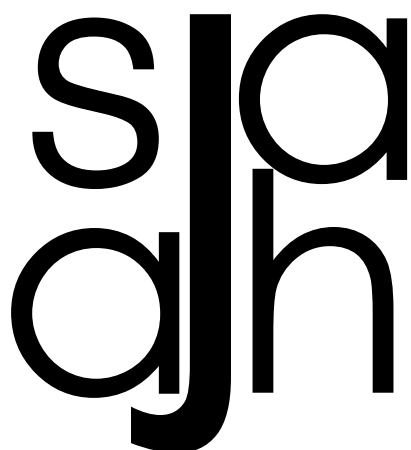




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Subjugated South African Buildings: The Bonwit Clothing Factory in Cape Town and the Peri-Urban Areas Health Board Building in Pretoria

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Two important and original buildings in the respective *oeuvres* of the South African architects RS Uytendogaardt (1933-1998) and C Strauss Brink (1920-1992), viz. the Bonwit Clothing Factory (1967) in Cape Town by the former, and the Peri Urban Areas Health Board Headquarters Building (1959) in Pretoria by the latter, have been subjugated to conform with their surroundings. The article presents these buildings as respective examples of two modern architectures, Brutalism and the International Style. In symbolising the brutalisation of factory workers, essentialising the industrial aesthetic-as-type, introducing original forms, and using carefully considered materials, the Bonwit Factory is positioned at the pinnacle of Uytendogaardt's architectural achievements. Strauss Brink's carefully considered combination of sparkling black banding, olive green, thin white stripes, decorative grille blocks, and articulated façades made the Peri Urban building an original, striking, and aesthetically pleasing building. The obliteration of one of South Africa's most important Brutalist buildings as well as one of its original International Style buildings is a loss to South Africa's architectural heritage.

Key words: Brutalism, International Style, subjugation, irreversible adaptive re-use, RS Uytendogaardt, CS Brink

Tot onderdanigheid gedwing: Twee Suid-Afrikaanse geboue, die Bonwit klerefabriek, Kaapstad en die gebou van die Gesondheidsraad vir Buitestedelike Gebiede, Pretoria

Twee belangrike en oorspronklike geboue uit die onderskeidelike oeuvres van twee Suid-Afrikaanse argitekte, RS Uytendogaardt (1933-1998) en C Strauss Brink (1920-1992), eersgenoemde se Bonwit Klerefabriek (1967) in Kaapstad en laasgenoemde se Hoofkantoor van Buitestedelike Gebiede in die middestad van Pretoria, is in die vroeg een-en-twintigste eeu onderwerp aan gedwonge aanpassing by hul veranderende omgewings. Hierdie artikel belig die geboue as voorbeelde van twee bewegings in moderne argitektuur: Brutalisme en die Internasionale Styl. In die *oeuvre* van Uytendogaardt word die Bonwit Klerefabriek vooropgestel as 'n hoogtepunt van sy argitektoniese bereiking. Die gebou simboliseer die ontmensliking van fabriekswerkers, die uitkristalising van die tipologie van industriële estetika tot die essensie daarvan, die aanwending van oorspronklike vorms en die gebruik van sorgvuldig gekose materiale. Insgelyks dra Strauss Brink se sorgvuldig gekose kombinasie van glimmende swart stroke, olyfgroen, dun wit strepe, dekoratiewe roosterblokke, en geartikuleerde fasades by tot die oorspronklike en estetiese bevredigende karakter van die Buitestedelike Gebiedegebou. Die uitwissing van Suid-Afrika se mees belangrike Brutalistiese gebou en een van sy mees bevredigende Internasionale Styl geboue as gevolg van onsimpatieke en onherstelbare veranderinge en verbouings in diens van gebruiksaanpassings, verteenwoordig 'n verlies van Suid Afrika se argitektoniese erfenis.

Sleutelwoorde: Brutalisme, Internasionale Styl, onderwerping, onherstelbare gebruiksaanpassings, RS Uytendogaardt, CS Brink.

Buildings may be altered over time for functional or financial reasons, and in instances where edifices are conspicuous, they are often subjugated to conform with their surroundings. Two important buildings in the respective *oeuvres* of the South African architects Roelof Sarel Uytendogaardt (1933-1998) and Christiaan Strauss Brink (1920-1992), viz. the Bonwit Clothing Factory (1967) ("Bonwit"), also known as the Truwell Clothing Factory, Salt River by the former, and the Peri Urban Areas Health Board Headquarters Building (1959) ("Peri Urban building"), also known as the H.B. Phillips Building, by the latter, have been subjugated.¹ A photographic record of these buildings, of which little has been written to date, has been preserved. In 1975 the author, while a student of architecture at the University of Cape Town,

photographed Bonwit. The author inherited 35mm slides of the Peri Urban building taken in 1960 by Strauss Brink.

The objective of this article is to present the Peri Urban building and Bonwit as important respective examples of the International Style and New Brutalism in South Africa. An ancillary objective is to identify these buildings as significant works in the respective *oeuvres* of Strauss Brink and Uytendogaardt.

The International Style

South African architecture, apart from some vernacular building, has always been derivative of foreign styles; often changed, often misapplied, only sometimes integrated (Prinsloo 1977: 34).

In 1932 Philip Johnson and Henry-Russell Hitchcock curated an exhibition of architecture in the Museum of Modern Art, New York. The work of some fifty architects from sixteen countries, including Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius and Alvar Aalto, but excluding Frank Lloyd Wright's work because of a different personal style, were displayed under the label the "International Style". This highly influential exhibition set the tone of architectural discourse for the next three decades (Khan 2001: 65). Johnson and Hitchcock identified three main aesthetic principles of the International Style:

Volume. Flexibility in plan made possible by a skeletal grid of columns. The surface of the contained volume needed to be a smooth unbroken skin tightly stretched over the building's skeletal frame. Windows should have light metallic frames and roofs should be flat or single-pitch without projecting over facades. However, exceptions to these rules were allowed as these extended the possibilities of the International style, e.g. Mies van der Rohe's Barcelona Pavilion (1929) and Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret's Maison de Mandrot (1929-1932).

Modular regularity. A building's underlying order should be symbolised by structural ordering using equally spaced columns. Asymmetry in the composition of buildings was preferable and curved surfaces could produce the effect of the style.

Avoidance of Applied Decoration. Decoration should be minimal and subservient to the clarity of the whole building to eliminate superficiality. Use of colour should be restrained (Amsoneit 1994: 6; Khan 2001: 67-70).

For Pevsner et al. (1975) the International Style, or what they referred to as the 'International Modern' style, is characterised by:

...asymmetrical composition, unrelievedly cubic general shapes, an absence of mouldings, large windows often in horizontal bands, and a predilection for white RENDERING (Pevsner et al. 1975: 253-254).

In addition to Johnson and Hitchcock's three aesthetic principles and Pevsner et al.'s constituents, International Style buildings usually incorporate the 'Five Points of a New Architecture' that Le Corbusier proposed for modern building design:

Pilotis. Free-standing columns or *pilotis* elevate the building to free the ground underneath for circulation, other uses or continuity of nature

Plan libre. Interior walls can be arranged freely to fit functional demands because the *pilotis*, not load-bearing external and internal walls, carry the load.

Façade libre. *Pilotis* also liberate exterior cladding from traditional weight bearing constraints, allowing openings to be arranged at will for light, view, climate or compositional needs.

Fenêtre en longueur. Long horizontal windows, one version of the free façade, were often used by Le Corbusier in his villas of the 1920s to create hovering bands of glass against smooth plaster-rendered walls.

Toît-jardin. A functional roof that replaces land lost underneath the building with a terrace and roof garden for relaxation and views (Curtis 1986: 69).

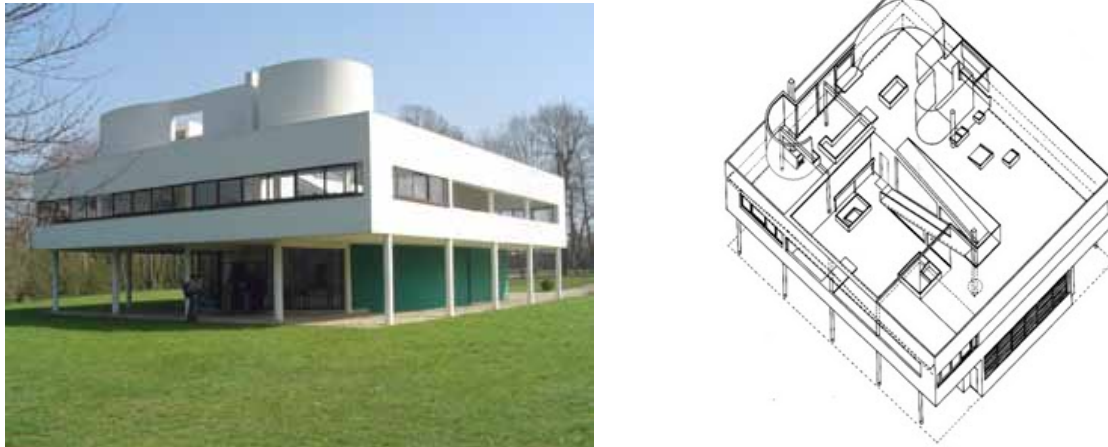


Figure 1
Left: Villa Savoye (1928-1931) at Poissy by Le Corbusier. Right: Axonometric
(Google images).

Le Corbusier's five points are clearly evident in his design of Villa Savoye, Poissy (figure 1), as well as several other villas designed by him during the 1920s.

Brutalism

In 1954 the term 'Brutalism' was coined in England to designate the style used by Le Corbusier in his *Unité d'Habitation* (1952) at Marseilles and the style of architects inspired by such buildings, e.g. Stirling & Gowan in England and Paul Rudolph in the United States (Pevsner et al. 1975: 64). The external appearance of a building in a Brutalist style or 'warehouse aesthetic' was dictated by its different internal functions and its frankly exposed external and internal materials. Shutter-patterned concrete, nearly always used in Brutalist buildings, was raised to the level of a fine art material. In Britain, according to Banham, Brutalism 'became tamed from a violent revolutionary outburst to a fashionable vernacular' (Banham 1966: 89):

Bona fide attempts to re-establish architecture of principle were inevitably transformed by the rapid propagation of the more superficial elements of each attempt. For example, Brutalism started as an ethic and a mode of work and degenerated into a formalism based on bad brickwork and rough concrete (Prinsloo 1977: 38).

The architects Alison and Peter Smithson's 'battleship aesthetic' with an exposed steel structure and plumbing for a school building at Hunstanton (1949-1953) gave rise to the phrase 'the New Brutalism'. This term referred both to the *béton brut* shutter-patterned concrete of the *Unité d'Habitation* in Marseilles and the anti-formalist architectural principles of the Smithsons (Furneaux Jordan 1969: 333-334).

Three decades after Johnson and Hitchcock's exhibition the architect and author Charles Jencks, as becomes clear in text further on, argued against any simplistic and deterministic theory of architecture that contends that there is one inevitable line of development. Jencks felt that architectural historians were either apologists for single traditions, such as the International Style or Brutalism, or prophets of inevitable technological development, which limited the number of actual live traditions (Jencks 1973: 11-14). In this way 'Futurism' and 'Expressionism', as labeled architectural styles, had been excised from architectural theory for thirty years. However, by 1970, according to Jencks (1973: 28), six major 20th century architectural traditions could be identified – "Logical, Idealist, Self-conscious, Intuitive, Activist, and Unselfconscious (80% of Environment?)". In his "Evolutionary Tree, 1920-1970" chronological diagram Jencks placed 'Brutalism' and 'International Style' in much smaller letters than several of his own rather obscure introductions, such as 'Parametric', 'Bureaucratic', 'Fascist', 'War Minimal', and 'Mobile' (Jencks 1973: 28). Four years prior to Jencks' publication, Furneaux Jordan seemed unaware of a 'plurality of modern movements in architecture' when he asserted:

...there are now *two* modern architectures. One is the steel and glass classicism of Gropius and Mies van der Rohe, the other is the *béton brut* of Le Corbusier and the 'New Brutalism' (Furneaux Jordan 1969: 320).

While Jencks recognised that an over-simplification, such as hazarded by Furneaux Jordan, creates some conceptual order out of an overwhelming complexity of detail, he underlined a pitfall in doing so:

But unfortunately it [simplifying by selecting and omitting data] often serves to reinforce one ideology – one tradition of development [such as the Modern Movement] – at the expense of live plurality (Jencks 1973: 11).

Within this theoretical context, Furneaux Jordan's identification of two modern architectures is congruent with Bonwit on the one hand, which is an example of the principled architecture of New Brutalism, and the Peri Urban building on the other, which provides an example of original design in the International Style (figure 2).

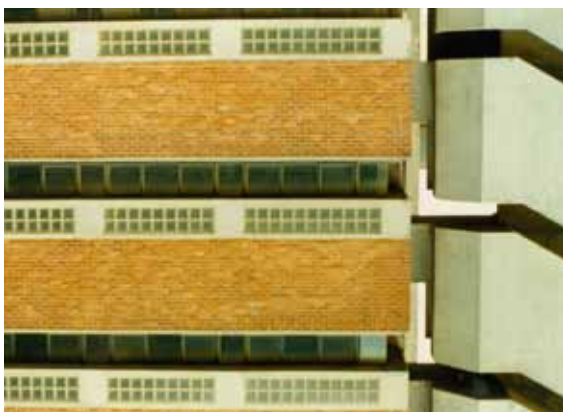


Figure 2

Close ups of Bonwit's Brutalist façade with frankly exposed materials (left) and the Peri Urban building's International Style façade, with plastered and coloured surfaces (right). Different materials, surfaces and textures, as well as projections and set-backs, provide visual interest in each façade. (Unless indicated otherwise, photographs of Bonwit were taken by the author in 1975, and photographs of the Peri Urban building were taken by Strauss Brink in 1960).

A bypassed Bonwit in publications and writings on the oeuvre of Uytenbogaardt

The young Afrikaners, freshly qualified at the architectural schools, were in no way bound by the traditional requirements to which the older architects adhered. They could start on a fresh drawing board and with typical Afrikaner enterprise they set about their task with such a will that they developed something permanent and valuable in certain architectural fields (Anonymous, quoted in *Our First Half-Century 1910-1960. Golden Jubilee of the Union of South Africa*. 1960: 169).

Uytenbogaardt's architectural, urban design and town planning career commenced when he graduated as an architect at the School of Architecture at the University of Cape Town in 1956. His 'starting from first principles' approach to design was already evident in his thesis 'A Marine Biological Centre', as partially illustrated in *Architect and Builder* (February 1957: 34-36) and *S.A. Architectural Record* (March 1957: 26-27). This design approach heightened an emotional and spiritual experience of his buildings, to the point of a Confrontation with Destiny:

There are no soft options. Nowhere is the consumer society pampered. The degree to which this approach is at odds with materialism can be measured by the changes made to Uytenbogaardt's Werdmuller Centre in Cape Town to cosy up the shopping centre. Confronting Destiny while shopping was clearly considered bad for business (Lange 1984: 26).

In *A Guide to Architecture in South Africa* (1971) Doreen Greig devoted twenty lines to Uytenbogaardt's Dutch Reformed Church in Welkom (1964), an early example of his work, and one sentence only to the later Bonwit:

R.S. Uytenbogaardt's Bonwit Clothing Factory at Salt River, an outstanding example of factory planning, of architectural form and use of colour (sic) (Greig 1971: 101).

More recent research and publications on the *oeuvre* of Uytenbogaardt have tended to focus extensively on his non-award winning Werdmuller Centre (1973) in Claremont, Cape Town, with minimal references to the award-winning Bonwit. The Werdmuller Centre merited 26 pages in *Senza tempo/Timeless*, a book by Giovanni Vio on the work of Uytenbogaardt (Vio 2006: 54-79). Four other Uytenbogaardt buildings were selected for inclusion in the book:

Remembrance Garden, Simonstown (1975) - 9 pages (pps. 81-89);
Indoor Sport Complex, University of Cape Town (1977) - 26 pages (pps.90-125);
Hout Bay Library, Hout Bay (1986) - 20 pages (pps.126-145), and
House Uytenbogaardt, Kommetjie (1992) - 20 pages (pps.146-165).

In the 1960s two of Uytenbogaardt's buildings were awarded Bronze Medals by the Cape Provincial Institute of Architects (CPIA) - the Hugo van Zyl Shop, Paarl, (1964) (CPIA citation in *S.A. Architectural Record*, June 1965: 41), and the Bonwit Clothing Factory (1967) (CPIA citation in *S.A. Architectural Record*, May 1968: 13). Again, Bonwit chalked up no more than a note in the incomplete and at times inaccurate biography of Uytenbogaardt on the final page of Vio's book (Vio 2006: 167).

In 1987 the Institute of South African Architects (ISAA) gave Awards of Merit to two Uytenbogaardt buildings – a Community Hall in Belhar and a Sports Stadium at the University of the Western Cape (*Architecture SA* 1987: 28). Disregarding these and previous award-winning buildings, Vio included the Hout Bay Public Library, which received an ISAA Award of Merit in 1991 (*Architecture SA* November + December 1991: 20), as the only award-winning building by Uytenbogaardt in his book. It seems Vio's personal preferences held sway when he included Uytenbogaardt's unpremiated buildings and omitted those that had won awards.

Bonwit was not discussed in Noëleen Murray's PhD (2010), in which she conducted a critical inquiry into Uytendogaardt's buildings and urban designs. Murray contextualized Uytendogaardt's work within apartheid modernity, and critiqued the Dutch Reformed Church in Welkom (1964), (also Murray 2005); Werdmuller Centre (1973), and an urban design for Belhar (1982) in separate chapters.

The Werdmuller Centre – A Derivative Design

The Werdmuller Centre² ("Werd-muller"), a shopping centre and offices for LHC Property in the Cape Town suburb of Claremont, was completed in 1973 (Vio 2002: 167). Soon after completion Werdmuller was under threat of demolition because the centre could not produce the return on investment required by its owners, Old Mutual (*Architect & Builder* 1978: 24). This trend persisted. In 2006 Vio alleged that, while a number of commuters walk to and from Claremont through Werdmuller because this route is sheltered:

...almost nobody is interested in buying anything from its shops, of which there are only a few nowadays... (Vio 2006: 23)

Since its completion the centre was controversial. Already in a 1974 discussion with students, Ivor Prinsloo, the newly appointed Head of UCT's School of Architecture, played down the extent to which Uytendogaardt had been influenced by Le Corbusier when designing Werdmuller:

Roelof is not copying, he is showing a fine understanding of Corb (Brink 1974).

Students at the School of Architecture, including the author, were acutely aware of Le Corbusier's strong influence on Uytendogaardt, which Uytendogaardt made no secret of:

[Le Corbusier was] one of the most innovative space makers we have known. Even making the drawings [for Werdmuller] I was influenced by him (Uytendogaardt quoted by Vio 2006: 75).

In deference to Le Corbusier, Uytendogaardt adhered closely to the Master's five points – the free-standing columns, freed-up plans, facades arranged at will, horizontal windows and usable roof areas – when designing Werdmuller. The design was 'strongly influenced' by, demonstrated a too 'fine understanding' of and too closely copied or plagiarized the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts (1959-1963) at Harvard University (Le Corbusier 1965: 54-60; Curtis 1986: 216-217), with elements of the Millowners' Association Building, Ahmedabad, India (1951-54) (Le Corbusier 1967: 86-89; Curtis 1986: 205-207) and House Shodhan (1951-54) (Le Corbusier 1967: 90-92; Curtis 1986: 226-228) also discernible.



Figure 3

Top Left: North Façade with angled sun screen fins – demolition by neglect? Top Right: Deserted internal ramp. Bottom Left: Ramp oblique to column grid as Carpenter Centre. Bottom Right: Suspended sculpted box. (Photographs by the author, 26 October 2011).

A comparison of the Carpenter Center and Werdmuller reveals the extent to which Uytenbogaardt was influenced. A description of the Carpenter Center in Le Corbusier's *oeuvre complète 1957-1965* could easily be mistaken for Werdmuller:

...the mutual interpenetration of exterior and interior space, the use of rough concrete, a ramp which connects two streets above the third floor, free-standing structural columns on each of the five floors and brise-soleil (Le Corbusier 1965: 54).

Werdmler and the Carpenter Centre both have asymmetrical sinuous curvilinear shapes in opposition to straight walls; a ramp oblique to the column grid; angled sun screens, and the 'casting in concrete' of 'shortest path' pedestrian routes.

Despite failing financially and qualifying as one of Uytenbogaardt's less original works, Werdmuller has an important place in local and international modern architecture. It is a deeply conceptualized and consistently designed building that matches and extends on Le Corbusier's tenets in a unique way. The building has been read in various ways - an opposition to many air-conditioned stereotypical shopping malls; a *tour de force* in three-dimensional architectural space-making, a benchmark in the use of sculptural reinforced concrete, or as an unwitting reinforcement of apartheid modernity (Vio 2006; Wolff 2009; Townsend 2010; Murray 2010). However, it may no longer be possible for the architectural fraternity to visit and experience the building first hand. In mid-October 2011 Heritage Western Cape gave official notification of the proposed demolition of Werdmuller, called for a historical impact assessment report (HIA)

in terms of the provisions of section 38(2) (a) of the National Heritage Resources Act, and requested that individuals or organisations with an interest in this matter should register as Interested or Affected Parties (Wolff 2011).

Bonwit – a Brutalist Masterpiece

While Werdmuller leans heavily on Le Corbusier, the same cannot be said for Bonwit. The Cape Provincial Institute of Architects (CPIA) awarded its Bronze Medal Award to the “Truworths Factory, Observatory” (sic), an outstanding building in the year 1967:

In the field of industrial architecture this building makes a valuable contribution. Its basic concept is directed three-dimensional organization of space for the best distribution of the users of the building. Considerable ingenuity has been employed to allow factory workers to get quickly to and from work without the use of lifts or other expensive devices. This is achieved by bringing the staff entrance to the middle of six floors. On each floor the arrangement of staff facilities, administration and services is handled with the same careful attention to the nice balance between areas of work and areas for service and movement. This has been achieved despite the difficulty arising from the need for allowing for major future expansion.

The design of the structure is consistent throughout. The materials are used in positive and robust forms which express the structural system and provide good wearing surfaces.

The skill with which the very complicated multi-storey relationships have been handled makes little of minor difficulties in detailing. Even if this building were not as efficient a technical solution than it is, it would be important as representing a phase in the evolution of architecture in this country (CPIA citation in *S.A. Architectural Record* May 1968: 13).



Figure 4

‘Truworths Factory, Observatory’ (sic). Photograph accompanying CPIA’s Bronze Medal Award citation. (S.A. Architectural Record May 1968: 13).



Figure 5

Bonwit from the South.

Bonwit is located between Brickfield and Pickwick Roads in Salt River, Cape Town. The area has a number of plastered and painted International Style and Art Deco clothing factories, e.g. the Rex Trueform, Monatic and Duchess buildings. Their painted and plastered exteriors present amiable, ‘socially acceptable’ white façades that conceal generally less pleasant working conditions behind them. Bonwit’s Brutal ‘honesty of expression’ (Raeburn 1982: 273) did not bow to such ‘white lies’.

In its original form, viewed from the south at a distance, Bonwit resembles a large ‘manufacturing machine’ (figure 5). Staircases on either side of the building appear to turn in on one another as if working parts of a mechanical device within which the sweat equity of factory workers ‘oils’ interlocking cogs and wheels. This is a striking reminder of the 20th Century machine age.

In the silent film *Modern Times* (1936) a conveyor belt transports Charlie Chaplin into the workings of the machine. He is turned and rotated over and under cogs and wheels (figure 6) before the machine is reversed and he emerges from the same aperture into which he disappeared. Though physically unhurt, Charlie is now a mentally unhinged albeit playful menace to people and machines around him. Between pirouettes he approaches a secretary in the factory and a woman outside the building to tighten the buttons on their garments with his spanners. The latter calls a policeman and Charlie runs back into the factory, after punching his time sheet out of induced habit. He turns wheels, dances, pulls levers and swings on a gantry chain to evade co-workers. Charlie is eventually caught and removed to a hospital to recover from his nervous break down. Did Uytenbogaardt intend that Bonwit, with its machine-like appearance and an entrance that resembles a throat on plan (figure 11), should symbolize the transformation of workers who are swallowed and regurgitated by his building?

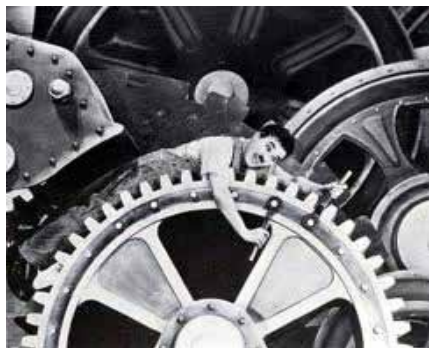


Figure 6
Chaplin becomes part of the machine in *Modern Times* (1936)
(Google images).



Figure 7
Chaplin frightens a woman outside the factory and is chased by a policeman (*Modern Times*)
(Google images).

The factory in *Modern Times* had inhumanly scaled high face brick walls and large industrial windows, typical of most factories in the 20th century. Similarly, Uytenbogaardt's decision to design Bonwit in the Brutalism style essentialises the industrial aesthetic-as-type, expresses the building's functions, and conveys a sense of the hard, unforgiving and alienating nature of factory work. Forbidding surfaces and materials are not 'smoothed over' as with other more genteel factory buildings. In all, a painful beauty.



Figure 8
Entrance to Bonwit.

Steps leading to Bonwit's main entrance (figure 8) narrow progressively evoking a sense of being compressed as one approaches the building. As one moves closer to the entrance, forbidding fortress-like forms loom and appear to threaten. Narrow horizontal slots in off-shutter concrete chamfered walls resemble bunkers - the architecture of fortification (Mallory & Ottar, 1973). Pressure, expectation and foreboding are induced as one enters the 'machine'. The *ensemble* of materials, forms and scale convey the impression that one might be transformed in this 'machine', as happened to Chaplin in *Modern Times*.

Bonwit's possible design influences

Tony Lange, who accompanied Uytenbogaardt on a two-week tour of Frank Lloyd Wright's buildings in the United States in 1963, and Don Tindale, who was a student in Uytenbogaardt's 1963 UCT class, both believe that Uytenbogaardt was influenced by Louis Kahn (1901-74) when conceptualising Bonwit. They contend that Bonwit's external vertical 'service' staircases contrast with the 'served' horizontal factory floors in similar fashion to external face brick 'service' shafts and the cluster of 'served' square-plan laboratory towers found in Kahn's Richards Medical Research Centre (1957-1961), University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia (Banister Fletcher 1975: 1290):

The Medical Research Buildings exemplified Kahn's distinction between what he called 'served' spaces as opposed to the 'service' spaces: the service towers are encased in brick and are designed in a vertical, slender way, whereas the main glazed laboratories display a horizontal emphasis (Raeburn 1982: 285).

Another building that might have influenced Uytenbogaardt when designing Bonwit is Stirling & Gowan's Engineering Building (1959-1963) at Leicester University. This building is:

...an immaculate instance of functionalism, as it was understood by protagonists of the machine aesthetic half a century ago (Banister Fletcher 1975: 1308).

The Engineering Building's composite structure is considered to be a *tour de force* that juxtaposes and fuses the contradictory 'formalist' and 'populist' aspects of the New Brutalist aesthetic. Canonical forms of the Modern Movement are combined with elements drawn from the 19th century industrial glass and brick vernacular of Stirling's native Liverpool, as well as Brutal structural components, such as the exposed diagrid floors drawn from Kahn's Richards Medical Research Laboratories (Frampton 1980: 266-267).



Figure 9
Engineering Building (1959-1963), Leicester University by Stirling & Gowan
 (Google images).

Several phrases used to describe the Leicester University Engineering Building in McKean's (1994) monograph are equally applicable to Bonwit:

Rough but suave, painful but beautiful ... makes even Corbusier seem soft. ...unprecedented little masterpiece ...it stands alone ...amazes with an intense power (McKean 1994: 5).

...dead-pan concern with programmatic analysis, economy and logic ...forms are neither anonymous nor gratuitous and fanciful ...circulation space ...is equally clearly articulated (McKean 1994:29).

As we have seen, different functional areas therefore formed different shapes, are constructed in different ways and have different visual characteristics internally. ...So Stirling & Gowan express the elements as clear, primary volumetric statements, held together by that most powerful negative form, the evanescent circulation. ...It seems instinctively recognised that this building lodges in the memory as a collection of complexly wrapped, completely impenetrable forms (McKean 1994: 33).

Kant's definition of the sublime is apposite here as to few other buildings: that aesthetic satisfaction which includes as one of its moments a negative experience, a shock, a blockage, an intimation of mortality. ...Clearly, Leicester couldn't be followed. It was the end of Brutalism – the last illustration in *The New Brutalism* (McKean 1994: 44).

Lastly, recurrent comparisons have been made between Brutalism and the architecture of fortification and aggression - Second World War gun emplacements, control towers, observation posts, and pill boxes along the British and German-occupied French coast (Mallory & Ottar 1973). In July 1967 the British architectural journal *AD* (Architectural Design) criticized 'Culture Bunkers':

The form and finishes of military installations are being used for the most hallowed of new buildings – cultural and civic centres. Throughout Europe and even in America architects are setting up their culture bunkers. The Queen Elizabeth Hall in London is not an isolated example (*AD* cited in Mallory & Ottar 1973: 279).

While Mallory & Ottar (1973) argue against a direct influence of fortification design on twentieth century Brutalist architecture, they foreground an ‘interesting coincidence’ in Le Corbusier’s innovative use of off-shutter concrete in his Unité d’Habitation (1948) at Marseilles, where he:

...abandoned the pre-war fiction that reinforced concrete was a precise “machine age” material and exploited rough wooden formwork to form what he called ‘beton brut’, a crude surface which reflected the grain and defects of the timber. The events which prompted Le Corbusier to make such a dramatic change in his attitude to concrete between 1939 and 1948 are uncertain.

...it is an interesting coincidence that this changeover period coincided with the construction of the Atlantic Wall along the French coast – defenses in which the textual possibilities of rough boarded concrete were so clearly indicated in its bunkers (Mallory & Ottar 1973: 279-281).

Whether he copied preceding fortification architecture or whether it was merely an interesting coincidence, Le Corbusier was the undisputed pioneer of *béton brut* - the ‘brutal’ use of off-shutter concrete in habitable buildings. The Unité d’Habitation was:

...the first genuinely post-war building, in the sense that its innovations separated it definitively from Modern Architecture before 1939 (Banham 1966: 16).

Bonwit adhered to Brutalism’s aesthetic tenets with its off-shutter concrete internally and externally, face brick walls, fortification-like shapes and slots.



Figure 10

Similarities between Second World War Bunkers (left and right) (Google images) and Bonwit (centre).

In symbolising the brutalisation of factory workers, essentialising the industrial aesthetic-as-type, introducing original forms, and using carefully considered materials, Bonwit is positioned at the pinnacle of Uytendogaardt’s architectural achievements.

The making of Bonwit

Fabio Todeschini, Emeritus Professor of Architecture at UCT, finalised Bonwit’s drawings for approval by the Cape Town City Council from mid-1964 to end-1964. From mid-1965, after graduating with a B Architecture degree at UCT with Uytendogaardt as his thesis supervisor, Todeschini headed up the team that was responsible for the working drawings and the supervision until the building contract was completed in 1967 (Todeschini 2011). While Todeschini could not confirm who had worked on particular drawings, Heinrich Kammeyer, who worked on Werdmuller, assumed that ‘P.S.’ was Peter Schneider; ‘D.W.’ was Derek Walker, (who was “... besotted with the building”), and ‘P.J.P.’ was Pieter Pelser, who partnered Uytendogaardt in the design of the award-winning Hugo van Zyl Shop (1964) in Paarl (Kammeyer 2011; *Architect and Builder* 1965: 16b). Kammeyer recalled that Ian Macaskill, Tony de Sousa Santos and Dennis Playdon also contributed to Bonwit’s realisation. Further research would verify whose

initials appear on the drawings, e.g. G.E.H.; W.C.W.; L.H., and P.A.S. in addition to the initials already mentioned; uncover how the design evolved, and who contributed what during Bonwit's realization process in Uytenbogaardt's studio.

The design of Bonwit

While Uytenbogaardt adhered closely to Le Corbusier's five points when he designed Werdmuller, these are almost entirely absent in Bonwit. The building is not elevated on *pilotis* – it sits solidly into the ground. Plans are freed up through the use of large spans with columns *in antis*, not in a grid. The framed reinforced concrete structure supporting window, brick and glass block infill is alternated with load bearing concrete walls. The roof area, dominated by a large water tank and lift motor rooms, is not intended for functional or recreational use. Louis Kahn's influence, as contended by Lange (2011) and Tindale (2011), is seen in Bonwit's plan, which differentiates 'service' and 'served' functions.

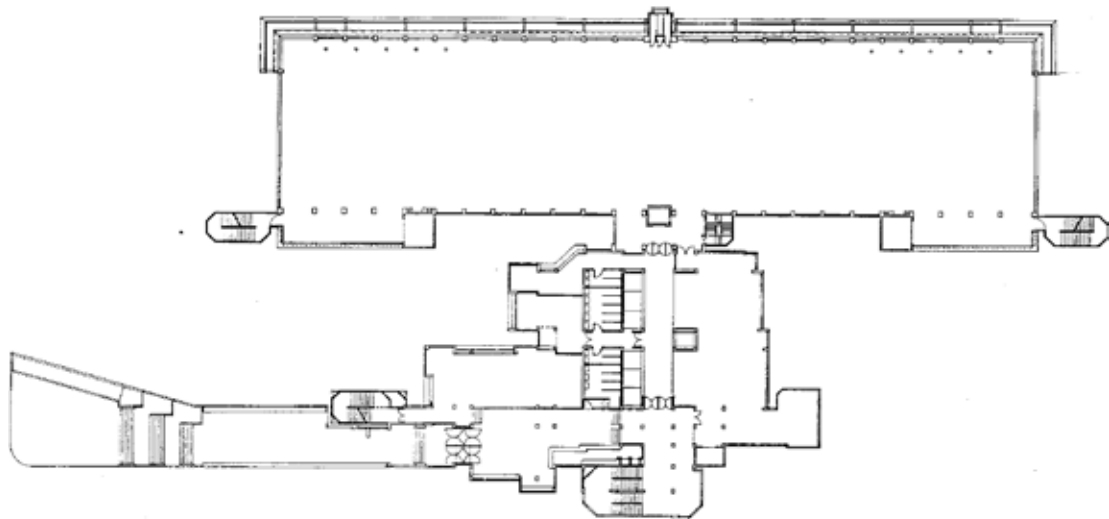


Figure 11
Ground Floor Plan.



Figure 12
Left: North Elevation of Factory block. Right: West Elevation
(Uytenbogaardt 1965-66).

Bonwit's Ground Floor Plan (figure 11) shows two practically free-standing buildings that are linked by a narrow circulation area. The southern smaller 'service' block, designated as the 'Administration Block' or 'Amenities block' on the working drawings (figure 11, and figure 12 Right), houses the entrance foyer, ablutions, some offices, cleaners' rooms, storage areas, and

lifts (Uytenbogaardt 1965-66). The large northern ‘served’ building is an open rectangular area where manufacturing of garments takes place in a flexible ‘open plan’ format, with an almost free-standing concrete solar screen eliminating heat gain (figure 13 Top right).



Figure 13

**Top left: Southern smaller ‘service’ Amenities Block. Top right: Large northern ‘served’ Factory Block.
Bottom left: Service and served blocks from the south east. Bottom right: Blocks from the south west.**

Sewing, stitching, buttoning machines and work tables, all on castors, could be moved into new arrangements and clusters by the garment workers to increase manufacturing efficiencies (Tindale 2011). Bonwit supported an empowering working environment where workers could control and move machines to better suit them and the manufacturing process. In contrast, in the *Modern Times* factory no interference with or adjustments to the huge stolid machine by disempowered workers were allowed. Subjugated workers were forced to accept inhumane and un-ergonomic conveyor belt speeds without question or objection.

In designing Bonwit’s vertical circulation, Uytenbogaardt separated staircases from their ‘served’ areas to clearly express their ‘service’ function.



Figure 14

Left: Escape stairs on eastern side of Factory Block. Right: Fire escape stairs to Amenities Block.

Balustrade up-stand beams to a height of 2,9 m above staircase landings are used to form narrow 610mm open slots on the external sides of the ‘escape stairs’, so maximizing shelter from rain, protection from strong winds and generating feelings of safety and containment when using the stairs.³ The resultant highly original form animates the elevations and adds a unique aesthetic to the overall appearance of the building.

Bonwit in 2011 – Irreversible Adapted Re-use

In 2006 plans were afoot to irreversibly adapt Bonwit for re-use. In Cape Town, the centrally-positioned suburbs of Woodstock and Salt River experienced steady redevelopment in recent years, with obsolete or old buildings being renovated to attract new residents and professional people (de Beer 2011). In mid-2006 Swish and Spearhead Properties bought Bonwit to convert it into a mixed use development, and expected to have sold all apartments in the refurbished Bonwit by the end of 2006. Anthony Wolpert, the development manager at Spearhead Properties, explained why Bonwit was ideal for this type of redevelopment:

It is an exceptionally strong seven-storey concrete structure with large open-plan areas supported on 1m-deep beams. This means a minimum of demolition work is necessary (Wolpert quoted in *Sunday Argus*, 5 November 2006).

After 2006 New Brutalism was tamed when face brick and concrete surfaces were plastered and painted, thereby obliterating Uytendogaardt’s original design intentions (figure 14 top right and left). Developers managed to proceed with a ‘prettification project’ of this award-winning building by either deftly side stepping any opposition, or by an under-the-radar strategy whereby “one asks forgiveness, not permission”. By way of contrast, there would certainly have been a huge outcry if Stirling & Gowan’s Engineering Building, Le Corbusier’s Carpenter Centre or Kahn’s Richards Medical Research Center were defaced in this manner.



Figure 15

Top left and top right: The cover-up – painted and plastered off-shutter concrete and face brick walls adapt and re-use Bonwit into the Twilight Zone style. Bottom left: Upper East Side Hotel to the south of Bonwit. Bottom right: New Atrium linking the hotel to Bonwit.

Nevertheless, the Upper East Side Hotel to the south of Bonwit (figure 15 Bottom left) was completed in time for the 2010 Fifa World Cup. The addition of the hotel impacted even more negatively on Bonwit by erasing almost all semblance of what had been.

The Peri-urban Areas Health Board Building – an International Style icon

Strauss Brink, who was 13 years older than Uytenbogaardt, graduated at the School of Architecture, UCT in November 1942 – see Footnote 1. His women's residence 'Asterhof' (1957) at UP, later complemented by two identical buildings, and the Peri Urban building were featured in the local architectural publication *S.A. Architectural Record* (January, 1960: 20-23; May, 1961: 9-15; November 1965:48; December 1965: 50), as well as in the British architectural journal *The Architectural Review* (October 1959: 185-186). Doreen Greig acclaimed the residences in her book *A Guide to Architecture in South Africa* because they "...set a high standard for such buildings" (Greig 1971: 203), and she also expressed admiration for the Peri Urban building, as cited further in the text. However, unlike Uytenbogaardt's *oeuvre*, little has been published on Strauss Brink's work to date, a gap which this article begins to fill.

In the early 1960s Strauss Brink proposed that more buildings in South Africa should be designed with 'absent centres' - courtyards or courts with water features, as found in some Cape Dutch and Mediterranean houses, as well as in the historic Roman city Pompeii. Secluded and peaceful courtyards would provide spaces where one's spirit may be re-invigorated (Strauss Brink early 1960s).

In keeping with his vision for South African buildings, whether large or small, courtyards enclosed on four sides or partially enclosed courts, recur in Strauss Brink's architecture. His extension to the Administration Building (1956) at the University of Pretoria (UP), now the Mathematics Building, is arranged around an open courtyard (Rautenbach 1960). When he converted a house into his office in Blood Street, Pretoria, he re-roofed the building around an open courtyard with a fountain and a replica statue of the faun in the House of the Faun, Pompeii. The design of Tugwell Hall (women's residence, 1972) and Leo Marquard Hall (men's residence, 1974) at UCT's Lower Campus, Rosebank consists of three semi-circular wings, each wrapped around a court that is open at one side. Strauss Brink's design for the Peri Urban Areas Health Board's offices (1959), located on the corner of Bosman and Schoeman Streets in Pretoria, was no exception – the U-shaped International Style building encloses a court open to the street (figure 16).



Figure 16
View to Bosman Street from the Peri Urban building's open welcoming court.

The 1956 scheme for the Peri Urban building

Strauss Brink was commissioned to design the Peri Urban building in 1956, and tenders for construction of the building were to be called for by the end of that year (*The Pretoria News* 27 August 1956). A 1956 perspective of the proposed building (figure 17) differs substantially from the building as completed in 1959 (figure 18).



Figure 17

‘The architect’s perspective [by C.B. ‘Swannie’ Swanepoel who worked with Strauss Brink on this building] of what the new headquarters of the Peri-Urban Areas Health Board will look like when it is completed.’ (The Pretoria News August 27 1956).

In 1956 a plain International Style building was initially envisaged with no fenestration on its western gable and with white horizontal bands between windows. The proposal adhered closely to Johnson and Hitchcock’s three aesthetic principles of the International Style (Amsoneit 1994:6; Khan 2001: 67-70). *Volume* is made visible by exposing columns on the western side of the building. Horizontal bands resemble ‘smooth unbroken skin tightly stretched over the building’s skeletal frame’. Windows have light metallic frames and the roof is flat without projecting over the facade. While columns are equally spaced in terms of *modular regularity*, asymmetry is mostly absent at this stage. *Applied decoration* is restrained and the use of colour appears to be absent. While the perspective illustrates a building that closely conforms to the aesthetic tenets of the International Style, the 1956 scheme, barring some visual interest created by the exposed columns and a mezzanine slab on the western side, is lacklustre.

It seems that delays were experienced in commencing with the construction of the building, as it was completed more than two and a half years after it was supposed to have gone to tender at the end of 1956. At the beginning of May 1959 226 employees of the Peri-Urban Areas Health Board moved into their new office building. Six months after its completion, the building was featured in a special Commonwealth issue of *The Architectural Review* (1959: 185-186), and in 1960 a photograph of the building appeared in *Our First Half-Century 1910-1960* (Anonymous 1960: 172).



Figure 18

Left: “Pretorius Street, (sic) Pretoria with its Jacarandas and modern office blocks” (Frameworthy postcard, 1963). Right: “The H.B. Phillips Building in Pretoria, seat of the Transvaal Board for the Development of Peri-Urban Areas.” (Transvaal 1961-1971: 58-59).

