheleka phansi yize efake igalelo ngekusebenzisa izitayela nemfanekiso ejulile ekwakheni izindlu. Ngenca yokuthi ungumuntu obengazichayisi ekuhlanganisebi izinto zekwakha kanye nemfanikiso, abaningi ababhali bamazi njengomuntu obesebenza ngezinto zokwakha kuphela. Leliphepha libheka umsebenti ka Semper, inhloso yawo, kanye nendlela abekasebenzisa ngayo izitayela nemfanekiso kuze izakhiwo zakhe zivele zinobuchwephesha. Leliphepha lihlahla indlela yokubona umsebenzi ka Semper kabusha, liphinde libukeze loku mayelana nemisebenti ka Richard Wollheim (1987) no Arthur Danto (1981) abebagcule ezindleleni zokwakha zesimanjemaje kanye nalezo ezifaka izinhlanga ezihlukahlukene. Leliphepha libhalwe kuze libeke ebaleni ukuthi ukusebenzisa izitayela zika Semper kanye nemifanekiso yakhe kuvula izindlela eziningi nezinobuchwephesha ekwakheni izindlu.
Amagama Amucoka: uGottfried Semper, Izonto zokwakha, Umsebenzi wakhe, Ushintjo Olukhulu Alwenza

[E]ven the question of material is secondary" – Gottfried Semper (Podro 1982: 54)

Gottfried Semper's (1803-1879) (figure 1) influence on the history of modern architecture is somewhat difficult to ascertain. Born in Germany (most likely in Hamburg) in November 1803, Semper was a child of the "revolutionary age" (Mallgrave 1996).[1] The philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche and composer Richard Wagner were amongst his personal friends and artistic peers (Mallgrave 1996: Semper 1989). Influential in his own day, Semper made a significant contribution to 19th century design and aesthetics, and especially so for theorising the significance of tectonics in the historical development of architecture. In his celebrated book, *The Critical Historians of Art*, Podro insightfully situates Semper's work within the trajectory of German historicist aesthetics: Kant, Schiller, Hegel, Rumohr, Schnaase, Semper, Goller, Riegl, Wollffin, Springer, Warburg and Panofsky (Podro 1982). In his account, Semper is shown to have a complex and interesting relation within this tradition, as Podro explains.

> Semper provided the basis of a systematic treatment of art history […] He explored the way visual artists, in particular architects, took structural features like the plaited twigs of primitive buildings or the woven threads of textiles, and exploited their potential for pattern making, and how they transformed such motifs to different materials, in this way generating architectural metaphors (Podro 1982: xxiii).

This paper argues that Semper's work opens fruitful avenues of enquiry that allow one to squeeze between contemporary re-appropriations of Modernism on the one hand, and Post-modern critiques of the early Modern Movement on the other – with unique insights into crucial questions of materiality and tectonics that form the central line of his enquiry. In this respect, Semper's legacy has a complex, and possible inadequately explained relation with Modern design. On the one hand, for example, we may note his firm disagreement with the 'materialists' of his day, theorists who wished to derive an architectural rationalism from the inherent logic of building materials and construction. The contemporaneous theories of Viollet-Le-Duc (1814-1879) offer, to be sure, the most advanced expression of this functionalist materialism, derived in this case from Viollet-Le-Duc's study of Gothic building structures (figure 2).[2] Viollet-Le-Duc's work is commonly understood to be a theoretical pre-cursor to the functionalism of the Modern Movement, and there is, arguably, but a small interval between Viollet-Le-Duc's structural rationalism and the functionalist minimalism of the Modern Movement. Mies van der Rohe's Farnsworth house (figure 3), for example, is an architecture derived from the 'honest' expression of materials, and the pure order of structure. Semper took exception to the rationalist tendency of his day, arguing that,

> [t]he materialists can be criticized in general for having fettered the idea too much to the material, for falsely believing that the store of architectural forms is determined solely by the structural and material conditions, and that only these supply the means for further development […] it is not absolutely necessary that the material as such becomes an additional factor in the artistic appearance (Semper 1989: 190).

It may on the other hand be argued that Semper's preoccupation with drapery, or what might be termed the dressing of space – as the leading principle of architectural expression, and how this ought to be distinguished from the load bearing requirement of structural support – provides a crucial step toward the duplicity of structure and skin that subsequently would became a *leitmotif* of Modernist design principles – a distinction to which we shall return in more detail. An important instance thereof is Le Corbusier whose sketches, that accompany his 'five points of the new architecture' (Le Corbusier 1937: 129), show the architectonic implication of grid frame construction, with walls conceived as skin that are emancipated from load bearing constraints – in other words a conception of the wall as pure, spatial envelope (figure 4). Relating Le Corbusier's Purist paintings to his early Villas (figure 5), demonstrates this elaboration of space via free envelope. Yet this connection with Modernism does not fully capture the spirit of Semper's thought, for Semper interprets the surface of walls in a more metaphorical sense: one that is enriched by the memory of tectonic content, rather than what was the case with Modernism where surfaces are rendered through somewhat naked abstraction, and with respect to the ideal of the machine.

Podro and Mallgrave alike have noted the influence that the French zoologist Georges Cuvier had on Semper's approach to the classification of craft and decorative motifs, although Semper orientates his system of classification toward a different end (Podro 1982, Mallgrave 1996). His book *Style in the Tectonic Arts of* 1860 (*Style*), possesses a somewhat fragmented and descriptive character, which has led some readers to misread the true orientation of Semper's thought (Semper 1989). *Style*, notes Mallgrave, is a "[…] difficult, if not an altogether obtuse text to penetrate."(Mallgrave 1996: 277). This fact has led to the, "[…] view widely attributed to him [… that] architecture is the product of material, function and technique" (Podro 1982: 44). As Podro makes clear, Semper never held this view. A 'materialist' misreading of Semper, Herrman observes (1984), emerges from the complex task Semper had set for himself in his book *Style*, where the techniques of the textile arts – namely knotting, stitching, plaiting, braiding, matting, weaving, embroidery, dying, printing, draping, etc – are distinguished and studied in significant detail, and where decorative motifs are attributed to each. This approach was derived from the "[…] task he set himself […] to trace the way back to the archetypes [i.e material processes and craft]" (Herrman 1984: 121), but this intention did not mean to say that the influence of craft was strictly deterministic for architecture, or that other more liberal aspects of architectural imagination should be ignored. Accordingly, in *Style*, Semper writes,

> Every artistic production on the one side, and all enjoyment of art on the other, presupposes a certain temper of carnival, to express it in modern terms – the carnival half-light is the true atmosphere of art. The denial of reality is necessary where the form, as a symbol charged with significance, is to emerge as the self-contained human creation. (Podro 1982: 49)

In presenting Semper's account of materiality, it is necessary then to study his ideas in a synchronic (rather than diachronic) fashion, selecting and assembling his somewhat fragmented contributions into a single, coherent form, one that may be extended and developed through conversation with more contemporary theories on the role of metaphor and artistic representation – via Richard Wollheim (1987) and Arthur Danto (1982).

Materials used formatively

In section 61 of *Style,* headed *Materials Used Formatively* (Semper 1989), Semper provides a helpful, if not slightly cryptic, synopsis, of his primary thesis regarding the formative role of craft and materiality in architectural design. The passage shows a rare condensation of his argument, and is worth quoting in full.

> Every material conditions its own particular manner of formation by the properties that distinguish it from other materials and that demand a technical treatment appropriate to it. When an artistic motive has been subjected to any kind of material treatment, its primitive type will be modified, having acquired a definite tone as it were. The type no longer rests in its primary stage of development, but has passed through a more or less distinct metamorphosis. When from this secondary or, according to the circumstances, variously graduated modification the motive now comes into a new material transformation (*stoffwechsel*), the form emerging from it will be a mixed result, one that expresses its primordial type (*Urtypus*) and all stages of modification that preceded the last formation (Semper 1989: 258 -259).

In this passage Semper puts forward three distinct propositions that may be reformulated as follows.

First, that there is a logical, or 'rational' relation between the inherent character of specific materials, and the techniques that are suited to them, or at least historically connected to the formation of these materials. This means, in effect, that materials arrive pre-associated with techniques and types of formation, and that this fact constitutes a certain 'determinate' domain within the processes of creative formation.

Second, that the precise manner in which materials are historically related to techniques, allows for the emergence of patterns of formation, or types, or motifs. Once established, these motifs develop a life of their own, and a 'metamorphosis' now occurs, where materiality and technique give birth to figuration – that is the early emergence of artistic representation, in the form of decoration, patterns and arrangements. Building upon Semper's insights, we might argue that this metamorphosis is a pre-condition for achieving architectural representation in the fullest sense of the word. Note that Semper does not, here, explain the significance of the 'primitive type' and the 'primordial type (*Urtypus*)' he alludes to – and we shall have cause to speculate on this in due course.

Finally, and most significantly, Semper highlights the fact that these artistic motifs are later rendered via different building materials, and in so doing leave behind the former determinate relation of materiality with technique. The transformation that occurs when motifs jump from one material to another, highlights the status of the motif as motif (rather than the motif tied to material), and produces a mixed effect – something new, yet with a memory of what was before. Once again, building upon Semper's insight, we might argue that this motion brings to fullness the possibility of architectural representation, imagined here via the lens of a *metaphoric memory*.

Let's follow this three-stage process in more detail, by cross connecting and interpreting Semper's most important theoretical works, *The Four Elements of Architecture: A Comparative Study of Architecture* of 1851 (*Four Elements,* in Semper 1989), and *Style in the Tectonic Arts of* 1860 (*Style,* in Semper 1989) .

Material and technique

In *Four Elements*, Semper famously designates what he deemed to be the four primary components of architecture, namely the hearth which is the 'moral' or central element, around which, "[…] were grouped the three other elements: the *roof*, the *enclosure*, and the *mound* […] " (Semper 1989: 102) – he appears to mean center, roof, enclosure and floor. And it is well known that he links various technical crafts to the materials that were initially used in the construction of each, hence in early times:

> […] the different technical skills of man became organized according to these elements: *ceramics* and after metal works around the *hearth*, *water* and *masonry works* around the *mound*, *carpentry* around the *roof* and its accessories.
>
> But what primitive technique evolved from the *enclosure*? None other than the art of the *wall fitter* (*Wandbereiter*), that is, the weaver of mats and carpets (Semper 1989: 103).

It matters little, for our purpose, as to whether this description is correct or not. Rather, what *is* important here is to note that Semper associates masonry with the hearth and not with the act of enclosure. What we ordinarily call the 'walling' of enclosure is associated with carpets – in terms of our 'common sense' understanding of the way architecture defines space, Semper has, in effect, substituted walls for carpets. Indeed, the simplest way to paraphrase Semper, is perhaps, to say that drapery both textures and folds space. Semperian aesthetics develops from this simple, yet I hope to show profound, imagination – what if one were to imagine spaces draped upon and clothed by textiles/carpets, surely such would differ from an architecture derived from the solidity of walls? But we are running ahead of ourselves.

The taxonomy of *Four Elements* is further developed in *Style*, where Semper provides a detailed discussion of the textile arts – materials such as yarn, straps, mats, wickerwork, felt, woven fabrics, embroidered cloth, carpets and clothes (figure 6), as well as the manufacturing techniques associated with each, twisting, knotting, stitching, plaiting, braiding, weaving, embroidering, dyeing and printing (figure 7). In each case Semper carefully describes how manufacturing techniques combine in the formation of various textiles, and how the nature of each is used to produce these. For example when discussing bobbin lace (figure 7, center bottom) Semper explains that the creative process requires, "[…] a mixture of weaving, twisting, and plaiting. The designs of most types are produced by an interlacing of threads, as is done in the weaving of linen cloth (Semper 1989: 222)."

The emergence of motif

At the next stage of elaboration, it is Semper's view that manufacturing techniques in turn allow for the emergence of various decorative motifs, or formal types, and the art of fabric design develops from these. When discussing the unique decorative quality of plaited covers, for example, Semper explains that,

> [...] the cord elements out of which they are fashioned do not necessarily have to intersect at right angles, as is imposed by weaving, but cords running diagonally and in any direction can be interwoven into the texture. *This advantage of plaiting should be maintained in every way, made apparent, and be stressed by its characteristic feature* (Semper 1989: 224).

This act of stressing the 'characteristic feature' of plaiting brings the quality of the decorative and artistic motifs to life. For which reason, Podro maintains that, "[…] it is not with technique as such that Semper was concerned but with the way in which a technique could become part of a design, the way objects may become 'self-illuminating symbols'[…]" (Podro 1982: 46). Or to put this another way, the emergence of decorative style is initially advanced by motifs that "[…] draw attention to the procedure of their own construction." (Podro 1982: 46) In this, the emergence of tectonic design showcases what we might term a somewhat literal order of representation – where materiality is made to dramatize itself; a figure where representation is *folded-in* upon itself.

Semper also notes that, "[w]hen an artistic motive has been subjected to any kind of material treatment, its primitive type will be modified […] ", to which he later adds '[…] expresses its primordial type (*Urtypus*)" (Semper 1989: 258). What are the 'primitive type' and 'primordial type (*Urtypus*)'? Semper does not explain, but perhaps we might interpret the primitive type to be the earlier formation – that is, the earliest decorative pattern, because, obviously, once a pattern or motif is established, it will be repeated and modified. The primordial type (*Urtypus*), however, might be interpreted as something more primary. Perhaps we might relate *Urtypus* to Semper's philosophical conception of artistic creation. In the Prolegomenon to *Style,* Semper provides a fascinating explanation for our (human) investment with the more playful and liberal properties of art:

> Surrounded by a world of wonder and forces, whose law man may divine, may want to understand but never decipher, which reaches him only in a few fragmentary harmonies and which suspends his soul in a continuous state of unresolved tension, he himself conjures up the missing perfection in play. He makes himself a tiny world in which the cosmic law is evident within strict limits, yet complete in itself and perfect in this respect; in such play man satisfies his cosmogonic instinct (Semper 1989: 196).

Artistic expression is accordingly, founded upon a primary substitution – a small and finely crafted miniature that stands in for that which is lacking – for what is ultimately unattainable in the world. In Semper, therefore, we might interpret this to be the 'primordial type (*Urtypus*)', from which the manifold wonder of architectural creation unfolds. And hence, when discussing the simplest and most basic technique of joining yarn, Semper writes, "[t]he knot is perhaps the oldest technical symbol and, as I have shown, the expression of the earliest cosmogonic ideas that arose among nations" (Semper 1989: 217). Accordingly, fabrication, is, if you will, and in every case, a variation of the knot (figure 8).

Material transformation

Finally, and most crucially, Semper places emphasis upon the phenomenon of '*stoffwechsel*' – or material transformation – where motifs that were derived from a specific material and technique, are later transferred onto another material and hence are applied as decorative and spatial figures (Semper 1989: 258 -259). Semper notes this material substitution produces 'a mixed result' – a combination of old and new (Ibid.). In *Four Elements*, Semper develops this idea in relation to the fourth element of architecture – i.e. spatial enclosure – with his observation that walls are derived from carpets – " […] what primitive technique evolved from the *enclosure*? None other than the art of the *wall fitter* (*Wandbereiter*), that is, the weaver of mats and carpets […] I assert that the carpet wall plays a most important role in the general history of art" (Semper 1989: 103). He continues, "[w]ickerwork, the original space divider, retained the full importance of its earlier meaning, actually or ideally, when later the light mat walls were transformed into clay tile, brick, or stone wall. Wickerwork was the *essence of the wall*" (Semper 1989: 103-4).[3] And, "Hanging carpets remained the true walls, the visible boundaries of space. The often solid walls behind them were necessary for reasons that had nothing to do with the creation of space" (Semper 1989: 104).

Semper supports his assertion – namely, that the essence of the wall is derived from textiles, wickerwork and carpets – by demonstrating that the dressing of walls (i.e. be this via plastering, paneling, painting or cladding, etc.) and decorative patterns commonly applied to walls (be that via patterned tiles, mosaic, decorated stucco, decorative wood paneling, etc.) involve imitation of motifs derived from textiles (figure 9). A careful reading of Semper shows that the metamorphosis of textile to the architectonic expression of enclosure occurs on at least two levels, namely i) that of decoration, and ii) that of drapery. Where the former (decoration) involves the application of various decorative, surface patterns, the latter (drapery) treats the metaphoric concept of wall-as-drapery in a more abstracted and spatialised way.

Regarding i) Semper notes that "[t]he oldest ornaments either derived from entwining or knotting materials or were easily produced on the potter's wheel with the finger on the soft clay" (Semper 1989: 103). He then adds, "[t]he artists who created the painted and sculptured decorations on wood, stucco, fired clay, metal, or stone traditionally though not consciously imitated the colorful embroideries and trellis work of the age-old carpet walls" (Semper 1989: 104) – which is to say, textile patterns are the primary informant of architectural, surface decoration.

Regarding ii) Semper also argues the complimentary view that surface treatment – whether it be overtly 'decorative' or not – is a practice derived from the metaphoric idea of wall-as-carpet; wall-as-drapery. Semper writes, "the oldest substitute [for carpets] was offered by the mason's art, the stucco covering or bitumen plaster" (Semper 1989: 104). He continues, the last "substitute perhaps can be counted [as] the panels of standstone, granite, alabaster and marble that we find in widespread use in Assyria, Persia, Egypt, and even in Greece." (Ibid.)

Material metaphors

In putting our three points back together, we shall now consider an example of what Semper achieves for the interpretation of artistic form. In *Style*, the section titled *The stitch, embroidery* (Semper 1989: 227 – 234), Semper describes two types of stitch that are used in embroidery, these being the 'the flat stitch' and the 'the cross stitch'. A distinction, that leads him to observe that , "[…] a stylistic opposition automatically arises between the *ornamental* character of cross stichwork and the inseparability of the method of the flat stitch from executing *illustrative* themes" (Semper 1989: 229). Semper hereby distinguishes decorative motifs that are derived from the inherent logic of these two types of stichwork – in particular relating Assyrian embroidery to the flat stitch and Egyptian embroidery to the cross stitch. Once established these decorative motifs develop a life of their own and soon cross-pollinate into other materials and methods of making, such that the motifs derived from the craft of embroidery lose their former logic (where form was tied to material and technique) to facilitate what we shall call a *metaphoric relation* to the former material from which they were derived. Semper summarizes his point as follows:

> Egyptian sculpture and painting was an embroidery in cross stitch executed on the walls with all the attributes of the latter's style; the technique of painting and sculpture commonly practiced in Asia since primitive times, on the contrary, is entirely consistent with those styles that belong to flat embroidery" (Semper 1989: 230).

The metaphorical implications of Semper's theory is submitted by Podro (1982) – although not adequately elaborated upon by him – and it must be noted that Semper does not, himself, use the word metaphor, to designate the phenomena he had wished to define. This question of what we shall now term a *material metaphor* – i.e. a metaphoric relation of one material with another – therefore needs to be clarified. Accordingly, the possibility for a *material metaphor*, in Semper, we shall maintain, is facilitated by a precise structure. It is one that we have already outlined in principle, but which may now be restated in a more succinct and logical form. Returning to our three-part argument, it will be remembered that at the second stage where the motive developed independence as a "self-illuminating symbol" (Podro 1982: 46) we characterized such as 'a figure where representation is *folded-in* upon itself.' In the third and final stage where the motive is transferred to another medium, we might say that the motive is now *folded-out* from itself, losing its literal and determined relation to materiality and craft. Initially the motif is folded-in, then later it is folded-out from itself, with respect to the logic of tectonics and material. The folding-out of the motive brings it into the 'carnival half-life' which Semper, as we have seen, characterizes as the 'true atmosphere of art' (Podro 1982: 49). So the motive, as we have here depicted it, floats between two materials, one old, the other new. The motif mediates, historically, between subsequent materials, and since tied, logically, to the formation of the former, allows the former to be 'seen-in' the presence of the latter.

Podro also submits that Semper relies upon a notion of "interpretive seeing" – the word he ascribes to Semper in this respect is "artistic appearance" (Podro 1982: 49) (Semper 1989: 190). We, surely, need to draw this out. What does it mean to say one can see the former material in the presence of the latter? Richard Wollheim, in his book *Painting as an Art* (1982), develops a notion of interpretive seeing with what he describes as *seeing-in*. Seeing-in is the imaginative ability, innate to all humans, of being able to see one thing in another – for example the ability to see a face in the clouds (figure 10). Wollheim maintains that "[s]eeing-in is a distinct kind of perception [… a] distinctive phenomenological feature I call 'twofoldness'" (1987: 46). He goes on to clarify the fact what is seen (namely the cloud) and what is seen-in (namely the face) are two side of the same perceptual experience – i.e. a double perception or 'twofoldness'. Literally speaking, there obviously is no face in the cloud. And when one sees the face in the cloud then one is in fact also seeing the cloud – there is no possibility of seeing a face in the cloud unless one is looking at the cloud. What one might term the real and imagined sides of the twofold perception are combined in one. As Wollheim maintains,

> [t]hey are two aspects of a single experience, they are not two experiences. They are neither two separate simultaneous experiences, which I must somehow hold in mind at once, nor two separate alternating experiences, between which I oscillate [….] (Wollheim 1987: 46)

Wollheim also maintains that the ability to see-in is one that "[…] precedes representation" (Wollheim 1987: 47). To see a face in a cloud is not as yet to represent something. To paint the surface of a canvas, however, in such a way that one may see-into the paint, to see a face represented there, *this* involves the act of representation. Artistic representation is, therefore, premised upon imaginative perception, the ability to *see-in*.

This imagined relation of one thing with respect to another parallels what Arthur Danto (in *The transfiguration of the Commonplace,* 1981) has designated as the 'question of *aboutness*' – a question which for Danto, ultimately, defines the ontological status of art (Danto 1981: 52).[4] For Danto, metaphor (which, 'roughly' put, places an idea or image in the light of another) dramatises the relation that is involved in the representation – that is the relation of *aboutness,* of one thing or image being about another – and thereby transfigures perception. Regarding visual metaphor, he explains,

> When Napoleon is represented as a Roman emperor, the sculptor is not just representing Napoleon in an antiquated get-up [… but …] Rather the sculptor is anxious to get the viewer to take toward the subject – Napolean – the attitudes appropriate to the more exalted Roman emperors […] (*ibid:* 167).

In other words metaphors – verbal and visual alike – establish an expansion of meaning, whereby metaphoric association doubles-up on top of the literal significance of what is read or seen. The metaphoric structure that is involved, here, it may be argued, parallels what Wollheim has described as the phenomenological feature of 'twofoldness' (Wollheim 1987: 46).[5]

A metaphoric conception of art, or of architecture – after Wollheim and Danto – transcends Semper's more narrow, or specific concern with a transference between subsequent building materials, because the expressive content of metaphor derives from a highly relative relation between words, or images – that is any relation between any images or words may be constitutive of metaphoric expression – which is also to say that metaphoric expression need not be tied to material, or to expressive medium. The notion of metaphoric expression is useful, philosophically speaking because it is supremely flexible. In relating Semperian aesthetics to a more contemporary theory of metaphor, therefore, we can link and expand the theoretical density of Semper's argument, while we perhaps risk losing the specificity of his interest – namely, with meaning derived from materiality and craft, that is, with what we might call *material metaphors*.

Architectural representation

In developing this idea it is perhaps instructive to return to the start of this paper, where it was argued that the contemporary significance of Semper's thought follows from the way he allows us to squeeze between contemporary re-appropriations of Modernism on the one hand, and Post-modern critiques of the early Modern Movement on the other. Robert Venturi, for instance, famously promotes his concept of the decorated shed (figure 11, left) – that is a functionalist shed adorned with advertising. Architectural expression is reduced here to the order of applied image and text, as decorative and signifying content. In this model, expression is derived from the words and images that are applied – be they literal or metaphoric – whilst the material and architectonic disposition of the shed is rendered silent (figure 11, right). Moreover, the relation of architecture to metaphoric expression is somewhat arbitrary. Architectural representation is confined to the order of applied symbol.

On the other hand the notion of metaphoric expression allows us to interpret Modernism's 'pure' use of materials in a mediated sense. Le-Corbusier's "[t]he house is a machine for living in" (Le Corbusier 1931: 4), for example, establishes a metaphoric relation between the house and the machine, through which the house, and the materials from which it is constructed, adopt the aesthetic properties of the 'idea' of a machine – rationalised, streamlined and functional. In this we see – at Villa Savoye for instance (figure 12) – how the building and its naked materiality is rendered metaphoric. The appeal to 'functionalism', in this case, is not literal as one might assume, but rather is evoked via metaphoric relation, one that is largely *ideational* in content and expression – i.e. what gets expressed is the *idea* of the machine. The use of materials at Villa Savoye, although 'honest' and 'literal' in a certain sense, is also intended to be qualified in relation to the *idea* of a machine – which, when interpreted in this fashion, represents a clear departure from Violett-Le-Duc. Depending on how you choose to see it, then, architectural representation is *either* rendered autonomous through naked materiality (in accordance with a line of thought that issues from Violett-Le-Duc), *or*, the representational motivation of materials is, largely, ideational.

In marked contrast to the arbitrary application of symbols (as with Venturi) and the ideational motivation of materials (as with Le Corbusier), we may for instance cite Semper's interesting interpretation of the Greek *situla* vase (figure 13). As Mallgrave notes, "[t]he Egyptian *situla*, or pail, was formed for the purpose of drawing water from the Nile; its raindrop-form, it was presumed, evolved from leather prototypes. It was carried on a yoke, one pail in front and one behind the bearer" (1996: 282-283). Hence for Semper the *situla*, which is made of ceramic, is metaphoric of leather – the raindrop-form, a memory of the deflection of leather when used to carry water. In this case we might say the content of the metaphoric relation, so implied, is primarily material in nature – material rather than ideational[6] – and derived from function and technique. When applied to architecture, the significance this has is that representational content is neither applied arbitrarily nor strictly invented in the ideational sense, but rather derives its referential content from histories of craft and materiality – that is, architecture supports a liberal imagination, and a mode of representation that is mediated by histories of material/tectonic culture.

In concluding, we may now note that Semper wished to proposes two distinct points: i) that material memory, whether intended or not, is a significant phenomenon in the history of architecture, and ii) derived from the first, being that this fact ought to be acknowledged and thereby used as a conscious principle in design – one that Semper thought could safeguard against willfulness and caprice. Our detour through theories of metaphoric expression allows us to concur with the usefulness of the first, but alerts us to the implausible nature of the second – because metaphor is relational, such that the choice of one's relation is what it is, principally a matter of choice. Clearly it is the case that the phenomenon of material memory does occur in the history of architecture – the enduring significance of which would remain open to interpretation. Yet to argue that this phenomenon 'should' inform ones approach to design, is ultimately without normative ground – an 'is' does not necessarily constitute an 'ought'. Having said that, it surely is the case that there are various, and rich instances, where the notion of material metaphor may be used to cogently imagine and to interpret design. The inner reference to a past that the presence of material metaphor/memory maintain, provide an interesting, and supremely architectural way, to create poetic significance. Semperian aesthetics, indeed, allows for the 'carnival half-light' where tradition, materiality, craft and function are artfully mediated.

Figure 1
Gottfried Semper, 1878 (Semper 1989: 264).

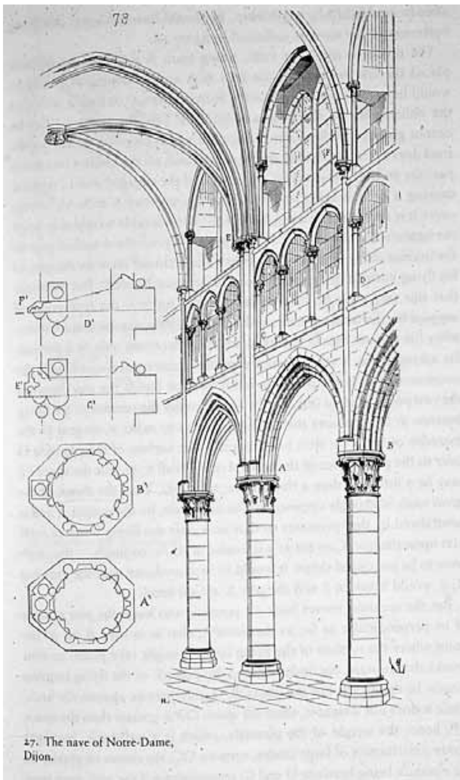

Figure 2
The nave of Notre-Dame, Viollete-Le-Duc (Hearn 1990: 99).

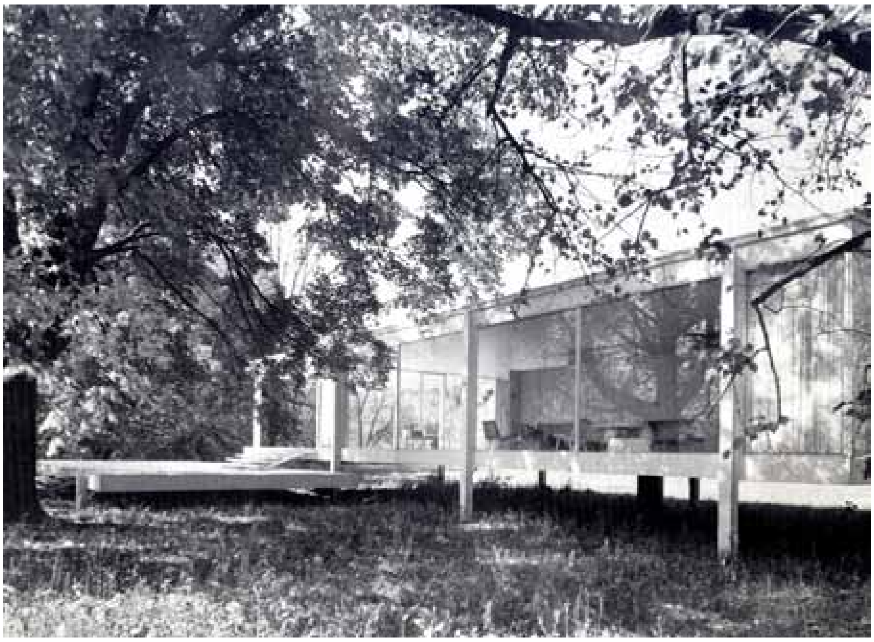

Figure 3
The Farnsworth House, 1951, by Mies van der Rohe (Tegethoff 1981: plate 21: 12).

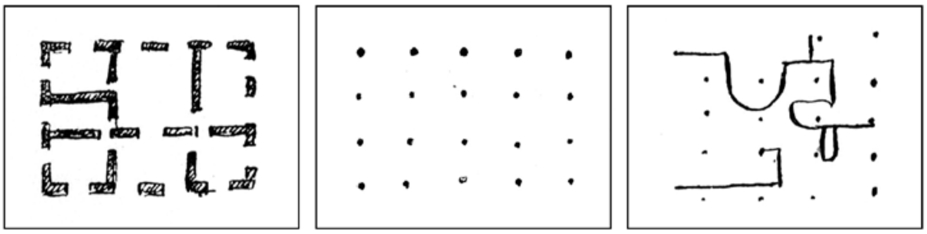

Figure 4
Sketches from ‘Five points of a new architecture’, *Oeuvre Complète 1910-1929* **by Le Corbusier (Le Corbusier 1937: 129).**

Figure 5
Left: Nature morte á la cruche blanche sur fond bleu, 1920, painting by Le Corbusier (Correr 1986: 49)
Right: Villa Stein-De Monzie, 1926-1927, by Le Corbusier (Benton 2007: 175).

Figure 6
Left: Roman silk fabric, from *Style* by Semper, 1860 (Semper 1989: 227)
Right: Tyrolean Feather Embroidery, from *Style* by Semper, 1860 (Semper 1989: 229).

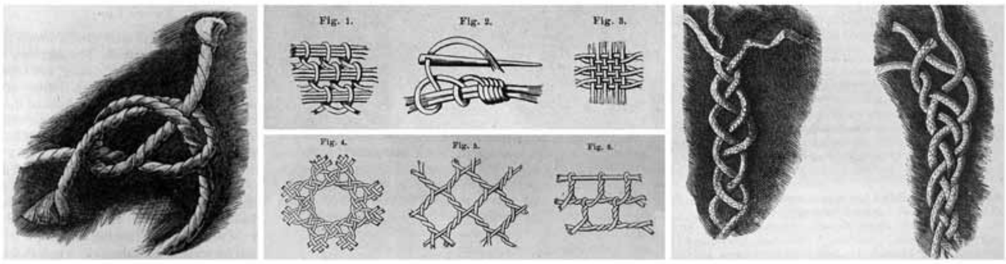

Figure 7
Left to right: knotting, stitching and plaiting, from *Style* by Semper, 1860 (Semper 1989: 218-222)
Center bottom: Bobbin lace, from *Style* by Semper, 1860 (Semper 1989: 223).

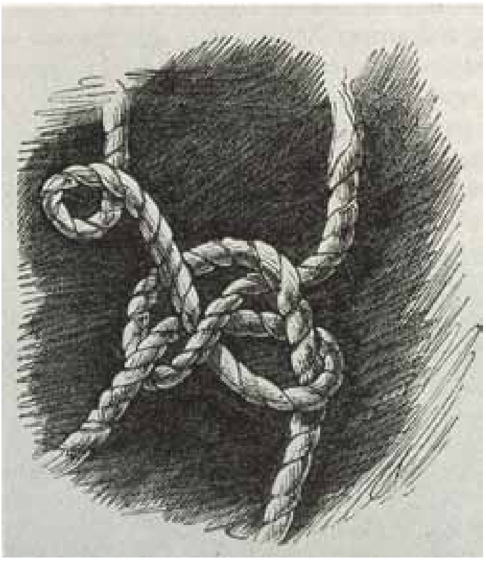

Figure 8
The knot, from *Style* by Semper, 1860 (Semper 1989: 219).

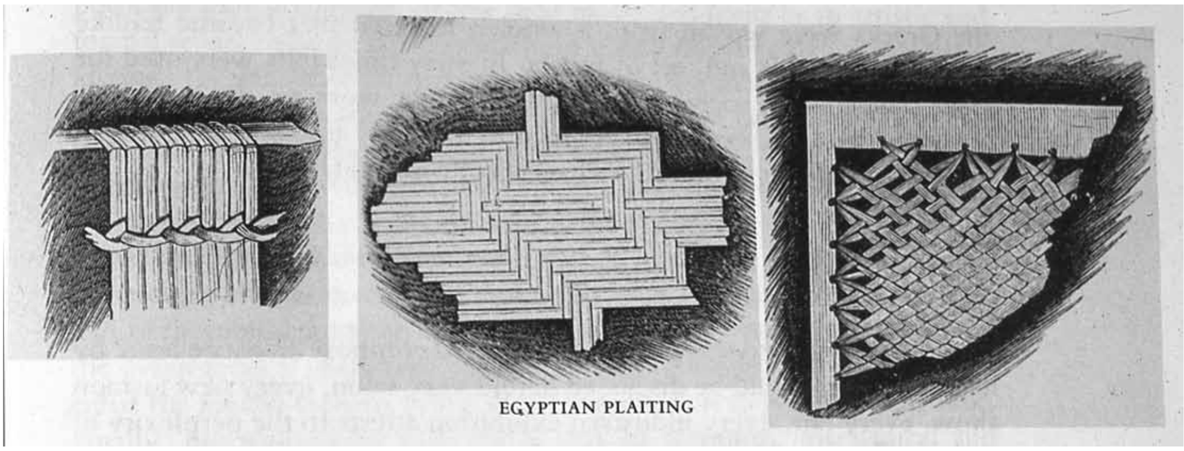

Figure 9
Egyptian wickerwork and decoration derived from plaiting, from *Style* by Semper, 1860 (Semper 1989: 225).

Figure 10
Ellery Lake, Sierra Nevada, photograph by Ansel Adams, 1934 (Wollheim 1987: 48).

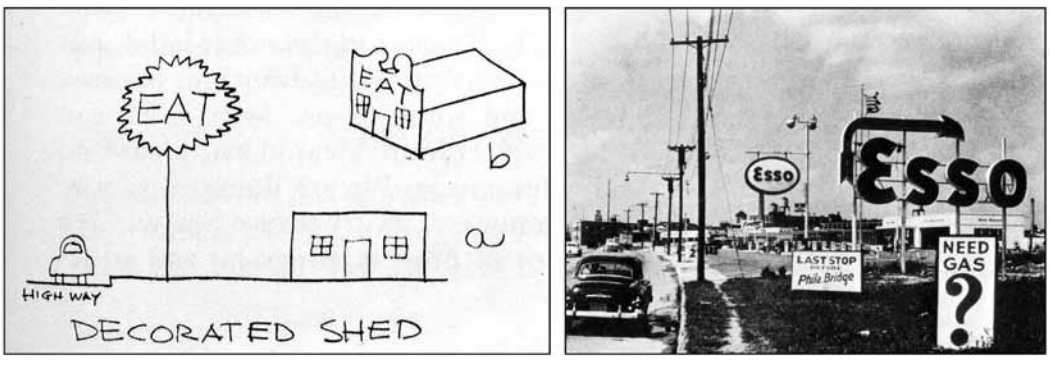

Figure 11
Left: Decorated Shed, Robert Venturi et al. (Venturi 1972: 76)
Right: Road scene from God's Own Junkyard, Robert Venturi et al. (Venturi 1972: 76).

