

**TERRA FIRMA: CONTEMPORARY REPRESENTATIONS OF THE
SOUTH AFRICAN LANDSCAPE**

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AFRICAN LANDSCAPE**

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**DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL COMPLIANCE WITH THE
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The financial assistance of National Research Foundation (NRF) towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at, are those of the author are not necessarily to be attributed to the National Research Foundation.

I declare that this dissertation is my own work and has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other institution.

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DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to the spirit of visual art and to the evolution of personal and social identities.

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to critically investigate the changing colonial and post-colonial attitudes towards the South African landscape, as physical space and its representation, through a post-colonial and Post-Modern critique.

Chapter One explores the shifting colonial attitudes toward the landscape from the middle of the eighteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century, to provide an historical overview and context for contemporary practice.

Section One defines colonialism for the purposes of this study and provides a brief history of colonialism in South Africa.

Section Two provides a concise history of European visual representation from the middle of the eighteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century in order to contextualize the development of South African landscape painting.

Section Three analyzes and evaluates changing colonial attitudes and their representation through a discussion of the work of Francois Le Vaillant (1753-1842), Thomas Baines (1820-1875) and J.H. Pierneef (1886-1957).

Chapter Two explores attitudes towards the South African landscape between 1948 and 1994 in order to provide a link between colonial representation and post-colonial contemporary practice.

discourse, comprising a series of signs that carry ideological and psychological meaning.

The critical evaluation of colonial and post-colonial representations of the South African landscape reveals the changing ideologies towards the politics of South African space, and the ever-shifting nature of what constitutes visual representation.

Section One explores the politics of South African space. This section maps the events that determined how the landscape was utilized by the Nationalist Party government, through legislation, to further the Afrikaner colonial objective of apartheid. It also maps out the resistance to this ideology, in the form of the Black Nationalist Movements.

Section Two provides a concise development of South African landscape representation, between 1948 and 1994.

Chapter Three investigates post-colonial attitudes towards the South African landscape from 1994 – 2004.

Section One defines post-colonialism for the purposes of this study and provides a brief history of post-colonial South Africa.

Section Two critically investigates the theory surrounding contemporary landscape representation to contextualise Post-Modern cultural production and post-colonial landscape theory through a discussion of the work of Willem Boschoff (1951-), William Kentridge (1955-), Clive Van Den Berg (1956-) and Mduduzi Xakaza (1965-).

Section Three analyzes and evaluates contemporary representations of the South African landscape through a discussion of the work of Sandile Zulu (1960-) and Jeremy Wafer (1953-).

Conclusion. The dissertation concludes with the finding that in Post-Modern terms the landscape is not just a phenomenon; it is also a text, an intellectual space or site of

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PREFACE

The following conventions have been applied to this dissertation.

- The Harvard System of referencing has been used.
- Double indentations and single spacing indicate direct quotations.
- “-” used for direct quotations from any specified author.
- ‘-’ used for quotations within quotations
- [-] used for the candidate’s insertions into the text.
- Titles of books, publications, journals and internet sites are underlined.
- Illustrations are in Italics.
- Illustrations are referred to by their figure number in brackets [-].
- In the works illustrated the height measurement precedes the breadth.

INTRODUCTION

The land is not the landscape. The land is natural terrain with physical resources.

According to Roskill (1997: 1), "It is an extraordinarily important component of our concrete physical experiences in the world, the apprehension of things deriving from these experiences and our accompanying sense of place. It represents a shaping term in our conceptualisation of what is out there and of human relationships as they intertwine and interact with that". The land is a complex and contentious issue and central to contemporary cultural debate in South Africa.

In Women and Art in South Africa (1996: 39) Marion Arnold suggests "Patterns of movement by indigenous people, the settlement of the Cape, the transfer of power from Dutch to British rule, the arrival of the 1820 settlers, the Great Trek, the Mfecane, *apartheid* resettlement – all these events signify the ongoing struggle between different peoples to live in South Africa, use the land, make a living from it, exploit it and own it". The land/physical terrain in South Africa has since its colonized inception been a site for conflict. Radically different perceptions of 'ours' by birthright and 'ours' by occupancy have led to innumerable wars. This state of conflict finally culminated in the 1913 and 1936 land acts, when the White Afrikaner Nationalist government determined that eighty seven percent of South Africa would be White owned and thirteen percent reserved for black ownership (Koloane in Enwezor: 1998: 32). This territorial domination of land/space justified the superiority of one race over another; the land in this context became an ideological site in physical space.

In Towards a New Landscape, Richard Mabey claims:

Landscape is an old idea but a comparatively new word. The term came originally from the Dutch '*landshap*' meaning a region or province. It entered the English

language (as '*landskip*' originally) in the seventeenth century as a piece of fashionable artistic jargon, and despite three hundred years of currency in that turbulent world of rural affairs, it has never quite lost that slightly precious air of the salon (Mabey 1993: 64).

The landscape, in the context of fine art, is a pictorial genre signifying a way of looking at, and recording, the natural terrain. Landscape bridges the binary opposition posed by the dialectic between nature and culture "since landscape is a cultural concept derived from the study of nature" (Arnold 1996: 39).

Landscape painting in South Africa was introduced by the waves of settlers from different parts of the world between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. With them came diverse styles, aesthetic tastes and varying ideological stances. South African landscape paintings have been interpreted by historians to authenticate events. They have also been co-opted by ideologies to prove that the land was empty, uninhabited, and available for settlement. Ashraf Jamal (Ed Geers 1997: 155) suggests that depictions of the South African landscape remain the impure 'dreamwork' of cultural domination. "At every point in history, landscape art has been indissolubly linked to 'material culture' and 'cultural outlook' (ibid).

In so saying, the colonial land/scape [physical space and fine art] is not just part of that massive act of land theft, that chronicle of dispossession that so defined the political and economic ambitions of Europe in the nineteenth-century. According to Delmont and Dubow:

Colonization is also the experience of a new land, a confrontation with the unfamiliar. It involves a struggle with a space where 'everything is still to be won', a space not yet made over for a transported identity. All this lends different tenor to the idea of colonial conquest and to the idea of colony as contested terrain. For conquest is as much a cognitive victory as it is a military one, and contest here may refer not solely to ownership disputes, but also to the process of translating alien territory into a space for self (Delmont and Dubow 1995: 11).

It is within this dialectic ambiguity that the candidate will in Chapter One explore the shifting colonial attitudes, from the middle of the eighteenth to the middle of the twentieth century, toward the land as physical terrain and landscape as visual representation, to contextualize contemporary cultural production.

In Chapter Two the candidate intends to explore attitudes towards the South African landscape between 1948 and 1994 in order to provide a link between colonial representation and post-colonial contemporary practice. This section will map the events that determined how the landscape was utilized by the Nationalist Party government, through legislation, to further the Afrikaner colonial objective of apartheid. It will also map out the resistance to this ideology, in the form of the Black Nationalist Movements. In order to contextualize contemporary South African cultural production, it is the candidate's intention to provide a concise history of South African landscape representation, spanning the years 1948-1994. It must be noted that during this period the physical landscape was transformed through urbanization, industrialization and political legislation. In addition, landscape painting was losing its impetus as a genre both locally and internationally. Traditional models of visual representation were challenged, as was the role of the artist and art object itself. During this period, because of the socio-political climate of South Africa, there was in South African visual arts from the late 1960s a drive towards challenging the conflicts and injustices that constituted South African society under apartheid.

In Post-Modern terms the landscape is not just a phenomenon. According to Arnold (1996: 40) "it is also a text, an intellectual space or site of discourse comprising a series of signs that carry ideological and psychological meaning".

In the context of this research the question now arises, how do we read the land today? "At this stage in South African history, with the corrosion of national boundaries, global industrialisation, fractured cultural communities, the notion of 'one land one nation' and the cosmopolitan culture of art-making, how in Post-Modern terms do we read our land and the psychic and material components which define it" (Jamal in Geers 1997: 15). The landscape is no longer simply a subject of art, but the locus and raw material for the making of art. Some contemporary South African artists, informed of post-colonial theory and Post-Modern discourse, are readdressing issues around the land and its [re]representation through new approaches to the fine art media. As Clive Van Den Berg in Panoramas of Passage. Changing Landscapes of South Africa states:

Landscape is an image readily accessible to all who view it, live in it, or lay claim to it as a possession. It is an image which has figured multiple experiences in what has been our diverse, complicated and often contradictory history. Throughout, landscape as a natural site is something that has endured. In its very physicality, it bears history's scars in one way or another. It is a site that can be revisited in attempts to re-think our past – what we have done, what has happened to us. And so, perhaps, it is the appropriate space in which to envision our future (Van Den Berg 1995: 7).

It is within the context of this re-envisioning that Van Den Berg and Jamal allude to, that the candidate will, in Chapter Three, attempt to unravel the complexities that define the contemporary South African landscape, as physical space and its representation, through a post-colonial and Post-Modern critique.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In Chapter One the candidate intends to explore the shifting colonial attitudes toward the landscape from the middle of the eighteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century, to provide an historical overview and context for contemporary practice.

Section One will define colonialism for the purposes of this study and provide a brief history of colonialism in South Africa.

Section Two will provide a concise history of European visual representation from the middle of the eighteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century in order to contextualize the development of South African landscape painting.

Section Three will analyze and evaluate changing colonial attitudes and their representation through a discussion of the work of Francois Le Vaillant (1753-1842), Thomas Baines (1820-1875) and J.H. Pierneef (1886-1957).

CHAPTER ONE

SECTION ONE

AN OVERVIEW OF COLONIALISM IN SOUTH AFRICA.

To attempt a definition of colonialism as an ideological model with all its subtle manipulations, and its ever-changing policies determined by site and time specific encounters, is beyond the research of this paper. Theorists of colonial discourse such as Edward Said, Homi Bhaba and Gayatri Spivak have provided groundbreaking critiques and categories of analysis on the subject. Other post-colonial critics and historians in turn have criticized these. According to Ranajit Guha (Ed Tobin 1999: 9), even radical critiques of colonialism are a prisoner of empty abstractions. Nicholas Thomas (Ed Tobin 1999: 9) argues that colonial discourse is too often analyzed in terms that are "unitary and essentialist" and that tend to "recapitulate" rather than "subvert" the privileged status and presumed dominance of colonialist discourses. Benita Parry (Ed Tobin 1999: 8) has noted that post-colonial theory tends to ignore imperialism's many and mutable states while allegorizing colonialism as "a notion applicable to all situations of structural domination". In Picturing Imperial Power (1999: 4) Beth Tobin, speaking about British colonialism, states that colonialism has been portrayed as a "static, unchanging, monolithic structure of domination and exploitation". She goes on to suggest that historians and anthropologists have neglected to analyze "the specific workings of particular colonial practices and colonial relations" (ibid).

The candidate's intention is not to analyze colonial discourse *per se*, but to provide a definition of colonialism as a shifting ideology that conceptually and physically impacted on the land and the peoples of southern Africa.

The word colonialism according to the Oxford English Dictionary (1993) comes from the Roman 'colonia' which meant 'farm' or 'settlement', and referred to Romans who settled in other lands, but still retained their citizenship. Accordingly the Oxford English Dictionary describes it as:

A settlement in a new country... a body of people who settle in a new locality, forming a community subject to or connected with their parent state; the community so formed, consisting of the original settlers and their descendants and successors, as long as the connection with the parent state is kept up (Ibid: 442).

This definition avoids any reference to people other than the colonizers, people who might have been living in those places in which colonies were established. It therefore removes from the word 'colonialism' any implication of an encounter between peoples, or of conquest of land and domination. The process of forming a community in the new land necessarily meant unforming or re-forming the communities that already existed there. Ania Loomba states in Colonialism/ Post Colonialism (1998: 2) that in reforming these communities a wide range of practices such as trade, plunder, negotiation, warfare, genocide, enslavement, and rebellions were used.

Colonialism can therefore be defined as the conquest of other people's land and goods. It can further be defined as the etching of cultural ideologies onto a geographical space. W.J.T Mitchell (1994: 2) points to the way in which landscape circulates as a medium of exchange, as a site of visual appropriation, a focus for the formation of identity.

Colonialism has been a recurrent and widespread feature of human history. The Roman Empire, for example, at its height in the second century AD, stretched from Armenia to the Atlantic. The Mongols under Genghis Khan conquered the Middle East and China. The Aztec empire was established when one of the various ethnic groups, who settled in the valley of Mexico, subjugated others. This empire spanned two hundred years, from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century. The fifteenth century saw various kingdoms in Southern India come under control of the Vijaynagare Empire. According to Loomba modern European colonialism cannot be sealed off from these earlier histories of contact. Yet, as she states:

These newer European travels ushered in new and different kinds of colonial practices, which altered the whole globe in a way that these other colonialisms did not (Loomba 1998: 3).

Marxist thinking creates a distinct difference between the earlier colonized lands and later European colonialism. Earlier colonialisms were pre-Capitalist. Modern colonialism was established alongside Capitalism in Western Europe. Modern colonialism according to Loomba did more than extract tribute, goods and wealth from the countries it colonized. It restructured the economies of these countries, drawing them into a complex relationship with their own, so that there was a flow of human and natural resources between colonized and colonial countries, the profits always flowing back into the so-called 'mother country' (ibid: 3-4). European colonialism devised a variety of techniques and created patterns of domination that produced the economic imbalance needed for the growth of European capitalism and industry. Referring to the latter as imperialism often makes the distinction between pre-capitalist and capitalist colonialisms. Like the term colonialism, imperialism is best understood by relating its shifting meanings to historical processes (Ibid: 4).

So far the candidate has defined the ideology of European colonialism, in the context of this research, as the forcible takeover of territory. With this came the appropriation of material resources, the exploitation of labour, and interference with political and cultural structures of another territory or nation, in order to re-structure the colonized space to fuel European capitalist expansion.

It is with this definition that we begin to plot our course. However, in order to contextualize the complexities of colonialism as a discourse and as a physical force that shaped the South African landscape and its peoples, the candidate will briefly map the history of South Africa's colonial past. It must be remembered, however, that history is often recorded and written by the victors. South African history is not a static chain of events on a timeline. The history the candidate has chosen to present is based on post-colonial theory from 1990 onwards. Orthodox South African history is shifting and changing according to colonial critics' discoveries about South Africa's colonial past by contemporary historians.

In Africa the Early Iron Age promoted a long and complex migration of cultures and peoples, as the techniques of stock-raising, cultivation with iron tools and long-term village settlement spread, broadly, from north to south after their initiation in Middle Africa some two and a half thousand years ago (Davidson 1992: 265). Very little is known about these migrations but that they produced in South Africa, and other African regions, a network of clan-and- lineage communities. They evolved their own ideologies of self-acceptance and worked out their own patterns and customs of mutual tolerance. These Iron Age Bantu-language peoples were not the only inhabitants. Stone Age peoples had preceded them by a vast number of

centuries. The earliest known human societies were Khoisan speaking hunter-gatherers, often referred to today as the San. Living in small nomadic communities they inhabited the region's richest ecosystems, hunting game in the grasslands and collecting shellfish along the coast. Around 2000 years ago the San were joined by the Khoikhoi, pastoralists who migrated south from the Middle Zambezi River valley. (Ed, Appiah and Gates 1999: 1758). Speaking Khoi or other languages, these Stone Age peoples were hunters, stockbreeders and food-gatherers who had yet to come into contact with the technologies of the Iron Age. Organised in family networks and dependent on stone tools and weapons, they had remained thinly spread across the lands south of the Limpopo (Davidson 1992: 266).

European expansion began to reach into the southern hemisphere in the sixteenth century, but it was not until the late eighteenth century that the great Southern voyages of discovery were launched. European colonization had initially concentrated on tropical territories that were densely populated by indigenous peoples, and could be transformed quickly into European merchant or plantation societies. In contrast, the indigenous populations of Southern Africa were relatively sparse and their lands were seen by Europeans, at least at first, as less suitable for European style agriculture (Denoon 1983: 4). Donald Denoon (Ibid)) claims that European settlements in Southern temperate regions were intended to guard the edges of the empire and service imperial interests in the tropics.

In 1652, the Dutch East India Company sent Jan Van Riebeeck and 80 others to establish a supply station at the Cape. They arrived at Table Bay on April 6, 1652. The primary purpose of this settlement, later known as Cape Town, was to provide

services and supplies for passing ships. From the beginning the settlers supplemented their own production with livestock bartered by local Khoikhoi in exchange for metal goods, tobacco and alcohol (Ed, Appiah and Gates 1999: 1757). Contracted to the Dutch East India Company when they arrived, the settlers by 1657 were released from their contracts and granted land to cultivate independently. Both the original settlement of Cape Town and the farms further afield faced a labour shortage. In 1657 the company began importing slaves from throughout the Dutch East India Empire, as well as from Madagascar, Angola and Mozambique (ibid).