In the 1960s and 1970s tourist shops in Pretoria stocked the *Frameworthy* postcard (figure 17, left), indicating that this street view was considered to be a worthy souvenir of the city. A decade later a full-page colour photograph of the building featured in the Transvaal Provincial Administration's book commemorating its growth and progress (figure 18, right), a choice which underlined its significance as a notable contribution to Pretoria's modern architecture.

The Peri Urban building's aesthetic

Differences between the August 1956 perspective (figure 17) and the building as completed two years and nine months later in May 1959 (figure 18) indicate that Strauss Brink made significant changes to the aesthetic of the building during this period. In doing so, he invented some new International Style aesthetic rules, while reinforcing others. White horizontal bands between window strips in August 1956 now had a black *marmoran* finish with tiny sparkles, unusual and unique for an International Style building. White vertical stripes on an olive green background and white ornamental grille blocks contributed to the original aesthetic of the façades.



Figure 19

Left: Decorative grille blocks in front of a duct. Middle: Main entrance. Right: Stair shaft with decorative vertical white stripes on green background.

By using decorative grille blocks, colours other than white and applying thin vertical decorative stripes Strauss Brink danced on the compound walls of the Protectorate of the International Style. The unstated rule was 'you can have any colour as long as it's white'. Some members of the Protectorate might have ruled against the Peri Urban building's 'superficial' applied decoration, which was not entirely 'subservient to the clarity of the whole building'. Others might have been in favour of the buildings decorative elements, because these had been applied in a 'restrained' manner. Regardless of disagreements within the Protectorate, Greig (1971) believed that the building's aesthetic and 'personality' appealed to passers-by and occupants:

A building for the public and for administration with a personality all of its own which brings pleasure to passers by and those who use it and work in it. Even people who say they "can't stand this modern stuff" (and there are still a few) appreciate this architect's lively approach to the design of a city building and decorative use of colour in modern materials.

The unusual colours of white and olive green in the [façade] pattern are combined with severe black [horizontal] wall bands which emphasise the delicacy of the fenestration. South American (sic) sunshades and a garden on the roof over the high banking hall provide the street scene with a new dimension of architectural experience (Greig 1971: 207).

A carefully considered combination of sparkling black banding, olive green, thin white stripes, decorative grille blocks, and articulated façades made for an original, striking, and (for many) aesthetically pleasing building. The conspicuous belle of the ball stood out from surrounding plainer walls without flowers.



Figure 20

Left: View on Bosman Street pavement. Right: The articulated façade.

Whereas the Brutalist Bonwit may be read as a symbol of a *Modern Times* machine with workers as its moving parts, the Peri-Urban building's unprecedented International Style aesthetic suggests Progress and Efficiency to be attained by its motivated office workers, key contributors to a culture of modernity.

The design of the Peri Urban building

While the Peri Urban building's aesthetic challenged one of Johnson and Hitchcock's International Style principles that *applied decoration* should be avoided, its design accorded with their other two principles, as elucidated by Amsoneit (1994: 6) and Khan (2001: 67-70).

As in the 1956 scheme, the *volume* of the U-shaped building, built to a height of ground level plus seven storeys in its northern section and ground level plus four storeys in its southern section, is revealed by exposing columns on the western side and in the court. The surface of the contained volume – the horizontal bands between window strips – seems to be stretched over the building's skeletal frame. Roofs are flat and do not project over the facades, and the building's underlying order is revealed by the *modular regularity* of its columns.

Asymmetry is reinforced by articulating the façade with projections and set-backs, such as the grille blocks screening a duct, as well as by continuing the horizontal bands around the north

western corner. The horizontal bands appear to be cantilevered, but closer inspection reveals that small balconies separate the anchor-end of the bands from a solid surface on the west façade (figure 18 Left), heightening a gravity-defying effect.



Figure 21
Left: Ground Floor Plan. Middle: First Floor Plan. Right: Typical Floor Plan
 (S.A. Architectural Record May 1961).

The Peri Urban building's plans (figure 21) reveal that Strauss Brink, as did Uytenbogaardt with Werdmuller, closely followed Le Corbusier's five points, as for example elaborated on by Curtis (1986:69). The north-western section of the building is elevated on *pilotis* to free the ground underneath for 'corner cutting' circulation. Interior walls are arranged freely to fit different functional demands, such as varying office sizes, board rooms and public interface areas (figure 21, Middle and Right).

Pilotis are used to liberate facades from traditional weight bearing constraints, with openings arranged at will for light, view and compositional need. Long horizontal windows, as used by Le Corbusier in his villas of the 1920s, create an impression of bands of glass hovering in plaster-rendered black bands. The roof over a large ground level hall, which projects on the northern façade, is usable with a greened terrace that affords relaxation and views behind a railing (figure 18, Left and Right).

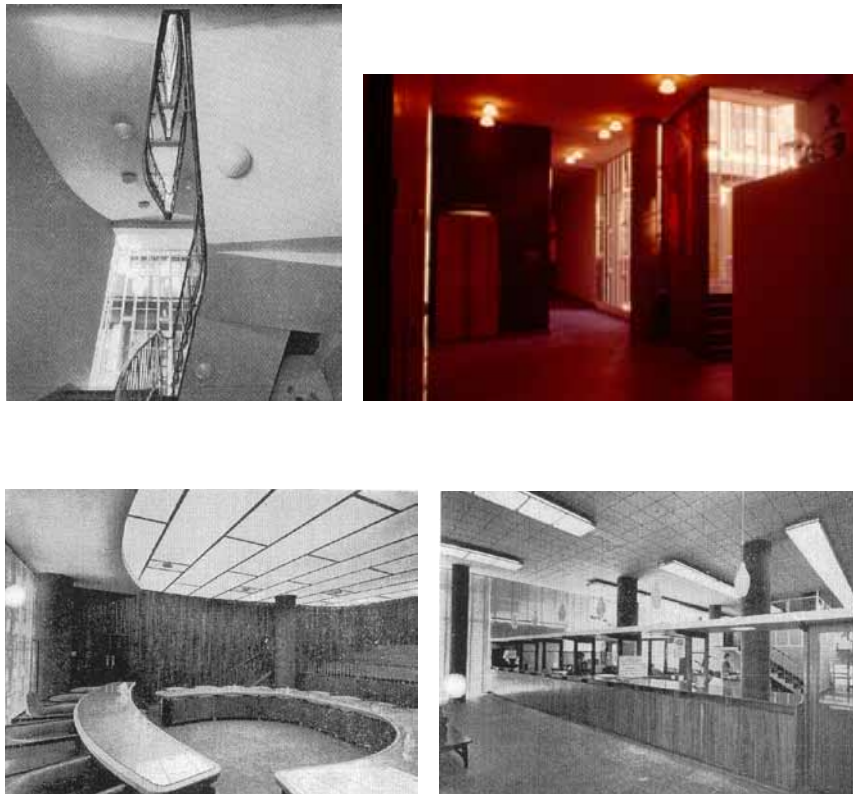


Figure 22

Top left: Curved main stairs and stair well. Top right: View of circulation area adjacent to main staircase. Bottom left: Board Room, First Floor. Bottom right: Public interface hall, Mezzanine Level (S.A. Architectural Record May 1961).

The northern side of the main stair in the court is partially expressed on plan (figure 21 Middle and Right). However, the staircase is partially concealed in a shaft (figure 19 Right) within which the stair is animated by curving the flights around a convexly arced stairwell (figure 22, Top left).

C.B. ‘Swannie’ Swanepoel made a substantial contribution to the realization of the building, as well as producing at least two presentation perspective drawings, the one as depicted in figure 16 and another of the final proposal, which is housed in UP’s School of Architecture. The architect Sam Pauw also worked on the building before graduating at the School of Architecture, UP (Pauw 2011). Further research into the Peri Urban building’s design process may establish how the design evolved in Strauss Brink’s studio, and who the other contributors were.

Strauss Brink was not involved in the 1980s when three additional floors were added to the southern section of the building, raising it to the same height as the northern section. Drawings were not privately preserved, therefore files in the City of Pretoria’s Building Plan Scrutiny Department and in the archives of the Peri Urban Health Board are the most likely localities to source these.

The Peri Urban Building in 2011

The Peri Urban building in the central business district of Pretoria, completed some eight years before Bonwit, was also subjugated.



Figure 23

Top left and top right: The Peri Urban building now over-painted in off-white ‘cream’
Bottom two images left of centre: Palisade fence (with small gate) bars access to the court and entrance.
Bottom two images right of centre: View to and view from entrance in greened court.
(Photographs by the author).

‘Improvement’ of the Peri Urban building - painting cream conformity over the original black finish - is reversible. However, given the apparent desire to mute perceived visual ‘black noise’, it seems unlikely that this building will be restored to its original more conspicuous colour. Bonwit’s plastering and painting could also be reversed, though at greater cost. The Brutalist building’s visual ‘noise’ was muted with a vengeance, because it seems that developers are convinced that their customers would rather have a Twilight Zone Style than to Confront Destiny.

Conclusion

With the advent of the new millennium, the intended aesthetics of Bonwit and the Peri Urban building were subjugated to fall in line with perceived market expectations (Bonwit) and common comfort zones (Bonwit and the Peri Urban building). A touch too Brutal and disturbing Bonwit required radical rehabilitation to camouflage and ‘prettify’ it into an unrecognizable version of its real self - but beware, Bonwit is still in there, fighting to get out.

Cream-coloured over-painting of the Peri Urban building’s black sparkling *marmoran* surfaces obliterated one of its most unique and original attributes. Duly subjugated and isolated behind a palisade fence, it no longer stands out, is unwelcoming and now more closely resembles ‘just another’ International Style building. The obliteration of one of South Africa’s

most important Brutalist buildings, now practically impossible to undo, and one of its original International Style buildings, is a loss to South Africa's architectural heritage. Cold comfort could, however, be taken in the photographic record which preserves 'the way they were'.

Notes

- 1 Christiaan Strauss Brink and Roelof Sarel Uytenbogaardt were both from Afrikaans backgrounds, graduates at the School of Architecture, University of Cape Town (UCT), undertook overseas post-graduate studies and were Professors in UCT's School of Architecture and Planning. Their biographies are available at <http://www.artefacts.co.za>
- 2 Wolff, I. 2009. 'Werdmuller Centre – an artifact of an ephemeral context.' *SA Journal of Art History*. volume 24, number 1. 75–86. This article critiques Werdmuller and has copious illustrations of the building. Available at http://www.journals.co.za/ej/ejour_sajah.html 2009
- 3 *¼ Inch Detail of Escape Stairs to Factory*. Drawing Number 80/55. Drawn by P.A.S. Revised 21 February 1966 (Uytenbogaardt 1965-66).

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This article examines the textual relationship between the paintings of Adriaan van Zyl and the novel *Memorandum: a story with paintings* (2006) by Marlene van Niekerk. The traditional assumptions about what constitutes the narrative as genre are subverted by the inclusion of the so-called *Hospital Series 2004-2006* by Van Zyl. The novel should not be read as a commentary on the paintings as such but rather as an accompaniment to the paintings – as suggested by the author herself. From the interaction between painting and novel the reader/viewer has to rely on certain codes and conventions to analyse the text under discussion. Genette's notion of transtextuality and in particular his notion of the architext assists the reader in deconstructing the meaning of this collaborative project on human suffering.

Keywords: Adriaan van Zyl's *Hospital Series 2004-2006*, *Memorandum*, painting and novel, transtextuality.

Adriaan van Zyl: *Memorandum*: Marlene van Niekerk

In hierdie artikel word die tekstuele wisselwerking tussen die skilderye van Adriaan van Zyl en die roman van Marlene van Niekerk, *Memorandum: 'n verhaal met prente* (2006) ondersoek. Wat ons tradisioneel bestempel as kenmerkend van die narratief as genre word gesuspenseer deur die insluiting van 'n reeks skilderye, die sg Hospitaalreeks van Adriaan van Zyl. Die roman moet nie gelees word as synde kommentaar op die skilderye nie – soos wat die outeur self aangedui het. Uit hierdie interaksie tussen skildery en roman word die leser/kyker gedwing om sekere kodes en konvensies te gebruik om die teks te analiseer, maar wat noodwendig afwyk van sy bestaande opvattinge. Genette se konsepte soos transtekstualiteit en argitekse word ingespan om hierdie gesamentlike projek oor menslike lyding te dekonstrueer.

Sleutelwoorde: Adriaan van Zyl se *Hospital Series 2004-2006*, *Memorandum*, skildery en roman, transtekstualiteit.

Marlene van Niekerk's third novel, *Memorandum: 'n verhaal met skilderye* was translated into English by Michiel Heyns and appeared in 2006 as *Memorandum: a story with paintings* - the English edition will be referred to in this essay. What makes this text so unique is that, apart from the narrative, the text also contains reproductions of paintings by Adriaan van Zyl. These paintings from his *Hospital Series 2004-2006* include the following: "Hospital Triptych II – The Entrance", "Hospital Diptych I – The Waiting Room", "Hospital Arrival", "Hospital Triptych I", "Hospital Diptych II, III", "The Anaesthesia Room", "Operating Theatre I, II", "Theatre Still Life I, II", "Hospital Still Life I-III", "The Recovery Room" and "The Waiting Room".

In an interview on the writing of the novel (henceforth *Memorandum*) Marlene van Niekerk points out that in 2005 Adriaan van Zyl suggested to her that they should collaborate on a book. She had to develop a text that could accompany his existing series of paintings of hospital scenarios. Van Niekerk reiterates that the text should not be seen as an explication of the paintings nor should it be seen as an illustration of her text, but "daar is 'n energie in albei aanwesig wat hulle met mekaar resoneer" [there is an energy present in both which causes a mutual resonance] (Anon, 2006). The novel should be viewed as an accompaniment to the paintings (Van Niekerk, 2007: 21). Saunders (2009: 106) regards this collaborative project as an attempt to "[draw] into narration the meditations of one terminally ill in order to record the unrecorded." Roux (2009: 27) views the novel as a complex semiotic system which gives particular significance to van Zyl's paintings within its context and interprets the paintings as

being part of what he describes as a manual for dying:

Die skildertekste in die “Hospitaalreeks 2004-2006” skakel op ‘n poëtiese vlak met die dood veral wanneer die uitbeelding van die diepsee (kyk Figuur 15) verbind word met die uitbeeldings van die leë hospitaalbeddens (kyk Figuur 3, 4, 5, 15). In die skildertekste is daar ook ‘n aantal tekens (veral op simboliese vlak) wat die oorgangsproses tussen lewe en dood aandui. Die stad teen skemer (kyk Figuur 5) is ‘n voorbeeld hiervan, asook die seetonele (kyk Figuur 2, 3 en 15).” [The paintings in the *Hospital Series* link on the poetic level with death especially when the depiction of the deep sea (see Figure 15) is linked to the portrayal of the empty hospital beds (see Figures 3,4,5, 15). In the paintings there are also several signs (particularly on symbolic level) which signify the crossing over between life and death. The city at sunset (see Figure 5) is an example thereof, as well as the sea scenes (see Figures 2,3 and 15.)]

The overarching theme of the novel, according to Roux (2008: 130) is that the patient is facing death but the suggestion is created that the patient is already dead and the patient has crossed the liminal border between life and death – especially since most of the beds are depicted as being empty.

For the purpose of this article I wish to examine the intratextual relation between paintings and narrative and I will make cross references to both during my discussion. An interesting reading of the novel is that of Nel (2009) who looks at the “metatextual dialogue” between this novel and the oeuvre of the artist Marlene Dumas. Nel (2009: 112) refers to Genette’s *transtextuality* as a theoretical point of departure in her analysis. This implies, “all that sets the text in relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts”.

In his *The Architext* Genette (1992: 99) distinguishes between what he calls “modes and genres” and points out that, genre refers to a literary category traditionally imposed on a particular text. Modes on the other hand are “forms” such as narrative or discourse and as such the elements of a particular genre may be present in more than one mode. A dramatic text may have elements of the narrative and vice versa. Genette opts for the term *transtextuality* to capture the essence of what he sees as transcending the boundaries of a particular textual genre. In the case of Marlene van Niekerk’s novel the boundaries of the narrative are transcended by the inclusion of the paintings by Adriaan van Zyl. Steiner’s (qtd in Allen, 2000: 176) remark is apposite in this regard since it captures the essence of what I intend to do in this essay: “It is only by viewing paintings in light of other paintings or works of literature, music, and so forth, that the ‘missing’ semiotic power of pictorial art can be augmented – which is to say that the power is not missing at all, but merely absent in the conventional account of the structure of the art.”

The Melancholic Miniaturist

In an essay written in 2004 to accompany Adriaan van Zyl’s then exhibition Marlene van Niekerk has commented extensively on his work, and also refers to the so-called hospital paintings. She characterizes him as a “melankoliese miniaturis” [a melancholic miniaturist] and delineates three prominent themes in his paintings: there is the theme of boundaries and liminalities which resonates in an almost ritualistic way through his oeuvre; a preoccupation with time and mortality and the tension between the raw history of decay, suffering, dislocation on the one hand and the distanced representation thereof in exact detail on the other hand. (2004: 6).

Similarly, Viljoen (2009: 8) typifies the work of Adriaan van Zyl as “sublime longing through an almost obsessive documentation of material reality” and not only “a search, a longing, or a, *Sehnsucht* for the unattainable but the hope that what is longed for may be realized. Van Zyl spreads the rumour of hope. Hope of safety, home and health. Hope that there is more. He

poses the possibility of another world without undermining the present reality of this world.”

With particular reference to the hospital paintings Van Niekerk (2004: 7) shows that the viewer is accompanying the painter from outside the hospital with its brutal exterior into the waiting room with its complete sense of deracination and desolation.

The utter lack of human compassion and communication presented in these paintings prompts Aucamp (2006: 11) to describe them as portraits about “stillness”. As in the case of Caspar David Friedrich’s work, Aucamp typifies Van Zyl’s work as follows: “the elements of a negative beauty – deliberate monotony, formal repetition, the unmistakable sound of emptiness within the orchestral whole of the picture.” In his assessment of German Romantic painting Vaughan (1984: 1) describes Friedrich as the painter of “entrancing landscapes” and these landscapes were filled with symbolism and in commenting on this symbolism Dolp (2008: 209) observes that it formed “part of a broader German visual practice that attempted to design a pictorial language that would express a new emotional experience of nature.” Commenting on this so-called emotional experience of nature Potter (2008: 331-332) remarks as follows: “This belief was rooted in his view of nature as a subject itself worthy of study, imbued with spiritual qualities and portrayed entirely without human presence, not as backdrop but as protagonist. His interest was not in the beauty of nature alone but in what the romantics called the sublime—powerful natural phenomena: snowstorms, impenetrable fog, impassable mountains—generating conflicted feelings of wonder and helplessness, which he could sense and capture with symbols and allegorical elements.”

One significant difference between the paintings of Caspar David Friedrich and that of Adriaan van Zyl is that in Friedrich’s work one mostly finds a figure gazing at the landscape, whereas in the case of van Zyl the idea of a gaze(r) is merely inferred and suggested (Roux, 2009 :31). David usually includes figures that are painted from behind - which later influenced Salvador Dali in paintings such as his “Person at the window” (1925).

In contrast to David’s natural landscapes Claire Wolf Krantz (2005) observes that in these works Adriaan van Zyl is moving into a “complex urban setting” and by choosing to paint a hospital he does not want to convey any notion of comfort but rather to express “substantiality, seriousness and capability”.

Waiting rooms

The novel opens with “Hospital Triptych II” (pp 4-5) which juxtaposes three scenes: the waiting room with its uncomfortable seats, the courtyard with its symmetrical windows and shadowed floor and in the third we have a seascape with waves. The trajectory of van Zyl’s work is suggested here: dislocation, dehumanized spaces, a portal to an unknown world – and the sea as the ultimate escape from this realm of pain. Compare also Wiid’s description of hospitals to his doctor:

Have you noticed, Doctor Snyman, what the interiors of some hospitals look like? They paint a green line on the floor and name it Greenacres Road for oncology, or Sunrise Crescent, pink for heart bypasses. But no accompaniment for the fearful heart. Have to muddle through yourself and fill in endless forms while your sands are running out. (*Memorandum*, 79)

His descriptions of the entrance that marks the sick “as a nought” (*Memorandum*, 79) and at the exit as “a null” supports the overall atmosphere that Van Zyl is trying to evoke with his choice of colour and objects presented in his work. Wiid also makes mention of the “monotony

of colours” (*Memorandum*, 32) associated with the hospital. The colours used by Van Zyl are either a recreation of the green associated with hospital rooms, whereas the walls are painted in a grey concrete colour. The paintings are devoid of any exuberant colours and even the mattress on the trolley in the “recovery room” (p. 113) is a mixture between the red of dried blood and liver brown. In stark contrast to this we have the metallic colour of the trolley’s components. Britz (2007: 7) points out that throughout the series of painting the dominant colours used by Van Zyl are white, grey, green, black, brown and dark brown.

In “Hospital Diptych I- The Waiting Room” (pp12-13) the image of the sea is again juxtaposed with a long corridor with asymmetric chairs and a sickening green decaying colour on the walls. The floor looks polished but slippery and activates connotations of a fear of falling and a sense of injury.

Van Niekerk’s novel is equally fascinating because just like in the paintings of Van Zyl there is also a preoccupation with spaces, the hospital is depicted as an unfriendly almost abject space and there is a predilection for order and regulation. The latter is signified by the main character J P Wiid who used to work as a city planner and who is used to spatial order and structuring. That explains why Saunders (2009: 119) calls it a novel about “the transformation of urban space.” Ashraf Pillay, the affirmative action overseer and replacement of Wiid, represents the new post-apartheid dispensation and he specializes in so-called “industrial architecture” and particularly the building of “jails, universities, hospitals, schools” (*Memorandum*, 41).

The hospital which forms the central focus of both the painter and the novelist’s work, however, is a remnant of the old apartheid regime and not as such designed to be a work of art. It was designed as a functional public institution aimed at curing the ill. This is conveyed masterfully in Van Zyl’s paintings with its emphasis on the linear, symmetrical structures devoid of any curves or circles. One senses the strict sense of balance that guided the original architect’s drawings of the structure. Wiid also observes the “surveillance windows in all the hospital doors” (*Memorandum*, 31) suggesting that patients are constantly being watched and viewed by the personnel in an almost Panopticon fashion. The original Panopticon was the model of proposed prison designed by Bentham and Foucault uses the concept to refer to attempts “to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power” (Foucault, 1995: 195). In the case of the hospital the description suggests that the patients (like inmates in a prison) are constantly under surveillance.

The hospital as disturbing space

But the hospital is not only a place with curative possibilities. It is also an abject space aimed at scientific experimentation, ordering, classification and the control of pain. Both painter and novelist’s works are underpinned by what Foucault (1973) calls “the visible invisible” in his seminal *The Birth of the Clinic*. The invisible world of the hospital is made visible through the paintings and the meticulous charting of the patient’s illness in *Memorandum*. Pain, suffering and experiences in hospital are usually barred from our discourse and by painting an open hospital bed is indeed as Krantz (2005) calls it, “disturbing”. We want the world of the diseased to be invisible and locked away behind the brown stone façade of the hospital. That also explains why the painting of an empty hospital bed is so disturbing because it activates the binary opposition life / death. The patient may be away in the operation theatre to be cured or may be on his or her way to the morgue. Nel (2009:125) writes in this regard:

Die kunswerke verrai wel enkele tekens van menslike teenwoordigheid: 'n laken wat weggetrek is, 'n kreukel in die deken, 'n bedliggie wat brand, maar dit beklemtoon juis so die totale uitsluiting van enige menslike gestalte. [The works of art indeed betray some signs of human presence: a sheet pulled away, a crease in the bedspread, a bed light burning, but it emphasizes the complete exclusion of any human figure.]

De Jong-Goosens (2007: 154) also regards the sense of emptiness in the paintings as particularly grim.

As in the case of the two enigmatic characters of Mr X and Mr Y in *Memorandum*, Van Zyl / Van Niekerk invites the reader to subject the hospital as an estranging environment to his or her clinical almost voyeuristic gaze. Whereas the character J P Wiid expresses his sense of gratitude towards the hospital personnel, both Mr X and Mr Y are quite critical. He feels that they should be grateful that they could afford “the First World medical services in Africa” (*Memorandum*, 62). Mr Y describes the hospital ward as “intensely unsweet and unrefreshing” (*Memorandum*, 38). Equally disturbing is the treatment that Mr X has to undergo since he is almost dehumanized in the process:

On my right they were trying to administer some substance to Mr X from a container shaped something like a grease gun. His head was all the way back, his mouth wide open like a gaping chicken's, his adam's apple a motionless lump on his gullet. *Uck-uck* he went. They shone a little red light into his mouth to see if there was an obstruction. *Uck-uck-uck*. From the shadows on the curtain I could see that the nurse was vigorously massaging his throttle, while with equal emphasis shaking her head at the other nurse. (*Memorandum*, 70)

This inhumane treatment also explains why Mr Y addresses the ward sister as “Your Excellency, Ambassadors of Pain” (*Memorandum*, 15). Even the name of the surgeon, Dr Snyman (literally Dr Man-who-cuts) evokes the idea of pain and mutilation and underpins the feeling of suffering associated with operations, hospitals and hospital wards.

The almost clumsy and inhumane administration of the medicine is again in shrill contrast to the neat instruments and cabinets portrayed in Van Zyl's paintings. Krantz (2005) when writing about “Hospital Still Life 1” and “Theatre Still Life II” refers to the “the cold reality of the instruments used for diagnosis and treatment, themselves deadly in the pain they produce” are being exhibited. Wiid refers to the “visibility of strange tubes and clamps in glass cases” (*Memorandum*, 44).

Amidst all the pain and suffering Van Zyl includes in his “Hospital Diptych II” stormy waves at sea as a sign of escapism. Van Niekerk (2004: 7) explicates this as follows in her discussion of the paintings:

Die skildery van die leë oopgeslaande hospitaalbed kry deur sy jukstaposisie met die skildery van die deinende watermassa daarnaas die allure onder andere van 'n onthutsende “vlot van Medusa” (vergelyk die bekende skildery van Gericault) waarop hierdie akwatiese reis in die dieptes van die “funksionaliteit” volbring moet word. [The painting of an empty open hospital bed through its juxtaposition with the painting of the swelling water mass gains the allure of amongst others the bewildering raft of Medusa (compare the painting by Gericault) on which this aquatic journey into the depths of “functionality” has to be completed.]

The painting “Raft of the Medusa” (1819) is described as “an icon of Romanticism” and depicts “pallid bodies given cruel emphasis by a Caravaggio-style chiaroscuro; some writhe in the elation of hope, while others are unaware of the passing ship. The latter include two figures of despair and solitude: one mourning his son, the other bewailing his own fate.” (www.louvre.fr.) . It is appropriate for the context of this paper to mention that while he was painting

this, Gerault visited hospitals and morgues to study cadavres (Spiegelman, 2009) which opens another interesting intertextual point of interpretation for a reader of *Memorandum*. The reader, just like Van Zyl and his predecessor Gericault is scanning the rooms of the hospital for subject matter but as we know from Van Zyl's works, they are devoid of human presence. Maybe all the corpses and cadavres have been removed to be studied or buried.

But as in the case of the people on the raft the reference to the painting implies that there is no real escape from the reality of disease and that death is imminent. The sea is not only a symbol of freedom and escape but also a symbol of death. According to Cirlot (1962: 281) the return to sea means a return to the mother, which implies dying. Thus the painting suggests that an escape from this harrowing dehumanized place might finally end in death. Death, within the context of a hospital, is indeed the final frontier. With regard to the sea imagery in the paintings Roux (2009: 79-80) comments as follows:

Die organiese vorms van die uitbeelding van die see word vervolgens ondersoek. Daar is nie in die uitbeeldings van die seetonele enige teken van geometriese vorms nie (geometriese vorms sluit byvoorbeeld 'n vierkant, 'n reghoek, 'n sirkel of 'n driehoek in). Die afleiding wat hier gemaak word is dat ons met 'n uitbeelding van die natuur te doen het, wat die afwesigheid van menslike geometriese vorms aandui. Daar is dus 'n groot kontras tussen die organiese aard van die uitbeeldings van die see en die anorganiese geometriese vorms in die uitbeeldings van die hospitaalruimtes. [The organic shapes of the depiction of the sea will be discussed next. In none of the sea scenes one detects any sign of geometric shapes (such as a square, a rectangle, a circle or a triangle). From this we deduce that we are dealing with a depiction of nature devoid of any manmade geometrical shapes. There is thus a major contrast between the organic nature of the portrayal of the sea and the anorganic geometrical shapes in the depiction of the hospital spaces.]

As is the case with Gericault, Van Zyl's paintings also defy one interpretation. Riding (2003: 38)) points out that "Raft of the Medusa" could be read today as "a cruel parody of heroic art, as a shipwreck cast as Biblical deluge, or as a political allegory of the French nation" and as such Van Zyl's juxtaposition of the hospital versus the sea is also open to a variety of readings. Does the sea signify freedom? Escape? Death? Or is it an unconscious wish that the abject space of the hospital be destroyed in a deluge and sink to the bottom like Debussy's cathedral?

The painting "Hospital – Arrival" (p. 21) takes the reader into the inner sanctum of the hospital. It depicts the awaiting bed with its customary green sheets. There is a small bunch of flowers, a carafe and a glass, an open container and a telephone on the bedside table. The light above the bed is not switched on. In the right hand corner we see a bag, probably the hand bag of the person who has brought the patient to hospital and who is able to escape from this space. In contrast to this we have in "Hospital Diptych II- The Night Before" (pp. 36-37) a light switched on and the bed scene is juxtaposed with a painting of the sun setting over a cityscape. It is night in the big city and the patient (who is absent from the painting) has switched on his night light. He is awaiting the next day's submission to the alien-like instruments in the operation theatre. Compare the representation of the large head-like theatre lights in both "Operating Theatre I" (p. 51) and "Operating Theatre II" (p.57). One is tempted to think that the brown stains on the bulbs of the theatre lights are old clotted blood and a breeding zone for the super bugs associated with hospitals! This depiction is in stark contrast to another hospital painting, namely by Andrieux. In his analysis of Andrieux's painting of a pediatric room in a French hospital circa 1900, Toubas (1997: 415) points out that "light and cleanliness were the order of the day" and the walls painted with white high gloss paint. Disinfection, sterilisation and clean spaces were at the order of the day. Similarly Eakins's use of white and striking colours in his "The Agnew Clinic" (1889) emphasizes hygiene and sterilisation. Rembrandt's use of light and colour in "The Anatomy Lesson of Professor Nicolaes Tulp" (1632) bathes the surgery scene in a clear

white light whereas the surrounding parts are dark and almost invisible. Interesting to note is the fact that the light emanates from the cadavre suggesting that he is the source of light, the object of scientific curiosity and experimentation, the source of Prof Tulp's analysis of the dead body. In the case of Adriaan van Zyl's paintings the grey and the dark colours suggest the opposite. There is a lack of hygiene, of systematic order and of scientific curiosity. It is devoid of any human objects of knowledge.

If one studies Wiid's meticulous documenting of his symptoms and treatment and one places his document next to the paintings then one could indeed infer that the patient yearns to escape from hospital and in Wiid's case from the scientific preoccupation of the doctors. In Addendum 1 (pp128-131) he refers to procedures such as the "insertion of nasal stomach tube & urinary catheter", "intravenous drip set up", "laparotomy", the removal of the "tumour segment of the colon" etc.

Whereas Wiid meticulously records these intrusive procedures, Van Zyl is more subtle in his suggestion of operating theatre lights and theatres waiting mordantly for the arrival of the patient and instruments are still wrapped and in containers. Just as effective is the inclusion of the two metallic objects (one looks like a pair of scissors) in the painting of the cabinet (p.86) since it immediately evokes connotations of pain and the opening up of the body. One hears Foucault's sardonic choice of title for his chapter here: Open up a few corpses. Despite the sophistication of the medical sciences it is indeed death that is seen as "the great dark threat" (Foucault, 1973: 179) behind the backs of the doctors.

In Van Zyl's paintings the sea is the ultimate liminal border that has to be crossed in order to escape the dehumanizing hospital space but in the case of *Memorandum*, the main character decides not to go for an operation but rather to listen to Bach's Passacaglia and "walk [his] city's streets" (*Memorandum*, 123). His Medusa is not taking him away on a raft but awaits him under "the manhole in the middle" of his street. The official with 24 years of service to the city council and who has always relied on administrative systems and a sense of order now decides to cancel his operation and even develops a sense of compassion towards his fellowmen. The escape from the regimes of pain and torture has ended in a newly found awareness of his surroundings and a new celebration of life. The city that he lives in is now "[altered] for the better for those who live in it" (Saunders, 2009: 122) because of this sense of renewed vision on the side of Wiid.

Conclusion

In this unique text that calls to mind the work of Sebald, several binary oppositions are being subverted: Van Zyl/Van Niekerk; paint / write; painting / novel – without making the one subservient to the other. In the process the text comments not only on different spaces (nests, houses, flats, hospital wards) but it also gives the reader two perspectives on pain, suffering, care and the clinical observation of the diseased body by the medical fraternity. Another interesting facet of the novel is the way in which it confronts the reader with representation: does the reader view the depicted landscapes as representing the settings of the novel? In other words, does the hospital room portrayed in Van Zyl's work "become" the hospital room in the reader's mind?

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Drawing strategies at the Venice Biennale 2011

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This article attempts to communicate the unique ambience and scale of Venice during its Biennale; to draw attention to four sets of questions highlighted by the 2011 event; and to focus on a few projects (including their drawing details) exhibited there. These art works and their drawing details remain indelibly embedded in the author's visual memory as articulate responses in political registers to the questions raised, while generating a sense of hope.

Key words: drawing, Venice Biennale, political registers, hope

Tekenkunsstrategieë by die Venesiese Biennale 2011

Hierdie artikel poog om die unieke atmosfeer en skaal van die Venesiese Biennale oor te dra; om die aandag te vestig op vier stelle vrae wat in die kollig gebring is deur die 2011 geleentheid; en om te fokus op enkele projekte (insluitend hul tekeningbesonderhede) wat daar uitgestal was. Hierdie kunswerke en hul tekeningbesonderhede het onuitwisbaar deel geword van die skrywer se visuele geheue as politiese teensang wat sprekend reageer op die vrae gestel, terwyl die werke terselfdertyd 'n sin van hoop kon genereer.

Sleutelwoorde: tekenkuns, Venesiese Biennale, politiese teensang, hoop

The Venice Biennale is accepted by many as being the largest and most comprehensive exhibition of contemporary art in the world. Established in the late nineteenth century as a gift to the wife of the ruler of Venice, this event has since happened every two years without fail, which made this year's biennale the 54th of its kind. Going to Venice seems like a kind of pilgrimage. Paolo Baratta, President of the Venice Biennale Foundation, speaks of it as "...a wind machine....it shakes the forest, discovers hidden truths and gives strength and light to new offshoots, while giving a different perspective to known branches and ancient trunks..." (2011: 31). He continues by listing the various "pillars" of the event: the pavilions of eighty-nine participating countries who sent representations to the event this year; the international exhibition constructed by the biennale curator; and the officially accepted forty collateral exhibitions. It is interesting that Baratta adds to this list the spaces inhabited by the art works plus the city of Venice itself as an active participant in the extravaganza which is the biennale (see 2011: 34).

One could also add to Baratta's list the extensive other layer of concurrent contemporary exhibitions organised to coincide with the biennale, as well as the matrix of permanent exhibitions of modernist and historical works spread across the geography of the city. All experienced together, Venice presents the viewing visitor with a performance like no other, while also providing an opportunity to remain current with the continuously changing face of contemporary art. The vast scale of the Venice Biennale makes it impossible to do justice to the whole; any particular author can only shed light on a small part. This article attempts to communicate the unique ambience and scale of Venice during its Biennale; to draw attention to four sets of questions highlighted by the 2011 event; and to focus on a few projects (including their drawing details) exhibited there. These art works and their drawing details remain indelibly embedded in the author's visual memory as articulate responses in political modes to the questions raised, while the works also generated hope.

Arriving at Venice's Marco Polo Airport, one has to board a boat to the city. This trip normally takes an hour, during which outlying islands come into view while Venice slowly reveals herself to the traveller. Many earlier visitors to the city – Turner, Monet, Ruskin – have

left us with their own impressions of this place which is like no other in the world. As a boat turns out of the Adriatic Ocean into the Grand Canal, one can identify with their experiences. And, almost immediately, signs of the biennale add to the visual bustle: flags fly, banners announce, *portegas* and *sottoportegas* open away from the *fondamenti* along the canal into the fabric of the city and invite one's eyes inward to the feast of visuality waiting within. Once landed, one has to negotiate one's ways along the density of Venice. Here is a city with almost no streets, no vehicular traffic, many narrow *portegas* opening suddenly and unexpectedly into *campos* which provide social foci for the life of inhabitants and the many visitors.

Despite the fact that Venice receives around twenty million tourists every year, it is noticeable that most of them are not interested in the biennale nor in concurrent exhibitions. One sees flocks of tourists shopping or waiting in queues to enter the Basilica San Marco or the Ducal Palace. The inconvenience of queues does not pertain anywhere else during one's perambulations around the city. Visitors who go there to see art seem to spread themselves thinly across the many large and small venues covering the entire terrain of the island. Although one has no sense of being rushed or jostled at these venues, Venice is an extremely exhausting experience. One is confronted by so many art works, each inviting a different response; and even outside exhibition spaces one's eyes find no rest because the architecture of the city provides still more visual overload.

The decayed surfaces of walls in the city display a myriad of marks, colour tones, textures and striations. Narrow walkways bring these close on both one's right and left side. Visual relief only arrives when one enters a *campo* and even then, more visual interest is present in decorated churches, lavishly ornamented interiors and partial views into yet more narrow pathways. The architecture of the city shows elements of many styles: Ottoman Turkish, Renaissance and Baroque, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century restorations, influences from Islamic North Africa and the far East. One is reminded of the city's history in travel and trading, of its eclectic social make-up and its love for extravagance and luxury evident in its architectural detailing. Everywhere, there is an abundance of the visual.

Walking through the quiet *Giardini* – public gardens – of Venice brings some visual relief. In these gardens many national pavilions held their contents within simple architectural boundaries. On entering these – one by one – a clear understanding of a particular country's representation became possible in the relative silence. Amongst these pavilions sat the *Padaglione Centrale* in pride of place with a selection of international works brought together by 2011 biennale curator Byce Curiger from Switzerland. Nearby, the old barracks, now known as the *Arsenale*, housed a linear display of more national representations along its narrow spatial layout. These were interspersed with works by individual artists forming part of collateral exhibitions. The *arsenale* culminated with the much enlarged Italian Pavilion curated by Vittorio Sgarbi this time around. Across a narrow canal, the South African exhibition was shown inside a small tower.

Along the walk back to the inner city, many further small and large venues held national representations or collateral shows by individual artists and more of these could be found across all parts of the island, often adjacent to the concurrent exhibitions of modernist and historical permanent collections. Many of these exhibitions aligned with the central theme of the 2011 Venice Biennale as chosen by Curiger and her team, namely *ILLUMInations*. In retrospect, some key questions are posed by the Venice Biennale and highlighted by its 2011 title. Art works elicit these questions and respond to them, without providing definitive answers.

First set of questions: The format of the biennale still follows its original plan: a focus

on nation states and the art that would define them. Now in the early twentieth-first century, one wonders how this still fits with the pan-European dream of a union across the continent. One also wonders how the format can still align with the fact that millions of refugees and migrants from nation states criss-cross the globe in various states of homelessness, either forced or by choice. Border-crossings and subversions of national ideals occupy much space in the margins of twentieth-century art and moved to centre stage in contemporary art. So, why still national pavilions?

A work in the 2011 New Zealand Pavilion at the Palazzo Loredan dell'Ambasciatore responded to this question. Commissioner Jenny Harper oversaw the presentation of Michael Parakowhai's work entitled *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer* at this venue.



Figures 1 and 2

Michael Parakowhai, *Story of a New Zealand River (He Korero Purakau mo Te Awanuiro Te Motu)*, part of *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer* (plus drawing detail, 2011). http://www.creativenz.govt.nz/assets/paperclip/artform_promotions/images/157/normal/venice1.jpg?1316997709.

Michael Parakowhai is a New Zealand artist of both Māori and European descent. His contribution to the Venice Biennale in 2011 consisted of various pieces shown inside the palazzo and in the adjacent garden. This article focuses only on the work shown in the images above. The visitor to this work hears music played from afar and it creates an ambience before one even enters the space. Classical European piano music is heard through the narrow walkways of Venice; in the Dorsoduro District where the Accademia Museum of historical art on the one side and the Peggy Guggenheim Museum of Modern Art on the other side overwhelm the viewer with European culture.

On entering the central space of the Palazzo Loredan, one sees only one ensemble: a large concert grand piano with an open back, a music stool, and the person dressed in black playing the piano. Views to other interior spaces and to the garden provide glimpses of other work. But, in this space, one is confronted with only this one surprising ensemble. Knowing the work of Parakowhai brings to mind that all his previous pianos are black, one with black arum lilies on top in an elegiac pointer to the tragedy of Māori near extinction in Aotearoa/New Zealand. One thinks of the title of Parakowhai's show: *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer* which refers to John Keats's 19th-century poem (1816) with the same title. In this poem the European

awareness of other worlds, for example of the Pacific, is suggested with a sense of foreboding: “Then felt I like some watcher of the skies/When a new planet swims into his ken;/Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes/He star’d at the Pacific...”.

Parekowhai’s piano in Venice was a triumphant red with paua (abelone) and polished brass inlay glowing like gold leaf in the play of light: red and gold – the colours of Venice. The quintessential European object – a grand piano – holds many references to Parekowhai’s earlier work and to the role of this instrument in the New Zealand film *The Piano* (1993) directed by Jane Campion. At the Palazzo Loredan, the red piano is moreover intricately carved with traditional Māori motifs derived from the ancient practice of drawing on the body with a tattoo needle and transferring the same drawings into the practice of woodcarving.

The meanings of Māori drawing in tattoo or woodcarving remain obscure to European eyes. Many modernist artists – such as Gordon Walters – have used these drawings as formal elements in their own work, a practice which led to much critical debate in New Zealand during the 1990s and beyond. As a Māori artist, Parekowhai has access to the cultural content of the drawings, not merely to their formal configurations. But, even for a European New Zealander (or Pākehā), the significance of the red piano is clear. In this work, the issue at the core of New Zealand identity as a nation is succinctly summarised: the interface between Māori and Pākehā cultures and how they mutually affect and change one another within a political exchange of contact.