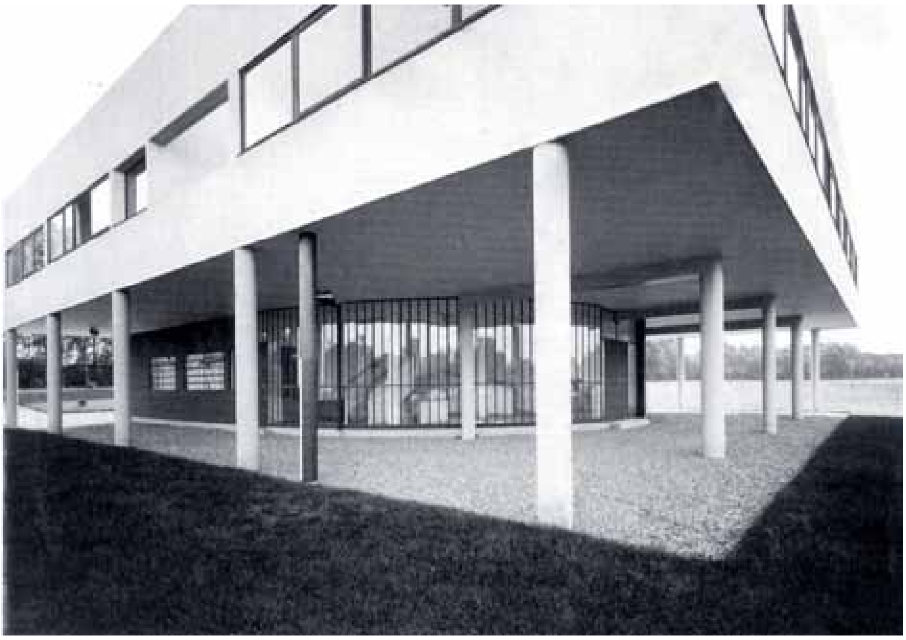

Figure 12
Villa Savoye, 1928, by Le Corbusier (Benton 2007: 196).

Figure 13
Egyptian situla, from *Style* by Semper, 1860 (Mallgrave 1996: 283).

Notes

1 In 1830 – during the Paris revolution – Semper writes, “I am so excited that it is difficult to do the slightest thing” (Mallgrave 1996: 11).

2 Regarding the correct use of building materials Viollet-Le-Duc states, “[w]e can give a special style, a distinction, to the simplest structure, if we know how to employ the materials exactly in accordance with their purpose.” (Hearn 1990: 173)

3 Semper notes, in a footnote, the common origin of the German words wand (wall) and gewand (dress) (Semper 1989: 103-104).

4 Danto maintains that aboutness is a ‘representational concept’, one that is genuinely relational in that what is deemed to be represented does not have to be real, “[t]here need be nothing for an imitation to resemble. All, I think, that would be required is that it [i.e. the representation] resemble whatever it is about in case it is true” (Danto 1981: 69).

5 Wollheim in fact notes the similar structure that concurs between his description of artistic expression via projection (which is derived from seeing-in), and that of metaphor, but wishes to place emphasis on the perceptual, rather than conceptual, aspect of expression – "[…] we must insist that the predicates that double-up – or, if we don't think that doubling-up is universal, whatever predicates are used in their place – not only are applied to the world metaphorically but guide or structure our experience of it" (Wollheim 1987: 85).

6 It may be noted that the distinction between an ideational and a material metaphor is relative rather than absolute, for clearly ideas do feature in our appreciation of materials, and materiality, in most cases, cannot be completely separated from ideas. The distinction is useful, nevertheless. One might, for example imagine a continuum of metaphoric content, where the physicality of 'materials' features more strongly at the one pole, and where the ideational attribute of 'concepts' feature more strongly at the other, and where a sliding scale of both merge between. In this case, what we have termed a material metaphor, would sit more toward the physical than and the conceptual side.

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The paradoxes of art

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Art's paradoxical character lends itself to being elaborated upon by identifying several paradoxes at the heart of it. This goes for all of the arts – architecture, painting, sculpture, dance, music, literature and cinema. The first paradox of art is that all artworks are "singular" – particular and yet generically belonging to art in general. Art's second paradox is that it reveals and conceals at the same time. In Heidegger's terminology, this makes of art a privileged instance of *aletheia*, or "unconcealedness". Paradox number three is that "art objects" are not to be merely "aesthetically" appreciated for their own sake, given their world-and-person-transforming capacity – it is *ergon* (work) and *energeia* together (Gadamer). Fourthly, although art is usually taken as an object of analysis, it (psycho-) analyses the viewer, listener or reader. In the fifth place, art indicts, and also redeems the world. The sixth paradox of art is that it is image as well as thing (Nancy). Paradox number seven about art is that (through the imaginary function of its images), it both liberates and enslaves. The eighth paradox is that the very faculty which enables artists to "create" artworks to begin with – the imagination – proves powerless in the face of the task confronting artists today, namely to find inventive ways of "presenting the unpresentable". The ninth paradox of art is that of its visuality or "sensuousness", in relation to its increasing "spirituality" (since the 18th century). Art's tenth paradox is the fact that the political and the aesthetic, which are usually regarded as being mutually exclusive, converge demonstrably in both art and politics (Ranciére).
Key words: art, aesthetic, image, imagination, paradox, political, sublime, thing

Die Paradokse van kuns
Die paradoksale karakter van kuns leen sigself daartoe om verduidelik te word aan die hand van 'n veeltal paradokse wat intiem daartoe behoort. Dit geld vir al die kunste – argitektuur, skilderkuns, beeldhou, dans, musiek, letterkunde en filmkuns. Die eerste paradoks van kuns is dat alle kunswerke "eenmalig" (of "singulier") is – partikulier en tog generies deel van die sfeer van kuns in die algemeen. Kuns se tweede paradoks is dat dit tegelykertyd blootlê en verberg. In Heidegger se terminologie maak dit van kuns 'n bevoorregte geval van *aletheia*, of "onverborgenheid". Die derde paradoks is dat "kunsobjekte" in die lig van kuns se wêreld-en-persoon-omvormende funksie nie alleenlik "esteties", op sigself, waardeer moet word nie – kuns is tegelykertyd *ergon* (werk) en *energeia* (Gadamer). Vierdens, ofskoon kuns gewoonlik as voorwerp van analise benader word, word die kyker, luisteraar of leser self daardeur ge(psigo)analiseer. In die vyfde plek beskuldig kuns die wêreld, maar beredder dit terselfdertyd. Die sesde kuns-paradoks is dat dit beeld sowel as ding is (Nancy). In die sewende plek verslaaf en bevry kuns in gelyke mate deur die verbeeldingsfunksie daarvan. Die agste paradoks is dat die vermoë wat kunstenaars in die eerste plek in staat stel om kunswerke te "skep" – die verbeelding – magteloos is in die aangesig van die opgawe wat kunstenaars vandag konfronteer, naamlik om op vindingryke wyse die "onvoorstelbare voor te stel". Die negende kuns-paradoks is die sigbaarheid of "sinnelikheid", in verhouding tot die toenemende "geestelikheid" daarvan (sedert die 18de eeu). Die tiende paradoks is die feit dat die politiese en die estetiese, wat gewoonlik as wedersyds-eksklusief beskou word, demonstreerbaar in sowel die politiek as die kuns konvergeer (Ranciére).
Sleutelwoorde: estetika, beeld, ding, kuns, paradoks, polities, sublieme, verbeelding

Theodor Adorno (1984: 1) captured the paradoxical nature of art when he remarked that: "Today it goes without saying that nothing concerning art goes without saying, much less without thinking. Everything about art has become problematic: its inner life, its relation to society, even its right to exist". What his observation does not make explicit (although it is implied) is that art's paradoxical character lends itself to being elaborated upon by identifying several paradoxes at the heart of this thing we call art (which Adorno himself does at length in the text cited, although I do not follow his course of reasoning here). This goes for all of the arts – architecture, painting, sculpture, dance, music, literature and cinema (the "seventh" art). I shall name and elaborate briefly on some of the most salient of these paradoxical attributes of art, or the arts.

It should be kept in mind that a paradox is different from a contradiction (where something is both asserted and denied at the same time). While it also asserts ostensibly contradictory things, in the case of a paradox these things are both demonstrably the case. So, for example, it is contradictory to claim that Socrates is a man, but is not human. On the other hand, the paradoxical claim, that the rational beings called humans are capable of, and often perform, irrational actions, bears the hallmark of experiential truth, just as it makes sense to say, paradoxically, that communication is both possible and impossible (if the demonstrable failures as well as the successes of communication are kept in mind – something thematized strikingly in Iñárritu's 2006 film, *Babel*).

When a paradoxical statement appears to gain a purchase on the phenomenon it implicates – being-human and interpersonal communication, respectively, in the two earlier examples – or to clarify it in some strange manner, it is indicative of a complex state of affairs. Art is such a complex phenomenon. Paradox is therefore a suitable figure for grasping its multi-facetted, mercurial, often enigmatic "character", because a straightforward "description" of its features – one that obeys the laws of logic concerning contradiction, for example – is bound to run into difficulties. I put "character" in scare quotes because I am using it in the sense that Schopenhauer (1969, I: 130-132; 138-139) attributes to it when he claims that, given science's trademark use of generalization, psychology is not possible as a science because an individual's character is inscrutable, "singular".

In the same sense, one may speak of the "character" of art, because strictly speaking there is no "art in general", but only "individual" artworks implicated by the collective noun, "art" – novels, paintings, sonatas, musical performances, sculptures, and so on. While our language-usage of talking about art as if it comprises one, self-identical "thing" suggests that these works all have something in common (the so-called "problem of universals"), every artwork is "singular", unrepeatably unique, except (paradoxically) as a "copy" or simulacrum without an "original", in the case of a film, for example.

1. This instantiates the *first paradox*: unlike a sculpture or a painting, a film's mode of being is not exhausted by its number of copies as so many "films"; there is only one *Citizen Kane* (Welles 1941), and every "copy" of it brings it to life on screen as the distinct, singular cinematic artwork it is. The same goes for all the copies of a novel, where the latter is activated as artwork every time a copy of it is read. The *first paradox* of art is therefore this: that all artworks are "singular" – particular and yet generically belonging to "art" in general, or in the "universal" sense. To put it differently, "art" exists (spatio-)temporally as a multiplicity of singular "artworks", but nevertheless one legitimately speaks of "art" as if the primary ontological mode of the artworks in question were not radical singularity. Moreover, their "singularity" is not ontologically identical (that is, regarding their mode of being), as shown in the case of films and literary works of art. Even more succinctly put, art is radically "singular".

The paradoxical singularity of art was articulated by Walter Benjamin (1969) as the "aura" of the work of art – that air of uniqueness that clings to a painting or a sculpture in so far as they are rooted in a specific time and place (even as they surpass these in their validity and significance), and are, moreover, inseparable from their materiality. In Benjamin's words (1969: 220-221):

> Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be…The presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity…The authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced…One might subsume the eliminated element in the term "aura" and go on to say: that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art.

A poem is just as "material" in this respect as a painting, with its specific syntagmatic and paradigmatic combination of signifiers constituting the "materiality" peculiar to literary artworks. The significance of this materiality is evident in the highly auratic ageing of the material medium employed in a specific art form, from cracks in the pigment of an oil painting to the "dating" of the treatment of marble in a sculpture – before Bernini, for example, marble was never sculpted as if it was flesh, bearing even the slightest imprint of the force of another hand – and the quaintness of Elizabethan poetry's diction.

However, one can take issue with Benjamin on art's *aura*, specifically as far as the implications of copies regarding the "original" artwork are concerned. Jean-Jacques Beineix's (1981) film, *Diva* – which thematizes the question of the "effect" of copies on the ontological status of the singular artwork (in this case the particular operatic performances by a famous diva, Cynthia Hawkins, who refuses to be recorded because she knows that every performance is unique) – furnishes the perceptual and conceptual means for a case contra-Benjamin. In brief, this amounts to the experientially demonstrable claim, that the recorded copy may indeed not coincide with, or be identical to the auratic "original" performance, but reciprocally endows it with even more aura, somewhat like a retrospective investment in its singular value (Olivier 2002: 136-141). The lesson that Cynthia Hawkins, the eponymous diva of Beineix's film, learns from Jules, her greatest admirer and secret "recorder" (against her wishes), is that it enables her, for the first time, to hear herself sing when Jules plays the recording to her in an opera house. Moreover, it serves to confirm, albeit after the fact, the beauty of her singing performance, and attracts people to the opera house to hear her in person. This may be generalized regarding different arts, with more paradoxical implications: the fact that there are thousands, if not millions of copies of Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, far from diminishing the aura of the "original" in the Louvre, enhances it. The copies, after all, derive their value from the inexhaustible aura of the singular painting dating from the Renaissance.

The clearest instantiation of the paradox attached to the singularity of the work of art is encountered in literary art. There must be hundreds of thousands of printed copies of Shakespeare's works in the world, say of *Hamlet*, and yet, there is only *one Hamlet*, just as there is only one *July's People*, by Nadine Gordimer. In fact, the more copies of a literary work are printed, the more it attests to its unique value, compounding the paradox. This raises the ontological question of the mode of being of literary works: in what does the being of *Hamlet* or *July's People* consist? The answer can only be something to the effect that that the printed words embody a unique concatenation of signifiers, which, together, comprise what bears the name of *Hamlet and July's People*, respectively. These signifiers need not necessarily be printed, of course; they could be auditory, as in a sound-recording, or comprise part of the soundtrack of films bearing those names. Even if all printed copies and audio-visual recordings of these works were to be destroyed, however, they could conceivably continue to exist in the memory of someone who has memorized them verbatim, as in the case of the destroyed texts memorized – and kept in existence – by individuals in the fiction film, *Fahrenheit 451* (Truffaut 1966). The indispensable element here is the singular combination of signifiers that comprise a specific work – unless these are to be encountered in some or other form, the work cannot be said to exist, even if it once did (like those ancient texts annihilated by the great fire that destroyed the ancient library of Alexandria in the late 4th century CE).

2. Art's *second* paradox is that it *reveals* and *conceals* at the same time. In Heidegger's (1975; see also Thomson 2011: 76-93) terminology, this makes of art a privileged instance of *aletheia*, or "unconcealedness". This ties in with Heidegger's understanding of the artwork as an unresolved struggle between "world" (realm of openness and interpretability) and "earth" (that which resists interpretation and withdraws from scrutiny). It is this abiding "struggle" between openness and concealment that makes it possible to find valid, demonstrable new meanings in artworks in the course of history. Closely tied to this is the paradox that art *preserves* a world (as a totality of relations) and simultaneously *surpasses* it in so far as the culture of a different age may (and does) find resonance in it, even if the world preserved in the artwork is no longer extant. In other words, meaning in art is overdetermined. "World" also resonates with what Lacan calls the register of the symbolic, as "earth" does with the Lacanian "real", or that which surpasses the symbolic register of language.

3. Another paradox (number *three*), integral to this one, is that it is seriously mistaken – as most people (including most art critics) have done regarding the modernist conception of art – to believe that artworks are merely "art objects" to be *aesthetically* appreciated for their own sake. To believe this, and treat artworks accordingly, is to deny art its world- and person-*transforming* capacity, so clearly demonstrable in the way art changes people, and the way that it affords novel experiences by bathing things in the world in a new light (as witnessed in the case of an old lady in front of Picasso's Guernica during a Picasso Retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in the 1980s, where she stood transfixed, with tears streaming down her face – evidently, the painting had transformed her world, and her with it). This paradox may also be articulated differently by saying that art, far from being just a multiplicity of "art objects", is *ergon* (work) and *energeia* together (Gadamer 1982: 99). It is *ergon* or "work" because – unlike the evanescent impromptu play of children, structured freely and spontaneously by its own internal impetus, the artwork's structure (for as long as it lasts) has a certain durability that comprises the basis for its "repeatability": a musical score and a drama are obvious examples, but every time one reads a novel, or views a great film, or appropriates the space of an architectural work, the work (*ergon*) is repeated, and *energeia* (energy) is "released". *Energeia* is the transformative "working" or "causality" that happens in the course of such reception or appropriation, when the interpretable meaning embodied in the *ergon* is transmuted into *praxis* and action. This is related to what Gadamer (1982: 274-275) calls "application", even if the actualization of action presupposes understanding and interpretation. What should be added, of course, is that such *energeia* can "do its transforming work" on condition that viewers, readers and listeners are receptive to it.

4. *Fourthly*, although art is usually taken as an object of analysis, paradoxically it (psycho-) analyses the viewer, listener or reader by the response it elicits on the part of the latter. Lacan explains this in his 11th Seminar (1981: 67-76) via the concept of the *object a* – that "little other object" (a specific sound-aspect of a song, a particularly noticeable "stain" or "knot" or "hard kernel" of some kind in a painting, a poem, a novel, a film) from the perspective of which the viewing, reading or listening subject suddenly or unexpectedly finds his or her life "framed" in a specific, revealing manner. According to Lacan, when one looks at a painting, one encounters there a "gaze" (on the side of the "object") distinct from one's own eyes' looking (on the side of the "subject"). In so far as the artwork as object "gazes" back at the subject (looking at it), the latter cannot see the perspective from which the gaze is directed at him or her, which implies that the gaze here marks the "rift" separating the conscious and the unconscious. As "*object a*", it functions as "cause of desire", indicated by the effect that the artwork has on the subject. The

melancholy key of a blues song by Bob Dylan, the dark silhouette of a promontory jutting out into a "wine-dark" sea in a painting, the wordplay in Dylan Thomas's (1954) *Under Milk Wood* of 1953 ("The only sea I saw Was the seesaw sea With you riding on it…"), the function of the colour red in Byatt's *Jaël* (2000), are but a few possible instances of artworks which may affect subjects in this way. Depending on the personal symbolic horizon of the subject, all of these "little other objects" (and similar instances in the different arts) have the capacity to resonate with the subject in question in such a manner that a deep sense of longing, or of melancholy, or anxiety, may be stirred in their minds. The *object a* as "gaze" thus functions to dredge up moods or feelings attached to the subject's singular, but unconscious "desire" – that which constitutes us as distinctive subjects – and the fact that one seldom manages to articulate it in language is an unmistakable sign that this is the case.

Ian Parker (2009: 7) elaborates on this psychoanalytic insight as follows:

> Art, whether in a gallery or recruited into advertising, provides another medium of representation through which we might be confronted, and confront ourselves, with the truth, even if we may never be able to put it into words. The shock of recognition, the uncanny sense that an image is familiar to us even if we cannot remember seeing it before, the experience of a sensation that we cannot even account for to ourselves, is something an artwork can produce. This art practice, so pervasive now in various sign systems designed to sell us something, sometimes sidesteps the ego, and something of the unconscious is made present; but then we need to ask ourselves, when we are in the presence of such images, whether we will put those impressions at a safe distance – assume that it is the unconscious of the artist that erupts in the work – or own up to what lies, and for a moment speaks the truth, within us as we view it.

5. In the *fifth* place, art *indicts*, and *redeems* the world. This happens in several ways, among others literary and cinematic satire, parody, romantic poetry, tragedy, comedy, tragicomedy, fantasy and science fiction. Think of the way that Wordsworth's poem, *Intimations of immortality*, films like Cameron's *Avatar* and Proyas's *I, Robot*, Bernini's sublime sculpture of Saint Teresa's passion, Caravaggio's painting, *The calling of St Matthew*, Cervantes's novel, *Don Quixote* or Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, and Shakespeare's tragedy, *Romeo and Juliet*, indict the world as a place of injustice, wanton destruction, lack of libidinal fulfilment and often needless suffering. Simultaneously, by transforming it (and us), they offer a kind of redemption – what Gadamer (1982: 101) calls "redemption and transformation back into true being".

Godfrey Reggio's *Qatsi*-trilogy of films, particularly *Koyaanisqatsi* (1983), are particularly telling instances of this simultaneous indictment and redemption. After a framing opening scene of a rocket during the first few moments of "lift-off", the camera cuts to a series of cinematographically stunning natural vistas – mountains, lakes, rivers, valleys, caves – that lasts for approximately eighteen minutes. Then, suddenly, these tranquil panoramic images are interrupted by a scene of a huge earth-moving machine, emitting black smoke which eventually engulfs the entire machine. This introduces a protracted cinematic exploration of what one may describe, in Heideggerian terms (1977) as a technological assault on the earth, before the camera switches to urban scenes which reflect the technologically permeated lives lived by commuters in mega-cities. On the one hand it is unquestionably an *indictment* of a certain kind of life – the Hopi-language word, *Koyaanisqatsi*, means "a kind of life that calls for a different form of life" – but on the other the sheer formal beauty of the film (which contains no narration or dialogue; the image-sequences are accompanied by Philip Glass's haunting music) performs a *redemption* in the sense of instantiating a fusion of advanced film technology and film art, which offers hope for the future.

If the same beings who can allow technology to assault the earth to the point of ecological dysfunctionality, are also capable of bringing cinematic art into being where *techné* and *poiesis* (Heidegger 1977: 34-35) become one, the possibility of a "turning" away from the stranglehold of technology as "enframing" (the "essence" of technology, according to Heidegger) is not out of the question. Even architecture is capable of such "redemption" – Gehry's Bilbao Guggenheim, the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, or St Vitus Gothic cathedral in Prague, modulates interior space qualitatively into spaces of spiritual redemption (and not only for so-called "believers"), which can only function on the presupposition that these spaces implicitly indict the degraded spaces by which they are surrounded.

6. Art's *sixth* paradox is that it is *image* as well as *thing* (Nancy). Unlike the concepts of philosophy or of science, art's inalienable medium is the image or "percept" (Deleuze), which is inseparable from imagination on the part of artist and audience/viewer alike. This is true not only for the visual arts, but for music and literature as well – musical symphonies and nuances do not have to be accompanied by the audience imagining landscapes (in the case of Sibelius's *Finlandia,* of 1900, for instance); the musical sounds are themselves sound-images. As the case of music illustrates, sound-images do not have to – and often cannot – be understood as representing something, the way an image in (sur)realistic painting is taken as representing something (made explicit in Magritte's painting, *This is Not a Pipe*). For this reason it is perhaps easier to grasp a sound-image as a (non-representational) "thing", whereas in the case of an image in painting or cinema it is harder to grasp its thing-character, in contradistinction from the thing that it may represent. In his phenomenology of the image, Jean-Luc Nancy (2005) has shown persuasively that the image has the ambivalent status of both image *and* thing, precisely in light of the difficulty (if not impossibility) of distinguishing the image from the thing (2005: 2):

> The distinct is at a distance, it is the opposite of what is near. What is not near can be set apart in two ways: separated from contact or from identity. The distinct is distinct according to these two modes: it does not touch, and it is dissimilar. Such is the image: it must be detached, placed outside and before one's eyes…, and it must be different from the thing. The image is a thing that is not the thing: it distinguishes itself from it, essentially.

If this seems counter-intuitive, think of Magritte's painting (representation) of a pipe, which is often regarded with confusion by viewers who (in the face of the painted words, "This is not a pipe", exclaim: "But it is!"). Or recall the seductive image of Bo Derek, emerging from the water to the strains of Ravel's *Bolero* in "*10*" – when the film first appeared, men in the audience certainly did not respond to her image as if it was only an image!

7. Paradox number *seven* about art is that (through the imaginary function of its images), it both liberates and enslaves. *Texts of Pleasure* (Barthes 1975: 14) enslave in so far as one identifies with an easily recognizable world of spatio-temporal "normality", in this way confirming and reinforcing the *status quo*. *Texts of Bliss*, on the other hand, liberate the audience, viewer or reader by drawing them into a world that is out of the ordinary, where the space-time and linguistic presuppositions instilled in the reader through "normal" (and normative) experience are put in question. The fictionally reconstructed, historical world of Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) makes of it a *text of pleasure*, and although the sacrificial act on the part of Carton, for the sake of reuniting the woman he loves with her husband, speaks of the noblest action humans are capable of, Dickens's reconstruction of the social ills of society is "normalizing" in the sense that the reader accepts this as a faithful account of all society *can* be. In this sense it enslaves. But a text like Joyce's *Ulysses*, which is a scarcely recognizable modern *Odyssey* – the story of a man looking for his home – presents readers with language which is, unless one perseveres, utterly impenetrable. *Ulysses* may be an extreme case in literature, though – small wonder that

Lyotard (1984: 80) names it as an example of the postmodern sublime, where the very means of presentation – language – is used to "present the unpresentable". This contrasts with the modern sublime, where the unpresentable is suggested by its absence, for example in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1971).

It is not necessarily the case that a *text of bliss* assumes as extreme a form as *Ulysses*, however. As an eco-political *text of bliss*, Cameron's *Avatar* (2010) may at first appear to be an easily recognizable *text of pleasure*, but although the linguistic and space-time coordinates seem to belong with the latter, the ecologically sound world of the fictional Pandora contrasts so starkly with the increasingly ecologically degraded world of earth that one soon recognizes its *text of bliss* status. With John Hillcoat's film (2009), *The Road* (based on Cormack McCarthy's novel) this is even more so, albeit in terms of the *abjection* (Kristeva 1997: 153-154) by which the intra-cinematic world is characterized: nature that has collapsed to the point of the absence of animal and plant life; internecine cannibalism on the part of the remnants of the (in)human race. But whether in the guise of a *text of bliss* of abjection, or one of utopian freedom, or virtually ineffable otherness, the point is that such texts liberate through the very imagining of otherness, or difference, from extant reality, from the tyranny of the *status quo*. Through such rare gifts, art keeps alive the awareness that what exists, is not all that is possible (as Adorno would say), or in Heideggerian terms, that any extant world is but one historical actualization of the inexhaustible multivocality of being. In this time of technophilia, which conflates *one* manifestation of being – ("enframing" as the essence of) technology (Heidegger 1977) – with being in its totality, this kind of liberation of and through art is indispensable.

The phenomenon of *kitsch* (Harries 1968: 73-83, 149-152; Olivier 2009) also resorts under this paradox of enslavement and liberation through art. To be more precise, kitsch – bad, anaesthetizing art – is probably one of the most persistent "problems" of the present time, in so far as it presents a virtually insurmountable obstacle to all attempts at breaking the deadlock of the dominant economic system (neoliberal capitalism) and its concomitant social alienation (Parker 2011: 86-90). Kitsch in its varied forms, from television soapies to Hollywood feel-good movies and "sweet kitsch" greeting cards, holds up a false image of the world and of social relations by glossing over the less pleasant and appealing aspects of life, such as the inevitable pain and suffering that befall most people some time in their lives. In so doing, it reinforces the ideological subtext of neoliberal capitalism, namely, that everyone can become rich, and that money is a panacea for all social problems. In this sense, then, kitsch enslaves: it functions like an addictive substance which anaesthetizes people's latent sense of what real fulfilment would entail, and replaces it with a sentimentalist version of (pseudo-) fulfilment.

8. The *eighth* paradox of art concerns what Lyotard (1991: 136-143) refers to as an aspect of the art of the sublime (which is characteristic of our time), namely that, because the imagination's capacity to produce adequate forms suffers shipwreck in the experience of the sublime, afforded by the sheer complexity of postmodern culture (in contrast to the experience of beauty), art must rely on "qualities" of matter that are unpresentable, for instance nuance and timbre, to "present the unpresentable". One might say (as Derrida might) that nuance and timbre are the unpresentable *differánce* of the sublime (Lyotard 1991: 140):

> Nuance and timbre are scarcely perceptible differences between sounds or colours which are otherwise identical in terms of the determination of their physical parameters. This difference can be due, for example, to the way they are obtained: for example, the same note coming from a violin, a piano or a flute, the same colour in pastel, oil or watercolour. Nuance and timbre are what *differ* and *defer*, what makes the difference between the note on the piano and the same note on the flute, and thus what also defer [*sic*] the identification of that note.

The paradox here is that the very faculty which enables artists to "create" artworks to begin with – the imagination – proves powerless in the face of the task confronting artists today, namely to find inventive ways of "presenting the unpresentable". And from the musical examples provided by Lyotard it would seem that music is an underestimated source of experiencing the sublime. This is related to what was earlier (paradox number one) called the paradoxical *singularity* of art. Lyotard (1991: 155) draws attention to the distinctive, *singular* timbre of a violin's sound on the particular occasion of a musical performance. Just as Benjamin (1969) discerned the artwork's "aura" (as index of its singular uniqueness) as emanating from the spatiotemporal coordinates of its provenance, so Lyotard challenges one to be passible to the ephemeral spatiotemporal qualities of a strictly unrepeatable musical performance (see in this regard Olivier 2002).

9. The *ninth paradox* of art is what Adorno (1984: 139) calls the paradox of its *visuality* (or more broadly, to include all the arts, its "sensuousness"), which he links with Kant's remark in the *Third Critique* (1969), that art's enjoyment "occurs without a concept". This has given rise to the cherished bourgeois idea, according to Adorno, that art is inalienably visual (sensible). And yet, he points out, since Kant (in the 18th century) art has become increasingly "spiritual". Corroboration for this may be found in Hegel's (1975, 1: 141-142; Olivier 1998) famous thesis (in the first half of the 19th century) of the "death of art". This is the claim that the "highest vocation" of art had been reached in his (Hegel's) own time – namely to give expression to *Geist* or Spirit in sensuous form – and that art having passed through the stages of symbolic, classical and romantic art, which could no longer "contain" the Idea in sensuous form, had to relinquish this "highest vocation" in favour of religion and (eventually) philosophy. In other words, for Hegel the history of art was marked by an increasing "spiritualization" of art, reaching its apogee in romantic art. The fact that he (Hegel 1975, 2: 388-397; Olivier 1998) foresaw art continuing to exist beyond that in the guise of a "critical art" (which no longer served the progress of Spirit as the sensuous embodiment of the idea), further confirms Adorno's claim: the "visual" or sensuous nature of art notwithstanding, it displays a demonstrable "spiritual" character.

But on what grounds can one claim this? One finds evidence of art's "spiritual" character in the work of Karsten Harries (1968: 61-73, 89-90, 102), specifically in his argument that early 20th-century non-representational art movements such as abstract expressionism, constructivism and suprematism, mark the retreat of art into the domain of the spirit, given the fact that extant social reality (of wars and economic hardship) had become unacceptable, and therefore "unrepresentable" to art and artists. The *paradox* is therefore that, regardless of its *prima facie* "visual" – that is, sensuous – character, the "meaning" of abstract art was inseparable from the world of the (freedom of the) spirit. Malevich's suprematism, particularly his "white square" (Harries 1968: 64, 68-69), epitomizes this spiritual freedom in so far as viewers are literally free to "see" or imagine *anything* in the square white expanse that their gaze can conjure up there. In the absence of any signifying markers to guide interpretation, it has been given "freeplay".

Tom Wolfe, too, in *The Painted Word* (1975), lends credence to this paradoxical state of affairs, albeit with satirical intent. Wolfe ridicules the fact that, in the American art-world of the twentieth century, an artist has "made it" once he or she has been fortunate enough to have their artworks declared the embodiment of an important art theory by someone like Hilton Kramer, an eminent art critic. Hence, for Wolfe, despite its putative sensuous character, art was by implication art theory ("intellect", "spirit") masquerading in visual, sensuous clothes.

Karsten Harries, in his *China Lectures* (2007: 27-28), corroborates this by pointing out the paradoxical truth about Andy Warhol's *Brillo Box*. It would not pass for art by traditional aesthetic criteria, but consider the significance of the increasing "spiritualization" of art, which here manifests itself in the fact that individual artworks, today, are situated in the context of the art world and of art criticism. Just like the pioneering artwork in this regard, Duchamp's *Fountain*, Warhol's *Brillo Box* is a case in point: it does not differ from Brillo boxes in the supermarket in appearance, but only in its "mode of presentation, the artist's intention, the historical and spatial context into which he chose to insert his work" (Harries 2007: 28). In other words, it is regarded as an artwork because of being inserted in a "spiritual" context, that is, in the intellectual-cultural context of art and the "artworld" as an institution, which therefore, paradoxically and counter-intuitively, becomes a constitutive element of the artwork in question, despite the intuitive belief, that art is art by virtue of its perceptible sensuousness.

10. The *tenth paradox* of art is highlighted by Jacques Ranciére (Tanke 2011: 75-85), a philosopher who has, virtually single-handedly, provided the intellectual means for rewriting the history of the arts with his notion of the "three regimes of art". These are the "ethical regime of images"(which, like Plato did, denies art legitimacy because it rejects the ethical claims of images), the "representative regime of art" (which, like Aristotle, limits art's legitimacy to hierarchically valorized representations of social reality) and the "aesthetic regime of art" (which is predicated on the ontological and ethical "equality" of everything in the world, as well as its artistic treatment). These novel categories challenge customary concepts such as "modern" and "postmodern" by demonstrating how different "regimes" intersect, in surprising ways, long after the historical heyday of one of them is supposed to have come to an end.

For present purposes, however, it is important to note that Ranciére has argued against the widespread conviction – whether on modernist (the aesthetic is one of several specialized domains of rationality) or postmodernist grounds (the aesthetic encompasses everything, including the scientific) (Habermas 1985: 9; Megill 1985: 2) - that art is confined to the politically innocuous sphere of the aesthetic. Instead, he argues, art is capable, precisely by virtue of its aesthetic dimension, to shape and structure the political realm, while conversely, "politics" also has an aesthetic function, in so far as it can bring about fundamental changes in perceivable social reality. It helps to recall that the concept, "aesthetic", derives from the ancient Greek term denoting sensory perception. It is through his notion of the "distribution" or "partitioning of the sensible" (Tanke 2011: 74-75) that Ranciére brings art and politics together: to "partition" or "distribute" the sensible means that the world of the senses, but also the "sensible" world in the sense of the "commonsensical" world, is structured or restructured in ways that allocate "parts" or "places" to different people, and classes of people, in different ways. The arts all have the broadly "discursive" capacity (where meaning has effects of power) to cast the perceivable world in a specific social, political or cratological perspective – tragedy (which depicts social reality in terms of the cosmically significant suffering of noble heroines or heroes) does this differently from comedy (which represents people from lower, less noble, classes, as the subjects of the comical, rather than the tragic).

Similarly, "politics" – which Ranciére distinguishes from all-too-familiar party politics – is a disruptive way of asserting the "equality" of the people through events such as the French Revolution or (closer to home) the Marikana protests, which is precisely where the aesthetic dimension of politics emerges. No less than art's aesthetic function, politics also "(re-) distributes" the sensible. "Politics" contrasts with the function of what Ranciére dubs the "police" – a play on the ancient Greek word, "polis" – his term for so-called "democracies" in which social and political space is parcelled out in irredeemably hierarchical ways, with no concern for the "part of those with no part" (the poor, the dispossessed, the marginal). It is those "with no part" in the space partitioned by the "police" (obviously not in the usual, restricted sense) who are responsible for the unpredictable manifestation of "politics" in diverse ways of asserting "equality".

It is with regard to "equality", finally, that art and politics meet: in contrast to the hierarchical partitioning function of the other two artistic regimes, the "aesthetic regime of art" has as its "object" a world where everything and anything is an equally worthy "subject", to be treated in any stylistic manner imaginable. That is, the world is subject to a radical "equality" for the arts under this regime, which art of this kind introduces into the world disruptively through "dissensus" (Ranciére 2007: 560). Similarly, "politics", as the only true, usually disruptive manifestation of "democracy", presupposes the radical "equality" of all political subjects, unlike the pseudo-democracies of this world, characterized by hierarchical structures where there is always already a "consensus" about who is fit to govern, and what benefits their supporters will receive.

The paradox should be clear: far from art and politics, respectively, being outside of the realm usually attributed to the other, they converge through their shared *aesthetic* function of "(re-) partitioning or (re-) distributing the sensible". Art therefore has an undeniable political function, and *vice versa* – not in the superficial sense of art being something that can be "applied" to politics, or politics lending itself to being thematized in art, but in the fundamental sense of art being *constitutively* political, and politics being *constitutively* aesthetic. In Ranciére's words (2011: Chapter 9), recasting Schiller's claim that the foundation of art and of life is to be found in the aesthetic: "…there exists a specific sensory experience that holds the promise of both a new world of Art and a new life for individuals and the community, namely *the aesthetic*".