Basil Davidson, in his book Africa in History (1992: 266), states that the first European settlers started moving northwards out of the Cape of Good Hope after 1652. Coming into contact with the indigenous Khoi tribes they found on the land, they, in Davidson's words, "easily drove them out or used them as subject labour". In Africana, (1999: 1757) the editors Appiah and Gates claim that open conflict between the settlers and the Khoikhoi first broke out in 1659; it abated, but then erupted again in 1673. During this confrontation, lasting four years, tens of thousands of Khoikhoi were killed or imprisoned. By 1677 the Khoikhoi population had been reduced to several thousand. By 1713 the group was virtually extinct after a small pox epidemic swept through the Cape.

Gradually pushing northward from their Cape settlement, these Dutch farmers, *Boers* in Dutch, thrust forward for more land and labour, subjecting or expropriating any Africans they found in their way. The pioneering hunters, with farming settlers to follow, had by 1760 already crossed northward over the Orange River into the heartland of what was to become South Africa. They ceased to clash with the Khoi

groups (Bushmen or Hottentot in colonial literature), and clashed instead with the Bantu-language groups, such as the Xhosa, on whose land they now threatened to colonize. According to Appiah and Gates, "the threat of war with an unknown number of Bantu-speaking groups frightened officials in the Cape. They reacted to settler expansion and its destabilizing effects by establishing a colonial border around the Great Fish River" (Ed, Appiah and Gates 1999: 1757). The 1780 border was the first 'conceptual' border created to keep Africans away from settlers. This border was established without the consent of the Xhosa clans who already occupied the land.

Unlike the Khoi, the Bantu-language groups, such as the Xhosa, had a powerful capacity to defend themselves. These peoples were numerous; strongly self organized and like their dispossessors, would soon have firearms.

According to Davidson (1992: 266) the earliest big clash between 'Boer and Bantu' came as early as 1779, while Boer incomers strove to expand their settlements beyond the Great Fish River.

The competition between the two settler superpowers, the British and the Dutch, and the indigenous African communities over natural resources, and the hold by the colonists over production and the instruments of state, ensured that any state attempt to regulate the environment became a deeply politicized issue (Ed, Smith, Gunner, Nuttall 1996: 7). Physical contestation over land between the two settler societies, and between these societies and indigenous inhabitants, ensued. This contestation was bound up with culturally different spatial concepts about the land. In southern Africa, the colonial emphasis was on dividing land in accordance with models drawn from industrialized and capitalist Europe, so that there were separate areas with exclusive functions such as forestry, game reserves and

farming. This clashed with African ideas of flexible land use and multi-purpose common land (ibid).

Gradually the frontier of White settlement was edged northeastward of what is now the Eastern and Western Cape Provinces, and, as this usually violent eviction of the inhabitants continued, other changes came. Stronger forms of self-organization emerged among local African clan-and-lineage communities. Kingships and military captaincies took shape. The pressure of white aggression gave them (Africans) a coherence they had probably not had before (Davidson 1992: 266).

At the same time the Dutch settlers also began to conceive of themselves as a people distinct within themselves. Soon they were no longer calling themselves Dutch or Boer, but Afrikaner; and with this they evolved a dialect of Dutch, their *taal*, into a fully-fledged language, Afrikaans. Davidson claims that by 1800 their characteristic ideology of nationhood was well established:

Born of an extreme Calvinism and a crude self-interest, this ideology encouraged them to build their farming economy and their social morals on the curious notion that all Africans, the biblical 'children of Ham', were designed by God to labour as the white man's slaves (Davidson 1992: 267).

According to Appiah and Gates (1999: 1758), in 1795, with the ending of the Dutch East India Company rule, two Afrikaner republics were proclaimed near the Cape of Good Hope, those of Graaf Reinet and Swellendam. These local Dutch claims were succeeded by British Imperial claims, who were riding on the tide of history. After defeating the French in land and sea wars for world hegemony during 1793-1815, the British assumed the colonial government of the Cape, initially to protect its maritime trade with Asia. Appiah and Gates go on to claim that the establishment of British rule in 1806 quickly brought dramatic political, economic, and cultural changes within the

colony itself. A wave of European immigration boosted the colony's white population to nearly 47,000 (from approximately 10,000 in 1780), narrowing what the British administration had viewed as a disturbingly high Black-to-White ratio. Although more than 80 percent of the colony's settlers were Dutch, British lawmakers replaced the Dutch legislature in Cape Town. A British style educational system replaced the Dutch traditions of schooling and English became the official language (ibid).

The Boers did not welcome the increasing influence of British culture or its court system's effort to regulate relations between Boers and Africans. Resisting the legal limits that were placed on their 'God-given right' to enslave Africans in their 'God-given land', the Afrikaner settlers pushed further into the interior, intending to escape the anti-slaving reach of British colonial rule. The wars of dispossession against the indigenous tribes continued as *trekboer*, like the British, pushed further northward (Davidson 1992: 268). Colonial history has called them the '*Kaffir wars*'. *Kaffir* is a term that emanated from Arabic, spoken by the East coast Muslims, which means 'heathen' or unbeliever. According to the South African Oxford Dictionary (1988: 407), the racial offensiveness of *Kaffir* is now so strongly felt that educated speakers and writers avoid it. Thus, the term '*Kaffir wars*' has been replaced by the term Frontier wars. According to Davidson (1992: 268), the Frontier wars of aggression and retaliation spanned between the years 1820 to 1834.

In 1834 the British abolished slavery in all of their territories, including the Cape Colony.

The abolition of slavery eliminated the primary source of labour for rural white farmers.

According to Davidson:

The Afrikaners, like the Africans, faced a new enemy. The Britain that took over governance of the Cape settlements was intent on continuing its campaign to abolish the slave trade, which an earlier Britain had done so much to introduce and sustain. The slave based system of the Afrikaners clashed in the Cape with the anti-slavery policies of British colonial rule (Davidson 1992: 268).

He goes on to state that:

Outraged by this denial of their 'rights' to subjugate the 'children of Ham', Afrikaner farmers under a man called Louis Trichardt led the biggest of all the Afrikaner invasions, the so-called 'Great Trek' of several thousand wagon riding families over a period of several years, across the Vaal and other rivers into the 'promised lands' of what was then the far interior (Davidson 1992: 268).

With this the wars of dispossession again shifted towards the north. The long-sustained and violent aggressions struck at the whole panoply of African peoples in these lands. The *trekboers*, as they moved deeper into the interior and further away from British rule, subjugated Africans as workforce for their newfound settlements (ibid: 269). The servitudes of modern colonial South Africa were already taking shape.

Advancing white settlement also started increasing the tensions between African communities. White settlement thrust one community against another in a sort of 'shunting process'. Whether of one language community or another, the African tribes of the 'Sotho' and 'Nguni' had generally been at peace with each other. Conflict or 'wars' between these tribal clans were as Davidson remarks "typically small affairs of champions and cheers, and soon ended" (ibid). Neither side seemed to have any interest in systematic or massive elimination of its rivals. What we know of their ideas of justice, usually preferring punishment by compensation to any other sanction, and of the emphasis they placed on the conservation of manpower, suggests customs of warfare among these peoples that could have had no tolerance for mass killing (ibid: 270).

While the trans-Atlantic trade in slaves had begun to fall away, a second major export of captives for enslavement developed along the east African coast after the 1820s. This

set into motion the second 'shunting process' for the African communities. Threatened communities strove to take themselves beyond the slavers' reach. Some of the Nguni-speaking peoples, divided into clan communities of which the Zulu were to become the strongest, found it worth their while to participate in the hunt for captives and in the delivery of these captives to slaving vessels on the Natal coast (Davidson 1992: 269). Other disasters were to further break down the traditional securities of African tribal communities. Drought in the southern African region had mortal consequences for people as well as cattle. Flourishing communities vanished in the chaos. Old constellations of political power and coherence gave way to new ones (ibid: 271). Militarized new peoples, both Black and White were on the scene, adding to the rivalry for place and power. Inescapable collisions through dispossession of land set people violently against each other. Further warfare and subjugation followed. The Boers under Piet Retief and Andries Pretorius crushed Ndebele and, later Zulu resistance (Appiah and Gates 1999: 1758). Shaka, the military leader of the Zulu nation, subjugated or eliminated thousands of African-speaking peoples in what was to become known as the *Mfecane*. Translated into English as 'the wars of crushing'. According to European history, it is said the *Mfecane* was a result of over-population. The 'shunting processes' had created severe competition for land, where sowing and grazing were the livelihood of tribal life. Davidson states that:

Just as the prolonged horror of the Atlantic slave trade was justified by its operators and profiteers with the argument that Africans when left to themselves were incapable of civil and peaceful self-government, so now, in South Africa, it came to be explained that the killings and the chaos, especially after 1800, were the product of African anarchy and a thirst for violence (Davidson 1992: 272).

According to contemporary South African historians, there is little real evidence to support the theory of over-population. Julian Cobbing, a South African historian working with a post-colonial approach to South African history, in his essay The Mfecane as

Alibi (1988) claims that the devastation for which Shaka and the Zulu were said to have been initiators, was invented by the white South African historian Erik Walker in his History of South Africa (1928). This attribution of wholesale guilt to the Africans for the devastations rapidly became, as Cobbing argues, a 'hold-all' alibi to exculpate the principal culprit, namely, violent white dispossession of African land and labour (Cobbing 1998: 486-519).

To further research the truth behind Cobbing's claims are well beyond the research of this paper. The *mfecane* as African 'colonial' conquest has, and does, hold its place in the annals of South African history books.

The Afrikaner continued efforts to establish independent Afrikaner republics. Orange Free State was formed in 1854; the South African Republic in 1860. The Cape colony administration's changed dramatically with the discovery of diamonds in Kimberley (1867) and gold in Witwatersrand (1886), both Afrikaner held territories. By the end of the century, writes Denoon:

The settler societies had all felt the exhilaration of pulling in capital investment hand over fist, drawing migrants by the thousands, laying railway tracks into the remotest interior, shoveling minerals furiously, harvesting grain by millions of tons, slaughtering thousands of stock, and enjoying per capita incomes that were the envy of the world. (Denoon 1996: 7)

According to Appiah and Gates (1999: 1758), Great Britain deemed it imperative that British South Africa control the region's abundant resources, even if it took military action to claim them. By 1899 Anglo-Boer tensions reached the point where war appeared inevitable. In that year the Afrikaner republics invaded British held Natal. The four-year war that followed took the lives of approximately 22,000 British and 14,000 Boer soldiers, as well as some 20,000 Afrikaner civilians who died in concentration camps. The war between the white colonial powers also took a huge toll on Black

Africans; 100,000 were interned in such camps, and tens of thousands died in them (ibid). The British emerged the victorious colonial power. The Treaty of Vereeniging, signed in 1902, after the Boers sued for peace, extended British rule over the predominantly Afrikaner Transvaal and Orange Free State. The British imperial plan to secure control over all the territories in Southern Africa had finally been realized.

In Africa in History (1992: 274-5), Davidson states that defeat for the Afrikaner in the Anglo-Boer war was in retrospect a victory for them. With the Act of Union of 1910, uniting the two British colonies of the Cape and Natal and the two Afrikaner republics of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, the British crown shed all its rights and responsibilities in a land now subjugated to a rigorous racist rule by 'Whites only'. According to Nel (1990: 14), the Union was a self-governing body within the Empire that was governed by former Boer General Louis Botha and J.C Smuts, both Prime Ministers. Within Botha's South African Party, J.B.M. Hertzog voiced his disapproval with the conciliation policy of the new union between Boer and Brit when it came to British interests in South Africa. Hertzog's liberal political opponents accused him of sabotaging the reconciliation between the two white groups, but among Afrikaners' he was held in high esteem as a campaigner for Afrikaner nationalism. Botha finally called for Hertzog's resignation. Hertzog refused, leaving Botha with no alternative to resign himself and form a new cabinet without Hertzog. Nel (1990: 16-17) further suggests that the result of this action was that Hertzog and his followers founded the National Party early in 1914. The birth of the Afrikaner Broederbond in 1918 saw the Afrikaner nations' need for a sense of unity and identity. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the Afrikaners campaigned for their national heritage. In 1924 the coalition government [National Party / Labour Party Pact] came into power. Coetzee (1992: 26)

suggests that as Prime Minister and head of the coalition party, Hertzog simply carried on from where he had left off with the notorious 1913 land act. He states

This law legalized the extensive dispossession of 'Black' owned land by prohibiting the purchase of land outside the specific reserves it set aside for the purpose. On Orange Free State farms all forms of 'Black' sharecropping or squatting were outlawed. The act also banned 'Blacks' from entering into any new cash or kind tenancies elsewhere in the country. The 'Blacks' who joined the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union of Africa or ICU... had no doubt that competing for 'the land' was the main issue at stake (Coetzee 1992: 27).

According to Nel (1990: 17), May 1925 saw the Afrikaners finally come into being as a nation, when the constitution of the Union was amended in order to make Afrikaans one of the official languages. In 1933 a coalition was formed between Hertzog and Smuts, resulting in the United Party. D.F. Malan, a staunch Afrikaner nationalist, was opposed to this amalgamation and with his followers formed the Purified National Party. The 1948 election was fought by the Nationalists on their policy of apartheid or separate development [between Black, Coloured, Indian and White]. Although ill defined before the election, the apartheid policy had in essence been in place since the Eighteenth century. It, according to Preston (1995: 153) appealed to a broad spectrum of opinion, mostly between White farmers and White semi-skilled workers who were protected by the colour bar that reserved certain jobs for Whites. Post-war South Africa saw Black African workers leaving the land to look for work in the cities. These migrant workers often ended up in the mines, as there was little prosperity to be found in the urban sprawl. Preston (ibid: 150) claims that by 1945 it was clear that the policy of treating Africans as "temporary sojourners" in urban areas had broken down. Workers were kept on low wages because, it was argued, their main income came from land and cattle held in reserves where their families continued to subsist. "In reality, the reserves could no longer supplement workers wages as most migrants were landless" (ibid: 152).

David Koloane in his essay for the Johannesburg Biennale catalogue, titled Walking the tightrope (1997: 32), further suggests that this territorial domination turned communities into refugees in their country of birth. He claims, "The absurd chessboard choreography of uprooting communities from ancestral land became the cornerstone of the apartheid system" (ibid). Black African workers became increasingly militant around this time, which increasingly radicalized the membership of the African National Congress [Black African Nationalist organization]. In 1948 the Smuts/Hertzog coalition, under the banner of the United Party, contrary to all expectations was defeated. For the first time since the formation of the Union, an all-Afrikaans government, with D.F. Malan as Prime Minister, was in power.

The country was governed by laws in the making and applying of which the Black majority, whether of African or immigrant Indian or mixed origin, was to be allowed no voice. Koloane states that:

the notion of superiority of one race over another was justified through the dispossession of land and space. The land acts of 1912 and 1936 allotted 87 percent of the land to white inhabitants and only 13 percent to local communities. This territorial domination turned communities into refugees in their country of birth (Koloane 1997: 32).

This rationale according to Afrikaner colonial rule was simple. Extremely valuable deposits of gold had been discovered in the Transvaal. Capital would become available for commercial exploitation of these deposits only if large supplies of cheap Black labour could be provided for work on the mines. Extensive White agriculture would likewise depend on continued supplies of cheap black labour, if in Davidson's (1992: 275) words, "this new country was able to produce the resources to support itself". The next eighty years were to demonstrate the ruthless violence of a system,

buttressed by force, after the National Party victory in 1948. The system was to be called *apartheid* or 'separateness'.

CHAPTER ONE

SECTION TWO

THE STYLISTIC INFLUENCES OF COLONIAL REPRESENTATION IN SOUTH AFRICAN LANDSCAPE PAINTING.

As with colonialism, which cannot be seen as a monolithic, static, and unchanging ideology, colonial representation of the landscape in South Africa cannot be defined by one aesthetic philosophy. The works of eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth century artists reflect the changing attitudes towards nature as a philosophical and aesthetic model, and towards landscape painting as a philosophical and aesthetic product.

According to Michael Levey, in From Giotto to Cezanne, A Concise History of Painting (1989: 211), the eighteenth century is perhaps the first period where art freed itself from its historical convictions. "No longer did painting *need* to state religious beliefs, record the natural world or explore space". The age was primarily concerned with the advancement of civilization through the rational and scientific. Models of visual representation evolved from religious imagery, nymphs and satyrs into a style of painting firmly based on reality. Esme Berman (1983: 2) suggests, "the idealization of simplicity, the widespread philosophical concern with the nature of reality and the positivist doctrine that 'only that which can be observed and recorded is real' led to naturalism in the arts". Neo-classicism, according to Levey (1989: 211), was part of this philosophy, "a preference for history over mythology and a desire to be factual and accurate in recording the ancient world as well as the modern one". New currents began to stir in Europe. Berman states that:

Dissatisfaction with the status quo, which found physical expression in the ensuing revolutions, was reflected in the search for new beginnings noticeable in literature and art. One development, which originated in France, was associated with Rousseau's plea for a return to nature (Berman 1983: 2).