Despite migrations across the globe, despite multicultural encounters and the demise of the ideal of nation states, the bicultural basis of relations in New Zealand still comes first in this country where the conundrum of ‘nation’ has not yet been solved between two co-existing cultures sharing the same space, place and government. Parekowhai’s *Story of a New Zealand River (He Korero Purakau mo Te Awanuiro Te Motu)* performs, however, as an optimistic – even triumphant – statement of hope: two cultures can share the landscape/body of the same eloquent object. And, then there is the sound: it fills the space – as the artist said in conversation in Venice – “like no object can” (2011). The sound emanates from the object in the middle of the space and creates an ambience which is more than the sum of its parts, also spilling into the adjacent space of the garden where a small bronze olive tree is ‘planted’ in a pot. The cultural interplay between the old and the new world is provided with yet another optimistic note, however small and in its infancy the ‘tree’ may be.

For most New Zealanders, the work at the Palazzo Loredan does not collapse into the larger framework of the Venice Biennale: it stands for a particular geographical and cultural past, present and future and vindicates the Biennale concept of bringing together the issues that form our shared world, while remaining specific to a particular place.

Second set of questions: Much of contemporary art is process-based with its best context being the studio of the artist, there where it all actually happens *in situ*. How can the dynamics of the work-in-process be translated when it is transported thousands of miles away from the studio and curated into a presentation show inside a prestigious pavilion bearing the weight of national pride and the artist’s accountability as a chosen representative? How can the dynamics of an artist’s engagement with the world be illuminated through exhibited work for an audience?

Contemporary Flemish painter Luc Tuymans curated the work of Walloon artist Angel Vergara for the Belgian Pavilion show entitled *Feuilleton*.



Figures 3 and 4

Angel Vergara, Feuilleton (installation view plus drawing detail, 2011). <http://www.modernism.ro/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/Angel-Vergara-Feuilleton-Belgian-Pavilion-@-The-54th-International-Art-Exhibition-of-the-Venice-Biennale-1-mic.jpg>.

On entering the Belgian Pavilion one immediately sensed the energy of a performance. On opposite walls, Vergara projected images from current political ‘broadsheets’ – newspapers, websites, blogs, television reporting – and projected over these his real time performative responses to corruption, greed, posturing, and the excesses of power through the use of painting to highlight or to obliterate. The paintings were then also isolated as aesthetic objects divorced from their performance context and hung on the remaining walls of the pavilion. The viewer thus had two distinct experiences: energetic, active performance process work versus abstract paintings of which the exquisite detailed surfaces drew one into a contemplative space.

Through the use of digital media Vergara has been able to translate the energy of the studio into the pavilion context of the Venice Biennale. The interface between painting and moving image energised the space; while differentiation between a more ‘public’ space and a more ‘private’ space through an opening in a wall, allowed for both aspects of his practice to share the same pavilion.

The complex interplay between active and contemplative; between large scale and small scale; between fields of political events and abstract details lifted Vergara’s work to a level of intricate engagement for the viewer. The weight of expectation was carried well by his work because he engaged with the world around him, while also creating moments of quiet focus on the methodologies of painting and its history. Moreover, the aesthetic remains of the active performance process suggest something of detritus, the leftovers of an abstract tradition, that which is left when the action is over.

But, it is the detail of drawing inside the works where a lyrical experience resides. Yet another layer is added to Vergara’s work as active performance, documentary detritus, surprising fields of gestural drawing with a brush; all the more complex because we remember their erstwhile life as responses to political events. Here it behoves us to remember that the feuilleton was “originally a kind of supplement attached to the political portion of a French newspaper” (www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feuilleton).

Third set of questions: Molly Nesbit stated within the context of the Venice Biennale in 2003 that today “...the arts are entering the space outside themselves, looking hard to the future” (2003: 34). In 2011, the biennale title *ILLUMInations* lead to the question as to how actual events and interventions in the ‘real’ world – which the arts have entered arguably to an extent as never experienced before – can be truly present within exhibition work. Real-world urgency and the agency of individuals and collectives in that world can often become passive as ‘mere documentation’ in exhibited work. How to overcome the limitations of exhibition work, especially when the work is exhibited in a showcase such as Venice, far away from the struggles amongst which it originated?

Egyptian artist Ahmed Basiouny died from gunshot wounds in Tahrir Square during the 2011 Egyptian Revolution and became an emblem of hope for many millions of people in his country. Prior to his death, Basiouny worked on a performance project titled *30 Days of Running in the Place*. He ran energetically in a structured space in a sensor-fused plastic suit through which the relationships between energy output and consumption input could be quantified and shown visually as grid drawings on a large screen.

Excerpts from this performance were shown in large scale projection alongside video documentation of the Tahrir Square uprisings, also done by Basiouny, specifically during the last days of his life. The flow of resources measured in Basiouny’s energetic performance functioned as an enactment of what is needed for the sustenance of life in the face of the greed and corruption to which the communal energy of the crowds had been responding. The effect is illuminating for those who were not present in Tahrir Square.



Figures 5 and 6

Ahmed Basiouny, *30 Days Running in the Place* (plus drawing detail, 2010, curated as a whole in 2011).
<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContentPrint/5/0/13655/Arts--Culture/0/Venice-Biennale-exhibits-Egyptian-artist,-Ahmed-Ba.aspx>.

The Egyptian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale pulsed rhythmically with the amplified recording of Basiouny’s running in place and his heartbeat. The effect was one of determination, endurance and staying-power constantly reflected in drawing details on the blue chart measuring input and output. Adjacent to this, the crowds in Tahrir Square were surging and enduring despite attacks from armed police. The large projection screens in a long row within the pavilion created a kind of panorama as far as the eye could see to both left and right, top and bottom. As a viewer one became engulfed within the hard rhythm of the pulsating whole of the work. Basiouny’s performance reflected the performance of the crowds and vice versa. Again, the energy contributed by digital media and the scale of the work overcame limitations. The viewer became

physically engaged with the issues at hand; one became a player in this political scenario, albeit for a short while.

Fourth set of questions: When work is embedded within relational projects, such as in events of commensality where eating and drinking together are part and parcel of the actual work, how can this be translated into its new existence far away from home? Nicolas Bourriaud has written about relational aesthetics as an aesthetics which accepts that "...the role of artworks is no longer to form imaginary and utopian realities, but to actually be ways of living and models of action within the existing real..." (1998: 13). Bourriaud sees art as a "state of encounter", as a creator of "bonds that link individuals together in social forms" (1998: 42), with such social forms often taking the shape of convivial sharing. There are many examples dating back to the 1960s and more recently including Philippe Pareno and Rirkrit Tiravanija's events arranged around food. How can such events translate to the Venice Biennale?

Hsieh Chun-te is a Taiwanese artist whose large photographic works in a set entitled *RAW* was brought together to fill a small building in the Santa Croce district of Venice. Aptly, the building used to house a culinary school as the artist himself owns a restaurant in Taipei called *C'est bon*, through which he has contributed much to local culinary traditions in his country.



Figures 7 and 8
Hsieh Chun-te, *Le Festin de Chun-te* (plus drawing detail, 1987-2011).
http://24.media.tumblr.com/tumblr_lkw8ibeyva1qzhpko1_400.jpg1.

The works exhibited as part of the official collateral events at the Venice Biennale were very carefully curated to fit precisely into the spaces available. Each work hung on its wall as if the format and scale were chosen for the site. A part of the space was used as a food area: green leaves glowing luminous against the pervading black grew in long horizontal planters; food was served at particular times on a long black table in beautiful plates. The space was experienced as a kind of chapel, possibly due to the altar-like 'apse' at the far end: a chapel in mourning for mutilated bodies and simultaneously a chapel for celebration of the continuance of life despite the tragedies of our time.

Photographic images were disturbing as the artist situated the images in a part of Taiwan which is quite distressed as a post-industrial site. Naked bodies lying forlorn in a derelict space or hung from clothes' lines; sexual acts with a crowd of men looking on; an ominous low-flying

plane redolent with suggestions of nuclear disasters; and some simple, very beautiful images of a lonely girl and a bride with veil flying in the wind jostled for attention.

The dark sootiness of the photographic ‘drawing’ contrasted with the fresh spring green of the growing leaves; and the colourful crowd who participated in commensality contrasted with the tragic mood emanating from the works. Carefully orchestrated, the relational aspect of the work created a new context for itself as it was situated next to the fish and vegetable markets of Venice. These open air markets display a huge range of nature’s bounty: burnt sienna crayfish, pink salmon, green mussels, silvery trout, all possible shades of mushroom, flaming red chili, purple grapes, lemons, red cut pomegranate and much, much more.

The visitor to *Le Festin de Chun-te* could not separate the work from the market ambience in the Santa Croce district. Regional and global flows of culinary delights and the politics of food in a post-industrial context were highlighted. Chun-te orchestrated an industrial sublime with all the awe and terror associated with a world past redemption, but he also inserted a sense of hope through commensality and an invitation to his audience to relish what we do still have: sustenance and its beauty – a beauty all the more appreciated when we realise that its bounty may be circumscribed in our over-consuming world.





Figures 9 and 10

Zhang Huan, *Friendship (Two Women)* plus drawing detail, 2007. <http://artobserved.com/artimages/2011/06/venice-biennale-palazzo-grassi-Zhang-Huan.jpg>.

The works discussed briefly above elicited and responded to sets of questions relevant to the Venice Biennale. As mentioned earlier, a range of large-scale exhibitions also coincided with the Venice Biennale. One of these showed a selection from the François Pinault Collection in the opulent Palazzo Grassi, situated in the affluent San Marco district. Walking in this area and entering the venue, one was again reminded of the city's history as a place of luxury and wealth, still evident in its architecture and ornamentation. One set of works on show contrasted starkly with its environment. Zhang Huan's large-scale drawings with incense ash were pared back to suggest a disciplined lifestyle, even perhaps poverty, in the age of Mao Zedong (of which a portrait was included). In terms of attention to drawing and drawing details, this work stood out as a companion piece for the others discussed earlier.

The artist explained that the Buddhist "...temple is a completely separate world of hope, just as a hospital is a world of struggle with pain and death... Upon seeing the incense ash left behind from...prayers, I was very moved..." (2011: 239), he said. The incense ash is fixed with adhesive spray, much in the same way as charcoal is fixed. Due to the greater granularity of the ash, the outcome is partly blurred and the artist uses this to great effect. The works at once reveal and conceal and contour lines are difficult to define. In the work imaged here entitled *Friendship*, the drawing detail shows how the blurred contours perform a closeness more literally denoted by the title. Silvery bits in the ash create a luminous glow which seems to underscore the importance of the relationship suggested.

Byce Curiger (curator of the Venice Biennale 2011) wrote: "...it has been sought to create possibly unexpected meetings between works by artists from different cultural horizons and who work according to different criteria. This is because we are convinced that the world of art is not only a colony of individuals who act alone: it is primarily a community of shared intentions... *ILLUMInations* is...intended to illustrate one of the characteristics of art: to be [an] illuminating experience" (2011: 37).

The works briefly discussed in this article come from widely divergent contexts; they deploy the graphic quality of drawing through a range of media: woodcarving, paint, digital screen, photographic processing, and incense ash. These works illuminate through cultural specificity, political engagement, the energy of agency, attention to place and community, and a reverence for the hope which “springs eternal in the human breast” as put by Alexander Pope so many years ago in 1733. Hope is what one takes away with one after seeing these works, despite the ugly or complex issues they address.

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Le Corbusier's research-based design approaches

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The ability to convincingly demonstrate the integration of and reciprocal dynamic between research and product in design assignments is now a prerequisite at most institutions of architectural learning. Due to the creative aspects of design and the undeniable significance of value judgment and imagination in decision-making, this cannot be taught or prescribed as a neat sequential methodology. The best way to understand the role of research is arguably to study how eminent architects have achieved this synthesis. Fortunately Le Corbusier (1887-1965) published copiously; from early exploratory sketches to descriptive essays after completion. Using Chandigarh (the capital of Punjab in India and his only built city) as a case study, this paper examines the research that informed its town planning and the design of some distinctive buildings.

Key words: Le Corbusier, Chandigarh, architectural research

Le Corbusier se navorsingsgerigte ontwerpbenaderings

Die vermoë om oortuigend die integrasie van en wisselwerking tussen navorsing en produk in ontwerptake te demonstreer is nou 'n voorvereiste by die meeste instansies van argitektuuronderrig. As gevolg van die skeppende aspekte van ontwerp en die onbetwyfelbare belangrikheid van waardebeoordeling en verbeelding in besluitneming, kan dit nie geleer of as 'n netjiese opeenvolgende metodologie geleer word nie. Die beste manier om die rol van navorsing te verstaan, is waarskynlik om te bestudeer hoe vooraanstaande argitekte hierdie sintese bewerkstellig. Gelukkig het Le Corbusier (1887-1986) roomskoots gepubliseer, van vroeë ondersoekende sketse tot beskrywende werkstukke na voltooiing. Met Chandigarh (die hoofstad van Punjab in Indië en sy enigste geboude stad) as gevallestudie, ondersoek hierdie artikel die navorsing wat die stadsbeplanning en ontwerp van sommige kenmerkende geboue ingelig het.

Sleutelwoorde: Le Corbusier, Chandigarh, argitektoniese navorsing

Rated institutions of architectural learning expound views that students' design schemes should describe process as well as product. In fact, most insist on a substantial proportion of research, especially in final year design theses. In the real world of practice, no architect would ever present anything but a final design to a client. That does not mean architects do not carry out research; in fact, award-winning projects tend to grapple with complex issues beyond the purely programmatic, which is clear evidence of considerable inquiry. But it is the outcome of those issues that are published rather than the decision-making behind them.

How can students learn about "process" if the really good architects rarely share theirs? Le Corbusier (1889-1965), arguably the most influential architect of the 20th century, fortunately had the propensity to publish copiously, from doodles to developed designs, often with the rationale included (*Oeuvre Complète* Volumes 1-8). Le Corbusier is an eminently suitable example of an architect that unfolded and developed design by applying process rigorously. He pioneered a number of paradigms during his career, which, from the taut, white Purist buildings of the 1920s to the rough, bold monumentality of Chandigarh's Capitol Complex in the 1950s, is intellectual and a giant creative leap.

Le Corbusier invented a number of systems that were certainly based on empirical research such as Dom-ino (concrete slab-and-column), Modulor (proportions and measurements), Le Brevet (welded metal frame) and the V7 street classification. His writings on urbanism can be described as scholarly in the broadest sense, although they are widely regarded simply as

polemical stances. This article focuses on his approaches to the research that informed his town planning and architecture by investigating the design development of four built aspects of Chandigarh: (1) the city plan, (2) a commercial street, (3) a low-income housing project, and (4) the High Court.

Apart from scrutinising his drawings and written explanations, comments by Balkrishna Doshi, who worked for four years with Le Corbusier as Senior Designer (1951-54) in Paris and four more years in India to supervise his projects in Ahmedabad, proved informative.

Chandigarh: Origins and intentions

Chandigarh is located northwest of Delhi, just south of the Shivalik Mountains, the foothills of the Himalayas. The Indian province of Punjab needed a new capitol after Partition in 1947, when India was divided into Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan. Matthew Nowicki and Albert Mayer created the initial masterplan. Le Corbusier was invited to participate after Nowicki died in a plane crash in 1950; he started work in 1951. His collaborators were his cousin, Pierre Jeanneret, Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew, as well as number of young Indian architects and planners.

Town planning

A frequent assertion is that Le Corbusier simply modified the leaf-shaped Nowicki-Mayer plan, perhaps because he had completed his layout in just four weeks (*Oeuvre complete*, volume 6: 51). It is certainly true that he retained certain characteristics, especially spatial relationships between key elements (government, city centre, university and industries) and the superblock principle, but his town planning scheme was based on the investigation of a very broad set of considerations. Le Corbusier (1958: 210) claims that he had revived the unbuilt proposal for Bogota, which he had drafted during the previous year. That proposal, in turn, is a reminder of Radburn, with the curved roads straightened out, the informal, meandering footpaths, and the greens with their organic edges retained and linking the superblocks across ring roads – clearly a case of applying an existing concept (and theory) to a new setting.

Charles Jencks (2000: 324) recognises that “Other critics, especially city planning theorists such as Jane Jacobs, have faulted Le Corbusier for taking an overly simplistic view of the way the city functions. William Curtis (1986: 224), however, writes that when Le Corbusier “did have a chance to lay out a whole town, at Chandigarh, he modified his abstract propositions considerably to deal with site, climate, culture and tradition”.

Browsing through Le Corbusier’s published work on Chandigarh, one notices the sketches of the terrain, cows, flowers, symbols and ordinary people. Rémi Papillaut (2002: 324) notes that Le Corbusier did not have a large collection of books about India, but rather seemed to “develop knowledge based on visual intuition”. This is corroborated by Balkrishna Doshi (in Takhar 2002: 58) who writes that Le Corbusier observed life styles and the impacts of the climate, flora and fauna at a spiritual and material level in everyday life: “Over the next few years, I gradually experienced his interpretations and translations of these observations into design.”



Figure 1
Landscape with a view of the Shivalik Mountains (*Oeuvre complete*, volume 5: 115).

He was acutely aware of India's myths, iconography and urban history. Although not as widely published as the first cities of the Middle East, India, and specifically the Indus Valley, has a long urban history. The Harappan cities existed between 2150 and 1750 BC, and were the earliest examples of the gridiron plan (Morris 1994: 31). The rules for making these ancient cities were described in the Vaastu. Doshi writes (in Takhar 2002: 65):

The Vastu Shastra ... is an ancient treatise, which says that architecture is connected to the environment ... He [Corbu] drew a diagram to understand this approach. ... He made a drawing for himself trying to interpret them for their psychic, figurative and material values.

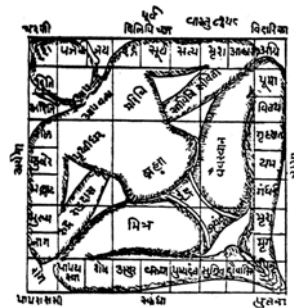


Figure 2
Vāstu-purusa mandala (from Lynch 1981: 76).

After *Contemporary City* and *Radiant City*, which were both purely diagrammatic proposals for fictional sites, Le Corbusier abandoned the symmetrical grid and from 1929 to 1945 he designed juxtaposed nets with different geometries for vehicles and pedestrians, often based on curvilinear, trigonometric and linear forms. Chandigarh signalled a return to the grid, and it is not inconceivable that the mandala persuaded him to do so. Superblocks with standardised dimensions also offer the advantage of nearly unlimited incremental, modular expansion.

Very early in his career Le Corbusier defined four town planning principles (1929: 170): (1) the centres of cities must be de-congested, (2) density must be increased, (3) circulation and mobility must be improved, and (4) parks and open spaces must be increased. These he pursued relentlessly all his life, as reflected in his very first drawings.

Fast moving traffic is restricted to the surrounding V1, V2 and V3 roads. These are highways, boulevards and ring roads bounding the superblocks, called sectors, respectively. V4 is an internal bazaar street, V5 a rather narrow looped internal neighbourhood street, and V6, the lanes into the estates and street blocks. V7 is a footpath in a green strip. Noticing the large number of bicycles and rickshaws, he later added V8 lanes. Figure 4 illustrates just how closely the final plan resembles the initial layout. While Le Corbusier certainly guided the layout of the V4, V5 and V7 streets and paths, he (quite uncharacteristically) allowed others to design the finer V6 streets.

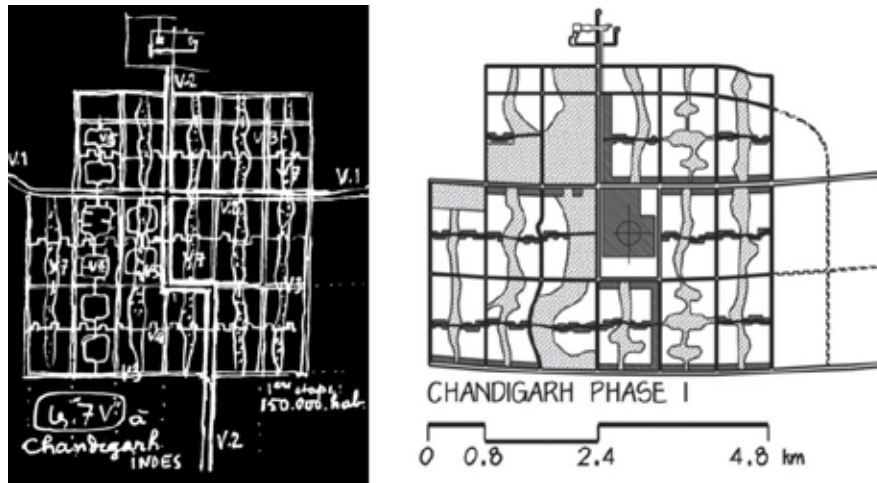


Figure 3
Early sketch by Le Corbusier and as-built
 (diagramme from Le Corbusier 1958: 211; plan of Phase 1 by the author).

Chandigarh is still being criticised for not being “Indian”, probably because critics expect the frenzied ambience of Old Delhi. The brief from the Indian government, however, insisted on a modern and efficient city, with Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister, speaking of “clean open spaces liberating Indians from the tyranny of the overcrowded and filthy cities, as well as from the confines of agricultural village life” (Curtis 1986: 189). With each sector, especially the residential ones, constituting a walkable and relatively self-contained urban village, bisected by the most prevalent of Indian urban typologies, the bazaar street, and envisaging a compact, low-rise residential form, how much more Indian could the critics have hoped for?

The V4 commercial street in Sector 22

Apart from the mixed-use nature of the sectors, I find Le Corbusier’s comments on the so-called V4 streets – the east-west trading streets that bisect the sectors – particularly revealing (*Oeuvre complète*, volume 5: 114):

The V4 is the shopping street running from left to right, which supplies all the needs of the sectors in the way of shops and tradesman’s services, corresponding in a manner to the “la grand-rue” of yesterday. This street is deeply rooted in Indian custom. The V4 crosses the town horizontally. It ensures continuity and neighbourliness between sector and sector. Here the traffic moves more slowly.

I expected the bazaar streets to resemble those in Delhi, but they make adequate provision for cars and parking. However, the shops, however, are indeed bustling. When Chandigarh was planned, India was recovering from the trauma of Partition and a British overrule. It was an impoverished country, not industrialised and the economy was primarily agricultural (Gayatri 2009). Few people owned cars and most urban households relied on walking, bicycles and rickshaw taxis. Le Corbusier, however, clearly anticipated that India would evolve into a major power together with all the material accretions (including private cars) that are associated with increased affluence. As Ravi Kalia (2002: 419) writes: “Le Corbusier looked towards India’s future, to an India with all the paraphernalia of industrialization.” Rémi Papillaut (2002: 324) is certainly correct when he writes that Le Corbusier’s design for Chandigarh has a universality based on “his vision of the modernity of India.

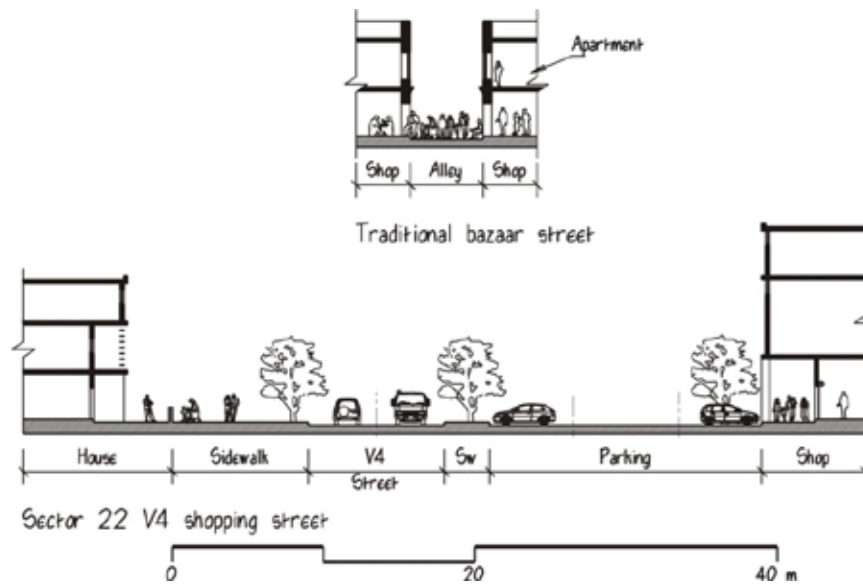


Figure 4
Sector 22 V4 shopping street – predictive
(survey and drawing by the author).

Design codes

Le Corbusier writes that he sketched the studies (Figure 5) one night in his hotel in Mumbai, referring to them as his “research” (*Oeuvre complete*, volume 7: 69). This is of course not unique among architects. As Bryan Lawson (1980: 94) writes: “The whole purpose of doodles, sketches or models is to act as a kind of additional memory to freeze and store spatial ideas which can then be evaluated and manipulated”. As evident in his sketches, Le Corbusier not only recognised the need to respond to the sun, heat and rain, but also managed to capture the patterns found in the local architecture.

Another method was his reinterpretation of historical precedent, as he elucidates: “Past history provides us with innumerable and forceful examples. Foresight and control are essential” (Le Corbusier 1929: 264). His sketchbooks and writings reveal that he analysed historical precedents in great depth. In fact, he wrote (quoted in Curtis 1986: 36): “The greatness of past inventions should be repeated not through imitation, but through a reiteration of constants, and a search for equivalent magnificence in modern terms”.

The constants are of course typological patterns. Michael Graves (1981: 8) notes that while Le Corbusier was “always aware of historical precedent, his interpretation was never literal, for he drew in a manner that transformed history into typology, a way for him to organize his thoughts relative to his own compositions” (Graves 1981: 8).

Learning by looking is an accepted approach. In their informative book entitled *Architectural Research Methods*, Groat and Wang (2002) offer a number of frameworks for architectural research, one of which is the “subjective” (qualitative) paradigm required for informal observation.

He also reinterpreted his own previously developed concepts. Villa Baizeau in Carthage, Tunisia (1928-1929) first featured overhangs and a design that opens up to the breeze, the pattern of which culminated, as Le Corbusier (1960: 81) himself claimed, in the formulation of the

brise-soleil and its use in the Capitol Complex. However, as Doshi (in Takhar 2002: 58) reminds us: “References from earlier works were only references and the thrust was on an approach suitable to India ...”.

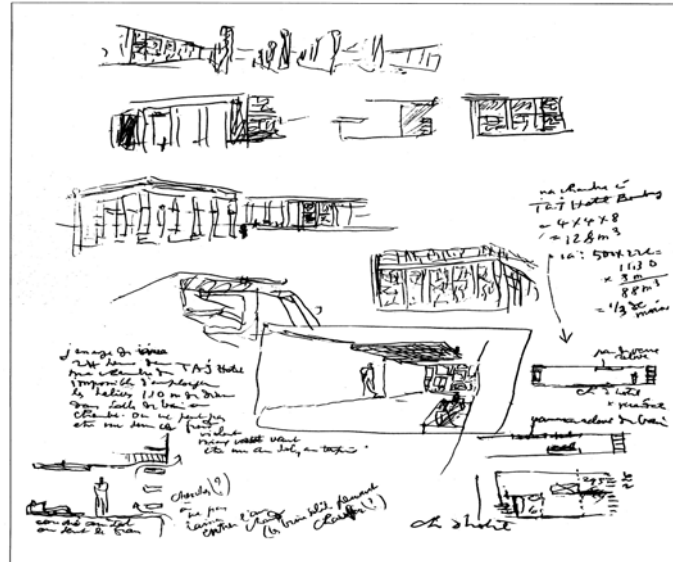


Figure 5
Observation of contemporary elements (*Oeuvre complete*, volume 7: 104).

Housing for poor people

During his visits to Algeria (1929-1942), Le Corbusier realised that vernacular type-forms evolved through a rigorous process of adaptation and tradition, and he subsequently searched for ways of “blending the substructures of the vernacular – their principles of organization – with the rules of his own vocabulary” (Risselada 1989: 60). From the beginning, he realised that an Indian house was different from a Western one and therefore studied the Indian vernacular in an effort to capture its essence.



Figure 6
Indian farmstead (*Oeuvre complete*, volume 5: 118).

Le Corbusier is continuously criticised for disregarding the intangibles – social and economic considerations – but in his conception of the bazaar street and housing for low-income workers, he certainly demonstrated understanding and responded quite appropriately. Le Corbusier’s team was instructed to design thirteen housing types for the different classes of government employees. He realised, however, that low-income workers were not provided for and initiated a fourteenth type. Here, based on his observations of the vernacular, he demonstrates adequate understanding of the way a Hindu family uses a house and provided a veranda allowing for

sheltered outdoor cooking, a courtyard and an outside toilet. For the roof, he retrieved the barrel vault, first conceived for his unbuilt Monol housing in 1919. His proposal was not built, however, a derivative scheme by Jeanneret and Malhotra was.

Was Le Corbusier qualified to deal with social issues? Should he have relied on interdisciplinary collaboration? Apparently not. Bryan Lawson (1980: 67) writes that “by and large this liaison between design and social sciences has not been as practically useful as was first hoped. Social science remains largely descriptive while design is necessarily prescriptive”. A case in point is the South Africa architect, Peter Rich, who made a career of working in rural and informal settlements, and at the World Architecture Festival of 2009 won the World Building of the Year award for the Mapungubwe Interpretation Centre in South Africa. He points out that architects are uniquely equipped as observers of social behaviour through training and inclination (personal interview).

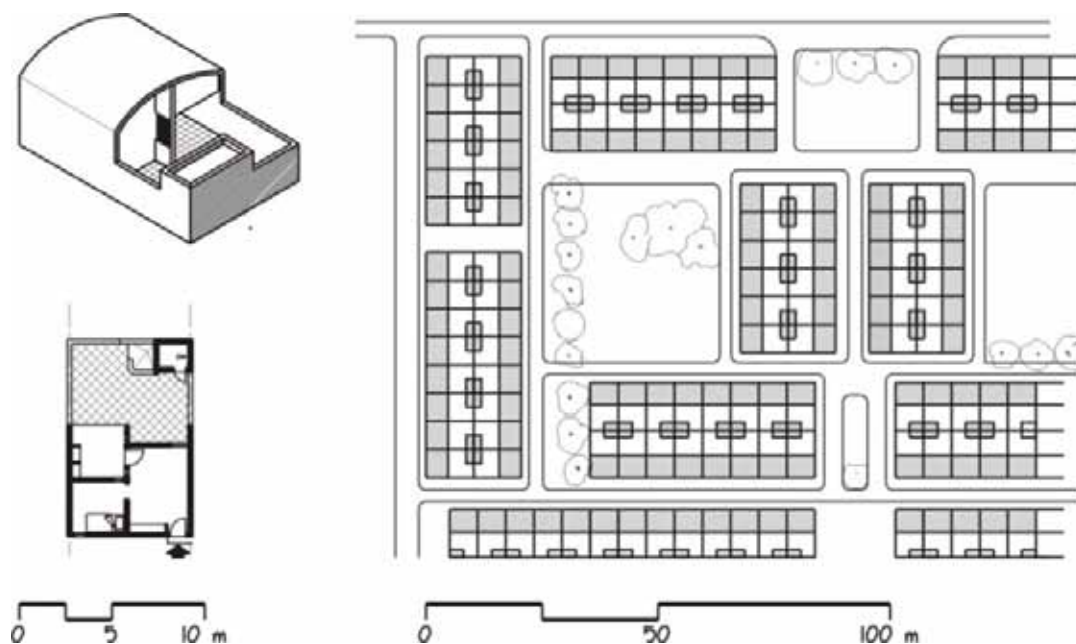


Figure 7
Vernacular inspiration – low-cost housing by Jeanneret and Jeet Malhotra
 (drawing by the author – unit and site plan after Mehta 2005: 58).

The Capitol Complex – the High Court

According to Curtis, Le Corbusier told Varma that the High Court is “about the majesty, the strength and the shelter of the law”. This was most certainly a case of post-rationalisation. Curtis recognised that Le Corbusier was “fascinated by double systems of articulation in Moghul architecture” (in Takhar 2002: 52); his earliest sketches of the High Court clearly depict his interpretation. This is another instance of using a historical typology to formulate a concept. The sketches of the high court indicate that Le Corbusier would decide on a concept very quickly, and evolve the design from it. As Doshi writes (in Takhar (2002: 59):

Being methodical and precise, he would expect us to transform a stamp-sized conceptual sketch he had made in India into a design. While developing it, he would ask us to follow-up all other relevant information including the climatic grid which was prepared in the studio to study air movement, sun path, humidity, rain fall, etc. to decide orientation, materials, openings, methods of construction, among other things. The brief would be vague initially but would be developed and detailed constantly.

A few pertinent points arise from this. First, Le Corbusier never doubted his first concept, unless he threw sketches of alternatives away, which is unlikely. Bryan Lawson (1980: 34) relates how Jane Darke, reporting on extensive research, mapped the design process as generator-conjecture-analysis, reporting that many architects she interviewed would first identify a pertinent aspect of the design problem, and then “develop a crude design on this basis and examine it to see what else [they] can discover about the problem”. Bryan Lawson (1980: 114) avers that “[creative artists] clearly demonstrate qualities of perseverance and single-mindedness not usually associated with divergent thought”.

Second, the design evolves through iteration and backtracking and congruent research. Balkrishna Doshi (in Takhar 2002: 58) writes: “For [Le Corbusier] discovery had to happen at all scales and without constraints.” Groat and Wang (2002: 114), referring to Darke in Lawson above, write that “architects, when given design problems with very complex programmatic and social-cultural considerations, nevertheless tend to start by proposing very simple figural schemas. Over the design process, a schema is analyzed, refined, tested, analyzed again, and so on, until a more responsive schema emerges”. Bryan Lawson (1980: 34) repeats a quote from Jane Darke’s research, noting that “even the briefing stage needs to be accessible by return loops”: “You can’t start with a brief and (then) design, you have to start designing and briefing simultaneously, because the two activities are completely integrated”.

Peter Rowe (1987: 103) writes: “It becomes evident when one examines the structure of problem solving in architectural design that the distinction of problem definition, solution generation, and solution evaluation as independent stages does not entirely obtain.” That is because “The validity and import of the new information may not be fully apparent until subsequent steps have been taken making use of the information” (Peter Rowe 1987: 95).

One gains the impression that symbolism had already been captured in the concept, and that the pragmatic research Doshi referred to simply served to refine the design. That was not always Le Corbusier’s approach. His first carpet layout, however, was the much earlier design of a university quarter in 1925. In a brief description, he reveals his method of design (1927: 260-261): “We have to classify, form a type and settle the form of the cell and its elements. Economy. Efficiency. And Architecture? We can always achieve it when the problem is clear”.

It is interesting that he considered what is currently popularly called “planning” a rational, exploratory process aimed at solving typological, functional and budgetary issues. “Achieving architecture” seems to be not only the more creative and poetic process of modulation and elevational treatment, but also that of determining the construction, a process we tend to associate with practical thinking.

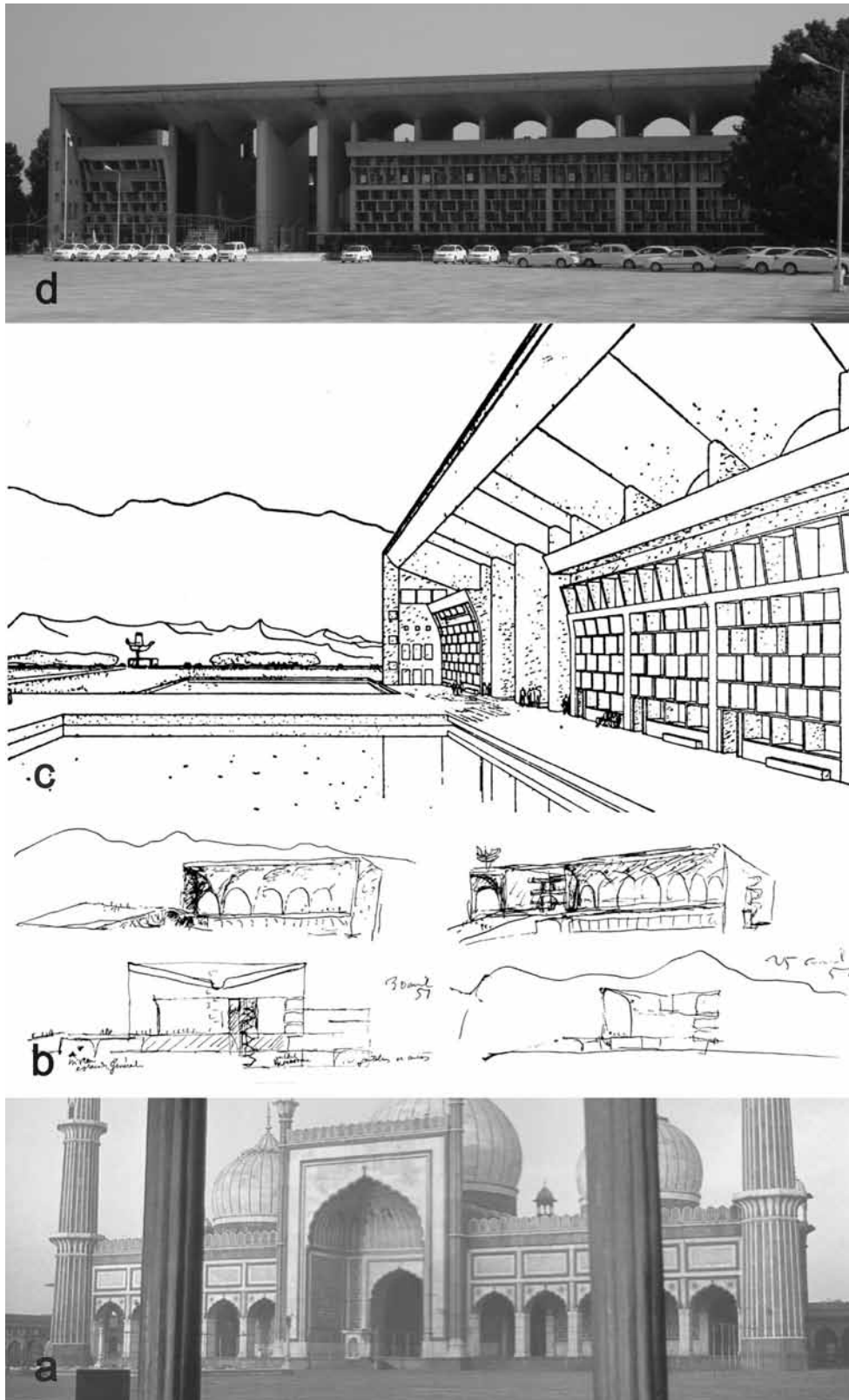


Figure 8
High Court – Historical precedent
8a: Mughal architecture in Delhi – Friday Mosque (from Dickie 1978: 21)
8b: Concept sketches (*Oeuvre complete*, volume 5: 126)
8c: Presentation drawing (Le Corbusier 1958: 225)
8d: As-built (source: the author).

Assessment

Architects are often accused of neglecting social, cultural, and political considerations in favour of aesthetics. Le Corbusier's research focused on symbolism rather than imagery, and on climate as well as social and cultural patterns.

We know what inspired and informed them, but how he actually synthesised his ideas into designs cannot be explained. As Bryan Lawson (1980: 109) writes: "Studies of gifted individuals generally recognised as creative fail to provide evidence of any obvious and clear process at work." We have to accept that the process that shapes architectural designs cannot be wholly empirically described, simply because "design involves figural as well as systemic considerations" (Groat and Wang 2002: 103).

Le Corbusier also developed "conceptual strategies" and formal skills by painting every day (Baker 1996: 289-290). Painting was one of Le Corbusier's passions and his comments are certainly revealing (1960: 219): "Painting is a bitter struggle, terrifying, pitiless, unseen; a duel between the artist and himself. The struggle goes on inside, hidden on the surface. If the artist tells, he is betraying himself!"

Was architecture and town planning less of a struggle for him? I do not think so. He clearly tried to make it easier by means of conceptualisation through spatially structured typologies rather than parti, which are more abstract organising ideas. He applied two approaches. The first was pattern recognition – the direct experience of gathering empirical evidence in order to form precepts rooted in reality. The precepts are then abstracted into concepts through discursive thinking based on logic.

The second is based on experience, norms and types. Peter Rowe (1991: 122), like many others, recognised that Le Corbusier not only had a number of "preferred spatial concepts", but also often employed "formal type as a guiding idea". He suggests that Le Corbusier used analogy (1991: 31), both from historical precedent and from concepts that he previously developed, and "design rules" (1991: 65). That approach ensured that a conspectus of ideas – his toolkit – was intermittently tested and refined. The trajectory of Contemporary City to Chandigarh 30 years later clearly demonstrates that.

The use of quick freehand sketches is a prominent feature of his design process. It could be argued that with the increasing refinement of CAD draughting and modelling systems it is an obsolete medium. However, after the initial fascination with computer-generated drawings, the value of sketching and hand drawings are being reconsidered. Peter Rowe (1987: 97) notes that "Michael Graves has eloquently described the inevitable reciprocity that occurs in an architectural design process between the act of drawing and the thinking associated with it – between 'the image' and 'the mind'". Peter Rowe (1987: 98) asks: "What is it about drawing or symbolic modeling that allows us to discover things?" And again, Graves comments:

Different scales and levels of precision reveal different qualities of solutions. Referential sketches, for instance, often have an idiosyncratic, notational quality about them. They are the "marking" of concepts and conceptual developments, rich in meaning to some but meaningless to others.

A number of current initiatives have been examining the use of sketches as research and design tools. In a competent article, Simon Unwin (2007) examines the role of drawing as an analytical tool. More recently, Katica Pedisic (2010), a PhD candidate at RMIT, writes that sketching is "a critical method in my research, in my design thinking". In fact, in discussion, many prominent

architects, some renowned for the sophistication of their digitally-animated walk-through and fly-around presentations, admit to sketching as being their preferred technique for exploring the brief and for conceptualisation. Even the study guide for an engineering course at MIT (Riskin 2008) proclaims that “Drawing and sketching—pencil to paper – is still a first means of developing problem solving your ideas and designs”.

Conclusion

Far from relying primarily on his unquestionable intuitive genius, it was found that each project was not only based on intensive research, but also that each adopted a uniquely different approach to research. Four key observations emerged. First, history, theory, technology, analogies, precedent and previously-developed concepts were all variously investigated in search of formative ideas. Second, his research was not so much a pre-design activity as an investigation integral and congruent to conceptualisation and design development. Third, a common process in all instances was that empirical analyses, direct observations and tectonic explorations were probed, integrated, assimilated and incorporated through sketching. Fourth, good research fused with reflective insight can have a predictive function.