Conclusion

These are just some of the most salient paradoxes of art – or, to be more precise – of all the arts. One might speculate that they issue from something at the very kernel of art, figuratively speaking, which (somewhat like Lacan's "real", which is supra-linguistic, but nevertheless has "effects" in the symbolic register), manifests itself in particular, identifiable paradoxes, such as the ones discussed here. If this is the case, however, it stands to reason that these are not the only paradoxes generated by this paradoxical, "extimate" (intimately conjoined with, and yet exterior) gist of art as phenomenon.

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As an undergraduate student, **Bert Olivier** discovered Philosophy more or less by accident, but has never regretted it. Because Bert knew very little, Philosophy turned out to be just up his street, as it were, because of Socrates's teaching, that the only thing we know with certainty, is how little we know. Armed with this *docta ignorantia*, Bert set out to teach students the value of questioning, and even found out that one could write cogently about it, which he did during the 1980s and '90s in opposition to apartheid. Since then, he has been teaching and writing on Philosophy and his other great loves, namely, the arts, architecture and literature. In the face of the many irrational actions on the part of people, and wanting to understand these, later on he branched out into Psychoanalysis and Social Theory as well, and because Philosophy cultivates in one a strong sense of justice, he has more recently been harnessing what little knowledge he has in intellectual opposition to the injustices brought about by the dominant economic system today, to wit, neoliberal capitalism. His motto is taken from Immanuel Kant's work: *"Sapere aude!"* "Have the courage to think for yourself!"

Finding the best clay: experiences of rural potter Alice Gqa Nongebeza contextualised

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When creating artefacts that belong in the material world artists choose specific raw materials for particular reasons, including that selected resources are accessible and well suited to fitness for purpose and expression of intentions. Many potters in Africa are engaged in zero electricity usage ceramics practice, and each creative cycle usually starts with extracting clay from local sites according to preferences and well established procedures that may sometimes include certain rituals. Ways in which some potters who source their own clay are particular about certain factors that are thought to be capable of influencing the effectiveness of physical properties of that raw material are explored, with particular reference to what is known about the practices of Eastern Cape potter Alice Gqa Nongebeza, of Nkonxeni Village [31°37'59.66"S, 29°23'22.26"E], Tombo, near Port St Johns. Specific choices enacted by potters when gathering and using clayey raw materials are considered in order to better understand some aspects of conceptual and social frameworks that may influence clay extraction procedures. Thus, by means of comparisons between particular potter's practices, as well as through analysis of interview material and observed events, this paper aims to contextualise how it transpired, *inter alia,* that clay seams close to the Nongebeza homestead were ignored by her in favour of a relatively distant and almost inaccessible site that yielded a particular clay well suited to her unique firing style of placing raw ware onto an already roaring bonfire, thereby effectively creating pots for daily use and enjoyment.
Key words: Alice Gqa Nongebeza ceramics praxis, clay sources, clay collecting practices and beliefs in Africa

Ukufumana olona dongwe luphucukileyo: amava omxonkxi wasezilalini u-Alice Gqa Nongebeza abekwe elubala

Xa kusenziwa iimisebenzi yobugcisa kwihlabathi esiphila kulo amagcisa omsebenzi wezandla akhetha izixhobo ezikhethekileyo ezinjengepeyinti, inki kunye okanye nodongwe ngezizathu ezikhethekileyo kuquka nokuba ingaba ezozinto zikhethelwe ukusetyenziswa ziyafumaneka na kwaye zikwimeko nakumgangatho ohambelana neenjongo zokufezekisa lomsebenzi. Abaxongxi abaninzi e-Afrika bakwiphulo lokwenza iiselamikhi ngaphandle kokusetyenziswa kombane, kwaye umjikelo ngamnye wokwenza oko uqala ngokombiwa kodongwe kwindawo zasekuhlaleni ngokweemfuno zomntu ngamnye neziye ziquke amasiko nezithethe ezidala nezaziwayo kulondawo. Iindlela abanye abaxongxi abafumana ngayo udongwe labo ikhethekile kwaye bajonga iinto ezithile ekucingelwa ukuba zinefuthe ekuphuhliseni izinto eziqulathwe kolodongwe ziyajongwa, ingakumbi nokunxulumene nokwaziwayo ngomsemzi womxongxi waseMpuma Kapa u-Alice Gqa Nongebeza, wakwilali yase-Nkonxeni [31°37'59.66"S, 29°23'22.26"E], kwisithili sase-Tombo kufutshane nedolophu yasesaJonisi. Iizigqibo eziye zithathwe ngabaxongxi xa bekhangela, beqokelela nasekusebenziseni iizinto eziqulethwe lolodongwe luluhlaza zithathelwa ingqalelo khona ukuze kwaziwe ngcono ixinto ezithile eziye zibenefuthe ekombiweni kodongwe ngendlela ekhethekileyo. Ngoko ke, ngendlela yokuthelekisa phakathi kweendlela ezisetyenziswa ngumxongxi othile, kwakunye nohlalutyo lodliwano ndlebe kwakunye neziganeko ezithe zaqatshelwa, iinjongo zeliphepha kubeka elubala nokuzama ukuqonda ukuba ingaba kwenzeka njani, phakathi kwezinye iizinto, ukuba zithi zikhona iindawo ezikufutshane zokomba udongwe nomzi ka-Nongebeza zityeshelwe kukhethwe indawo ekude nekunzima ukuba kufikelelwe kuyo nevelisa udongwe oluthile nolulungele indlela yakhe engaqhelekanga yokubeka olodongwe luluhlaza emlilweni ngokwenza njalo evelisa iimbiza ezilungele ukusetyenziswa iimihla yonke nolonwabo.
Amagama amakaqatshelwe: Alice Gqa Nongebeza, iiselamikhi, indawo apho kufumaneka khona udongwe, iindlela zokukha okanye ukuqokelela udongwe e-Afrika

The actual chemical composition of Nongebeza's clay (Steele, Ekosse & Jumbam: 2010) as well as some of the main aspects of her ceramics practices and body of work have been considered in previous papers focussed on rural ceramics praxis in the Port St Johns region of the Eastern Cape (Steele 2007, 2009, 2012). Now, with her recent passing away on 20^{th} September 2012, it seems appropriate for me to further acknowledge her as a powerful visual arts ceramics practitioner (figure 1) by looking more closely at the matter of how she came to find and extract her clay.

It is useful to lead into discussing her experiences and practices by looking briefly at those of some potters elsewhere in Africa in order to have a frame of reference for contextualisation purposes. Silvia Forni (2007: 44), for example, has observed in Cameroon, at a village called Babessi, that the whole cycle of clay collection, shaping, and then firing is conceptualised as specifically procreational. Thus, right at the outset of each creative cycle potters thought of the "site where the [raw] clay is collected … [as being] equated to … an inner room, the most private and sacred core … where offspring are conceived". Notions foregrounding correlation between clay pits and an inner sanctum refer directly to such sources of clay as being a "place of great potential where material necessary for the production of pots -and, metaphorically, of people- is found".

Figure 1
Alice Gqa Nongebeza 2006; and vessel created in 2011 (photographs: the author).

There are, at Babessi, no gender or age restrictions on who may collect clay, so help is often enlisted from children or grandchildren. But there are some limitations, including that "pregnant and menstruating women should avoid" the clay pits because forces there "could be harmful to their reproductive ability". Forni (2001: 100), has also concluded that, at Babessi, a site from which clay is to be extracted "is considered to be highly … endowed with great spiritual force", which she also witnessed being placated with invocations and offerings of salt even on a normal clay collecting excursion, whereafter "digging" was done "very carefully and in silence".

Furthermore, Olivier Gosselain and Alexandre Livingstone Smith (2005: 40, referring also to Gosselain 1999) have concurred that in Africa "selection and exploitation of clay sources" are often "surrounded by … rituals and taboos" that methodically forbid particular people from sites where clay is dug. These authors suggest that circumstances may arise when it is recommended that "men are excluded, uninitiated people, members of other social groups than the potters" and indeed other persons such as "little boys or girls, pregnant women, menstruating women, twins, [and] warriors", depending on ontological beliefs and other circumstances.

Gosselain & Livingstone Smith (2005: 40, referring to Arua & Oyeoko 1982; Frank 1998; Herbich & Dietler 1991; Lawton 1967) also noted that certain prohibitions may exist regarding undertaking of particular activities "on the eve of extraction, [and/or] during the trip to gather clay or at the site" and that such prohibitions would be likely to include activities such as that of "having sexual intercourse, talking, singing, swearing, urinating, manipulating certain objects, [and] eating particular food". Furthermore, these authors have also confirmed that "rituals and sacrifices may also be performed at the extraction site", thereby consolidating an impression that clay collection in particular parts of sub-Saharan Africa is an intensely focused activity aimed at choosing and digging a best batch of clay as a starting point in a precarious series of creative activities wherein things can go wrong at many different stages. Such carefully concentrated "human symbolic activity" resonates with points made by Bert Olivier (2008: 32), with reference to Lacan (1977) and Derrida (2003), which drew my attention to the use of practices and "a web of words" in order to "repair" or "restore" composure on occasions of trauma, and to give reassurance when outcomes are unpredictable.

Gosselain (1999: 209) has pointed out that taboos and prohibitions have evolved around clay extraction because "outcomes [usually] remain uncertain" and consequently to "breach a taboo" could result, for example, in scenarios such as that "clay suddenly disappears, it loses its workability, or it becomes unexploitable". Gosselain & Livingstone Smith (2005: 40, referring also to Sall 2001; then Herbich & Dietler 1991) thus note that, despite extreme variance in conventions and customs governing ways of going about extracting clay, "these practices aim at preserving the quality and availability of clay … [and] the lifespan of individual sources", adding that sites are usually only rarely abandoned prior to having been completely worked out.

It thus seems likely that close to as many potters and places for collecting clay as there are, so indeed will there be variance in attitudes and procedures, depending at least to some extent on idiosyncratic temperament combined with learned preferences as well as individually discovered techniques. Yet there seems, surprisingly, to be only a handful of written observations made about contemporary southern African potters and their clay finding and collection strategies, and associated beliefs.

Juliet Armstrong (1998: 42) has noted that the "potters of the Magwaza family jointly collect clay from two different sites … [then] each potter is responsible for the grinding and mixing of her own clay". Elizabeth Perrill (2008: 19) has reported that amongst these potters, who live in the Mpabalana district north of the Tugela River in KwaZulu-Natal, "information about clay sources is passed down generation-to-generation, woman-to-woman [and that] potters utilise between two and five clay sources and then dig, grind, sieve, and mix the clay [with water] into the proper consistencies for various vessels". Similar sourcing and preparation procedures have been related by Eastern Cape potters Debora Nomathamsanqa Ntloya and Nontwazana Dunjana, respectively of Qhaka and Esikhululweni villages near Port St Johns.

Furthermore, Dieter Reusch (1998: 19-20), in researches focussed on ceramics praxis of Mabaso potters of the Msinga district between the Mooi and Buffalo tributaries of the Tugela River in KwaZulu-Natal, found that raw clay was widely conceptualised as one of the "fruits of the soil", the "earth being a … female entity and … provider of nourishment for the people". Mabaso potters also indicated to Reusch that they thought of raw clay and the earth in general as a "place closely identified with ancestors". Such close identifications have, according to Perrill (2007: 21), led some potters such as Azolina Mncube Ngema of the Nongoma area in KwaZulu-Natal, to find a new clay source in a "dream [after which she] followed instructions of that vision and began digging from that new area".

Likewise, in the Eastern Cape, Alice Gqa Nongebeza, has articulated and foregrounded an inherently metaphysical link to her clay extraction site on account of having discovered it in a dream and thereafter found elements from the dream physically present at the exact spot the following day. During interviews conducted in 2005 and 2006 (Interviews 001 of 14th January 2005: 4-4; and 003 of 27th April 2006: 2-3) she related that as a young adult she had been suffering many firing losses when using the techniques and clay shown to her by neighbours who had initially taught her. One night her maternal grandmother -who had not been a potter- appeared in a dream and beckoned her to follow in order to find a new clay source, on a steep slope near a specific tree.

In this dream Nongebeza knelt down next to the tree and watched as her grandmother moved the soil aside, then dug deeper and removed some clay, which was made into two balls and left there as a marker. Nongebeza was instructed to return the following day with three white beads to place at that spot in order to say thank you to the earth and ancestors. On the following day she asked someone to accompany her and followed the pathways traversed in the dream and found the site, identifiable by the imprints of her knees, as well as the two balls of clay. She related that she then actively engaged with a mystic process of acknowledging and thanking her ancestors for "showing" that place, and thereby also made herself known and acceptable to the site and surroundings by placing the three white beads, of the type usually worn by Mpondo women around the neck, in the manner prescribed in her dream.

Nongebeza's recounting of these events makes it sound simple, but, in actual fact the site is located in an adjoining area known as Mbutho, and is approximately 5.2 kilometres away by foot, in a setting unlikely to have been discovered in any other way. This clay source is situated on a precipitous slope in sub-tropical jungle, far away from existing homesteads or agricultural activities. It "can only be accessed after leaving a very narrow and winding gravel roadway to follow an extremely steeply descending purpose made pathway that weaves through dense indigenous forest and undergrowth for approximately 40 metres" (Steele *et al* 2010: 35). All clay must be carried back up the slope in small quantities, then to the homestead by whatever means.

This clay seam, below a topping of soil, is made up of two components, the lower part being known as sabhunge, which is a slightly stonier component that gets added in at about a 50/50 ratio to give the final clay body tooth and good workability characteristics. This combination also allows Nongebeza to pursue her unique firing practice of placing items to be fired into an already blazing bonfire. Nongebeza expressed on many occasions that despite distance and difficult access she would not use any other clay source because it was fit for purpose and she believed that this is the "clay that God has mixed for me" (Interview 007 of 28th April 2006: 2, as well as Interview 008 of 12th May 2006: 20; Steele *et al* 2010: 35).

In discussion with her regarding appropriate behaviour when working at the clay site there were two main recommendations that emerged, namely, that conduct should be relatively quiet and decorous, and that if the snake of the clay seam was to show itself, then it should be respected as if it were an ancestor which had come out for a visit, thereby connecting such a snake to cosmological ideas about fertility and life rather than fear and death. Nongebeza also said that if it was seen it could be gently moved, or covered up again with soil, or digging could be recommenced in a slightly altered place, so as not to disturb it. When asked specifically whether there were any other "rules" for fetching clay she assured me, with disarming pragmatism, that one can go at any time and get clay with anybody who will help (Interview 016 of 6th March 2006: 2; and Fieldnotes of 7th March 2008; 2: 89).

Nongebeza's uncomplicated attitude was clearly evident on many occasions, including that I -a male outsider who grew up somewhere else, despite that I am a potter- was always made to feel welcome during all stages of clay collection. There has also usually been a plethora of both male and female children and adults in all stages of life accompanying such expeditions and helping in one way or another, and no known misfortunes have befallen anyone while clearing and working in the heart of that dense indigenous jungle in order to get to the clay seam and collect as much as was required. I also noted that there appeared to be no prohibitions regarding appropriate timing because during my various visits over the past decades we have gone and dug clay at many different times of day, and even at night on one occasion. We had started out quite late in the afternoon, and darkness fell before we were finished. I was delighted when she invited us to stay for supper, and then she promptly took out her cellphone and phoned home to make the necessary arrangements, thereby reminding me that this was just another working day for Nongebeza, even though I felt very much in awe of the occasion and surroundings.

Finally, I think it is also important to observe that her use of that clay seam has resulted in minimal environmental disruption**.** Even though the act of opening up the earth and removing clay requires digging that significantly altered that particular spot at a specific point in time, almost all traces of previous clay extraction activities are naturally removed within a few months because the sub-tropical undergrowth rapidly returns. Thus only a very careful look reveals a sort of indentation in the mountainside along the contour that has been followed by Nongebeza as she collected clay for the past five decades or more from that site shown to her in a dream.

It is fascinating that, despite disarming pragmatism and absence of obvious clay collection taboos, Nongebeza was clearly not interested in several clay seams that I have seen that were easily accessible and closer to her home partly because, in her cosmology, this particular clay source was the one allocated to her family by her ancestors and God. Such a position chimes with an overall sense of respect for clay as natural resource expressed by some other rurally based potters, as well as with elaborately constructed clay collection rituals practiced by some potters in West Africa. Such attitudes integrate "technical … fields [with] social and symbolic ones" (Gosselain & Livingstone Smith 2005: 40). Out of this emerges the idea that in certain sectors it is believed that attitudes and ritual practices may influence the chemical properties of raw materials in such a way as to improve chances of successful visual arts outcomes, which is an idea that might be interesting to pursue further in due course.

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The pool of the psyche: water in the work of Ariana van Heerden and Kevin Roberts

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Water is a material which pervades the earth and is the source of all life, the *fons et origo* (Cirlot 1971: 365). Humans are seventy percent water and it occupies seventy percent of the earth's surface. As a substance that can exist in a number of physical states, water is form and formless, material and metaphor, image and idea, substance and symbol. Thus it is hardly surprising that water is a powerful symbol: for the unconscious in Jungian terms; for purity and baptism in many religions; a symbol of spiritual or physical journeys and of aspects of the human condition. It appears in the work of many traditional and contemporary artists. Ariana van Heerden and Kevin Roberts are South African painters and both depict water in numerous works, in very different ways, varying from the wide oceans to the water in a cup. This paper will investigate their paintings of this substanceless substance, and aspects of the unconscious that are reflected in their works when the latter are approached from a Jungian and neo-Jungian point of view. For example, the differing contexts in which water appears in the paintings of Roberts and van Heerden can suggest the anima and aminus as aspects of the psyche, the male or female principle, birth and death, the personal and the collective, the romantic and the classical, because of these artists' approach to this most liminal of materials.
Keywords: water, symbol, Jung, Bachelard, archetype, van Heerden, Roberts.

Die poel van die psige: water in die werk van Ariana van Heerden en Kevin Roberts
Water is dié element wat wyd verspreid oor die aarde voorkom; dit is die bron van alle lewe, die *fons et origo* (Cirlot 1971:365). Die mens bestaan uit sewentig persent water en dit beslaan sewentig persent van die aardbol se oppervlakte. As 'n stof wat in verskeie natuurkundige gedaantes kan bestaan, is water vorm sowel as vormloos, wesenlik en metafoor, beeld en denkbeeld, wese en simbool. Derhalwe is water 'n kragtige simbool: vir die onderbewussyn in Jungiaanse terme; vir reinheid en die doop in vele religieë; 'n simbool vir spirituele en fisiese reis asook aspekte van die menslike bestaan. Dit kom voor in etlike tradisionele en hedendaagse kunstenaars se werk. Ariana van Heerden en Kevin Roberts is Suid-Afrikaanse kunstenaars en albei beeld water uit in talle werke, op verskeie maniere wat wissel vanaf uitgestrekte oseane tot die water in 'n teekoppie. Hierdie referaat ondersoek hulle skilderye wat hierdie substansilose stof uitbeeld, sowel as aspekte van die onderbewussyn wat gereflekteer word in hul werke, gesien vanaf 'n neo-Jungiaanse sowel as 'n Jungiaanse uitgangspunt. Byvoorbeeld, as gevolg van die uiteenlopende verband waarin water, die mees drempelend van alle stowwe, in Robberts en van Heerden se skilderye voorkom, mag die anima en die animus voorgestel word as aspekte van die psige, die manlike of vroulike, geboorte of die dood, die individuele of die gemeenskaplike, die romantiese of die klassieke.
Sleutelwoorde: water, simbool, Jung, Bachelard, argetipe, van Heerden, Roberts.

Perhaps, more than any other element, water is a complete poetic reality (Bachelard 1983:150).

Water is a material which pervades the earth and is the source of all life, the *fons et origo* (source and origin) (Cirlot 1971: 365). As a substance that can exist in a number of physical states, water is form and formless, material and metaphor, image and idea, substance and symbol. Thus it is hardly surprising that water is a powerful symbol: for the unconscious in Jungian terms; for purity and baptism in many religions; a symbol of spiritual or physical journeys and of aspects of the human condition. It appears in the work of many traditional and contemporary artists. One can think of examples as different as William Turner, Claude Monet and Bill Viola's more recent installations, in which immersive baptism could refer to both drowning and a cleansing re-birth. Ariana van Heerden and Kevin Roberts are South African painters and both depict water in numerous works, in very different ways, varying from the wide oceans to the water in a cup (**f**igures 1 and 2**)**. In a previous article, I analysed a selection of Roberts's works, focusing on the anima images that pervade all his works. In this article, I aim to explore a Jungian and psychoanalytic interpretation of the images of water in the works of these two artists. Key theorists are Jung himself, as well as Gaston Bachelard.

From a Jungian perspective (Jacobi in Jung 1978: 253), everything is a manifestation of the psyche. Jung suggested that the psyche, this psychobiological entity, is manifest in our dreams, myths, psychoses and cultural artefacts through symbolic images. It has been largely as a result of Jung that any significance has been attached in the West to symbols and symbolic images in relation to the processes of human development (Cirlot 1971). "[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".

Bachelard, a philosopher who constructs phenomenological, psychoanalytic interpretations of poetic images, uses a Jungian approach, for example in *The poetics of space* (1994). In *Water and Dreams* (1983) he continues his investigation of the poetic imagination, especially as it manifests in what he calls "the material imagination". This is the imagination as it reflects in material substances, or elements, in images of *matter,* such as fire, earth or water. He argues that such images "plumb the depths of being" (Bachelard 1983:1). In other words, they reveal and reflect aspects of the psyche that may not be otherwise accessible to consciousness.

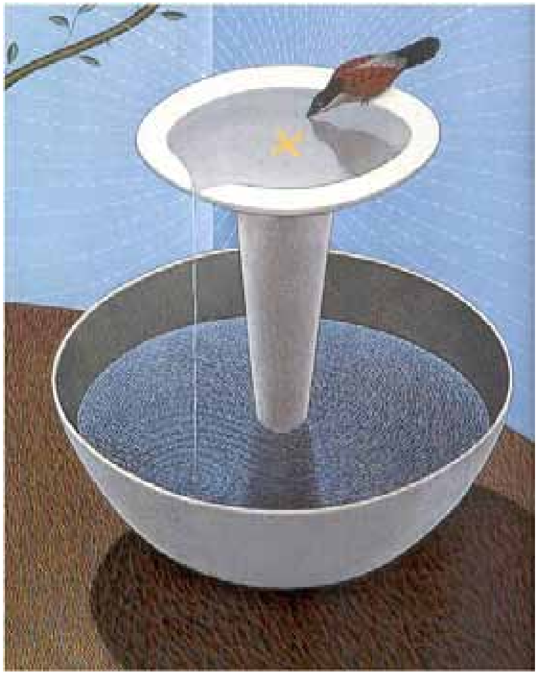

Figure 1
Kevin Roberts, detail of *Waiting for rain,* 1999-2004, oil on panel, 100 x 120 cm, private collection (Stevens 2005: 20).

Figure 2
Ariana van Heerden, detail of *Breast stroke*, 2012, pastel on paper, private collection (photograph van Heerden).

Jung is concerned with both the individual and universal aspects of the psyche or, in his terms, with the personal and collective unconscious. The contents of the collective unconscious are known as archetypes (Jung 1969:4), which are archaic, primordial energies that have existed in the psyche since remote times. They manifest as psychic energy and come to consciousness in myths, legends, fairy tales, and also in images and art, where they take the form of symbols. The relationship between the personal and collective unconscious as manifest in symbols and images is expressed by Bachelard (1994:33) thus: "Great images have both a history and a prehistory... . Consequently it is not until late in life that we really revere an image, when we discover that its roots plunge well beyond the history that is fixed in our memories." So archetypes are both our own and everyone's.

Archetypes, images and symbols are inter-related in the sense that "[t]he psychological mechanism that transforms energy is the symbol" (Jung in Cirlot 1971: xxxv). So the archetype manifests in the symbol and gives rise to images. The meaning of archetypal, or in fact all, symbols is only partly accessible (Cirlot 1971: xxxvi). Symbols are rich in potential meanings and associations. In particular, what Bachelard (1971:xix) terms "the poetic image" is an image or symbol that does not duplicate reality or reconstruct the past but creates that which reverberates in the consciousness of both creator and viewer. Each creator would have preferred, pervasive images that unify the oeuvre, which it is the task of the interpreter to trace.

However, the interpretation of symbols is complex, as they are a "a penumbra of uncertainty" (Jung 1978:29). According to Cirlot (1971: xi-xiii), symbols are dynamic and "multivalent" in their meanings, and are "imbued with emotive and conceptual values". They carry cultural, historic, spiritual or religious significance and the meaning of any symbol must take into consideration its form, material, construction; the interpreter must consider both what the symbol is (its form, its reality) and what it may signify (its potential meanings). Symbols are ambiguous, have both personal and particular as well as universal meanings, inner and outer significance, are microcosm and macrocosm, have objective and subjective aspects, and one could thus relate them to the personal and collective unconscious of Jung. It is important to emphasize that they are both material and meaning: "the invisible... is analogous to the material order" (Cirlot 1971:xvi) and "What is within is also without". So all symbols can be interpreted psychologically, that is as having some deep connection to both the personal unconscious (of the artist) and the collective unconscious (of artist and viewers).

Important for this article is the Jungian notion that archetypes are mirrored in mankind's relationship with, and knowledge of, nature and also in natural substances, such as water. Bachelard (1994:xiii) explores the "material imagination" which uses the elements of nature, such as water, to suggest that which is "primitive and eternal" through the symbolic potential of substances. Bachelard focuses on these "images of matter" which he felt were ignored by literary criticism and philosophy, and the creative response to and about nature. Jung (1969:6) refers to the "the mythologized processes of nature" as expressions of the inner, unconscious psyche, which becomes accessible to consciousness only by being mirrored in nature.

The personal context

A psychoanalytic reading should be most concerned with analysis of the artworks and not the artist, as argued by Jung (1978: 86) amongst others, who says this reduces creativity to a mere symptom, detrimental to both the work and the artist. However, Anthony Stevens (1995: 57) argues that a first step in interpreting artefacts, dreams as well as art works, is the personal context. This article aims to psychoanalyse the images and not the artists, however, this may be unavoidable and 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 painter of serene, dreamlike and very symbolic female figures, situated in recognisable local landscapes, often in the presence of water and surrounded by a variety of ordinary objects that contribute to the layering of symbolic meanings in the work.[1]

From this more personal perspective, it seems worthwhile to note three personal facts about Roberts: he was kept apart from his mother for a considerable time in his early youth due to family circumstances; as an artist he painted obsessively and repeated certain themes such as the female figure 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's use of images, such as the woman next to or in water, could "as easily have been dreamt as turned into poetry" (Stevens A 1995: 155).

Van Heerden (b 1956) is an academic who is also a committed artist. She is obsessed with the sea and has depicted it in numerous paintings and drawings done over a number of years. She had a complex relationship with a troubled mother who died when she was a teenager. She grew up in various tropical locations because of her father's work in the diplomatic service, and is a keen traveller, swimmer and diver. However, she remembers almost drowning at an early age, so the sea is an ambivalent space and place for her.

Water as archetype

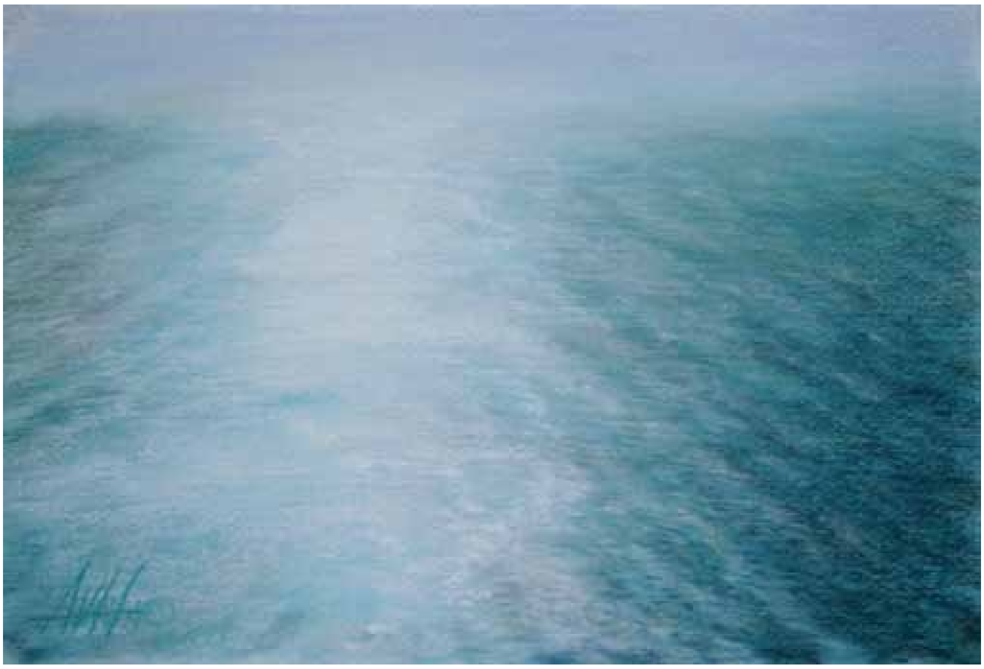

Figure 3
Ariana van Heerden, *Recollections, Azura, Quirimbas Archipelago,* 2012, pastel on paper, 400 x 465 cm, private collection (photograph van Heerden).

Scientists tell us that water has existed on Earth for some four and a half billion years and that it was a decisive factor in the development of life on earth: humans are seventy percent water and it occupies seventy percent of the earth's surface (Dixon in Freschi 2011:13). Thus it is hardly surprising that water is a powerful symbol and an important archetype. Bachelard (1994:72) writes that all great images, such as landscapes, "reveal a psychic state." Considerations about water, as an aspect of landscape, lie deep in the human psyche, and a relationship to it is elemental in human existence. According to Cirlot (1978: xxxviii)[2] water fertilizes, it purifies, it dissolves, and these attributes combine with its lack of fixed form to begin to explain its complex symbolism. Jung (1969:17) considers water as one of the most central archetypes[3]

As the origin of life, the strongest association of water is with the maternal force, or Great Mother (Cirlot 1971:364), and the receptive female side to the personality. For Bachelard (1971:xxi), it is a feminine element, and can have different meanings depending on how it is described or depicted, for example, calm water (figures 3 & 4) signifies the cosmic mother and the "beneficent milk of a momentarily calmed universe" (Bachelard 1971:44). Bachelard describes the milky image of a lake beneath the moon, which gives rise to many poetic associations for him, of warmth and happiness, safety and softness, the milk of mother nature, of the womb. He calls this "the wife-mistress landscape" (Bachelard 1971:61) because of the deeply feminine character of milky water, which he sees as an anima archetype projected onto nature.[4]

Figure 4
Kevin Roberts, *Continuum-Point,* 1999-2004, oil on panel, 114 x 114 cm, private collection (Stevens 2005: 11).

In these paintings 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, or to swim or sail over a calm sea. As Jung (1969: 22) writes: "[i]in every human being...there is a special heaven, whole and unbroken", the sense of an unbroken, ongoing integration of psyche, body and environment.

The water in both Figures 3 and 4 can be seen as representations 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). This archetype is in its totality a symbol of love, nurture, union, fruitfulness. 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. The women in Roberts's painting directly represent the archetype of the anima.[5] The anima might also be symbolised as the Great Mother, typically Mother Nature or Mother Earth, so in van Heerden's depiction the calm sea can also be seen as a benevolent Mother Nature, or anima.

The significance of water changes if it is depicted as deep or dark (figure 5 and 6). Such still and dark water can be melancholy, "dreamy, slow and calm... the embodiment of tears" (Bachelard 1983: 7,11). It can represent the unconscious, particularly the collective unconscious. Jung (1969: 18) writes of water as the living symbol of the dark (or hidden) psyche, of the depths of the unconscious. "Water is the commonest symbol for the unconscious" and thus dreams of water are common. Water is furthermore the shadow, the dark self:

> ... the world of water, where all life floats in suspension; where the realm of the sympathetic system, the soul of everything living, begins; where I am indivisibly this *and* that; where I experience the other in myself and the other-than-myself experiences me. [T]he collective unconscious is ... as wide as the world and open to all the world (Jung 1969:21-22).

Figure 5
Ariana van Heerden, *Lap pool,* 2012, charcoal on paper, 310 x 490 cm, private collection (photograph van Heerden).

Figure 6
Kevin Roberts, title unknown, 1999-2004, oil on panel, size unknown, private collection (Stevens 2005:14).

So deep or dark water has a significance, other than the maternal force, as does “heavy, dormant water ... [or] violent and energizing sea” (Bachelard 1983: 12). It signifies the pre-formed state, before death and rebirth, or the transition from life to death. Here, water becomes as heavy as blood. “To disappear into deep water or to disappear toward the far horizon, to become a part of depth or infinity, such is the destiny of man that finds its destiny in the destiny of water”. This relates to baptism, the washing away of the old and the creation of the new. Water it thus birth, and in its depths, a sinking into the sub-conscious or death. It is liminal, a “mediator between life and death” (Cirlot 1978: 365) between the “surface and the abyss”.

Furthermore, for Bachelard (1983: 6,55) water is the most transitory element, and thus a symbol of transformation: “Water always flows, always falls, always ends in horizontal death”. For him, essentially water is associated with death and the ultimate human destiny. It is “an invitation to a special death that allows us to return to one of the elementary material refuges”, which he calls the Ophelia complex (figure 7).

Figure 7
Kevin Roberts, *Ophelia is only dreaming*, 1993-94, oil on panel, 142 x 127 cm, ABSA collection (photograph ABSA).

Visual aspects of works by Roberts and van Heerden

For Bachelard, there is a strong correlation between water, death and beauty. Both Roberts and van Heerden undoubtedly deal with aesthetics and seek to create a kind of beauty. They do not concern themselves with social commentary, criticism or intervention, or any of the other more contemporary strategies in art, but seek the heightened aesthetic experience which Kuspit argues is the artist's essential task, although they use different visual means.

> The nature of this poetic/visual game is what interests me more than investigating issues or sociological concerns. In a sense, I endeavor to understand my condition as a human being by looking inwards towards a poetic, mystical, seemingly irrational set of concerns, the interplay of which give me a glimmer of something that may be general to the human condition (Kuspit 2004:31).

Figure 8
Ariana van Heerden, *Ebb and flow,* 2004, oil on canvas, 120 x 200 cm, collection the artist (photograph van Heerden).

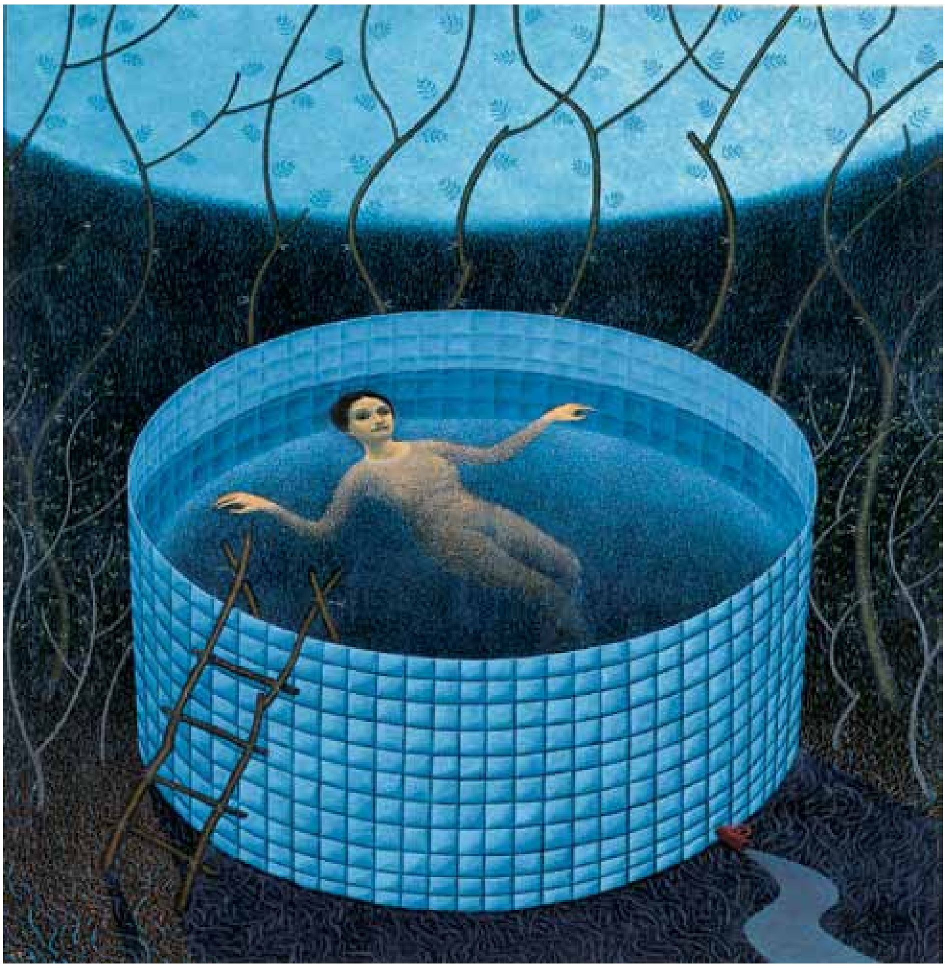

Figure 9
Kevin Roberts, *Portapool epiphany*, 1999-2004, oil on panel, 133 x 110 cm, private collection (Stevens 2005:21).