Nature was seen as a profound source for the pleasures of the imagination. According to Klopper (1989: 65) the power of nature, in the Eighteenth century, was seen to rival that of technology, because of nature's power to structure and order the world. This perception emancipated nature from the control of humankind. This idyllic celebration of nature was at once mysterious, abundant and fecund. The emphasis in the Eighteenth century on exploration and discovery opened the European world up to new *exotic* locations. According to Urbach (1996: 4) the European dream of Africa alternated between mystery and fear, terror and ecstasy. "Africa, a place of phantoms, beasts both fabulous and fantastic, a phantasmagoria of images" (ibid). Africa was seen as the 'dark' continent, a land of mystery, magic and savage peoples, living at one with nature.

The Nineteenth century saw, as has been stated, a growing concern to tame and order the landscape, thereby rendering it useful to culture. Colonies were expanding and Rousseauian idealism gave way in Europe, especially England, to the theories of the picturesque in art. The picturesque, defined by its great theorist, Uvedale Price, originated in Italian landscape art. In White Writing, on the cultures of letters in South Africa, J.M. Coetzee (1998: 39) points to the fact that when the treaty of Utrecht opened up the continent to the so called grand tour in 1713, English travelers made the acquaintance of Italian landscape art, "particularly the paintings of Claude Lorraine (1600-1682) and Salvator Rosa (1615-1673), and carried home a taste for them". He goes on to state that the enthusiasm to paint in this style continued until the end of the century in England, and for another half century at least in the colonies. The picturesque remained a mark of cultivated taste (ibid). The ideally picturesque view, according to Price's theory, drew from Claude Lorraine's compositional devices. Coetzee states:

Landscape is picturesque when it composes itself, or is composed by the viewer

in receding planes according to the Claudian scheme: a dark *coulisse* on one side shadowing the foreground; a middle plane with a large central feature such as a clump of trees; a plane of luminous distance; perhaps an intermediate plane too between middle and far distance (Coetzee 1998: 39).

This Italian Renaissance model of paintings, filtered through the work of Claude Lorraine, was grafted, principally through Thomas Gainsbough (1727-1788), onto an English tradition that continued to find its subjects in local topography (ibid: 43). It is worth noting that the word landscape is both topographical and aesthetic in its reference. The word picturesque refers to nature and art at the same time.

This aesthetic and philosophical model brought into South Africa a vision of landscape representation that was particularly European. The South African landscape in this respect presented the 'colonial' artist with a series of challenges. Coetzee (ibid: 42) states that firstly the entire palette had to be modified. The ochres, browns, fawns and greys of the South African landscape were in contrast to the rich range of greens of the European landscape. Secondly, because of the dry climate in South Africa, foliage transpires very little and lacks lustre. Europe is moist and foliage rich in its aesthetic appeal. Thirdly, South African light tends to be harsh and bright and transitions from light to shade abrupt. The skies are blue and light and shadows static. The European landscape is moist and there is always cloud movement in the sky. Light and shadow never stand still. Fourthly, due to the near absence of surface water- lakes, rivers, streams, pools- the reflective medium of surface water is rare, as is atmospheric moisture. Europe's climatic conditions encourage atmospheric moisture and the abundance of surface water. According to Coetzee (ibid: 43) the atmospheric conditions in Northern Europe make for developments in European art that have no relevance to South Africa. He goes on to broaden the discussion by claiming that the general atmospheric conditions of the two continents produce "radical differences of

material culture between two societies, even, one might speculate, radical differences of cultural outlook (Coetzee 1998: 43).

In attempting to define philosophical and aesthetic models of colonial landscape representation in the nineteenth century, two issues should be noted. Firstly, Dutch colonists and artist's views about the land and the landscape, as an aesthetic product, were at variance with those of British colonizers and artists. Secondly, the nineteenth century, with its emphasis on scientific empiricism, technological advancement and industrialization, saw European artistic styles change in accordance with theories and philosophies of their time. According to Coetzee (ibid: 40) "the picturesque performed a transitional function, for the space of several decades bridging the gap between a waning neoclassicism and the growing romantic taste for variety of light and shade, abruptness, what Price calls intricacy or surface variation".

According to The Oxford Companion To Art:

The Romantic attitude can first be discerned in England as early as the first quarter of the 18th c. The Romantic sentiment had a vogue for about a hundred years and it was a characteristic of that vogue that it could encompass a fairly wide sphere (Ed, Osborne 1986: 1008).

The Romantic style incorporated the ideal rather than the real. It embraced the concepts of nobility, grandeur, virtue, and superiority (ibid). Its premise lay in a naturalistic approach, brought about by the pursuit of perceptual accuracy in art during the Nineteenth century.

The development of the camera in the late half of the nineteenth century brought with it a new understanding of visual representation. In Art and Artists of South Africa Berman states:

The mechanics of visual experience received considerable attention and the obsession with factual record was accompanied by rapid developments in optical science. The inevitable outcome of the visual obsession was the development of the camera, which was perfected over the period 1839-1879. This should perhaps have spelt the end of painting, but by then Europe's artists had made

certain discoveries for themselves and were already off along new paths (Berman 1983: 2).

This in turn led visual representation away from the loosely defined Romantic period and into Impressionism. Impressionism had its formal launching in Paris in 1874.

According to Berman:

The experiments of artists working at this time were affected by the revelations of optical science; by the fundamental postulate that the human eye is sensitive to light and that colour is only a function of light; by information about the spectrum; how each colour has its complement or opposite-number, alongside which it gains visual intensity (Berman 1983: 4).

The Impressionists, conscious of the effects of light upon object and led by the observation that there are no outlines in nature, dissolved the forms they saw into bold, loose marks of coloured paint. The Impressionists' concern with light, colour, and mark-making reduced the significance of the subject in painting, and opened up avenues which art historians believe led to the development of the Modern art movement. Berman (ibid: 2) suggests that, "while what has since been recognized as the stirring of modern art was taking place in Europe, South Africa was still very much a land of pioneers". Settlement was still confined to the coastal areas, only the Cape interior having any long-established towns. The need to tame and survive from the land led to a culture of settlers whose artistic and cultural production was barren. According to Berman (ibid: 3), the settler artists of the nineteenth century were either self taught or guided by teachers schooled in England's Academies. Visual representation was therefore translated in terms of early nineteenth century European conventions. She goes on to claim that, "their romantic naturalism possessed a fair degree of professional polish, which won popular approval and resulted in the emergence of a South African 'tradition' that has persisted to the present day" (Berman 1983: 4).

The twentieth century in Europe saw a succession of art movements that explored new understandings of visual perception and challenged old forms of visual representation. Technology, industrialization and urbanization were part of the contemporary European psyche. The demise of the traditional landscape genre in European art was eminent. Fauvism followed Post-Impressionism. Expressionism evolved out of Fauvism and defined the theories of Cubism. The technological expressions of Purism, Orphism, Futurism and Vorticism were borne in extending the concepts of Cubism. Editor, Nicos Stangos, in his definitive collection of essays on the Concepts of Modern Art (1980), states that:

Around the beginning of the century the seemingly steady and leisurely developments in the arts appeared suddenly to become shattered. This undoubtedly reflected a similar change in man's view of the world as a whole. Social, political and economic changes paralleled philosophic and scientific developments and the gradual collapse of traditional authoritarian systems and values, not necessarily in terms of their loss of power but in their self-assured security and long-term survival. In the arts, the tradition of the past - or at least an unquestioning adherence to it - was challenged from all sides (Stangos 1980: 7).

Modern art movements and concepts were according to Stangos (ibid: 9), "intentional, purposeful, directed and programmed from the very start. They were accompanied by a plethora of manifestos, documents and programmatic declarations". The work of the Modern artist in this sense was considered in terms of the concepts they wished to exemplify. To explore these movements as philosophical and aesthetic paradigms is far beyond the reaches of this paper. However, in the context of this research, European visual representation can be seen to have had a decisive role in the shaping of South African visual representation.

South Africans, according to Berman (1983: 3), "continued until comparatively recently to be a predominantly rural people. Even as the cities grew, the most striking feature of this country remained its fascinating landscape". In this context landscape at the turn of

the twentieth century was still the primary subject matter for visual representation. As has been stated, the turn of the century also saw the defining of colonial space with the forming of the British colonies and the Afrikaner republics in the union in 1910. The 'wilderness' had somewhat been tamed and political control over the country lay in the hands of the colonists. Growing numbers of South African visual artists were able to make trips to Europe. They were stimulated by their experience and incorporated into their work the visual and philosophical trends they learned from their European contemporaries. Until the late 1940s South African art was virtually a continuation of established Western styles, adapted only tentatively to express the South African situation (Koloane 1997: 32). The landscape as a genre of visual representation continued well into the twentieth century in South Africa. David Koloane (ibid: 37) suggests that the landscape has always been the pivot of South African colonial expression. "It is the central emblem in the politics of space".

Moving from the philosophy and aesthetics of European artistic production, it is the candidate's intention to suggest that colonial European artistic practice served another purpose. It aided in justifying the ideologies of colonialism and European expansion. In Picturing Imperial Power (1999), Tobin suggests that art simultaneously reflects and shapes social, economic, and political practices. She goes on to say that:

Drawings and paintings are sites where the tensions and contradictions of colonialist doctrines and practices were negotiated, more or less successfully, on an aesthetic level. Paintings, as is the case with all cultural production, are not merely reflections of larger social and economic forces; they participate in the production of meaning, in the construction of identities, and in the structuring within discursive fields of particular positionalities (Tobin 1999: 1).

European artistic practice therefore serves imperialism in such a way that the appropriation of land, resources, labour, and culture are transformed into something that is aesthetically pleasing and morally satisfying.

According to Coetzee, in his discussion of European art and literature in South Africa in Text, Theory, Space (ed, Smith, Gunner, Nuttal, 1996:4), "The Eurocentric visions of visual representation reduce the possibility of absorbing any scheme of seeing based on indigenous conceptual categories". The colonial artists adopted an antagonistic stance to African space. The myth of the 'empty land' can be seen not only as something willed in the imagination of the colonizers, but also in its vastness, something that is potentially devouring and overwhelming. Much of the colonial imagery of the landscape in this context reinforced the many existing conceptions of 'wilderness', which had held an important place in western thought since medieval times. Paul Rich, in his essay, Landscape, Social Darwinism and the Cultural Roots of South African Racial Ideology (1983), argues that:

Given the deep-rooted Judaeo-Christian conception of 'wilderness' as the embodiment of evil and as a form of hell, the conception of it helped to emphasize the Protestant and self-defining element within the English (and the Dutch) colonial enterprise. Just as the American settlers drew on strong biblical justification for settling the 'wilderness' and establishing gardens and tending ground as agents of 'civilisation', so the English and Dutch settlers and missionaries sought a similar Christian parallel (Rich 1983: 3).

According to an essay, written by Goldsworthy (ed, Smith, Gunner, Nuttal, 1996: 6), on the importance of European settlers crossing the equator, "The journey to the South involved not only a reorientation in spatial terms, but a shift in identity from European immigrant to colonial settler". The representation of the landscape therefore became an anchoring point in the re-establishment of a group identity after the cultural shock of leaving their native land. The 'wilderness' in this context became 'home' to the colonial settler. In The Road to Botany Bay (1987: xxi), Paul Carter proposes that the imperial landscape was created through the European naming and mapping of its geographical features by white explorers, administrators and settlers. According to Carter, "The act of naming and the names themselves, either blatantly ignored or

subverted and incorporated pre-existing names and histories of the land. Thus competing or over-lapping histories are either presented or silenced through the cultural power of maps and place names" (ibid).

The defining and naming of the 'wilderness' thus became the administrative and legislative method of securing the unknown space into a familiar defined place. Visual representation of the 'wilderness' filled the same task in an aesthetic way. Implicit in this research then, is the understanding that visual representation of the South African landscape had a political and ideological significance that are in Hundt's (1991: 18) words, "commensurate with ownership, control and privilege".

CHAPTER ONE

SECTION THREE

THE REPRESENTATION OF CHANGING COLONIAL ATTITUDES IN THE WORK OF FRANCOIS LE VAILLANT, THOMAS BAINES AND JACOB HENDRIK PIERNEEF.

Visual representation cannot be removed from cultural outlook. Ashraf Jamal's essay in Contemporary South African Art: The Gencor Collection (Ed: Geers 1997:155) points to the fact that depictions of the landscape remain "the impure 'dreamwork' of cultural domination. At every point in its history, landscape art has been indissolubly linked to material culture and cultural outlook". The works of the selected artists thus provide a visual representation of the shifting colonial ideologies of their time.

Section One will address early colonial attitudes through a discussion of the work of Francois Le Vaillant (1753-1824), a French ornithologist and artist traveler who arrived in the Cape in 1781. He was an ardent admirer of Jean Jacques Rousseau, an Eighteenth century French philosopher who was associated with a return to nature and the urge to glamourise the exploits and heroes of the common people (Klopper, 1989: 65).

The Second section will explore the work of Thomas Baines (1820-1875). He arrived in the Cape in 1842 and documented his travels in the vast and sparsely settled hinterland of Britain's new colony. Foucault (1986: 75) suggests that the artist-traveler-adventurers of the nineteenth century can be seen as intelligence gatherers for the colonial powers. Baines's volumes of sketches, watercolours and landscape paintings in this context can be seen as manuals for colonization.

The late colonial attitudes will be interrogated through a discussion of the work of J.H. Pierneef (1886-1957). The Twentieth century saw the rise of Afrikaner influence in South Africa, which culminated in the Nationalist Party coming to power in 1948. The landscape has been tamed and the colonies, through occupancy, have become established physical places. It will be argued that the work of Pierneef consolidates and justifies, through the medium of landscape painting, the Dutch colonial ideology of Afrikaner Nationalism.

CHAPTER ONE

SECTION THREE

FRANCOIS LE VAILLANT

Born in 1753, Le Vaillant spent his youth in Dutch New Guiana where his father held the title of French consul. Le Vaillant was a trained ornithologist and started collecting specimens at a young age. In 1781, at the age of twenty-eight, Le Vaillant left Holland for the Cape of Good Hope under the auspices of the Dutch East India Company.

Jacob Temminck, who required Le Vaillant to collect Southern African animal specimens for his own collection, financed the trip (Zest for Birds online 2000: 1-2).

Records of his travels are vague, but it is assumed from his writings that on the first of his two journeys into the interior of Southern Africa, Le Vaillant traveled east to the Great Fish River and at least as far north as the southern borders of the Kalahari Desert (ibid), (Klopper 1989: 65). His second journey to the northern Cape, which is less well documented, may have included several trips with horses and pack-oxen across the Orange River into present-day Namibia (Klopper 1989: 65). Le Vaillant was one of the first Europeans to actually penetrate the interior of South Africa during his expeditions. During his travels Le Vaillant collected specimens, sketched and painted the natural scenery and also penned a six-volume work called Historie Naturelle des Oiseaux D'Afrique, in which he documented life in the Dutch colony. These volumes also contained writings describing the conflicts between the English and the Dutch over possession of the Cape. "As a professional naturalist, Le Vaillant described the plants, animals, natives, and French settlers with a detailed eye" (Zest for Birds online 2000: 1-2). In so saying, the text in Le Vaillant's autobiography (ibid) suggests that due to his reputation as having a wild imagination, his records of his travels are often held in doubt. "It is rumoured that he even went as far as describing 'new' birds by putting

together pieces from various specimens of different species" (Zest for Birds online 2000: 1-2).

Without further investigating the rumours of Le Vaillant's "imaginative embellishments of the eighteenth century" (Carruthers, Arnold 1995: 36), it is the candidate's suggestion that in reading the visual images [and texts] that Le Vaillant produced on his travels, one must place him within the context of his time. Le Vaillant, as many other males of the eighteenth century were, according to Levey (1989: 211), influenced by an age that was primarily concerned with the advancement of civilization through rational and scientific enquiry. The explorer-travelers of the eighteenth century were thus seen as being "intelligence gatherers" (Foucault 1986: 75) in aiding the advance of civilization through scientific enquiry. [Foucault implied another meaning with this term to that of the artist-explorers of the nineteenth century. This will be further interrogated through the discussion of Baines in the next section of this research]. Le Vaillant's objective was that of naturalist and taxonomist. The sketches and paintings produced on his travels into the interior parts of Southern Africa were therefore, primarily to document and record for empirical purposes.

In so saying, because Le Vaillant was essentially a traveler-explorer who traversed the South African terrain in search of specimens, and because he only made two journeys together spanning twenty-eight months, as a result he cannot be seen as a colonist/settler, and in the context of this research, a colonial artist, *per se*. What are revealed through his representations of the South African landscape, in a Post-Modern critique, are the impressions held by the eighteenth century European [French] of [South] Africa. They also expose the neo-classical tendencies of the eighteenth century towards visual representation. The candidate will therefore consider one painting by Le

Vaillant to contextualise. broadly speaking, the eighteenth century's attitudes towards the South African landscape and its representation. In so doing the candidate will reveal the early colonial endeavour of the eighteenth century, to compare it with that of the middle and later colonial endeavours, in discussion on Baines and Pierneef.

In her Essay Crossing Rivers: or Exploring the Interior of Southern Africa, Kloppe states:

Many of Le Vaillant's watercolour landscapes, translated from sketches executed in the field, remained unpublished until quite recently, and several were executed by other artists' whom he employed on his return to France. But there are also numerous examples, now in the Houses of Parliament in Cape Town, in his own hand. These include two watercolours of ox-wagons crossing rivers as well as other landscape images pertinent to a consideration of his perception of the places he visited (Kloppe 1989: 65).