It can be postulated from these observations, that whenever a design challenges conventional and standard solutions and whenever it engages with issues beyond the purely programmatic, the whole project, from inception to completion, including research, design and construction, essentially constitutes an experiment. Further, the processes and impacts of such an experiment can be described (and debated) only once the town or building has been operational for some time. An inevitable conclusion is that post-rationalisation should be reconsidered and refined as a legitimate means of architectural explanation and substantiation. In addition, in spite of advances in digital representation, the value of sketching as a means of integrating research and design should not be underestimated.

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Myth, ruin and self-exposure: Roger Ballen and the afterlives of images

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In memory of my father-in-law, Gert Botha (1945-2010)

The departure point for this article is photographer Roger Ballen's series *Boarding house* (2008), which is explored partly in terms of the antediluvian creature, Odradek, in Franz Kafka's short story "Troubles of a householder" (1919) and in terms of melancholia. Odradek, as the Thing that outlives us and illuminates obscurely, is an allegory of ruin. Incomplete, ambiguous, and mortifying like a photograph; it is also intricately related to the dialectics of melancholia (meaning both heaviness and inspiration). In Ballen's geologically petrified photographs, the piling up of fragments and ornaments produces the grim heaviness of mythic fate and guilt. I want to open up the possibility of the elucidation and reversal of myth in Ballen's work by contrasting a strain of ambiguous photographic stereotypes (including by August Sander, Diane Arbus, Pieter Hugo and Zwelethu Mthethwa) with examples of critically inflected photography and with a found image.

Key words: myth, ruin, melancholia, self-exposure, Roger Ballen, afterlife

Mythos, Verfall und Selbstenthüllung: Robert Ballen und die Nachleben der Bilder

Ausgangspunkt dieses Artikels ist die Serie "Boarding house" (2008) von Fotograf Roger Ballen, die einerseits unter Hinweis auf das vorsintflutliche Wesen, Odradek, in Franz Kafkas Kurzgeschichte "Die Sorge des Hausvaters" (1919), andererseits mit Bezugnahme auf den Begriff Melancholie untersucht wird. Odradek, dasjenige Ding, das uns überlebt und dunkel illuminiert, ist eine Allegorie des Verfalls. Lückenhaft, zweideutig und verletzend wie ein Foto, steht es auf komplizierte Weise in Beziehung zur Dialektik der Melancholie (hier mit der Bedeutung von Schwere und Inspiration). In Ballens geologisch versteinerten Fotos bringt das Anhäufen von Fragmenten und Ornamenten die grausame Schwere von mythischem Schicksal und mythischer Schuld hervor. Ich möchte die Möglichkeiten von Erläuterung und Umkehr des Mythos in Ballens Werk, mittels der Kontrastierung von einer Reihe ambivalenter fotografischen Stereotypen (wie bei August Sander, Diane Arbus, Pieter Hugo und Zwelethu Mthethwa) mit Beispielen der kritisch flektierenden Fotografie und ein "found image", darstellen.

Stichworte: Mythos, Verfall, Melancholie, Selbstenthüllung, Rogert Ballen, Nachleben

This article¹ forms part of a book I am completing titled *Thinking photographs: Art, history, time, and reproducibility*; it also relates to previous articles I've published, which explore the relationship between photography, posing and staging, authenticity and falseness, the ethics and aesthetics of photographic portraits of the other, the aura and disaster of reproducibility, and the deathly force of photographic flattening, including in the work of South African photographer Pieter Hugo. These and other articles will also appear as chapters in my book on photography.

The departure point for this article is photographer Roger Ballen's series *Boarding house* (2008), which is explored partly in terms of the antediluvian creature, Odradek, in Franz Kafka's short story "Troubles of a householder" (1919), brilliantly visualised as "only a broken-down remnant" (Kafka 1954: 137) in Jeff Wall's digital photograph *Odradek, Táboritská 8, Prague, 18 July 1994* (1994) (Figure 1 & 2) and in terms of melancholia.



Figure 1
Jeff Wall, *Odradek, Táboritská 8, Prague, 18 July 1994*
 (1994, transparency in lightbox, 229 x 289 cm, Frankfurt aM, Museum für Moderne Kunst).



Figure 2
Jeff Wall, *Odradek, Táboritská 8, Prague, 18 July 1994* (detail).

Odradek, as the Thing that outlives us and illuminates obscurely, is an allegory of ruin.² Incomplete, ambiguous, and mortifying like a photograph; it is also intricately related to the

dialectics of melancholia (meaning both heaviness and inspiration). In Ballen's geologically petrified photographs,³ the piling up of fragments and ornaments produces the grim heaviness of mythic fate and guilt.⁴ I want to open up the possibility of the elucidation and reversal of myth in Ballen's work by contrasting a strain of ambiguous photographic stereotypes (including by August Sander, Diane Arbus, Pieter Hugo and Zwelethu Mthethwa) with examples of critically inflected photography and with a found image.

Let me begin by describing a picture (Figure 3). It is grey toned. A girl in a white dress is looking anxiously at a runny, spray-painted spot on a bare wall; her left hand is lightly touching the wall; her right hand appears on the brink of grasping something in the air. There are several such spots and other spray-painted marks and drips on the wall she is facing. Except for its greyness, the wall could be part of one of Cy Twombly's paintings. Traces of damp mark the wall's bottom periphery, suggestions of distant mountain ranges in Chinese landscape paintings. The edge of the girl's shadow falls across the division of carpeted floor and wall, crossing the vertiginous boundary separating the horizontal and vertical; the real and illusory; the solid and ghostly; body and no-body. The carpet is old; its mottled pattern brings to mind the worn-out carpets of decaying hotels. On the wall to the left and behind her, there are more spots and marks, as well as a smiling face drawn on a piece of paper, perhaps by a child or the photographer himself. Below the smile the artist has scribbled "Me" in a child's hand.



Figure 3
Roger Ballen, *Girl in white dress*, from *Boarding house*
(2002, silver gelatine print, 50 x 50cm, courtesy of the artist).

This self-marking is created *en abyme*; to quote Andy Warhol, there is nothing behind it. Rather than mark identity and sense, this drawing, like the other traces, *traits*, contours, *orli*, and *splendores* in Roger Ballen's photographs — what the American art historian James Elkins calls nonsemiotic elements — remains ambiguous. All that is visible is grey surface; readable and unreadable ornament (cf Menke 2002: 268). "[T]he whole thing looks senseless enough", as Franz Kafka (1954: 137) writes of the creature Odradek, in his short story "Troubles of a householder" (1919), "but in its own way perfectly finished".

Still, no answers are forthcoming; it therefore seems fitting to recall that the Latin phrase *in camera* means "in a chamber" — that is, in private. While Ballen's photographic room of perpetual decline appears to reveal or expose its subject, its meaning remains private; obscure. This is what gives it its atmosphere and texture of imperviousness; even futility.

The girl in a white dress is trapped in an accursed cave, a depressive shadow chamber, an apocalyptic corner haunted by a Thing without representation. What is this Thing, which persists here and elsewhere in Ballen's *Boarding house*? The French psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva defines the Thing as "the real that does not lend itself to signification, the center of attraction and repulsion." Following the French Romantic poet Gérard de Nerval, Kristeva describes the Thing as "an insistence without presence, a light without representation: the Thing is an imagined sun, bright and black at the same time" (Kristeva 1989: 13). The Thing is not an object, but a shadow, which the depressed narcissist or melancholic mourns.

The Thing obscurely illuminates Ballen's serial *tableaux*, like a black sun. It is bright and dark all at once, but figures greyly. It is insinuated by a dripping spot on the wall, a piece of wire or twisted string, "not merely knotted but tangled together" (Kafka 1954: 137). Like Kafka's Odradek, the Thing survives the decaying room and its inhabitants. Hardly visible, it is a mute presence of absence, a broken doll, a scrawl on a bare wall, or rusting piece of metal. Kafka (1954: 137) describes it as "only a broken-down remnant".

The Thing shadows the melancholics and depressives pinned and cornered in these rooms in *Boarding house* and elsewhere in Ballen's oeuvre. It is mostly imagined, but insistent. A light without representation, it has paradoxically inspired a long lineage of art making and interpretation in which exposure and ruin are inseparable.

One of Roger Ballen's depressive forebears is the American photographer Diane Arbus; although Ballen's deliberate staging, specifically in his recent work, signals a break with her.⁵ *Boarding house* is more overtly constructed than earlier suites such as *Platteland: Images of rural South Africa* (1994) (Figure 3), which appropriate a "documentary mode" reminiscent of August Sander (Figure 4), Diane Arbus (Figure 5) as well as Pieter Hugo's "matter-of-fact" images in which "fractured, freakish",⁶ marginalised sitters face us blankly. The photographer and his apparatus are all but absent, and the *mise en scène* (staging) and denotation is naturalised in such a way that they appear as truth (Figure 6).



Figure 3

Roger Ballen, *Dressie and Cassie, twins, Western Transvaal*, from *Platteland*, 1993, gelatin silver print, 36.2 x 36.2 cm (source: http://www.artnet.com/artists/lotdetailpage.aspx?lot_id=B6A543CD655CF76C2A910D9BA81AC9BB).



Figure 4
August Sander, *The foster mother*
 (c. 1930, gelatin silver print, 26 x 19.6 cm , London, Anthony d'Offay).



Figure 5
Diane Arbus, *Russian midget friends in a living room on 100th street, NY*
 (1963, gelatin silver print, 39 x 37.5 cm, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art).



Figure 6
Pieter Hugo, *Pieter and Maryna Vermeulen with Timana Phosiwa*
(2006, c-print, 202.5 x 168.5 cm, Cape Town, Michael Stevenson).

Yet these “documents” are deliberately, rhetorically moody; their logic and naturalness have a form, a structure (cf Barthes 1977: 279 & Grootenboer 2005: 12).⁷ By formalising it, *Boarding house* arguably magnifies the suffocating aura of “distance, however near it may be” (Benjamin 2003c: 255) that characterises Arbus’s photographs; the distance of class and art. What kind of private fantasies are Arbus and Ballen living out, in these moody, atmospheric framings and manipulations of the forlorn and distanced other — the marginal, the entropic, the oblivious?⁸

Take Arbus’s famous *A young Brooklyn family going for a Sunday outing, NYC* (1966) (Figure 7). In 1968 in a letter to Peter Crookston, deputy editor of the *Sunday Times* colour magazine, where Arbus’s photograph was about to be published, she said of the family in the photograph: “They were undeniably close in a painful sort of way” (Jobey 2005: 68). Her choice of words is revealing. The family is “undeniably close”, which is how they seem to someone looking at them from a cool distance. Describing their closeness as “sort of” painful only underscores the distance, the sense that, thank God, they are there and we are here (cf Sontag 1979). Both closeness and distance turn out to be false: the former is patronising; the latter is a trick of aesthetic framing and appreciation (cf Atkinson 1999 & Azoulay 2008: 14).



Figure 7
Diane Arbus, *A young Brooklyn family going for a Sunday outing, NY*
(1966, gelatin silver print, 39.2 x 36.7 cm, Santa Monica, RoseGallery).

Arbus's photographs continue August Sander's documentary human atlas project, *Antlitz der Zeit* (*The Face of Our Time*) (Figure 8); only now the subject is less everyman, than freak.⁹ Like Sander, Arbus sets out to objectively and matter-of-factly record the "overlooked" of society. Similar to Sander's *Sisters* (1927), Arbus's *Identical twins, Roselle, New Jersey* (1967) (Figure 9) are framed where they are found: no torture chamber or throne room; no studio lighting or props.¹⁰



Figure 8
August Sander, *Sisters*
(1927, gelatin silver print, 33 x 24.5 cm, New York, MoMA).



Figure 9
Diane Arbus, *Identical twins*, Roselle, New Jersey
(1967, gelatin silver print, The Estate of Diane Arbus).

At first glance, this translates as the elimination of the stifling atmosphere of aestheticised aura and artificial distance that Benjamin deplors as the mark of bourgeois studio photography from the late nineteenth century (Figures 10 & 11). In the absence of authentic experience predicated on absorptive distance and the return look (cf Benjamin 2003d: 338), bourgeois portrait photography simulates authenticity by way of the pose, the exotic, and the blank stare (cf Benjamin 1999b: 518, 526 & 2003d: 340, Costello 2006 & Schoeman 2011).



Figure 10
Portrait of man and child, Atelier of Robert Wallich
 (c. 1895, Berlin, Einholz Collection).



Figure 11
 Anon, Portrait, late 19th century, hand-coloured American tintype
 (Photo: <<http://arts.jrank.org/pages/11555/tintype.html>> "Tintype – carte de visite, in situ, The Cyclopedia of Photography", accessed 20 February 2011).

Yet, despite its potentially self-aware thematising of photography as twinning, doubling and copying, Arbus's picture is nothing if not stifling. The twins seem enveloped in a fog of maudlin nostalgia and solipsistic fantasy — the photographer's. Arbus's photographs have the aura of a fabricated childhood encounter with the fascinating, risky, exotic other, perhaps in a travelling circus of freaks.¹¹ Like so many grainy flashbacks in movies, their false air of sadness makes them grotesquely sentimental. For all their supposed honesty, the photographs aestheticise their subjects, preserving them as if in milky formaldehyde.

Arbus's artistic fantasy of the other is debilitating and depressive; hardly a civic or ethical challenge to the viewer's subjectivity (cf Azoulay 2008, Costello 2006, Sontag 1979 & 2004). The photographs revel in the repetition of the same, the ideology of artifice for the sake of artifice. They lack the critical edge of reason, cunning, awakening, enlightenment or self-reflexivity. As Adorno and Horkheimer (1972), Paul Ricoeur (1991: 486), Terry Castle (1995) and others have shown in different ways, reason is embroiled in myth, precisely when it claims to rule over it. But it can also clear the ground of the nightmare, phantasmagoria, oblivion, and eternal recurrence of fate, madness, and depression. Benjamin articulates it perspicuously in his *The arcades project*:

To cultivate fields where, until now, only madness has reigned. Forge ahead with the whetted axe of reason, looking neither right nor left so as not to succumb to the horror that beckons from deep in the primeval forest. Every ground must at some point have been made arable by reason, must have been cleared of the undergrowth of delusion and myth (Benjamin 1999a: 456f).

But Benjamin's evocation of reason and clearing away is dialectical rather than triumphalist. It involves a subtle form of self-critique rooted in the awareness that anti-ideology is another form of ideology. Exposure thus includes self-exposure — that is, exposure of the technologies that critically frame or rhetorically naturalise the image. If self-exposure is absent in Arbus, what about Ballen's work? The photographs from his previous book and exhibition *Shadow chamber* (2005) (Figure 12), as well as those from *Boarding house*, bear traces of American photographer John Divola's work from the 1970s (Figure 13), of which writer and artist David Company writes:

Divola explores relationships between the natural and the artificial, the objective and the subjective. In the *Vandalism* series [1973-75] he blurred the distinction between found evidence and constructed performance. The marks recorded by the camera appear intentional yet their meaning is elusive. Has the camera 'encountered' them or have they been made especially for it? The photographs preserve the ambiguous status of the traces. In fact Divola had himself broken into these condemned buildings, which he 'vandalised' creatively before photographing them (Company 2008: 88).



Figure 12
Roger Ballen, *Configuration*,
 2003, gelatin silver print, 40 x 40 cm
 (Source: <http://www.rogerballen.com/index.asp?page=ig_schamber-imgs>).



Figure 13
John Divola, *Untitled*,
 1974, gelatine silver print, 35.5 x 35.5 cm (Source: Campany 2008: 98).

Ballen's ready admission that his photographs represent his own constructed, fantasy world, suggests that they partake of Divola's deconstruction or vandalising of meaning, stability, and transparency. In thematising inevitable decay and entropy, they act even against themselves, undoing their sense of art and semblance, authorial power, will, control, and reification. As with Divola's work, their ambiguous performativity undoes both objectivity and subjectivity, revealing the unconscious as a fictional writing pad, one we continually unmake and remake.

Ambiguously or unwittingly countering myth with myth, Ballen's work stands somewhere between the "township chic" of Zwelethu Mthethwa and the deconstructive portraits of Benin photographers Edouard Méhomé and Sébastien Méhinto *aka* Pigeon. The work by Méhomé and Pigeon forms part of a unique collection of portrait photographs from Benin, mainly from the 1960s and 1970s, before colour photography had been introduced to Benin. Alex van Gelder built up the collection, which has been collated in a book titled *Life and Afterlife in Benin*.

While Mthethwa's ornamentalism (Figures 14 & 15) disguises the flattening and obliteration of the figure, which arguably further alienates and disenfranchises the sitters from the potential of their "unique interior lives";¹² the works of the Benin photographers un hinge the hardened stereotype through negation.



Figure 14
Zwelethu Mthethwa, *Untitled*
(1991, c-print, 92.5 x 129.5 cm, New York, Jack Shainman Gallery).



Figure 15
Zwelethu Mthethwa, *Untitled*
 (1999, c-print, 92.5 x 129.5 cm, New York, Jack Shainman Gallery).

In Pigeon's police photograph (Figure 16), which resembles Richard Avidon's portraits in its clarity and directness, if not chic, the handcuffs dialectically reverse the stable category of colonial, racial, and gender bondage, guilt, and fate. Méhomé's half-portrait of a young man (Figure 17) "staring at and beyond us with misaligned pupils" (Enwezor 2005: 10) in a mask-like face, surrealises the mythic reification of the real, unsettling the colonial gaze. Unlike Mthethwa's work, it "forces open the relationship between photography and traditional modes of representing the real in African art", to cite Okwui Enwezor (2005: 10),¹³ opening up the liberating or reifying oscillation of "myth-work" (cf Damisch 1996: 119 & Ricoeur 1991: 486, 487).



Figure 16
Sébastien Méhinto aka Pigeon, Police photograph, n.d., 50 x 60.6 cm (Source: van Gelder 2005: 115).



Figure 17
Edouard Méhomé, Studio Photo Vedette, Porto-Novo, n.d., 50 x 60.6 cm (Source: van Gelder 2005: 89).

Méhomé and Pigeon were humble studio photographers; as opposed to Mthethwa who is a world famous artist. This is an important difference; as is the difference between a portrait displayed by someone who commissioned it and one displayed as art in a museum. Can a high-end art portrait of “the other” ever place the photographer, subject, viewer and collector on an equal footing?

With reference to Ballen’s work a more lyrical, poetic forebear also springs to mind — American director Jim Jarmusch’s beautiful black-and-white film from 1986, *Down by law*, featuring Tom Waits, John Lurie, and Roberto Benigni. Exquisitely filmed by Robby Muller, one part of the story takes place in a prison cell. In one of the special features on the DVD, Tom Waits remarks on the cell walls, which are strikingly inscribed with graphic marks, drawings, and doodles (Figures 18 & 19). Some of these were filmed as found, while others were drawn especially for the film. The lucid, graphic marks on these cell walls anticipate the marks and faces drawn on the walls in Ballen’s photographs, while their clarity, elegance and lightness suggest a possible transformation of the burden of unrepresentable and inevitable affliction, guilt, depression, nightmare and ruin staged in these rooms of a fictional boarding house. I am reminded of Benjamin’s (1999: 816) words about Kafka: “Whether it is a man or a horse is no longer so important, if only the burden is taken off the back”.



Figure 18

John Lurie, Robert Benigni and Tom Waits in *Down by law*, director Jim Jarmusch, 1986
(source: <<http://www.enclavedecine.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/down-by-law-1986-02-g.jpg>>).



Figure 19
Prison cell wall with graffiti in *Down by law*, director Jim Jarmusch (1986).

Like the “freaks” in Arbus’s work, and like the hybrid Odradek, human beings and animals in Ballen’s *Boarding house* “still live under the spell of the family” (Benjamin 1999d: 799). It ornaments them with the prehistoric guilt pictured in Kafka’s penal colony. Benjamin writes:

In the penal colony, those in power use an archaic apparatus which engraves letters with curlicues on the back of every guilty man, multiplying the stabs and piling up the ornaments to the point where the back of the guilty man becomes clairvoyant and is able to decipher the script from which he must derive the nature of his unknown guilt (Benjamin 1999d: 811).

The “archaic apparatus” used by “those in power” is suggestive of a camera and camera person respectively and the notion of the clairvoyant back can be translated as the self-aware or self-critical image (cf Stoichita 1997). The latter is evoked by a torn and crumpled found identity book image (Figure 20), which I want to contrast with the art photograph (cf Fried 2008, Schoeman 2010 & 2011). While the latter disguises the status quo of power and capital,¹⁴ the former’s arbitrary reproducibility disperses it.¹⁵ This authorless ruin, fragment or torso (cf Schoeman 2011b) has an aura of afterlife (cf Schoeman 2011a) that is unforeseen, unposed and constellated like a *Stern-Bild* or star image. I imagine it schematically as reflecting sky and earth. Its smallness protracts life; its surface ornament is polysemic, allowing “a plurality of configurations” (Benjamin qtd Menke 2002: 268) often suppressed in the reified art photograph (cf Schoeman 2010). Instead of forcing or controlling what is seen in a false totality (cf Benjamin 1998: 176), its melancholy aura of loss and separation poses nothing and lets something be seen:¹⁶ “something that is still to come” (cf Richter 2010); a lucid, untrammelled afterlife.

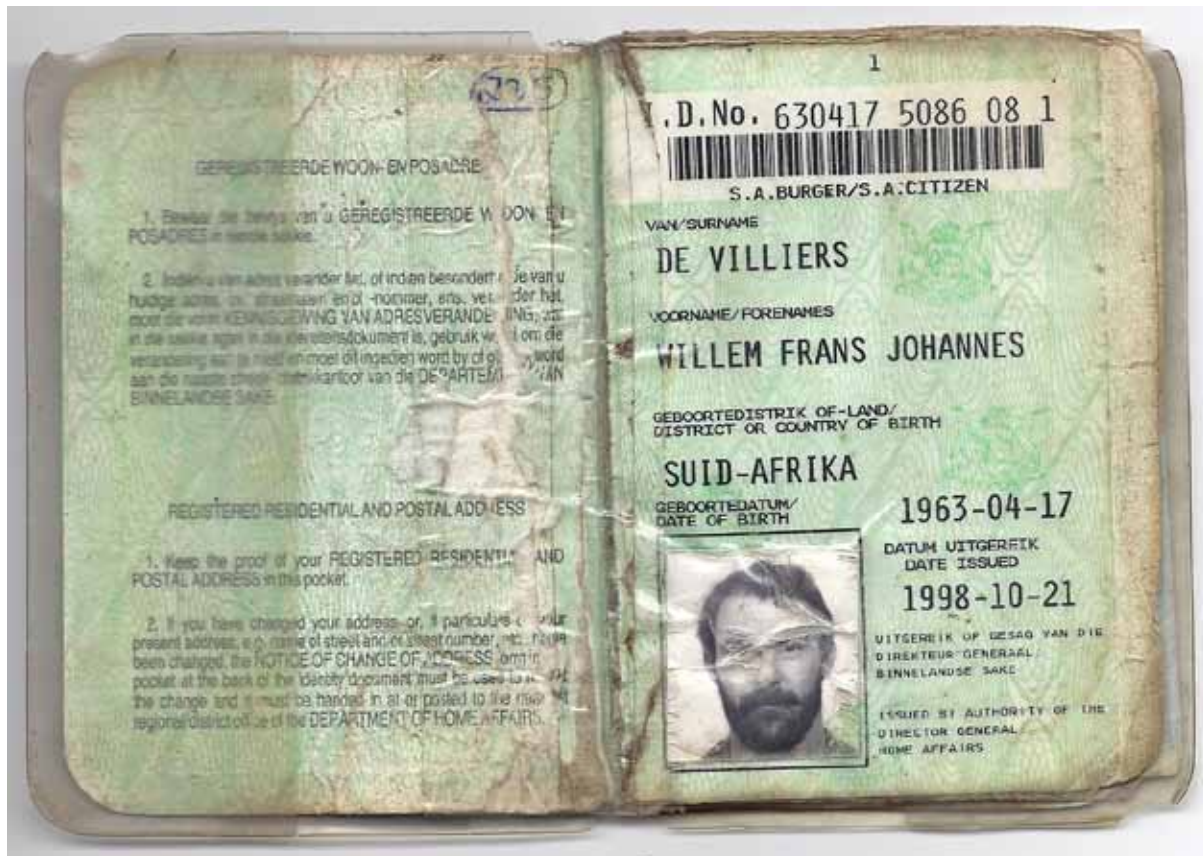


Figure 20
Found identity book.

Notes

- 1 This is an expanded version of a paper I presented at *Other views: Art history in (South) Africa and the global south*, a colloquium organised by South African Visual Arts Historians (SAVAH) under the aegis of the Comité International d'Histoire de l'Art (CIHA), History of Art, Wits School of Arts, Wits University, 12-15 January 2011. My thanks to the session participants for their observations.
- 2 I am taking my cue from Walter Benjamin who writes in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*: "In the ruin history has physically merged into the setting. And in this guise history does not assume the form of the process of an eternal life so much as that of irresistible decay. Allegory thereby declares itself to be beyond beauty. Allegories are, in the realm of thoughts, what ruins are in the realm of things" (Benjamin 1998: 177f).
- 3 Besides being a photographer Ballen is a trained and practicing geologist. The ossified patina of his photographs is suggestive of the geologist's study of the deep time of earth, rock, mountain, ground, stratification, slow shift invisible to the human eye.
- 4 Cf Benjamin (1998: 178): "For it is common practice in the literature of the baroque to pile up fragments ceaselessly, without any strict idea of a goal, and, in the unremitting expectation of a miracle, to take the repetition of stereotypes for a process of intensification". The tomb-like rooms, clutter and claustrophobia in *Boarding house* are reminiscent of the baroque, as is the aura of ruin and mortification.
- 5 In an interview in 1999 with former art critic Brenda Atkinson, Ballen claimed that he "never set up the photographs; if I did they wouldn't have the plasticity that they have. You can't dictate the event or contrive the spark of the extra moment" (Atkinson 1999). But time and the plurality of the event are always artificial in a photograph and in both Arbus and Ballen the encounter with the subject is carefully engineered (cf Jobey 2005: 73). Both Arbus's and Ballen's photographs may be products, in part, of fluid time, but their overall effect is contrived and they derive, like all photographs, from the mechanical or technical obliteration of the flow of time and the plurality of the event. In *Thinking Photographs* I will return to the question of

- Barthes's *punctum* and Benjamin's aura, "the tiny spark of contingency, of the here and now" (Benjamin 1999b: 510); the prick of death, which occurs after the fact, after the moment and after looking, *après-coup*, *après-mort*. The here and now of the photograph, which comes after the lived moment, pricks us with the knowledge of death, which has already happened and is yet to happen. Death and the photograph are entangled with what comes after life: the afterlife.
- 6 To quote Atkinson 1999 writing about Ballen.
- 7 With reference to Roland Barthes's 1977 essay "Rhetoric of the image", Dutch art historian Hanneke Grootenboer writes: "The presumed 'logic' the image thus presents, its naturalness or its 'truth,' is brought about by form, a structure, in which all the elements seem to fit, and that is called the rhetoric of the image" (Grootenboer 2005: 12).
- 8 Cf Atkinson (1999): "Above all, I want to believe that all of these subjects knew what they were getting into. I want to, but I don't".
- 9 Susan Sontag (1979:60) detected "class condescension" in Sander's purportedly neutral project: "Sander's eclectic style gives him away. Some photographs are casual, fluent, naturalistic; others are naïve and awkward." Her criticism of Sander is also aimed at Arbus.
- 10 Benjamin (1999: 515) describes photographers' studios of the late nineteenth century as occupying an ambiguous place "between execution and representation, between torture chamber and throne room". Cf my forthcoming article "Photography's aura: Re-reading Walter Benjamin and Michael Fried against the grain of visual colonialisms".
- 11 Sander's *Circus people* (1930) pre-empt's Arbus's attraction to circus performers.
- 12 Contrary to Sontag, John Szarkowski wrote of Arbus in 1967: "Her real subject is no less than the unique interior lives of those she photographed". See Jobey 2005: 72.
- 13 Enwezor writes: "The portrait is challenging not least because its aesthetic power forces the viewer to think beyond the formal nature and clarity of the picture. It is a photograph that calls for a consultation with a medical researcher, which may then place the image in another archive, namely that of tropical diseases. There is of course in traditional African sculpture a genre of masks devoted entirely to exploring aberrations in human physiognomy. This portrait, perhaps unintended to be read as such, forces open the relationship between photography and traditional modes of representing the real in African art".
- 14 Benjamin (1999b: 184) writes in the series of fragments titled "Central Park": "That things are 'status quo' is the catastrophe".
- 15 Cf Benjamin (1998: 184) who writes about "that arbitrariness which is the most drastic manifestation of the power of knowledge".
- 16 Martin Heidegger (qtd Maly 1989: 189) wrote: "*Das Wesen des Bildes ist: etwas sehen zu lassen*" (the nature, being, essence or root-character of the image is to let something be seen).

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Ambiguous associations: monuments referred to in the design of the Voortrekker Monument

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In Gerhard Moerdyk's communications, both orally and in writing, on the origin and importance of the design of the Voortrekker Monument (1949, Pretoria, South Africa) he often associated this monument with various other monument across the world. These references fall in two groups: the first concerns a statement that developed and changed over time, wherein the Voortrekker Monument is placed in a scale relationship to well-known world monuments. These include the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus, the Pantheon, St. Peter's Cathedral, the Dom des Invalides, the Taj Mahal, an Egyptian pyramid, the Great Wall of China and the Völkerschlacht Denkmal. The second concerns the relationship of the design of the Voortrekker Monument to Great Zimbabwe, and explores the different views that Moerdyk expressed of this monument. The article shows how Afrikaner sentiment and ideology directed and shifted Moerdyk's own personal views and comments on the tension that arose between his personal interest as an architect and his public views as a representative of Afrikaner ideals.

Keywords: Voortrekker Monument, monument.

Dubbelsinnige assosiasies: Monumente verwys na in die ontwerp van die Voortrekker-monument

In Gerhard Moerdyk se kommunikasies rondom die ontwerp van die Voortrekker-monument (1949, Pretoria, Suid-Afrika), beide mondelings en in skrif, assosieer hy gereeld die monument met 'n verskeidenheid ander monument regoor die wêreld. Hierdie verwysings val in twee groepe: die eerste hou verband met 'n stelling wat verander en ontwikkel oor tyd, waarin die Voortrekker-monument geplaas word binne 'n skaal-vergelyking tot bekende monumente regoor die wêreld. Dit sluit in die Mausoleum van Halikarnassus, die Pantheon, die Petrusbasilika, die Dom des Invalides, die Taj Mahal, 'n Egiptiese piramide, die Groot Muur van Sjina en die Völkerschlachtdenkmal. Die tweede behels die verband tussen die ontwerp van die Voortrekker-monument en Groot Zimbabwe, en ondersoek die verskillende opinies wat Moerdyk uitdruk oor hierdie monument. Die artikel wys hoe Afrikaner-sentiment en -ideologie Moerdyk se opinies beïnvloed, en lewer kommentaar op die verskille wat ontstaan tussen sy persoonlike belangstellings as argitek en sy publieke posisie as verteenwoordiger van Afrikaner ideale.

Steutelwoorde: Voortrekker-monument, monument.

This article will examine and discuss the well-known historical monuments that the architect Gerhard Moerdyk (1890-1958) referred to while he was designing the Voortrekker Monument. It will show that he did not necessarily acknowledge these monuments outright as influences on the design, but rather established more tentative associations between them and his own design for the Voortrekker Monument. It is my contention that these associations shifted over time, eventually becoming obscured in the light of contemporaneous architectural and social debates around what the design *should* represent in relation to what the respective monuments actually represented. This illustrates how, in the search for an authentic architectural expression of Afrikaner history, culture and society, a conflict developed between the architect's references to other monuments across the world and the search of the new Afrikaner society for a unique identity by means of an 'original' and 'authentic' architecture.

From the early decades of the twentieth century onwards, Afrikaner society was on the ascent. The French philosopher, Michel Foucault, defines this as the process by which a society gradually achieves higher spheres of power. This power in turn is used to generate and propagate

knowledge of that society, especially by means of written accounts and visual reproductions that define its identity. The individual, as a member of such a society, similarly ascends: his/her 'name' and genealogy, which situate him/her within a kinship group, become important. This sets up an affiliation with the group's written accounts and ceremonies that mark the power relations and structure of the society. Within this system, says Foucault, *monuments* 'bring survival after death'¹.

The idea of constructing a monument to commemorate the Great Trek had been raised as early as 1895, but it took a further thirty years before this wish was translated into a focused effort. The Great Trek of 1835-1838 was regarded as the foundation of Afrikaner society and, as the centenary of this event approached, so did the desire to express in material form the cultural power of their ascendance – thus giving rise to the idea to commemorate the event by constructing a national monument.

The *Sentrale Volksmonumentekomitee* (the Central VolksMonument Committee, CVC) was formed in 1931, and tasked with making this a reality. Much of their early efforts were focused on fundraising and mobilising popular and political support for the project. The media often reported on aspects related to the venture and the first hint of what the monument could look like came from a design that Gerhard Moerdyk gave to the press. This design, produced independently of the CVC, was published on 17 October 1935 in the newspaper *Die Volksblad*. It referred to a proposal for a large stone archway 'in the Egyptian style'². The article unfortunately did not include an illustration of this design but there is a drawing in the Moerdyk Family Collection that could be of this proposal, see Figure 1. Moerdyk explained that the path leading through the arch would be symbolic of the road followed by the Voortekkers, with columns on each side representing the problems they experienced along the way. Although Moerdyk called these 'columns', they would have been more than mere supports, enclosing interior spaces. He proposed that the remains of the Voortrekker leader, Piet Retief, and his men be placed inside a sarcophagus in one of the columns, and that the walls of this space be decorated with relief panels by the sculptor Anton van Wouw, depicting important events associated with the Trek. The other column would house a museum dedicated to the Voortrekkers. This proposal also made provision for a rostrum overlooking a large amphitheatre. It is important to note that a few elements of this proposal found their way into the eventual design, namely the sarcophagus (which later became the altar), the relief panels visually relating the story of the Voortrekkers, and the amphitheatre.

The CVC gave the official task of determining the design of the proposed monument to the Form Sub Committee. This committee met for the first time on 26 January 1936, and a concise and precise brief for the project was captured in the minutes of this meeting:

Insake die vorm, staan die komitee die gedagte altyd voorop: die monument moet die beliggaming van die Voortrekkeridee insluit.

Regarding the form, the committee holds forth the following idea: the monument should embody the Voortrekker idea. [own translation]

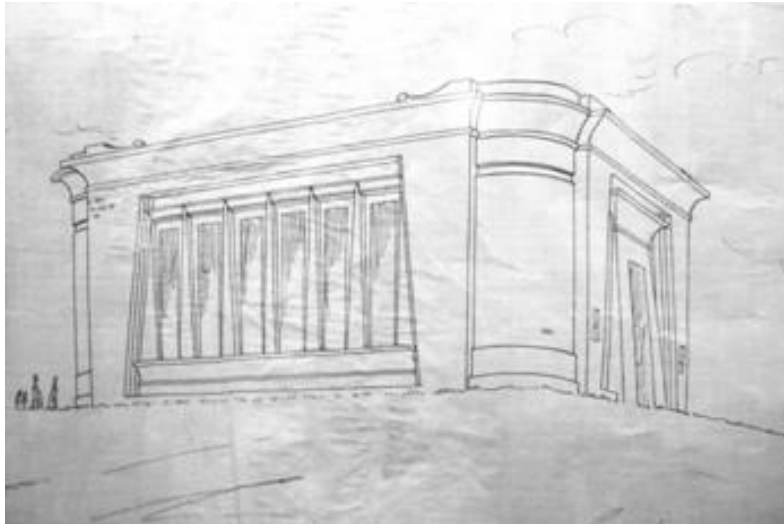


Figure 1
Moerdyk [1936?]. Untitled drawing.
 (photograph of a drawing in the Moerdyk family collection: Nicolas Clarke, 2008).

It was resolved that the Secretary of Foreign Affairs would be asked to direct a request to the Union Missions in Rome, Paris, Berlin, New York and London to send to the committee portraits or drawings of historical monuments to be found in the countries in which they were stationed. Pictures of the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne were specifically requested. Examples of the wide range of materials, such as postcards, photographs and books received, following this request, can be viewed in the Archives of the Voortrekker Monument.

A month after the first meeting of the Form Sub Committee, on 29 February 1936, Gerhard Moerdyk was invited to address the committee on the advantages and disadvantages of a competition to determine a design for the monument. Moerdyk strongly advised against a competition and, not long afterwards, on 7 April 1936, he was appointed as *boumeester* (master builder) of the project³.

A day later, on 8 April 1936, an Afrikaans newspaper, *Die Volkstem* published a description of yet another design by Moerdyk, in this instance based on the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus. In the words of another newspaper, *The Rand Daily Mail*, of the same date, the monument ‘will take the form of an old Greek mausoleum’. No known drawing of this proposal exists.

But on 14 April 1936, less than a week after the description of Moerdyk’s second design proposal was published, the CVC put out an official statement to record their dismay over the unauthorised and incorrect reports that had been published on the design of the monument. They emphasised that the design had not been finalised but that the idea was of a massive building in white granite, bearing influences from ‘the Zimbabwe style’. A reverential atmosphere would be created within, with space for historical panels. In front of this monument would be placed the figure of a Voortrekker woman, arranged within a circular wall representing a laager. The Committee emphasised:

Die Monument sal van eg Suid-Afrikaanse aard wees, en om te sê, soos in sommige ongemagtigde koerantberigte gedoen is, dat dit ‘n Griekse of enige ander soort monument sal wees, is heeltemal verkeerd.

The Monument will be of true South African character, and to say, like in some unauthorised newspaper articles, that it will be a Greek or any other sort of monument, is completely wrong.⁴
 [Own translation]

One can only assume that the description of the mausoleum proposal had been given to the press by Moerdyk himself and that he would have had no reason to give them an outdated design unless he deliberately wanted to mislead them. Regardless, it appears that the Committee's rebuke was directed at Moerdyk as much as at the press, and that there might not at this point have been agreement between Moerdyk and the Committee on the design. This is not the only anomaly that exists in relation to the Voortrekker Monument and other monuments, as will be shown here.

In September 1936, within a further six months, the final design of the Voortrekker Monument – in accordance with the CVC's description thereof – was revealed to the public in the form of a model that was exhibited at the Empire Exhibition in Johannesburg. From this point onwards, Moerdyk was often called on to clarify and defend this design. Up to this point, references to other monuments have included those by Moerdyk (an Egyptian archway, a Greek mausoleum) and one by the CVC (Great Zimbabwe). These references, together with further associations, will now be analysed in more detail. The first part of this analysis will deal with a group of world monuments that Moerdyk often referred to in relation of the Voortrekker Monument and the second will deal with the reference in the design to the Great Zimbabwe.

World monuments

Both Moerdyk and the CVC, in official statements given to the press, repeatedly denied that the design of the monument had any foreign origin. At the same time, however, they often described the monument in relation to a select range of historical monuments. These associations are however peculiarly ambiguous, as will be shown here.

The following discussion will focus on extracts from a group of documents that can be found in the Gerhard Moerdyk Collection, housed in the Merensky Library at the University of Pretoria. The collection contains a wide range of material that had been donated for safekeeping by Moerdyk's family and includes a set of typed and hand-written documents by Moerdyk on the design of the monument. Although none of these documents are dated, it is possible, in most instances, to position them in the chronology of the project according to their content and focus. These documents illustrate how Moerdyk's range of references to other world monuments expanded over time. Three specific examples are quoted here in full and analysed.

The first statement comes from a document titled *Die wording van die Voortrekker Monument*, and reads as follows:

Die Voortrekker Monument is omtrent dieselfde grootte as die Mauseleum van Halikarnasus, gebou in Klein-Asië deur die weduwee van Koning Mausulus. ... Die Voortrekker Monument is kleiner as die gebou in Parys waar die graf van Napoleon is. Dit is een-tiende so groot as die Taj Mahal in Indië. Dit is een-sewe-en-twintigste so groot as 'n piramied en dit is minder as een-duisendste van die wolume van die Muur van Sjina, so dit is nie een van die groot geboue van die wêreld nie, maar dit hou die indruk van geweldigheid. [verbatim]

The Voortrekker Monument is roughly the same size as the Mausoleum of Halikarnassus, built in Asia Minor by the widow of King Mausolus. ... The Voortrekker Monument is smaller than the building in Paris where the grave of Napoleon is. It is one-tenth as big as the Taj Mahal in India. It is one-twenty-seventh as big as a pyramid and it is less than one-thousandth of the volume of the Wall of China, so it is not one of the big buildings of the world, but it holds the impression of tremendousness. [own translation]

The second statement, contained in a document titled *Ontwerp en simboliek van die Voortrekker Monument* reads:

Die Voortrekker Monument is nie 'n groot gebou nie, dit is omtrent ewe groot as die mausoleum van Halikarnassus, 'n monument wat in Klein-Asië vir koning Mausulus opgerig is en die voorganger geword het van hierdie soort monument. Dit is kleiner as die Dom des Invalides in Parys, die graf van Napoleon; veel kleiner as die Taj Mahal in Indië, en slegs een-elfde so groot soos die Völkerschlacht Denkmal in Leipzig. Dit beslaan slegs een sewe-en-twintigste van die volume van een piramide en minder as een-duidendste van die volume van die Muur van China.

The Voortrekker Monument is not a large building, it is nearly the same size as the mausoleum of Halicarnassus, a monument that was erected in Asia Minor for king Mausolus and which became the predecessor for this kind of monument. It is smaller than the Dom des Invalides (sic) in Paris, the grave of Napoleon; much smaller than the Taj Mahal in India, and only one-eleventh as big as the Völkerschlacht Denkmal in Leipzig. It occupies only one-twenty-seventh of the volume of one pyramid and less than one-thousandth of the volume of the Wall of China.

The third version of this comparison is contained in a document titled *Saamstelling en simboliek van die Monument as geheel* and reads as follows:

Die Voortrekker Monument is nie 'n groot gebou nie, dit is omtrent ewe groot as die Mausoleum van Halikanassus in Klein Asië, wat die voorganger is van al hierdie soort monumente. Dit is kleiner as Dom-des-Invalides in Parys, waar die graf van Napoleon is. Dit is baie kleiner as die Taj Mahal in Indië. 1/11 van die Volkerslacht (sic) Denkmal in Leipzig. Die hele monument kan, so groot as wat hy is, binne in die Pantheon van Rome staan sonder dat dit eens die mure sou raak. Die monument kan deur die St Peters Kerk in Rome gedra word sonder om skade te doen. Dit is 1/27 van 'n piramide in Egipte en minder as 1/1000 van die muur om Sjina. Dit is dus nie een van die groot geboue in die wêreld nie.