However, neither Jung, Bachelard or indeed any of the neo-Jungians offer any approach to the visual aspects of symbolic images, as they concentrate purely on their content, so one must turn to an art historian for such a system. One way to understand the different visual strategies used by van Heerden and Roberts is by applying the Swiss art historian Heinrich Wölfflin's notions of the linear and the painterly.[6] Wölfflin (1932) writes that Renaissance art is linear: it seeks perfection of form at rest, every form delimited but fully developed, complete and co-ordinated so the whole is made up of independent parts. Each part has its own colour, with a composition based on horizontals and verticals, symmetry and balance. This characterises Roberts's approach (figure 9). On the other hand, the Baroque replaces this with the "restless, the becoming, ... the limitless, the colossal", and focuses on movement and a general ground colour which can dissolve clear form, with an unstable balance, in an approach Wölfflin (1932:9-117) calls 'painterly'. This is an apt definition of van Heerden's approach (figure 8). It is essentially the difference between tangible, clear, closed form, constructed by outlines, and limitless formlessness or open form, constructed by mass. Furthermore, the linear constructs a series of planes having multiplicity, while the painterly emphasizes depth and unity. One could apply Wölfflin's description of the linear to any image in Roberts's paintings, for example the way in which each leaf on a tree is clearly delineated, or in his use of distinct patterns across objects.

> Linear style is the style of distinctness plastically felt. ... The tracing out of a figure with evenly clear lines ... has an element of physical grasping. The operation which the eye performs resembles the operation of the hand which feels along the body, and the modelling which repeats reality in the gradation of light also appeals to the sense of touch (Wölfflin 1932:21).

By contrast, what could be more painterly than the wide and deep seas of van Heerden? One could describe them thus:

> [E]verything ... enlivened by a mysterious movement. ... [F]orms begin to play; lights and shadows become an independent element, they seek and hold each other from height to height, from depth to depth; the whole takes on the semblance of a movement ceaselessly emanating, never ending (Wölfflin 1932:19).

Wölfflin (1932:27) touches upon a possible psychological explanation for the choice of a linear or painterly approach: The linear comes from the *hand*, and a consequent interest in, or desire for, enduring, solid form and material, measurable and finite, the "thing in itself", while the painterly emphasizes the *eye* that seeks the changing appearance, movement, the "thing in its relations", the immaterial and immeasurable. So while both artists paint nature, Roberts may be seen to affirm the measurable, knowable exteriorized world and its objects while van Heerden seeks to escape the world into another, less definable, possibly more universal realm, a space of pure light, movement or colour. One might see these two approaches as representative of the classical and romantic spirit in artmaking.

Another point of departure for comparing the work of these two artists is the degree of mimesis, or closeness to a representation of reality: Roberts is clearly more mimetic than van Heerden, whose surfaces, while recognisable as water are closer to colour-surface abstraction. For Kuspit (2012:3), this near abstraction too has psychological dimensions, with the rejection of the mimetic in twentieth century art indicating:

> [an] increasingly problematic sense of self in a world that aroused more anxiety than its representation could manage. In mimesis, the ... artist invests himself in an alien world so that he can feel safe and secure in it. He emphatically burrows into it to make it his own.

So while mimesis is a coming to terms with the world, abstraction can be seen as withdrawing from or transcending the world.

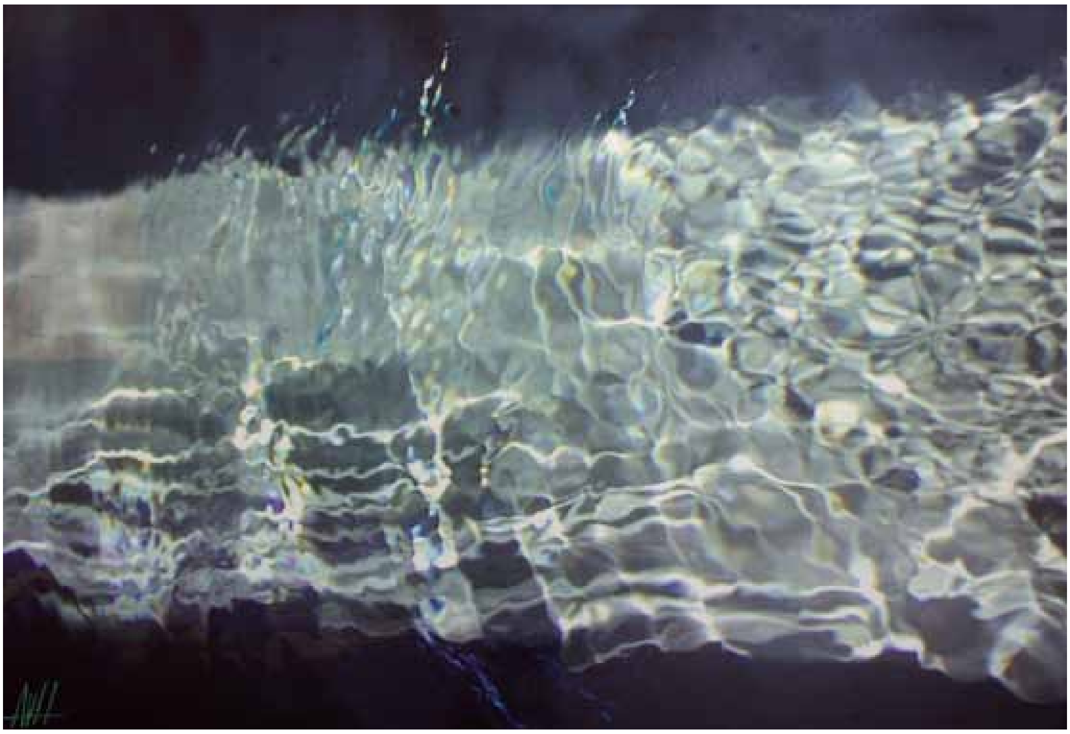

Figure 10
Ariana van Heerden, *Doppler,* 2010, mixed media on canvas, 830 x 1170 cm, private collection (photograph van Heerden).

Figure 11
Kevin Roberts, *Rainmaker*, s.a., oil on panel, size unknown, private collection (photograph the author).

Yet another aspect of Roberts's depictions of water in relation to van Heerden's is relative scale: his intimate, smaller and familiar (figure 11), hers vast, extensive and strange (figure 10). Bachelard (1994: 65) refers to the need of the poet, when creating images, for retreat or expansion, for simplicity or grandeur. This leads to considerations of the domestic versus the cosmic; the intimate or inner life versus the life in the larger world, or even the classical versus the romantic. So one might describe Roberts's paintings as dealing with the local, the known, the domestic and intimate while van Heerden's might be described as referring to the cosmic, unbounded and foreign or strange other world.

One could furthermore examine differences between the two artists' depictions of water in terms of orientational metaphors: according to Lakoff and Johnson (1980:25), there are different metaphors involved in images that are near, bounded or centred (Roberts) or on the other hand are far, peripheral or boundless (van Heerden). Containers, such as Roberts's containers of water, project the self as contained, controlled, a self meeting the world, while far, boundless images such as van Heerden's visual water fields suggest an encounter between self and void, the potential dissolution of the self in nothingness. Of course, these differences in approach can be seen, in a more nuanced way, as overlapping: Roberts's repetition of patterns and marks become seemingly infinite, while van Heerden's water masses project into the viewer's space and come closer.

The next section will consider aspects of the artists' works individually and in more detail.

Roberts

Water is an important, recurring image in Roberts's paintings, taking its place alongside other images, such as women, plants and earth.[7] Roberts often paints water that is contained: in a bowl, cup, pool or furrow (figure 12). Bachelard (1994:3-6) sees such containment as domestic and intimate, symbolically related to other images of containment such as the house, which is a safe, contained space of the imagination as much as a functional space.

Figure 12
Kevin Roberts, *Waiting for rain*, 1999-2004, oil on panel, 100 x 120 cm, private collection (Stevens 1995:20).

These images suggest interior space, a female space which is sustaining and sheltering, and permits peaceful dreaming. As Bachelard (1983:50) writes, "[a] pool contains a universe". It suggests and contains the intimate acts and moments of life, the familiar made beautiful or valorized. These are the positive mother or anima images, comparable to the vessel, the womb, the home, the garden, paradise. Of course, the constant presence of a female figure in all Roberts's paintings supports this reading of water as anima.

The centrality and closed shape of these contained waters is complete and balanced. Centrality itself is an important archetype, manifest in images such as mandalas, magic circles or stone circles. The circle is contained and secure, a place of safety: according to Bachelard (1994:234) images of complete roundness "help us to collect ourselves ... and to confirm our being intimately, inside". These shapes furthermore suggest the association between water and the sacred, and one thinks of the font, the sacred spring, pool or river. Roberts wrote in a series of commentaries on his paintings: "The shape of the pool is that of a perfect, womblike enclosure, a spatial device that by extension includes the viewer in the space of the painting. Thus the painting is about inclusion and completion".

Bachelard (1983:11,14) analyses cool, clear waters such as these. They create and represent order, unity and organization. These waters are pure, and show "the superiority of fresh water over sea water", for suggesting nurturance and ease. This would account for their relationship to birth, baptism and re-birth. In the case of the artist, I would argue that he seeks (but perhaps never finds) a rebirth into a kind of wholeness with each recreation of particular images, and attempts self-actualization and integration of the anima into his own psyche.

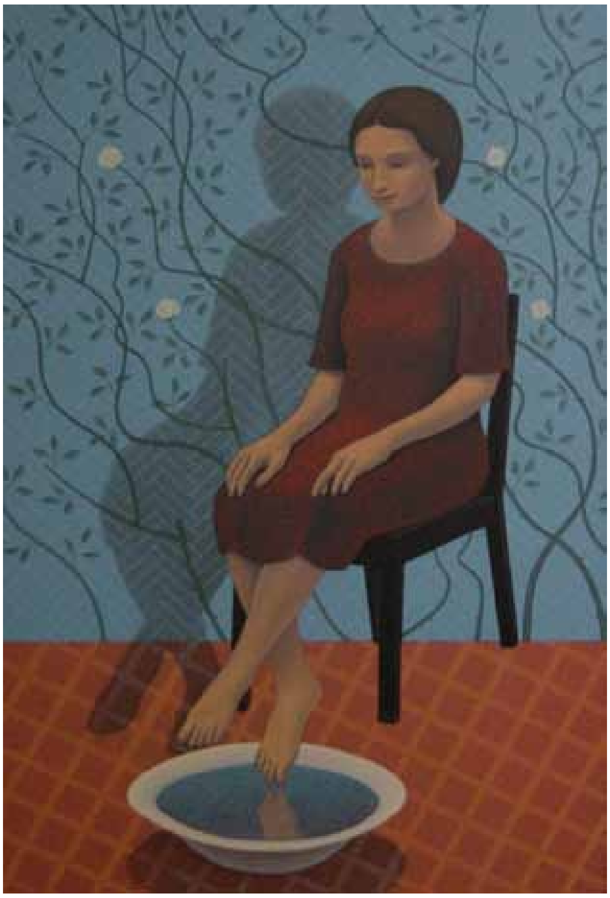

Figure 13
Kevin Roberts, Title and size unknown, 1999-2004.
Oil on panel (author's image).

Time in Roberts's work seems, in the perfect placement of every object, the centrality and stillness of water, foliage and figure, to stand still. Time slows, calms and is frozen in a perfect moment. Everything is in repose. Even reflections on the water's surface are still, as are occasional shadows. Bachelard (1983:22) writes of still water as the perfect mirror, "living and natural" in a way no mirror could be. Water, as an element of material imagination, is more profound an image than a mirror, which is part of what he refers to as formal imagination, imagining with objects (Figure 13). Reflections in water suggest such myths as Narcissus, an idealised, fragile and delicate image of beauty: Bachelard (1983:25) refers to such a "watery reflection" as a world tending towards beauty, which is just the kind of imaginary world Roberts meant by his "poetic image".

A woman floating in water, which Roberts painted in at least two major works (Figure 7 and 9), is seen by Bachelard (1971:18) as an image that, although of historic origins, can remain active in a poetic sense, and is a meditation on death, the "most maternal of deaths" (Bachelard 1983:73). For Jung (1969) the descent into water is the descent into the unconscious, which is an image often present in dreams, and signifies a descent into the hidden depths of the self. So the Ophelia image might be a descent into the psyche. Bachelard likens such images to the many depictions of woman at her bath, involving female nudity in a female context or setting. Such images are sensual and sexual, but arguably in an innocent and dreamy way rather than an active or masculinised way.

For Roberts, the compulsive urge, as I have argued elsewhere, is to recreate and make whole the mother, and most images in his works are anima archetypes. He recreates the safety, the ease and predictability of home, of the ideal Mother.

Van Heerden

Figure 14
Ariana van Heerden *13'S41'E – 5-45 am*, 2012, chalk pastel on paper, 310 x 490 cm, private collection (photograph: van Heerden).

Van Heerden repeatedly paints water as sea. These all-over paintings might be compared to an abstract artist's such as Jackson Pollock. Kuspit (2004: 60) suggests that Pollock's rhythmic surfaces seek to maintain an order even in formless chaos. Van Heerden paints vast and deep waters, which sometimes are calm, still, white and warm, almost milky, and certainly maternal, the calm sea being that "greatest and most constant maternal [symbol]" (Bachelard 1983:115) (Figure 14) . This is the nourishing water of Mother Earth. It can in addition be a rocking element, again maternal.

These vast seas that van Heerden depicts are, on the one hand, memories of a tropical paradise experienced but, on the other, their limitlessness and lack of any horizon or land (except occasionally far away and often underwater), must read as the lack of a safe haven, as danger and potential death. There is no horizon to offer containment or safety. There is often a merging of deep water and sky, and both become the substance of a yet more boundless space. Van Heerden states that: "Staying adrift is always an option", suggesting that the space of greatest belonging for her is "not home" and that solitude or wandering is her natural condition. These works seek to explore the limitless, which according to Bachelard (1994:188) is the non-I, rather than the I, or at least the ultimate depths of the self, the vast collective unconscious or the primal. These images, where water becomes space, suggests isolation, remoteness or solitude, this "water [that] bears the mark of limitlessness" (Bachelard 1994: 205-206). Bachelard refers to diving in deep, heavy, dark water as "the magical operation that... allows the diver to loosen the ordinary ties of time and space ...".

Bachelard (1983: 74) writes of the danger of death in vast waters and "the immense risk of setting out over the water". The dark side of the mother archetype is suggested, which Jung (1969: 82) equates with other dark mother images such as the abyss, the grave and the sarcophagus, spaces that are secret, dark and hidden, inescapable as fate.

Figure 15
Ariana van Heerden *Between the void,* 2012, chalk pastel on paper, 310 x 380 cm, private collection (photograph van Heerden).

Simultaneously, the sea is an invitation to adventure, to sailing, journeying, swimming or diving. Swimming is an act of conquering the alien element, or overcoming fear (Bachelard 1983:163) and thus is a masculine act. So van Heerden's projection via water images has an element of the animus, or male archetype, both in its suggested violence and aggressive activity, but also in the inference that the artist/viewer is a swimmer or diver, is active and thus taking on a male role (figure 15). So the sea here can be seen either as ambivalent or as a sign of psychic integration: anima and animus, pleasure and pain, nourishment and danger.

All depictions of water must refer to the female principle, and on this scale to the Great Mother or Mother Earth. However, those of van Heerden's works that depict aggressive movement in waves or storms might thus be said to represent animus as much as anima; to project the male archetype that completes or is missing in the female psyche. Women move from "an exclusive relationship with the same (the mother) and then discover a relationship with a different other ... the masculine". Bachelard (1983:15) also sees such violent water as a form of anger as "[t]urning malevolent, it becomes male" **(Figure 16)**. He suggests that such immense, threatening water arouses cosmic fear, an ancient, archetypal fear that humans have always experienced in the face of violent nature.

Figure 16
Ariana van Heerden, *34.4'S 18.5'E,* 2007, oil on canvas, 120 x 100 cm, private collection (photograph van Heerden)

Conclusion

In the discussion above, I interpreted a single symbolic image, water, in the work of the two artists and simultaneously used Wolflin's framework to formally distinguish the two sets of images with the aim of showing nuanced, different meanings that can arise from an image. So, it is evident that the meanings of images lie not only in their symbolic or archetypal aspects, but equally in their visual and material properties.

From a psychoanalytic and Jungian perspective, the importance of these paintings, or indeed any paintings that succeed in communicating to the viewer, lies more in their potential meaning than in their visual form. As Bachelard (1994: xxiii) notes, even in an art that requires skill, the success of the work is independent of any skill. It depends on its ability to communicate and move the viewer, and a vital strategy for this is through the archetypal symbol. Jung (1969:13) argues that, with the slow collapse of collective religious images/icons, we suffer from a lack of meaningful symbols that would speak via archetypes to the personal and collective unconscious. He writes of "the alarming poverty of symbols that is now the condition of our life". Thus, whether by their creation or by viewing them, the integration of such archetypes can be a healing one.

However, while a Jungian approach can indeed elucidate archetypal and symbolic images, ie, the iconography, it is limited in that it does not take any account of visual form. This is its major failing, and I hope that in the interpretations I offer, I have shown that both a Jungian and a visual reading may be necessary and may support each other in richer, more complete interpretations of artwork. The interpretations that I have explored, like all interpretations of artworks, are however neither true nor provable, but hopefully are persuasive, and add something to or enrich our viewing of the works. I would argue, along with others such as psychoanalytic critic Kuspit (2004: 9) that art has purpose for both artist and viewer: "[t]he serious spectator's aesthetic re-affirmation of the painting is a kind of re-creation of it, serving the same spiritual purpose as the artist's creation of it: creativity is a means of escaping from... everyday consciousness of the life-world." In making art, "the artist transfers his primitive feelings into his material, which becomes the medium through which they are transferred to the spectator" (Kuspit 2004: 15).

Kuspit (2004: 13) sees the role of art as a healing one, even if such healing is temporary and incomplete, as it involves insight into the core of the self. For both artists, images such as water are strong projections and for both there is arguably, from a Jungian perspective, a seeking for healing and wholeness, as there is an element of this in all artmaking. Water, whether depicted as a contained and small amount, or as vast and boundless, is always an element of healing, of washing clean and making whole, as well as a sinking away and dissolving into nothingness.

Notes

1 Roberts's 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.

2 Cirlot (1978) considers water such an important symbol/archetype that in *A dictionary of symbols* he analyses it in detail in his introduction, which seeks to define the symbol as fully as possible.

3 Jung like Cirlot considers water an important archetype and discusses it even before that other key one, the anima, in *The archetypes and the collective unconscious* (1969).

4 Jung (1969:24-25) in *The archetypes and the collective unconscious* introduces the anima, or feminine archetype, as a creature projected into water such as a mermaid, siren or water nymph, reinforcing the association of the archetypal female with water.

5 I have previously analysed the anima images in Roberts's work in more detail in *Body, Psyche and Symbol: The Paintings of Kevin Roberts* (2012) .

6 Although Wolfflin's use of formal and stylistic analysis of artworks, as well as his distinction between style and content, are outdated and old-fashioned, yet I would argue that his examination of the differences between linear and painterly approaches to painting may be useful here.

7 Bachelard (1983:13) refers to the side-by-side images of earth and water as "paste (*la pâte*)", the very essence of matter, the exemplary compound.

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Materiality and the making of the Tswana house from the early nineteenth century to the present

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This study explores the various factors that impacted on the materiality of the *ntlo*, the house of a married Tswana woman and her children, from the earliest recorded examples in the early nineteenth century, to the present. While the *kgotla* (the traditional male meeting place) features prominently in settlement research, the vernacular Tswana dwelling has received less attention. The study contradicts the simplistic and popular perception, that pre-industrial communities simply built their vernacular constructions with whatever material was available. It is found that, in addition to the availability of material, the critical determining factors that shaped materiality include gender, the earth and cosmology.
Keywords: Tswana, Kaditshwene, Mochudi, materiality, *ntlo*

Materialiteit en die maak van die Tswana huis vanaf die vroeë negentiende eeu tot die hede
Hierdie studie ondersoek die verskeie faktore wat 'n invloed uitgeoefen het op die materialiteit van die *ntlo*, die huis van 'n getroude Tswana vrou en haar kinders, vanaf die eersgenoteerde voorbeelde in die vroeë negentiende eeu tot op hede. Terwyl die *kgotla* (die tradisionele vergaderplek van mans) prominent in nedersettingsnavorsing gemeld word, het die volkseie Tswana-woning minder aandag ontvang. Die studie weerspreek die simplistiese en gewilde opvatting dat voor-industriële gemeenskappe eenvoudig hulle inheemse konstruksies gebou het met die materiaal wat tot hulle bekikking was. Benewens die beskikbaarheid van material, is die bevinding dat die kritiese bepalende faktore wat materialiteit gevorm het, geslag, die aarde en kosmologie insluit .
Sleutelwoorde: Tswana, Kaditshwene, Mochudi, materialiteit, *ntlo*

Early 19th century travellers, who travelled into the interior of South Africa, were surprised by the existence of Tswana agro-towns with populations of between 10 000 and 20 000 people. However, within a few decades many agro-towns were destroyed or simply abandoned because of the violent confrontations with Mzilikazi's marauding Ndebele, and with the aggressive Afrikaner Boers. Many Tswana tribes subsequently relocated further west to present day Botswana, where their vernacular villages continue to exist. This affords a researcher an architecturally diverse and geographically dynamic, but also culturally cohesive and chronologically uninterrupted, field of study.

The iconic image of an African village is one of round huts, surrounding cattle enclosures (Oliver 1999: 125). While this is a vivid mental image, it is simply too ambiguous for academic purposes. Whereas these enterprising explorers commented on the organic, but seemingly codified layout of settlements, later scholars readily recognised that the Tswana culture (based on the pre-eminence of cattle) synthesised their worldview, social structure and the physical layout of settlements into an arrangement that became known as the Central Cattle Pattern (CCP, figure 1). The CCP represents the homestead (*kgoro*) of an extended family. It consists of a roughly circular or elliptical core [court byre], with cattle stockades and the traditional meeting place (*kgotla*) surrounded by a fringe of the married women's houses. As Paul Lane (1998: 201) explains "each wife in a polygamous household has her own establishment or house (*ntlo, lelapa*). By this is meant the social group comprising the wife herself, her children and any other people directly attached to her." Traditionally and especially in pre-colonial times, the core is an exclusively male domain and the residential edge is female territory, separated by a neutral interstitial space for circulation.

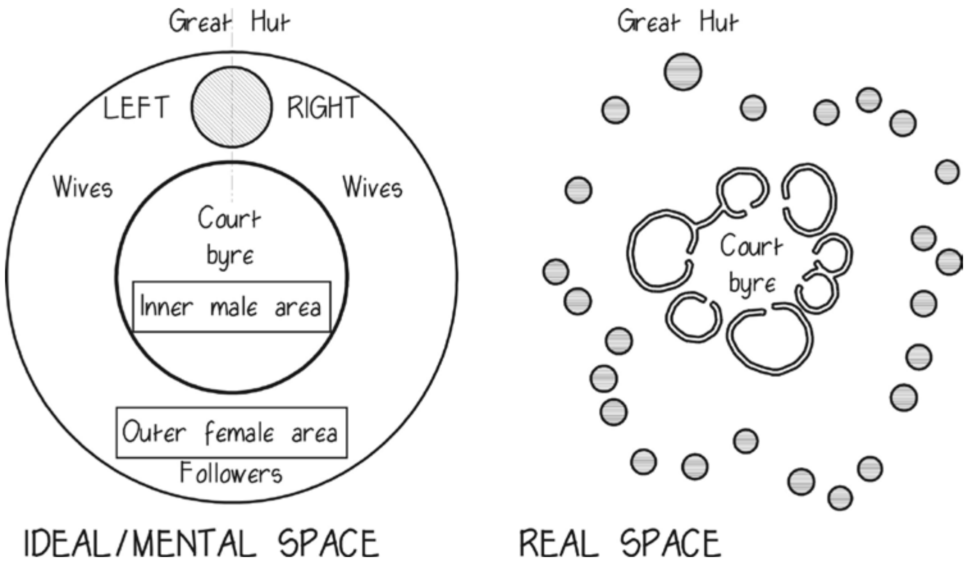

Figure 1
The Central Cattle Pattern (drawing by the author after Huffman 2007: 25, 29).

The CCP, with its specific characteristics, is quite a rigorous albeit idealised concept, which allows the definition of tested parameters. While the CCP is a convenient framework for researching Tswana settlement in general, previous research has been criticised for concentrating on the central zone, and neglecting the surrounding houses (Lane 1998: 187). Research with an architectural focus has also been rather sparse. My own investigations to date were mostly on form, function and geometry, without much reference to making. With this article I hope to contribute to research by contextualising the evolution of vernacular Tswana houses and their material expression.

In terms of this study "material" refers to the physical elements of construction; the *sine qua non* of building. "Materiality" refers to the purposeful articulation of the structure, defining or enclosing social space, not only as an ecologically appropriate arrangement, but especially as a response to cultural and economic exigencies.

The popular perception is that vernacular builders, especially in pre-industrial times, selected and manipulated readily available materials simply for their ability to enclose and span space, in order to protect the inhabitants against inclement weather and intruders. The reality is considerably more complex and multi-dimensional. It was found that in addition to the availability of material, the critical determinants that shaped construction include (1) custom and convention, (2) defence and privacy, (3) gender, (4) nature and the earth, and (5) cosmology and ritual. This is certainly not a comprehensive list.

Dithakong

Dithakong is the Tlhaping capital, east of Kuruman in the Northern Cape, which had been a major destination for several of the earliest 19th century expeditions from the Cape to the interior of the subcontinent. This agro-town is also referred to in colonial literature as Litakun, Litakoo or Lattakoo.

Samuel Daniell visited Dithakong in 1801, as part of the official Truter-Somerville expedition. The party was surprised at the size which was estimated to be as big as contemporaneous Cape Town, and include 2 000 to 3 000 huts, and 10 000 to 15 000 people (Barrow 1806: 391). William Burchell stayed in Dithakong in 1812, and describes it as a collection of little villages, each centred on a chieftain and spread over an area of approximately 3km across (Burchell 1824: 512). Missionary John Campbell followed in 1813 (figure 2) and again returned in 1820. However, Burchell (1824: 24) describes how the town was intermittently relocated (every four to six years), and describes the Tlhaping as semi-sedentary. Consequently, archaeologists have not managed to find the remains of any of these sites because they were constructed using earth, grass and timber only. Another missionary Robert Moffat, accompanied Campbell in 1820. They subsequently built the first missionary station in the region, in Kudumane (present-day Kuruman), where the Thlaping had moved by then.

Bell, Burchell, Campbell, and Daniell, among others, produced well-known sketches, engravings and watercolour illustrations (figure 3). Burchell, a trained naturalist, also wrote a seminal book, entitled *Travels in the interior of southern Africa, Volume 2* (1824), devoting 242 of 619 pages to "Litakun". It is probably the most extensive and scholarly account of pre-colonial Tswana customs and constructions. It is still available and the fact that Walton quotes him verbatim and extensively (1956: 53-57) is evidence of the authority and detail.

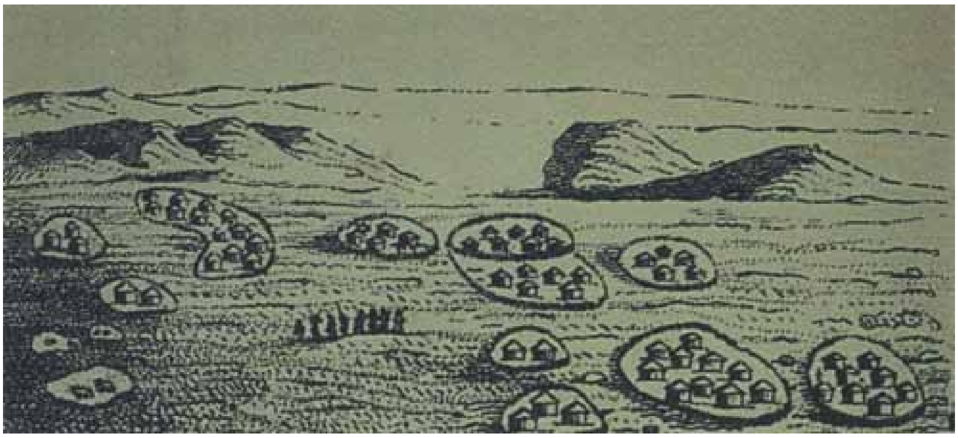

Figure 2
Sketch of Dithakong by Campbell 1813 (source: Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture / Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division).

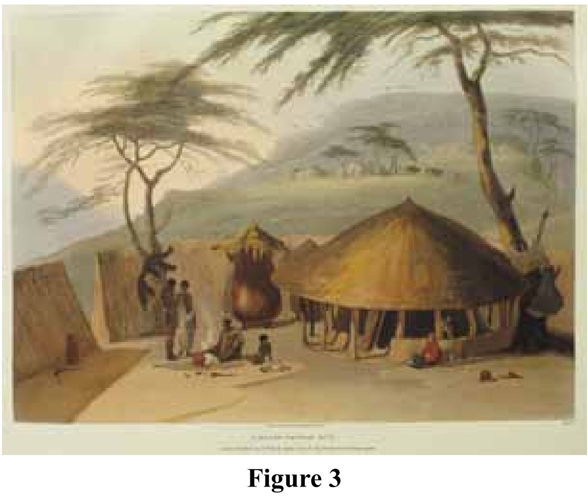

Figure 3
"A Boosh-wannah Hut" – a *lelapa* by Samuel Daniell, 1801 (source: Smithsonian Institution Libraries).

Kaditshwene

In spite of previous exposure to Tswana towns, the Hurutshe capital of Kaditshwene (called Kurreechane in early writings) situated 40km northeast of Zeerust, surprised Campbell (figure 4). Not only was it bigger than the others, but the Tlhaping and Rolong towns also had wooden fencing, where stone was used at Kaditshwene (Campbell 1822: 224). He estimated the population at 16 000 people (1822: 277).

While Campbell observed a prosperous stable community, the missionary Stephen Kay saw poverty and hunger only a year later. The early visits took place during a time of great hostility and danger to the inhabitants. Kay (1833: 189) reported that the people of Kaditshwene lived in fear. The position of the town, on the highest hill in the region, was clearly a defensive precaution. According to Boeyens (2000: 7) the town was attacked and destroyed by Mzilikazi soon after 1827, and the survivors relocated to another locality, 50km away.

Figure 4
A painting based on one of John Campbell's original sketches of Kaditshwene (source Campbell 1822: opposite 222).

There were a number of large stone-wall towns, including Molokwane and Marothodi (the historical capitals of the Kwena and Tlokwa respectively) in the Pilanesberg-Magaliesberg region. At Kaditshwene, Jan Boeyens (2012) could match 19th century writings with archaeological and anthropological findings. However, Molokwane (studied by Julius Pistorius) and Marothodi (studied by Mark Anderson 2009) had no graphic observations to underpin and corroborate their work. Most of these agro-towns were destroyed during the internal conflicts of the 1820s, known as the *difaqane. B*y the time the Trekboer settlers moved into their territories, most agro-towns had ceased to exist, and the despondent survivors – staunchly resisting white overrule – moved further northwest into what became the British Protectorate of Bechuanaland in 1885 (Botswana since independence in 1966), where they perpetuated their town-building tradition. The Kgatla who lived near Pilanesberg but founded Mochudi in 1871, are typical of this relocation (figure 5).

Mochudi

John and Jean Comaroff, and co-author Deborah James (2007: 61) note that:

> The overall design of Tswana towns remained fairly resilient throughout colonial Bechuanaland, their proportions changing relatively little with the passage of time. Even after the independence of Botswana (1966), the larger chiefdoms retained strong architectural traces of the past; they still do.

Comaroff *et al.* (2007) report on Isaac Schapera's photographs and research on Mochudi, a large village 37km north of Gaborone, and describe the "architecture of village life" and "domestic scenes" in considerable detail (figure 6). Today Mochudi, still the capital of the Kgatla, has a population of approximately 40 000. Significantly Gasebalwe Seretse (2007) regards the Kgatla "as the foremost custodians of the Setswana culture". He notes that, although the Kgatla were the first to build European-style houses, "it is possible that the oldest buildings in Botswana are to be found in Mochudi." Anita and Viera Larsson (1984) produced a copiously illustrated survey entitled *Traditional Tswana housing: A study in four villages in eastern Botswana*. In 1996 they released *Modernisation of Traditional Tswana Housing*. Both are seminal publications.

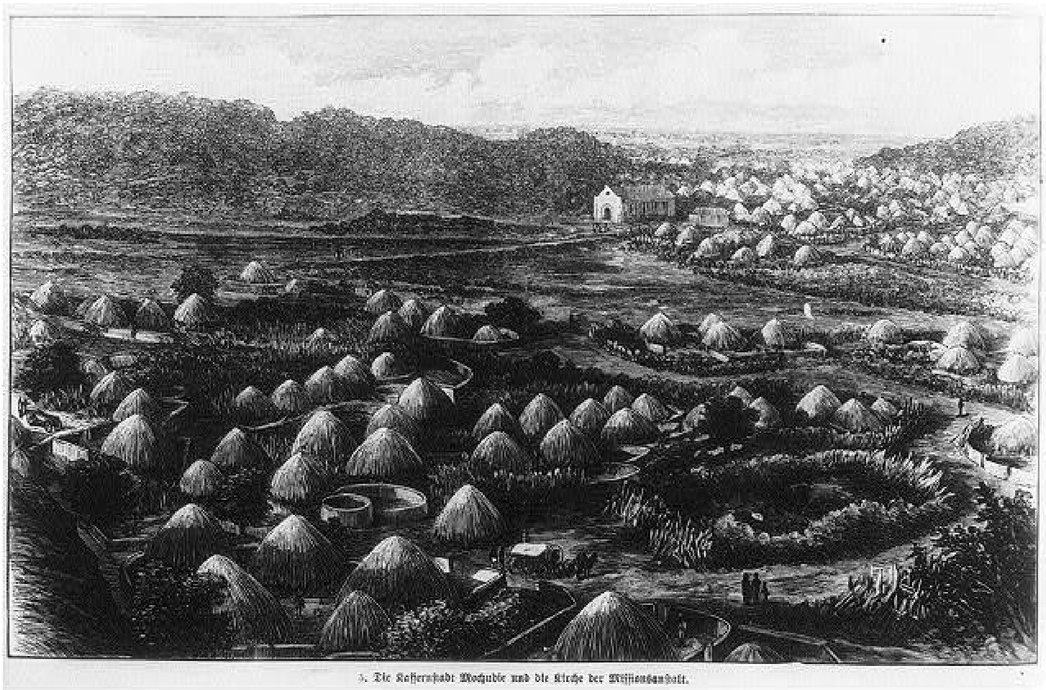

Figure 5
An image from 1899 entitled "The Kaffrarian city Mochudi and the mission church". (source: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.).

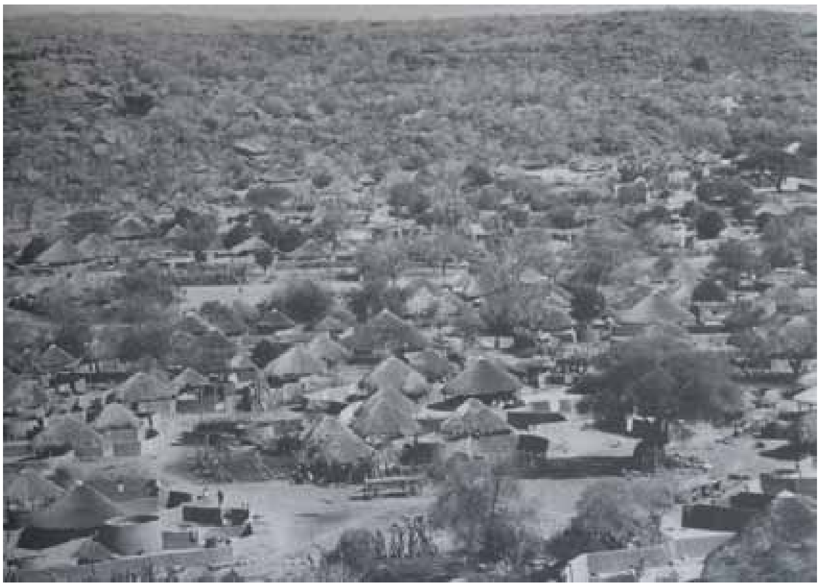

Figure 6
Part of Mochudi photographed by Isaac Schapera in the 1930s (source: Comaroff 2007: 63).