By placing Le Vaillant within the eighteenth century's attitudes towards art, nature, culture and science, discussed in Chapter One Section two: 1-2, we can start to unpack the motivation behind his visual representation and discover, through a post-colonial and Post-Modern critique, that an unadulterated representation of the South African landscape has never existed.

Rivers, streams and ox-wagons dominate the elements that characterize much of Le Vaillant's depictions of landscapes. Few of these rivers or natural boundaries actually defined the limits of the colony when Le Vaillant embarked on his travels, and it was only in the nineteenth century that they served to "underline the arrogant assertion that to be civilized was to be in possession of an advanced technology controlled by and contained within the boundaries of the colony" (Kloppe 1989: 65). However, rivers in general were afforded a symbolic function in the artist-traveler's perception of a world divided into two distinct spheres. The first, one already traversed and charted, the

second, virgin territory still awaiting discovery and, through that discovery, appropriation of the known (Klopper 1989: 65). The fact that ox-wagons are mostly present in Le Vaillant's representations is clearly significant. The ox-wagon is first and foremost a motif of the artist-traveler's presence in the landscape, "Marking his passage, transforming the migration trails of animals into roads, and establishing networks of communication that would facilitate the control and administration of the territory" (ibid). Moreover, the ox-wagon most importantly became home. Filled with supplies and all that was required to undertake such a journey, the ox-wagon became the symbol for comfort and refuge. Metaphorically, the ox-wagon could also be read as a Western 'light' in the 'dark' continent. This light can operate on two levels, which are again mutually inclusive. Firstly, the 'light' of Western science was introduced into Southern Africa, "a place of phantoms, beasts both fabulous and fantastic, a phantasmagoria of images" (Urbach 1996: 4) in the hope of advancing 'backward' civilizations. Secondly, the 'light' of Christianity was enforced upon indigenous peoples to replace the 'magic' and 'ritual' practiced by indigenous tribal communities.

In so saying, the apex of these concepts came about in the height of the colonial endeavor of the nineteenth century that will be interrogated at a later stage. The ox-wagon provided not only Le Vaillant with a refuge in the wilderness; it also served the Afrikaner settlers who fled into the interior of South Africa, away from British rule. The ox-wagon in this context became an important symbol in the language of colonialist expansion.

In *Crossing of the Sundays River* (n.d.) [Fig 1], depicted from a high point on the near bank of the river, Le Vaillant provides a bird's-eye view of three ox-wagons crossing a river. The first has already traversed the river and is about to ascend the far bank. The second is still passing through the water. The last is waiting to enter the river on the

near bank. In a Post-Modern critique this motif could perform a dual purpose. Firstly, according to Klopper (1989: 65), "it enables the artist to create a sense of the passage of time. The ox-wagons thus function in part as a metaphor for the entire journey". Secondly, in viewing the wagon ascending the far bank, Le Vaillant impresses on the viewer the successful conclusion of his voyage into the 'new' world. Although a hindrance in his progress, the river is not therefore an insuperable boundary in his exploration of the unknown. One could say that he therefore occupies the entire terrain before us, and beyond the hill on the far bank.

Compositionally, the watercolour is structured into four distinct planes created through diagonals, which drop into the middle distance from the left hand top corner. This middle distance is viewed from a birds-eye view, while the far distance is viewed almost vertically. According to Alexander and Cohen (1990: 26) this was "possibly a device employed" by Le Vaillant "to overcome his untutored draftsmanship". The result is that through Le Vaillant's draftsmanship, intentionally or unintentionally, the viewer is pushed into the land of this landscape. The only possibility of moving out of this terrain is up the path and toward the slender pale sky in the far distance. The anticipation the view from the distant hill evokes is interrupted by dark green brushstrokes that force the eye back through the terrain and onto the viewing ledge in the near ground. The eye is therefore led around the image in a continuous circular motion. Le Vaillant's depiction of South African space in this context becomes finite and comprehensible, an impression that is reinforced by the presence of his caravan of human and animal life.

What becomes apparent when critically evaluating *Crossing of the Sundays River* is the naïve and idyllic quality with which Le Vaillant represents the landscape. The oxen, herdsman and ox-wagons are not modeled, but clearly outlined. The exaggerated blue



[Fig1]

Francois Le Vaillant, *Crossing of the Sunday's River*, n.d., 23 x 36.6cm,

Watercolour on paper

of the river is painted with parallel strokes to differentiate it from the land, which is glassy calm and inviting. The activity of the oxen and wagons cause no surface variation to the tranquil water. The light is soft. There is a sense of an idyllic pastoralism here. This impression raises an issue crucial to a consideration of Le Vaillant's perception of the South African landscape. According to Kloppe (1989: 65), "A product of the Enlightenment, the Africa he [Le Vaillant] documented is never hostile or inhospitable. Rather it is an awe-inspiring Garden of Eden, which he embraces with a confidence and self-assurance that is sometimes comical".

Crossing of the Sundays River in this context can be seen as a stylized eighteenth century European representation of the South African landscape. The specific challenges presented to the 'colonial' artist representing the South African landscape, which Coetzee (1998: 42-43) made mention to earlier, are no more apparent than in *Crossing of the Sundays River*. Le Vaillant's Rousseauian celebration of nature that is at once abundant and fecund is a testimony to his essentially idyllic European perception of Africa and its landscape.

Kloppe, speaking of the changing attitudes of the eighteenth and nineteenth century colonial endeavor, towards South African space and its indigenous inhabitants, states:

Within a short time after his voyage to Southern Africa, Le Vaillant's characterization of the indigenous inhabitants of the sub-continent as peaceful and pastoral was in fact no longer regarded as acceptable. To justify the growing exploitation of their land in the nineteenth century they were described, instead, as slothful and barbaric. This transformation in the character of the inhabitants of South Africa went hand in hand with an attempt to erase them, metaphorically if not physically, from the face of the landscape. In the course of the nineteenth century, then, the hinterland beyond the Cape Colony became an empty wilderness (Kloppe 1989: 66).

It was into this seemingly uninhabited world that Baines traveled on his various expeditions after his arrival at the Cape in 1842.

CHAPTER ONE

SECTION THREE

JOHN THOMAS BAINES

Carruthers and Arnold, speaking of Baines state:

Born in King's Lynne in 1820, Baines left England for the first time at the age of twenty-one and travelled in what is now South Africa until 1853. He returned to England for two years, and in 1855 joined a Royal Geographical Society (RGS) expedition to Australia, which lasted until 1857. Next, he was selected to accompany David Livingstone in exploring the upper reaches of the Zambezi (1858-1859) and, after being dismissed by Livingstone; he spent 1860 in Cape Town. From 1861 to 1864 he traveled in Namibia and Botswana; between 1865 and 1872, he exchanged his hitherto independent and somewhat carefree lifestyle for that of a capitalist settler attempting to exploit gold deposits of Zimbabwe. In 1873 and 1874 Baines was in Natal and he died in Durban in 1875 (Carruthers, Arnold 1995: 10).

Baines, in common with many of the artist-travelers' of the nineteenth century became preoccupied with the exploration of the 'blank' spaces of the British colonial map. In her essay, Thomas Baines: Tracing the present in the past, Desiree Lewis (1999: 109) argues that the underpinning of the colonial artist-explorers' travels was not simply motivated by a desire to explore new worlds, "but by a need to imbue a vacant world with meaning, to fill the 'blank space' with triumphant presence". The conscious ideology of Victorian England was best expressed in the creation of the Empire, the aim of which was not to make England international, but to fashion the world after England's example (Carruthers, Arnold 1995: 21).

Baines was one of the many British travelers of the mid-nineteenth century who believed that their first allegiance and responsibility lay with England. According to Carruthers and Arnold:

Thomas Baines participated in three of the most important phases of colonization: travel, settlement and exploitation. Colonies were the prizes of the nineteenth century because the colonizers were guaranteed advantages in world trade having access both to raw materials and to new markets. Colonies offered

opportunities for investors, missionaries and immigrants; for bringing European law, order and notions of civilization to backward and warring societies, and for creating a system in which the 'light' of 'morality' and religion could penetrate into the darkest dwelling places. Thus Baines, as his work so amply demonstrates, was firmly convinced that, as a member of the superior race and nation, he was required to bring civilization to Africa, and to encourage 'inferior' people- by force if necessary- to adopt his superior, European, culture. This belief in an immutable social order was linked directly to the scientific ideas, which were current in the nineteenth century (Carruthers, Arnold 1995: 21-22).

When Baines arrived in Cape Town it was the major metropolis of a well established and settled colony, having been in British hands for almost half a century. The western parts of the Cape had an agricultural and mercantile economy, the latter increasingly diversified and resilient as the colony became drawn into the dynamism of imperial capitalist Britain (ibid: 24). The eastern districts were somewhat less secure, even though a generation had elapsed since the arrival of the 1820 Settlers and the conquest of the Xhosa was by then well advanced. Baines started painting soon after he arrived in the Cape colony and even though he had very little formal training, joined Cape Town's small fraternity of permanent artists. His paintings, like most other artists, were of popular tourist scenes of Cape Town; Table Mountain and the coastline, shipwrecks, and imaginary scenes of Southern African war painted for passing sailors and the military trade (ibid: 26). There was still no hint of Baines's yearning for travel and adventure in his first few years in South Africa. Five years were to pass before he ventured outside the confines of Cape Town.

Baines, aware of the constraints of painting for an indiscriminating clientele, became increasingly interested in educating himself about the colony. There was much available literature concerning it in the form of published accounts of travels, for from early in the eighteenth century the Cape had been a mecca for European adventurers and scientific collectors. It is difficult not to overemphasize the role of

travelers and explorers in the Victorian psyche. These men were the era's national heroes and they commanded large followings among the general public. "Travellers were considered reliable witnesses; they were believed to be competent observers who told the 'truth' and in whose work the imaginative embellishments of the eighteenth century had no place" (Carruthers, Arnold 1995: 36).

Baines moved from the urban limitations of Cape Town to Grahamstown on the eastern frontier, which was known to be a starting point for inland ventures. It was with this move that Thomas Baines's career as writer and travel artist began. From then on he never again lived permanently in a city, and he began to be meticulous in maintaining a regular journal whenever he traveled and in sketching the scenes and events that he saw (Ibid: 26).

To understand the artistic vision of Baines and to evaluate his images, in the context of this research, one has to place him in the context of two worlds – Victorian England and colonial Africa. "An English upbringing and the imperialist ideology of nineteenth century Britain shaped Baines's sociopolitical beliefs and cultural attitudes but it was the landscape, space, people, animals and plants of Africa that provided his iconography" (ibid: 76). A prolific and versatile artist, Baines drew and painted in oils, watercolours, pencil, ink and chalk. He also produced lithographs and wood engravings for mass circulation in portfolios or as book illustrations. It was at school that Baines acquired the rudiments of drawing but, in addition, he would have received some tuition from his maternal grandfather, a painter and decorator. He was apprenticed to William Carr, a Lynne carriage builder whose speciality was ornamental painting, where he learnt the discipline of design and knowledge of colour theory (Carruthers, Arnold 1995: 76). Before leaving England, Baines had most probably

studied art books to acquire technical information and a basic grounding in art history. He would have learnt the conventions of naturalism by copying drawings and paintings, an accepted method of instruction in the Victorian era.

Baines's narrative journals seem to confirm that he was an explorer who painted rather than an artist who travelled. Since he represented himself as an explorer-traveller and put his work forward as an accurate record of reality, his work has come to be accepted as such (ibid). It has frequently been valued for its documentary nature. Lewis suggests that through realistic representations of the South African landscape and its people he encountered, Baines saw himself providing a window of Africa for those in the metropolis. She states:

The perception of his art as primarily mimetic or 'scientific' persists in certain contemporary views and is manifested in the way his paintings have been housed, categorized and stored. His written and painted observations of fauna and flora have contributed to perceptions of the exclusively realistic and informative value of his representations. Since Baines had strong ties with sites of scientific investigation in Britain, he was seen as contributing to the steady consolidation of nineteenth century scientific enquiry (ed. Stevenson 1999: 110).

Baines, on returning home in 1857, exhibited his pictures in King's Lyne at a lecture he gave on his expedition to Australia. Thus, by using his pictures to illustrate lectures, Baines "cast himself in the role of artist-traveller and allowed images to support his words" (Carruthers, Arnold 1995: 79). The paintings primarily in this respect became instructional pictorial journalism. Science, as has been stated, was of consuming interest to the Victorian psyche and the main philosophical debates were generated by Darwin's scientific theories. Science, not art, was perceived as progressive and relevant to the present, just as Applied art, rather than Fine art, was directly related to economic expansion and power.

Baines perceived of himself as an adventurer-traveller and the journals, specimens and visual work he collected were dedicated to furthering the Victorian demands of scientific investigation. His commissioned expeditions to Northern Australia with the Gregory expedition as artist/ storekeeper, and more importantly, his Expedition with Livingstone for the Royal Geographical Society also as artist/ storekeeper, placed Baines amongst the group of adventurer heroes of the Victorian era.

To attempt to investigate the full scope of Baines as a visual artist would require a dedicated research paper of its own. His paintings, drawings and journals of visual material include contributions to zoology, botany, ethnography, cartography, astronomy and geology. It is therefore the candidate's intention to analyze examples of paintings of the South African landscape that Baines produced in oils and watercolours. By so doing, the candidate intends to place the work within the philosophic and aesthetic framework of Fine art. In re-investigating the visual production of Baines's work, it is the candidate's suggestion that Baines, as a Fine artist, produced an autonomous body of work that asserts its presence as drawn or painted images. That is to say, the works not only aided the advancement of the Victorian ideologies of his time, but also existed as works of art within the Fine art context. Carruthers and Arnold (1995: 76) support this by suggesting that Baines's paintings are not masterpieces of *trompe l'oeil*. The relationship between the objective and subjective that exists in his representations that perceived reality, are as complex as their relationship with paint, colour, tone, shape and texture.

When viewing Baines's work, it is necessary to realize the context in which he produced his paintings and drawings. According to Michael Stevenson in his essay, Thomas Baines: An Artist in the Service of Science in South Africa (1999: 27-28),

Baines was not a professional artist who worked in a studio. He had to contend with endless demands of managing a trek: "Shoot game, mend wagons, make shoes and clothes, mend guns" (ibid). He also needs to be placed within the nineteenth-century imperialist context. According to Carruthers and Arnold:

Baines looked on the landscape with nineteenth-century imperialist eyes, directing his gaze at spacious terrain which he considered available for British occupation and exploitation (Carruthers, Arnold 1995: 92).

Thematically, Baines's paintings of the South African landscape deal as much with metaphor as with fact. In her essay Thomas Baines and Southern Africa Flora (Ed Stevenson 1999: 77), Marion Arnold discusses the tensions that exist in Baines's paintings when she states, "Baines applied his botanical knowledge to his art and, in turn, his art discloses a wealth of information about the ecology of the nineteenth-century colonial landscape". Carruthers and Arnold (1995: 92) suggest further that his landscapes are in botanical terminology, habitat studies; but in the realm of Fine art, landscape painting as a genre is constructed from discourses about representation and the use of pictorial language. In this context, Baines's painted landscapes draw on popularized nineteenth-century conventions of the picturesque and reveal evidence of his romantic sensibility which predisposes him to identify with the grand romantic beauty of the wilderness (refer to Chapter One, Section Two: 17-19).

The candidate has chosen to contextualise Baines's visual production by selecting and critically analyzing three images that span the length of his creative career. These images represent the shifting attitudes of the British Imperial endeavor in South Africa. They also represent chronologically the shifting conceptual and technical vision of Baines the visual artist.

In his watercolour, *A walk up the Devil's Mountain* (1842-1846) [Fig.2] taken from one of his first sketchbooks that he worked in when arriving in the Cape, Baines is shown as a solitary adventurer traversing a rocky ledge. Cape Town, Baines's first home, offered the nineteenth-century artist spectacular views, and the mountain ranges of the Eastern Cape similarly enabled him to contemplate and represent dramatic scenery (Carruthers, Arnold 1995: 93). The romantic notion of the artist-hero, confronting a nature that is hostile, exotic, grand and unfamiliar, was a well-established language when Baines started painting in Cape Town. The watercolour conveys the incomprehensible immensity of nature. Rosenblum (1975: 14), talking of the Northern Romantic tradition, states "the artist ...explores his own relationship to the great unknowables, conveyed through the dwarfing infinities of nature". The perilous quality of this romantic encounter with nature is heightened by dramatic tonality of *chiaroscuro* that emphasizes spatial depth, and increases the romantic atmosphere. This watercolour is a fine example of Baines's early landscapes that are rooted in the personal, rather than the social, experience and reveals a romantic sensibility that prevails throughout his career

Many of Baines's landscape paintings depict what was little known to the British public or colonists. According to Carruthers and Arnold they portray particular spatial situations which reinforces the expansionist ideology of traveling in the nineteenth-century:

Travel defines his position within South African art, according particular significance to the artist as 'sightseer', whose choice of sights and point of view endorse British preconceptions about the Dark Continent (Carruthers, Arnold 1995: 92).