The Voortrekker Monument is not a big building; it is nearly the same size as the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus in Asia Minor, which is the predecessor for all these types of monuments. It is smaller than the Dom-des-Invalides in Paris, where the grave of Napoleon is. It is smaller than the Taj Mahal in India. 1/11 of the Volkerslacht (sic) Denkmal in Leipzig. The whole monument can, as big as it is, stand within the Pantheon of Rome without touching the walls. The monument can be carried through the St Peters Church in Rome without doing any damage. It is 1/27 of a pyramid in Egypt and less than 1/100 of the Great Wall of China. It is therefore not one of the big buildings in the world.
[Own translation]

All three statements mention the following buildings in the following order: the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus, the Dom des Invalides, the Taj Mahal, the Pyramid, and the Wall of China. All three statements begin by mentioning the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus, the scale comparison of this monument remaining the same, with the Voortrekker Monument being, supposedly, nearly the same size. The last two statements acknowledge the Mausoleum as the predecessor for this type of monument, possibly meaning a building that commemorates an important person or event. In each instance, this reference is followed by one to the Dom des Invalides, which is larger than the Voortrekker Monument. The Taj Mahal follows, described incorrectly as being much larger than it actually is in comparison with the Voortrekker Monument. This seems to have been an inadvertent error. All three statements further mention a pyramid (the particular pyramid is never specified, although the Voortrekker Monument is always described as having one-twenty-seventh of the volume of such pyramid) and the Wall of China (twice less than 1/1000, once less than 1/100). The Völkerschlacht Denkmal (in Leipzig) is mentioned twice, with the Voortrekker Monument supposedly being one-eleventh of its size. The Pantheon and St Peter's Cathedral are each mentioned once.

How accurate are these scale comparisons? Figure 2 illustrates the actual scale relationship of these monuments. The sizes used in this representation are all derived from Bannister Fletcher's *A History of Architecture*, a book to which Moerdyk referred his readers in *Die Geskiedenis van Boukuns*, published in 1935. It is not unreasonable to assume that this might have been the source of his estimates of sizes. The only monuments in this group not represented in Fletcher are the Völkerschlacht Denkmal and the Voortrekker Monument. The sizes of these two monuments were obtained from scale drawings. The illustration of these comparisons in Figure 1 shows that Moerdyk's scale references were generally accurate. The Monument indeed almost fits within the Pantheon and it could nearly be carried through the St Peter's Cathedral, had the carrying of buildings been possible. It is in fact approximately the same size as the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus, or at least the version of it that is shown in Fletcher, as the actual monument has disappeared long ago. It is in fact smaller than the Dom des Invalides. No verification has been attempted as far as the volumes are concerned. In what instances was Moerdyk thus off the mark in his comparison?

Well, the monument is clearly not that much smaller than the Taj Mahal. There is no obvious reason why Moerdyk would have made such a pronounced mistake with the scale of this building, as he had himself given its size in *Die Geskiedenis van Boukuns* as occupying 185 square feet, with the dome being 80 feet high (24.32m). In comparison, the dome of the Voortrekker Monument is 100 feet high (30.4m). It could be argued that in Islamic architecture the volume of the building is measured by the volume defined by the minarets – but whether Moerdyk would have been aware of this concept, is unknown and unlikely.

But by far the biggest discrepancy between Moerdyk's comparison and the actual scale relates to the Völkerschlacht Denkmal in Leipzig. Moerdyk referred to the monument as being one-eleventh of the Leipzig monument when in fact it is closer to one-half of it. The present author has previously put forward a theory that the spatial order and scale of the Voortrekker Monument was derived directly from the Völkerschlacht Denkmal, based on the close correspondence between their spatial arrangements and sections of these two monuments⁵. It was also speculated that someone other than Moerdyk – possibly the Form Sub Committee itself – had proposed this building as a reference for the design of the Voortrekker Monument. Had someone communicated to Moerdyk that the Voortrekker Monument was one-half of the Völkerschlacht Denkmal, in Afrikaans *een-helfte*, this could have been misinterpreted by Moerdyk as *een-elfde*, one-eleventh, with the pronunciations being very similar. This is the most plausible possible reason for this glaring mistake. The fact remains that, on this point, Moerdyk was completely off the mark.

Leaving that aside, one is left to ask what the meaning and intention of this comparison could have been? Moerdyk clearly wanted to convey to the public that the Voortrekker Monument would become an important monument, comparable with other well-known monuments across the world. But he needed to find a neutral way to do this, as it had become clear that the Voortrekker Monument needed to be regarded as distinct to the Afrikaner. Whereas the first two designs he had put forward were clear in their references ('in the Egyptian style', 'based on the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus'), his verbal articulation of the design then shifted towards a less committed association: 'smaller than', 'larger than', and 'as big as'. This made it more difficult for commentators and critics to say that the design was 'derived' from any of these monuments, yet it remained associated with them. The Voortrekker Monument simply took its place 'among' them. In this way, the monument was related to the world of architecture, albeit in a very non-committal and ambiguous manner. The ultimate aim seems to have been a subtle location of

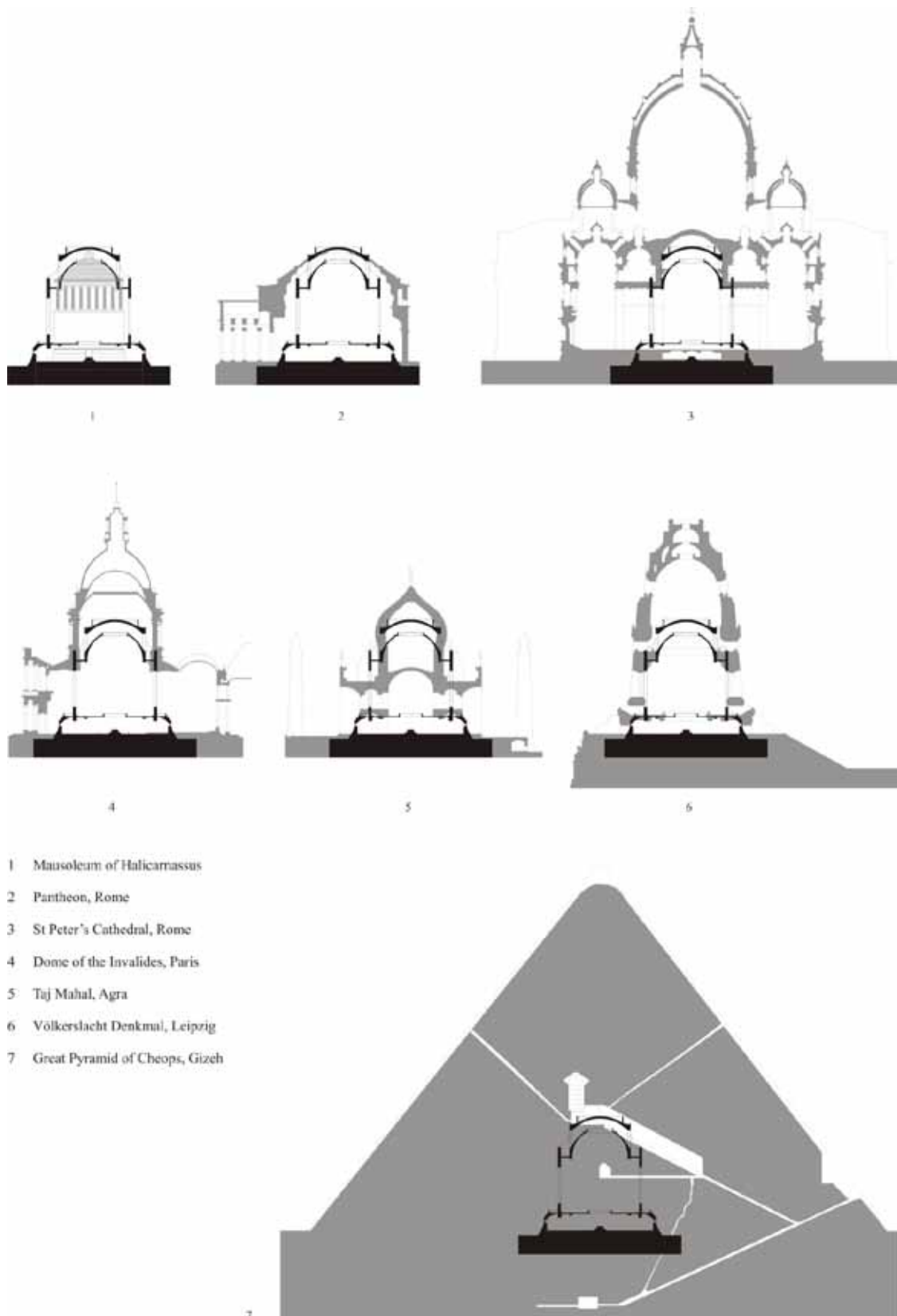


Figure 2
Scale comparison of the Voortrekker Monument and other world monuments (source: the author).

the monument among its predecessors without acknowledging any direct influence. I would propose that this is indicative of an emerging underlying architectural identity crisis that can be related to a deeper crisis of identity within the Afrikaner: having discarded cultural bonds and references regarded as ‘foreign’, they lacked an established architectural representation.

The one reference and association clearly deemed important by the CVC, as they specifically referred to it in the official statement that was published after the second design was made public, was the allusion to the Great Zimbabwe. This reference will now be analysed, and it will be shown that it is also ambiguous...

Great Zimbabwe

In a hand-written document titled *Die Wording van die Voortrekker Monument*, Moerdyk emphasised that, as far as the world monuments were concerned, although the Voortrekker Monument could not compare in size to those buildings, it still created an impression of ‘tremendousness’. But, he went on; there were other sources to draw on for this quality: Africa, for instance, possesses a character of tremendousness, which ‘dwarfs the work of man’s hand’. If, he argued, one took the largest building in Europe and put it on Africa’s plains, it would immediately be dwarfed. This was not the result of actual measurements, or of scale and perception. The Egyptians, according to Moerdyk, were the only nation that understood how to reflect Africa’s tremendousness. In southern Africa, only one building conveyed the same idea, namely, Great Zimbabwe. This argument establishes the following position: that the Voortrekker Monument would be an impressive building, albeit small in comparison to other monuments; that, like the Egyptians, the Afrikaner as a nation understood what was needed to produce an impressive monument; and that this monument would be only the second in southern Africa to achieve this level of impressiveness. Any earlier built heritage in southern Africa, both imported and indigenous, is thereby repudiated and transcended. By implication, the Afrikaner would produce the first worthwhile monument since the Egyptians built their pyramids and the Zimbabwean civilisation constructed their monument.

It is generally assumed that the reference to Great Zimbabwe as offering some inspiration for the design of the Voortrekker Monument stems from Moerdyk’s appreciation of this building. In other words, it is assumed that he had such a high regard for this monument, which had sprung from the soil and civilisation of southern Africa that it was singled out as a reference for the monument of the Afrikaner nation. But his position on Great Zimbabwe is much more nuanced, ambiguous, and actually often highly derogatory. How did he know this place? What did he think of it?

We know that Moerdyk had visited and documented Great Zimbabwe in the late 1920’s⁶. In *Man en Monument* (1999), Moerdyk’s family recalls his fascination with these buildings: he often reflected on the ingenuity of its builders and the building techniques they had employed. For example, he specifically referred to the method of decreasing the size of building stones, as the height of the wall increased. He believed that this created the illusion of grandeur, and thus employed precisely this technique in important works of his own, such as the Voortrekker Monument and the Merensky Library. In this biography, he is portrayed as an architect with a deep-seated admiration and fascination for this particular monument and its builders

In *Die Geskiedenis van Boukuns* (1935), Moerdyk made it clear that he did not support the fantastical theories that Great Zimbabwe had been built by a foreign civilisation of sun-, moon-, and star-worshippers. Rather, he advised, “in the study of art, as in science, one should follow

the facts”⁷. The facts, as far as he was concerned, could only be found in the quality of its art and form. Investigations of these two aspects clearly indicate, in his opinion, that it was built by an uncivilised nation and that it was not older than 500 years. It did not evidence, in his mind, the slightest hint of an artistic consciousness or design ability, and it was constructed from rocks crudely stacked. One of the earliest signs of civilisation, he explained, was geometric knowledge [*meetkundige kennis*], and this was completely lacking at Great Zimbabwe. He stated that there was not a single definite geometric form to be found, not a single straight line, circle or ellipse – and he thus concluded that these structures were the product of an uncivilised nation. The admiration and fascination that he supposedly displayed towards this work is noticeably absent in this description and its associated sentiment. Could this ambiguity have been rooted in a deep-seated racial conundrum that presented itself to Moerdyk? Namely, that he was, as a worldly architect and a man of the world, truly fascinated by Great Zimbabwe but that this fascination became tempered when expressed through the racial filter of Afrikaner society – to acknowledge and deny the importance of this built work at the same time:

Zimbabwe is eintlik nie baie groot nie en tog het baie besoekers dit al reeds beskryf as die grootste bou-werk wat ooit in Afrika verrys het, maar wat vergaan het in die welstand van naturelle bloed. Ek ken die afmetings van Zimbabwe, ek sien kans om dit met ‘n honderd kaffirs in minder as ‘n jaar te bou, maar tog het dit hierdie gevoel van geweldigheid.

Zimbabwe is not really very big and yet many visitors have already described it as the biggest built work that has ever arisen in Africa, but which decayed in the welfare of Native blood. I know the dimensions of Zimbabwe, I [Moerdyk] see my way to, with a hundred kaffirs [Africans], build it in less than a year, and yet it has this feeling of tremendousness.⁸ [Own translation]

This statement in itself is incredibly ambiguous, if not derogatory: Moerdyk maintains that it is not impressive in scale, and that, even if some do regard it as impressive in size, its value is diminished by its association with ‘Natives’. He also declares that it can be re-made relatively easily. Despite his almost dismissive view of the monument, Moerdyk does admit that there is something magical about it. It appears, quite literally, as if he is undecided as to the historical or architectural importance of Great Zimbabwe.

The press presented the Voortrekker Monument for public consideration by using headlines such as: *Memorial in style of Zimbabwe*⁹. It repeated the characteristics of the envisaged monument, portraying it as a massive stone structure showing traces of the Zimbabwe style with chevron motifs, but no traces of any known European architecture, except that its source would be geometrical.¹⁰ There was, however, constant public criticism and attacks on the references and allusions contained in these descriptions of the monument. It was repeatedly asked how the monument could reflect the Afrikaner, or Afrikaner society, culture or history. Generally, these questions were responding to associations that had been described in words, rather than to their actual representation in the proposed design. The reference to Great Zimbabwe was deemed especially offensive, as many considered it as black by association, if not by origin. Conversely, references to historical monuments were taken to imply that the Afrikaner did not have its own unique architectural identity. Towards the end of 1936, a proviso was added to the established range of references – these monuments, it was stated, might have served as examples of sanctuaries and altars:

Maar geeneen van die geboue gee ook maar enigsins die Voortrekker of ons land of onself weer nie. Die Voortrekkers het die beskawing gebring. Beskawing in die boukuns beteken orde en meetkunde. Die Voortrekker self het geen monumentale boukuns nagelaat nie, dus ons kan nie hul voorbeeld volg nie. Die barbaar het wel boukuns gehad, maar sonder meetkunde. Die grootste ou bouwerk in Suid-

Afrika, naamlik by Zimbabwe, was vreemd aan alle meetkunde. Daar is geen regte lyn, geen sirkel, geen enkele meetkundige vorm nie.

But none of these buildings in any way reflects the Voortrekker or our country or ourselves. The Voortrekker brought civilisation. *Civilisation in architecture means order and geometry.* The Voortrekker did not leave behind any monumental architecture, thus we cannot follow their example. *The savage had an architecture, but without geometry.* The largest old building in South Africa, namely at Zimbabwe, was without any geometry. There is no straight line, no circle, not a single geometrical form.¹¹ [Own translation, own emphasis]

This point needs to be emphasised: according to Moerdyk, the monuments referred to were merely monuments, they did not reflect the Voortrekkers, and they had nothing to do with the monument for the Voortrekkers. The design is similarly disassociated from the Great Zimbabwe, which are considered to be of savage origin. Instead, it was argued, the monument would reflect the civilisation established by the Voortrekkers, which *can* be represented architecturally in order and geometry. Significantly, the conventional representation of the design – the drawings on paper and the models of it – did not change; it was not altered substantially, only its details were developed. However, the representation of space shifted to include categories and ideologies that were more palatable to public consumption. This powerfully emphasises the importance of ideology in relation to representations of space.

Is dit nou onvanpas dat beskawing orde bring in chaos? Vandaar die sterk ontwikkelde geometriese ontwerp van binnelandse boumateriaal gebruik op Afrikaanse wyse. Daar het 'n kopie voor die hand gelê. Maar in die ontwerp is geen kopie, daar is ook geen enkele Europese styl-motief toegepas nie, maar alleen 'n logiese geometriese toepassing van Afrikaanse boumateriaal. Die ontwerp is een van vierkante, kube, sirkels en vlakke – alles in harmonie met ons tafelvormige landskap.

Is it inappropriate that civilisation brings order in chaos? Hence the strongly developed geometric design of local building material used in an Afrikaans way. There was a copy at hand. But in the design there is no copy, there is also no single European style motif applied, but only a logical geometric application of Afrikaans building material. The design is one of squares, cubes, circles and planes – all in harmony with our tabular landscape.¹² [Own translation]

As the design was refined and the details were finalised, Moerdyk became adamant that it appropriately represented the Afrikaner. He substantiated this belief by referring to the strongly developed geometric design that was derived from local building material, and that was, more significantly, ‘used in an Afrikaans way’. Local building material would have referred to the granite used to build the monument, a material of the earth, extracted from the hard-won land. What ‘a logical geometric application of Afrikaans building material’ actually meant was not explained, but it might have been adequate to convince Afrikaners that this was indeed a true Afrikaner monument.

Conclusion

The design of the Voortrekker Monument presented a challenge in that it needed to be both impressive and unique. As the project became more important in the public consciousness, the requirement for it to represent the Afrikaner ‘architecturally’ became more pronounced. The architect of the Voortrekker Monument was at pains to convey the importance of the building as a monument by repeatedly comparing it with other world monuments. He understood, though, that this comparison could not be based on stylistic similarities, as this might challenge the

authenticity and uniqueness of the volk's monument. Moerdyk thus solved this problem by basing his comparison on scale, rather than aesthetics. This located the Voortrekker Monument not only as one of the famous monuments of the world but also as unique to Afrikaners. At the same time, the design needed to be disassociated from its most direct reference and geographically closest relation, the Great Zimbabwe. This was achieved by shifting the focus from the shared decorative characteristics between these projects towards a normative reading of form: the geometry and order of the Voortrekker Monument expressed civilisation, whereas Great Zimbabwe clearly associated with the 'uncivilised'. It is thus my conclusion that the fundamental ambiguity contained in the various and evolving descriptions of the Voortrekker Monument's design signals that the growing interest in the world of architecture on the part of its architect, Gerhard Moerdyk, was increasingly moderated by a narrowing, exclusionary and inward-focused world of Afrikaner ascendance.

Notes

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| <p>1 Foucault, <i>Discipline and Punish</i>, 192.</p> <p>2 <i>Die Volksblad</i>, "Sal Volksmonument in 1938 klaar wees?", 17 October 1935.</p> <p>3 Sentrale Volksmonumentkomitee, Notule 7 April 1936, Voortrekker Monument Archives.</p> <p>4 <i>Die Vaderland</i>, "Massiewe bouwerk van graniet binne ringmuur met waens", 14 April 1936.</p> <p>5 Steenkamp, 2009. <i>A shared spatial symbolism</i>.</p> <p>6 Vermeulen, <i>Man en Monument</i>, 50-54. Moerdyk began his search, with the artist Gustav Preller, for Monomotapa in 1924. It is stated that a few years afterwards he went to visit Zimbabwe but it does not say which year exactly.</p> <p>7 Moerdyk, <i>Die Geskiedenis van Boukuns</i>, 23.</p> | <p>8 Moerdyk Papers, "Die wording van die Voortrekker Monument", Africana Collection, Merensky Library, University of Pretoria.</p> <p>9 <i>The Star</i>, "Memorial in style of Zimbabwe", 11 July 1936.</p> <p>10 <i>The Star</i>, "Form of Voortrekker Memorial", 9 September 1936. <i>Die Volksblad</i>, "Hoe Voortrekkermonument daaruit sal sien", 10 September 1936. <i>Die Volkstem</i>, "'n Heiligdom binne 'n laer: grondidee van Voortrekkermonument", 11 September 1936.</p> <p>11 <i>Die Vaderland</i>, "Monument moet verlede sowel as volkskarakter weerspieel: Mnr. Moerdyk verduidelik idee van sy ontwerp", 10 Desember 1936.</p> <p>12 Ibid.</p> |
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| <p>Foucault, M. 1977. <i>Discipline and Punish</i>. Translated by Alan Sheridan. London: Penguin Books.</p> <p>Moerdyk, G. 1935. <i>Die Geskiedenis van Boukuns</i>. Pretoria: JL van Schaik.</p> | <p>Steenkamp, A. 2009. A shared spatial symbolism: the Voortrekker Monument, the Völkersclachtdenkmal and Freemasonry in <i>South African Journal of Art History</i>, volume 24, number 1, pp.150-160.</p> <p>Vermeulen, I. 1999. <i>Man en Monument</i>. Pretoria: JL van Schaik.</p> |
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Colonial conceptions and space in the evolution of a city: evidence from the city of Bloemfontein, 1846-1946

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Mainstream understanding of how the urban form of South African cities developed over the past century and a half is often traced back to the colonial town plan. Writers argue that the gridiron and axial arrangement were the most important ordering devices. For example, in Bloemfontein—one of the smaller colonial capitals in South Africa—it has been suggested that the axial arrangement became an important device to anchor “the generalist structure of the gridiron within the landscape to create a specific sense of place”. Over the years, the intentional positioning of institutions contributed to a coherent legibility of the city structure in support of British, Dutch, and later apartheid government socio-political goals. During these eras, it was the colonial conceptions of space that influenced the morphological evolution of the city. This paper suggests that an alternative process guided the expansion of Bloemfontein. Drawing on the theory of natural movement, I suggest that Bloemfontein grew mainly as a result of its spatial configurational properties. Using longitudinal spatial mapping of the city from 1846 - 1946, empirical data from a Space Syntax analysis will be used to construct an argument for the primacy of space as a robust generator of development. The paper offers an alternative interpretation of the interaction between urban morphology and the process of place-making in a South African city.

Keywords: urban form; colonial cities in South Africa; conceptions of space; place-making; Space Syntax; empirical spatial data

Koloniale begrippe van ruimte in die evolusie van ‘n stad: bewyslewing vanuit die stad van Bloemfontein, 1846-1946

Die ontwikkeling van die Suid-Afrikaanse stad oor die afgelope eeu en ‘n half word verstaan vanuit die oogpunt van die generiese koloniale stadsplan. Skrywers het reeds die belangrikheid van die roosterpatroon en die aksiale planuitleg oortuigend beklemtoon. Bloemfontein, een van die kleiner koloniale hoofstede in Suid-Afrika, word beskryf in terme van hoe die assestelsel die stad anker, deur middle van “. . . the generalist structure of the gridiron within the landscape . . .” en hoe dit verder ‘n sin van plek tot gevolg het. Oor die jare het die strategiese plasing van institutionele geboue ‘n bydrae gelewer tot die samehang en leesbaarheid van die stadstruktuur, wat verder ook die Britse-, Nederlandse-, en later apartheidsosiaal-politieke doelwitte ondersteun het. Gedurende hierdie eras is die morfologiese evolusie van die stad sterk beïnvloed deur die koloniale begrip van ruimte. Hierdie artikel beskryf ‘n alternatiewe proses wat aanleiding gegee het tot die uitbreiding van die stad, Bloemfontein. Deur gebruik te maak van die teorie van natuurlike beweging, stel ek voor dat die stedelike groei hoofsaaklik plaasvind het as gevolg van die eienskappe van ruimtelike ordening. Die argument is geformuleer in terme van ruimte as ‘n primêre generator vir stedelike ontwikkeling deur gebruik te maak van historiese stadskaarte vanaf 1846 – 1946 wat geanaliseer is deur middel van “Space Syntax” tegnieke. Die argument in die artikel bied ‘n alternatiewe blik op hoe ons die interaksie tussen stedelike morfologie en die maak van plek in terme van die Suid-Afrikaanse stad verstaan.

Sleutelwoorde: stedelike vorm; koloniale stede in Suid-Afrika; begrip van ruimte; maak van plek; Space Syntax; empiriese data

A large body of evidence traces the origins and growth of the colonial city in South Africa to various applications of colonial town planning principles. These principles are believed to shape the spatial reality of South African cities even today. For the Dutch and British colonial powers during the 19th century, the appropriation of space in the interior of Southern Africa was part of a much larger colonial enterprise that reached the far edges of the known world at the time (Betts and Ross 1985).

Theorists have written about the role of colonial town planning in allowing the colonists to imprint intentional power relations in space (Betts and Ross 1985; Floyd 1960; King 1976; Lynch 1981; Mabin 1992; Smith 1992). Others have also considered the spatialisation of power in the apartheid city beginning in the 1950s (Davis 1981; Robinson 1992). Kotzé (1994) suggests that the gridiron plan, with its axial arrangement of streets and the positioning of prominent buildings at the termination of these axes, resulted in a very particular socio-political civility.

Another significant contribution in this area of research was made by Kotzé & Du Preez (2011), who also investigated the development of the city of Bloemfontein¹. Their research suggests that the colonial town plan served as an important spatial method for anchoring the city gridiron in the surrounding Free State natural landscape. Their analysis focuses especially on the formative years of the settlement. However, contrary to Chapman's (1984) position, it becomes much more difficult to describe settlement growth by means of colonial principles as the city expands beyond the colonial town core.

This paper proposes an alternative understanding of how the colonial city developed. It is not suggested that the idea of city expansion based on colonial design principles should be called into question, but rather that colonial city development theory provides an incomplete account of this process. This paper utilizes a theory that supplements the common understanding of space-making. This alternative theory is able to explain some of the underlying spatial decision-making that led to the ideal city form in the colonial South African hinterland. It is proposed that our understanding of this process is incomplete without taking into account the generative force of the fundamental properties of physical space.

Investigating the development of the colonial plan: the case of Bloemfontein

It is therefore necessary to consider supplementary processes that shape colonial cities. One theory that is useful for understanding changes in urban form is the theory of configurational space (Hillier 1999; Hillier et al. 1993; Hillier 1996a, b; Hillier and Hanson 1984), which proposes that space is a fundamental generator of change in urban form. Using this theory, it is possible to examine how the physical properties of space played a significant role in facilitating the expansion of the colonial city. This spatial perspective thus makes it possible to reassemble a different narrative about how the city plan of Bloemfontein developed.

First, however, it is important to acknowledge the importance of the topography and natural landscape features (hills, streams) which became important reference points for the positioning of the first streets in colonial settlements (Chapman 1984; Kotze 1994; Kotze and Du Preez 2011). During the formative years of the settlements, spaces were experienced, recognised, and conceived in the context of the natural landscape. Connections to these landscape features were critical for the survival of these early settlers: access to and protection of scarce water sources and hills for prospect and defence.

It was only later that the political fantasy of creating a civil (colonial) society in contrast with the harsh reality of the surrounding wilderness resulted in a turn towards a system of architectural legibility. This was achieved by building new landmark buildings in alignment with the axis that had gained prominence in Bloemfontein. Over time, the dominant groups in town were able to realise more powerful socio-political aspirations by reinforcing already prominent spaces within the city with architectural landmarks. In this way, architecture enhanced the [spatial] legibility of the city.

Theorising space in the construction of meaningful place

To test these ideas, I employ the *theory of natural movement* developed originally by Bill Hillier at University College London (Hillier 1996a, b; Hillier and Hanson 1984). This theory suggests that the city grows, first and foremost, as a result of the spatial configuration of the city grid. A significant feature of Hillier's theory of space is that aspects of cultural and social life follow the imbedded logic of spatial relationships. What his theories may suggest in terms of the colonial city is that the dominant socio-political claim on public space will tend to occur in the more prominent spaces within the city. The idea that integrated spaces, or most highly traversed spaces in a system of spaces, are more likely to become the physical embodiments of colonial power in Bloemfontein. This idea is explored in this paper and supported by evidence from an analysis of Bloemfontein. The exploration is intended to be suggestive, although the single case study research design limits generalisability and the propositions remain hypothetical.

In syntactical terms, spaces are more important when they are more integrated into the overall (global) spatial pattern of the city. Highly integrated spaces are more likely to attract more human movement and therefore achieve prominence due to their centrality within a system of spaces. Multiple research studies have provided strong evidence supporting this connection between spatial configuration and movement (Hillier 1999; Hillier et al. 1993; Hillier 1996a). A highly integrated space can be easily reached from anywhere in the city by traversing the fewest number of other spaces en route. Using the concept of integration means that the significance of one space (a street) is viewed in relation to all other streets in a city, rather than as a space in isolation (Bafna 2003; Hillier 1996a).

The quality, prominence, and meaning of civic places are due to street design and architecture that reinforce the imbedded potential of space. Any single space is always in reference to the overall spatial pattern of the city; therefore, as the overall layout of the city changes, so does the potential for some places to become less prominent and other places to become more prominent. This process is critical in determining how colonial ideals become realised, strengthened, or erased over time.

Method of investigation

For this investigation, I employed space syntax analysis techniques. The syntactical map is a version of the city street pattern that shows city streets as straight lines, interconnected at every change in direction. The maps were drawn in AutoCAD and then imported into an open-source software program called Space Syntax 2D, produced and developed at the University of Michigan. This program calculates the *integration* of every city street in relation to all other streets. The streets in Bloemfontein were categorized according to their level of integration with the city grid: from highly integrated (thicker black lines) to streets with low integration (thinner gray lines). Finally, GIS (Geographic Information Systems) was used to calculate how the location and the completion dates of landmarks correspond to changes in the city plan over time.

The integration pattern of every city is different due to differences in the density of the street network patterns. Typical for South African cities, the streets in Bloemfontein have low integration values, as most street spaces are fairly segregated from the other street spaces in the city. The exceptions are the Bloemfontein Central Business District (CBD) and corridors leading into/out of the city from the CBD. The streets in the CBD are highly integrated and have become more integrated over time, though they account for only 12.5% (or 1/7th) of all the city streets (see Figure 1 and Figure 2).

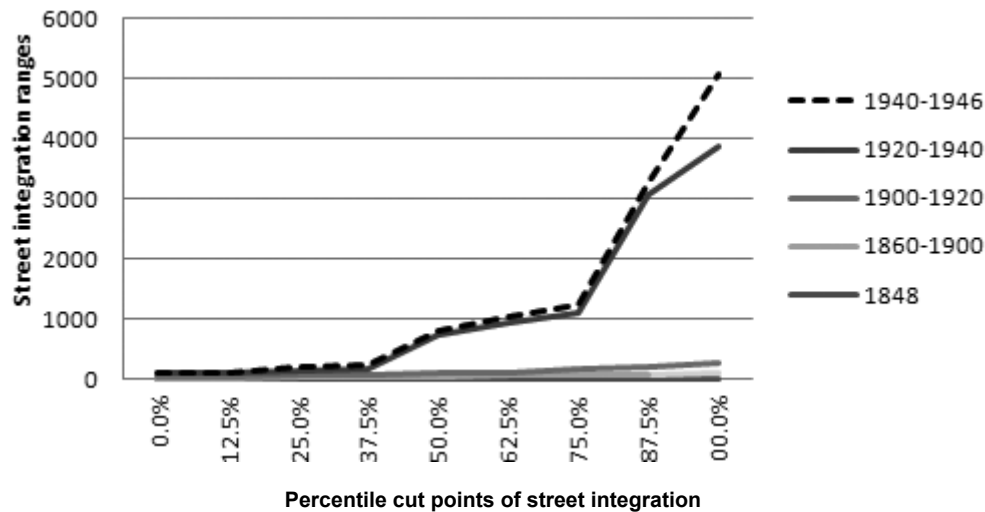


Figure 1
Street integration over time at percentile cut points

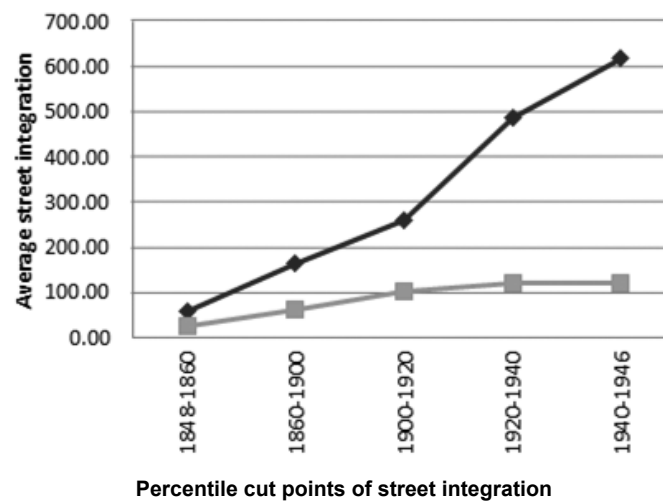


Figure 2
Comparison of the average street integration of streets in the top percentile cut points (12.5% of streets) with all the other streets in the city.

To focus the investigation, the study period from 1846 – 1946 was chosen in order to correspond with the detailed descriptions of the historical development of the city in Karel Schoeman’s 1984 book “Bloemfontein: Die Ontstaan van ‘n Stad 1846-1946”. To date, Schoeman’s book is the most comprehensive historical survey of the development of the city of Bloemfontein. The selection of date-specific maps covering different stages in the development of the city plan was dependent on the availability of historical documentation of the city plans. The historical maps that were chosen correspond to significant growth periods of the city grid. For the purpose of this study, viewing the Bloemfontein city plan in 20 year increments seemed to capture significant changes in the gridiron pattern and the building stock.

The production of colonial city space, 1846-1946

1846 – 1860

Captain H.D. Warden was ordered by the British Government in 1842 to look for a suitable site for a settlement in a central location from which the English could govern the Transgariep area (today called the Free State). He identified a site which was “. . . suitable in every respect,

and in a military point of view superior. . .” (Schoeman 1980:3) due to the hills that provided opportunities for surveillance of the area. Called “Bloem Fontein”, the site was located amongst the best farms in the area, had a sustained water source, and was situated within a mile from the high road to Winburg (Schoeman 1980).

Warden was eager to move his regiment to the area. By March 1846, Warden, his family, and his troops had already established themselves in the area. At first, Warden and his family temporarily moved into the house of farmer Brits. The troops and horses were positioned downstream from the fountain (“Fontein”), possibly to prevent contamination of the water source. Brits himself helped to extend a canal eastward to provide the camp with fresh water (Schoeman 1980).

The first street (later called St George’s Street) [4] extended eastward along the canal that connected Warden’s house [1] with the military camp. The street was nestled between the canal (“spruit”) to the north and a slight hill (“dolorietrant”) to the south (Schoeman 1980:3). The first few buildings in Bloemfontein were constructed along this dirt road. A fort named after Charles Drury [2] was erected on the hill above the fountain to protect this scarce resource. In 1849, the Fort was moved to its current location [3] guarding the southern entrance into the town (see Figure 3) (Schoeman 1980).

Within two years of Warden and his troops occupying the area, the town was already laid out by the surveyor Andrew Bain (see town plan in Figure 3). The town plan reinforced the connection between Warden’s house and the camp with another street parallel to St. George’s Street on the north of the spruit, connected with a few perpendicular streets crossing the canal. In addition to Fort Drury, a few other buildings were erected such as the First Parliament Building (“Raadsaal”) [5], the first Catholic Cathedral (1849) [6], the first Anglican Cathedral (1850) [7], a lodge, hotel, printing press, and general stores (Schoeman 1980).

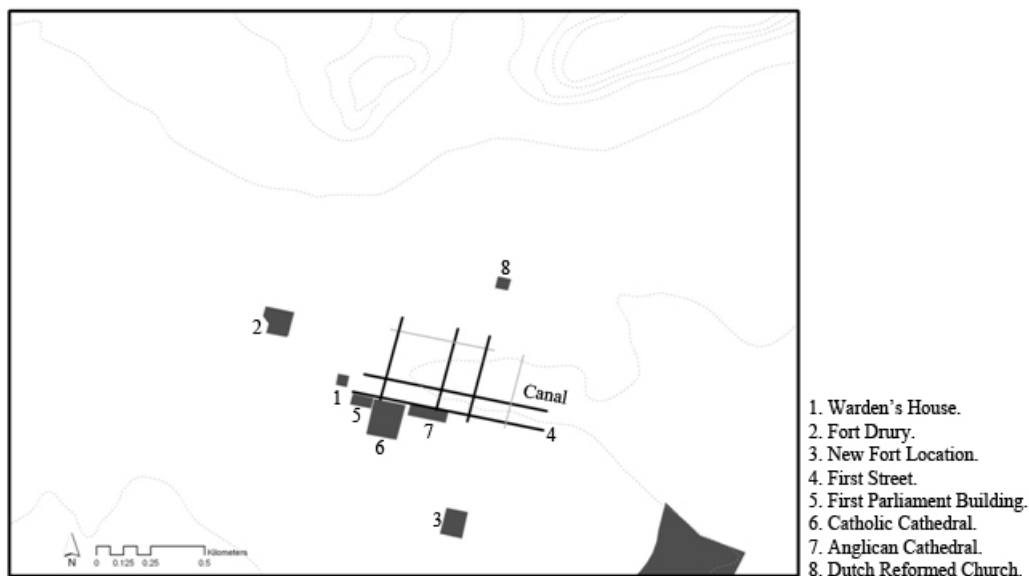


Figure 3
Bloemfontein, beginning years from 1846.

On the northern side of the canal, the British administration reserved a site on the flat plain for a Dutch Reformed Church to be built [8]. In 1852, a simple T-plan building was erected, with plenty of room around the church for the Boer families to leave their wagons when they came to town for the Sunday church service. By 1854, the Dutch Reformed church building, although

still incomplete at the time, became the most visible and imposing architectural structure in town. Dr. Fraser wrote in 1849 that: “*Bloemfontein is fast growing into a town, and will be a very pretty place*” (Schoeman 1980:12). Within two years of Bain’s plan being laid out, people referred to it as a “*rapidly increasing English town*” (Schoeman 1980:12).

But the optimism was short lived. As early as the beginning 1850s, Britain became unwilling to incur further costs by having armed forces permanently settled in the area. This, combined with Warden’s inability to secure the area from plunder and the Colonial-Basotho Wars, fueled the decision to withdraw their troops. The administrative responsibilities for the town were handed over to temporary Boer governance in 1854 and formalised in 1856 with J.J. Hoffmann as the first president of the new Republic. As a result, more and more Dutch residents were attracted to the area. Despite the speed at which the settlement developed in its first few years, during the 1850s it remained a rather small, modest place with houses distributed relatively far apart. Interestingly, the local newspaper called *The Friend* described the settlement as “... *a miserable collection of hovels*” (Schoeman 1980:21).

1860 – 1900

Bloemfontein remained a quiet town until the 1870 discovery of diamonds in the Free State. Despite great resistance from the Free State Republic, the British government acquired the diamond fields. Nonetheless, the town of Bloemfontein made a convincing case that the best transportation routes to the diamond fields were through Bloemfontein. As a result, greater numbers of English-speaking residents started to move to the town (Schoeman 1980).

These factors triggered the second growth period. Schoeman (1980) describes the town during the mid-1870s as concentrated around the Market Square on the northern side of the canal, while St Andrews Street developed westward in the direction of the former Fort Drury. With more people moving into the area, the important places in town became more intensely used. New public and private buildings began to fill in the town plan and defined more usable public space.



Figure 4
Bloemfontein plan from 1848-1860 and additional institutional development, 1860-1890.

The creation of public spaces and the higher complexity of street use also resulted in new opportunities for public place-making. The syntactical map of the town plan at that time shows Maitland Street as one of the most highly integrated streets, which reinforced its spatial prominence. It is not surprising that in the mid-1870s, the Municipality decided that the site at the western end of Maitland Street was the most appropriate to locate new Government Buildings [9]. As Schoeman writes, they described the prominence of this site and envisioned erecting a building whose tower would be in the centre of Maitland Street, framed by the buildings that connected the site to the market square. This important public space was conceived as a moment of civility in the landscape, a public place in its own right (Schoeman 1980:67-68). In the 1890s, Maitland Street was formally bookended by the erection of the Bloemfontein train station [10] at the east end of the axis. The train station acted like a new front door, feeding the town with an influx of new residents. The arrival of foreigners to the town and increasing population growth between 1870 and 1904 changed the character of the place to become the centre of Free State civility (Krige 1991).

The early decision to locate the Dutch Reformed church on the outskirts of town would eventually redirect the socio-political atmosphere of the town during the 1880s (Schoeman 1980:67). In the 1870s, an imposing building that became known as the Twin Tower Church replaced the old structure. In a town with primarily single story buildings, the church was a prominent landmark, overshadowing the other churches located in the protected area between the hills to the south of the city and the canal. For many years, the Dutch Reformed church was the first visual landmark that travelers from the south encountered upon their arrival (see Figure 5) (Schoeman 1980).



Figure 5
View north down Church Street towards the Twin Tower Church, 1892 (Schoeman 1980).

The residents of the English quarter on St George's Street tried to maintain a foothold in the socio-political scene of the town by building churches and schools along this axis (see Figure 7). After the Anglo-Boer War, the Anglican congregation built a new tower [11] designed by Herbert Baker at the end of Wes Burger Street to take advantage of this privileged location (compare Figure 4 and Figure 7). Wes Burger Street had been highly integrated since Bains' initial town plan, which may have been the reason behind this architectural gesture to reorient the socio-political legibility of the town back towards the south. However, the syntactical analysis suggests that this attempt came too late. From the 1880s onward, Wes Burger Street became less syntactically integrated. By 1906 the town plan had already changed, and the Anglican Church tower remained on the margins of the development in the Bloemfontein Central Business District. (See Figure 7) (Schoeman 1980).



Figure 6
Tower of the Anglican Church designed by Herbert Baker, 1906 (Schoeman 1980).