Custom and convention

Burchell (1824: 586) commented that "The Bachapins are a people who, in almost everything they do, adhere to ancient customs." As Graham Clark (1957: 248) succinctly put it in his vintage *Archaeology and Society*: "in primitive societies custom was king". Customs are, as Basil Davidson (1967: 169) explains, the essence of Africa's "guardian institutions". African communities were conservative, simply because change could threaten their survival (Reader 1997: 263).

At Dithakong, Burchell (1824: 364) observes that the houses are "without a single exception, of the same general form and outward appearance". He emphasises the difference between the front and rear courtyards (the bilobial typology), but also notes variations in section and plan. Each dwelling occupies an area of 12m to 18m in diameter and each is enclosed with a circular fence, some shaped like two joined elliptical areas (Burchell 1824: 515-516). These formed a semi-private front lobe (he calls it the "public section") and private rear lobe. The wall inside the doorway that obstructed view to the interior of the hut is also significant as it is not a standard configuration. The diameter of the rondavel-type (also called cone-on-cylinder) huts ranged from 2,4m to 4,0m (Burchell 1824: 517). From Dithakong, Campbell moved north and at the Rolong town of Mashow he observed that the huts were very similar to those of the Tlhaping, but with deeper verandas (Campbell 1822: 184). Campbell's drawings of Kaditshwene confirm the wide distribution of the type. Kay (1833: 199) visited Kaditshwene the following year and drew a plan of a very similar type of house as the one pictured by Burchell. He also noted that it is built in the same way as the ones he saw at Litakun. This type is described by Frescura (1981: 53) as "possibly the most universal of southern Africa's house forms". In fact, the cone-on-cylinder type dwelling is found in an area occupying about 60% of sub-Saharan Africa (Walton 1956: 128).

In spite of some variation, the Tswana houses seem to share two characteristics: one, a bilobial lapa arrangement, and two, a veranda supporting the roof (figure 7). In the Tswana settlements of the 19th century "the bilobial pattern is generally predominant. The dwellings form a fringe around the central group" (Maggs 1976: 40). Frescura (1981: 109-111) regards the veranda house as a "definite and separate genre of house form" which emerged in Zimbabwe by about AD 1100. The veranda was the only way to provide open but protected outdoor residential living space. It protects against sun and rain, creates a transition between inside and outside, and expands the area of an enclosed space.

Amos Rapoport (1969: 4-5) explains that buildings are identical in primitive societies, but that the "vernacular design process is one of models and adjustments or variations", exactly as the early visitors recorded. However, amongst the Tswana the process of entrenching a model seems to be quicker than usually assumed; the encountered patterns only emerged in the 1700s, with many Tswana communities living in beehive shelters, and corbelled shelters before them.

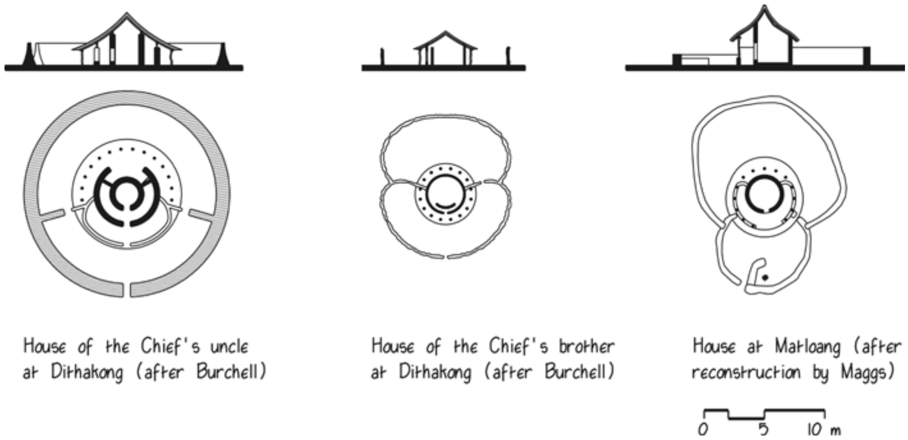

Figure 7
Bilobial types (drawings by the author).

According to Maggs (1972: 59) Dithakong is a Tlhaping settlement to this day, and despite the vastly changed economic and political context, and the attendant changes in material culture, the bilobial pattern is still the basis of many dwellings. But many huts have become rectangular and larger than before. They have doors and windows with wooden frames but retain their conical, thatched roofs supported by posts.

The drawings by Franco Frescura have become iconic in the field of Tswana settlement study (figure 8). He drew these after (a) Burchell's engraving at Dithakong, (b) a reconstruction by Michael Taylor at Buffelshoek, 20km north of Parys, (c) a reconstruction by Tim Maggs at Matloang, 50km south of Kroonstad, and (d) a photograph by Maggs at Dithakong in 1976.

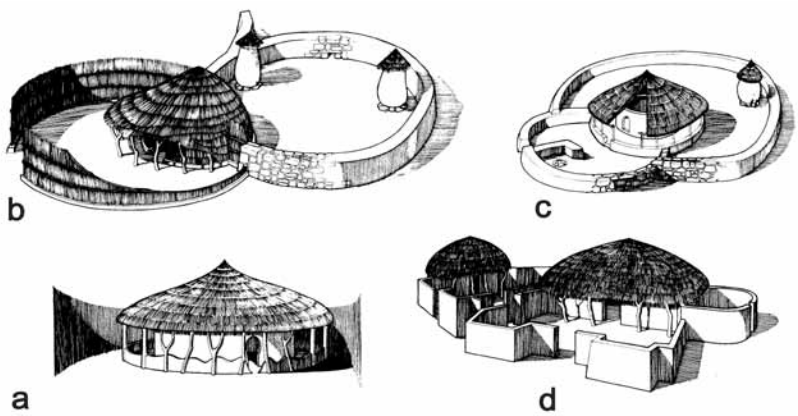

Figure 8
Bilobial homesteads types
(source: Frescura 1981: 156).

The various Tswana tribes (*morafe*) were never a federation. In fact they competed, sometimes violently, over cattle and resources. It is therefore so much more remarkable that, in spite of (perhaps because of) considerable "fission and dispersal" (Hall, Anderson, Boeyens & Coetzee 2008: 64), they have been sharing a cultural superstructure that has remained resilient, but responsive and dynamic at the same time (Tlou & Campbell 1997: 95). In the villages of Botswana there are still considerable manifestations of traditional cultural practices, but even there the customs seem to be disappearing (Tlou & Campbell 1997: 371).

Materials and finishes

Burchell (1824: 517) describes all the houses at Dithakong as thatched round huts (rondavels) constructed of earth walls, of between 100mm and 150mm thick. The thatched roofs, most at about 8m in diameter, are usually supported on a separate circle of posts, forming a veranda. Whereas Frescura depicts a monolithic earth wall (figure 9), Burchell (1824: 519) describes a wattle-and-daub technique: "Walls [are] formed of sticks neatly plastered over with a composition of sandy clay and the fresh manure from the cattle-pounds", or grass "cut into small pieces". Travelling beyond that area, Moffat encountered many ruined and deserted towns, and commented that the standing walls "were generally composed of clay with a small mixture of cow-dung, and so well plastered and polished with the former that they had the appearance of being varnished" (Wallis 1945: 8).

Beehives in particular are associated with nomads, and rondavels are accepted as the dwelling of a settled community. The veranda rondavel, constructed of thatch over earth walls, was the reported type of dwelling throughout the region in the early 19th century, without exception. Walling material, however, varied from woven branches and wooden stakes at Dithakong, to stone rear lobes and wooden or reed front lobes at Kaditshwene, to exclusively stone enclosures at Buffelshoek. Maggs (1976: 285) writes that while the walling material forming the bilobial *lapas* may be made of stone or brushwood, the spaces remain the same.

This phenomenon is significant because neither stone nor wood were necessarily the most abundant materials where they were respectively used as walling. At Dithakong there were two types of fences (Burchell 1824: 515-516). The first, usually about 1,8m high, consisted of densely interwoven and neatly trimmed twigs and small branches, to the extent that the texture was "as even as that of a basket". The second type was constructed of acacia stakes and branches by "poorer inhabitants", and had a much rougher appearance. Campbell (1822: 224) remarked that every house in Kaditshwene was surrounded by a stone wall. Kay (1833: 227) also describes stone-walled cattle kraals.

Choosing timber and stone at Dithakong and Kaditshwene respectively is puzzling. Dithakong is rocky and has few trees, whereas Kaditshwene has an abundance of trees. Burchell (1824: 356-451) writes:

> As we approached the hills which partly enclose the valley in which Litakun stands, the ground became uneven and rocky [...] a few [trees] were here and there to be seen standing amidst the dwellings; but excepting these, no other tree was visible in any quarter [...]. On this hill, between the rocks and stones, grow a few shrubby plants.

Burchell (1824: 513) also notes, as evident by the "stumps and stems" that all trees have been cut down for building and for fuel. Finally, Burchell (1824: 526) states that "[t]he mountains about Litakun are of moderate height and of rounded or flattened forms; and everywhere bare of wood, excepting a few scattered bushes."

It is puzzling that the Tlhaping did not build in stone, which was plentiful at Dithakong. Dithakong means 'place of ruins' in Setswana. There were ruins of a long-abandoned stone-wall settlement nearby, that all visitors were aware of. However, Campbell (1822: 126) specifically ascribed the ruins to the Hurutshe. But, the Tswana had no idea who built these stone ruins, and were completely unfamiliar with stone-wall techniques. Kaditshwene is situated in a Bushveld vegetation zone (Hall *et al*. 2008: 75) where plenty of timber, used for roof rafters and posts, and fencing stakes, is found. Clearing a space strewn with rocks and building walls with them, such as at nearby Molokwane, was certainly expedient where a large number of cattle and people have to move about. A large number of agro-towns in the Rustenburg region were stone-walled. Robert Moffat (in Wallis 1945: 8) notes: "The ruined towns exhibited signs of immense labour and perseverance, every fence being composed of stones, averaging five or six feet high, raised apparently without mortar, lime, or hammer." Why the Hurutshe and other Tswana tribes used stone while timber was plentiful is not known; perhaps as a defensive measure? After all, this was the era and place of the Difaqane and all the stress and dangers that accompanied that bloody epoch.

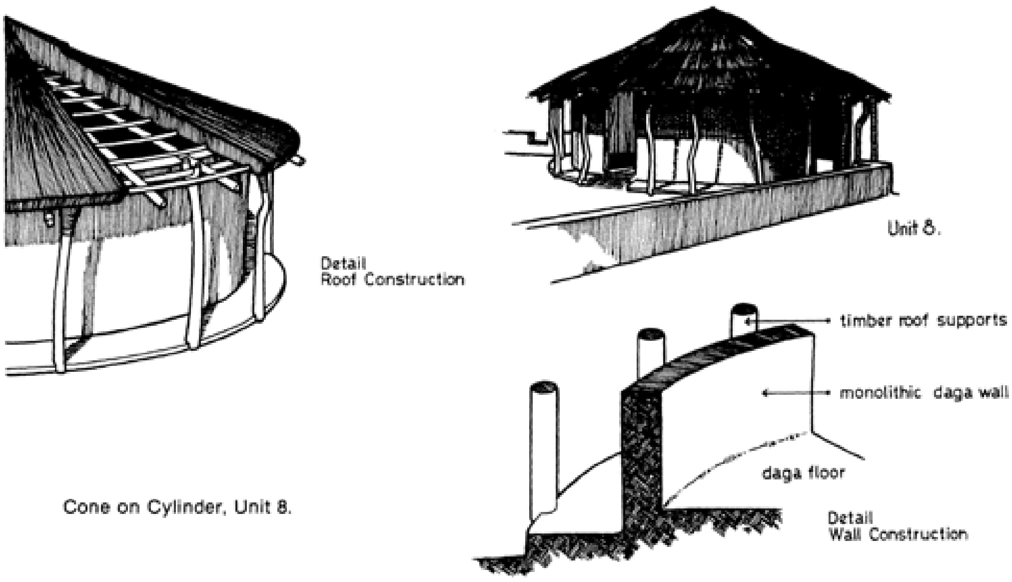

Figure 9
Tswana construction
(source: Frescura 1981: 59).

Decoration

Wall decorations were scarce at Dithakong. Burchell (1824: 458) only recounts the clumsy paintings of animals, painted with white clay, by the younger wife of the chief. At Kaditshwene there was extensive and careful decoration, in spite of external threats. Campbell (1822: 224) comments that some of the houses in Kaditshwene were painted yellow on the outside. He remarks significantly that one hut was painted red and yellow "with some taste", which may indicate decorative patterns. Campbell (1822: 228) also notes: "In some houses there were figures, pillars, etc. carved or moulded in hard clay". His painting of the interior of Chief Senosi's private hut is unique (figure 10).

Kay (1833: 193-200) comments on the “superior cleanliness, taste, and genius of the people”, and speaks of “whimsically ornamented” interior walls. He also writes significantly on individual taste (1833: 201):

> In the way of embellishment, however, each has his own taste to direct him; and the walls are usually decorated with pictorial and moulded representations of the native animals, and human inhabitants, in a style that shows a germ of genius […].

Decoration and symbolism are interrelated of course. This is confirmed by Simon Hall (1998: 250), who describes Sotho-Tswana decoration as symbolic markers of territory. Ron Eglash (2005: 200) agrees in his well-known book entitled African Fractals. He notes that Sotho-Tswana women use the geometric structure of flowers – intrinsically associated with the “regenerative power of women” – to affirm identity, territory and boundaries.

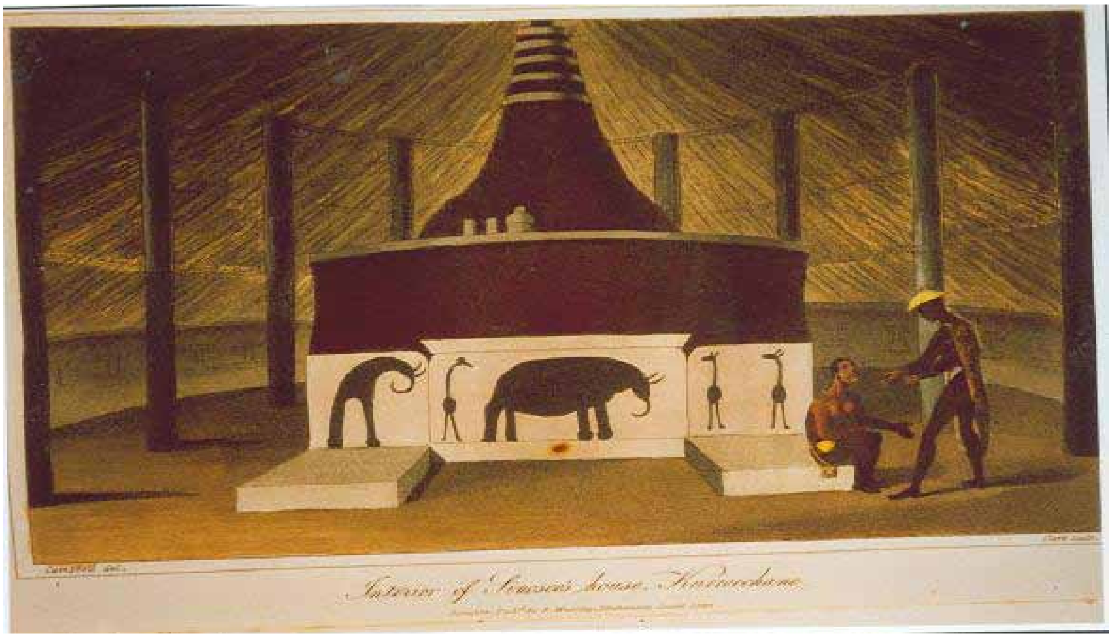

Figure 10
Interior of Chief Senosi’s house, documented by John Campbell (source: Campbell 1822: 268 opposite).

Defense and privacy

Dithakong, far removed from the marauding Mzilikazi but not without threats, was situated on a flat, low-lying terrain partly bordered by low hills. Campbell (1822: 220, 232) noted that the Hurutshe capital of Kaditshwene stood on top of one of the largest hills in the region: “[B]ecause of enemies, and that several other towns for the same reason were built on eminences, but they found it very inconvenient, being so far from wood and water.”

The high stone walls at Kaditshwene could have been a defensive measure, but at Dithakong the stone walls seem unnecessary. There could be another reason for the high walls and screens: privacy. The Tswana used to live a polygamous lifestyle. A polygamous society, combined with an entrenched practice of marrying cousins (Tlou & Campbell 1997: 94) could have resulted in very involved familial relationships. Lane (1998: 201) also comments on the intertwined wife-to-wife relationships, which could have created the need for territoriality, and for visual privacy. This would have been achieved with high walls. In fact, Frescura (1981: 26) recognised that the Tswana bilobial dwelling sets out to outline a territorial statement. Since Tswana society is now monogamous, *lapa* walls are now very low, and it has been said that high walls would now be considered “antisocial”.

Gender

Burchell (1824: 515) notes that “the business of building the houses, as well as that of keeping them in order, is a duty which, in this nation, custom has allotted to the women only; and I was always assured, that every part was the work of their hands”. Burchell (1824: 590) is hugely impressed by the bilobial dwellings: “I have given them due praise for their architecture, with regard to the neatness of their dwellings and the plan on which they are constructed.” Many visitors commented on the quality of housekeeping. Burchell (1824: 521) in particular observed:

> There is one quality for which the Bachapins, and probably the other tribes of Bichuanas, are greatly to be admired, and in which they excel all the southern inhabitants of this part of Africa; the neatness, good order and cleanliness of their dwellings.

The bilobial dwelling is not a family dwelling, it is the territory of a married woman. The front courtyard is a semi-public outdoor space, used for cooking, eating and socialising. The rear courtyard is used for storage, fowl roosts and what Maggs (1976: 281) calls “rough housework”. The hut itself is used for sleeping and cooking (in inclement weather), while the veranda provides shade during the day.

Burchell (1824: 521) describes the hut of one of the chiefs as much more modest than many of the other huts at Dithakong, perhaps because the chief conducted his business in the kgotla and did not receive visitors in his hut (figure 11a). Significantly, Burchell (1824: 521-522) notes that the house belonging to the Chief’s uncle was also one of the largest: “[A] circumstance to be ascribed perhaps more to the architectural talents of his wife, than to his own rank or situation in society.” It is clear, therefore, that women, as part of the process of building also decided the dimensions and spatial organisation (Burchell 1824: 455).

Although, as Walton (1956: 52) stresses, the *lelapa* was the real home, with all the domestic activities taking place there. The *lelapa* was not a male space. Men ate in the *kgotla*, where they also worked leather, repaired tools and weapons, and tended to the livestock. However, women did more than build houses, raise children, prepare food and clean the house. They also worked the fields. At Dithakong, Robert Moffat (1842: 251-252) observed the women working hard in the scorching sun and their husbands “lounging in the shade”. Burchell (1824: 586-587) writes: “Bachapin agriculture is ... performed entirely by women.” The Tlhaping cultivated sorghum, kidney-beans, pumpkin and calabash gourd (the shell of the latter used extensively as a domestic utensil and container). It is significant that Burchell (1824: 588-589) noted a general scarcity of food, and in order to “escape starvation, or at least to mitigate the daily hunger”, the women also search the plains for wild roots and berries.

Denbow and Thebe (2006: 96-98) remind us that women built the “traditional earth and cow dung houses ... with few tools other than their own hands”. Today, new houses (or extensions) in cement blocks and plaster, are built by men using mixers and trowels. Since the majority of houses in Botswana now have masonry walls and corrugated iron or cement tile roofs, the responsibility for building has shifted from the women to the men.

Paul Lane (1998: 187) explains that the CCP dictates that the court byre, the male domain, is the core of the homestead (*kgoro*). As such it is surrounded by houses that constitute both "a protective barrier between the settlement and the outside world and the settlement element that is in most immediate contact with the outside world." Both the houses and the homesteads demonstrate what Lane (1998: 189) calls "gynecomorphic forms", which is an interesting theme that needs more research.

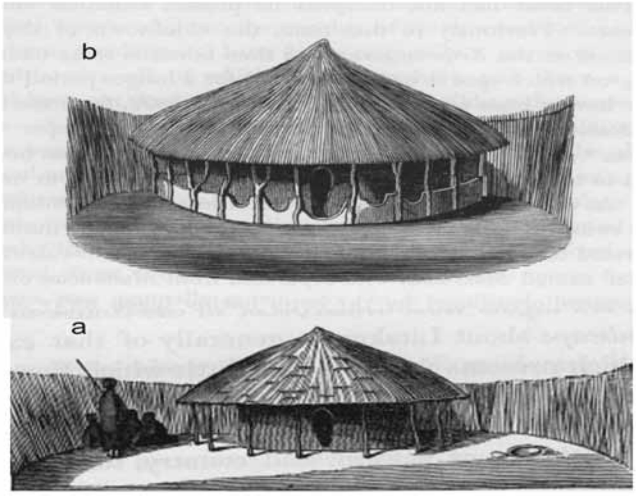

Figure 11
Engravings by Burchell: (a) a chief's hut; (b) a typical house (source: Burchell 1824: 511, 528).

Nature and the earth

Burchell (1824: 517) writes about Dithakong: "I never saw among them a building, or enclosure, with straight or right lined sides". Moffat (in Wallis 1945: 8) observed a similar phenomenon further north: "Everything is circular, from the inner fences which surround each house to the walls which sometimes encompass the town". Rapoport (1969: 25, 77) points out that circular huts are easier to roof than rectangular ones, but emphasises that the choice might ultimately depend on the symbolic nature of the forms, adding in a footnote that some traditional cultures do not have a word for "straight".

The circles and curves probably symbolise harmony between the earth and sky. The earthy colours, texturing and small scale could be evidence of a process of merging the built artefact, with the landscape. The low scalloped wall, forming the veranda of the hut in figure 11b, is certainly reminiscent of the low, flat hills surrounding Dithakong. The *lelapa* connects the living space with the sky, especially at night under the stars. Andrew Smith (in Lye 1975: 110) explains:

> It is impossible in the distance to judge the character of a Bichuana [Tswana] town or to conjure the number of its inhabitants. At first the lowness of the houses and their similarity to each other give it the appearance of a confused mass and, until the smoke from the huts or some other indication of the abode of man is discerned, it may be mistaken for a dark patch of soil.

Burchell (1824: 527) noticed, very astutely in my opinion:

> The landscape about Litakun is generally of that extensive and open kind which presents for the pencil, little which European artists are accustomed to consider as picturesque. It possesses, however, some beauties of its own, which depend more on the effects of aerial tints and the coloring [sic] of a warm arid country, than on richness of subject or romantic outline.

This open landscape could have had special meaning for the Tswana; a meaning which seems relevant even at present to humankind as a whole. Mallgrave and Goodman (2011: 227-228) suggest that we "have a particular fondness for environmental conditions that in an evolutionary sense have favored [sic] our biological survival."

Cosmology and ritual

Rapoport (1969: 49) writes that in traditional societies in particular, the house served as a "social control mechanism". That is certainly relevant when the *ntlo* is seen in the context of the CCP, and its intrinsic allocation of gender-based responsibilities and spaces. In addition, the CCP allowed Tswana women to create what Rapoport (1969: 49) called "the ideal environment". The circularity of settlement has some practical implications, but could be interpreted as a representation of the metaphysical cosmic image, a concept that has been pervasive in sub-Saharan Africa (Rapoport 1969: 50). The bilobial dwellings, which form a fringe around the central group, alludes to symbolic and practical protection not only of the male domain as a whole, but also of the community's greatest asset and measure of wealth – its cattle.

In 1947, the City Council of Pretoria built a so-called *lapa* scheme in Mamelodi West, consisting of rondavels around a centralised space, emulating traditional Tswana dwelling form. Perhaps this was appreciative of the popularity of the indigenous rondavel-dwelling in rural areas. But residents considered them "patronising, demeaning and controlling" and refused to move into them (Bakker, De Jong & Matlou 2003: 17-18). It can therefore be reasonably concluded that the act of building a house, and specifically a rondavel it seems, is more than the mere construction of shelter.

Conclusion

The traditional Tswana dwelling is the tangible manifestation of a complex value system that combines custom, kinship, climate, resources and settlement geography, cosmology, and ritual. Creating the *ntlo* is a female activity above all, and inherently associated with the mother's role to provide sustenance and protection at all scales.

Materiality was influenced by the various exigencies of the day, including political, ideological and ecological considerations. It is abundantly clear that materiality dictated social behaviour, and vice versa. And in the process it was the aesthetic appreciation and spatial sensibilities of women that constantly mediated between materiality and purpose. With increasing globalisation, it is often assumed that materiality has lost its relevance as a means of signifying the cultural boundaries and symbolic meaning of domestic space. This study hopes to sensitise readers to the fact that materiality, in Tswana society, remains relevant. This awareness could improve our understanding of the nature of aesthetic appreciation of black households.

At international housing conferences, female participants from especially Africa and the Middle East, continually complain that social housing in particular is insensitive to traditional gender-orientated needs for privacy and functionality. Perhaps the lesson to be learned from this study is that women should be prioritised when architects are commissioned to design social housing.[1]

Note

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Florensky and Malevich: the image and materiality

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Daniel Miller claims that artefacts essentially not only have material existence – size, shape, texture, weight, colour, the substance from which they are made – but also the human value placed upon them, the context in which they are given agency, when they become engaged in the vital play of contemporary life: the material only acquires meaning, significance through cultural usage, a disaggregated hybridity that contributes to our sense of a cultural reality. In his book *Iconostasis* (1922) the Russian priest and writer Pavel Florensky insists on the significance of the material specificity of icons within the religious ontology of Russian orthodoxy. Similarly Kazimir Malevich's evolving concept of Suprematism can only be grasped through the "new realism" of his non-objective images, icons for a post-revolutionary future. Material objects – icons and Suprematist images – can exercise within social situations an agency that aims to bring about cultural effects. Both thinkers lived through the early years of the post-1917 Russian revolutions where their humane concepts of dialectical materialism came in conflict with more mundane materialism of Bolshevism.
Keywords: Materiality, Agency, Icon, Suprematism

Florensky en Malevich. Het beeld en materialiteit.
Daniel Miller beweert dat artefacten in wezen niet alleen een materieel bestaan hebben - grootte, vorm, textuur, gewicht, kleur, de stof waaruit ze zijn vervaardigd - maar dat daar bovenop ook een menselijke waarde geldt, de context waarin ze bestaansrecht worden gegeven, als ze in het vitale spel van het hedendaagse leven betrokken zijn: het materiaal krijgt pas betekenis, waarde door cultureel gebruik, een uiteengesplitste hybriditeit dat bijdraagt aan ons gevoel van een culturele realiteit. In zijn boek Iconostase (1922) dringt de Russische priester en schrijver Pavel Florensky aan op het belang van de materiële specificiteit van de iconen binnen de religieuze ontologie van de Russische orthodoxie. Ook het evoluerend concept 'Suprematism' van Kazimir Malevich kan alleen worden begrepen door middel van het 'nieuwe realisme' van zijn niet-objectieve beelden, iconen voor een post-revolutionaire toekomst. Materiële objecten - iconen en suprematistische beelden – kunnen binnen sociale situaties een invloed uitoefenen dat zich richt op culturele effecten. Beide denkers hebben de eerste jaren van de post-1917 Russische revoluties meegemaakt waarin hun humane concepten van het dialectisch materialisme in conflict kwam met meer alledaagse materialisme van het bolsjewisme.
Keywords: Materiality, Agency, Icon Suprematism

"We cannot know who we are, or become what we are, except by looking in a material mirror, which is the historical world created by those who lived before us. This world confronts us as material culture and continues to evolve through us." Daniel Miller, 'Introduction' to Daniel Miller (ed.), *Materiality* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005), p. 8

As a result of praxis – manual skill informed by knowledge and custom – human beings make things for use.[1] Most of these things are mundane - tools, implements, clothing, shelter, food and drink, protection of the body against the elements, defence against foes and predators. Over time the mind has developed thought processes that not only look for ways to extend praxis, to enhance capacities, but also to contemplate and evaluate that praxis and its social contexts, as well as the contemplators' selfhood, their concepts of natural and supernatural worlds. Knowledge of praxis is passed from one generation to another through language, but also through the use of imagery. Aspects of contemplation, concepts, are given a form of mental and social materiality through the use of images – the cave drawings and bas-reliefs of prehistoric societies, for example. Images were the only way ideas, beliefs, stories, could be rendered in material form before writing.

As Daniel Miller points out, "in his phenomenology of the Spirit, Hegel suggests that there can be no fundamental separation between humanity and materiality. That everything that we are and do arises out of a reflection upon ourselves given by the mirror image of the process by which we create form and are created by the same process."[2] "The very act of creating form creates consciousness or capacity such as skill and thereby transforms both form and the self-consciousness of that which has consciousness, or the capacity of that which now has skill."[3]

It is in the nature of human relations to the image that the materiality of the sign-bearing medium becomes invisible, overlooked, so that we see the spirit of an ancestor, a pathway to contemplating a god, a landscape, a portrait, and not the moulded clay, the paint on wood or canvas. Yet the material form and medium of the image is essential to both its social invisibility and its "affecting presence"[4]: change the materiality and you rupture the praxis. The material object and its sign-bearing significance are fused in social practice, we do not disaggregate the natural hybridity of form and function in our cognition of the image.

Florensky

The Russian Orthodox priest Pavel Florensky (1882-1937) wrote extensively about both the materiality and spiritual significance of the icon, particularly in his book *Iconostasis* written between 1918 and 1920.[5] It was a period of profound change in the life of the Russian Orthodox Church and for Florensky himself. The Moscow Theological Seminary in Sergiev Posad near Moscow, in which he taught, was closed in March 1919. In November monks were forbidden their dormitory in the monastery of the Lavra of the Trinity and St Sergius near where Florensky lived with his family. On 31 May 1920 the Cathedral of the Trinity in the Lavra was sealed off and in 1922 the Bolshevik government issued a decree on the confiscation of church valuables. *Iconostasis* is a defence of Florensky's deeply held values that were being eroded all around him, as the spirit of Russian Orthodoxy was gradually starved of material oxygen.

In *Iconostasis* Florensky claimed that there is nothing accidental about the materiality of the iconic forms, nor about the material lives of the icon painters. Artistic praxis and media "flow from the sacred purpose." "Neither the techniques nor the materials…are accidental; none of them may be understood as having simply arrived – in the accidents of history – inside the Church, as if any of them could be painlessly and easily replaced by other techniques and other materials."[6] The icon cannot be compared with any other art form, nor can it be replaced by other types of images, "as if materials and techniques were somehow arbitrarily connected with artistic ideas and concepts, somehow extrinsic to aesthetic essences."[7]

In claiming that "it is impossible, then, to conceive even as a purely aesthetic experiment an icon composed in an alien technique with alien materials: it could not possibly be an icon,"[8] Florensky emphasises an essential materiality that was unaffected by regional variations in colouration and composition, by changes in style over time, by the influence of Western art from the 16th century, by the massive intrusion of Russian popular culture into the range of subject matter, or by artistic dexterity.

> This impossibility becomes vividly clear when we consider the spiritual essence of the icon. The artistic strategies and tactics of icon painting, i.e. the materials used and the ways of technically using them, are the metaphysical modalities by which the icon possesses incarnate life. The materials and techniques of an art – any art – are symbolic: for each single one of them possesses its own concretely determined metaphysical aliveness through which it corresponds to a unique spiritual fact.[9]

Florensky makes claims for the appropriateness of specific materials to their metaphysical function.

> If we think about the surfaces of icon painting – about the exact biology and physics of the artistic surfaces (i.e. their chemical and physical natures) about what precisely coheres the colour-pigments as well as their chemical constituents; if we think about what various dissolvents and varnishes exactly do in the icon; if, in short, we think about the myriad *material causes* [Florensky's emphasis] operating in any art, then we are already directly engaged in reflecting upon that profoundly metaphysical disposition which the creative will expresses in and as its wholeness.[10]

Material and creative function forge a natural hybridity that is the result of both manual praxis and the history of concepts and social interactions. "In creativity [there is] something far beyond the merely mental arbitrariness of rational choice…the powers of creativity continue the primary activity of organic organisation, that activity through and of which the physical body is itself woven."[11]

The Russian wall of icons, the iconostasis, "the window on Heaven", which separates the congregation from the sacred space of the altar (the sanctuary), which replaced the Byzantine *templon* (openwork altar rail) around 1400, whilst marking a shift in the material display of icons,[12] did not affect the integrity of the materiality of icons themselves within this frame. "Otherworldliness" is conveyed through the material even when that materiality becomes, as it were, invisible through the assumption of the ubiquitous hybridity of the image. "An icon can be of high or not-so-high quality, but a genuine apprehension of otherworldliness, a genuine spiritual experience invariably constitutes its foundation."[13]

The materiality of icons cannot be considered separately to the materiality of their context, their place in the space of a Russian Orthodox church, their surfaces lit by oil lamps and candles, the dim Northern light filtered down through slits in the drum of the dome, the air rendered sacred through a mist of incense, an air vibrant with the voices of unaccompanied choristers.[14] There is also, Florensky argues, a particular colouration to the Orthodox Church interior in which the icon and frescoes play a significant role. These qualities of the materiality of the Orthodox interior in themselves create a sense of the power of that "crystalline transparency of Orthodox liturgical life,"[15] become the locus of engagement of subject and object, such that it is possible, in such material circumstances of the body, of the full play of the senses,[16] for the believer at prayer to experience the saints descending from the icon to give their blessing. It is a situated experience of material life that shapes both human sentient experience and thought processes: the image plays an essential part in the living materiality of the liturgical space for the engaged believer. Icons become "agentic objects" within that space of liturgical action, within the vital play of Orthodox worship, acting as "interlocutors between persons, things, and worlds".[17] The material and immaterial become enmeshed, collapsing the boundaries of subject and object. In these circumstances icons "represent a presence of power in realising the world, crafting things from nothing, subject from nonsubjects."[18]

The deitic imaginary, religious ideas and sentiments, a sense of collective identity and belonging, of history, an ontology, takes form through the concrete locus of engagement with the icon in the living context of Orthodox worship. It is as if the objectification of specific religious events through the imagery of the icon imbues the greater realm of Orthodox belief with agency, with spiritual efficaciousness.

Florensky, in his condemnation of Western reason, contends that the very form of the canvas on a stretcher in Renaissance art is related to the individuality, "the sensuous liquidity" of the Renaissance painter. "The icon board: immovable, hard, unbending, …is far too strict, obligatory, and ontological for the hand of the Renaissance artist."[19] The purpose of the icon is not to depict the apparent, the world as seen through reason and the eye, the Renaissance's Optical Model, but as a means to apprehend the invisible world, what is "sensuously unavailable", but essentially "real".[20] This is the reason for the use of gold in Orthodox icons to depict the spiritual firmament:[21] blue merely renders the apparent sky, the sensuous experience of looking into space, not the religious aspiration of apprehending the heavens.

For Florensky, then, the icon is an essential object within the orthodox frame of being, constituting its context of lived action. Icons play a part in the social process of influencing a perception of the world, of cosmology, of ontology, of who and what we are, of the moral structure of the world in which we act. Their materiality, constituted of the hybridity of praxis, object and concept, both represent and interpret Orthodox reality. Icons act as emphasis frames, simplifying that mystical reality by focusing on subsets of belief – the life and work of Christ, the Apostles and Fathers of the Church, that are mere external, material, visualised cyphers for a reality that lies beyond, beyond the apparent, the optical, the sensuously experienced, beyond reason. It is this frame and the material qualities of the icon, as against any other form of visual art, that give the icon power and authority within the Orthodox world, that constitute normative behaviour, Orthodox second nature, the Orthodox orientation to the world, or habitus. The intangible is grounded in the tangible.