They go on to suggest that, through the use of landscape painting, Baines invites the viewer (and by allusion the explorer/colonizer) to enter and travel through pictorial



[Fig 2]

Thomas Baines, *A Walk up the Devil's Mountain*, 1842-1846, 8.9 x 10.8 cm,
Watercolour on paper

space, and through the gaze take possession of a real spatial situation (Ibid). By using such devices as linear perspective and the accepted visual language of the nineteenth-century, Baines convinces the viewer that space can be traversed and conquered, imaginatively and literally.

In the oil painting, *South-west angle of Lake Ngami* (1864) [Fig.3], Baine's romantic instincts become synonymous with colonial empiricism and Imperial expansion. He delights in the visual spectacle of a towering storm cloud erupting into sheet rain over a lake in the infinite landscape. The painting, structured to the picturesque framework of the nineteenth-century, reveals a commanding aerial view of the landscape. The statement he structures is literally and metaphorically dependent upon this point of view. According to Carruthers and Arnold (1995: 99), by adopting a 'birds-eye view', a commanding magisterial gaze, the artist surveys miles of African terrain as detail is subsumed by distance. His gaze is also the imperial gaze, for here is Edenic Africa, a space supposedly uninhabited and awaiting British Imperial initiatives. The composition, structured to the classic Claudian scheme as discussed in Chapter One Section Two: 18, recedes in planes toward the distant azure hills. The viewer, commanding the view from the foreground plane amongst rocks and African scrub, is invited into the image to wander with the small ox-wagon in the middle ground. The notion of the majestic elemental South African landscape recedes in planes to the lake and fire, which has been started by a bolt of lightning produced by the ominous storm cloud hanging in the sunset sky.

The small ox-wagon, which almost integrates into the vast South African landscape, indicates on one hand, a human vulnerability in the empty, infinite space, at the mercy of unknown and uncharted nature. On the other hand, the ox-wagon, as has been suggested in the discussion on La Vaillant, becomes an important symbol in the



[Fig 3]

Thomas Baines, *South-West angle of Lake Ngami*, 1861, 45 x 65 cm, Oil on canvas



[Fig 4]

Thomas Baines, *Major-General Somerset's Division on the March*, 1854, 40 x 63 cm, Oil on canvas

language of colonialist expansion. Sandra Klopfer, discussing Baines in her essay

Crossing Rivers: or exploring the interior of Southern Africa (1989) claims that:

The often-repeated motif of the traveller's ox-wagons in this open expanse with its distant horizons suggests, the apparently empty, virgin territory he records has already been claimed for civilization. The arguably sinister implications of this aggressive appropriation of land is especially evident in the long train of ox-wagons he depicted when he was employed as an official war artist during the Eighth Frontier War against the Xhosa in the early 1850s (Klopfer 1989:67) [Fig.4]

South-west angle of Lake Ngami, is, as the title suggests, a specific geographic point on the Southern African landscape. Baines embraced all that nineteenth-century technology and science offered and this landscape becomes concerned, as does his others, with a moment in historical time. It also reflects Baines's pre-occupation with accurately recording the natural flora of his surroundings. Miller, in his essay, From Science to Allegory: geological Observations of Thomas Baines " (Ed Stevenson 1999: 151-152) observes that Baines's creative vision "is a didactic, analytical vision, in which all the elements of the natural world- animals, plants, water and rocks are accorded equal status".

As the last painting in this discussion of Baines's work, the candidate has chosen to critically evaluate *Durban from Mr Currie's residence, Berea 1873* (1873) [Fig. 5].

Painted two years before his death in Durban in 1875, this painting synthesizes many of Baines's preoccupations as artist, scientist and capitalist settler. The view is an accurate record of Durban from Invicta Cottage, home of Henry William Currie from 1858. It presents us with a panorama of the British Imperial objective in South Africa, which was ultimately to transform nature into a capitalist cultural enterprise. A world where traveling and settlement coexisted, represented by the small, but established, city of Durban and by the ships moving in and out of the harbour. According to Carruthers and Arnold (1995: 145), it shows the salvage of a wrecked ship while the

Pioneer (the first steam tug to be used in South African waters) sails out of the harbour entrance toward a vessel anchored in the roadstead. The Durban painting encodes Victorian attitudes to both nature and culture, and is a multi-leveled statement about vision. Baines again adopts the magisterial gaze of Durban. This birds-eye view enables the viewer to survey the panorama, which is again composed according to the Claudian scheme of receding planes, structured in this painting horizontally into five zones. These zones read from the top are; an atmospheric cloudbank in the sky, Bluff and light dappled water in the harbour, Durban city development, green belt of middle distance pasture and a foreground garden. The view is both a vista and a vision of successful settlement (ibid: 135). As was suggested earlier by Miller, in relation to Baines's creative vision, this painting, with its multitude of activities replete with its Victorian imperial representation, creates a convincing reality that confirms the Imperial British enterprise.

Carruthers and Arnold (1995; 135) suggest that, "although separated by middle distance space, the microcosm of the foreground connects philosophically with the macrocosm of the town as the part relates to the whole. The foreground is also connected to the distance by the telescope, an optical instrument that reclaims distance and reverses concepts of the near and the far" (Carruthers and Arnold 1995: 135). The telescope, literally an instrument of insight used by the artist to extend his perception, also functions metaphorically as the means of focusing on imperial achievements in Natal.

The image exposes the way in which the design of culture has transformed nature. The distant town and the foreground garden are both deliberately organized, a product of human intentionality and cultural decisions. The foreground becomes a narrative that



[Fig 5]

Thomas Baines, *Durban from Mr Currie's residence, Berea 1873*, 1873, 45.5 x 60
cm, Oil on canvas

summarizes the identity of Durban in 1873. The presence of Thomas Baines and Henry William Currie are suggested through the inclusion of their possessions. Baines by his telescope, gun and art materials that lie scattered around his chair. Currie [a town councilor who was to be elected mayor in 1879] by his obvious colonial lifestyle, with Indian workers that tend to 'his colonial space' after tea, a great British past time. Indian workers were brought to Natal from another region of the Empire to serve British needs. On the lawn in the foreground lies Currie's hunting dog. Now sleeping on the sprawling lawns of Currie's estate, it is as if the old colonial enterprise of trekking and hunting in the wilderness has been replaced by established domestic culture. The other main feature in the foreground is the well-manicured flowerbed, the plants neatly labeled as if under scientific investigation.

Durban from Mr. Currie's residence, Berea 1873, consolidates and synthesizes many of Baines's preoccupations, namely his enthusiasm for landscape painting, his fascination with scientific instruments, love of natural history, pride in British achievements and his intense curiosity about the world in which he lived (Carruthers, Arnold 1995: 136).

In critically evaluating the three works in this chapter, it becomes evident that they represent, as has been stated, the colonial objective over the fifty years Baines spent in and out of South Africa. They also become texts into reading how Baines perceived this colonial objective and to his changing attitudes and ideas as an artist representing this landscape. *A walk up Devil's Mountain* reveals Baines the bewildered, but confident, explorer-traveller, who has just embarked on a journey into the 'dark continent'; carrying as baggage all the preconceived romantic notions of the nineteenth century toward

nature and toward landscape painting. His visions as colonial settler and as visual artist are still unclear as he negotiates the rocky ledge.

South-west angle of Lake Ngami suggests that Baines has defined himself in the colonial Imperial enterprise as explorer-artist; travelling through the majestic South African landscape; calculating, measuring, analyzing and capturing it in images as to render it useful to culture. What becomes evident in this work are Baines's technical and conceptual methods that mature as he traverses the South African landscape.

Durban from Mr. Currie's residence reflects Baines's pre-occupation with the Imperial objective. He is no longer traversing the landscape, but has become a settler in the land he once measured and mapped into paintings. Nature has been rendered useful to colonial expansion and the Imperial enterprise in South Africa has been established. His conceptual and technical languages are unique and mature in this oil, one of the last paintings Baines painted before his death.

According to Lewis (Ed Stevenson 1999: 109), "Much of Baines's artwork has been situated in a tradition of disavowing critique. Far from being the subject of informed display, it has often been housed in museums where it is simply categorized as evidence of its period, and where little effort has been made to explore or commemorate it." She goes on to suggest that "A primary concern among many revisionist scholars has been to reveal the artists-explorers collusion with Victorian and colonial ideology" (ibid). In the context of this paper, perceptions of Baines are enhanced, by recognizing that his adulthood coincided with the early and mid-Victorian era, when British expansionism and chauvinism were rampant and aggressive. Baines accepted these values without question, and therefore his visual

representation is entrenched in a British belief in imperialism, moral righteousness, self-confidence and economic and social progress. However, as Carruthers and Arnold so aptly state:

A close examination of his life suggests that not all he saw was etched as clearly in Black and White as he would have us believe. More of the dominant characteristics of modernity can be found than are to be expected-including skepticism, feelings of insecurity and self-doubt, and a sense of isolation and loneliness. In the life and work of Thomas Baines some of the more paradoxical and complex ideas which were integral to the Victorian age can be discerned (Carruthers and Arnold 1995 12).

CHAPTER ONE

SECTION THREE

JACOB HENDRIK PIERNEEF

J.H. Pierneef was born in Pretoria on the 13th August 1886 to Gerrit Pierneef, a Dutch settler who was a man of stern discipline and a devout Calvinist, and Christina Buser, who came out of a patriarchal Boer farming family (Grosskopf 1947: 5-6). This Dutch settler ideology was to influence Pierneef as a visual artist and as an Afrikaner male, who maintained a noticeable Dutch identity throughout his life. Pierneef was thirteen years old when the Second Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) broke out. This war not an isolated incident in South African history, but part of the broader conflict between Afrikaner nationalism and British Imperialism. Lord Roberts occupied Pretoria on 5 June 1900 (Nel 1990:13). The Pierneefs sympathized with the Boers and the family chose to leave for the Netherlands. It was here that Pierneef came to the realization that he wanted to be an artist. In Hilversum, Holland, Pierneef studied night classes in architecture and worked in a factory that produced artists' colours. According to Grosskopf (1947: 8), "It was an old-world establishment, carrying on the worthy tradition of Flemish and Dutch schools of painters that had ground and mixed all their paints". The Pierneef's then moved to Rotterdam, and with this move came Pierneef's first professional instruction in drawing at the Rotterdam academy, and painting, from August Allebe (1838-1927).

The Anglo-Boer war ended in 1902 and the Pierneef family returned to Pretoria after their short exile (ibid: 9). According to Estelle Pretorius, in her Essay Biography of Jacob Hendrik Pierneef (1990), back in Pretoria Pierneef became involved with a number of well-known artists.

She states:

His godfather, Anton Van Wouw (1862-1945), continually encouraged him to persevere and to improve his painting technique. Frans Oerder (1867-1944) gave him a few painting lessons and taught him the basics of oil painting. At this time he met the Dutch artist, Edward Frankfort, who specialized in figures, interiors and landscapes. He advised and encouraged Pierneef. The Irish artist, George Smithard (1873-1919), instructed Hendrik in etching, a technique he soon mastered and refined. Smithard impressed upon Hendrick the need to develop his own style and not imitate European art styles (Ed Nel 1990: 35-36).

In this time Pierneef worked at the State Library in Pretoria and spent his spare time painting, lecturing on art and became involved in the cultural activities of Pretoria.

It was only in 1913, at 27 years old, that Pierneef had his first one-person exhibition.

In 1917 he left the library for a post offered by the Transvaal Education Department, lecturing to student teachers in the colleges of Pretoria and Heidelberg. Pierneef's teaching interlude lasted little more than a year, and by the end of 1917 he resigned from his position. It was in this year that he joined the Afrikaner Broederbond

(Grosskopf 1947:10-11. Coetzee 1992: 2). According to Ferreira, in his Essay Images of Pierneef's South Africa (1990), the Afrikaner Broederbond was born in 1918, out of a need for Afrikaner unity and identity. He states:

One of the aims of its constitution was to strive towards Afrikaner unity, but its aim was above all the maintenance and development of Christian principles as the foundation of all its activities. The Afrikaner was to be taught to love his language, his history, traditions, country and nation. In addition, the Broederbond wished to promote South African art and culture (Ed Nel 1990: 16-17).

The young Pierneef had clearly arrived socially, if not yet artistically. Pierneef decided in 1919 to become a full-time artist. In 1922 he received his first commission, painting eight panels in the assembly hall of the Ficksburg Hoerskool in the Orange Free State. According to Coetzee (1992: 2), "The significance of this commission lies both in the patron and the subject matter of the panels. The patron, S.H. Pellissier, was one of the major architects of Afrikaner culture and the decision to base the panels on his study of

Bushman paintings reflects Pierneef's interest at that time" (Coetzee 1992: 2). By 1924 Pierneef had re-married and had met Hans Aschenborn, a German artist who had immigrated to South West Africa. On Aschenborn's invitation, Pierneef discovered the arid stretches of the South West African landscape. This according to Coetzee (1992: 2) marked a turning point in the perception Pierneef had of himself as an artist, and it reinforced his perception towards the representation of the landscape. It resulted in the development of a recognisable 'Pierneef style', which consisted of stylized simplified forms, vast open spaces and subtle colour rendering.

In 1925 Pierneef left for Europe and on this tour became aware of some of the international art movements (Refer to Chapter One, Section Two: 21). In order to become fully acquainted with the spirit of his time, Pierneef traveled extensively to Düsseldorf, Munich, Berlin, Paris, Antwerp and Bruges. These art movements had an overwhelming effect on Pierneef (Van Der Waal-Braaksma in Nel 1990: 135). He was confronted with the Impressionists, the Neo-Impressionists, the art of the Symbolists, the sensual Art Nouveau and the geometrical Nieuwe kunste (ibid). It was also on this journey that he met Willem Adriaan Von Konijnenburg (1868-1943), an established and respected Dutch artist and philosopher of art. According to Coetzee (1992: 17), it has become customary for writers on the art and ideas of Pierneef to refer to the possible influence that this Dutch artist had on him. In the context of this research, Von Konijnenburg's theories and concepts of art can be clearly seen in Pierneef's production and discussions on his own work after 1926.

In 1926 on his arrival back to the Union Of South Africa, Pierneef, inspired by the experience of contemporary European art, self-consciously experimented with the concepts and techniques of its visual representation. According to Pretorius (Ed Nel

1990: 74), the South African public was not ready for the first works Pierneef exhibited after his return from Europe. His exhibition in Pretoria was a financial disaster. She goes on to suggest that this could be the reason Pierneef never continued to work with contemporary art styles and concepts. He returned again to a technique of simplified forms that were strongly linear with subdued and pale colours, and his reference, the South African landscape. Pierneef was a full time artist who had a family to support. He also had a great following of buyers, especially in the intellectual Afrikaner circles, who wanted to buy the distinct 'Pierneef style' of painting (Pretorius in Nel 1990: 74-77), (Coetzee 1992: 3).

In 1929, Pierneef was commissioned to produce 32 murals for Park Station in Johannesburg [Fig 5,6,7] depicting landscapes of different parts of South Africa (Pretorius in Nel 1990: 142). According to Coetzee:

That *The Station Panels* mark a high point in his painting is generally accepted but, in one sense, it was an ambiguous attainment: it was such an overpowering example of his work and it succeeded so amply in fixing a recognizable Pierneef 'style', that it must also mark a point of stagnation after which decline and even derivation was inevitable (Coetzee 1992: 3).

Pierneef felt the rewards and the recognition that such a public commission brought.

In 1935 he received the Erepenning (medal of honour) from the Suid-Afrikaanse

Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns, the first painter to be honoured with this title

(Coetzee 1992: 3). He received another public commission even before completing

The Station Panels; seven paintings commissioned for South Africa House in London.

These were unveiled in March 1934 and Pierneef expressed his satisfaction with the success of these works (Coetzee 1992: 3).

The 1930s and 1940s were years of success for Pierneef. He traveled extensively both nationally and internationally. He gave much of his time, and used his prestige, to further the political and cultural cause of the Afrikaner, as this time was especially important for the Afrikaner in their struggle for cultural emancipation (ibid). Pierneef was involved with designing book covers, invitation cards, Christmas cards, posters and remained in demand as a speaker on art and culture. He was revered by many people in the Afrikaner public community, as well as by many in the Afrikaner nationalist government. Coetzee (1992: 3-4) points to the fact that this pressure on him as a visual artist led to stagnation. He settled for a recognizable and even mannered style that was compositionally balanced, with subtle colour tones and deep receding silent spaces. He attempted to broaden his subject matter by including scenes from outside the Transvaal, but this met with less success. Exhibitions, with the tediousness of absolute predictability, were invariably successful (ibid: 4).

The fifties ushered in major exhibitions for Pierneef. These contained much of his old works and were held at all the major cities around the country. In 1951 he received two Honorary Doctorates, one from the University of Natal, and the other from the University of Pretoria. Pierneef died on 4 October 1957. He was seventy-one years old.