In contrast, the part of town north of the canal at first consisted primarily of private establishments, but gained institutional presence after the 1880s. Churches expanded their architectural presence in the town, and schools, hospitals, stores, banks, a City House, recreational facilities (Rambler's Club), the Bloemfontein Club, and further expansion of the town street pattern followed suit (Schoeman 1980).

New opportunities now existed for the occupation of highly trafficked areas on the southern axis of Hoffmann Square (St Andrews Street) and the area around Charles and Henry Streets (see Figure 7). These opportunities were capitalized on through the institutionalization of the northern part of the city over the next few years. Public buildings and spaces such as Baumann Square [12] and Warden Square (1881) [13], the Fourth Raadsaal (1893) [14], the Executor's Office [15], City Hall (1883) [16], Rambler's Club (1898) [17], and the Oranje Hospital (1883) ([18] in Figure 8), followed the east-west and north-south spike in street integration. The City Library (1905) [13a] was also later completed on the eastern side of Warden Square. The integration map of 1880 to 1900 indicates that the highly integrated cross streets that formed a spatial central place of the town had shifted north-westwards from where the town centre had been a half century earlier. A larger Presidential residence was completed in 1885 on the site where Brits' (later Wardens') original house was located (see Figure 3[1]). This significant building would later play an important role in the establishment of President Brand Street as a major public space in the town (Schoeman 1980).



Figure 7
Bloemfontein, 1880-1900.

1900 – 1920

After the Anglo-Boer War, most of the building projects occurred on the northern side of the canal. The integration plan was concentrated by the addition of Peet and Selborne Avenues running along the edges of the newly channeled Bloem Spruit (see Figure 9). The city core was further intensified by the expansion of the city grid in all major directions, a decision made during the Anglo Boer War and implemented immediately thereafter. This expansion became effective in locating larger land uses such as Grey College [19] and the University of the Orange Free State [20] in 1906, and a military camp at Tempe [21] used by the British during the Anglo-Boer War (see Figure 9).

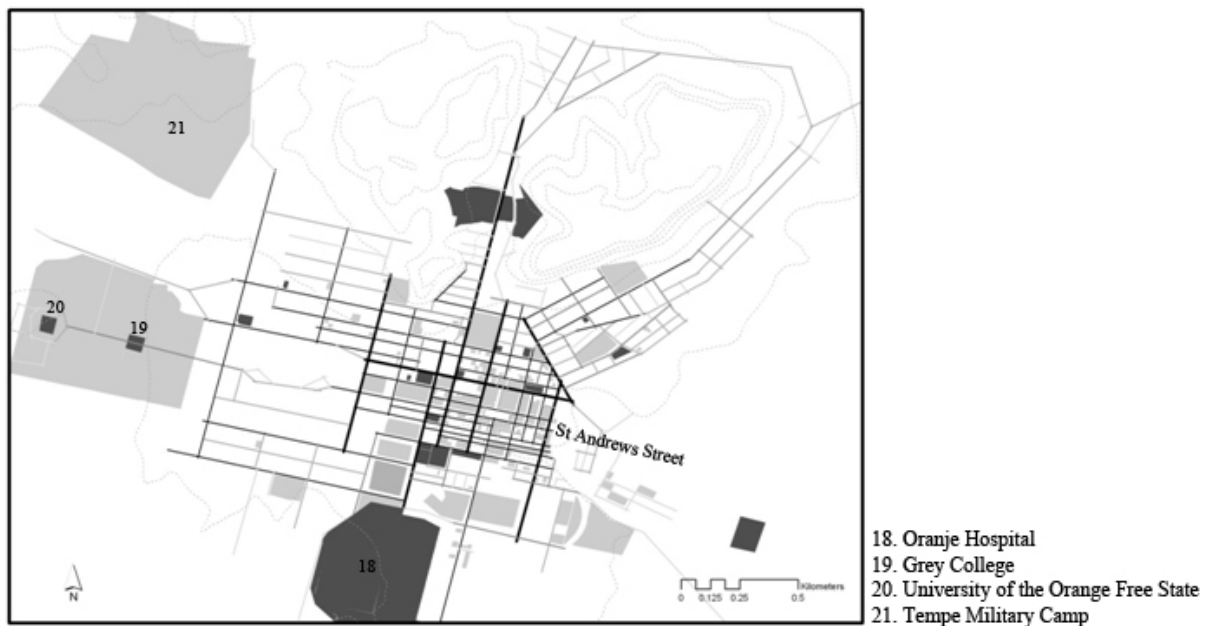


Figure 8
Bloemfontein, 1900-1920 (larger scale).

The town plan from before the Anglo-Boer War shows St Andrews Street as one of the few highly integrated streets in the town (Figure 7). It is therefore not surprising that this axis became particularly important in the westward expansion of the city towards Grey College and the University of the Free State. Interestingly, although St Andrews Street was critical in this expansion, its spatial prominence diminished slightly as a result.

With the Fourth Parliament building to the north and the President's residence to the south on President Brand Street, a new connection across the channel was established by building a bridge in 1906 (see Figure 9). This opened up another axis of opportunity for institutionalization that came to life with the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910. The city of Bloemfontein was formally selected as the judicial capital of South Africa, a decision that was aligned with the completion of the High Court in 1909 [22] and the Appeals Court in 1910 [23]. The National Museum (1911) [24] was appropriately conceived around these highly integrated streets but in close proximity to the city squares rather than being located on President Brand Street. This then strengthened the judicial prominence of President Brand Street (Schoeman 1980).



- 22. High Court.
- 23. Appeals Court.
- 24. The National Museum

Figure 9
Bloemfontein, 1900-1920.



- 25. Fire Station.
- 26. City Hall.
- 27. Trinity Methodist Church.

Figure 10
Bloemfontein, 1920-1946.

1920 – 1940

This area of town was further intensified after the 1920s with the addition of the Fire Station (1933) [25], City Hall (1936) [26], and Trinity Methodist Church (1929) [27] (Figure 10). Schoeman writes that visitors during the 1930s remarked that “[i]t is very doubtful indeed whether there is a single city in South Africa that has more fine and impressive buildings than President Brand Street” (Schoeman 1980:255) (see Figure 11).



Figure 11
Looking north on President Brand Street, 1930 (Schoeman 1980).

1920 – 1946

The outward expansion of Bloemfontein after the 1940s stemmed from the need for more residential areas and consequently intensified the spatial integration of the central city street grid. The diagram below show the ratios of public buildings located on the most integrated streets compared to public buildings on the rest of the streets in the city over different points in time.

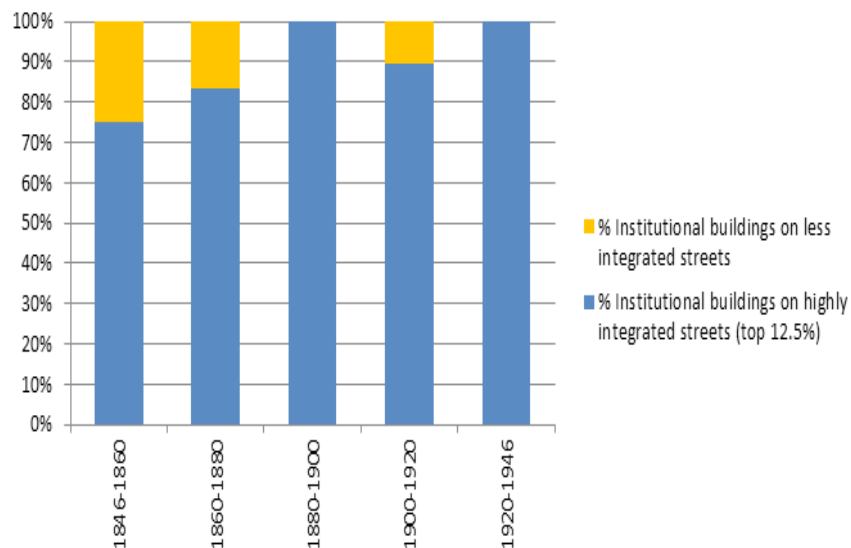


Figure 12
Institutional buildings, public use buildings, and integration of streets over time.

Three observations are important (see Figure 12). First, more than 70% of the public buildings (which include institutional buildings) have always been located on streets that are the most integrated in the city (top 12.5%). Second, over time more buildings were constructed on the

streets that were the most highly integrated, increasing the overall ratio of public buildings on integrated streets. Third, once the city reached optimal occupation with all the prominent sites being occupied, i.e. the time right after the Anglo-Boer War (1880-1900), the need for further city expansion was prompted. After street expansion, the integration of the overall (global) street system changed, and new sites became available on integrated streets (1900-1920), only to become occupied again over time (1920-1946) (Figure 12).

This also means that prominent buildings located on formerly highly integrated streets that experienced diminished prominence due to prior town expansions became reintegrated into the town plan as a consequence of this outward growth. This secured the lasting significance of government and secular institutions in the city core (refer to Figure 12 and compare the most integrated streets in Figure 10 with the most integrated streets in Figure 13).

An interesting observation from the 1940s map is that Zastron Street [28] and Nelson Mandela Avenue [29] (formerly called Voortrekker Street) have already become prominent streets in the overall city plan (see Figure 13). These corridors would later become the main thoroughfares of Bloemfontein and sparked the significant commercial expansion of the CBD in a westerly direction. The space, with its significance dating back to the 1940s, have since grown into the main commercial area that one sees today, which includes two indoor shopping malls, two outdoor strip malls, hotels and guest houses, the main entrance of the University of the Free State, large businesses, regional headquarters of several banks, law firms, fast food restaurants, petrol garages, and various other uses.



Figure 13
Bloemfontein, 1920-1946.

Conclusion

This project investigates how the objectively measured spatial characteristics of the colonial city plan facilitated the socio-political decision-making process of the city of Bloemfontein between 1846 and 1946. This period was characterised by successive colonial development phases (Floyd 1960) and is described in-depth in the book by Karel Schoeman. The findings suggest that spatial characteristics are enmeshed with the political decision-making process. The colonists sensitively responded to their surrounding spatial landscape and developed their settlements with architectural features that bolstered their power by constantly reinforcing the city's coherence and legibility.

It is generally thought that the colonial linkages and historical architectural pieces that make Bloemfontein legible are the result of carefully calculated principles of colonial town design. However, this paper argues for an alternative interpretation of this process. Drawing on the theory of natural movement, it suggests that the fundamental spatial logic of the most basic town layouts exposes citizens to future opportunities for place-making which they use to construct successive development phases of the town plan. It is suggested that the theory of natural movement provides a possible avenue for understanding why certain morphological changes occur over the lifespan of a colonial settlement. The implications of understanding why morphological changes occur and how acts of place-making become enmeshed with settlement-development are far reaching. It provides us with a way of knowing why effective places exist, and affords insight into how to maintain the vibrancy of places, and where to anticipate opportunity for future places.

Another aspect of this paper explores how the spatial characteristics of the town plan facilitated the construction and shifting of prominent urban places through British and Dutch socio-political decision-making processes. The study traces the evolution of the city in terms of how different sectors of the city have enjoyed less or more investment and reinvestment over time. It is through the habitual experience of the environment that residents start to realize the potential prominence of sites. However, it is those in power that are able to realize the potential of space through architectural means that support their goals. Ordinary citizens, on the other hand, become subjected to these physical expressions of ideology communicated through the experience place. Finally, this paper also provides urban designers and planners with quantitative-historical evidence of how spatial processes can affect socio-political decision-making and the development of towns and cities. The analysis suggests that spatial processes play a significant role in how systematic inequities develop over time, highlighting the importance of space when considering equitable future restructuring and city growth.

Notes

- 1 This research built on the analysis of Robertson by Chapman, R. (1984)

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Interconnectedness and process in Cleone Cull's visual art

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This paper is an interpretation of the recent work of the Eastern Cape, Port Elizabeth artist, Cleone Cull, through what one might call a 'close looking' at the works in question (that would parallel 'close reading' of a literary text). Such a 'looking' yields an interpretive grasp of her works which has the primary impression of a 'dynamic equilibrium' as its point of departure, which further lends itself to being interpreted through what it itself suggests in the guise of visually and chromatically instantiated markers. The preponderant, pervasive visual motif running through these works is that of *interconnectedness and process* – a percept (perceptual counterpart of 'concept') which further lends itself to a number of mutually resonating interpretations, framed in terms of familiar theoretical complexes, such as alchemy, Tantra, Jungian depth psychology and Zen Buddhism. But the most persuasive, and accommodating, philosophical-theoretical matrix suggested by the visual features of Cull's works is the philosophical ontology of Deleuze and Guattari, as articulated in *Anti-Oedipus*, which therefore comprises the major thread of this interpretive essay.

Key words: art, interconnectedness, process, alchemy, Cleone Cull, Deleuze, desiring-machines, Guattari, Jung, Tantra, Zen

Onderlinge verbintenis en proses in Cleone Cull se visuele kuns

Hierdie artikel is 'n interpretasie van die onlangse werk van die Oos-Kaapse kunstenaar, Cleone Cull, by wyse van wat moontlik as 'n 'fyn kyk' na die relevante werke bestempel kan word (wat parallel sou wees aan die 'fyn lees' van 'n literêre werk). 'n Sodanige 'fyn kyk' gee die primêre indruk van 'n 'dinamiese balans' as vertrekpunt, wat sigself egter verder daartoe leen om verstaan te word deur wat die kunswerke self aan die hand doen via chromatiese en visuele betekenaars. Die oorwegende visuele motief wat deur genoemde werke loop is *onderlinge verbintenis en prosesmatigheid* – 'n 'persep' (sintuiglik-waarneembare eweknie van 'konsep') wat sigself verder tot 'n aantal wedyrsyds bevestigende interpretasies in terme van bekende teoretiese komplekse leen, soos alchemie, Tantra, Jungiaanse diepte-psigologie en Zen-Boedhisme. Die mees oortuigende en omvattende filosofies-teoretiese verwysingsraamwerk wat egter deur die visuele eienskappe van Cull se kunswerke aan die hand gedoen word, is die filosofiese ontologie van Deleuze en Guattari, soos dit in *Anti-Oedipus* geformuleer is, en om daardie rede die belangrikste hermeneutiese motief van hierdie interpretatiewe essay uitmaak.

Sleutelwoorde: kuns, onderlinge verbintenis, proses, alchemie, Cleone Cull, Deleuze, begeertemasjiene, Guattari, Jung, Tantra, Zen

Eastern Cape artist, Cleone Cull's recent work attests to a mature, well-integrated and encompassing artistic vision on her part, as even someone with a merely intuitive grasp of art would be able to confirm at a visual level. There is a clear and demonstrable formal consonance between and among the artworks in question, some of which were recently on display at an exhibition – entitled *Walking between the Worlds* – in Port Elizabeth's Athenaeum. This essay is an attempt to formulate a critical response to what are arguably her most paradigmatic works in the exhibition, to wit, some of those in the series, *Ascension Manuals* and the ones comprising *Return of the Goddess*.

Before embarking on the interpretation, a note on my approach is necessary. In a certain sense, what I intend doing here is the reverse of the phenomenological approach, developed by Edmund Husserl, which requires that, to do justice to the understanding of a 'phenomenon' – whether it is art, or an ethical act, or a distinct kind of aesthetic object such as a nude study (or its perversion, pornography) – through 'intentional' analysis, one should peel away all theoretical, philosophical or ideological notions attached to, or associated with, the phenomenon or object

in question. In this way, Husserl believed, one would be able to reach an optimally *unbiased* account of the phenomenon through ‘pure’ intuition (see Megill 1985: 306). It is important to note, however, that ‘phenomenon’ does not here have the Kantian meaning of something that ‘appears’ in space and time – that is, a particular, concrete phenomenon; on the contrary, the concept ‘phenomenon’ denotes what Husserl regarded as the universal ‘eidetic’ (*eidos* or ‘form’-related) structure in terms of which all concrete manifestations of the ‘phenomenon’ in this sense may be understood. In fact, all understanding would, according to this argument, unavoidably depend on one’s ability to grasp just such an underlying, sustaining structure.

While I have no *prima facie* argument with Husserl as far as the conditions of the possibility of understanding concrete, perceptually given entities in terms of a universal, rationally intuitable structure (which imparts to them their distinctiveness as ‘phenomena’) are concerned, here I want to work in the opposite direction. (One could radicalize his phenomenology, though, as Derrida has done [see Olivier 1988], in terms of the interplay between presence and absence.) Instead of getting rid of the theoretical, psychological or metaphysical theories or prejudices which obtrude themselves on the phenomenon of a certain kind of artwork (as manifested in particular artworks), I would like to proceed from a *prima facie* perceptual impression of the artworks to the idea-complexes or theoretical, philosophical interpretive schemas suggested by them. It may well be, I suspect, that the end result of the interpretation arrived at may not differ significantly from what a strict Husserlian phenomenological analysis would yield, except that it would be formulated along the conceptual contours of the theoretical perspectives suggested by the perceptual approach. Not that one could ever render a ‘pure’ or *absolutely* unbiased account or description of any object of perception, let alone an artwork – because such an account has to be linguistic, bias is built into it by means of the significations carried by words. After all, words (and images) always have their own comets’ tails of semiotic baggage or associated meanings, which is why Husserl insisted on starting a phenomenological investigation by getting rid of as much of this, to him obfuscating, baggage.

Gadamer (1982: 235-253) recognized this, and (unlike Husserl) attributed a positive heuristic value to such bias, or prejudice, insisting that this is precisely the point where an interpretation commences – one always begins, inescapably, from what is familiar (one’s unavoidable ‘bias’ or ‘prejudice’), and appropriates what is foreign or new in its light. From there the interpretive process follows a to-and-fro pattern (which Gadamer likens to the dynamic structure of playing a game), where every interpretive effort is tested against what has to be interpreted, until a satisfactory point of understanding is reached (usually in relation to the question, how it applies to one’s own life-situation). My own approach to Cull’s artworks is therefore more Gadamerian: it is informed by the acceptance of my own (theoretical) ‘prejudice’ (or pre-judgment) as inescapable point of departure, although I have to emphasize that this ‘prejudice’ is triggered, in the first place, by the visual material in question. And unavoidably so, I would contend; one cannot look ‘innocently’ at the world once one’s way of ‘looking’, ‘listening’, and so on, has been informed by specific theories (quite appropriately: a *‘theoros’* was a spectator at an ancient Greek drama).

Hence, when confronting these artworks visually, what does one see? Complex objects, or perhaps more accurately, a concatenation of discernible objects, arranged in a kind of pseudo-symmetrical, ‘circular’ fashion. Not that they have a circular form; rather, one gets the impression that there is a kind of ‘circular’ or cyclical process taking place here. Some of these objects are tubular or cylindrical, while others have the appearance of mechanical devices of sorts. These are linked to other such objects, and also, indiscriminately, to more organic-looking objects, with the result that heads are connected to ‘pipes’, which are in turn linked to what resembles

other parts of either a machine or other biological organs of sorts. I use the phrase, ‘of sorts’, because the organic-looking objects (such as those resembling breasts or mammary organs, ‘leaking’ fluid), are not always recognizable as depictions of familiar organs; sometimes they seem like fantasy organs. Some of the artworks are brightly coloured, while in others the use of colour is very subtle, almost imperceptible, so that the impression ‘almost’ exists in their case that they are in black and white, or sepia. (I shall comment in these terms on specific artworks when I discuss them, below.)

Moving from a description of the objects of visual perception to what they suggest at the level of ideas, one could proceed as follows. The visual counterparts of the idea of equilibrium or balance – albeit framed in complex, rather than simplistic terms – meet the eye in virtually every one of these works of art, but none more so than the pastel drawings in question. If equilibrium is implicated in the dense configuration of images and image-complexes encountered in these artworks, however, it seems to be always in conjunction with the visual embodiments of other ideas such as those of source, conduit, efflorescence, fruiting and excess, even excrement. And one should add that the ‘equilibrium’ in question here is not one of fixed symmetry, but a fluctuating one where visual dynamism is always on the verge of exceeding the complexity of generative chaos and lapsing into the disorder of moribund stasis.

Tracing the subtly coloured lineation(s) suggestive of these meanings with one’s eye, it appears that a theme which pervades the drawings is that of the interconnectedness, perhaps the ‘alchemical unity’, of everything, even ostensible opposites such as the organic and the mechanical. I have used the phrase, ‘alchemical unity’, advisedly, given the manner in which Cull’s imagery – in which allusions to the four elements of antiquity (water, air, earth and fire) abound – resonates with the ‘alchemical philosophy’ of the Renaissance philosopher and scientist, Paracelsus, whose medical practice was founded on his belief in the interrelatedness of everything in the universe, which he regarded as an encompassing organism.

From here it is but a small step to seeing a link between Cull’s art and the more recent notion of the ‘Gaia-hypothesis’, formulated by climate scientist James Lovelock (2010: 105-122), according to which the earth, or Gaia, far from being a neutral terrain accommodating living organisms, is itself a macro-organism affected by, and in turn affecting, the organisms that form part of its overarching ecological fabric. This idea was recently given striking cinematic embodiment in James Cameron’s *Avatar* (2009), where the dramatic action is played out against the backdrop of a planetary ecology in which the interconnectedness of plants, animals and humanoid species is an integral aspect of the unfolding narrative.

As in the case of *Avatar*, Cull’s artworks, too, derive their visual power from the images that constitute them. This is not an inconsequential fact, if one considers the distinctive character of images compared to ‘verbal’ language – while all signifiers, verbal as well as iconic, are essentially multivocal from one context of interpretation to the next, such a proliferation of meaning is particularly irrepressible in the case of images, precisely because they lack the syntagmatic, linearly sequential directive which tends to ‘focus’ or guide linguistic interpretation. In cinema the succession of images may still impart to them the syntagmatic interpretive aspect of narrative, but with painting or drawing one’s interpretive appropriation is largely dependent upon the non-sequential, paradigmatic register of meaning-association.

And yet, in the case of Cleone Cull’s work one does not simply encounter significations dependent upon associations. There is evidence of a kind of quasi-syntagmatic, quasi-narrative register too, precisely through the strong visual indication of something like a ‘source’, whence a

‘process’ of some kind ‘originates’, and to which point the process, in its final stages, eventually seems to return, so that the image-complex appears to comprise a cycle of sorts. Precisely what the component-stages of this processual cycle comprise, or represent, is difficult to state without fear of contradiction, given the multivocality of the images in question. To be sure, it is not difficult to discern the outline of faces, or eyes, or of strange, quasi-(al-)chemical instruments, or eyes framed by what could be the head of a lion, or perhaps hitherto-undiscovered monstrosities, as well as unmistakably sexual images. But what these images may signify, even if they are ‘recognized’, is a different question altogether, and depends crucially on the semiotic context, or hermeneutical horizon, in which they are inscribed, as long as one refrains resolutely from the temptation – so frequently yielded to by art critics – of foisting the cloak of one’s personal prejudices on the images in question. Instead, to be able to discern the voices of the meaning-laden complexes of signification before one, the critic should listen carefully, and attune him- or herself to the register in which they are communicating. And this may be difficult, especially when there are many voices, or iconic nuances – as here, in Cull’s works – to be registered and scrupulously decoded.

The reason for such interpretive difficulty pertaining to many-voiced images, whether singly or in configured form, has to do with the way in which they interact with the conceptual and perceptual horizon of understanding that every perceiver unavoidably carries with her or him when they confront these artworks. What results in the shape of an interpretation is the outcome of an interaction between the horizon of meaning projected by the images, on the one hand, and the framework of pre-understanding that accompanies a viewer when she or he approaches the works of art. For this reason one has to be as receptive and judicious as possible when the ‘internal horizon’ of the artwork-constitutive images is first gauged.

In the process of arriving at a comprehension of the works in question, one should keep in mind that, although images cannot be reduced to (verbal) text or discourse, they have their very own discursivity, as Lyotard (1995: 12-17) has demonstrated so well in his work on figurality: the way that images are configured intimate specific power-relations, no less than language does. In addition to what has already been mentioned (Gaia, alchemical interconnectedness), some of the visually-discursive strands of Cleone’s works converge demonstrably on Eastern thought (Zen, Tantric beliefs and practices), Jungian depth psychology and the difficult poststructuralist thought of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (specifically in *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*). What I mean by this, is that, even if the artist has never *consciously* had any of these theoretical or philosophical perspectives in mind before, or in the course of creating these works of art, the latter lend themselves to interpretation in their terms.

As in the case of Renaissance philosopher Paracelsus (Windelband 1958: 370-371), who affirmed the organic unity of (human) microcosm and the universe as macrocosm, Tantra (White 2000: 7-9), too, comprises a knowledge-based development and practice of worldly (including sexual) *rituals* designed to reach that which surpasses the mundane but is consonant with it. This is predicated on the assumption that the force or energy that pervades the universe is the same everywhere, from (the bodies of) individuals to the highest levels of spirituality. Zen Buddhism is closely related to this, with the important specification that it rejects theoretical or word-based knowledge in favour of *experiential* learning in combination with meditation. This aversion to theory and theoretical certainties explains its predilection for paradoxes, for example the instruction from a Zen master, to ‘Shut your mouth, close your lips, and say something’ (quoted in Nisker 1990: 49). The aspect of Zen that resonates most audibly with Cull’s art is formulated by Capra (1975: 141): ‘All things are seen as interdependent and inseparable parts of the cosmic whole; as different manifestations of the same ultimate reality’. In Cull’s work of

art one encounters the visual counterpart of this belief, also held by the Renaissance philosopher and alchemist, Paracelsus (referred to earlier).

Looking at Cull's drawings and paintings with these considerations regarding Zen and Tantra in mind, it is not difficult to draw a connection between their visibly processual and cyclical imagery of interconnectedness, on the one hand, and the emphasis, in Zen and Tantra, on experience (rather than theoretical learning), practice and ritual, aimed at bringing the individual closer to the universal matrix within which their individuality always finds its cosmic destination, as it were. To put it more concretely, the constitutive imagery of every one of Cleone Cull's artworks suggests that it may be conceived of as an occasion for the *enactment* of a ritual, or an experience-oriented meditation, that serves the 'practical' (that is, praxis-related) purpose of initiating the process of integrating the individual viewer with the rest of the universe as their spiritual home. The rest is up to each viewer.

Turning to the affinity between Cull's art and Jung's 'depth'-psychology of archetypes (Jung 1996: 43), one should note that it resonates with Jung's concept of 'archetypes' – the 'self', the 'shadow', the 'anima' and 'animus', the 'child', the 'sage', the 'trickster', the 'devil', and so on – which Jung believed to belong to the 'collective unconscious', and which denotes archaic, fundamental psychic models that are invariably found as structuring principles in the myths and art of every culture. They are also found in every person's psyche, to the extent that it is organized by the 'collective unconscious', as distinct from the personal unconscious, which is dependent on individual experience. The point about this is that, according to Jung, all art is susceptible to analysis in terms of these archetypal 'models' or symbols – and Cleone's art is no exception. Scrutinizing these works through a Jungian lens is likely to yield rich results.

However, what has been suggested so far requires a more encompassing philosophical framework to be fully comprehensible although such comprehension should not be conflated with the ritualistic and meditative aspect of each artwork as an occasion for providing the impetus for a process of enlightenment. I believe that one would be hard put to find a more appropriate set of ideas for doing justice to Cleone Cull's artistic vision than the process-oriented philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari as articulated, mainly (but not exclusively), in *Anti-Oedipus* (1983).

To the uninitiated, reading a text like *Anti-Oedipus* would probably be disconcerting, to say the least, given its metaphors of desiring-machines, organ-machines, bodies-without-organs, energy-flows, valorization of schizophrenia and 'schizzes', rejection of Oedipal identity and power, assertion of oneness between humanity and nature, and so on. When all of this is placed in relation to the discourse of psychoanalysis – which is integral to their text, anyway, and can therefore hardly be avoided – things start making some sense: this is Deleuze and Guattari's ontological take on the world and on human subjectivity, which underpins their proposed substitution of 'schizoanalysis' for psychoanalysis, which is, in their view, definitely passé.

A brutally condensed account of this will have to suffice here, but is necessary to be able to do interpretive justice to Cleone Cull's work – which is not to say that she consciously attempted to instantiate Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy in her work; far from it. An artist's vision can be compatible, if not coincide, with that of a philosopher or a novelist – and often does – without them being acquainted with each other's work at all. No one perspective on the world is the privileged domain of any human subject; besides, whatever the similarities, differences will remain.

For Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus* (1983: 1-8), there is no such thing as a static reality; everything is forever caught in a *process* of becoming, albeit a flux interspersed with moments of intermittent ‘rest’ or interruption of the process. Hence, reality is never-ending process, and, moreover, this is a process of incessant production. Such production takes the form of so-called ‘desiring-machines’ being linked to one another in all directions, but according to the law of binarity (two-ness). Everything we usually think of as being discrete things and objects, are clusters of desiring-machines – even a distinct, ‘identifiable’ individual is a concatenation of desiring-machines — heads, ears, eyes, noses, tongues, hands, fingers, legs, feet, sexual organs, organs for excretion, and so on: these are all desiring-machines, because all of them have some productive function aimed at – that is desiring – the fulfilment of some (never-ending) task. (The song, ‘I have life’, from the musical, *Hair*, includes lines which exemplify the clustering together of ‘desiring-machines’, such as: ‘I have my ears, I have my mouth, I have my teeth, I have my tongue, I have my liver...’) This is why they can say that the ‘schizophrenic’ is the ‘universal producer’, where their understanding of ‘schizophrenic’ is not the usual, clinical, one, but a term that emphasizes the ‘non-identical’ character of the supposedly enduring entities involved with the performance (that is, production, or process) of some task. In this sense, everyone who is ever engaged in some ‘productive’ activity or process – and that means everyone, even infants, whenever they as much as look at, drink, touch, or listen to something – is a ‘schizophrenic’, because no one is monolithically ‘one’, but is constituted by numerous ‘desiring-machines’ (eyes, ears, etc.). Desiring-production is a function of desiring-machines, and *vice versa*; hence all is *process*. The following excerpt from *Anti-Oedipus* sums things up as they are for Deleuze and Guattari (1983: 2):

There is no such thing as either man or nature now, only a process that produces the one within the other and couples the machines together. Producing-machines, desiring-machines everywhere, schizophrenic machines, all of species life: the self and the non-self, outside and inside, no longer have any meaning whatsoever.

In effect, Deleuze and Guattari encourage us to stop thinking substantialistically, as if the world comprises independent, discrete objects, unconnected to one another and only occasionally being causally involved in fleeting contact with one another. In a manner reminiscent of the thinking of Spinoza, and more recently Bergson, their world is one of perpetual process, where things and individuals are the *illusory* productions of flows of desire, and where, moreover, the customary distinction between humanity and nature is null and void. In other words, according to them, humanity and nature (Deleuze & Guattari 1983: 5):

...are one and the same essential reality, the producer-product. Production as process overtakes all idealistic categories and constitutes a cycle whose relationship to desire is that of an immanent principle. This is why desiring-production is the principal concern of a materialist psychiatry, which conceives of and deals with the schizo as *Homo natura*.

So whence the impression of a world of distinct, separate, objects? At any given time, desiring machines are linked to one another — the hand picks up a teacup (while the other hand holds the saucer), the nose smells the aroma of the tea, the eyes see its brownish colour, the tongue tastes its inimitable taste — according to the law of binarity (always one desiring-machine connected to another; the cup and the tea are desiring-machines as much as the hand, the eyes, the mouth, the tongue and the nose are, given their exigency for their respective functions or purposes). This connective binarity extends in all directions, so that multiple connections between desiring machines spread out rhizomatically everywhere – no desiring-machine connection is ever isolated.

Still, why do we experience things as being separate? The illusion of existing things and individuals arises when a third event interrupts binary couplings: for a moment, intermittently, when flows of desire, emitted by desiring-machines, are interrupted by other such flows from different desiring-machines, which could be organ-machines (when the eye is attracted by a beautiful woman walking past, and the tea-sipping stops temporarily), and at this moment, when everything stops for a moment before resuming, something resembling identity is produced – an undifferentiated thing, seemingly unchanged through time. This is what Deleuze and Guattari call ‘the body without organs’ (1983: 7-8), which is produced in the manner described, but is itself wholly unproductive:

Producing, a product: a producing/product identity. It is this identity that constitutes a third term in the linear series: an enormous undifferentiated object. Everything stops dead for a moment, everything freezes in place – and then the whole process will begin all over again. From a certain point of view it would be much better if nothing worked, if nothing functioned. Never being born, escaping the wheel of continual birth and rebirth, no mouth to suck with, no anus to shit through... Desiring-machines make us an organism; but at the very heart of this production, within the very production of this production, the body suffers from being organized in this way, from not having some other sort of organization, or no organization at all... The automata stop dead and set free the unorganized mass they once served to articulate. The full body without organs is the unproductive, the sterile, the unengendered, the unconsumable... The body without organs is non-productive; nonetheless it is produced, at a certain place and a certain time in the connective synthesis, as the identity of producing and the product...

This may seem cryptic, but if we consider that Lacan (Lee 1990: 82), too, has argued that one’s subjectivity is too complex to be grasped as ‘one’ thing, instead being complexly ‘stretched’ between three different registers – the ‘real’, the imaginary and the symbolic – then it is not that difficult to grasp Deleuze and Guattari’s meaning: that illusory entity that we regard as our ‘identity’ (what they call ‘the body without organs’) cannot function as a desiring-machine. Only combinations of desiring-machines can ever keep the flows of production, of energy, going, therefore what we think of as ‘me’ or ‘you’, ‘she’ or ‘he’, ‘it’, or ‘they’, are unavoidably always concatenations of desiring-machines.

Returning to Cull’s artworks with this brief characterization of Deleuze and Guattari’s ontology in mind, do they not seem to resonate or vibrate in sympathy with it? Visually, her art seems to exemplify the process of energy-flows described by the two French poststructuralists in *Anti-Oedipus*. Even their description of the process that intermittently generates the ‘body without organs’ sounds uncannily like a poetic evocation of one or more of her artworks. The gesso, pastel, gum arabic and ink works are all consonant with the ontology briefly outlined above – although not exclusively; the other interpretive frames I suggested also find resonance here – but the ones which most readily lend themselves to this interpretation, are *Fiery eyed I come to you* (Figure 1) and *Full Steam Ahead* (Figure 2) in the *Ascension Manuals* series. Before starting to take in the detail, in fact, Figure 2 (*Full Steam Ahead*) strikes one as an amorphous ‘body-without-organs’, until, that is, all the detail obtrudes itself: organic and machinic features such as firework-spinning-wheel-like shapes, truncated, imprisoned faces, humanoid and animalistic figures, (al-)chemical instruments and devices – all vaguely reminiscent of Hieronymus Bosch’s vision of hell, and the etchings of fantastical prisons imagined by Piranesi in the 18th century. Not only does everything seem to be interconnected and ‘in process’, but currents of various kinds run through its densely textured ‘body’.

Although Figure 1 (*Fiery eyed I come to you*) is less amorphous at first sight – in fact, symmetrical – it also displays a species of organic-machinic concatenation of components, productive of a heterogeneous array of fluids and currents. Its title – *Fiery eyed I come to you*

– suggests that this composite image-configuration of ‘desiring-machines’ might be an artistic anatomy of passion, which would sit well with Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophical vision of a schizophrenic, but endlessly generative universe.



Figure 1
from Series: Ascension Manuals, *Fiery Eyed I Come to You*,
pastel , ink, gesso and gum Arabic on board, 1.238 metre square (Cleone Cull).



Figure 2
from Series: Ascension Manuals, *Full Steam Ahead*,
pastel , ink, gesso and gum Arabic on board, 1.238 metre square (Cleone Cull).

Regarding the three *Return of the Goddess*-series works in pastel and ink, the four ancient elements (water, air, fire and earth) are pervasive, sometimes manifesting themselves in images suggestive of life-giving (and death-dealing) fluids, and redolent with mythologically suggestive imagery. ‘Desiring-(organ-)machines’ may likewise readily be perceived there, suggesting ‘fertility’ in a multifarious sense. Figure 3 and Figure 5 – *Exiled, the Goddess, returns full armed*, and *Queen of Heaven: Five-branched on fire* – simultaneously represent an accurate artistic intuition of the current ascendancy of the feminine principle, or (Jungian) *anima* (usually as encountered in the masculine unconscious), after centuries of suppression and oppression by the masculine principle or *animus* (the masculine principle, usually as encountered in the

feminine unconscious). Looking carefully at the other work in this group – Figure 4 (*Goddess does the hoochie coochie*) – one may discern there an androgynous union of sorts between these principles, hinting at a possible or desired reconciliation. This does not mean that these *Goddess*-works are not accessible via the heuristic path opened up by Deleuze and Guattari's process-ontology. On the contrary, they virtually vibrate in sympathy with the French thinkers' vision of interconnected desiring-machines – most conspicuously in the case of Figure 4 (*Goddess does the hoochie coochie*). Here the desiring-machines are almost exclusively organic (the exception being a vaguely mechanical-looking device where one imagines the goddess's eyes would be).



Figure 3
from Series: Return of the Goddess, *Exiled, The Goddess Returns Full Armed*,
pastel, ink, gesso and gum arabic on fabriano, 1 metre x 995mm (Cleone Cull).



Figure 4
from Series: Return of the Goddess, *Goddess does the hoochie coochie*,
pastel and ink on fabriano, 1.293 metre x 995 mm (Cleone Cull).



Figure 5
from Series: Return of the Goddess, *Queen of Heaven: Five Branched on fire*,
pastel, ink, gesso and gum arabic on fabriano, 1 metre x 995mm (Cleone Cull).

One possible response on the part of readers might be: so what? What does this interpretation have to commend itself? Does it make Cleone Cull's art more accessible than it would otherwise be? My answer would be that, while this is not necessarily the case, the people at Cull's exhibition whom I have spoken to, and with whom I shared my interpretation, did affirm its hermeneutic fecundity as far as they were concerned. Some of them confessed to being baffled by the works in question, until they had an interpretive lens through which they could look at them. I should emphasize again that this does not mean that it is the *only* (multifocal) 'lens' available to viewers; there are many, but in each case the test is whether the discernible figures and shapes start making sense with the aid of its interpretive, focalising function.

Put differently, the interpretations put forward here will not meet with everyone's assent – how could they if everyone brings a different set of personal prejudices, experiences and beliefs to the artworks concerned? This is why I set out my preferred interpretive 'moulds' or frames beforehand, so that readers can 'look through' them at Cull's artworks if they so choose. They are not the only perspectives available to one, nor even privileged ones, however – they are merely the ones suggested to me by my own philosophical background. As such, I hope that they may just add a different dimension to the appreciation of what, in my humble assessment, are powerfully evocative works of art by Eastern Cape artist Cleone Cull.

Note

This paper is a significantly extended and referenced version of an essay that appeared in the catalogue accompanying Cleone Cull's exhibition at The Athenaeum, Port Elizabeth, titled *Walking between the Worlds*.

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Contrapposto in El Greco's Portrait of Cardinal Don Fernando Niño De Guevara and its possible prototype

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El Greco's career in Italy brought him into contact with diverse sixteenth-century artistic influences that affected his practice of portraiture. This article focusses on one of his supreme masterworks, the *Portrait of Cardinal Don Fernando Niño De Guevara*. It is argued that its possible prototype of the depiction of the Cardinal is Michelangelo's *Moses* in the Basilica of San Pietro in Vincoli, Rome. In the representation of both figures the application of *contrapposto*, a harmony of compositional opposites and tensions, is remarkable. Furthermore, the gazes of both are turned to the left, *a sinistra*.
Key words: El Greco, *Portrait of Cardinal Don Fernando Niño De Guevara*, *contrapposto*, Michelangelo's *Moses*

Contrapposto in El Greco se Portret van Kardinaal Don Fernando Niño De Guevara en die moontlike prototipe daarvoor

El Greco se loopbaan in Italië het hom met verskillende sestiende-eeuse kunsinvloede in aanraking gebring wat sy praktyk van portrettering beïnvloed het. Hierdie artikel fokus op een van sy uitstaande meesterwerke, die *Portret van Kardinaal Don Fernando Niño De Guevara*. Dit word gestel dat die moontlike prototipe van die voorstelling van die Kardinaal Michelangelo se *Moses* in die Basilika van San Pietro in Vincoli, Rome, is. Die aanwending van *contrapposto*, 'n harmonie van komposisionele teenoorgesteldes en spannings, is merkwaardig in die voorstelling van albei figure. Voorts is die blik van albei na links, *a sinistra*, gerig.

Sleutelwoorde: El Greco, *Portret van Kardinaal Don Fernando Niño De Guevara*, *contrapposto*, Michelangelo se *Moses*

Domenicos Theotokopoulos, called El Greco, who was born in Crete in 1541 and educated in the Greek Orthodox icon tradition, developed into a Western painter in Venice where he sojourned from 1567-70. There he was most probably apprenticed in the workshop of Titian (*circa* 1488-1576), as attested by a reference in Giulio Clovio's¹ letter of introduction to Cardinal Alessandro Farnese in Rome, dated 16 November 1570.² It is not clear how extensively El Greco travelled in Italy before he left Venice to live and work in Rome and then departed to Spain. In Rome Michelangelo Buonarroti's (1475-1564) legacy left a clear imprint on El Greco's oeuvre. Not only was his *Pieta*³ based on Michelangelo's sculpture in Florence Cathedral,⁴ but the figure of Christ in his *Trinity*⁵ also derives directly from the older master. In Rome he not only emulated Michelangelo, but also came under the influence of the Mannerists, especially in the field of portraiture.

The development of portraiture during the Italian High Renaissance and Mannerist periods

During the Italian High Renaissance and Mannerist periods, portraiture underwent remarkable developments. Most of the early Renaissance portrait painters, such as Piero della Francesca (1410/20-92), Antonello da Messina (1430-79), Sandro Botticelli (1444-1510), Antonio Pollaiuolo (1431/2-98) and Domenico Ghirlandaio (1499-94), prominently depict the faces of their sitter to fill the format of their panels. However, some background and other meaningful iconographical details are also included, for example, in Botticelli's *Portrait of a Man with a Medal of Cosimo de' Medici*,⁶ Ghirlandaio's *Old Man and His Grandson*,⁷ and Piero's *Diptych Portrait of Federigo*

da Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino, and His Wife, Battista Sforza.⁸ In the last mentioned portrait the estate owned by the Duke and his wife is depicted in the background. In addition to the function of suggesting spatial depth behind the sitters, architectural and landscape backgrounds enhance the complexity of these above mentioned portrait compositions and relate the sitters to their cultural environments.