In an article written in October 1918 Florensky likened the liturgical rite of the Orthodox church to a synthetic aesthetic experience, a *Gesamkunstwerk*, experienced by the congregation through their senses of sight, hearing, smell and touch, materially through their body. When cultural experiences such as this cease to exist and the objects that are used in such rites (*deistva*) are removed to a museum, the object changes its character, loses its power: an icon in a museum becomes "a work of art" at best, an ethnographic specimen at worst – it becomes merely material and ceases to enjoy the conceptual richness of it former hybrid character. "A museum that functions autonomously is false",[22] he writes, and the essential adjuncts to ritual "die, or at least enter a state of [suspended animation]."[23] Though materially the object remains the same, it is now, conceptually, a freak. "Verily, *lucus a non lucendo*."[24]

When icons took on characteristics of artworks, became precious and collectable, Florensky felt their integrity challenged. "Icons in an excessively delicate style, for example the Stroganov manner, are of course characteristic of an age that turned its sacred objects into items of luxury, vanity and collectability."[25] Furthermore, putting an object into a museum "transgresses against life, slid[es] on to the oversimplified, easiest path of stifling and soul-destroying collecting. For isn't that what happens when an aesthete or archaeologist regards the signs of life in some organism, a functionally unified whole, as self-sufficient *objects*, severed from the living spirit, outside of their true functional relationship to the whole."[26] Thus for Florensky "materiality" encompasses not simply the object, but the object in its "vital play",[27] the environment for which it was conceived, and the phenomenological conditions for its enactment, for it to realise its power, for it to act. "The work of art is the centre of an entire cluster of conditions, which alone make possible its existence as something artistic; outside of its constitutive conditions it *simply does not exist* as art."[28] "In a museum we see not icons but merely caricatures of them"[29] (Florensky's emphasis).

It is in this spirit that Florensky included in his notes in preparation for this essay his positive response to the notion of the late Metropolitan Vladimir that rather than gathering all Russian religious art treasures into a museum he would prefer to see them burnt.[30]

It is significant that Florensky wrote *Iconostasis* in the aftermath of the October Revolution in Russia that led to the formation of the atheist Bolshevik government. From 1918 to 1920 he served on the Commission for the Preservation of Monuments and Antiquities of the Lavra of the Trinity and St Sergius in Sergiev Posad, the architectural complex at the heart of Russian Orthodoxy then being reorganised as a museum. He was also invited to teach a course on Byzantine art at the Moscow Institute of Historical and Artistic Researches and Museology. The book was meant to serve as an explication of Orthodox belief and practice, emphasising the role of icons, and hence, despite the feelings expressed in his notes, the need to preserve rather than destroy them, because of their role in Russians' orientation to the world, an orientation that was fast being redirected and replaced by the new orthodoxy of Marxism-Leninism. There is a painful self-contradiction in Florensky's position here, as he sought to come to terms with the destruction of the material and phenomenological conditions for the enactment of his spiritual beliefs.

Florensky was also a research scientist and entertained the possibility of legitimate parallel thinking, upholding a scientific basis for material culture and orthodox belief for spiritual aspirations. He certainly attempted to live that duality, as well as act as a salvage museologist for the preservation of the most valuable (from his perspective) material objects from the Orthodox past. However there was a fundamental split between the closed mysteries of Orthodoxy and the open enquiry of the scientist that made parallel thinking untenable to the Marxist mind, which, at its most positive, was intent on enhancing social capacities, at least at this stage of the Russian Revolution. If Florensky entertained the idea of the parallel progression of science and spirit such a duality became increasingly untenable within Bolshevik orthodoxy. The ideological frameworks of the two orthodoxies were incommensurable, conceptually incompatible, as he was to understand tragically in the not too distant future.

Malevich

In December 1915 Kazimir Malevich showed Suprematist images, the New Realism, for the first time at the "Last Futurist Exhibition of Paintings: 0.10" at Nadezhda Dobychina's Art Bureau on the Field of Mars in Petrograd, as St Petersburg was then called. The exhibition showed over thirty Suprematist works arranged from floor to ceiling, like some abstract fresco, and with the key image, the *Black Quadrilateral* (usually now called *The Black Square*) in the icon corner, right up against the ceiling plaster cornice. Malevich explained the reference to "0.10" in an essay he distributed at the exhibition, *From Cubism to Suprematism. The New Painterly Realism*.[31] This New Realism, he argued, would draw a line under all previous art, it would "reduce all figurative forms to nothing" and then "step beyond zero – to the non-objective."[32] In this way he made overt the process by which imagery crafts something from nothing, subjects from nonsubjects, the use of the materiality of language and image in combination to give form to the immaterial.

The prose of his essay was no less shocking than his images, mocking the art of the past, disparaging Western "art" displayed in galleries and museums as without relevance in the new age, devoid of the former "vital play" of images. Instead Malevich presented new icons for a new era, the era of scientific enquiry, of revolutionary social change. For Malevich the art of the past was of no "use" to us, we needed a new hybrid materiality linking Suprematist objects with Suprematist concepts, as, from their first appearance, Suprematist painterly images were associated with verbal explications, explorations – the visual and the word inextricably woven together as a conceptual magic carpet whisking the mind into a new conceptual space. Like the experience of the icon in the vital space of the orthodox liturgy Malevich hoped that the contemplation of Suprematist images in the context of his writing would lead to a reshaping of both sentient experience and imminent thought processes. Suprematist images, in these circumstances, would become agentic objects.

The material words, Malevich believed, were needed to speed and sharpen comprehension of Suprematism's mission, giving the incredulous public a way in, a guide, to the radical imagery they were to see and experience, as Malevich was sure that, without a cultural context, visitors would immediately feel bodily shock, apprehension, even revulsion. What Suprematism lacked, however, was "situation", an embeddedness within a social context, a legitimising culture wider than the fissiparous cliques of the Russian avant-garde. Form, materials and the manufacture of images have to be grounded in social relations to become reified agents of vital play, to accrue to themselves the inflection of powerful things.

But Malevich wanted to cut away the ground of history, to shatter the material mirror, to sever all links with the history of art, with both sacral and secular traditions of cognition, any previously constructed 'situatedness'. He was a radical iconoclast. But how could he persuade a sceptical public and artworld that his ideas had value, had relevance within their own, and fast changing, social context? Malevich understood that the material images in themselves were not enough. Urgent words were essential to the task of creating a foundational "situation" for his "new" material objects, to make nothing into something imbued with agency, the materiality of energy, "a work of pure living art". From the first the key image of the *Black Square* was imbued not only with the crude materiality of a "real" black quadrilateral – black paint on a white ground – instead of the fallacious, "little corners of nature, madonnas and shameless *Venuses*," but, like Florensky's icon, with a conceptual material life that shapes both human sentient experience and thought processes.

In his essay Malevich insisted that "creativity", the development of new visual forms and concepts, could not happen when art was burdened with now irrelevant historical baggage, including the frame of the apparent, of nature. Cubism and Futurism had tried to reconfigure that frame, by developing multiple perspectives within a single image and by attempting to address the problem of expressing speed and time in a materially two-dimensional medium. Neither Cubism nor Futurism could bring themselves to abandon the frame of Western art histories in order to "create" material images free from the shackles of "the apparent", of nature, in order to enter the new realm of "absolute creativity".

The world of "nature", as Malevich puts it, is framed by "reason". It had for some time been a cornerstone of Russian Cubofuturism to get "beyond reason" (*zaum*), beyond the historical and cultural limitations placed on thinking within all human communities, to effect a change in cognition.[33] In March 1915 Malevich had issued his "Easter Message", alongside those of his Cubofuturist colleagues, to the effect that "Reason is the artist's prisoner's chain, and therefore I wish all artists freedom from reason."[34] In the opening statement of his 1915-16 pamphlet-manifesto Malevich placed Suprematism firmly outside the frame of "Reason": "Space is a receptacle without dimensions, in which reason displays its creative work (*tvorchestvo*). Let me also display my own [alternative] creative form."[35]

Thus from the very first Malevich challenged any commonly established sense of materiality as he was seeking both forms and concepts that lay outside the common parameters of particulars and universals: he wanted "absolute creativity", an exploration of the unthought.

Yet the tools available to him were the very prisoner's chains he was so keen to throw off – the materials to make images – paint, canvas, and the materials to explore concepts – language.

In the years that followed (1915-1921) Malevich not only developed Suprematist images – the "static sensations" of the Black and Red Quatrilaterals, the "dynamic sensations" of complex coloured images, the magnetic Suprematism of interrelating, interacting "dynamic sensations", the "sensations of total non-existence" in the white-on-white phase, the "technological organisms of the Suprematist future" – the constructions "satellite systems in space", but also a series of essays each developing new aspects of Suprematism, emphasising the making of images and conceptual thought as "creative work" (*tvorchestvo*) without any constricting frame. For Malevich reality is not contained within frames. The only "reality" is energy, the energy that propels us, and our world, through the infinite cosmos, an energy subject only to the rules of its own nature, which Malevich, somewhat confusingly for some commentators, labelled "economy".[36]

Malevich was not unaware of the parallels between the role of Suprematist images and the icon, after all he had placed one of the *Black Quadrilaterals* in the icon corner of the Dobychina Gallery in December 1915. If the icon sought to evade the apparent by insisting on a gold ground, so too Malevich denied the blue of the sky by insisting on depicting the universe, within which we have our being, as a white ground, nothing-ness, zero, the void.

Malevich had grown up with icons in his parents' house – despite their Polish Catholic origin. He was familiar with the essential "mysticism" of Russian Orthodoxy. When he lived in Vitebsk in 1919-1921, the period when Florensky was preparing *Iconostasis*, Malevich visited both Orthodox and Catholic churches, as well as the synagogue.[37] The energy that Malevich places at the centre of his subject matter, both in terms of concepts and imagery (the *Black Square* symbolising stasis and the *Red* movement) he was, also confusingly, at times to label "God". Malevich's concept of God, he makes clear, is grounded in the materiality of his images.

Malevich never conceived Suprematist ideas, and the images that gave them form, as simply a given, static, unresponsive to change. They existed in a concept of space owing much to Einstein's Theory of Relativity, and Malevich reflexively understood that his own mind had to grow from the materiality of the images and ideas he had forged through the spiralling hybridity of Suprematism. In 1920 he wrote to his friend Mikhail Gershenzon:

> A great deal has also become clear about Suprematism, in particular when the *Black Square* grew into an architecture in such a manner that it was difficult to express the shape of that architecture, having taken forms that were difficult to see as architecture, it was an image in which it was impossible to see its form. This is the form of some new living structure; if suddenly you came upon such a city, it would be impossible to recognise that this *Square* had become vital, giving the new world some resolution; but I look at it quite differently than I did before. It is not a painting. It is something else. It occurred to me that if mankind had drawn the image of God in its own image, then, perhaps the *Black Square* is the image of God, like manifestations of his actuality in a new form of some contemporary genesis.[38]

All Malevich's images and writing have multiple and evolving conceptual values, refocussing their significance according to context. For example, the *Red Square* of action became the badge of the Suprematist faction at Unovis (The Affirmers of the New Art) within the Vitebsk School of Art (1920-21), which students and staff wore on their clothing as a sign of solidarity. Malevich also invited his students in Vitebsk to "draw the Red Square in your studios as a sign of the world revolution of the arts."[39] Others also saw in the Suprematist images other meanings of "revolution", such as the end of the old world, with both negative and positive connotations.

Yet Russian artists and the intelligentia took both his images and writing seriously.[40] Post-1917 Russia seemed to offer the ideal "situation", the cultural embeddeness, the vital play, that Suprematism previously lacked.

In an interesting exchange the writer Andrei Belyi saw the *Black* and *Red Squares* accompanied by the Jewish intellectual Mikhail Gershenzon. For Belyi they were simply objects, without significance, but Gershenzon was incensed by them. He appeared to be mocking Malevich when he lowered his voice to speak seriously, as if he were giving a lecture: "The history of art and all those images of Vrubel' are nothing by comparison to these squares". "He stood in front of the squares, as if praying to them; he later explained to me: looking at these squares (black and red), that he had a sensation of the fall of the old world: ' Just you wait and see: everything will be destroyed.'"[41] Malevich wrote to Gershenzon in December 1919:[42]

> The moment is approaching when this world will come to an end. Its forms are decrepit, worm out. A new world is on the horizon, its structures are soul-less and reason-less, will-less, but are powerful and strong. They are indifferent to God and the church and to all religions. They have life and breath, but their breast does not rise and fall and their heart doesn't beat, but the brain that has moved into their body moves them and us with a new strength: for now… I call this spirit dynamism (although this word, perhaps, conveys something else).[43]

Whilst documenting the passing of the old world, Malevich did not seem to find any solace in the new. Indeed in 1920 he also developed ideas of parallel thinking: the new Bolshevik government might be instituting new "soul-less" structures, but Suprematism could breath a new positive "creativity" into them. In Vitebsk in early 1920 he organised a Suprematist Party with branches among his followers in Moscow and a few provincial towns.[44] It had no political policies[45] but stood for freedom of creativity and freedom of thinking outside any frame or platform. Its forward thinking was conveyed materially by Suprematist images, now being produced by Malevich's followers and students in Vitebsk, and conceptually by the stream of aphorisms and articles coming from his own pen. The Suprematist Party was not opposed to the Bolsheviks but saw itself as their creative partner, an intellectual counterweight to the brutal mechanics of revolution. However, by the end of 1920 Malevich recognised, like Florensky, the inexorable tragedy that the Bolshevik leadership would never permit such parallel processes. The ideological frameworks of Suprematism and Bolshevism were incommensurable, conceptually incompatible, as Malevich was also to understand tragically in the not too distant future.

For both Malevich and Florensky the image – whether icons or Suprematist paintings – were the material objects through which a knowledgeable viewer could find a path to new thinking, thinking that was outside any language-based conceptual framework tied to history. Both rejected the rationality that had given rise to one-point perspective. Whilst images purport to create a sense in two-dimensions of optical space both Russians found mere opticality a hindrance to comprehending the "reality" of, in the one case, our relationship to God and, in the second, man's place in a dynamically constructed spatial universe. Perspective might be a useful mechanism to outline the apparent but not the "real" (though the "real" meant different things to both Florensky and Malevich). For Florensky the icon was a faith-hallowed device for contemplating mystical reality. It was necessary and sufficient for this purpose. For Malevich the *Black Square*, and its progeny, were temporary mechanisms for a similar exercise in conceptual thinking but were increasingly insufficient. To reach "zero", the materiality of the void (the only reality in which the energy of the universe has its being) Malevich struggled towards the white-on-white series and even showed a blank canvas at two exhibitions. By 1920 he was writing about the "religious spirit of pure act", in a sense announcing that the only material conduit towards thinking through the idea of a new reality as suggested by developments in science, philosophy and mathematics, was akin to the irrationality of religious experience.

There is no suggestion that Malevich and Florensky knew, except superficially, of each other or their work. Commentators have often put their ideas alongside each other and hoped that something would come from such a juxtaposition,[46] but to no avail. Florensky's focus on the icon precluded any serious consideration of the work of the contemporary Russian avant-garde. He was aware of abstract Modernism but tended to group all practitioners into a single category and dismissed their images as conjuring tricks and magic quite devoid of any intellectual coherence.[47]

Any discussion of the work of Florensky on icons and Malevich on Suprematist images highlights the essential recursive dialectic between the material and the conceptual. Social praxis, concepts, the material form these take in development of cultures over time is never static – icons did change in important material, stylistic and social respects over time and place, however Florensky argues that their essential "vital play" for orthodox believers did not, and Malevich was always ready to grasp the recursive nature of Suprematism – between image and concept, from painting to design, to architecture, to film, with a shifting materiality, as the concepts themselves responded to new social and political circumstances, yet was essentially seeking new ways of seeing the world and man's place in the universe, Suprematism's "vital play." Concepts develop according to the passage of dynamics of history through time, including the materials used to give them form, and through their contemporary situatedness, shaped itself to some extent by the material structuring and componentry of that history. Materiality and immateriality have a natural recursive relationship out of which concepts and history itself grows, driven by the energy that Malevich argues is the very life-force of the natural world, the universe in which we have our being.

Cover of a 2010 edition of Florensky's *Iconostasis* published by Azbuka-Klassika, Moscow

Cover of Malevich's pamphlet-manifesto *From Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism: The New Painterly Realism* published in Moscow, 1916

Notes

1 A 'thing' is used here to indicate any object or event that is experienced optically or otherwise sensuously free of any social or symbolic connotations.

2 Daniel Miller (ed.), *Materiality* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005): 8

3 Miller: 2005: 9

4 On 'affecting presence' see R.P. Armstrong, *The Powers of Presence: Consciousness, Myth and Affecting Presence* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981)

5 Iconostasis was not published in Russian until 1972: Archimandrite Innokentii (Prosvirin) and Pavel V. Florensky (eds), 'Sviashchennik Pavel Florensky, *Ikonostas*' in *Bogoslovskie Trudy*, 9 (Moscow, 1972): 88-148. For an English translation see Donald Sheehan and Olga Andrejev, *Pavel Florensky. Iconostasis* (Crestwood, New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996).

6 Sheehan and Andrejev: 1996: 98.

7 Sheehan and Andrejev: 1996: 99.

8 op.cit.

9 op.cit.

10 op.cit.

11 Sheehan and Andrejev: 1996: 100.

12 The first ceiling-high, five-levelled Russian iconostasis was designed for the Cathedral of the Annunciation in the Moscow Kremlin in 1405, which was repeated in the Cathedral of the Dormition in Vladimir in 1408. On the history and significance of the iconostasis in the Russian Orthodox Church see Aleksei Lidov (ed.), *Ikonostas: Proiskhozhdenie, razvitie, simvolika* (Moscow: Progress-Traditisiia, 2000).

13 Pavel Florenskii, *Ikonostas*, edited by A. G. Dunaev (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1994): 71.

14 Pavel Florensky, 'The Church Ritual as a Synthesis of the Arts', in Nicoletta Misler, *Pavel Florensky: Beyond Vision: Essays on the Perception of Art* (London: Reaktion Books, 2002), p. 107-109.

15 Sheehan and Andrejev: 1996: 101.

16 Misler: 2002: 110.

17 Lynn Maskell, 'Objects in the Mirror Appear Closer Than They Are' in Daniel Miller (ed.), *Materiality* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005): 51.

18 Maskell: 2005: 51.

19 Sheehan and Andrejev:1996: 105.

20 ibid: 125.

21 Misler: 2002: 108.

22 ibid: 101.

23 ibid: 102.

24 ibid: 103.

25 Florensky, 1985: 288.

26 Misler, 2002: 104

27 ibid.: 106.

28 ibid.:106.

29 ibid.:108.

30 ibid.: 99. Metropolitan Vladimir (Vasilii Bogoiavlensky) (1848-1918) was Metropolitan of St Moscow (1898-1912) and St Petersburg (1912-1915), when he was demoted because of his criticism of Rasputin. He was Metropolitan of Kiev and Galich when he was arrested in February 1918 and executed in front of his monks. It was possibly for this reason that Florensky did not included this passage from his notes in the final version of his essay.

31 Kazimir Malevich, *Ot kubizma k suprematizmu. Novyi zhivopisnyi realism* (From Cubism to Suprematism. The New Painterly Realism) Petrograd, 1916. A shorter, version of this pamphlet-manifesto was written and printed in the autumn of 1915, despite the fact that it bear the date "1916" on the cover. Both versions appear in identical editions.

32 Malevich: 1916: 14

33 For a general history of Russian Cubofuturism see Vladimir Markov, *Russian Futurism: A History* (London: McGibbon and Kee, 1969).

34 *Paskha u futuristov: Paskhalnye pozhelaniia* in Kazimir Malevich, *Sobranie sochinenii v piati tomakh 1*, (Moscow: Gileiia, 1995): 26

35 *Ot kubizma k suprematizmu* in Kazimir Malevich, *Sobranie sochinenii v piati tomakh* 1, (Moscow: Gileiia, 1995): 27

36 Malevich's term 'economy' is tantalisingly unclear, but nevertheless central to his intuition about ontology, the nature of being in the universe. In his fascinating essay on Malevich in Vitebsk, Timothy Clark relates Malevich's "economy" to the more mundane notion of either a political or fiscal economy, that were never present in Malevich's own use of the word. More egregiously he insists on equating "energy + internal logic" with Flatness, expressing his repeated 'will to flatness' as a measure of Modernism. For Malevich Suprematist images were not expressions either of flatness or three dimensions, but of the spatial relationships established through the economy (the rules created) of energy. Clark, T.J., *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes in the History of Modernism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press). 1999: 234-236. Clark also fails to grasp Malevich's ironical use of key concepts, such as 'God' or 'the Factory'. Elsewhere in this essay, however, Clark's untiring efforts to get to the heart of the Vitebsk experience are profoundly illuminating.

37 Kazimir Malevich, *Sobranie sochinenii v piati tomakh* 3, (Moscow: Gileiia, 2000): 334

38 ibid.: 339

39 Unovis (1), Vitebsk, 20 November 1920.

40 See, for example, Belyi, Andrei, *Mezhdu dvukh revoliutsii* [Between Two Revolutions], Edited by A. V. Lavrov. Seriia literaturnykh pamiatnikov (memuarov) (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1990, reprint of 1934 original): 256: A. Lisov, The Works of Group UNOVIS from Vitebsk in the First Exhibition of Russian Art in Berlin in 1922, in Malevich: *Klassicheskii avangard Vitebsk, 5* (Vitebsk Regional Museum: Vitebsk, 2002): 49-56; and the ambivalent relationship to Malevich's ideas in the 1920s and 1930 mentioned in the correspondence of Antonina Sofronova, in *A. Sofronova: Zapiski Nezavisimoi* (RA: Moscow, 2001).

41 Belyi: 1990 [1934]: 256

42 Kazimir Malevich, *Sobranie sochinenii v piati tomakh* 3, (Moscow: Gileiia, 2000): 327-354. This section contains the few letters still extant that Malevich wrote to Gershenzon 1918-1924.

43 ibid.: 337

44 Karasik, Irina, (ed.), *V kruge Malevicha* (Palace Editions: St Petersburg, 2000): 16 and 23.

45 Malevich was affiliated in the immediate post-1917 years with the Russian and Ukrainian anarchists. He wrote for their journal and was

horrified when, as early as 1918, the Bolsheviks began to persecute their leadership.

46 John Milner is, for example, guilty of this 'influence by juxtaposition'. See his *Kazimir Malevich and the Art of Geometry* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996): 115, 185.

47 Igumen Andronik (Aleksandr Trubachev), Mariia Trubacheva and Oleg Genisaretky (eds.), *Pavel Florenskii. Analiz prostranstvennosti i vremeni v khoduzhestvenno-izobrazitel'nykh proizvedeniakh* (Moscow: Progress 1993): 127-8.

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Unovis No. 1, Vitebsk, 20 November 1920.

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Willem Boshoff and materiality according to Adorno

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This article presents a reading of South African artist Willem Boshoff's installation *Writing that fell off the wall* (1997) to illustrate how he used his material to expose colonialism and apartheid as inhuman ideologies. Adorno's views on materiality serves as a theoretical framework. According to Adorno history is sedimented in the artist's material and form elements. He distinguished between the *Inhalt* (material content) and *Gehalt* (social truth content) in artworks. Adorno claims that works of art do not explicitly need to have a historical content because they exercise their critique through the way in which they configure material that already contains history. The artwork's meaning is revealed through the dialectical relation between the *Inhalt* and the *Gehalt.* I argue that Boshoff exposed the bankrupt ideologies of colonialism and apartheid by conceptually scattering ideologically laden concepts in eight different and previously "superior" languages during colonialism and apartheid, on the floor.
Key words: Adorno, apartheid, colonialism, *Gehalt*, *Inhalt*, material, Willem Boshoff

Willem Boshoff en materialiteit volgens Adorno
Hierdie artikel bied 'n interpretasie van die Suid-Afrikaanse kunstenaar Willem Boshoff se installasie, *Writing that fell off the wall* (1997) om te illustreer hoe hy sy materiaal gebruik om kolonialisme en apartheid te ontmasker as onmenslike ideologieë. Adorno se beskouinge oor materialiteit dien as 'n teoretiese raamwerk. Volgens Adorno is geskiedenis gesedimenteer in die kunstenaar se materaal en vormelemente. Hy onderskei tussen die *Inhalt* (materiaalinhoud) en *Gehalt* (sosiale waarheidsinhoud) in kunswerke. Adorno stel dat kunswerke nie eksplisiete historiese inhoud hoef te bevat nie, omdat kunswerke hul kritiek uitspreek deur die manier waarop die materiaal waarvan die kunswerk gemaak is, reeds geskiedenis bevat. Die kunswerk se betekenis word geopenbaar deur die dialektiese verhouding tussen die *Inhalt* en die *Gehalt.* Ek argumenteer dat Boshoff die bankrot ideologieë kolonialisme en apartheid ontmasker deur konseptueel ideologies-gelade konsepte in agt verskillende voormalige "superieure" tale gedurende kolonialisme en apartheid, op die vloer te strooi.
Sleutelwoorde: Adorno, apartheid, kolonialisme, *Gehalt*, *Inhalt*, materiaal, Willem Boshoff

The South African artist Willem Hendrik Boshoff (born 1951) introduced himself on his website (2007)[2] as a conceptual artist focusing primarily on installation art, languages and text, botany and sculpture. Sudheim (2004) and Rattemeyer (2000) have both emphasized that the artist wrestles with memories, power and ideologies. This article focuses on the ways in which Boshoff has utilized his material, namely words, language, painted wooden panels, space and other form elements to expose colonialism and apartheid as inhuman ideologies. I illustrate this by interpreting one of his language based conceptual art installations, *Writing that Fell Off the Wall* (1997) which he created for the Second Johannesburg *Africus* Biennale with the theme *Trade Routes – History and Geography*.

Figure 1
Boshoff, W., *Writing that fell off the wall,* (1997),
8mx24m [variable], language installation: Type on paper, wood, paint on masonite,
Johannesburg Art Gallery
(source: http://www.willemboshoff.com).

The reading and interpretation of the installation is undertaken within the framework of Adorno's views on history, artistic materials and his dialectical distinction between the *Inhalt* and *Gehalt* of works of art. I argue that Boshoff has exposed the bankrupt ideologies of colonialism and apartheid by scattering ideologically laden concepts on the floor in eight "superior" languages during colonialism and apartheid, namely English, Dutch, Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, French, German, and Afrikaans.

Firstly, an exposition of ideologies is given, followed by an overview of colonialism and apartheid in the South African context. To be able to read and interpret the installation, a theoretical exposition of Adorno's views on history, art and artistic materiality is then given. After this, a description of the material and visual form elements the artist utilized is given, followed by the interpretation of the installation. The article concludes with some remarks on the relationship between materiality and art from a neo-Marxist perspective.

Ideologies and how they function in societies

The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy describes an ideology as any wide-ranging system of beliefs or ways of thought, and categories that provide the foundation of programmes of political and social action. It concludes by stating that an ideology is a conceptual scheme with a practical application. One can therefore say that an ideology, as a system of coherent ideas, has far-reaching effects and influences on the structure of a society and on the thoughts of members of the society. Van der Merwe and Viljoen (1998:147-148) state that the term ideology normally or often has a negative connotation, for instance when it is used as an instrument of subjection. An example of the latter occurs in the case of a racist-nationalistic ideology.

Under the influence of Marx and Lenin, Thompson (1990) views ideologies in relation to class differences. He, however, redefined class differences as group differences. According to Thompson, ideologies generally tend to enhance the reigning group's ideas and interests.:

> Ideology according to the epiphenomenal conception is a system of ideas which expresses the interest of the dominant class but which represents class relations in an illusory form. Ideology expresses the interest of the dominant class in the sense that the ideas that compose ideology are ideas that, in any historical period articulate the ambitions, concerns and wishful deliberations of the dominant social groups as they struggle to secure and maintain their position of domination (Thompson, 1990:37-38).

This means that in a political and power context an ideology can be defined as a system of ideas that represents people and the world in such a way that the interests of the people in powerful positions, the so-called elite groups in societies, are viewed as general interests. The reverse of this view is implied. Other people, not belonging to the elite groups, cannot claim any rights according to their interests or values because they are either suppressed or ignored. These particular interests of the people in positions of power are falsely presented as the absolute truth and as being to the benefit of all the people of a country. An ideology conceals the difference between general and generalized interests in a society. Therefore, the generalized ideas and interests of the reigning group are served by necessity because of the ruling, intellectual and material power disposed of by them. Therefore it is important to realize that ideologies cannot be viewed as innocent or harmless. Authentic interests are more than the sum of their individual components. They always contain something that has not yet become a reality. Contrary to this, generalized interests always have a way of concealing the false, limited view of the world to keep certain people in power and others in subordinate positions by using the ruling and material power imposed by people in positions of power (Adorno 2003a:17; 2003b:50; Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002: 28-30).

From a Marxist perspective, the general interests of the people in power are mainly centred in a capitalistic struggle to gain, keep, or justify their wealth and power (Nairn, 1977; Hobsbawm, 1992; Kedourie, 1993). Hobsbawm (1992:146) views nationalism as an ideology because, according to him, it is an instrument in the hands of the capitalist elite to manipulate and channel the working class notion of the self and of a society in a specific direction. This manipulation of the working class is one of the reasons why Kedourie (1993:xiii-xvii) believes that nationalism is an ideological conspiracy consisting of fabricated fantasies about a ruling nation. These fabricated fantasies or modern myths typically belong to the sphere of ideologies.[3] Marschall (2005) correctly notes that generally people believe these myths to be the absolute truth without any questioning or verifying of the content of these myths. Ethnic myths, traditions, and histories in authoritarian and totalitarian regimes are manipulated to reveal a so-called glorious past, symbols, and icons related to the ruling nation and their ideologies (cf. Marshall, 2010: 177; Hobsbawm, 1983: 7; Connerton, 2007: 5). Stone and Rizova (2007: 31) emphasize the importance of the maintenance and conservation of identity, language, and culture based upon a shared descent, history, and future.

The source of nationalism and a national identity is according to Smith (2004: 9) primarily located in the sphere of religion, and embedded in this sphere, are ethnicity, language, culture and the national state. The important role language plays in the self-assertion of the people in power and in the alienation of identity of the oppressed is highlighted by Fanon's (1986: 31) statement, "A man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language". Imperial education set the language from the metropolis as the norm. Indigenous languages are then viewed as inferior, uncivilized and the deviation from the norm as is often the case in national formations and other ideologies, which privilege the group in power.

Lukes (2005) distinguishes between three dimensions of power and power relationships. The first dimension of power has specific implications for decision-making processes in cases of conflict between the interests of the people in power and their subordinates (cf. Zaaiman, 2007: 363). The second dimension embraces the first, but in a qualified way, because it leaves room for an investigation into ways in which the decision making process can be manipulated in cases of a conflict of interests between people in power and their subordinates (Lukes, 2005: 20). The third dimension encompasses both the first two dimensions, but deals specifically with preferences according to norms, values, and ideologies. In this dimension, power is viewed as part of all social interactions because all ideas and beliefs are expressed through language and behaviour as bases for all social and political activities. This dimension also includes divergent religious ideals, as well as self-interests in economic affairs. According to Lukes (2005: 29-30) this third dimension is spontaneously and unconsciously incorporated in power relations and is therefore unconsciously determined. Degenaar (1980: 5-6) adds that the highest political loyalty is expected of people belonging to the same nation or nation state.

When ideologies are viewed as social pathological phenomena, they do not only have implications for power relations but also for identity issues. Intergroup relations between white European colonizers and black African and indigenous people were based upon identity issues, rooted in Manichean binary opposition[4] between light and darkness. These binary oppositions in the colonial discourse existed between the white European *self* as the norm and the black African *other* (the deviation from the norm)[5] (JanMohamed, 2006: 19-24; Bhabha, 2006: 155-156). The colonizers firmly believed in their own moral superiority and their civilized culture in contrast to the immoral and uncivilized colonized people (JanMohamed, 2006:19-24; Ghandi, 1998:31; Loomba, 2005: 54). This implied that the *other* or *das Nichtidentische* was viewed as an amorphous mass without any individual qualities or properties. Over a period, the subordinates internalized these negative views of the people in power, and they adhered to the artificially imposed inferior identity. This then became the way in which they viewed themselves, their language and identity, as well as their role in society. This process of internalizing artificially imposed values is known as the "colonizing of the mind".

Colonialism and apartheid in South Africa

Until recently, official documentation on the history of South Africa gave the impression that the Dutch colonizers arrived in 1652 at the bay of the Cape of Good Hope at an empty landscape or at least at the same time as the indigenous Khoikhoi[6] and San (Worden, 1994:5; Crais, 1991: 255-275). This impression confirms Loomba's (2005: 20) statement that the existence of a pre-colonial history of South Africa was often negated. The Dutch was not interested in colonizing the country; their goal was to establish a refreshment post for Dutch ships on their way to India. In 1795 the Cape of Good Hope became a British colony for a short period, and again in 1806 when it became a colony of the British Empire. As more Europeans, immigrants and slaves inhabited the country, the borders of the original Cape of Good Hope expanded into the rest of South Africa and the country was divided into four provinces; the Cape, Transvaal, Orange Free State and Natal (Giliomee, 2003: 10 and 42-43; Thompson, 2006:40)[7]. McCleod (2000: 7-8) correctly claims that colonialism was driven mainly by capitalism. Africa, for instance, was colonized by the British because of the continent's rich minerals and the cheap labour of the colonized people.

White Afrikaners, also known as *Burghers* or *Boers* were descendants of the colonizers as well as from relationships between colonists and the indigenous Khoikhoi. Leatt *et al.* (1986: 70) correctly state that the process of the white colonists becoming indigenous or Africanised found expression in the term *Afrikaner* by which the colonists came to call themselves. This is confirmed by Giliomee's (2003: 33) remark that (European) observers expressed shock about a European community that appeared to become ever more African, or as some phrased it, "degenerate", or "wild". White Afrikaners were convinced that the British colonizers would always view them as white outcasts of the British Empire (Giliomee, 2003: 149-150) and their language as a minor and bad dialect of Dutch, calling it "kitchen Dutch" (Kapp, 2010: 110 or

"Hotnot's language"[7] (Scholtz, 1980:49). Afrikaners were therefore generally viewed by the British as their *other*. However, the colonizers viewed the white Afrikaners as "of a higher order" than the indigenous black people and slaves, as can be deduced from the colonial discourse of race purity rooted in the Manichean binary opposition between light and darkness.

After the two wars for independence between the British forces and the two independent Afrikaner Republics (the Free State and the Transvaal or *Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek*) for freedom from British colonialism and imperialism, the four provinces became a unified British colony in 1910. In 1931, the Statute of Westminster was accepted and South Africa became a dominion of the British Empire. Dubow (2007: 55) argues that a unified South African dominion was "directly shaped and controlled from the metropolis". Because the country was still a British dominion, the interests of the white English population were understood and were obviously still the guiding interests in the country. In 1948, the National Party[8] (NP), consisting of mainly Afrikaans speaking people, came into power. Initially the NP had especially the interests of the white Afrikaans-speaking people at heart and their main objective was to serve the interests of the white Afrikaans speaking group to become the equals of the British settlers' descendants in all spheres of society.

The justification of the advancement of the private interests of white people had its foundation in the nineteenth century in a so-called God-given law, namely that of racial separation and purity, stemming from Eurocentric views on race, culture and nation which viewed the white races as superior (Shohat, 1993: 110; Bhabha, 1985: 153; Young, 1995:9). In this way colonialism, and in the twentieth century apartheid, was justified and viewed as a form of a "missionary nationalism" (Hastings, 1997: 6). Because racial purity was believed to be a law ordained by God, this "law" was unchangeable, justified, and therefore obviously enforceable. Bhabha (1991: 53) states that imperial colonialism was viewed as an education project to bring The Word of God and the Light of Civilization to the colonized countries, and in this case to Africa. Hoskins concurs:

> Eurocentric history deliberately promulgated the myth that Africa was a 'dark continent' replete with cannibals, savages, and inferior, uncivilised, backward, primitive peoples, devoid of knowledge and culture… (Hoskins 1992: 248).

White Afrikaners identified with imperial colonial views and agreed to Eurocentric views on race, culture, and nation. Because they were generally a religious group, white Afrikaners believed that they were "planted" on the African continent to maintain and further enhance "civilization" and to spread the Word of God to uncivilized people. This was explicitly stated by *inter alia* H.F. Verwoerd, former prime minister of the country (1958-1966) (Verwoerd, 1963:xix, xx; Smith, 2004:78). The vicious circle of race discrimination not only continued but also expanded during apartheid. Because the indigenous people were by far the majority, the emphasis of the NP gradually shifted from the advancement of Afrikaner interests to keeping the white population of the country in power, and advancing and serving white socio-political and power interests (Giliomee, 2003: 287, 469, 477-478; Arnold, 2005: 331,726).

In 1961 the country became a Republic under the leadership of the NP. Afrikaners were now free from British colonialism and on an equal footing with their English counterparts. The black people, however, did not receive any such freedom. Loomba's (2005) perspectives on what happened in countries after decolonization are important. She (2005: 16) claims that after decolonization new formations of nationalism in former colonized countries seldom had the interests of all the people of a country at heart. She argued that when a colonized country received its freedom, this freedom was very selectively applied. According to Loomba an elite group that identified with the colonial views and perspectives took over the role of the *self* and these elite groups in their turn continued to view all the other formally oppressed groups as the *other.* In the case of South Africa, the elite group left behind by imperial colonialism, was the white Afrikaners.