In the context of this research, the candidate has chosen to critically evaluate three images from *The Station Panels* (Fig 5,6,7) series, which were commissioned in 1929. These panels reflect Pierneef at the height of his conceptual and technical powers. They also reflect the essence of Afrikaner nationalist ideology, for which Pierneef was an ambassador, and which culminated in the victory of The National Party, which came to power in 1948.

In 1929, Pierneef was awarded the commission to paint twenty-eight paintings of natural scenes and historical places in South Africa, and four smaller studies of indigenous trees, for the new Johannesburg railway station (Coetzee 1992: 3). Rail transport in the 1900's played an important role in the Union governments' plans for economic development.

According to Coetzee:

An extensive rail network was in operation before 1910, providing the infrastructure for economic development and communication. ... Industrialization, now more than ever based on mining, required an efficient railway system and by the Twenties, it was clear that this had been achieved. The railways were not only functioning smoothly but well enough to be the Unions spearhead in the process of opening up the rest of Southern and, indeed, central Africa to trade and development. ... In addition, as part of the British Empire, the Union had become a tourist destination. ... The Johannesburg Railway Station became the main point of embarkation for the visitor, whether tourist or businessman (Coetzee 1992: 6-7).

It is in this context that the station building was commissioned. The building was a collaborative effort of two South African architects, Gordon Leith (1886-1965) and Gerard Moerdijk (1890-1958) (ibid: 5). The station panels were installed during October 1932. According to Van Der Waal-Braaksma (1990), over time the paintings were exposed to smoke pollution and humidity and had to be restored several times.

She states:

After completing the restoration in 1948, Pierneef recommended that the paintings be put behind glass to prevent soot damage. Between 1960 and 1963, the panels were transferred to the new suburban inner court of Park station where they remained until 1971. Between 1971 and 1973, the paintings were once again cleaned and housed in a separate locale in the railway museum and art gallery in the old Park station building. In 1987, they were transferred to the Johannesburg Art Gallery on permanent loan (Ed Nel 1990: 142).

In order to contextualise *The Station Panels* in relation to Pierneef's philosophies about the South African landscape and art production, it is essential to place him within the context of Afrikaner nationalism and within the framework of early twentieth century art.

In Pierneef, Land and Landscape (1992: 22), Coetzee claims that Pierneef positioned himself within the ideology of Afrikaner nationalism. He goes on to explain how the operation of ideology on human life "involves the constitution and patterning of how human beings live their lives as conscious, reflecting initiators of acts in a structured, meaningful world" (ibid). In this context ideological structure and ideological content determine what is good and right (values) as well as what is real (cognition) and what is possible (imagination) (Thompson 1986: 14). According to Coetzee (1992: 22), Pierneef constantly shifted between these three spheres of ideology as a landscape painter. Landscape painting was a firmly established genre in South Africa in the 1900s. Pierneef was not a pioneer in landscape painting, he merely took his place in an already established market where the popularity of landscape was unchallenged. Coetzee suggests that there is a popular idea that landscape painting is special to, and revealing of, the Afrikaner. He states:

It is rather intended [landscape painting] to convey the Afrikaners' sense of being mystically linked to the land. Afrikaners derive their historical being and identity from this relationship; they are products of the land *natuurmense* [people of nature] or, at the very least, *plaasmense* [farm people]. This belief is predicated on assumptions made and expanded in the ideology underpinning Afrikaner nationalism (Coetzee 1992: 25) [my parentheses]

One of the primary aims of Afrikaner nationalism was to establish the Afrikaners' claim to the land, on the basis of the strength of historical justification and divine ordination. The Afrikaner national character was derived from the *trekboere* who had an emotional and psychological dependence on the land, especially the vast spaciousness of the landscape. Their suffering and sacrifice was cited as proof of the legal claim of Afrikaners to the land (Coetzee 1991: 36). The particular Dutch Calvinist tradition that Pierneef aspired to, manifested by his close association with the Afrikaner Broederbond, suggested that the *trekboere* lived a life like the Israelites in the Old

Testament, being led by God to the promised land. According to Coetzee, the Great Trek, the most pivotal event in Afrikaner history, was presented as historical proof of the elect status and pre-ordained exclusivity of the Boer nation. He goes on to state that according to the Afrikaner the hand of God granted the *Voortrekkers* victory over the 'Black' nation at Bloodriver, and thereby made it clear that he meant the Afrikaners to possess the land (ibid). Marks (1980: 7-12) suggests further that Afrikaner historians then invented an attendant myth, the myth of the 'empty land', to further enhance their claim to the land. By the time Pierneef embarked on the Park Station commission these readings of the Afrikaners past were well established. The South Africa of 1929 was a period when Afrikaner nationalist ideology was defining itself into a cohesive governmental organization.

As has been stated before, the succession of European art movements that occurred at the turn of the century, had a profound influence on Pierneef. Van Der Waal-Braaksma, in her Essay Pierneef-the artist (1990), claims that styles and trends in Europe reflected the political turmoil of the time. She continues:

In the artistic field, a sharp reaction against Impressionism could be detected. Symbolic and decorative ideas manifested themselves for the first time. The principles on which this new approach was based were simplification and comprehension. The new movement, the consequences of which would be felt well into the twentieth century and traces of which were to be found in Pierneef's oeuvre, was born of a changing spiritual environment. Western civilization was characterized by a new interest in the nonrational (Ed Nel 1990: 119).

The emphasis shifted from the Nineteenth century's preoccupation with reason, intellect, empiricism and established truths, into a quest for intuition, the subconscious and a "vague mystique centering around belief in a impersonal, all-embracing world soul" (Van Der Waal-Braaksma in Nel 1990: 119). When Pierneef traveled to Europe in 1925 he was confronted by philosophies and concepts that suggested that the artist,

as part of this world-soul, should express what he/she feels and expose the creative inner life. According to Coetzee (1992: 19), this led to the formation of a group loosely defined as the Symbolists, which had strong links with Dutch artists and poets. "The symbolists sought to revive the near moribund naturalistic tradition by infusing it with allegorical and metaphorical motifs, nevertheless retaining a strong emotional appeal. Strongly individualistic because of their emphasis on personal expression and experience, these artist nevertheless shared a strong sense of solidarity" (ibid). It is into this tradition that Von Konijnenburg, as artist, situated himself. As has been stated earlier, Von Konijnenburg profoundly influenced Pierneef. Coetzee argues that by the time Pierneef met Von Konijnenburg he had some commercial success as an artist, "but lacked a theoretical, aesthetic direction, a justification and explication of his work" (Coetzee 1992: 18). To fully explore the extent of Von Konijnenburg's influence over Pierneef is well beyond the reaches of this paper. It is however important in establishing the theoretical and conceptual basis of Pierneef's work when evaluating the three images from *The Station Panels* series. Pierneef returned to the Union with the concepts of Von Konijnenburg, who according to Coetzee:

Firstly, Insisted on a spiritual, religious basis for all art and life; secondly, he viewed art as based on an ideal creative construction, an inner logic expressed in 'symbolic' archetypal structures such as geometric forms; thirdly, he saw 'true' art as eternal and yet not divorced from life, never just art-for-art's sake and never abstract; fourthly, because art is not to be abstract, it remains accessible to a wider public (Coetzee 1992: 20).

Coetzee (1992: 20) goes on to suggest that Von Konijnenburg's successful forays into wall decoration must be understood in relation to these concepts; and so too, in the context of this research, must Pierneef's *Station Panels*. By producing an art product for obvious public display (such as murals based on simplified forms and a clear design), the strong socialist or rather populist need for art in the so-called *monumental-decorative* style was satisfied.

The candidate suggests, however, that to simply defer Pierneef's creative and philosophic concepts to Von Konijnenburg's is an over simplification. The influence is well recorded, but Pierneef, as an Afrikaner artist of the early twentieth century, tried to establish a particularly unique South African visual language. Van Der Waal-Braaksma in her essay Pierneef-The Artist (Ed Nel 1990: 124-125) suggests that the growing interest in 'primitive art' influenced artistic development in Europe and South Africa at this time. Ancient civilizations were rediscovered, as was the indigenous art of Africa. "The rock paintings of the Bushmen and the traditional art of the black peoples of Southern Africa influenced the way in which Pierneef approached representing the South African landscape" (ibid). She goes on to state that, "in certain types of light, the South African landscape also takes on a flat, two dimensional quality, and Pierneef, perhaps influenced by the approach of the rock artist, was particularly aware of this. In his view, the blinding midday sun robbed objects of their volume and reduced them to two dimensions" (ibid). According to Grosskopf (1947: 18) Pierneef was influenced by Bushmen art and African wood and ceramic sculpture, as their flow of line and geometric design was, according to Pierneef, characteristic of the whole nature of South Africa. This search for an indigenous South African model of visual representation was an objective that Pierneef undertook for much of his creative career. It is ironic therefore that Pierneef, who intensely studied and lectured on the art of the Bushmen and the 'Black' man, should turn out to be one of the main advocates of an exclusionary 'White' indigenous art.

The choice of panels the candidate has chosen to critically evaluate the *Station Panels* series characterizes a cross section of the South African landscape in the early twentieth century. The chosen works represent Pierneef's conceptual and creative

vision as an artist. They also represent Pierneef's political vision as an Afrikaner nationalist, living in early twentieth century South Africa.

Amajuba [Fig 6] is a significant landmark for Afrikaner history. It is situated in the Kwazulu-Natal region of South Africa, and in Zulu means 'house of the pigeons'. According to Coetzee (1990: 34) it was here that one of the most spectacular Boer victories over British forces occurred during the First Anglo-Boer war of 1881. He suggests further that it is generally agreed that this battle led to the recognition by Britain of the independence of the Boer Transvaal Republic (ibid). *Amajuba*, in common with all the panels in the *Station Panels* series, has the distinct Pierneef style; stylized simplified forms, vast open spaces and subtle colour rendering. It is structured in receding planes and uses geometric line and perspective techniques to draw the viewer into the landscape. A subtle illumination of light draws the viewers' attention to the farmhouse in the centre foreground. It shows a peaceful dwelling in a land that seems silent, empty and fecund. Coetzee (1991: 37) suggests that for the Afrikaner the farm is God-imbued. He suggests further, "Accordingly, to the Afrikaners' landscape depicts nature that is halfway between culture and nature". In *Amajuba*, Pierneef's Calvinist vision suspends the dualism between nature and culture. He therefore visually preserves the illusion of the Boers intimacy with nature [the South African landscape], and therefore with God. Ploughed fields next to the dwelling support the needs of culture, and the historical battlefield looms overhead, as if monumentalized, in the deep shadows of the receding planes. Historical justification [victory over the British] and divine ordination [Calvinist doctrine] were the foundations on which the Afrikaners' claim to the land was established. The mountain, which is a noticeable feature of the landscape, is really nothing more than a large *Koppie* [hill]. However, to the Afrikaner, the name *Amajuba* is sufficient to evoke powerful nationalist tendencies.



[Fig 6]

J.H. Pierneef, *Amajuba*, 1929, 146 x 140 cm, Oil on canvas

The second painting is of *Louis Trichardt* [Fig 7], a historical town that lies in the Soutpansberg region of Southern Africa. Its historical reference is contained in its name. Louis Trichardt was a *Voortrekker* leader who according to Coetzee (1992: 31) was considered the trailblazer of White migration. Trichardt and his followers camped in the vicinity of this town on his 'trek' to Lorenzo Marques, between May 1836 and August 1837. The image reveals that the South African landscape has been cultivated and domesticated. Structured in receding planes with subtle tonal and colour rendering, the eye shifts gradually over the dark foreground fields, into the lighter middle distance of the small *Boer* town, reaching the luminous far distance in the pinnacle of a church. The church spire then directs the eye into the rolling geometric clouds above. Van Der Waal-Braaksma (Ed Nel 1990: 148), in her discussion on Pierneef's clouds, suggests that in *Louis Trichardt* one can see the face of a man, as well as a figure of a bird with enormous eagle's wings. She goes on to state that Pierneef's stylized sky adds a dramatic tension to the static nature of the painting (Van Der Waal-Braaksma in Nel 1990: 148). It is in the Sky where God resides, together with the elemental nature of the sun, air and water which provide the Boer farmer with all that is needed to cultivate and culture the land.

Louis Trichardt radiates a static monumental and bountiful sense of peace. Van Der Waal-Braaksma (Ed Nel 1990: 144) discussing the *Station Panels* states that, "This effect is obtained by meticulously constructed compositions and firmness of line and the geometrical structure of all the works". Coetzee (1992: 31) argues further that Pierneef's composition for *Louis Trichardt*, as with many of the other *Station Panel* images, is clearly based on Von Koningburg's geometrical design.



[Fig 7]

J.H. Pierneef, *Louis Trichardt*, 1929, 148.75 x 140 cm, oil on canvas

He states:

To confirm this, we have numerous sketches clearly showing that Pierneef planned, calculated, divided and balanced the pictorial elements according to geometric forms. One can repeatedly recognize his use of symmetrical compositional features such as the arch as part of a circle, the sectioning of the surface horizontally and the use of triangles on either side of an imaginary line. This use of geometric forms does not detract from his standing as an artist. Instead it makes it possible to situate him in a tradition of wall painting-it places him in history (Coetzee 1992: 14).

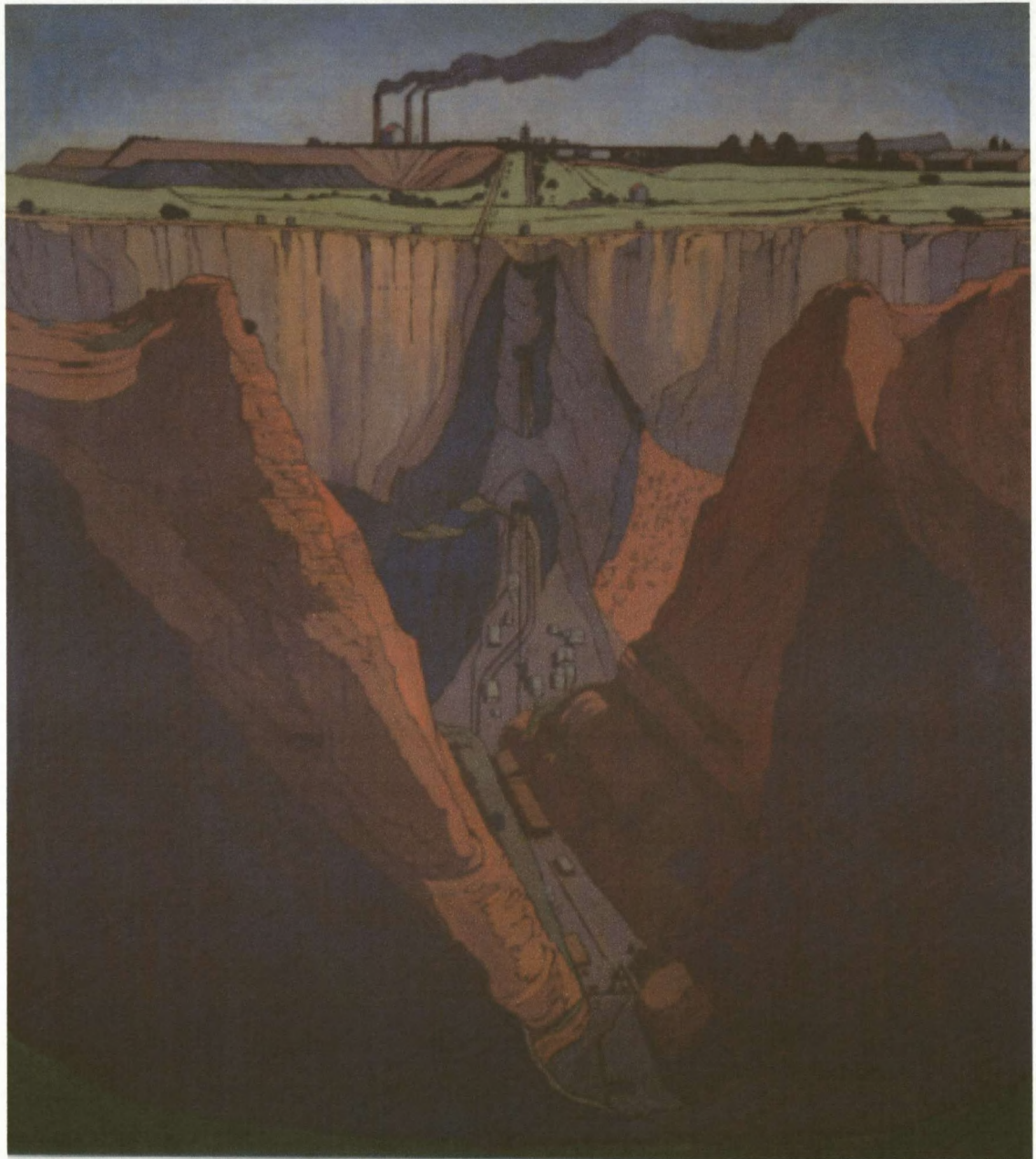
Pierneef therefore appropriated Von Koningburg's concepts and applied them to his own particular visual language. The result in *Louis Trichardt* is a painting that is static. Nothing in Pierneef's nature grows or dies. It is not bound in time, but exists in the realm of timelessness contemplation, where all of nature is God imbued. In placing the church in the centre of the panel Pierneef further emphasizes this reference.