Leonardo da Vinci's (1452-1519) most notable contribution to portraiture is in the rendering of his sitters' *moti mentali*, of which the *Mona Lisa* is the supreme example, depicting a sitter who seems to guard what her mind is preoccupied with.⁹ Her face is portrayed in three-quarter frontal view, subtly influenced by a fantastical asymmetrical landscape in the background. All the details of the face, dress and landscape are deliberately and meticulously composed to reveal the sitter's external appearance, while the artist's application of *sfumato* to the features suggests, but also conceals, her actual personality.

Mannerists such as Giulio Romano (1499-1546), Jacopo Pontormo (1494-1557), Agnolo Bronzino (1503-72) and Parmigianino (1503-40) tended to portray sitters in three-quarter view and to surround them with elaborate environmental and background details, all of which are given the same meticulous attention as the faces and figures. Notwithstanding their ostensibly naturalistic portrayals, these painters severely geometricized the compositional framework onto which they imposed the portraits, backgrounds and other details.¹⁰ In Mannerist portraiture faces consequently appear inscrutable in a psychological sense. To a Mannerist painter, the expressive distortion of the facial features of a sitter, caused by implied *moti mentali*, would have seemed inadmissible if it distracted from an idealised, albeit frozen, vision of a sitter. It is, therefore, almost impossible to interpret the personalities of the sitters portrayed by Mannerists beyond their exterior appearance and setting. For example Bronzino's *Portrait of Eleonora of Toledo and Her Son*,¹¹ and Pontormo's *Portrait of Ugolino Martelli*,¹² tend to reveal the ingenuity of the painters in solving compositional problems, but there is seemingly a lack of involvement with or insight into the personality portrayed. Stylistic problem solving seems to be the real subject matter in these portraits.

What Giorgio Vasari (1511-73) called *bella maniera* in his *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori, ed architetti* (1550) was partly based on the concept of *facilità*, that is, making what is difficult to execute, seem easy. While not breaking completely with the fifteenth-century ideal of the Florentine painters, Mannerists complicated their compositions in various ways. Intricate compositional schemes underlie the shapes of the apparently naturalistically rendered sitters, as well as the often elaborate back- and foreground details. Especially noteworthy is the design, based on circular forms, in Parmigianino's *Portrait of a Lady*.¹³ Despite their rigorous application to the sitter's face, headdress and shoulders, these geometric forms barely distort her appearance, but add a quality of idealised beauty. Mannerist portraiture most often emphasises the artifice of courtiers or members of the nobility who self-consciously pose in elaborate environments, dressed conspicuously in fine clothes, and display or are surrounded by emblems of their status. For example, in Bronzino's *Portrait of a Young Man*¹⁴ the youth holds a book, while the Conte de Fantanello in Parmigianino's *Portrait of Galeazzo Sanvitale*¹⁵ is depicted with his knight's armature.

El Greco's *Portrait of Cardinal Don Fernando Niño De Guevara*

The general characteristics of *maniera* portraiture are recognisable in El Greco's *Portrait of Cardinal Don Fernando Niño De Guevara* (figure 1). Most notable is that the focus is not only on

the sitter's face. Even though his head is the portrait's main focus, it is influenced by and cannot be separated from the rest of the composition that has various focal points. This practice recalls a common trait in Mannerist painting, as well as the fact that back- and foreground elements and forms are meticulously detailed. The sitter's setting and finery of his dress indicates his elevated status as Cardinal, and is comparable to any person of rank in Cosimo I's court, as portrayed by Bronzino.



Figure 1

El Greco, *Portrait of Cardinal Don Fernando Niño De Guevara*, circa 1600, oil on canvas, 170,8 x 108 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (source: internet).

Besides the influence of the Mannerists, El Greco was also the heir to Leonardo's concept of penetrating the *moti mentali* and character of a sitter in the portrait of the Cardinal, who was the leading figure in the Spanish Inquisition. A formal analysis of the composition will validate this.

As a point of departure in the following analysis it can be accepted that, in essence, a portrait is the depiction of a person who posed for the artist in one or various sittings in which they were mutually involved in the outcome. A portrait is assumed to be a likeness of the sitter, but in an artistic sense, a mere likeness would be uninteresting (like almost all photographs of people). Therefore, the penetrating gaze of the portraitist should reveal the essence of the sitter's personality and environment in which the latter chooses to be portrayed. In the case of El Greco's *Portrait of Cardinal Fernando Niño Don Guavara*, it is assumed that the portrayed is indeed of the Spanish Great Inquisitor and that the painter portrayed him from life in an interior in which he was at home.

In the absence of documentation one can only speculate about the sitter/painter interaction. Close scrutiny reveals no emotional expression on the face of the sitter, and his gaze is clearly directed to a point to the right of the painter: he is looking over his left shoulder. Judging by the stark features of the Cardinal, one may venture to say that El Greco portrayed him as a wary intellectual with a high forehead, the upper line of which is emphasised by his cap. The dark-rimmed spectacles that he wore when posing for his portrait emphasise rather than obscure his eyes by framing them, thus emphasising his limited eyesight that may be the painter's visual pun on his limited spiritual vision. His attitude in the posture of a seated man in the presence of a painter who observes him in order to depict his likeness, is vigilant and taciturn, as if aware of an intrusion into his privacy as an habitually introspective individual.

Four main focal points can be isolated in the composition: the head, the two hands, and the conspicuously unfolded piece of paper placed off-centre on the floor in the foreground. Left and right and above and below are compositionally equally balanced by means of the positioning of these nodal points.

Although the sitter is shown in the full voluminous garb of his status as Cardinal, the artist took great care not to diminish the importance of the face, the main individualising element. Attention is drawn to the face by means of a variety of contrasts in the manner of depiction used in and around that area. Linear emphasis is employed to render the circular forms of the spectacle frame around the eyes, those primary facial elements to which the spectator's attention is initially directed, while the face itself is a modelled form, bounded by contours and set against two different flat background areas. A break in the background patterning occurs conspicuously as a line above the sitter's head, which, if continued, would divide the face in two parts. The austere wooden panelling to the sitter's right contrasts strongly with the silk damask wall cladding to his left. Likewise, changes in colour occur with the juxtaposition of primaries in the Cardinal's silken cloak and carmine coloured cap, while the two parts of the background – the red-brown panelling and the yellow damask weave – are also strongly contrasted. The silvery grey of the sitter's beard and the white of the narrow collar are furthermore contrasted with the flesh tones of his face that are neutral against the surrounding warm hues. Contrasts in texture serve to isolate objects and elements of the sitter's ambience and regalia, ie. the different kinds of background, the partly visible chair, his spectacles, beard, white collar, the fabric of his cap, cloak and dress, as well as his hands and face as the only exposed flesh parts.

Besides the face of the sitter, his two hands are prominently exposed as focal points. They are placed more or less on the horizontal middle line of the canvas, The hands are some distance apart, on either side of the vertical middle line that runs through the face and figure. They are placed at the ends of the chair's arm-rests which they partly obscure to gain in prominence themselves. The dissimilarity between the poses of the left and right hands, both highlighted by white lace sleeves, form as striking a contrast as the dissimilarity between the door panelling and the damask wall cladding in the background. The contours of the hand volumes, especially of the right hand, give a clue to the compositional scheme of the painting and what meaning it suggests. Both hands stand out from shadow areas, while changes in surface, tonality and shape occur around them; both appear isolated where they protrude from the visible parts of the sleeves under the cape. The right hand is rounded and relaxed at the wrist, while angularity is emphasised on the opposite side where the fingers grip the armrest. The hands are dialectically in opposition to one another, but belong together in the unity of the sitter's cramped physical appearance and his mental anxiety, expressed in a vigilant gaze over his left shoulder.

The fourth focal point – the highlighted unfolded "letter" at the Cardinal's hidden feet,

bearing the artist's signature – is emphasised as a shape placed on a dark circular floor tile. It is a tonal focal point to which attention is drawn by the use of light and dark contrasts. Contained within the geometric shape of the foreground tile, it also acts as a visual anchoring point at the base of the composition. In this rather flatly painted area the upturned edge of its bottom right-hand corner has a slight effect of foreshortening and turning the viewers vision back into the painting. Compositionally the letter forms significant relationship with the rings on both hands and the top of the hat, thus linking the main focal points.

The Cardinal's attire takes up a large part of the picture format. It obscures the slight twist in his body and the peculiar distortion in his bent knees. However, one cannot imagine that El Greco was concerned about the anatomy of the man under his heavily draped figure, but one gains the impression of the figure as being rather short. This is an indication that El Greco, who often elongated figures to suggest their spiritual aspiration, clearly had no intention of idealising the Cardinal. Stylistically this is an example of a figure being flattened parallel to the picture plane, notwithstanding the suggestion of depth by means of bent limbs.¹⁶ The compositional scheme imposed upon the sitter, and the painterly emphasis of the decorative lace pattern of the dress exposed under the cloak, result in an anatomical distortion that is disturbing, because it suspends a rational interpretation of a seemingly naturalistic portrait. Furthermore, the chair is distorted with the depth of the seat too narrow for comfort, causing the viewer to speculate how exactly the sitter is placed on it.

The various focal points and the strong patterning of the room surfaces, as well as the sitter's elaborate official vestments, do not distract from the compositional whole of the portrait that is more than the sum of its parts. The relationship of the figure to its format is carefully considered. In viewing the portrait, one's eye keeps moving from shape to shape and from surface to surface. For example, the directional thrust of the pointed form of the undergarment, slightly curled up on the floor draws the eye to the lower right edge of the picture but not out of it, while the fine lines of the muted foreground area, subtly allows the spectator's eye to rove back to the focal points and the circular rhythms of the upper and lower parts of the figure. The spectator's eye can move from the left to the right of the picture and back again, because neither side predominates. In fact, there is a very strong visual pull up and down which, paradoxically, adds a restless feeling to a seemingly static figural pose.

Variety is found not only in what is depicted, but also in the prominence given to painterly effects on the individualised surfaces. In depicting the various parts of the dress different kinds of brushstroke are used: on the fabric of the carmine silk there are broad gestural strokes, worked *alla prima*, while the elaborate white lace details are suggested by means of a more elaborate scumble. This reveals the virtuosity of the painter who learnt the craft of the Venetians who excelled in decorative surface effects. No doubt, El Greco's intention with the portrait of the Cardinal was to rival the portraiture of his master, Titian, who, however, never portrayed a religious personage looking over his left shoulder.

In the portrait the most striking area of the background is the large, predominantly yellow plane of intricately designed damask which suggests affluence in the Cardinal's ambience. This plane (curiously reminiscent of Byzantine textured gold-leaf backgrounds) is an assertive element in the picture space. Consequently, the opposite background area of dark wooden panelling, seem to belong to a different optical plane. This background division affects the interpretation of the left and right sides of the sitter himself. Similarly, the artist's rendering of textures by means of alternative and contrasting ways of applying paint also affects interpretation of the inherent qualities of the man portrayed. In the larger carmine, yellow and white areas

the painting is lively, but more dull and flat in the paving and floor areas, while the hands and face are conspicuously highlighted. The viewer's attention is engaged by many intricacies of colour transitions between shapes. There is a smooth transition between the sitter's left ear and the damask background, while on the right side a harsh contour separates the face from the panelling. In the face itself the silvery white beard and the flesh tones are strongly contrasted, while the cap is a linear element that rounds off the high forehead. A transition by means of a dark line is conspicuous between the right wrist and the sleeve. Although the patterning is so varied meticulous attention is paid to the links between the surfaces themselves, conspicuously between the damask and the cloak in which the sheen of the former is reflected in the highlights of the latter.

In other instances contrasts tend to become paradoxes, for example the positioning of the Cardinal's seated figure should imply some depth by means of foreshortening, but his physical space under the voluminous dress is actually severely reduced. Solidity is given to objects by means of texturing, but the background surfaces are actually dematerialised: the plane on the sitter's left side has a gold-leaf flatness and that on his right is rather vacuous and geometrically inert. However, these surfaces actively oppose one another in their different patterning and respectively as light-reflecting and light-absorbing areas. A contradiction is very obvious in the relaxed and tense poses of the dissimilar hands, alternatively implying repose and mental activity. Accordingly, El Greco's composition is expressively arranged to emphasise simultaneously opposing faculties in the sitter. The background, as well as the sitter, implies a duality of parts. To the right of the seated figure the pattern is rigidly rectilinear, but to his left in the more or less equally wide visible area of the damask wall finish, a curvilinear pattern is emphasised. The rectilinear background pattern corresponds with the stiffness and pointed folds of the Cardinal's dress on his left side and his tense left hand, while the opposite is true of the damask weave and the curved contour of the dress on the other side. This correlates with the depiction of the sitter's right hand, posed in a relaxed and elegant way, with the index finger pointing in the direction of the lower, broad curve of the compositional scheme.

The left side of the face, seen in three-quarter view is emphasised. Notwithstanding the asymmetrical left and right sides of the face and the total composition, there is nevertheless a *contrapposto* or dynamic balance that implies that, notwithstanding the seeming harshness of the Cardinal, he also had a softer, compassionate side to his being. The man, Don Fernando Niño De Guevara, is subtly revealed by El Greco as a complex personality, simultaneously relaxed and tense. What manifests physically in the portrait may have diverse psychological origins: the overt self-assurance arising from a high religious position, endowing him with power over all members and non-members of the Roman Catholic Church,¹⁷ contrasted with uncertainty, maybe self-doubt, due to a moral sense of right and wrong. By showing him looking over his left shoulder – *a sinistra* – it is implied that he is ever-wakeful and fearful of the latter.

On the surface, the *Portrait* can be interpreted as a pictorial counterbalancing feat. Although it has previously been described as a "compositional whole", its parts are not balanced in a classical symmetrical sense. The system of oppositions is consistent with regard to curvilinear and angular or rectilinear forms; light and dark colouring; textured and plain surfaces, and flattened forms contrasted with three-dimensional spatial effects. The spatial planes are ambiguous and unresolved to the extent that one may wonder where the real picture plane is located. If it is taken to be the back of the chair, visible to the sitter's left, its pictorial function is to establish a middle distance that is decisive for the visual interpretation of the sitter amidst his surroundings. Behind this plane the dark drapery of the curtain and the panelling recedes furthest and the damask cladding is intermediate. But the sitter then presents shifting

planes in relation to the paper on the floor, which is on the same plane as the frontal protruding part of the skirt. In the composition two-dimensional and spatial design are blended, seemingly reinforcing the established opposing psychological traits of the sitter.

At first glance the *Portrait* could be viewed undiscerningly as a naturalistic portrayal of a sixteenth-century Spanish Cardinal dressed in his finery in a palatial interior. After a formal analysis one has to conclude that El Greco synthesised all pictorial elements to the point of artificiality in a conceptual and perceptual whole. The artist deliberately assembled a variety of elements in the interest of artistic complexity. The setting may not represent a real interior and the sitter's face is a psychological abstraction, but one imagined by the artist for his expressive purposes that are visually and mentally more intricate than most bland Mannerist portraits. No part of the representation is overworked or neglected; all the parts fulfil a purpose in the totality. This conclusion tallies with John Shearman's (1967: 28) general assessment of the artist: "El Greco is best considered as an artist who used strongly Mannerist conventions with an increasingly expressive purpose and urgency that is far from characteristic of Mannerism... ."

In concluding the formal analysis of the *Portrait* El Greco should be commended for accomplishing a *tour de force* in portraiture by means of his skill as a painter, his intellectual ability and psychological insight. This unique *Portrait* is a "self-aware image",¹⁸ that is an image created by the artist as a means of reflecting upon the nature of painting. The formal elements of the portrait are clearly manipulated in a calculated way so that the impact of the portrait relies on the metaphorical effect of referring the viewer to the formal means applied to achieve the image. The compositional complexities intensify the viewer's involvement with the human subject. While El Greco's interaction with the sitter – whom he obviously had to please (if not to flatter) – cannot be reconstructed. However, the end product proves that he remained boldly in control of his subject and medium. All the physical details in the *Portrait*, despite their diversity, relate to the person portrayed to reveal the motions of his mind. The intricate composition is not an end in itself as one tends to conclude about *maniera* portraits, but profoundly symbolic of a man with a dual personality.¹⁹

A possible prototype for the *Portrait of Cardinal Don Fernando Niño De Guevara*

The life task of the Cardinal, an Inquisitor, was to guard the orthodoxy of the Roman Catholic Church. El Greco shows him looking over his left shoulder, symbolically alert to sinister forces. He is obviously not the first Western artist to depict a figure who is alerted to evil by looking to his left. The question arises if the memory of Michelangelo's works inspired El Greco when he composed the Cardinal's portrait, since this renowned artist's *David* and *Moses* figures spring to mind as El Greco's possibly prototypes. It can be argued that El Greco became well acquainted with the sculptor's works during his sojourn in Italy.

The larger than life standing *David* figure (unveiled in 1504 in front of the Palazzo della Signoria, Florence) is depicted in an alert pose immediately before his battle with Goliath. His tensed physique and frowning facial expression reveals him as aware of the approach of the evil foe and mentally prepared for combat. This is emphasised by the direction of his gaze: he is looking attentively over his left shoulder, *a sinistra*. However, more appropriate as a prototype for the portrait of the Cardinal would be Michelangelo's seated *Moses* figure in the Basilica of San Pietro in Vincoli, Rome, whose gaze is also turned *a sinistra*. In an ironic way the sculpture of the great Old Testament figure could well have served as the prototype for a portrait of the Cardinal, a lesser guardian of God's law.

In 1545 the design for the funeral monument of Pope Julius II (1443-1513), intended for St. Peter's in Rome, was carried out on a much reduced scale and the few completed sculptures placed in the Basilica of San Pietro in Vincoli, Rome.²⁰ The architectural and sculptural composition of the much reduced monument is dominated by the seated figure of *Moses*, placed at the eye level of the viewer (figure 2). This twice life-sized marble figure is placed in the centre of the lower course of the monument, between two smaller figures, although it was originally intended for the upper course, where it would have made an even more powerful impression and a more desired realistic effect. From a distance the effect of the swollen veins of the left arm, the massive shoulders and somewhat unnatural folds of the drapery would have seemed more natural and in proportion. Nevertheless, the symbolic representation of Moses, who led the Hebrew people from Egyptian captivity, is evoked on a colossal scale with the intention to glorify the papacy of Julius II. He believed himself divinely chosen to be a military commander who liberated the Italian city-states from foreign rule, as well as a reformer of the church after the devastation caused by the Borgias, in a similar way that Moses delivered his people from the idolatry of the golden calf. With this symbolic parallel in mind, Michelangelo created the Moses figure as an idealised image of the powerful Pope who was his patron.



Figure 2
Michelangelo, *Moses*, 1513-15, Basilica of San Pietro in Vincoli, Rome,
marble, height 235 cm (source: internet).

Conclusion

The question remains: what could have motivated El Greco to emulate the Moses figure as a prototype for cardinal Guevara's portrait? The gaze over the left shoulder – *a sinistra* – is obvious. One may indeed speculate why a portrait of an overdressed sitter with a modest-sized physique with limited eye-sight could be inspired by a semi-nude monumental figure that is twice life-size, and is clearly not a portrait. El Greco's portrait of the Cardinal – if my insight is correct – is a parody of the Moses figure. The Christian Inquisitor, a Roman Catholic law enforcer, is a parody of Moses, the powerful Old Testament law giver whose vigilant pose is not directed at thin air and imaginary sinners, but expresses an awareness of the idolatrous transgressions of the Israelites in the desert. Interpreted in this way, a new dimensions of meaning can be added to El Greco's portrait that is generally acknowledged as one of the greatest portraits ever painted.

Finally, the portrait of the Cardinal is not a work of compassion. El Greco left the viewer many clues to suggest that he was not impressed by his “holy” sitter. In contrast, Michelangelo created a powerful Moses figure that acknowledge his holiness after having received the tablets of the law, held under his right arm, directly from God.²¹

Notes

- 1 Giulio Clovio (1498-1578) was a Croatian illuminator, miniaturist and painter who was active in Renaissance Italy. He befriended El Greco who painted a portrait of him, entitled *Giulio Clovio Pointing to his Farnese Book of Hours* (1571-71), oil on canvas, 58 x 86 cm, Naples, Museo Nazionale di Capidamonte. 115 x 96 cm, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence. See the discussion of this portrait in Maré (2002).
- 2 Giulio Clovio’s letter stated: “There has arrived in Rome a young Candiot pupil of Titian who in my judgement is exceptional in painting; and among other things he has done a portrait of himself which has astonished all of these painters in Rome. I should like to keep him under the shadow of your Excellency without the other expenses of his living, but only a room in the Palazzo Farnese for a short time until he succeeds in finding better quarters.” (Quoted from Wethey 1962: 7.) 12 Jacopo Pontormo, *Portrait of Ugolino Martelli*, circa 1540, oil on panel, 92 x 69 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington DC.
- 3 El Greco, *Pietà*, circa 1574-76, oil on canvas, 0,66 x 0,47 cm, Hispanic Society, New York. 13 Parmigianino, *Portrait of a Lady*, 1530-31, oil on panel, 69 x 51 cm, Galleria Nazionale, Parma.
- 4 Michelangelo Buonarroti, Florentine *Pietà*, circa 1550, marble, height 226 cm, Museo del Opera del Duomo, Florence. 14 Agnolo Bronzino, *Portrait of a Young Man*, circa 1538, oil on panel, 95 x 75 cm, Metropolitan Museum, New York.
- 5 El Greco, *Trinity*, 1577-79, oil on canvas, 300x178 cm, Prado Museum, Madrid. 15 For a description of *maniera* conventions see Smyth (1963).
- 6 Sandro Botticelli, *Portrait of a Man with a Medal of Cosimo de’Medici*, 1474-75, tempera on panel, 57,5, 44 cm, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence. 16 Parmigianino, *Portrait of Galeazzo Sanvitale*, 1524, oil on panel, 107 x 80 cm, Galleria Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples.
- 7 Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Old Man and His Grandson*, circa 1490, tempera on wood, 62 x 46 cm, Louvre, Paris. 17 Zeldin (1998: 12) states that “El Greco witnessed over a thousand supposed heretics brought to trial before the local Inquisition”.
- 8 Piero della Francesca, *Diptych Portrait of Federigo da Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino, and His Wife, Battista Sforza*, 1465-66, tempera on panel, 47 x 33 (each), Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence. 18 The term “self-aware image” was created by Stoichita (1997) to discuss the issue of meta-painting, that is a painting that contains paintings, or develops in the form of a painting (or paintings) within-a-painting. While El Greco’s portrait of the Cardinal does not qualify as meta-painting in Stoichita’s sense, it nevertheless has a metaphorical connotation that refers the viewer from viewing the subject matter back to viewing the formal qualities of the painting.
- 9 See Garrard (2010). 19 With regard to the fact that El Greco emphasises the tension between left and right in the person of the Cardinal, it should be noted that it is a modern neurological discovery that different modes of consciousness have a physiological basis in the brain. The cerebral cortex of the brain is divided into two hemispheres, joined by a bundle of interconnecting fibres. The right side of the cerebral cortex primarily controls the left side of the body, and the left side of the cortex controls the right side of the body.
- 10 For an analysis of the composition of Mannerist portraits, see Maré (1979).
- 11 Agnolo Bronzino, *Portrait of Eleonora of Toledo and Her Son*, circa 1545, oil on panel,

- 20 In 1505 Pope Julius II called Michelangelo to Rome to create a gigantic tomb for him in St. Peter's. The project was never completed. However, the *Moses* statue, which is double life size, the focus of the architectural and sculptural composition of the tomb, was intended to express the painfully restrained wrath of the leader of a wayward people. An allusion to the warlike prowess of Julius II was intended and the sculptor has embodied his own conception of masculine prowess. The way in which the Moses figure grasps the Tablets of the Law, the bare arm and right knee, the heavy beard and the "horns" heighten the effect of physical and spiritual power. The flanking figures of Rachel and Leah, symbols respectively of contemplative and active life, were carved by Michelangelo himself, but they are not as satisfactory as the Moses. The monument itself and the figures on the upper course were not executed by the great master, though they were worked out according to his suggestions. On the other hand, two shackled figures out of the series planned by the sculptor are in the Louvre, though incomplete. These *Slaves* were intended to typify the power of the Pope in the domains of war and art, and were to stand in front of the herm as pillars, where the inverted consoles now are. In the *Slaves* in the Louvre the antithesis between resistance to the fetters and submission to the inevitable is expressed with remarkable skill. There are also in Florence some unfinished figures belonging to this monument, namely a victor kneeling on a fallen foe, and four other figures, which are merely blocked out.
- 21 Most probably Michelangelo was not aware of the fact that the Mosaic law closely resembles the Code of Hammurabi (died 1750 BCE).

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The mystical visions of El Greco's backturned figures

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This article is introduced with a statement about the author's involvement with El Greco studies and her attempts to understand the manifestation of mysticism in his art. The research focusses on the visual experience of two different kinds of beholders in El Greco's oeuvre: the virtual backturned figures in paintings beholding a vision as part of the representations, and the beholders in real space viewing the complete paintings. The presentation in each of the seven works discussed is mediated by an internal backturned beholder, forming a nodal figure in the composition, who views a mystical vision as the main theme presented in the painting, while the beholder in real space views the beholding backturned figure, his vision and the total composition.

Key words: El Greco, mystical vision, backturned figure, nodal figure

Die mistiese visioene van El Greco se ruggekeerde figure

Hierdie artikel word ingelei deur 'n stelling oor die outeur se betrokkenheid by El Greco-studies en haar pogings om die manifestasie van mistiek in sy kuns te deurgrond. Daar word gefokus op die visuele ervaring van twee verskillende soorte betragters in El Greco se oeuvre: die virtuele ruggekeerde figure in die skilderye wat 'n visioen as 'n deel van die voorstellings aanskou, en die betragters in die werklike ruimte wat die volledige skilderye aanskou. In elkeen van die sewe werke wat bespreek word, word die voorstelling deur 'n interne betragter, as 'n nodale figuur in die komposisie, bemiddel in die vorm van 'n ruggekeerde figuur wat die mistiese visioen as die hooftema in die skildery aanskou, terwyl die betragter in die werklike ruimte die betragterende ruggekeerde figuur, sy visioen en die totale komposisie waarneem.

Sleutelwoorde: El Greco, mistiese visioen, ruggekeerde figuur, nodale figuur

A statement by William Desmond (1995: 736) that imparts an insight regarding the sources of philosophical mindfulness – and presumably thinking and cognition in general – is a suitable starting point for some subjective introductory notes on my research into El Greco's (1541-1614) art:

I have no desire to undermine or deconstruct the emphasis on definite cognition of the determinacies of beings or processes. However, I do not think *philosophical mindfulness* is simply a progressive conquering of an *initial indefiniteness* by a more and more complete determinate cognition. Here is something about the beginning that is not only in excess of objectification and determination at the beginning, but that remains in excess at the end, even after our most strenuous efforts at determination. I think we need to distinguish between the following: first, the *original astonishment*; second *perplexity*; and third, the *curiosity* that leads on to *definite cognition* (emphasis added).

It is impossible to explain my original astonishment at El Greco's art. I first saw reproductions of his work more than fifty years ago. Since then I remained determined to find the key to his enigmatic paintings. This ideal I set myself took many years of research and viewing of his original works,¹ until I eventually completed my doctoral thesis entitled *El Greco's Achievement of his Personal Maniera* (2003). In that study I believe that I overcame my initial indefiniteness and found the key that unlocks the theme of angelic beings in his oeuvre as well as the unexplored meanings of some of his most spectacular works, such as the *Burial of the Count of Orgaz* (Maré 1999).

My academic research did not blunt my original astonishment, but deepened my perplexity, especially after I saw the El Greco retrospective exhibition in New York (2003) and studied the catalogue² in which scholars wrote articles on the artist's life and work that in many

ways could be termed as definitive. One aspect of El Greco's life and works continues to baffle art historians and other researchers is his supposed mysticism. Was he a mystic in the sense that he may have experienced visions that mystics such as Teresa of Ávila describe, or was he a genius gifted with the artistic ability and religious understanding capable of portraying mystical ecstasy according to the beliefs of the post-Tridentine Roman Catholic Church? These remain perplexing questions, even though both admirers and detractors of his work call him a "mystic". Also Harold Wethey (1962: 58) labelled El Greco "a Mannerist of an unprecedented mystical nature".

At this late stage in my life, perplexity became "curiosity" (Desmond's third phase), inspiring the present research in which I will attempt to find a way that leads on to "definite cognition" that, I acknowledge, may remain evasive – if not too ambitious for me – in understanding El Greco's multi-faceted paintings.

The period eye of the Cinquecento

The fifteenth century in Italy established the norms for art that informed the sixteenth century in Italy, but also caused a reaction. By simplifying the differences between the two periods one may say that in the former artists received their training in the study of both nature and classical art in order to achieve the qualities of rule, order and measure, as defined by Giorgio Vasari (1511-73) in his *Lives of the Artists* (first published in 1654).³ According to this art historian, the great artists of the sixteenth century, notably Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564) and Raphael Sanzio (1483-1520), added to the qualities of rule, order and measure the intuitive and correcting judgement of the eye, to create a *terza maniera*. This added quality of visual judgement in naturalistic representation, not strictly based on mathematical principles, relieved the period of the "dryness" caused by the strict adherence to rule, order and measure (derived from Vitruvius⁴), especially of the geometric construct of perspective. Thus it relieved artists of the rationalisation of sight.⁵ During the peak period of the Renaissance the *maniera*⁶ expressed by the artists that Vasari rate above all others – even including those of classical antiquity – was achieved not merely by the study of natural and artistic objects and the expression of rule, order and measure based on fixed conventions, but according to Elizabeth Cropper (1995: 169), what characterises their art is an element of *non so che*, that is

that rule which has a certain licence; that order which has a certain beauty and copious ornament; that measure which produces a certain grace beyond measurement; that drawing which possesses graceful ease and sweetness, especially between the "seen and not seen"; and of course, that beautiful *maniera* which comes from studying the most beautiful things, and which makes it possible to make everything beautiful.

Works by Renaissance artists were subject to a social construction of conventions for seeing the world, witnessed by the culturally relative "period eye" of the fifteenth century, postulated by Michael Baxandall (1972). To a large extent humanist criticism and public oratory shaped the visual art of the Renaissance, and Leon-Battista Alberti (1972: 84-5) furthermore privileged persuasion to virtue above individual style and emotion which he actually found suspect. Such rationalism did not prevail however, as Cropper (1995: 192) notes:

Under the new conditions of Petrarchism, however, the individuation and isolation of the affective subject that resulted from the conscious expression of frustrated and unconsummated passion was compensated for and comforted by the delights of producing works of art and the imaginings of creative solitude.

It was during the development of such creative freedom in the arts that Mannerism⁷ flourished when El Greco, aged 25, arrived in Cinquecento Venice where the expression *poesia*,⁸ in distinction to the naturalism of the Quattrocento, graced the “period eye”. However, El Greco’s apprenticeship to Renaissance art followed the road to the achievement of visual illusionism in painting via Albertian naturalism and perspective. This manner of painting he exchanged for Ficinian⁹ transcendence, which is the opposite of Albertian naturalism, as Joan Gadol (1969: 231 ff) points out. However, the concept of visual illusion in painting was so strong that Norman Land (1986: 207) states:

For Aretino, as for other Renaissance writers on art, criticism was understood as a response to a particular image. The work’s powerful illusion of nature engaged the critic’s *imaginatione* in such a way that he mistook the illusion for reality itself and it so stimulated his *fantasia* that he injected meaning into the subject and form of the painted image.

If the illusion of a representation based on visual reality could be so strong as Pietro Aretino suggests (in his *Lettere sull’arte*, first published in 1557), that illusion could be mistaken for reality, Ficinian abstraction from matter (later described by Erwin Panofsky in his *Idea*), could be even stronger, since it reflects the activity of consciously transformed reality. The image represented in transcendental art, according to Jonathan Goldberg (1976: 63-4), “mirrors neoplatonic epistemological precepts; the world it offers reflects the activity mind¹⁰ of and demands a similar action on the part of the viewer”. In transcendental art the illusion cannot be mistaken for reality itself, since reality is so imaginatively transformed into a pictorial reality that does not directly refer back to the world of nature, but evokes that of a Platonic higher order of subject and form, combined in an artistic *fantasia*.¹¹ In many respects El Greco’s mature works answer to this definition.

It is on the visual experience of two different beholders – the virtual backturned personality in the painting and the beholder in real space – that this research focusses. A selection of works by El Greco are mediated by an internal beholder in the form of a backturned figure, as a nodal figure in the composition, who views a mystical vision as the main theme presented in the painting, while the beholder in real space beholds the backturned figure, his vision and the total composition.

Kendall Walton (1976: 50) explores the question “whether there is ever anything comparable to narrators in depictive representation” and explains: “When we look at a picture it does not seem that there is a (fictional) personality mediating our access to the fictional world, not that we are presented with someone’s conception of it; we ‘see for ourselves’ what goes on in the picture-world.” Since he admits that the situation is not as simple as this, he postulates an “apparent artist” who serves some of the functions of a narrator and concludes: “In certain special cases there are in depictions fictional characters which are closely analogous to narrators” (Walton 1976: 61).

In this research a special case of fictional personalities or characters – called beholders – will be introduced as the key to the understanding a group of seven visionary works by El Greco. The criterion for the selection of works to be discussed in this chapter is based on what Michael Schwartz (1995: 231) designates as “the theme of displacements of beholding in Renaissance painting”. According to Schwartz (1995: 234), “Displacement into the pictorial thus signifies for the beholder ... one step closer to the heavenly”. He continues by discussing Masaccio’s (1401-28) *Tribute Money* in the Brancacci Chapel, Florence, painted during the mid-1420s, as an example of entrance into a Renaissance painting in which displacement occurs:

One figure, that of the tax collector, has his back turned and is in the foreground proximate to the space of the chapel. The figure is in a *contrapposto* stance which indicates movement, or at least the potential for movement, further into the virtual space. In its backturned aspect this figure parallels a beholder confronting the painting, while the (potential) stepping into the depth aligns with the idea of moving from the chapel into the pictorial space. In these ways beholding is thematized so as to assign the role of tax collector *within* the narrative scene. ... [T]here is displacement from the chapel into the image-world...



Figure 1
Masaccio, *Tribute Money*, 1425-27, fresco, Brancacci Chapel,
Santa Maria del Carmine, Florence (photograph: the autor).

The theme to be pursued in seven works by El Greco is that of the “backturned” beholder who confronts the represented world of the painting from inside its virtual space, and who mediates a beholder who confronts the painting from a stance in real space and experiences the displacement from reality into the image-world.

What the backturned figures as visual narrators witness are the spiritual regions represented in seven paintings by El Greco. In mystical terms these regions are explained by John Davidson (1995: 320):

The spiritual regions are – by definition – spiritual and non-material. They, like God, can be presumed to exist wherever the spirit dwells and it would seem that there is only one “place” where they could be. As Jesus himself taught, God and his creation are inside – attainable not through an ascent into matter, but through an ascent in being or consciousness, the two terms being used synonymously for out purposes. For this reason, access to the spiritual realms has often been termed an expansion of consciousness, leading to a state of super-consciousness.

One may say that El Greco’s backturned figures witness their own inner visions in a space of expanded consciousness. Access to the fictional world of the painting is mediated by these anonymous figures inside the pictures who behold a mystical vision with their backs turned to the viewer who is situated in real space, but imaginatively shares in the visionary pictorial space of expanded consciousness. What the backturned figures in El Greco’s paintings witness are the heavenly regions represented in the upper or registres of the paintings, most often replete with angels, saints or a symbol. In mystical terms these non-terrestrial, imaginary regions are spiritual

regions, representing a transcendental reality that induces a state of super-consciousness in both the beholder and the viewer, respectively situated inside and outside the presentation. The backturned figures witness their inner, “invisible”, visions in a space of expanded consciousness which are made accessible to the outside viewer.

Notwithstanding the influence of classical art in the Renaissance and the proliferation of scenes based on Greek and Roman mythology, the art of the sixteenth century in Italy (the Cinquecento) remained basically Christian, and it is on this aspect of El Greco’s religious representations that the analysis of the selected works will briefly focus.

El Greco painted various works which are based on New Testament texts,¹² most of which generate a sense of extra-terrestrial reality as the works discussed below attest. The seven paintings, dealt with in chronological order (in as far as chronology can be established), are the ones in El Greco’s oeuvre in which a male backturned figure, whose face is completely or almost completely obscured, and who points to or is depicted in a position implying that he is not looking askance, but gazing directly at a mystical vision. This figure is, without exception, the only one to do so in all of the compositions.

The mystical visions of El Greco’s backturned figures

El Greco’s *Saint Francis Receiving the Stigmata* (figure 2) shows Saint Francis in the wilderness, where he retired on 14 September 1224, the feast day of the Exaltation of the Cross, to contemplate Christ’s Passion.¹³ While in deep prayer on this occasion the kneeling saint had a vision of a seraph with outstretched wings inflicting the stigmata on him. El Greco actually portrays a miniaturised, horizontally situated crucified Christ up in the cloudy sky, whose crucifixion wounds are paralleled on the saint by means of direct light rays.

It is not the saint himself who sees the heavenly apparition because he is looking in front of him while undergoing the agony of the stigmata; it is his companion, the reclining figure with his back turned to the viewer.



Figure 2

El Greco, *Saint Francis Receiving the Stigmata*, early 1570s, tempera on panel, 28,8x20,6 cm, private collection, New York (source: Wethey 1962).

In *Christ Healing the Blind* (figure 3) the semi-nude backturned figure to the right of the centrally placed Christ whose eyesight has been restored points at a vision invisible to the viewer of the picture. His physical appearance can be described as “exalted”, in contrast to the muscle-bound mythical Hercules figure opposite him.¹⁴ The symbolism of “healing the blind” during the time of the Roman Catholic Church’s Counter Reformation. Also the strong contrast between the exalted body of the healed man and the pagan figure of Hercules might carry overtones of El Greco’s choice of direction away from the classical pagan influence on Renaissance art.¹⁵

This composition follows Alberti’s (1972: 83) guidelines for the *historia*¹⁶ genre: “I like there to be someone in the *historia* who tells the spectator what is going on.” The expression of this figure who looks out of the picture at the spectator, behind the healed man, is serene and detached, conveying his insight to the viewer and may thus represent the painter’s self-portrait.¹⁷ However, pointing in the opposite direction the backturned figure’s gaze is obviously away from the exterior viewer; whatever he is beholding is not visible to the viewer outside the painting. The scene from which the person who “informs” the viewer looks out also conceals the mystical scene. A dialectic is created between looking out into real space and looking into a hidden, but implied, vision, similar to that between the exalted figure and Hercules. This play of opposites enhances the meaning of the representation.



Figure 3
El Greco, *Christ Healing the Blind*, circa 1570-5, oil on canvas, 50x61 cm,
Galleria Nazionale, Parma (source: free internet).

In *The Adoration of the Name of Jesus* (figure 4) the main foreground figure is the kneeling figure of the Doge of Venice, Alvise I Mocenigo, with his back turned to the viewer. To his right King Philip II of Spain also kneels on a carpet. These dignitaries were the main participants in the so-called Holy League who defeated the Turks in the Battle of Lepanto in 1571. Also present in the earthly company, standing opposite the doge and the king, are Pope Pius V Ghislieri and various military commanders.¹⁸

Combining naturalistic representation and fantasy with a magnificent display of Venetian *colorito*,¹⁹ El Greco created a dense composition revealing a metaphysical view of existence as a chain of being, from below to above: the underworld of damnation in hell represented by the open jaws of a monster; the Christian world are represented by rulers, ecclesiastics and soldiers who venerate the name of Jesus; the intermediate world of purgatory is populated by the miniature figures of those awaiting either salvation or damnation, while in the upper register angels gathered in a circular formation celebrate the vision, situated in the exact centre of the top of the composition, of the name of Jesus by means of pointing and adoring gestures.

What the backturned Doge and all the human and angelic figures looking heavenwards see is a burst of glory in which a cross and three letters – *IHS* – an abbreviation in Latin of the Greek name of Jesus (*ΙΗΣΟΥΣ*) appear. The Doge, placed in the centre foreground, is honoured as the backturned figure, affording him the best viewing place of the mystical apparition.



Figure 4

El Greco, *The Adoration of the Name of Jesus* (alternatively called *An Allegory of the Holy League*), circa 1577-9, oil on canvas, 140x110 cm, de San Lorenzo de El Escorial (source: free internet).

In *The Resurrection* (figure 5) the vision is of the risen Christ, centrally placed in the upper half of the picture, naked except for fluttering drapery, holding his white banner of triumph and standing elegantly on a cloud in front of a burst of light. His gaze is downwards at the soldiers who are taken by surprise. Only the donor in a white mantle and the backturned soldier in the middle foreground look directly up at Christ who gestures heavenwards with his right hand. Looking over the right shoulder of the backturned soldier is a figure looking out at the viewer,

honouring the idea of the *historia*. Also the variety of poses derive from Alberti's lessons for a successful *historia*, that it should include a variety of figures in different poses.

The gestures of Christ and the group below, as well as the direction of their gazes, enhance the coherence of the composition, while the figure below Christ's feet remains sleeping, ignorant of the vision.



Figure 5
El Greco, *The Resurrection*, circa 1577-9, oil on canvas, 210x128 cm,
Church of Santo Domingo el Antiguo, Toledo (source: free internet).

In *The Burial of the Count of Orgaz* (figure 6) El Greco achieves a unity of form and content in a most unprecedented way: by juxtaposing the physical reality of the terrestrial world in the lower register of the painting with a visionary scene in the upper register, mediated by the action in the middle register. In this complex painting, El Greco's personal manner of expression clearly reinforces its meaning. The conventions applied to the celestial region are Mannerist in detail, while the earthly register is predominantly realistic.

The content of *The Burial* is a medieval legend, transformed “into a realistic reenactment of a funeral to convey a message. To emphasize the didactic intention, the artist included a young boy in the left foreground of the painting, pointing at the burial group (Schroth 1982: 3). It is assumed that the didactic lesson must have been immediately obvious to those viewers of the painting who were familiar with the doctrines of the CounterReformation. What was

believed, S. Schroth (1982: 7) asks, by the “noblemen who contemplate the event [and] view it with utmost studious detachment”? She goes on to answer: “Ruiz’ devotion to the saints brought him the reward on earth of a miraculous burial by the hands of saints; now the saints will reward him in heaven by interceding for his soul” (1982: 8).

The aid the soul receives in its ascent is vividly illustrated by the action of the angel, as it pushes the soul upwards with tremendous force. When one recalls that there was no specific reference to the soul of the Count in the contract for the painting, one realises how revealing is the prominence accorded it by El Greco.