The NP gradually enforced ever more draconian laws to keep the white people in power and to ensure the separation of white and black people. The cornerstone of apartheid was the Population Registration Act (1950) according to which all South Africans were divided into four racial groups based on the colour of their skins, namely whites, blacks, coloureds and Indians (Asians) (Arnold, 2005: 725-727, 334-338; Slabbert, 1999: 21, 50-54). Gradually South Africa came in for more and more criticism by the international community for its apartheid policy. To "soften" the concept of apartheid, the NP invented the slogan, *separate, but equal* (De Klerk, 1991: 65-66) with minor changes to the fate or destiny of the majority of the population.[9]

Adorno's views on history, art and materiality

Adorno (2003d: 96) believes that history is the narrative of what people in power did to their victims. In the same way as Thompson describes an ideology, Horkheimer and Adorno (2002: 28-31) argue that in an unfree society power is aimed at the cultural progress of the group in power, regardless of the pain and suffering that is done to the *other* or *das Nichtidentische.* They also state that in cases where there are differences in interests, the interests of *das Nichtidentische* are always denied or ignored. This is why they convincingly claim that Europe has two versions of the same history: the well-known official version of history as documented in textbooks, and an "underground" version from the perspective of the victims (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002: 231). In his critique on modernity, Adorno states that "[t]he need to let suffering speak ... [has been] the precondition of all truth. For suffering is objectivity that weighs upon the subject" (Adorno, 2003c: 30-31; 1973: 17-18). By giving a voice to suffering, art can play a therapeutic role. Adorno (2004:133, 137-138) explains that all authentic works of art are a form of expression, even when works of art are not recognizable imitations of reality: "... art is expressive when what is objective, subjectively mediated [?] speaks, whether this be sadness, energy, or longing. … [E]xpression is suffering's countenance of artworks" (Adorno, 2004: 146).

Adorno (2004: 191) distinguishes between the *Inhalt* and *Gehalt* of works of art and believes that works of art are historically determined. History is sedimented in the *Inhalt* of works of art, that is the material, and the way in which the artist arranged the material (in Adorno's words, the artist's "constellations" of the material), as well as all other visual form elements (Adorno, 2004: 134; cf. Jarvis, 2002: 105). Therefore works of art do not need to be explicit images of historical events because, as stated, history is sedimented in the *Inhalt* of artworks, that is the material, constellations and form elements that the artist utilizes: "History is the content of artworks. To analyse artworks means no less than to become conscious of the history immanently sedimented in them" (Adorno, 2004: 112).

Adorno regards *Gehalt* as the social truth content of works of art. He (2004: 191-192) claims that social truth resides in the specific negation (German: *bestimmte Negation*) of the untruth of an inhuman society. The *Gehalt* of works of art must be understood as the socially mediated meaning of works of art which comes to the fore in the dialectical relationship between the *Inhalt* and the *Gehalt* of works of art. Because history is sedimented in the material and because the material is taken from reality, albeit in a fragmented way, the artwork becomes a monad – it is autonomous and windowless. According to Adorno (2004: 146-147, 275) art is the antithesis of society because art has a double character: it is socially determined in its autonomy and at the same time a social phenomenon that absorbs in itself the unsolved tensions in society: "We must reverse the copy theory of realist aesthetics: in a subtle sense reality ought to imitate artworks, not the other way around ... For only what does not fit into this world is true" (Adorno, 2004: 182, 76).

Adorno (2004: 308) uses the metaphor of Leibniz (1646-1716)[10] to explain the relationship between autonomous art and society and transposes this metaphor to artworks:

> Adorno holds that each artwork is a coherent entity constituted by a dynamic force field of meanings. Furthermore, no artwork is reducible to any particular message (unlike, for example, committed art). Yet each is a cipher of society awaiting the appropriate interpretation. Art can be critical both in encouraging praxis which is contrary to socially prescribed experiences … and in drawing attention to the extraordinary in the ordinary (O'Connor, 2000: 240).

Following Kant Adorno emphasizes that a specific function cannot be ascribed to works of art. This notion he puts in a paradoxical way: "Insofar as a social function can be predicated for artworks, it is their functionlessness" (Adorno, 2004: 297), and "[t]he purposefulness of artworks requires the purposeless" (Adorno, 2004: 134). Function must in this sense be understood in terms of utility.[11] He also follows Kant when he argues that it is often necessary to have access to information about an artwork. Adorno (2004: 253) quotes Benjamin that the "eyes" of the public left their "footprints" on the work of art and that the viewer has to look through all these layers of "footprints" to understand and interpret the work of art. In similar vein Mills (2009: 3) points out that materiality in works of art extends beyond the simple fact of physical matter to broadly encompass all relevant information related to the work's physical existence. She adds that not only are the work's production date and provenance of importance, but also its history and the artist's personal history, as it pertains to the origin of the work and the work's place in the canon of art history. All these aspects are important for experiencing the work aesthetically:

> Kant's critical philosophy would make reflective judgments equivalent to determinant judgments. For this reason, aesthetic judgment is said to be imaginative. ... Aesthetic judgments are subjective, in spite of the fact that they must also have universal validity by which they not only apply to the person making the judgment but to all other persons (De Bolla, 2002: 27).

Reading and interpretation of Writing that fell off the wall (1997)

Willem Boshoff (2009) uses the words of an unknown American-Indian author to explain his inspiration for, and intention with this installation: "At first we had the land and the white man had the Bible. Now we have the Bible and the white man has the land" (Boshoff, 2009). The material the artist uses in this installation, that forms part of the *Inhalt*, consists of fourteen separate standing wooden panels painted white. The panels are placed in two rows of seven panels each, which give the impression of clean, empty white walls. Scattered on the floor all around these panels are wooden blocks also painted white with one word printed in black ink on each block.

Figure 2
Boshoff, W., ***Writing that fell off the wall,*** **(1997), detail,**
(source: http://www.Willemboshoff.com).

Each printed word is repeated in Afrikaans as well as in seven European languages, namely English, Dutch, Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, French, and German. These languages were the official languages during colonialism and apartheid, and were forced upon the oppressed *other* or *das Nichtidentische*. Words such as *Salvation, Perfection, Truth, Identity, Boundary, Order, Faith, Purity, Reason, Destiny, Progress, Ordnung, Razão, Principio, Purité, Identität, Grens, Perfeçión, Geloof, Waarheid* and *Identiteit* form part of the material the artist utilized. All the words on the floor can easily be read.

Figure 3
Boshoff, W. , ***Writing that fell off the wall,*** **(1997), detail,**
(source: http://www.Willemboshoff.com).

In line with Mill's views, Boshoff gives the following important *Gehalt* information on his website (Boshoff, 2009) when he states that the white wooden blocks which are scattered on the floor, contain words to reveal several bankrupt ideologies in seven different languages plus Afrikaans.

Horkheimer and Adorno (2002: 38; Adorno, 2003c: 23) claim that the language and terminology of the Enlightenment served to offer "uniform security" and "truthful values" as generalized and standardized measurements of order and civilization. This self-assured discourse of the Enlightenment was used by colonial states to oppress people from colonized countries, and arrange Africa and big parts of the rest of the world according to their own needs and interests (Boshoff 2009). The artist (Boshoff 2009) also explains on his website that the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century offered this rhetoric of so-called universal norms to the world. He believes that the most important consumable goods that were to be sold by the colonial states in Africa were ideological in nature. The countries that Boshoff focuses on in this installation that were involved in colonial imperialism, totalitarianism and nationalism are England, Germany, Portugal, Italy, France, the Netherlands, Spain and South Africa. By scattering the ideologically laden concepts on the floor in the official languages of these countries, Boshoff conceptually reflects upon the bankruptcy of their policies by using their own languages. The artist further degraded the ideologies of colonialism and apartheid by using words in the official languages of these countries. The installation offers a walkabout tour of this philosophical "consumerism" which is now no longer in demand: "Its pathways grant a look at how idealistic assurances that were once proudly offered for sale by the pioneers, are disqualified" (Boshoff 2009). The artist conceptually forces the viewer to look down upon them to be able to read the words. Looking down upon someone or something implies disdain and disillusionment. Therefore, this act of literally looking down upon is conceptually metaphoric for the way in which people have to view and evaluate colonialism and apartheid. The artist, by the way in which he arranged the constellation of his material and the form elements, emphasizes that there is no longer any room for such words in the public sphere and on walls of buildings. In an artistic way, he confronts the so-called elite and intellectuals during colonialism and apartheid to account for the consequences of their actions. He furthermore confronts the viewer with the untruth, falseness and fleetingness of this so-called everlasting, "cast in stone," solid, generalized norms and values. These Western and European norms, cultures and values were once promised in the name of "progress", "order" and "prosperity" to all the people of colonized countries. The artist conceptually represents these so-called solid certainties and beliefs in the modern rhetoric in "writing that fell off the wall":

> A wise crack then, not the writing on the wall but the writing that fell off it. ... Fallen language. The grand abstractions of the Enlightenment come down to earth with a bump. The fallen terms ... hold your attention for a spell, but the sheer profusion is discouraging. ... Wandering through this rubble of meaning, your eye snagged by one term after another, you might be gripped by a disconcerting sensation ... You are standing in a ruined book. The walls are pages that have been rattled until their printed contents came tumbling down. The work is a book writ large (Vladislavic 2005: 6).

During apartheid discrimination against the so-called *other* continued. In this process indigenous people had been displaced and were viewed as the inferior *Nichtidentische.* Because the indigenous people were viewed as divergent from the superior *self* as the norm*,* they were deprived of their full enjoyment and practice of their identity, culture, heritage and language (cf. Said, 1995:89; Bhabha, 1994; Spivak, 2006). With *Writing that fell off the wall,* the artist got even with the bankrupt ideologies of colonialism and apartheid that contributed to the polarization of the South African population and the suffering of millions of people due to these ideologies. Ideologically laden concepts in so-called superior languages are now scattered on the floor in a disordered fashion around the clean white "walls" as useless and worthless writing that fell off the wall. By utilizing his material in a modernistic fragmented way, and through the constellation of elements such as painted wooden panels and words printed on white wooden blocks, the artist has succeeded in exposing the social antagonisms inherent to the reality of the suffering of subordinate people at the hands of people in power. At the same time, the artist has conceptually revealed the ideal of a society in which "suffering is foreign to knowledge" (Adorno 2004:24).The dialectical relation between the *Inhalt* and the *Gehalt* of this installation brings to light the social truth content and the socially mediated meaning of the installation.

Conclusion

Boshoff, apart from being the creator of the installation, has also functioned as both a critic and a reviewer of *Writing that Fell Off the Wall* because the installation represents a negative evaluation of colonialism and apartheid and exposed them as inhuman ideologies. At the same time, the artist is also an activist, because by his own artistic acts, he consciously degraded these previously "superior" languages and concepts during colonialism and apartheid, namely English, Dutch, Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, French, German, and Afrikaans by throwing these "important" and "meaningful" words on the floor (cf. Vladisclavic 2005: 6). Therefore, it could be argued that through this act, the artist in an artistic way demanded explanations from those previously imperialist and totalitarian regimes. The *Gehalt* or truth content of *Writing that Fell Off the Wall* leaves a clear message, namely that the time for the following of ideological ideas that caused pain and suffering to the so-called *das Nichtidentische* has passed.

Notes

1 This article is based on a paper delivered at the 7th Annual Conference of the *South African Journal for Art Historians*, 7-8 June 2013 hosted by the School of Language, Media and Culture, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Port Elizabeth, South Africa. Dr. Swanepoel is a senior lecturer in History of Art at the North-West Univeristy, Potchefstroom Campus, South Africa.

2 This webpage is no longer available on the internet. It has been replaced with an updated webpage, 2009.

3 This is in contrast to ancient mythologies that belonged to the religious sphere (Marschall, 2005).

4 Manichean binary oppositions referred to the doctrines of the Persian prophet Mani (Circa 216-276) based upon the conflict between light and dark (JanMohamed 2006: 19).

5 Said (1995:78, 89) in his postcolonial critique from an Oriental perspective, uses the terms *Occident* (self) and *Orient* (other).

6 White people often called the indigenous Khoikhoi "Hotnots", an abusive name (Scholtz, 1980:49-51).

7 The First Freedom War (1880-1881) between the two independent Afrikaner Republics (The Free State and the Transvaal or *Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek*) ended in defeat for the British Empire, while the Boer Republics lost the Second Freedom War (1899-1902) generally known amongst Afrikaners as the *Anglo-Boer War* (Kapp 2002: 273-281; Pretorius 1999: 404-411; Spies, (2001)

8 The National Party came into power for the first time in 1924 in coalition with the "Labour" (Worker's) Party and again in 1948 after a merger between the Purified National Party (*Gesuiwerde Nasionale Party*) and the Refounded National Party (*Herstigte Nasionale Party*) (Worden 1994: 91-92; Giliomee 2003: 376; Welsh & Spence 2007: 282).

9 The white, dominantly Afrikaner National Party ruled the country until its democratic independence in 1994 when all the people of the country could for the first time cast their votes.

10 According to Leibniz monads are individual unities, and each monad is an individual entity with its own internal dynamics. Monads are also windowless. This means they do not affect one another, but each reflects the universe from its own individual perspective (O'Connor 2000: 240).

11 In his dialectic of art and society – in the radicalization of, and critique upon Kant (1724-1804), Hegel (1770-1831) and Marx (1818-1883) – Adorno (2004:174-183) states that art can act as critique upon the *status quo* (Belluigi, 2001:2). The truth content (*Gehalt*) of works of art comes to the fore in the way in which an artwork challenges current states of affairs, while at the same time, Adorno, in his negative utopia suggests how problems in society can be solved and changed for the better.

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The Agora of Asia Minor: the shaping of the non-material by the material in urban space

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Materiality to the Milesians was the ultimate state of being. To be was to be material and matter was the complete key to the nature of things. The Pythagoreans however, thought that mathematics and formulas could be applied to explain everything in the physical world and some tried to build the physical world out of spatial points. This article proposes to investigate the agora of Asia Minor, the birthplace of Milesian materiality, by considering the material, geographical motivation for its creation and ultimate demise, by investigating the abstract ratios and figures of non-material space as shaped by material form and structure and by commenting on Greek spatial intention. It further aims to offer a Pythagorean corrective to Milesian materialism through sensitivity to order and form.
Key words: Milesian materialism, Pythagorean formulas explaining matter, urban spatial ratios, urban squares

Die Agora van Kleinasië: die vorming van die nie-materiële deur die materiële in stedelike ruimte
Materialiteit was vir die Milete die uiteindelike wesenstoestand. Om te wees was om materieel te wees en materie was die volledige sleutel tot die aard van dinge. Die Pythagoreane het egter gedink dat wiskunde en formules toegepas kon word om alles in die fisiese wêreld te verduidelik en sommiges het probeer om die fisiese wêreld uit ruimtelike punte te bou. Hierdie artikel neem voor om die agora van Kleinasië, die geboorteplek van Miletiese materialiteit, te ondersoek deur die materiële, geografiese motivering vir sy skepping en uiteindelike verval in ag te neem, deur die abstrakte verhoudings en figure van die nie-materiële ruimte te ondersoek soos wat dit deur materiële vorm en struktuur gevorm word en en deur kommentaar te lewer oor Griekse ruimtelike bedoeling. Dit beoog verder om 'n Pythagoreaanse korrektief tot Miletiese materialisme aan te bied deur sensitiwiteit tot orde en vorm te skep.
Sleutelwoorde: Miletiese materialisme, Pythagoreaanse formules om materie te verduidelik, stedelike ruimtelike verhoudings, stedelike pleine

The concept of materiality first originated over two and a half thousand years ago in Miletus, which was a bustling harbour town on the west coast of Anatolia in modern day Turkey. The first evidence of settlement stems from the Neolithic times, but since around 1000BC Ionian Greeks resettled there under Neileos, making it the first settlement of the East Ionian grouping of the Hellenic civilization and an important city that endured past the time of the Roman Empire. When choosing a site for a settlement the ancient Greeks considered all the geographical elements of hillside, river, defence, natural hazards and human enemies. Geography affected every step of daily life in ancient Greece. The tides, the stars and the hills were objects of importance that required close attention (Brumbaugh 1970: 9).

The material: geography

The site of Miletus was located near Monondendri and Mount Mykale where the founder Neileos performed the first religio-political act by erecting shrines to Poseidon and Demeter respectively. The main shrine of Athena was intimately connected to the inland Apollo and Artemis shrines of the nearby Branchidae-Didyma sanctuary that predates the founding of Miletus. The favourable geography was an important reason for settling in Miletus and as such included access to the Aegean, the protected bay, surrounding mountains and proximity to the Greek mainland and it was an ideal trading location relative to the existing Anatolian societies. The city became one of the traditional twelve Ionian cities, with Priene and Myus on the other sides of the protected bay. Ironically, the geography that prompted settlement around the bay also caused the ultimate demise of these cities. The Meander River ran into the eastern part of the bay where its mouth created a delta carrying alluvium into the gulf. Although Miletus was once one of the most famous ports of the Classical world with its harbour at the southern entry of the large bay, the gulf silted up over the centuries and by the Roman era both Priene and Myus lost their harbours and by the early Christian era Miletus itself became an inland town. All three cities were abandoned to ruin as their economies were strangled by the lack of access to the sea.

Figure 1 shows the location of Miletus, Priene and Myus along the ancient bay. The Meander River mouth to the east of the bay caused the marooning of these cities by the alluvial delta. The map shows the evolution of silting in the Miletus bay by comparing the approximate antique shorelines of the Hellenistic and Roman periods with the shoreline of late antiquity and the current shoreline. The map also shows Samos, the birthplace of Pythagoras, on Samos Island to the west. Ephesus is 30km north of Priene. (In this article the English names of towns Miletus, Myus and Ephesus will be used to conform with source material, and not the original Hellenic Miletos, Myos and Ephesos in which they were founded.)

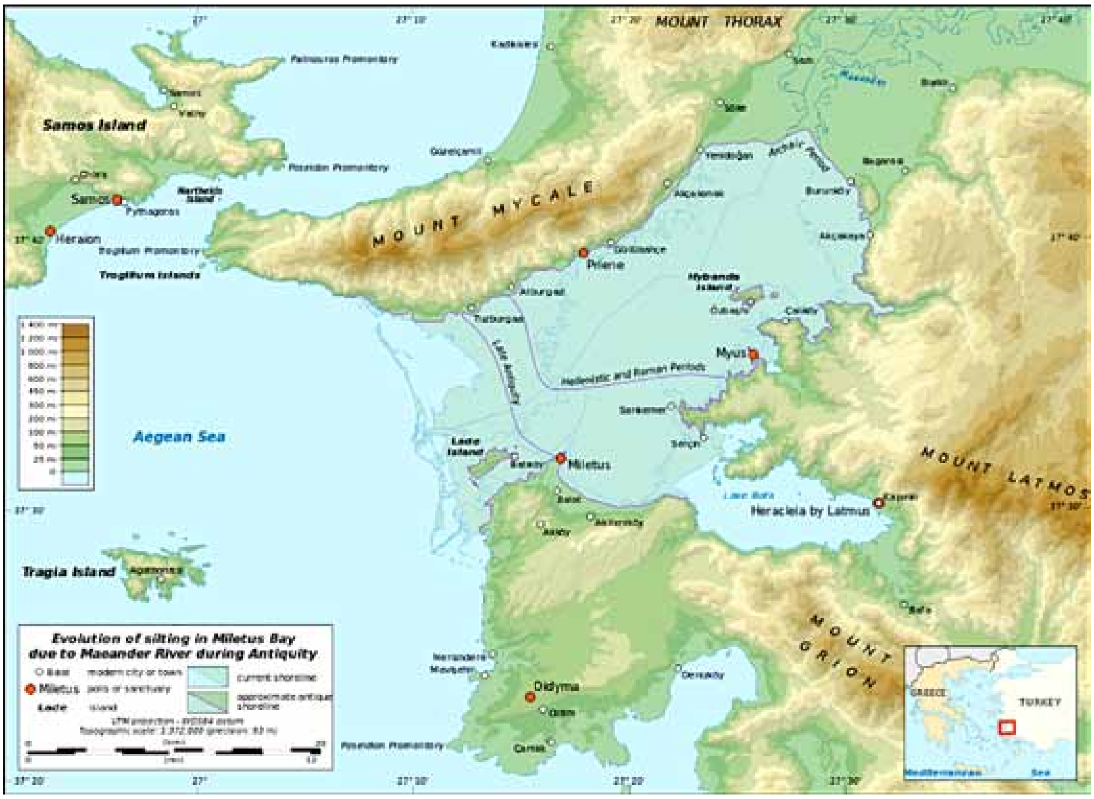

Figure 1
Evolution of silting in Miletus bay
(source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miletus).

Before materialism

In the pre-atomist Greek world, the Greek dark ages, mythology was still the only method available to record history or explain nature. The mythological world was an anthropomorphic world. When Greek philosophy began it took its origin from a world in which there was no accurate history, no science, no pure mathematics and the distinction between mind and matter, subject and object, animate and inanimate things, miracles and natural causes did not exist. Instead of history there was a body of legends, instead of science there was nothing at all (Brumbaugh 1970: 5).

The ideas of matter, physics, science and philosophy had to be discovered and to be discovered, mythology had to be abandoned. Philosophy is the attempt to find a single system of reality that will synthesise and hold together the many facets of our specialised knowledge and specialised social structure (*ibid*, 11, 13).

Milesian materiality

In the 6th century BC, Miletus was the site of origin of the Greek philosophical and scientific tradition, when Thales, followed by Anaximander and Anaximenes (known collectively, to modern scholars, as the Milesian School) began to speculate about the material constitution of the world, and to propose speculative naturalistic (as opposed to traditional, supernatural) explanations for various natural phenomena.

Thales and Anaximander were the first to discover a new world of natural science and philosophy but they were still bound by ancient mythological ways of thought. The psyches of Thales and the goddess Dike of Anaximander were responsible for change in the world. Anaximenes, the third philosopher from Miletus, broke through this last trace of myth. He discovered that change in nature could be explained mechanically (Brumbaugh 1970: 26). Anaximenes thought that all change was the result of changes in density brought about by condensation and rarefaction. This new idea gave scientists experiments, models and physical explanations of change and their cause, which is still our way of thinking. He believed that change and collision kept the system shifting (*Ibid*, 27). His system of nature needed no souls or deities but only matter in motion. This spinning world remained the key model for astronomy and natural philosophy through the following ten centuries.

Hippodamus of Miletus, the father of city planning

The art of town planning in Greece probably began in Athens but the architect to whom ancient writers ascribe the first step was Hippodamus of Miletus (c. 407 BC) who has been dubbed the “Father of City Planning” (Haverfield 1913: 10). He seems to have worked in Athens and in connection with Athenian cities, under the auspices of Pericles. Aristotle tells us that Hippodamus planned Piraeus, the port of Athens (figures 2 and 3). The Hippodamian, or grid plan, was introduced for the first time in Piraeus and became the basis for subsequent Greek and Roman cities (Haverfield 1913: 10). A characteristic of Greek town planning was that the grid was often rigidly imposed over the topography, creating steep streets and steps. The site of the amphitheatre was typically chosen for its position on the slope of a hill so that only the seats had to be carved out.

According to Crouch (2004) the Greeks chose sites for their colonial towns that resembled the geological context of their native country, confident of their ability to adapt their familiar town-planning and water management practices to suit these conditions. The political organisation was one of city-states, a decentralised pattern that developed naturally and was well suited to the geography of the Greek mainland. On the coast of Asia Minor this provided a relatively unstable form of organisation. The cities of Asia Minor could not cooperate effectively enough to avoid conquest one by one by Persia and the political histories of Samos and Sicily showed that at times there was a strong dictatorship, at others a rather loosely organised democracy (Brumbaugh 1970: 9-10).

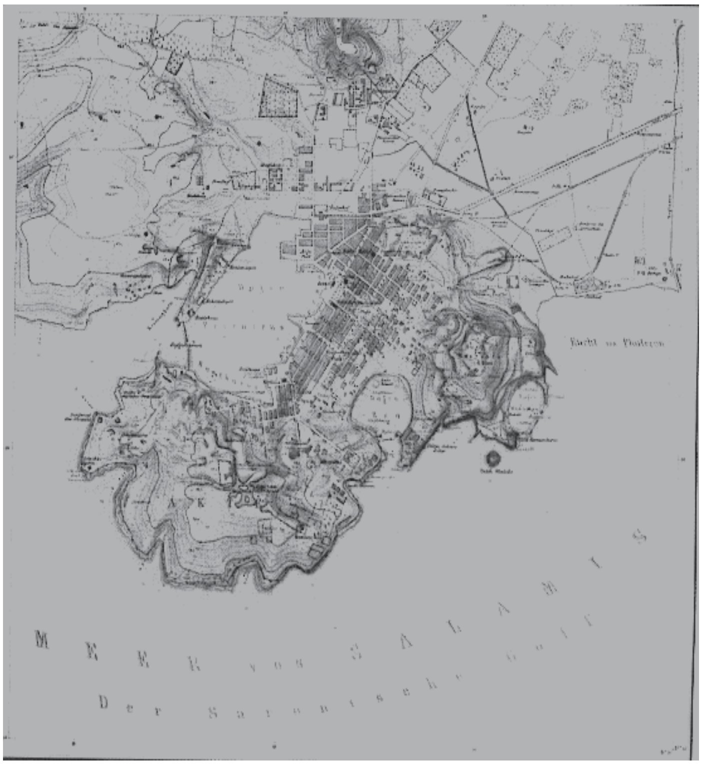

Figure 2
Map of Piraeus by Kaupert (1881)
(source: http://www2.rgzm.de/Navis2/Harbours/Athen/Piraeus/PiraeusAbb3.htm).

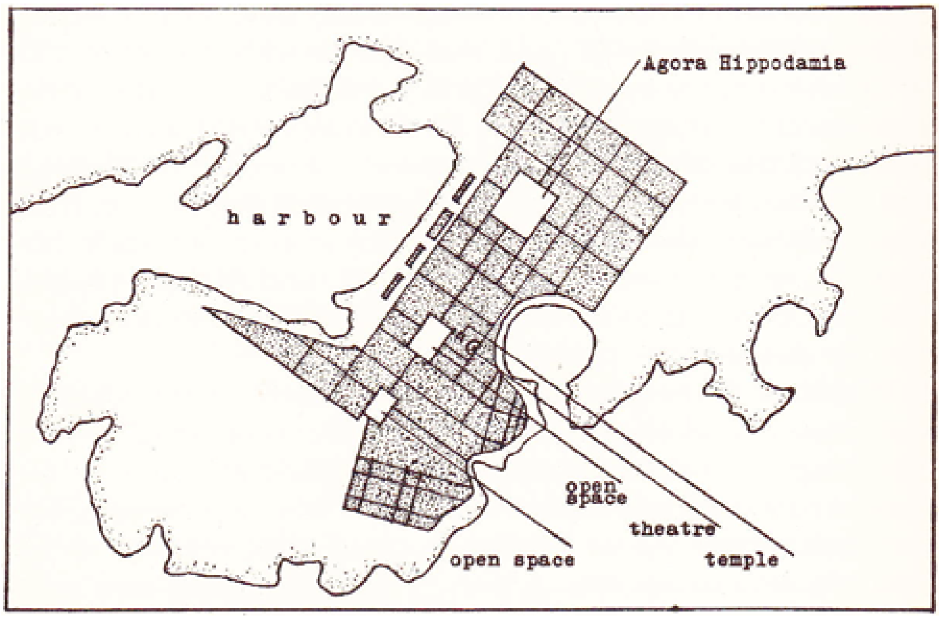

Figure 3

Piraeus after Milchhoefer
(source: Martienssen 1964: 26).

The great temples remind us that the colonists felt themselves poised on the edge of nowhere and tried to hold on and intensify the religion that they brought with them. Probably the sense of adventure on the frontier was a necessary component in the emergence of Greek science and philosophy.

The city wall, streets and houses all followed the grid. Aristotle and Hippocrates recommended that houses be built on south-facing slopes. The grid stepped to follow the slope. Public spaces and public buildings were created on levelled slopes.

The town plan of Priene (figures 4, 5 and 6) on Miletus bay has also been ascribed to Hippodamus. It is worth mentioning here because excavations have revealed the town plan without changes by later Roman interventions and it demonstrates how the Hippodamian grid was applied over the geology in the layout of a Greek colonial town (Haverfield 1913: 10). The grid is a rational (or cultural) construct and the Greeks copied the grid as design system, probably because it was what separated civilisation from barbarism. Haverfield (1913: 6) argues that ancient remains that show long straight lines or several correctly drawn right angles date from a more civilised age.

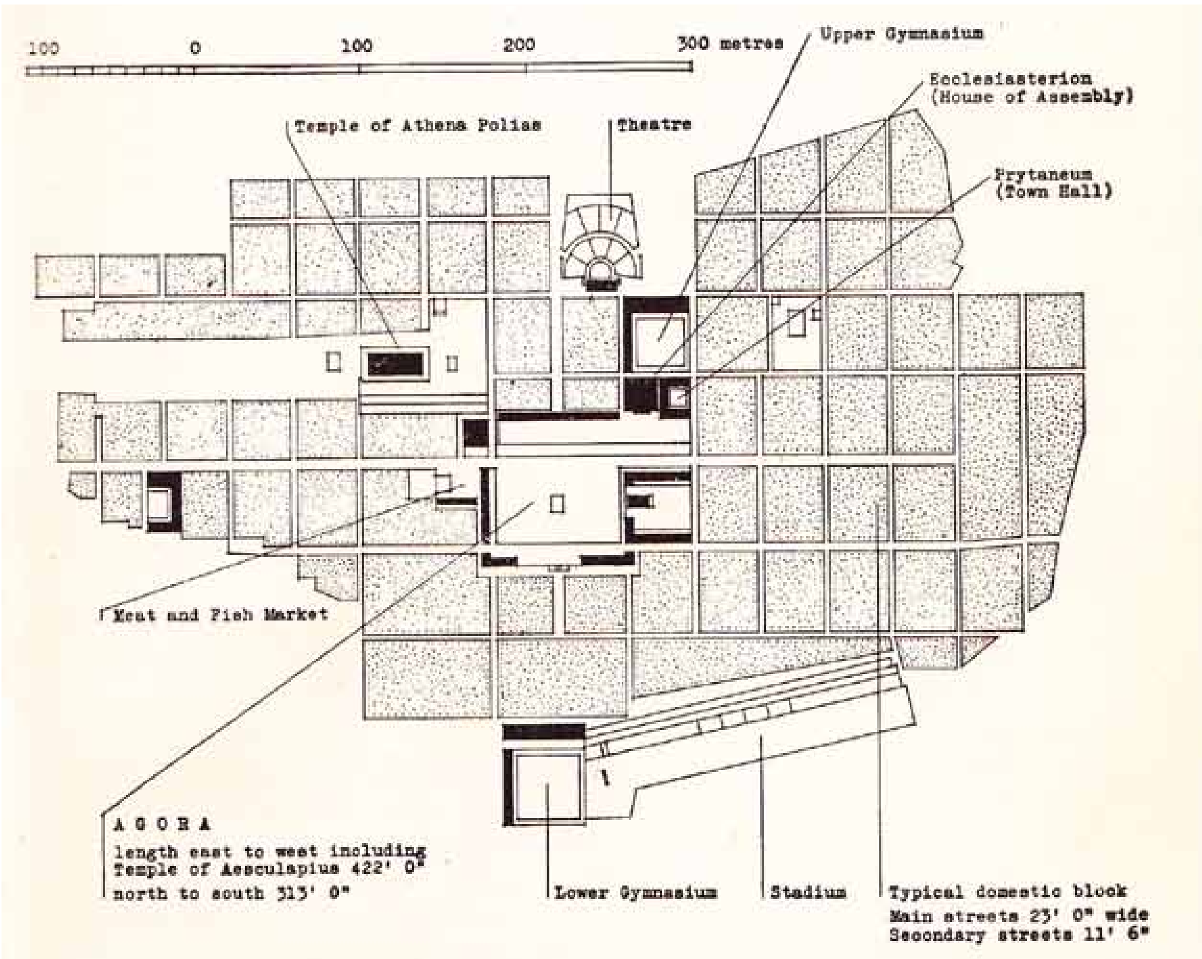

Figure 4
Plan of Priene
(source: Martienssen 1964: 39).

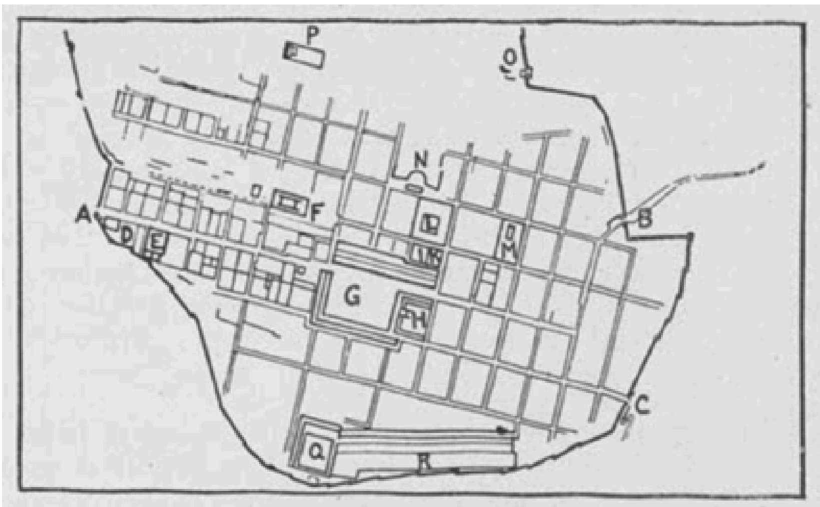

Figure 5
Priene, Asia Minor – a planned city from the 4th century BC. General outline of Priene: A, B, C. Gates. D, E, F, H, M, P. Temples, G. Agora, Market. I. Council House, K. Prytaneion. L, Q. Gymnasium. N. Theatre, O. Water-reservoir, R. Race-course
(source: Haverfield 1913: 16).

Figure 6
Priene, Asia Minor –The grid street plan was laid out across a hill, and all buildings were aligned accordingly
(source: Haverfield 1913: 16).

In a similar vein Bergquist (1967: 1-2) comments on modern surveys of early Greek sanctuaries that are described as irregular and disordered, if not chaotic, accidental and plan-less, because they do not follow a strict rectangular grid. “There exists a strong tendency to label a not strictly geometric arrangement as irregular and irrational, unplanned and accidental.” Although she believes that these descriptions are erroneous, she continues to provide examples of the change that *temene* (temple complexes) have gone through from early to late Archaic times. In the early Archaic examples there seemed to be a lack of intention and structures were isolated with no orthogonal relations either to each other or to the enclosure. Middle Archaic examples were planned and composed by orthogonal means although it was not too strictly applied and in late

Archaic examples there was a clearer composition, although it was still not achieved through consistent and systematic relations. Bergquist touches on intention, which will be investigated later in the article (1967: 1-2). Whether the early *temene* were planned or not, there is no doubt that the Hippodamian grid in town planning was a design system. And from there sprouts the agora, on which this article will focus. If temple complexes often had irregular shapes, the agora invariably was rectangular, although in early times the agora was an irregularly shaped area at the intersection of important streets. It was only in the growth of the corporate idea of a city that it assumed formality. This formal agora had its origin in Ionia and was introduced into Greece by Hippodamus. The agora was placed centrally in the city plan, although in the case of seaports the agora was usually situated near the harbour.

Figure 7 shows the Hellenistic town of Miletus, with its Hippodamian grid and three agoras (south, west and north). The north agora was near the harbour, the favourable geography determining its location.