Coetzee (1992: 32) suggests that *Louis Trichardt* is the most northerly scene depicted in the *Station Panels*. It is the closest to South Africa's northern border and therefore closest to the great continent of Africa. The church in Pierneef's Calvinist ideology represents the spearhead of the White Afrikaners' duty to bring civilization to the Dark Continent. According to Coetzee (1992: 32) the civilizing mission of the Whites, by way of Christianity, was frequently discussed in the Afrikaners' intellectual writings of the time.

The last painting the candidate will critically evaluate from the *Station Panels* series is *Premier Mine* [Fig 8]. Whether this image fits the brief of the *Station Panels*, which was to depict natural scenes or historical places of the South African landscape, is debatable. It does however, contextualise the Afrikaner nationalist interest in South Africa's mineral wealth in the middle of the twentieth century. "On the 26 January 1905, the worlds largest diamond was discovered at the mine painted by Pierneef... a

diamond mine near Cullinan north-east of Pretoria" (Coetzee 1992: 38). The Cullinan diamond has become famous for its inclusion in the crown of the British Monarch.

In this painting Pierneef depicts the vast excavation pit. In his distinct style, influenced by Von Koningburg's concepts of wall painting, Pierneef concentrates on the activity in the pit, which according to Coetzee (ibid) was reputed to be the single biggest pit in the world at that time. The composition, with its geometric shapes, positioning of lines, subtle colour rendering and contrasts of tone, entice the viewer into the depths of the mine, for it is here that nature has yielded its treasures for culture. The eye is led through the mineshaft, eventually climbing the far bank onto the landscape beyond. In the far distance rises the mine's headgear, as smoke bellows from the chimneys just off to the left. *Premier Mine* depicts the rise of the industrial revolution that changed the face of the South African landscape. It also challenged the Calvinist Afrikaners' concept of a God imbued nature [farm], in which they [the Afrikaner] were so emotionally and psychologically attached. Ferreira, in his essay Images of Pierneef's South Africa (Ed Nel 1990: 11), comments that the crippling economic depression of 1929 caused Afrikaners to leave their farms and move to cities where unemployment was rife. The rural *Boer* farmers' link to the land was slowly severed with the rise of the urbanized landscape. According to Coetzee (1992: 29) this development was seen as detrimental to the Afrikaners' sense of national identity. In retrospect however, the Afrikaners' fears of losing their national identity were unfounded. On the contrary, according to Ferreira (Ed Nel 1990: 19), "it was here that centres of Afrikaner culture developed and various cultural organizations developed". The God imbued land had been turned into an economic machine rendering it useful for the further development of South African Afrikaner culture.



[Fig 8]

J.H. Pierneef, *Premier Mines*, 1929, 140.5 x 127 cm, oil on canvas

In critically evaluating the above images from the *Station Panel* series, it becomes evident that Pierneef interprets the landscape with a European Imperial eye. In depicting the landscape as empty, silent and virgin, he invokes the Afrikaner myth of the empty land. The images, besides having a merely technical artistic motivation have according to Coetzee, a clear compositional scheme, which indicates a desire to impose order. He states:

They represent a desire to structure the landscape, to render nature into culture, physicality into spirituality, the wilderness into inwardness. Landscape at its most fundamental level deals inescapably with man's relationship with the world and it deals with man in the world. It is expressive of a world-view largely determined by culture and ideology. Pierneef's stylizations indicate a culturally determined set of relations (Coetzee 1992: 15).

In this respect, the landscapes pictorial organization gives the viewer the illusion of control. The finely judged, meticulously structured and aestheticized landscape become concrete expressions of Afrikaner cultural convictions and political aspirations.

CHAPTER TWO

INTRODUCTION

In Chapter Two the candidate intends to explore attitudes towards the South African landscape between 1948 and 1994 in order to provide a link between colonial representation and post-colonial contemporary practice.

Section One will explore the politics of South African space. This section will map the events that determined how the landscape was utilized by the Nationalist Party government, through legislation, to further the Afrikaner colonial objective of apartheid. It will also map out the resistance to this ideology, in the form of the Black Nationalist Movements.

Section Two will provide a concise development of South African landscape representation, between 1948 and 1994.

CHAPTER TWO

SECTION ONE

THE POLITICS OF SOUTH AFRICAN SPACE, 1948-1994.

To attempt to provide a dense socio-political analysis of South Africa, spanning the years 1948 to 1994, requires a study that falls far beyond the reaches of this research. The candidate intends therefore to provide a concise history of South Africa's socio-political landscape, in order to contextualize the historical framework that determines contemporary practice.

The 1948 election was hailed by many Afrikaners as much more than a mere political victory. It was in Preston's (1995: 156) words " the crowning achievement of half a century of struggle and deprivation". Malan wasted no time in defining his colonial policy of apartheid. He introduced legislation to give it a legal framework. According to Preston:

A first step was to create machinery for preventing the intermingling of races in white areas. Mixed marriages between Whites and Blacks were prohibited in 1949, and a year later the immorality act of 1927 was amended to ban 'immoral' acts between Whites and Blacks. Under the 1950 Population Registration Act every individual was classified according to race, with a Race Classification Board set up to adjudicate on borderline cases. ...To implement the grand design of physical separation of the races the Group Areas Act was passed in 1950. As a means of removing Black communities living in 'White' areas it proved particularly effective. Possibly the best known of the laws of this period was the Separate Amenities Act of 1953 which regulated public amenities. ...But of all the legislation introduced to implement apartheid the so-called 'Pass Laws' of 1952 proved the most unpopular. These laws compelled Blacks to carry identification documents at all times – an effective means of establishing precisely where Black people lived and worked (Preston 1995: 156-158).

Koloane (1997: 32) further argues that the Group Areas Act restricted free movement of communities and coerced people [Blacks] from fertile surroundings to arid, desolate

dumping areas miles from anywhere. South African geographical space, in this context, was therefore further defined, through White Afrikaner legislation, as a colonial place. This colonial place according to Davidson (1991: 341), "possessed an industrial machine of comparatively great power and wealth, fuelled and constantly expanded by steady inflows of private capital from the United States, Britain and other Western European countries". The National party continued its policies of segregation. Malan retired from politics and was succeeded by JG Strydom, who in turn was succeeded by HF Verwoerd.

Verwoerd's radical Nationalist political ideologies were grafted onto the already existing legislation regarding separate development. He, according to Preston (1995: 161), accepted as logical and inevitable the creation of self-governing Black countries within the borders of South Africa – areas that became known as 'Bantustans'. These Bantustans, according to Davidson (1991: 342), were to be inhabited only by Black Africans. They were to have a measure of domestic self-rule as satellites of White South Africa. Robinson and Tuttle in Africana (Ed Appiah and Gates 1999: 1759) suggest that although the National Party claimed that these homelands allowed Blacks to maintain their tribal customs and political structures, the primary objective of the Bantustans was to prevent formation of class-based resistance movements among Black workers. In the ideology of its White leaders, who ruled as masters over a Black population some five times their number, these Bantustans were nothing more than labour reserves for the South African government. Apartheid, in this context, provided an ideological justification for massive ongoing population relocations. It also provided ideological justification for human rights violations through discriminatory governmental legislation.

Davidson states:

One after another the petty discriminations against non-whites were multiplied in terms of pass laws and everyday segregation. One after another the major discriminations were strengthened in terms of education, political life and territorial segregation. One after another the slender rights of non-whites were wiped from the legislative map (Davidson 1991: 341-342).

The South African government's discriminatory policies soon spurred a range of protest groups. The South African Native Congress was the first Black political organization that was founded in 1898. 1912 saw more than one hundred Black activists assembled in Bloemfontein to create an even larger civil rights organization, the South African Native National Congress [SANNC], which became the African National Congress [ANC] in 1923 (Ed. Appiah and Gates 1999: 1758). In 1952 the ANC united with several Coloured political groups to wage a non-violent campaign of boycotts, strikes and marches. The anti-apartheid movement gained momentum. By the end of the 1950's it was clear that non-violent action would be met consistently with government sanctioned violence (Robinson and Tuttle in Appiah and Gates 1999: 1759).

In January 1961 legislation was tabled and on 31 May the Republic of South Africa became a reality. The former justice minister C.R. Swart was sworn in as the first State President of the new Republic of South Africa. To the Afrikaner supporters of the National party the verdict of the Boer-war had been reversed. One of the two white tribes had satisfied its national aspirations, the second was now a partner in this unhappy alliance, and the Black African knew they had no hope of fundamental reform from above (Preston 1995: 163-165). These fears were confirmed when police shot and killed sixty-nine unarmed demonstrators in an anti-pass protest in the township of Sharpeville. Shortly afterward the Nationalist government banned the ANC and other

anti-apartheid organizations. According to Robinson and Tuttle (Ed Appiah and Gates 1999: 1760) "... over the next several years it [National Party government] continued to rely on pass laws, relocations, and other apartheid mechanisms to suppress resistance efforts. In response, the banned ANC and the Communist Party, led by Joe Slovo, together formed the guerilla army Umkhonto we Sizwe [MK], the 'spear of the nation'". Davidson (1991: 344) argues further by claiming that government repression in the late 1960s appeared to silence all effective Black protest. An initial effort at counter-violence by guerilla sabotage had failed and ended up in the long-term imprisonment of Black anti-apartheid leaders, including Nelson Mandela, who was then president of the ANC youth league.

In June 1976 elementary and secondary school students marched in protest of apartheid educational policies, and police fired into the crowd. Several children were killed and many more injured; riots erupted in Soweto and throughout the country. The event provoked international condemnation and economic boycotts against South Africa (Robinson and Tuttle in Appiah and Gates 1999: 1760). In response, Davidson states:

This repression provoked something that came near, for the first time in recent South African history, to a mass uprising, again put down by police violence but, this time, denoting a new determination among wide strata of the black population (whether African, Indian or Coloured). Guerillas of Umkhonto we Sizwe, the military wing of the ANC, now began to find an ever more effective support from that population, and guerilla successes increased as a result (Davidson 1991: 344).

Davidson (1991: 344) claims that by 1982 it appeared that the process of armed resistance had possibly gone beyond the white regime's ability to suffocate it. He goes on to suggest, "... the racist regime had gone far towards a more or less complete militarization. Inherently, its condition had become one of endemic emergency, and

there was little to suggest that this condition could be terminated by new forms of repression. Its military and economic strength were overwhelmingly powerful; yet it rested on an embattled minority of some four million whites in a total population now approaching twenty-four million" (Davidson 1991: 345). In 1985 the whole country was placed under emergency regulations. "These gave the green light to repression by army and police. State terrorism against the Black majority took new and sinister forms" (ibid: 347). According to Preston (1995: 186) by the time the State of Emergency had been lifted in March 1986, over seven hundred and fifty people had been killed and thousands had been imprisoned. The sheer cost of maintaining order combined with full-scale international trade sanctions, forced on American President Ronald Reagan by US Congress, resulted in the collapse of the South African currency, the Rand (ibid). With this toll on the South African economy, the widespread violence and international pressure for the democratization of South Africa, the National Party signaled its desire for a new approach when it replaced President Botha for the more moderate F.W. De Klerk.

On the 2 February 1990, in his opening address to Parliament, De Klerk lifted the ban on the ANC, PAC and SACP. Nine days later, after twenty-seven years as a political prisoner in jail, the leader of the ANC, Nelson Mandela, was released. May 1990 saw talks between the government and the ANC, and in June, after the State of Emergency was lifted, the ANC agreed to a ceasefire (Preston 1995: 192). With this came the slow process of dismantling the Apartheid system. The laws that upheld racial classifications and discrimination in land ownership, urban residence, and public segregation were removed one by one. According to Davidson (1991: 350) and Preston (1995: 195), the Land Act [which restricted eighty-seven percent of the land to Whites], the Group Areas Act [which specified separate residential areas for the different racial

groups], the Separate Amenities Act [which controlled the use of public amenities], and the Population Registration Act [which classified the population by race], were all repealed. Davidson (1991: 350) comments that even when these pillars of the apartheid system crumbled on legislative paper, they were built into every practical field of the country's life

The dismantling of the apartheid system took nearly four years and proceeded against a backdrop of ongoing violence. Robinson and Tuttle (Ed Appiah and Gates 1999: 1761) claim that thousands died, both in terrorist attacks waged by groups that opposed the anticipated changes [such as the far right Afrikaner Resistance Movement] and in conflicts between members of the ANC and the Inkatha Freedom Party [IFP], led by Zulu chief Mangosutho Buthelezi. South Africa's first multi-racial elections were held in April 1994. As expected, the ANC achieved an outright victory, capturing 62.6 per cent of the votes and 252 seats in the 400-seat National Assembly, and taking overall control of six of the nine provincial assemblies. On 10 May 1994 Mandela was inaugurated as the president of South Africa, with De Klerk and Thabo Mbeki, ANC national chairman, as deputy presidents.

CHAPTER TWO

SECTION TWO

SOUTH AFRICAN LANDSCAPE REPRESENTATION, 1948-1994.

In order to contextualize contemporary South African cultural production, it is the candidate's intention to provide a concise history of South African landscape representation, spanning the years 1948-1994. It must be noted that during this period the physical landscape was transformed through urbanization, industrialization and political legislation. In addition, landscape painting was losing its impetus as a genre both locally and internationally. As has been suggested in the section on colonial representation, European art movements had a profound influence in defining the course of South African visual art. The latter half of the twentieth century produced art movements in Europe and America that were defined by concept. Traditional models of visual representation were challenged, as was the role of the artist and art object itself. During this period, because of the socio-political climate of South Africa, there was in South African visual arts from the late 1960s a drive towards challenging the conflicts and injustices that constituted South African society under apartheid.

To attempt to map a course, through the dense theory of European, American and South African visual representation of the twentieth century, is a task of enormous proportion that does not serve the needs of this paper. It is the candidate's intention to therefore provide only a historical and conceptual scaffold to contextualize contemporary cultural production.

As has been stated before in Chapter One, Section Two: 21, and in the discussion on Pierneef, the twentieth century saw a plethora of art movements in Europe and America. According to Stangos (1980: 9) "concepts and a preoccupation with theories and ideas which often preceded, conditioned and pre-defined the nature of the art object itself [if not in a temporal sense, at least in a conceptual one], started emerging gradually as chief constituents of artistic activity". He states further, "Modern art movements were essentially 'conceptual': works of art are considered in terms of the concepts they exemplify. The role of the critic, the theoretician, became uniquely important in shaping new artistic developments" (ibid). This trend according to Berman (1983: 11) started at the beginning of the twentieth century with the development of Cubism. Evolving from the concepts that defined this movement, came a succession of art movements in Europe and America that contributed to the inevitable advent of abstract art.

In South Africa, there was a growing community of artists who had European training. They also had contact with contemporary European art concepts and styles. Berman (1983: 10) suggests that the orientation of local painting had begun to shift from perceptual description of the landscape to the mechanics of visual expression and the search for personally valid methods of communicating experience. Pierneef's vision of creating a visual language that was particular to the South African context was high on the artistic agenda. Although still influenced by contemporary philosophic and stylistic European trends, some South African visual artists challenged orthodox South African painting, which according to Berman (1993: 12) found expression in assiduous concentration on local subject matter and the prevailing popularity of 'Native Studies'. The 'tourist-poster' manner invoked by this parochialistic view of art, resulted in the

landscape genre sliding into the formula of European illusionism which is still prevalent in commercial South African landscape painting today.

Influenced by the Europeans' discovery of the African mystique in the early twentieth century, in which Primitivism became a cult in Europe, South African artists started developing a visual language that was based on the ethos of the African continent. This can be found in the expressionistic work of Maggie Laubser (1886-1972).

Laubser's images are constructed by the use of strong complimentary colours and jagged forms, which she used in order to achieve symbolic and expressive, rather than objective, descriptions of the South African landscape. In *Landscape with sheep* (Not dated) [Fig 9] the German expressionists', especially Karl Schmidt-Rotluff's influence can be seen technically, in the subdued colours of her palette and in the gestural expressionistic brushwork and conceptually, in her subject matter which portrays nature's brooding forces. According to Berman (1983: 254) "Maggie Laubser, for all her so called 'foreign modernism', was more South African than any other painter in the country; that she alone had crystallized her peoples identification with the soil and their simple, holistic view of nature; that behind the apparent naiveté of her forms there was a devout appreciation of the spiritual unity of all things". The naturalistic landscape has started to give way to a more personal subjectivism. Laubser's landscape is stripped of its detail. Simplified forms, dark outlines and a bold, loose use of paint renders the South African landscape into a field of coloured planes that "symbolize mans spiritual yearnings" (Alexander and Cohen 1990: 61).