David Davies (1984: 69) states that, in accordance with the Tridentine decree on Justification, the Count clearly “has merited the grace of salvation”. Even so, the Count’s salvation is not automatically assured and he has to face a “Particular Judgement, where it [ie. the soul] is assisted by the Virgin and the saints who intercede effectively on its behalf”.

Although, theologically speaking, there may still be some doubt about the Count’s salvation, the imminent physical action of the angel negates this possibility. It “ascends with his soul to heaven”, according to Davies (1984: 69). In a later statement, Davies (1990: 31) refers to the movement of the angel as “spiralling”. However, he does not elucidate the formal, expressive qualities of the angel’s movement: “The most important link in the chain between earth and heaven is the angel, who, at the hub of the composition, spirals heavenwards bearing the soul of the Count in the unsubstantial form of a child.”

Looking closely at the picture’s middle register it is clear that the angel cannot ascend any further, since his way is blocked by the narrow diameter of the funnellike cloud. It is not the angel, but rather the soul, stepping upwards with its right foot on the angel’s tensed hand, which will, in the very next moment, be forcibly pushed up into heaven. Nevertheless, Davies sensed that the movement of the angel is related to that of a spiral. His analysis, however, is incomplete. The angel is indeed transformed into a vortex and his powerful movement contributes to the depth of meaning inherent in his presence in the painting.

Stylistically, the most interesting register is the central one that depicts the angel that mediates between the realms of death and life. This figure is elegantly foreshortened and twisted into a most awkward posture, a posture suggestive of dramatic force. It is one of the most forceful figures that El Greco created to differentiate the transformation of one state of being into another in pictorial space. Through salvation, death is transformed into life, and the angel is the vital sign of the transforming force.²⁰

While a few of the mourners on the earthly zone, with their heads aligned horizontally, turn their eyes upwards as if aware of a transcendental occurrence, only the priest’s full attention is focussed on the heavenly vision, not the earthly burial. He is the nodal backturned figure who beholds the full vision of the angel’s effort to deliver the count’s soul to the awaiting heavenly court.

The miracle of the saints appearing at the count’s burial has a counterpoint in the upper zone where the vision constitutes the true miracle. The state of death in which the body is lowered into the earth is miraculously superseded by a celestial rebirth, of which the group of mourners that solemnly witness the burial is unaware. The beholder that stands in real space sees what the mourners at the burial scene, as well as what the backturned figure sees, and as such is able to synthesize the meaning of El Greco’s epic painting.



Figure 6
El Greco, *The Burial of the Count of Orgaz*, 1586-8, oil on canvas, 480x360 cm,
Parish Church of Santo Tomé, Toledo (source: free internet).

In the Prado *Resurrection* (figure 7) El Greco envisages Christ's resurrected body in "a blaze of glory" (Finaldi 2003: 174), standing erect and holding a white banner of victory in a singularly elevated position above the earth and a diverse group of seemingly confused human figures. All these terrestrial figures (except one sleeping helmeted soldier) seem to express an epiphany, but in diverse ways, gesturing forcefully in reaction to their awareness of the unexpected cosmic event and its radiating force.

Only one figure beholds the complete vision of Christ's exalted body.²¹ The Roman soldier who has fallen backwards and prominently occupies the immediate foreground space, with the back of his head turned to the beholder outside the painting, gazes directly at the elevated Christ figure. His sword, clutched forcefully in his muscular right arm, is a direct and unmistakable pointer at the elevated Christ figure whose relaxed physique forms a striking contrast with that of the prostrate figure of the soldier. This contrast demarcates the difference between the exalted figure and the earthly; between the spiritual Christ who has overcome the gravitational force of the earth and the fallen soldier whose physical strength is subject to it.

Like the other backturned figures in El Greco's oeuvre, the prostrate figure of the soldier in the *Resurrection* mediates the vision of the risen Christ for the beholder in real space, enabling or her to gaze upwards from a "fallen" state to a state of resurrected grace.



Figure 7
El Greco, *The Resurrection*, late 1590s, oil on canvas, 275x127 cm,
Museo Nacional del Prado. Madrid (source: free internet).

The group of apostles and a woman surrounding the Virgin in *The Pentecost* (figure 8) on whom the flame of the Holy Spirit descends may be collectively described in Neoplatonic terms as those of whom “the sight is so clear that consciousness ... is no longer and self is no more” (Edman 1925: 76). They are those who are “at last united with what they have always been in origin; they are seeing and being the light which they do not even know that they see. ... It is life and thought, always in Plotinus identical, passed into rapture of attainment, existence turned into ecstasy” (Edman 1925: 76). The ecstasy of the group emanates from the Holy Spirit in the traditional symbol of a dove expanding its wings in a bust of light in the dome-shaped enclosure above the congregation being baptised in fiery flames.

The figures directly under the vision are all presented as experiencing an epiphany and aware of the supernatural occurrence, all gesturing in various expressive ways, for example the figure to the upper left side who raises his hand in a gesture of ecstasy.²² All the figures, except the person second from the upper right of the picture who looks out at the viewer, have their heads raised towards the vision of the Holy Spirit, but only the kneeling backturned figure in the foreground gazes directly at the heavenly revelation. The other backturned figure, placed to the right in the centre of the picture, shields his eyes with his right forearm as if the vision is blinding him: he therefore is not considered to be the main beholder who guides the vision of the outside beholder.



Figure 8
 El Greco, *The Pentecost*, circa 1596-1600, oil on canvas, 275x127 cm,
 Museo Nacional del Prado. Madrid (source: free internet).

In *The Pentecost* El Greco once again presents a figure looking out of the picture, making eye contact with the beholder in real space as prescribed for the *historia*, and a nodal figure who gazes directly into the visionary apparition, thus guiding the beholder's gaze into transcendental space. Clearly, the opposite directionality of the protagonists' gazes is meaningful. Compositionally these gazes relate the outside world and the image-world (as phrased in the quotation by Schwartz above).

Conclusion

In an increasingly subtle way El Greco developed a play of *coincidentia oppositorum*, by juxtaposing backturned figures beholding a personal vision in the image-world with figures gazing out the picture at the viewer. The super-conscious and normal consciousness – the inside and outside – as well as above and below, are juxtaposed. The contrasting figures and directions actually become the painter's formal means of creating vertically extended multi-layered compositions.

Not all the visions that El Greco attribute to backturned beholders are the same. They are all different and presented in different contexts, beholding their own inner visions in a space of expanded consciousness. El Greco's projections of "imaginings of creative solitude" (Cropper 1995: 192, quoted above) is related to the mental state of "super-consciousness" as postulated by Davidson (1995: 320, quoted above). By means of the backturned beholders

El Greco invented a unique way of reconciling reality and the transcendental. As succinctly observed by the historian Theodore Zeldin (1998: 12), he tried “to paint the human and the divine intertwined...”, as the analysis of his seven paintings with backturned figures prove.

Notes

- 1 In this regard I owe a debt of gratitude to my mentor, the late Prof Harald E. Wetthey, who accompanied me in various Spanish museums and generously shared his extensive knowledge of El Greco with me.
- 2 See Davies and Elliot (2003).
- 3 See the “Proemio alle terza parte” in *Le opere di Giorgio Vasari* (1906, volume 4: 8-9).
- 4 The idea that beauty is a quantifiable fact derives from Vitruvius.
- 5 I borrow the term “rationalisation of sight” from William Ivins (quoted in Shipley 1993: 125).
- 6 *Maniera* has been variously interpreted. However, for the purposes of the present research the author subscribes to the succinct summary by Elizabeth Cropper (1992: 14) of its formal qualities: “Through a deliberately conceived contrapuntal relationship between new (and quite specific) conventions, derived from the antique, and the innovative manipulation, even violation, of those selfsame principles, *maniera* achieved its own elegance and formality. *Maniera* offered an alternative to the classic ideal of the Renaissance.”
- 7 Mannerism is derived from the Italian *maniera* as used by Giorgio Vasari. For an overview of the style, see Finocchio (2011).
- 8 *Venetian painters* achieved brilliance in colour, luminosity and a subtlety of modelling which contradicted the linear (*disegno*) ideal of central Italy. Above all, Venetians believed in the expressiveness of colour. For this, Dolce was the main spokesman. He believed that “paintings need to move the spectator” (Roskill 1968: 187), and these words may also be taken as a definition of the Venetian’s concept of “*poesia*” which, in Venice, melded with *colorito*.
- 9 Marcilio Ficino (1433-99), the founder of the Florentine Academy, was a humanist philosopher of the early Italian Renaissance. His most notable influence was as a reviver of Neoplatonism and translator of Plato’s works into Latin. See Ficino (1576) and Collins (1974).
- 10 Since “mind” is a rather vague term, I substitute the following description: imaginative and conscious transformation of sense perception to achieve a transcendental reality in a work of art.
- 11 In the sixteenth century Italian artists aspired to acquired a personal *maniera* (see Maré 2001). To be able to work *di maniera*, meant working from memory, as opposed to working from a model. This praxis derives from the *ars rhetorica* in which *memoria* was the essential quality. Thus the process of working *di maniera* implies working *di fantasia*, that is the artist’s ability to transform recollected reality into a personal and more abstracted or idealised manner of artistic expression.
- 12 See Maré (2009).
- 13 Bray (2003: 102) attributes the setting of the picture to the description by Thomas de Celano (1200-66), who wrote a biography of Saint Francis.
- 14 See Maré (2010).
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 The *historia* [Italian: *istoria*], as described by Alberti, not only deals with the representation of narrative but also appropriates rhetorical devices, such as gestures, into its scheme. By means of these devices, mute figures on the twodimensional canvas communicate the narrative or the ideas which the painter wishes to convey to the viewer. Alberti (1972: 77) considers the *historia* to be the greatest work of the painter and maintains that the most effective model is one that “holds the eye of the learned and unlearned spectator for a long while, with a sense of pleasure and emotion”. The *historia* thus had to communicate with the spectator on an emotional level. It was also required to include a variety of figures in various poses and serve a didactic purpose.
- 17 The portraits in the group have been identified by Christiansen (2003: 84).

- 18 For the identification of the terrestrial group, see Finaldi (2003: 126).
- 19 See note 8.
- 20 See Maré (1999).
- 21 See Maré (2010).
- 22 See Maré (2008).

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Memorial complexity and political change: Paul Kruger's statue's political travels through space and time

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For more than a century the statue of Paul Kruger has served as a focal point of political uncertainty and change in South Africa. Since Paul Kruger's statue was first brought to Pretoria after its completion just before the Anglo-Boer War it has been moved from location to location in a process of political manipulation until its eventual positioning on Church Square in the city centre. However, in post-apartheid South Africa it seems the political process of forced relocation is to be perpetuated, but this time as part of the post-colonial reconstruction process. The article aims to investigate the aspect of memorial complexity and its relationship with the underpinning political change in South Africa and the prospect of the statue's relocation sometime in the future. The importance and effect of a nexus between a statue and its location on the possible relocation of Paul Kruger's statue, is also highlighted.

Keywords: Paul Kruger, Paul Kruger's statue, Church Square, Prince's Park, Station Park

Gedenkkompleksiteit en politieke verandering: die politieke migrasie van Paul Kruger se standbeeld deur ruimte en tyd

Die standbeeld van Paul Kruger het vir meer as 'n eeu as die 'opvanger' van politieke onsekerheid en verandering in Suid-Afrika gedien. Sedert die standbeeld voor die Anglo-Boere-oorlog na sy voltooiing na Suid-Afrika gebring is, is dit as deel van 'n proses van politieke manipulasie van standplaas na standplaas verskuif. In post-apartheid Suid-Afrika wil dit voorkom of die proses van politieke manipulasie geperpetueer gaan word, maar hierdie keer as deel van die proses van post-koloniale rekonstruksie. Die artikel ondersoek die verskynsel van monument kompleksiteit in sy onderlingende verhouding met politieke verandering in Suid-Afrika. Die ondersoek word met spesiale verwysing na Paul Kruger se standbeeld se moontlik hervestiging in die toekoms gedoen. Die belangrikheid van 'n nexus tussen 'n standbeeld en sy plasing word in die artikel beklemtoon en die effek wat dit moontlik op die moontlike herplasing van Paul Kruger se standbeeld mag uitoeven.

Sleutelwoorde: Paul Kruger, Paul Kruger se standbeeld, Kerkplein, Prince's Park, Stasiepark

The ongoing process of post-colonial reconstruction in South Africa has developed into a political campaign to rename streets, towns and cities, but has also extended to reconstruction and relocation of memorials and statues of previous eras. Sometimes there is historical justification for the construction and reconstruction of monuments and even for the replacement of "colonial names" with more indigenous ones. However, it seems problematic that the whole reconstruction process is apparently happening on an ad hoc basis, with little or no broad coordinated planning. This feeds an impression that political motives are the main drivers, with little or no historical and logical justification. In the longer term this will blur reflections of historical developments of the past. Such a one-sided mindset about monuments and statues produces few dividends for the nation building project. The strong political undercurrents of the present reconstruction process confirm the dictum that politics will always be the "right to decide who gets what, when and how" (D. Jackson & R. Jackson 2003: 115).

The capital city, Pretoria, has not been immune to this (political) post-colonial reconstruction process, as illustrated by the erection of Freedom Park and the statue of Chief Tshwane in front of the City Hall, both of which embody the new regime's symbols and values. Although the addition of the monument and the statue has been welcomed, both have a questionable historical

basis with little or no anthropological nexus between them and their present placements. In the broader political context, the motivation for their placement and the pressure to erect them seems predominantly a matter of post-colonial reconstruction, ignoring broader historical, anthropological and nation building realities. However, for the moment the existing statues and memorial from the “colonial” era in Pretoria remain untouched in their present locations.

Yet prevailing optimism may be premature in the light of the dramatic demographic changes in Pretoria’s central business district and in and around the city centre. The demographic changes at the city centre have already resulted in the first calls for the removal of the statue of Paul Kruger on Church Square to make way for a statue of a fallen struggle hero, Chris Hani (R. Ntshingila 2010: 1). So the “untouchable” status of the existing monuments and statues in Pretoria seem threatened: it’s highly unlikely they will retain their status in the future. In view of the demographic changes in Pretoria’s city centre, it is understandable that a statue of a struggle hero may be more acceptable to the current youth structures of the ANC Youth League in Tshwane, who clearly lack an understanding of the magnitude and complexities of history.

In the light of currently unfolding events, it’s unlikely that Paul Kruger’s statue will escape party politics and the urge to speed up the process of post-colonial reconstruction. Memorialising will always be a contested endeavour in a volatile and ever-changing political environment such as South Africa’s. However, within the historical context of Pretoria, this anticipated relocation of Paul Kruger’s statue is nothing new, with its chequered history in the face of the freakish, opportunistic and volatile nature of politics. Therefore, if Paul Kruger’s statue is relocated, it will be its fifth and (hopefully) its last migration in a long historical process of political manipulation. It is doubtful that any other public statue in South Africa’s history has had to endure the same travels from venue to venue and exposure to the volatility of short-term party politics.

The history of the Paul Kruger statue is one of travels in space and time in a sea of political instability. It is a tale of initial political alienation, followed by a period of gradual political acceptance and then again a further period of partial political alienation. In an illogical, bizarre manner, the Paul Kruger statue seemed perpetually doomed to be the focus for political controversy, pressure and instability in a hostile political environment.

The migration of Paul Kruger’s statue started more than a hundred years ago when it arrived at Delagoa Bay from Italy on the eve of the Anglo-Boer War. For political reasons the British occupiers did not want the statue to cross the border into South Africa, for they feared inflaming emotions in an already volatile situation. When the war ended, the statue was allowed to be brought into South Africa, but banished into political obscurity to the open grounds of Prince’s Park on the western outskirts of Pretoria. The statue remained at the park until the political climate calmed to such an extent that it could be welcomed back into the city’s welcoming political fold. However in 1925 the statue was moved again, to another perimeter of the city, the Railway Station, marginally within the city boundaries. Although the statue was now closer to its symbolic heart and intended locus, Church Square, it was still alienated from the political warmth of the city.

The political climate improved for those who valued the symbolic values embodied by Paul Kruger and the doors of the inner city opened for the statue as they took the reins of power. Although the statue was destined to travel one more time, this time it was into the welcoming core of the city, Church Square, the same spot that saw Paul Kruger’s first inauguration as President on 9 May 1883 (D.W. Krüger 1961: 272). But the idea that this last move had finally

completed the statue's political encircling manoeuvres around the fringes of Pretoria has not been realised. In the light of recent political events, and in the context of uncoordinated post-colonial reconstruction of monuments unfolding all over post-apartheid South Africa, it seems the final chapter on the migration of Paul Kruger's statue has yet to be written.

The objective of this article is to investigate the broader issues surrounding Paul Kruger's statue with a view to explaining present political developments. The investigation will not only be in relation to the statue's historical background, but also with reference to its symbolic memorialisation of the past and the volatility of politics resulting in its insecurity. The migration of the statue will be described with specific reference to the specific locations where it was erected, the reasons underpinning the decision to erect the statue at that specific venue, and also the nexus between the statue and the various sites. In the concluding section the factors presently threatening the statue's location on Church Square will also be explored and a possible alternative location proposed for the statue in the event of relocation.

Memorials and statues in an ongoing world of political transformation and change

Obviously the erection of new memorials and the continued presence of existing memorials will remain a contested endeavour in an unpredictable and ever-changing political environment. E.A. Maré (2007: 36) states: "Memory has always had political or ideological overtones, but each epoch has found its own meaning in memory."

In post-apartheid South Africa the current volatile and changing political climate ensures that the symbols and memorials of the previous regime will not escape the persistence of shifting values and changing meaning. It is an inescapable reality that the values and history symbolised in Paul Kruger's statue, for example, remain a world apart from the disposition of today's new generation who spend their leisure time in its shadow and on the lawns surrounding its plinth.

It is also inescapable that the memorialisation of past events in today's post-apartheid South Africa, such as the struggle against apartheid, will be a powerful driving force to memorialise and honour a new generation of political heroes and their triumphs. S. Ware (2008: 1) emphasises that the etymological roots of "monuments" (statues) and "memory" are linked, because both evolve from the meanings of "be reminded" and "be mindful". Therefore, in emerging and consolidating nations such as South Africa, new memorials will continue to play an important role for the memorialising of a new regime's heroes and values in an effort "to be reminded and to be mindful" of what underpinned the process of building a new political hegemony.

From a post-colonial vantage point, Maré (2007: 37) points out how new incoming societies, with their own cultural and ideological identities, establish monuments and memorials to create their own rallying points. However, from a broader post-colonial perspective, the process could also be taken a step further to serve to "correct" those political and historical inequalities of the past which present the greatest challenge to the new system.

In South Africa this phenomenon of post-colonial reconstruction has already gained momentum, recently giving strong impetus for most of the monuments and statues that have sprung up in city centres, on hilltops and in open city squares with a view to memorialising the values of the new regime. However, this is no new phenomenon in the ebb and flow of politics: when the Voortrekker Monument was built its *raison d'être* was also challenged. In response M.C Botha (1952: 15) legitimised the building of the monument with the assertion that the impressive structure should primarily "force" Voortrekker descendants to think about the

sacrifices made by their forebears in order to create an independent nation. “When entering the Monument the visitor must be overwhelmed with gratitude towards God.” He emphasised that the Monument should remind descendants that they should be mindful of and thankful for past sacrifices. Here memorials play an important role to unite the past with the present and to weld ancestors and their descendants into one cohesive unit.

No fault should be found with political construction of new monuments as long as there is historical justification and a historical nexus with location. However, this process of memorialisation should be distinguished from the political reconstruction process, which is underpinned by the fact that it does not add to, but removes, past manifestations of the memorialisation of previous regimes. When memorialisation is based on the notion of honouring past heroes who were not honoured for their sacrifices in the past, then the motivation is at least understandable. However, if the aim of reconstruction is to remove and replace the previous regime’s symbols then the process gets contaminated, because it sets the stage to perpetuate change and instability into the future.

Furthermore, memorialisation should be done on the basis of compelling historical evidence which supports the erection of the new monuments or statues. In addition, there should also be a legitimate nexus between the location (such as a historical heritage site) and the memorial, so as to legitimise the erection of that memorial. As Ware (2008: 1) emphasises, memorial design is always invested in specificity and local concerns, within a context of national preoccupations. The design must therefore have specific significance and in terms of space and location should form a reciprocal interrelationship with its location that could strengthen and legitimise its presence. Paul Kruger’s statue on Church Square illustrates this intrinsic value of the relation between a statue and its location, because of its specific historical and political meaning within its spatial environment.

The geographical position of Paul Kruger’s statue and its spatial relation to the location and the buildings strongly reinforce its intrinsic values and meaning. The statue reflects the former President as a forceful presence with an air of steadfast resolution, the eyes cast slightly downward as though directed at a crowd gathered below, perhaps suggesting his demeanour during his inauguration or his stance standing on the steps of the old Raadzaal across the street. The statue, larger than life-size, embodies the authority of the state and political dominance, reflected in the sash displaying state symbols and the staff signifying authority. The four armed burghers on a lower level, forming a small protective laager around the plinth, represent the “volk” who are prepared to protect their sovereignty. The four Boer sentries portray a strong sense of loyalty --- but also of despondency, following the loss of their Republic (H. Heydenrych & A. Swiegers 1999: 120).

At the height of ZAR power the three sources of authority and power were reflected by three buildings that formed a quadrangle of state power around the square. The Raadzaal building reflected political authority, while judicial authority was represented by the Palace of Justice, and the church radiated religious authority. In a mutual, reciprocal manner these symbols interacted with Paul Kruger’s statue for many years, although the church was dismantled in later years. However, it should be remembered that, from 1954 when Paul Kruger’s statue was erected on Church Square, subsequent political events culminated in the formation of a Republic which legitimised the values that Kruger stood for. It was therefore no coincidence that the formalities for the establishment of the South African Republic took place on Church Square on 31 May 1961.

The history of Paul Kruger's statue is therefore one of migration through space and time as dictated by the volatility of politics. In the next sections the underlying political currents that spearheaded the migration will be outlined; this will enable the discussion to offer a prognosis on what the future holds for this symbol of former Afrikaner independence.

It started as a gift

It was Sammy Marks (1884–1920), a Jewish entrepreneur, who set the whole process in motion. He was very prominent in the local affairs of the ZAR and enjoyed enormous financial benefits from a close relationship with President Paul Kruger and his extended family, including Frikkie Eloff, the President's son-in-law. Marks, flush with funds after his firm's stock-market success in August 1885, offered the city of Pretoria 10 000 pounds for the project to erect a marble statue of Paul Kruger at a site to be chosen by the President himself (Mendelsohn 1991: 89).

Marks's gesture to demonstrate his loyalty to the ZAR by honouring the President with a statue was not untypical of an age when Queen Victoria was memorialised on city squares and other locations throughout her extended empire. While Kruger's statue was certainly validated by his impact and contribution to the ZAR, this step was a radical departure for a Republic which had not previously chosen to honour its leaders in a specific way. The nature of Boer society and Kruger's informal presidential style certainly did not create the need for the elevation of a living president in the form of a statue, which smacked of the monarchical (Mendelsohn 1991: 89).

The modest reaction to the decision to honour Paul Kruger as a statesman of those in the President's residence is illustrated by his wife's response when FW Reitz and his son, Denys, visited the President shortly before the Anglo-Boer War. They were looking at a picture of the statue as she offered them coffee, when she suggested that they could at least have considered hollowing out the top hat so as make a drinking fountain for the birds (D. Reitz 1990: 9). In a similarly modest gesture, Kruger had earlier indicated to Marks that the less important square of Burgers Park was his preferred location for his statue.

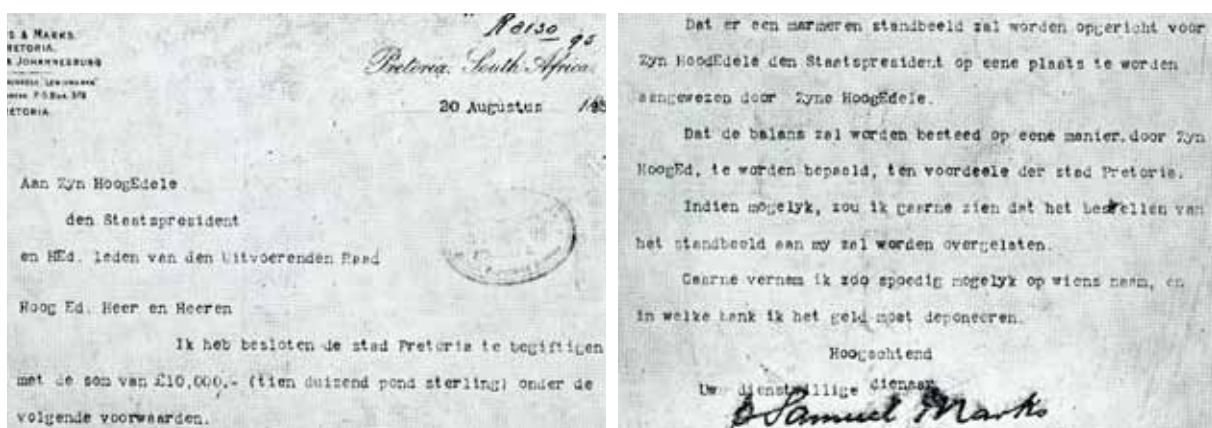


Figure 1

Sammy Marks letter to the ZAR in which he donated the money for the erection of Paul Kruger's statue (scanned from SP Engelbrecht [ed.] 1952:98).

In spite of Kruger's objections, Marks persuaded the President that Church Square, right in the heart of the capital, would be a more appropriate place for the statue, in order that "every visitor to the capital [may] view the statue". Anton van Wouw, relatively inexperienced at that stage,

had been chosen as the sculptor to complete the work in Europe. (The Kruger statue ultimately became the most famous of Van Wouw's public works.) In the interim Marks had erected a base of red Scottish granite for the statue on Church Square where, as a result of political events, it was destined to remain solitary and unadorned for many years.

In mid-1899, barely months before the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902), the statue, the four bas reliefs (depictions of landmarks in Kruger's career) and four Boer sentries were completed and despatched to South Africa. However, Marks's tribute became an early casualty of the War: the statue ended up in a Delagoa warehouse where it remained to the end of hostilities (Mendelsohn 1991: 90). It was said that Lord Milner made sure the statue remained in Delagoa Bay to prevent Krugerism from returning to the country in any form. In the meanwhile Marks had lost his enthusiasm for the project and opportunistically started to hoist the Union Jack at his Zwartkoppies residence, just outside Pretoria. How sad that such a magnificent artwork was kept from the public, but that is the mercurial nature of politics.

Paul Kruger's statue and the move from Delagoa Bay to Prince's Park: allowed back, but not in!

In a climate of peace and reconciliation after the war, widespread pressure brought Paul Kruger's statue back to Pretoria. However, although the political climate had become more favourable, the time was still not right to place the statue at its original intended location on Church Square. Instead a fountain financed by Marks was erected on the spot before this was moved to the Zoo four years later (*Record* 2007: 27).

It soon transpired that although the Paul Kruger statue would be allowed back to Kruger's former capital, it would not be allowed into the square at the city centre. In accordance with the political climate an open piece of land, partly used as a racing track, was identified as another locus for the statue. This open piece of land, south of Church Street and opposite the old cemetery, was first known in 1892 as Volkspark but was later renamed Westpark. In 1894 there was another change of name to Nieuwe Park, followed by yet another, during the Anglo-Boer War, to Westeinde Park. The last name change occurred in 1904 when the park was rechristened to its present name, Prince's Park. The name was given when Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein, a sister of Edward VII, visited Pretoria to see the grave of her son, a member of Lord Roberts's staff who died of enteric fever during the war and was buried in the cemetery opposite the park. She planted the first tree in the park, described by the local press as "... a vigorous-looking miniature oak tree – and arboreal symbol of Britain's might (Peltzer in S.P. Engelbrecht 1955: 331). The park's outer section was still part of a horse racetrack, but the whole area was known thereafter as Prince's Park (T. Andrews & J. Ploeger 1989: 52–3). The base of red Scottish granite that was originally intended as the plinth for Paul Kruger's statue was removed from Church Square to Prince's Park.

During the first few years after the formation of the Union in 1910 the political climate was unstable. General L. Botha reshuffled his cabinet in an effort to stabilise government, excluding General J.B.M. Hertzog after a clash with a cabinet colleague. In response to the harsh treatment of Hertzog, H.S. Webb and Tielman Roos organised a mass meeting at Prince's Park. Their decision to hold the meeting at Prince's Park was certainly influenced by the presence of the Kruger statue (still covered and yet to be unveiled). The statue had certainly raised the symbolic status of the open park and prompted the decision to use it for such an important political meeting (Geyser 1975: 113).

When Webb was inspecting Prince's Park beforehand to decide whether a stage was needed for the speakers, he noticed large heaps of soil that had been dumped at the park, and immediately cancelled the trolleys planned as a makeshift stage, thinking the heaps would serve the purpose. However, the heaps were later discovered to be compost and not soil, which inspired General De Wet's impromptu, clever remark, immortalised in years to come. Indirectly referring to General Botha, in England at the time, he observed he would rather find himself standing on a heap of dung among his people than on a glittering platform among strangers (Geyser 1975: 113)! More than 5 000 supporters gathered at the Park to show their support for Hertzog and his views on the position of the Afrikaner within the 1910 Union.

Paul Kruger's statue, without the four figures at the base of the plinth that "disappeared" during the war, was inaugurated a few months later. Botha decided to keep his distance from proceedings for political reasons and he asked Beyers to do the honours (Engelbrecht 1955: 99). The statue remained at Prince's Park for the next 12 years, but those supporters who aimed to bring the statue to Church Square were still actively campaigning for its erection closer to the symbolic heart of the city.



Figure 2
Paul Kruger's statue in Prince's Park, but without the four figures around the plinth
(scanned from SP Engelbrecht [ed.] 1952: 98).

The political climate changed favourably when Hertzog and the National Party took over government. The South African Women's Federation was relentless and put pressure on

government to move the statue to a more prominent location. This opened the way for removal of Paul Kruger's statue to a more prestigious location, although still not to the most elevated position on Church Square.

From Prince's Park to Station Park

Exactly one century after his birth on 10 October 1925, Paul Kruger's statue was unveiled at its new location at Station Park on the southern perimeter of Pretoria (Engelbrecht 1952: 99). For the first time the monument included the four burghers on the lower section of the plinth. General Smuts played a major role in locating them and negotiating their return from Lord Kitchener's estate in England and from the war memorial at Chatham's College, in order to take their rightful place on the plinth (P. Joyce 1989: 98–99).

The migration of the statue to Station Park was the result of political flux, ending in an almost 45 percent encircling movement around the city to the southern entrance. The prevailing political situation in 1925 did not allow the statue to be erected any closer to the symbolic political power centre of the city and the country.

Paul Kruger's statue was erected on a square directly in front of the Railway Station, facing directly into the north axis line of Market Street, which led to the political heart of the city, Church Square. The Square was just out of sight from the statue, hidden within a quadrangle of buildings which included the Palace of Justice and the old Raadzaal.



Figure 3
Paul Kruger's statue in front of the Station, displaying the four burghers around the plinth
(scanned from SP Engelbrecht [ed.] 1952:98).

The lawn around the statue in Station Park Square was later replaced by a lavish Italian garden with small fountains to form an outer perimeter. On a deeper political and symbolic level, the

placing of the statue in Station Park had a variety of hidden meanings. One meaning associated with the new location was that there was a change in the political climate in the country, and that gradually more and more past icons were being welcomed back to the administrative and political fold of the new South African state.

The station area also had further significance, because it initially served as a triumphal place on 1 January 1893 when for the first time the former Boer Republic gained a rail connection with the outside world. However, it also signalled a sad moment for the ZAR, because Kruger left Pretoria by rail (though not from the railway station) when the British forces approached the capital.

Although the political climate had improved, the statue was still not at its rightful location. Many individuals and many cultural organisations were unhappy with the site and determined to see the statue moved to Church Square (Heydenrych & Swiegers 1999: 120). The city fathers were under persistent political pressure to move the monument to its rightful place on Church Square. In 1939 the city fathers eventually succumbed and voted for removal of the monument to Church Square (Engelbrecht 1952: 99). However, the Second World War (1939–45) and its aftermath were to delay this final migration of Paul Kruger's statue for more than a decade.

From Station Park to Church Square

The National Party's victory under Dr DF Malan in 1948 spearheaded the next migration of Paul Kruger's statue, this time directly into the political, symbolic, hallowed heart of the city, Church Square. From a historical and architectural perspective, it seemed the statue had at last reached its final resting place when it was lifted from its plinth in front of Station Park and transported down Market Street to Church Square. Predictably the Nationalists capitalised on the event when prime minister Dr DF Malan unveiled the statue on 10 October 1954 (Joyce 1989: 98–99).

This act concluded the long travels of Paul Kruger's statue through space and time which started at Delagoa Bay, then moved to Prince's Park and Station Park and finally to Church Square. In symbolic terms, the last migration to Church Square established a harmonious balance between the statue's symbolic value and the historical significance of Church Square as a true heritage site, spanning the history of the former Boer Republic (1855) to the present modern state.

Pretoria may be named after the Voortrekker leader, Andries Pretorius, but for most of its existence the city's strongest association has been with only one man, Paulus Stephanus Johannes Kruger (1825–1904) who, as President of the ZAR (1883–1900), dominated the military and political events of Pretoria and the ZAR. To this day his presence in the city remains real and lingers with tangible reminders, such as his unpretentious one-storey house in Church Street, in street names and, most importantly, his statue on Church Square, with its constant shadow in the heart of his city.

As for the architectural splendour of Church Square, it should be remembered that these buildings were the legacy of the distinguished men whom Kruger appointed during his four terms as President. They included Sytze Wopkes Wierda, Willem de Zwaan and Frans Soff, all of whom made a profound impact on Church Square with their architectural skills (E. Meiring 1980: 9).

Over the years, Paul Kruger's statue on Church Square has become an icon symbolising the

history of the city, the former ZAR and a bygone era. This symbolic political quality influenced subsequent political events as Afrikaner prowess gained strength.

One of the most significant events at Church Square was as a venue to symbolise the new state's pinnacle of political power. C.R. Swart was sworn in as President (symbolic position) of the Republic of South Africa in 1961 on the same balcony of the Raadzaal where Lord Kitchener addressed his troops on 5 June 1900. The sombre, imposing statue of Paul Kruger "witnessed" the event, "looking down" at the large congregation assembled around its plinth.

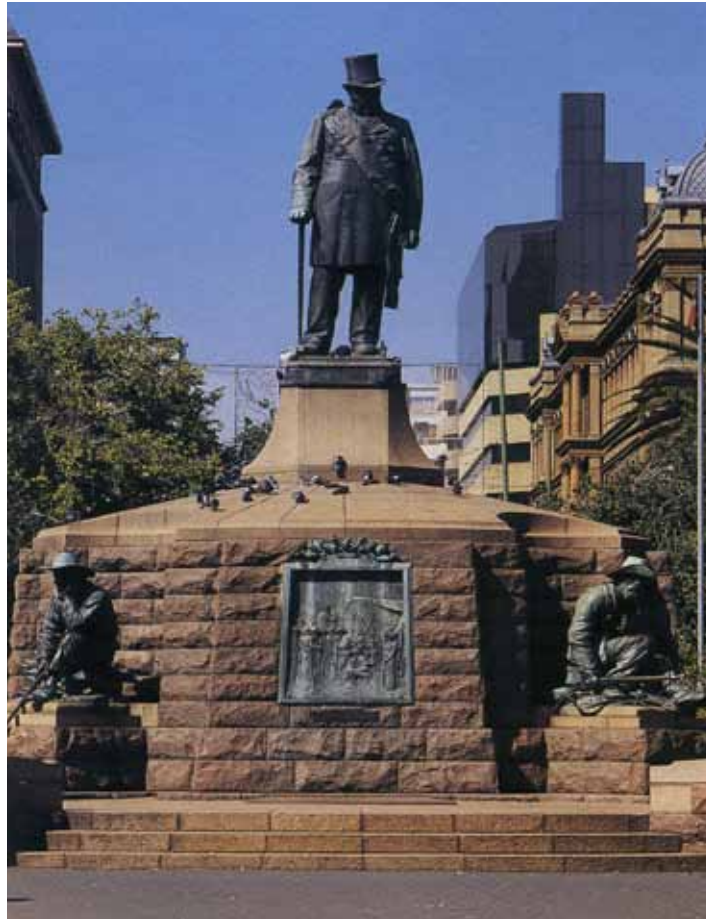


Figure 4
Paul Kruger's statue on Church Square in the city centre
(scanned from Heydenrych & Swiegers 1999: 120).

City centres, Church Square and changing times

Traditionally, city centres have always been the most inspiring and architecturally imposing parts of a city (G.M. de Waal 1977: 16). Old city centres represented the birth of the city, and their architectural gravitas enabled town fathers to display their political prowess in the grandeur of the public buildings. From the centre of the square, the rest of the town and city developed outwards incrementally, like the spokes of a wheel.

However, the square remained the focal point, the heartbeat and the core of the city in spite of the development outwards. In his novel *Die mugu* Etienne le Roux wrote about the importance of a city and city centres, when he described a city as a neo-cosmos of its citizens.

Even the English poet Robert Browning could in those days before the advent of inner city decay enthusiastically declare “O, a day on the city square, there is no such pleasure in life” (W. Jordaan 2010: 19).

The unfortunate reality is that city squares have changed dramatically since the idyllic days when they gave a city its heart. In the modern era of urban decay the phenomenon of the upper middle class and the wealthy migrating to the sprawling leafy suburbs, and subsequent withdrawal into suburbia, has largely sucked the life out of city centres. The affluent spend their leisure time in gated communities and in luxurious shopping centres in wealthy suburbs, hardly ever setting foot elsewhere, let alone in the city centre. This aloof absence means city centres have largely lost their symbolic significance. Ossip Zadkine’s grotesque statue in Rotterdam ably reflects the notion that cities in the modern era have become structures without soul (Jordaan 2010: 19).

Pretoria has not escaped that fate, and the migration by the predominantly white middle class away from the city centre has resulted in the influx of a community whose demographic values do not align with the history, symbolism and values of Church Square. Therefore, although the Paul Kruger statue still occupies the dominant position on the square, the spaces around and perimeters of the square have undergone a dramatic transformation over the last few decades. The buildings around Church Square, once the political, judicial and religious power centre of the state and the city, have been drained of their political gravitas. The old Raadzaal building now houses municipal offices and the Palace of Justice no longer forms the centre of judicial activity.

The generation of predominantly white people who once shared and valued the same political objectives and values as Kruger has retreated and disappeared into suburban laagers on the fringes of the city. The new generation of city dwellers who have moved into the city centre and those who spend their time on Church Square every day share few of the values represented by the statue and see very little justification for its further presence on the square. This reality raises an urgent question about the nexus between memorial or statue and heritage site as a location that justifies and legitimises the presence of that memorial or statue.

To fully understand the place, meaning and underlying values of a monument requires an understanding of the location in terms of its anthropological and historical nexus. The challenge for the placement of monuments and statues is to understand their value and meaning and to search for an applicable nexus with historical or political events and/or sacred and religious places, which could provide the contextual framework to underpin these values.

The reasons for the original intention to position the Kruger statue on Church Square have already been explained. However, before the statue could take its place on Church Square political motives were to force its migration to a variety of locations, some with little or no nexus as a heritage site or any historically underpinning reason for having the statue there.

Historically, Church Square formed the symbolic heart of Pretoria and for more than 150 years has witnessed dramatic and critical political and historical events. Historically, it was critically important for the statue to remain at a place where a strong nexus exists which has been symbolically institutionalised in the collective mind of the people of the city and the country. The nexus and the integration of the two are so strong that a separation will almost inevitably also mean surrendering their interrelated intrinsic meaning.

As Maré (2007: 36) reminds us, memorials and statues inevitably cast a specific memory

in stone and the structure cannot be modified; but, unfortunately, meaning can be reinterpreted. Paul Kruger's statue was erected to honour an exceptional statesman during a specific political and historical period of the existence of a Voortrekker or Boer Republic. The symbolic meaning of the statue was reinforced and legitimised within its specific location, space and spatial positioning on Church Square, at that juncture the ZAR's political, judicial and religious focal point, so that the statue was intrinsically woven into the symbolic fabric of Church Square.

The status of a heritage site cannot be imposed or invented because it is a product of a long historical process that gradually adds a certain value to the location. Maré (2007: 42) refers to a heritage site as a "chief focus of patriotism" but then questions how the location of a memorial could be called a heritage site "if nothing of historical importance ever happened there". In the case of Church Square it acquired the status of an Afrikaner heritage site, consistently reinforced for decades before 1994.

However, when the nexus between a statue and its heritage site is severed, the meaning of the statue will also be compromised, because the removal of its nexus negates the legitimisation provided by its historical context.

Conclusion

Quo vadis Paul Kruger's statue? What is the prognosis for Paul Kruger statue's continued presence on Church Square in the present volatile political climate, fuelled as it is by political opportunism and historical ignorance? Clearly, with the increasing pressures of political opportunism, the statue may well be facing the prospect of yet another move to yet another venue.

Another move would completely sever the symbolic link, the intrinsic harmony and the delicate balance between the statue and the heritage site that Church Square has provided until now. In isolation from one another, both statue and square will lose their symbolic significance and intrinsic value.

A historical nexus between a struggle hero such as Chris Hani and Church Square as a heritage site is an impossibility, the two as incompatible as *volkspele* in Kliptown near Soweto. However, with the present mindset of irrational memorialisation, the importance of a nexus with the location is considered insignificant. This mindset will cost the country dearly, symbolically, historically and culturally, because degrading art, heritage and history to make them subservient to a political agenda is tantamount to draining a nation of its cultural status.

If the statue does indeed face another move in the future, where would be the most obvious and appropriate location for Paul Kruger's statue? Most likely is the Voortrekker Monument's Heritage terrain where a number of similar outcasts have already migrated to spaces available on the terrain around the Monument close to Fort Schanskop. The statue would be welcomed by the silver statue of the master Boer spy Danie Theron, who kneels at the entrance to Fort Schanskop. So Paul Kruger's statue would not be alone; it would be surrounded by friends, although the loss of a historical nexus with a heritage site will have been lost forever.

In the final analysis the point should be made that if Paul Kruger's statue, one of the most prominent of all statues in South Africa, is not immune to political opportunism, then no other monument can be safe from similar treatment. The most likely outcome is the migration of the majority of Afrikaner memorials and statues to little enclaves where they can be valued and

protected. Will the War Museum of the Boer Republics in the Free State fulfil the same rule as Pretoria's current catchment area for uprooted memorials and statues in future? The danger is that South Africa will lose its creditability as a cultural and historical destination and become a state without a soul.

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