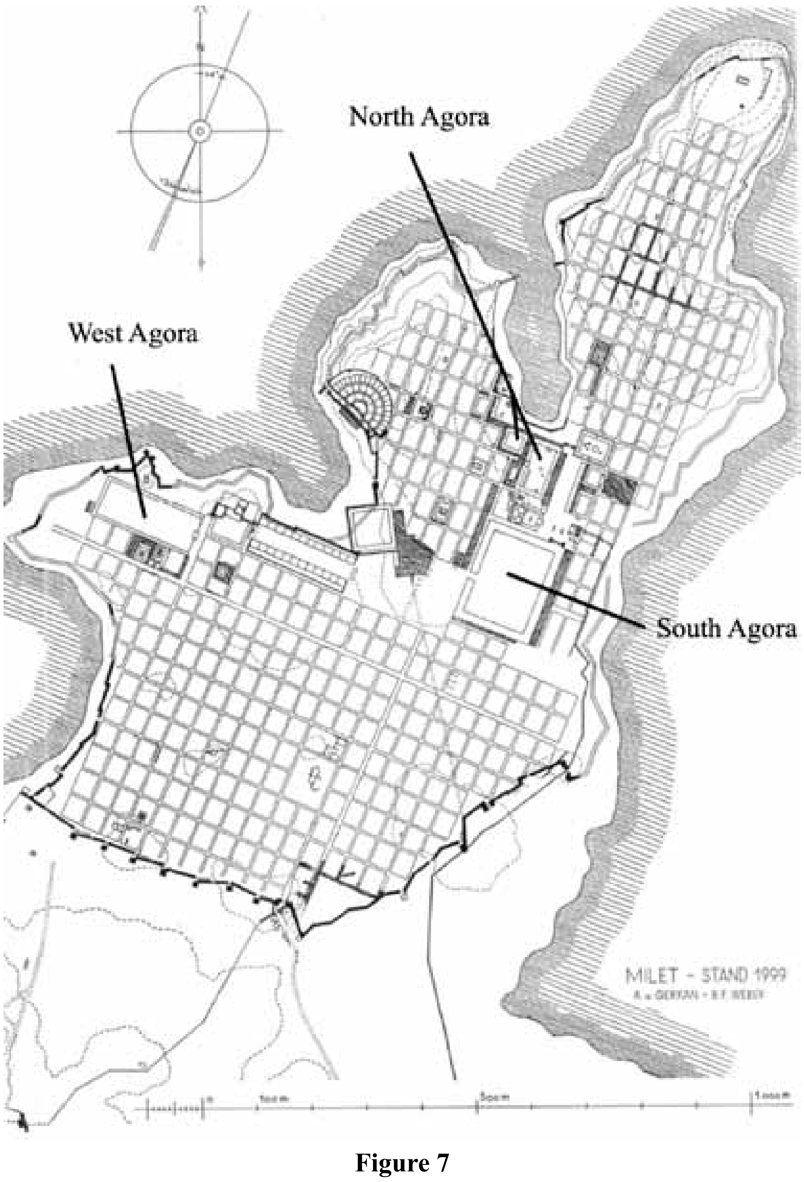

Figure 7
Plan of Miletus after von Gerkan, notes by Author
(source: http://www.travellinkturkey.com/aegean/miletus/miletus-plan.jpg).

The public square (agora)

Historically, public places have played an important role in cities in many cultures. Public spaces such as the Greek agora provided a place for markets, celebrations and civic life to flourish. The agora in ancient Greece was a central spot in city-states. The word literally means 'gathering place' or 'assembly'. It was the centre of athletic, artistic, spiritual and political life of the city. The best know example is the agora of Athens, which was also the birthplace of democracy.

In Hellenistic times there were two types of agoras: i) Assembly places where rulers' proclamations were heard and ii) meeting places for public or private business transactions. The initial political function was modified in time into an economical one but at all times it remained a place of pleasure and recreation, sometimes criticised by politicians and philosophers as an abuse of the space.

It consisted of a large, open, rectangular or trapezoidal area, surrounded by *stoai*. The *bouleuterion* and *prytaneum* were often grouped in the vicinity. The commercial agora was surrounded by shops and stalls (Martienssen, 1964: 31).

Martienssen (1964: 3) describes the horizontal plane as the first essential in any system of formal arrangement that tended to embrace the activities of organised or collective life. He argues that human beings' sensory equipment demands the visual stability, which level surfaces offer. "The plane surface is a deliberate structural means to negate the irregularity of existing topographical conditions. Even primitive dwellings have level forecourts where the ground has been beaten to a hard platform, which not only performs a practical function but also satisfies the intuitive demand for repose. In antiquity a more permanent and durable treatment of level surfaces was achieved by laying large stone slabs, which also satisfied the requirements of geometric accuracy."

Pythagorean mathematics

One of the things that Western thought owes to the Pythagoreans is the awareness that form and structure give things their individual identities (Brumbaugh, 1970: 30). The concept of form and the Greek word *eidos*, which finally came to express that concept, have a complicated history. At first *eidos* meant the look of a thing or the face. In mathematics *eidos* was a near synonym for schema or shape and referred to the mathematical structure. The idea of good form was important in athletics and dancing to suggest that form is a standard of value. Plato and Aristotle tried in different ways to bring these two senses of form, the mathematical and the ideal, together (Ibid, 31).

That numbers are things extends the notion of reality well beyond the Milesian idea that to be is to be material (Ibid, 31). They discovered that mathematical formulas can be applied to explain the physical world and from this discovery they generalised to the philosophic thesis that the ultimate nature of reality is mathematical. Just as the Milesians thought that matter was the complete key to the nature of things, the Pythagoreans thought that mathematics was the whole of philosophy. These two suggestions challenged subsequent Greek philosophers to reconcile the claims of both form and matter as the constituents of reality. They were curious about the nature of number and figure as such and this curiosity was needed to discover that numbers, figures and relations have a reality of their own and to the philosophical doctrine that numbers are things. The Pythagoreans found that they could think about shapes in the same way (Ibid, 32).

Much of the new Pythagorean mathematics was impure: it still depended strongly on pictures and imagination. Numbers had shapes and even personalities. Like the concept of matter in the Milesian school, the concept of numbers had to develop from intuition and postulation (Brumbaugh 1970: 33). Both the notion that nature prefers symmetry (Pythagoras was a gem-engraver) and that qualitative differences, such as those between earth and fire, might be explicable by particles differing in shape, could be dated as early as Pythagoras himself and find some experimental support (*ibid*, 217). The Milesians had recognised the sphere of physical reality and in addition thereto the world of numbers has real relevance to human interests and problems, since these abstract ratios and figures give science the tools it needs for understanding nature. The mixture of imagination and abstraction made it easy to also link numbers with shapes and objects. Some members of the Pythagorean School tried to build the physical world out of spatial points (Brumbaugh 1970: 34). Each number had its own personality, masculine or feminine, perfect or incomplete, beautiful or ugly.

The importance of right proportion had been a central theme in Greek architecture (Brumbaugh 1970: 38). There was no limit to the power of number and ratio to penetrate the innermost nature of things. Pythagorean order had three aspects: political, religious and ethical (*ibid*, 39). The Pythagorean political ideal was small communities with common property, women were given equal opportunities and education, and interest in music and mathematics was shared as part of regular social life. Admission to the order was selective on the basis of intelligence and character. But Pythagorean policies ran counter to other powerful parties and Pythagorean communities were wiped out. Pythagoras thought that the study of mathematics and music was the best way of achieving harmony of soul and purification, thus breaking with traditional religion. The ethics that he taught, centred around and the idea of harmony in the soul. A good soul has a proper order among its impulses and standards of value and the aim of education was to instil a love of harmony (*ibid*, 41). We become harmonious persons through appreciation of and contact with the beauties of music, the orderly abstractions of mathematics and the concrete sublime system of the stars. The common presence of harmony and order was criteria for truth and beauty in both the natural and the human sphere. The conquest of pure mathematics gave the West its most valuable tool of explanation. To philosophy their new sensitivity to order and form offered a corrective to Milesian materialism (*ibid*, 42).

This article proposes to connect philosophy with physical reality. The material constitutes the build environment but it is the abstractions of mathematics, the power of ratio and number, measurable scale, geometry and proportion that provides harmony and relation between the solids, as was so passionately advocated by the Pythagoreans.

Change according to Heraclites

Heraclites was born in 353 BC in Ephesus, modern day Turkey, on the coast of Asia Minor. He called the Immortal Principle fire and introduced change and motion as part of this principle. He said the world exists as a conflict and tension of opposites (Pirsig 1974: 372). Central to Heraclites's writings was the ever-living restless fire, *pyr*, which added a new dimension to philosophy. It was neither simply Milesian material stuff (the material nature of *aer* was not yet established), nor was it simply a symbol for incessant transformation. The living fire that supplies the driving force of a universe in endless change is a physical cause, at the very least (Brumbaugh 1970: 48). Perhaps the simplest way of explaining it is to say that Heraclites was trying to express both the tensions that lead to harmony and the tremendous energy that flows through reality in his fire imagery. It is energy and not matter that is important to him (*ibid*, 49).

Today we can recognize as a genuine possibility a process philosophy in which physical reality is not matter, but power (*ibid*, 49). When reason becomes enchanted by mechanical models or mathematical maps and forgets the concrete fact of change, the strife and individuality, the stuff of our experienced world, is forgotten. Heraclites, like his predecessors, began by looking for the one stuff underlying the changing world we observe all around us but he falls neither in the Milesian nor Pythagorean group. Reality for him consists of motion, process, power, strife and flow (*ibid*, 43). The Roman stoics thought that they were following Heraclites. They identified logos with God and combined materialism and pantheism, the view that all things are part of God (*ibid*, 46).

The agoras of Miletus

There were three agoras in Miletus: the North, South and West agoras (Figures 7 and 8). The North agora is the oldest of the three, dating back to the 5th century BC and became the main agora, located just south of the Harbour of Lions. The rectangular public square measured approximately 42m x 84m, thus with an x:y ratio of 1:2 and 90 degree angles. It was blocked to the east by a wall with a *propylon* or monumental gate in the centre giving access to the space from the Sacred Way, but this was later changed to shops and on the west there was a *peristyle* or open colonnade with shops (figures 9 and 10).

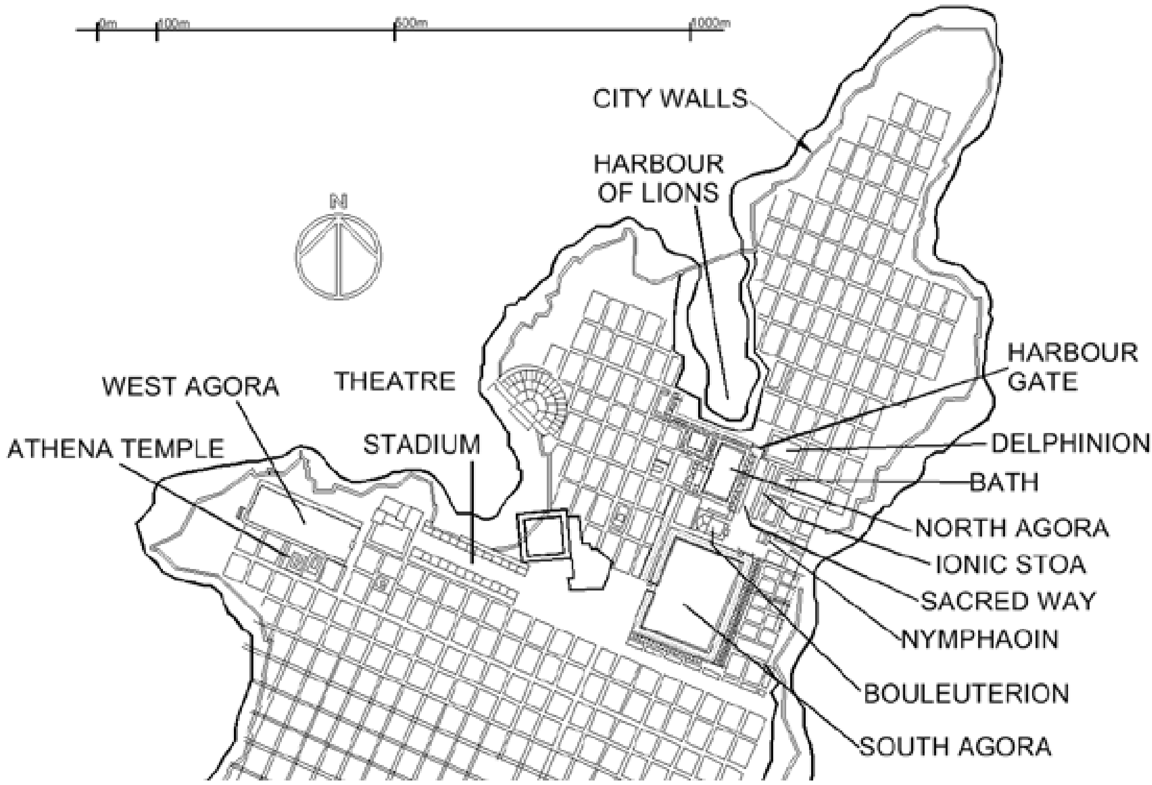

Figure 8
Plan of ancient Miletus
(source: drawing by author after http://www.ntimages.net/Miletus-harbor-stoa-agora-tns.htm).

Figure 9
North Agora, Miletus, model from Pergamon Museum, Berlin
(source: http://www.livius.org/a/turkey/miletus/miletus_model.JPG).

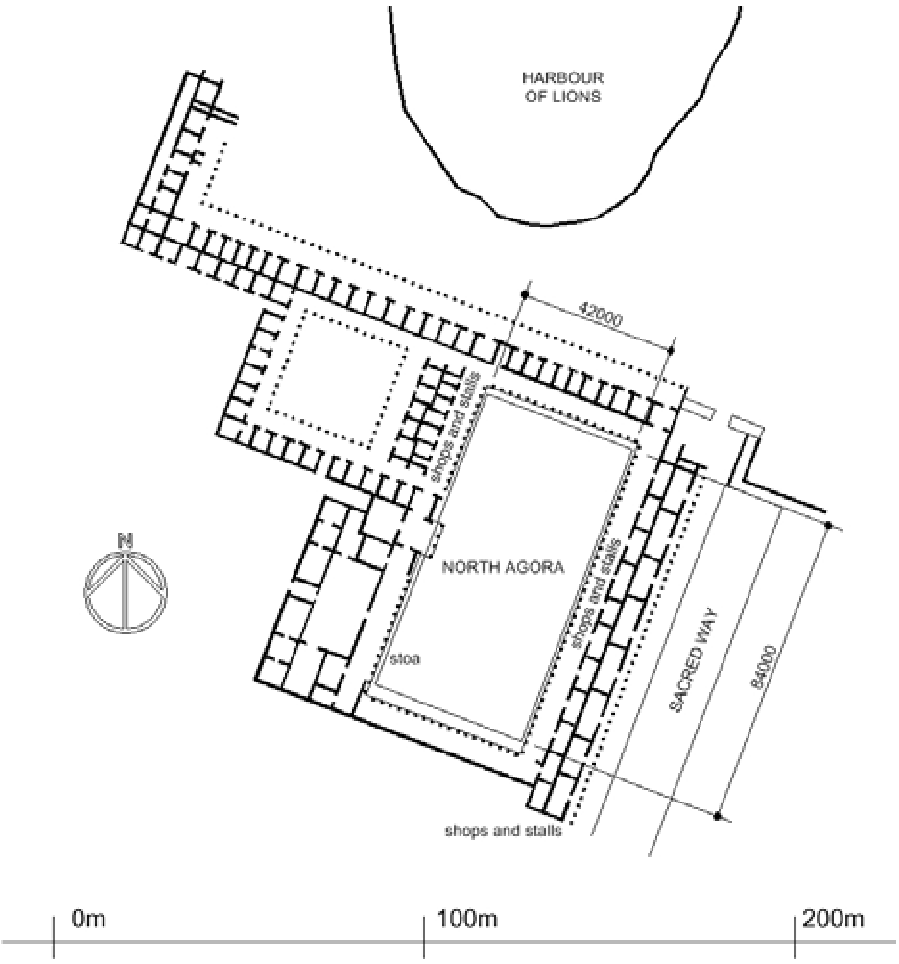

Figure 10
North Agora, Miletus
(source: drawing by author after http://www.fhw.gr/choros/miletus/en/photos.php).

Most Greek agoras that originated as gathering places later became market places, with merchants' stalls or shops amid the colonnades. From this twin function of the agora as a political and commercial space came the two Greek verbs *agorázō*, "I shop" and *agoreúō*, "I speak in public". The word agoraphobia, the fear of open spaces or public situations, derives from the meaning of agora as a gathering place. The *Prytaneion,* where the *prytaneis* or executive convened, was on the south-western corner. It was an important building in ancient Greek cities where official visitors were accommodated and officials met, similar to the seat of Government. The North Agora underwent several changes in the Hellenistic period. A Doric portico surrounded the sides of its open-air space and an Ionic temple was build at the centre of the western portico. In the Roman Period the open-air space of the Agora was defined by a two storey Ionic portico, thus increasing the height and on the eastern side a double row of rooms was added.

The South Agora (figure 11) dates from the 3rd Century BC and around 120 houses had to be demolished to create this planned public space to accommodate political, economic, religious and social events in the city. The open-air space measured 122m x 158.6m (x:y ratio 1:1.3 with 90 degree angles) and was one of the largest *agoras* in ancient Greece, surrounded with *stoai* and shops. Its east *stoa* measured one stadium long and consisted of a Doric colonnade of columns. Behind the colonnade and parallel to it stretched a series of three-room shops, which could be accessed both from the agora through the *stoa* and from the outside. Later a colonnade of Ionic and Corinthian columns was added to the interior of the single aisled *stoa*, turning it into a two-aisled *stoa*. Statues were placed in front of the interior colonnade. The north, south and west sides also had two-aisled *stoa* and the south wing also housed single-room shops with access from both sides. Entrance to the agora was through its west, south and north sides. The west gate was a simple opening near the centre of the west side and the south gate was on the south-eastern corner which, in Roman times, was a simple wide vaulted entrance. Up to the late Hellenistic times the north gate of the South agora consisted of a *stoa* with Doric columns and three gates, but in Hadrian's era (117-138AD) it was adorned with a monumental two storey *propylon*, which was regarded as such an important archaeological find, that the *propylon* was taken to Germany piece by piece, re-erected there and today forms part of the Pergamon Museum in Berlin (figure 12). The South Agora occupied the equivalent of sixteen *insulae*.

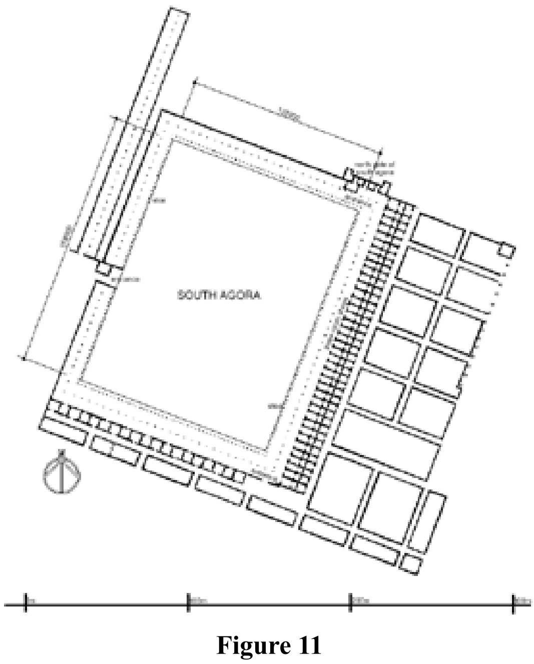

Figure 11
South Agora, Miletus
(source: drawing by author, after http://www.fhw.gr/choros/miletus/images/mil_notiaAgoraRoman1.jpg).

Figure 12
North Gate of South Agora, Propylon of Miletus, Pergamon Museum, Berlin
(source: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Market_Gate_of_Miletus.jpg).

The West Agora (figure 13) was built in the 2nd Century BC south of the theatre harbour and was the latest of the three agorae of Miletus. Measuring 180m x 60m (x:y ratio 3:1 with 90 degree angles) it consisted of a huge rectangular open space and was surrounded on three sides by a *stoa* or covered walkway with an Ionic colonnade. The entrance was on the east side, accessible through the *propylon* on the main axis of the square.

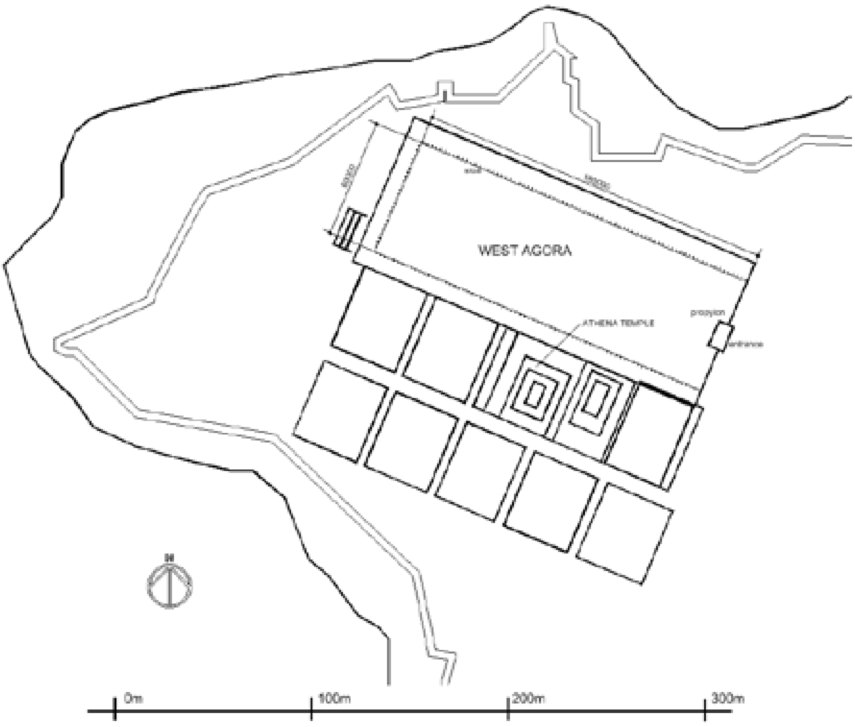

Figure 13
West Agora, Miletus
(source: drawing by author after http://www.fhw.gr/choros/miletus/images/mil_WestMarket1.jpg).

The agoras of Ephesus

There are two agoras in Ephesus (figure 14), the Commercial agora and the State agora. The Commercial agora is known as the square agora and measures 110m x 110m (x:y ratio 1:1 with 90 degree angles). It arose in the Hellenistic period, in the 3rd Century BC and was surrounded completely by columns, but the ruins date from the reign of Caracalla. There were three gates, one from the front of the theatre on the northeast, one from the opening to the harbour on the west and the third from the Celsus library. The north side was left open and a portico with a row of shops inside surrounded the other three sides. It was the most important trade centre in Ephesus and had a water clock in the centre.

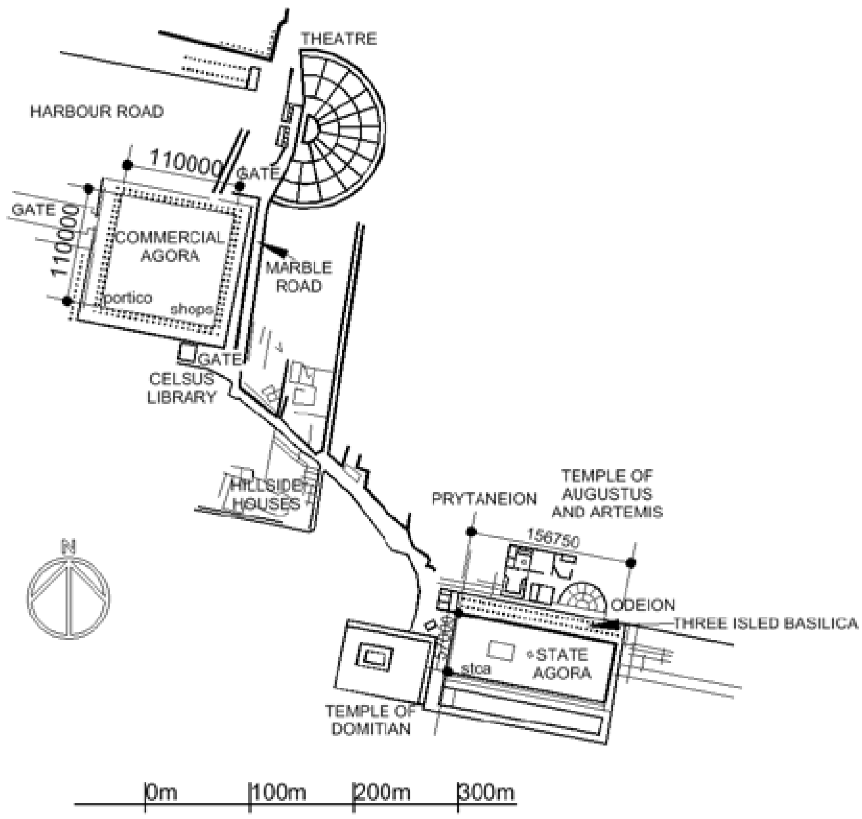

Figure 14
Ephesus plan
(source: drawing by author after http://www.kusadasi.tv/history-ephesus-turkey.html).

The State Agora's original design was also Hellenistic. During this first building phase, the complex's open-air square was bordered by simple *stoai* along the north and south sides. The agora as we see it today dates from Roman times, from the age of Augustus. The transformation from Hellenistic agora to Roman forum can be seen in the rectangular design (measuring approximately 156.750m x 57m, x:y ratio 2.75:1) and clearly defined edges. Along the northern side, from west to east, the *Prytaneion,* the temple of Augustus and Artemis and the *odeum-bouleuterion* were arranged. In front of these buildings there was a three-aisled basilica, which formed the complex's northern side (figure 14).

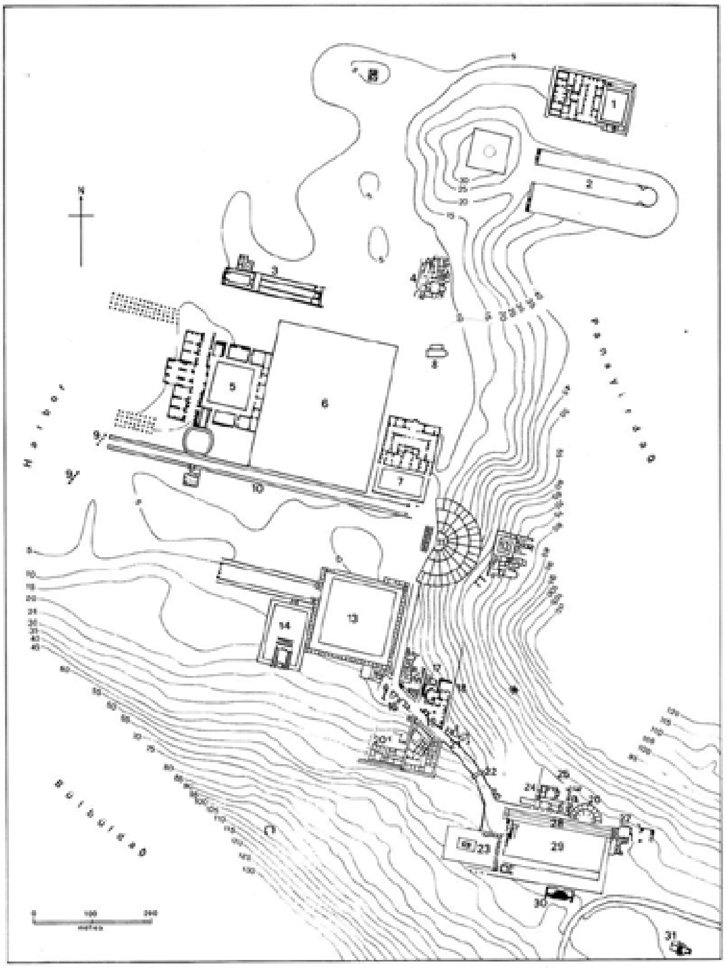

Fig. 12. Plan of late antique Ephesus. 1, Gymnasium of Vedius; 2, Stadium; 3, Church of St Mary; 4, Governor's Palace; 5, Baths of Constantius; 6, ruined Palaestra, eventually covered with houses; 7, Theater Gymnasium; 8, possible synagogue; 9, Harbor gates; 10, Arcadiane; 11, Theater; 12, villa above Theater; 13, Agora; 14, Temple of Serapis; 15, Library of Celsus; 16, Roman monuments; 17, private dwellings; 18, Baths of Scholasticia; 19, Temple of Hadrian; 20, apartment houses; 21, Embolos; 22, arch; 23, Temple of Domitian; 24, Prytaneum; 25, houses; 26, Senate House; 27, Bath of Varius; 28, Basilica; 29, Upper Agora; 30, Nymphaeum; 31, 'Tomb of St Luke'. (*Redrawn after Forschungen in Ephesos* Suppl. XII, Plan 1)

Figure 15
Plan of Ephesus
(source: http://ephesus.biz/img/ephesusmap.jpg).

The agora of Priene

Priene demonstrates a unifying process in its constituent elements and the architectural expression of its institution has crystalized into significant forms, making it a typical Hellenistic city. The streets are laid out with almost mathematical precision and extreme uniformity of arrangement (figure 4). The main east to west street passes to the north of the agora and at a right angle to this is the principal cross street, which serves the commercial west side of the agora (meat and fish market), the south gymnasium and stadium and the precinct of the temple of Athena Polias. On the centre line of the Agora is another street that links the agora with the theatre and on the east boundary of the Agora is an important street that links the temple of Asclepios, the *Prytaneum* and the northern gymnasium. The main streets were approximately 7m wide and the secondary streets were 3.5m wide. Any wheel traffic would normally be restricted to the main east west street, which connected the public space and market with the city gates. The agora dominates the whole city and is virtually central. It measures about one fifth of the length and one fifth of the breadth of the city. It occupies the equivalent of two *insulae* and provides the focal point for civic activities and grouped with it are public buildings (Martienssen 1964: 38-41).

Encircling the main area was a continuous *stoa* on the east, south and west sides (figure 16). On the west side were shops and beyond these a small market. To the north lay the principle *stoa*, which extended beyond the limits defined by the other colonnades. It was used for festivals or ordinary activities of everyday life. In the *stoa*, the column system retains its purpose as a screen in that columns define a visual plane and yet allow a penetration of space between them, but the defined area of use, the agora is open to the sky (Martienssen 1964: 41 - 43).

A flight of steps, uninterrupted for its full length of 144.17m, lead up to a broad terrace 6.4m deep, before the north *stoa*. A further flight of three steps leads directly into the *stoa*. The north *stoa* is 11.6m deep and fronted by a Doric colonnade of 49 columns with an inter-column measurement of 2.28m and a shaft height of 5.2m. The pavement level of the *stoa* is 1.83m above that of the agora. According to Martienssen the agora of Priene underlines the Greek ideal that man is the measure of all things, but rather than accentuating the individual, the scale of the construction is proportioned to the shared demands of the group (Martienssen 1964: 46 - 47).

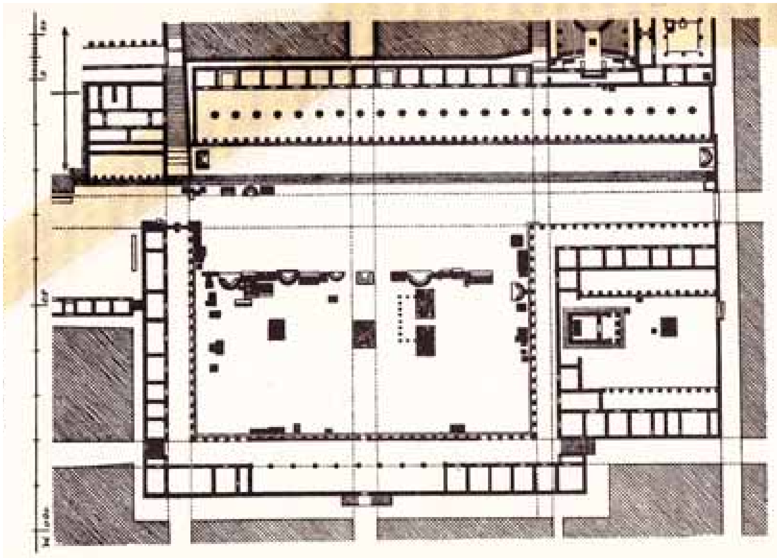

Figure 16
Agora of Priene after von Gerkan
(source: Martienssen 1964: 39).

The idea of space

In the section above an attempt was made to create an awareness of the form and structure of the chosen agoras of Asia Minor and by doing so, these urban spaces were given individual identities. According to the Pythagorean philosophy that the ultimate nature of reality is mathematical, proportion and ratios were applied to explain their physical existence. This is not the first attempt to seek geometrically based rationality in Hellenic architecture.

In 1937 Doxiadis attempted to show that Greek sanctuaries and markets, from Archaic to Hellenistic, were laid out according to a polar co-ordinate system of a viewpoint (the entrance) and the angles of vision, (the angles between the lines of sight from the entrance to the corners of the buildings and to the space between the buildings) alleging also that the angles were divisible by a tenth of the circle in layouts with Ionic architecture and that the buildings were situated at distances of round numbers of feet (Bergquist 1967: 3). In 1949 Scranton analysed some Hellenistic market places from the point of view of 'space form,' which is the shape and arrangement of the volumes created among themselves by various buildings and of 'block form', the shape and arrangement of the buildings and monuments themselves and concluded that several types of 'space form' were developed, while one type of block form was employed (Bergquist 1967: 3). In 1964 Martienssen explored the Doric temple and the relation its elements had to one another. He maintained that:

> the Greeks had permanent rules that underlie all events and changes in nature and in human life. They always sought for one Law pervading everything and tried to make their life and thought harmonise with it. This theory of Greek philosophy was deeply connected with Greek art and poetry for it not only embodied rational thought but vision, which apprehends every object as a whole and which sees the idea in everything (Martienssen 1964: 156).

Martienssen concluded that sites were so arranged as to be able to provide the visitor with a comprehensive perception and cognisance of the volume of the temple firstly by means of a succession of different views obtained from viewpoints changing as to distance, angle of vision and level and secondly that in the Greek arrangement of sites there is a fusion of the absolute and abstract with the local and the practical, a fusion of variables with the constant (Bergquist 1967: 4).

Bergquist's 1967 study of the Archaic Greek *temenos* and its relations to the whole and its parts attempted to explain the intention of early Greek builders and argues that these complexes were planned and not the result of chaotic assembly of parts. She attempts to investigate the archaeological evidence and to analyse the structure, which reveals how the Archaic Greek sanctuaries were arranged and the function which reveals why they were given the arrangement they had.

But other authors are sceptical, claiming that the Greeks were not conscious of spatial relations and that they did not intend the outcome. Such a statement was made by Smithson in his 1958 critique on Martienssen's *The Idea of Space in Greek Architecture*. He maintained that there is no conscious space in Europe until after the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Martienssen 1964: xix). The critique came after Martienssen's death in 1942 and in a response Heather Martienssen claimed that both the artist and the spectator experience space at the subconscious level. "That the Greeks did not invoke the spatial effects of the sophisticated post-Baroque generation is not to say that the spatial effects are not there. Martienssen probably did not mean to propound that the Greeks planned the placing and relationship of their buildings with a wholly conscious and rational working out of what the spatial effects would be. It is more likely that he gave the Greeks credit for such an intuitive awareness of their own activity in relation to their monuments that the two facets in placing worked together to produce the final result." Martienssen would probably not have agreed that all the insight and consciousness should be credited to modern man who does the assessment of a Greek site and that none should go to the builders of Greek civilisation. A Greek site with its total integration of buildings, movements and near and distant presence of natural growth and geology is far from the unrelated chaos that contemporary man usually accepts as his environment.

It seems that previous investigations of relationship between space and structure were focused more on sacred areas (*temenos* and temple), whereas this article investigates the same in the urban square or agora.

Spatial intention - Conclusion

Was there a conscious decision to create the square / public space according to mathematical ratios and geometry? Although authors differ on this matter, Lawlor (1989: 5) expounds in his *Sacred Geometry* that all our sense organs respond to the geometrical or proportional and not the quantitative. Similarly, we do not hear quantitative differences in sound wave frequencies, but rather the proportional differences between frequencies, (as was formulated by Pythagoras centuries ago). In our human consciousness, we have the ability to perceive the relationships contained in insubstantial forms of a geometric order and the changing forms of our actual world. The content of our experience results from an immaterial, abstract, geometric architecture, which is composed of harmonic waves of energy, nodes of relationality and melodic forms springing forth from the eternal realm of geometric proportion. Lawlor further maintains that in nature, proportions exist *a priori* without a material counterpart, as abstract, geometric relationships. The architecture of bodily existence is determined by an invisible, immaterial world of pure form and geometry.

Martienssen maintained that the level plane in ancient Greece is an external extension in the conscious arrangement of structural forms for spatial definition. The space shaping cubes restrict the normal visibility of natural surroundings. This type of restriction offers a key to the problem of adjusted surroundings and it evidences the fundamental and predominant geometrizing tendency of thinking humans, the tendency to envelop their activities in a framework of visual stability, of known and expressed dimensions (Martienssen 1964: 4-6).

There is a similar shift today away from the assumption that substance (particles) is the fundamental nature of matter, towards the concept that the fundamental nature of the material world is knowable only through its underlying patterns. Our organs of perception and the phenomenal world we perceive seem to be best understood as patterns or as geometric structures of form and proportion. Many ancient cultures examined reality through geometry and music. What we perceive as various qualities of matter, are actually differences in periodicity.

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