In 1938 The New Group formed. It consisted of a group of artists who were not linked by adherence to any specific aesthetic attitude – other than a shared and publicly expressed contempt for the amateurism prevailing in South African art. The New group



[Fig 9]

Maggie Laubser, *Landscape with Sheep*, n.d., 57.5 x 48 cm, Oil on canvas

represented the artistic generation of the 1930s and 1940s who had veered away from the naturalistic portrayal of the landscape (Berman 1983: 13). According to Berman (ibid) Walter Battiss was to further define the indigenous visual art language through his interest in the African mystique and San rock painting. This cult of the African mystique can be paralleled to Pierneef's interest in San rock art which he claimed was the most typical form of South African painting, and a model to be favoured over Western European, particularly British, models. Battiss saw San art as a route to local identity. His identification with the San was not simply nostalgic, but his understanding of their culture was such that their images became an important part of his artistic consciousness. Alexander and Cohen state:

He explored their customs and beliefs as subjects, was inspired by his perception of them as kindered spirits, and incorporated their pictographs into his own formal vocabulary. Never using their images in a dogmatic manner, nor merely copying them, Battiss transformed his sources in a personal way, responding to many other influences (Alexander and Cohen 1990: 19-20).

In this context Battiss has to be placed within contemporary Western art, which had undergone changes stylistically, with the development of non-figurative conventions, and philosophically and psychologically, in its concerns with primitivism, inner being, states of mind and abstract concepts. The landscape in this context was no longer represented through objective naturalism, but as subjective abstraction. In *Symbols of Life* (1966) [Fig 10], the landscape is flattened to reveal the two-dimensional quality of the painted surface. This surface seethes with earth coloured forms that suggest people, fauna, flora and insects. The winding cellular form running across the centre of the work invokes images of a river, a cross section through an anthill, markings or scales of an animal or the cellular make up of what constitutes a life form. All these associations, of the internal and the external, are reminiscent of what would constitute the objective landscape, from the molecular level up.



[Fig 10]

Walter Battiss, *Symbols of Life*, 1966, 122 x 122 cm, Oil on canvas

The debate that was created in South African cultural production, between an international eclecticism and a self-conscious Africanism, was to become a pertinent issue for artists and critics that spanned several decades. Alexander and Cohen (1990: 20) refer to a paper delivered by Joyce Ozynski in 1979 which suggests that the South African White artists adoption of Africa and "the incorporation of elements of tribal design... have... been used as a means of establishing the African identity of the Whites, and denying their colonial origins. In order to justify their exploitation and repression, it is necessary for the Whites to attempt to prove that their roots go as deep as those of the natives they subjugated" (ibid: 20-21). In this context, does the work of Battiss become a more genuine South African statement? Are his links to San and African motifs any different from his European contemporaries who appropriated African symbols, who through roughness of texture and non-realistic drawing evoked primitive African qualities? Koloane (1997: 33) supports Ozynski's statement by suggesting that the notion of racial supremacy as entrenched by government policies poses significant aesthetic problems, regarding artists from a dominant culture assimilating the influence of a vilified inferior counterculture. This in a post-colonial and post-modern context may be true, but the candidate suggests that locality also defines aesthetic consciousness. An artist working within a specific geographic location responds to his/her immediate environment in more than just a visual way. It becomes the conceptual ground for cultural production. In this context appropriation and assimilation stand on opposite ends of the same spectrum. The plethora of cultural influences [European, Black, Indian and Coloured] that define the South African experience therefore make it impossible to define an indigenous South African style of visual representation. In a post-modern context it is precisely this pluralism that

determines the concepts and stylistic variations that constitute indigenous creative expression.

The movements which were gaining impetus in Europe and America in the late 1950s and early 1960s were Abstract Expressionism, Action-Painting and Informalism, which led to the latter-day Dadaism. Abstract and non-figurative forms of art were natural and appropriate vehicles of contemporary expression. According to Berman (1983: 14) by the mid 1950s the increase in external travel and the improvement in communication media, coupled with the end of South Africa's cultural isolation from the West, had exposed the hiatus dividing local art from contemporary international currents. The new generation of artists set out to close the gap.

Cecil Skotnes (1926-) from early in his career reflected the orientation of his generation toward the abstract idioms that were prevalent in contemporary European production. *Visit to a Battle Site* [Fig.11] represents the artistic search by Skotnes to penetrate the African ethos that was evident in the work of Battiss. According to Berman (1993: 19) Skotnes sought to strip Africa of its mystique and to come to grips with the unromanticized reality. The painting is based on the battle of *Isandhlwana*, where in 1879 a Zulu force of twenty thousand warriors defeated a British force of approximately 1800 soldiers, who were camped on the hill of *Isandhlwana*. It marks a major military feat for the Zulus and therefore remains a symbolic marker in the resistance to the colonial objective. At first glance Skotnes's landscape becomes an abstracted conceptual space. It calls to mind the late Cubist and expressionist idioms of European art. There are also associations to the colour-field painters of America, which fell under the umbrella of the loosely defined term, Abstract Expressionism. When further interrogated the hills along the high horizon, coupled with the title of the



[Fig 11]

Cecil Skotnes, *Visit to a Battle Site*, 1974-5, 122 x 122 cm, Oil on canvas

painting, place it firmly on the South African landscape. Alexander and Cohen (1990: 121) suggest that the dusty textured red-ochre, that covers most of the canvas, is reminiscent of dry earth and the bloody spoils of battle. The painting can be interpreted as a cross-section through the battlefield, but it might equally convey the idea of a collective reservoir of memories of those who fell. Buried in shafts under the hills are three ominous figures. "Like carved African effigies of the ancestors, their tubular eyes and mouths, faceted bodies and cylindrical forms refer broadly to African stylistic conventions" (ibid). Skotnes's use of African motifs was therefore defined by his portrayal of events from the history of South Africa. In this context he chose to use forms appropriate to his subjects. Critically, as was discussed above in relation to the African mystique, his imaging in some ways has been a dehumanizing stereotyping of the Black African culture, which according to Alexander and Cohen (ibid: 21) helped to form the white South African construct of ethnicity. In so saying, Skotnes was influential in developing Black visual art in South Africa. According to Koloane (1997: 33) he co-ordinated the Polly Street Art Centre, which became the cradle of urban Black expression.

At this juncture it must be stated that within the avant-garde South Africa of the early 1960s, a new school of humanist figurative expressionism was emerging from a body of urban-based black artists. The pioneers of Black South African visual representation were not primarily traditional landscape artists. According to de Jager (1992: 19) Black artists do not generally concern themselves with landscape painting. Koloane (1997: 33) supports this view by claiming that the space or environment within which an artist operates will reflect their social conditions. Thus, an artist operating from the urban township, in which most of these artists lived and worked, will often reflect concerns different from a landscape artist with a privileged background. These artists, however,

represent an important phase in South African visual production for they had a profound influence in the development of Black African cultural production that led to the Township Art Movement.

The 1960's in South Africa brought with it a growing realization, among artists of all races, that South African artists had never truly examined the nature of their particular identity as South Africans. In so saying, it became fairly obvious to the South African artist of the late 1960s that valid expressions could not be fabricated from derivative conventions – African or European – and much of the serious effort of the late sixties was directed toward the formulation of new symbols that would project the specific quality of local content (Berman 1983: 20).

These new symbols of local content found their expression, in many instances, through the medium of landscape. It must be stated however that on the humanistic level there were visual manifestations from artists of all communities who challenged the cultural and socio-political climate of South Africa. In the context of this research, the landscape was still a source of inspiration for white South African artists. The landscape was now accorded more penetrating study than before. Berman states:

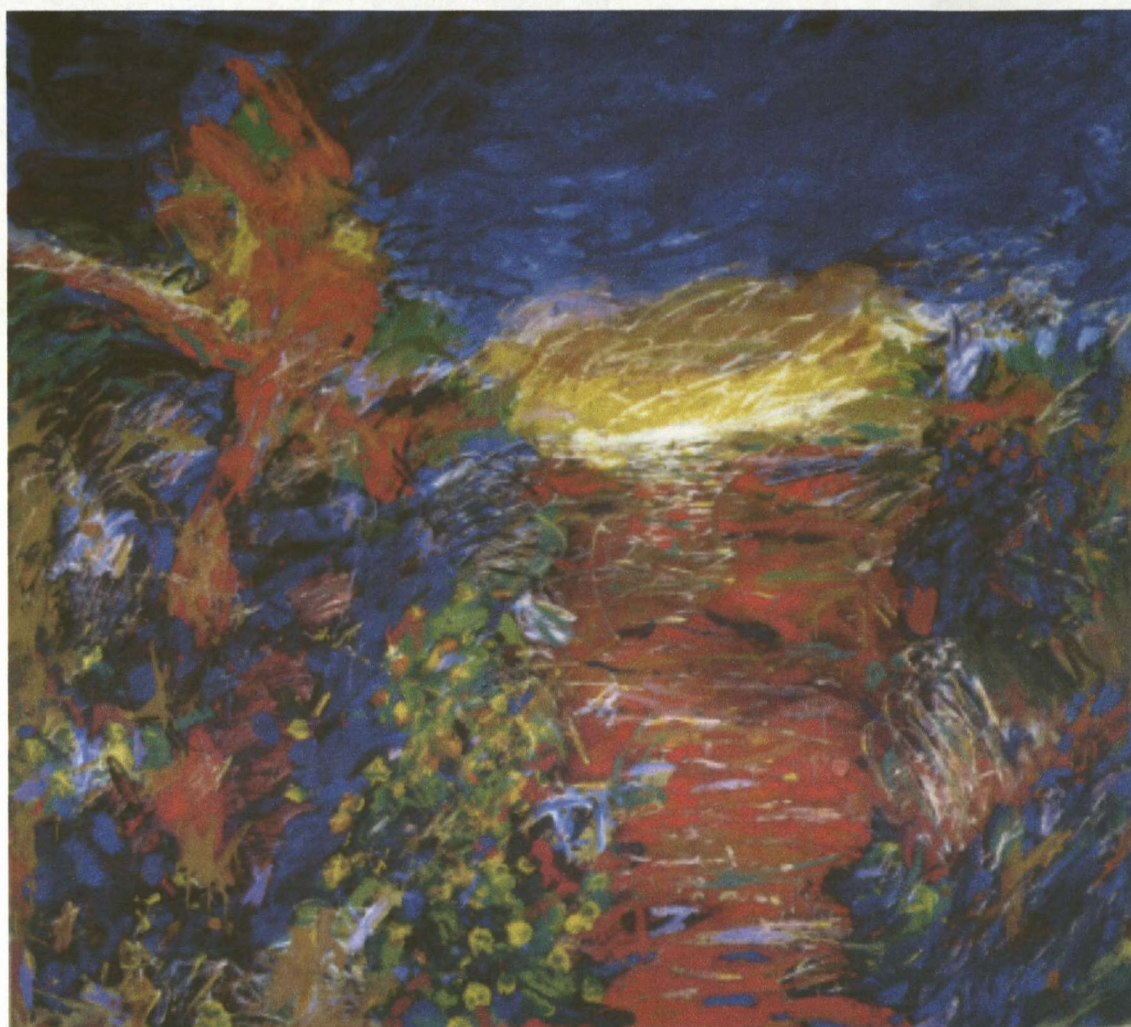
... even the geological structure of the landmass underwent pictorial translation, while such intangibles of perceptual experience as the distinctive sense of space, the abstract properties of light and sun, the aggressiveness of the physical environment and the drama of elemental natural forces recurred as common themes (Berman 1983: 20).

In *White African Landscape* (1982) [Fig 12], Kevin Atkinson's (1939-) large-scale abstract canvas teems with life created through primacy of colour and expressionistic gestural mark. The scale of the painting invites the viewer to journey into the suggested landscape. The red path of brushstrokes approaches the central yellow and white

crucible of colour. A red form to the left of the path burns against a turbulently painted blue expanse. This landscape is more concerned with subjective inner responses than with objective representation. Atkinson was profoundly aware of the role of science in contemporary existence and believed that the study of natural laws known to scientists and physicists should be incorporated into the basic training of artists (Alexander and Cohen 1990: 144), (Berman 1983: 50). He was also influenced by the Conceptualist movement of the late 1960's that was governed by theory rather than aesthetic product. Stangos sates:

Starting in the mid-sixties, an extended free-for-all began in art which lasted for almost a decade. This free-for-all, a broad and extremely diverse range of activities known as Conceptual, or Idea, or Information art – along with a number of related tendencies variously labeled Body art, Performance art and Narrative art – was part of a widespread abandonment of that unique, permanent yet portable (and thus infinitely saleable) luxury item, the traditional art object. In its place there arose an unprecedented emphasis on ideas... The result was a kind of art which had, regardless of the form it took (or did not take), its fullest and most complex existence in the minds of artists and their audience, which demanded a new kind of attention and mental participation from the viewer...(Stangos 1980: 256).

According to Berman (1983: 51), Atkinson, after a trip to Documenta in Kassel in 1972, was inspired by the new experimental inclinations in contemporary art and embarked on a series of environmental projects and happenings. She goes on to suggest that those events were less significant than Atkinson's adaptations of Conceptualist ideas that manifest in his paintings from 1973 onwards (ibid). In *White African landscape* Atkinson attempts to establish identity, and identification with the contemporary physical and spiritual landscape [environment]. In this context the work becomes the conceptual, abstract surface that represents a specific cultural, socio-political and spiritual climate. Coupled with the title of the painting, the gesturally painted surface evokes moods and memories that are reminiscent of the turbulent cultural, socio-political and spiritual landscape in South African during the 1970's early 1980s.



[Fig 12]

Kevin Atkinson, *White African landscape*, 1982, 300 x 300 cm, Oil on canvas

Due to the cultural, social and political climate in 1970s South Africa, the dominant emphasis in progressive South African art was in the area of social consciousness. Fransen (1982: 322) claims that in the seventies there was a logical outflow of the "New Humanism", a drive among younger artists toward stronger and more overt commitment to the conflicts and injustices existing in South African society, sometimes labeled as Protest art. Berman states:

The occurrence of Protest art in the Republic was in step with a worldwide trend and had indeed been presaged in the Humanistic tendencies apparent in the sixties, whereby South African artists had begun to examine their identity, to question their commitment to the human situation and to direct their artistic effect toward achieving greater relevance to their South African experience (Berman 1983: 23).

Berman (ibid: 24) goes on to claim that the formal considerations that had defined the theory of progressive art in the 1960s started giving way to the international resurgence of figurative styles, epitomized in movements such as Hyperrealism and Photo-realism in the USA. These trends were essentially urbanized in orientation and, relating as they did to the immediate circumstances and environments of people, rather than the impersonal properties of landscape, were conducive to exploration of the particular human situation in South Africa.

It was within this context that Black visual representation in South Africa started maturing under the label of Township Art. De Jager (1992: 45) states that the Township Movement dominated the 1960s and early 1970s, as part of the general awareness of identity occurring in all spheres of life of South African blacks during this period. The South African landscape had been industrialized and urbanized following the universal and inescapable trends of the twentieth century world. For the Black culture in South Africa, the township was a result of this urbanization, through the implementation of apartheid legislation.

In the context of this research the candidate intends to define the Township Art movement within the context of the politicized urban South African landscape. In so saying, as Colin Richards (Ed Geers 1997: 84) aptly states, the term Township Art is a "lazy label which demeaned it aesthetically and otherwise. This label was often itself counterpoised by another label 'representing' an apparently alternative tradition – that of 'protest art'. 'Protest art' is a category probably even more heavily populated by caricatures and sterile stereotypes of both art and social life than 'Township art'" In context to the above, the label that defines the Township Art Movement is a broad and cumbersome one, spanning three decades from the 1950s through to the 1970s. Because of the humanist and figurative bias in Township Art, the candidate will only discuss two watercolours, painted by Durant Sihali (1935-), to contextualize the South African Blacks socio-political landscape during the 1970s.

Race Against Time (1973) [Fig13] and *Old Pimville, Demolition Squad with crow Bars Bringing down a Building* (1973) [Fig 14], represents the forced removals that occurred in the Black landscape through Government legislation. According to Koloane (1997: 32) "over twenty years an estimated 3.5 million people were uprooted from their homes. Communities were treated like guinea pigs, shuttled from one habitat to another". Sihlali's role as documenter and as artist is solidified in these two images. As a documenter, his paintings are of great historical significance as they recorded the specific cultural, economic, social and political landscape that defined Black culture in 1970s South Africa. Sihlali's urban landscapes are represented in the naturalistic tradition of European art. His skills as a watercolourist and as a draughtsman are clearly evident. Richards (Ed Geers 1997: 86) commenting on the medium of watercolour in Sihlali's work suggests that he created an air of disintegration through broken brushstrokes, crumbling edges, and dissolving planes of sometimes-



[Fig 13]

Durant Sihlali, *Race Against Time*, 1973, 45 x 68 cm, Watercolour on paper



[Fig 14]

Durant Sihlali, *Mvabasa Street, Old Pimville*, 1973, 48 x 83 cm, Watercolour on paper

extraordinary fragility. In this context, Sihlali's watercolour technique reinforces the subject matter of the destruction and disintegration of whole communities due to the Nationalist government's legislation. In critically evaluating these two images, it becomes apparent that there is no emotional or overt critical statement being made. Sihlali's vision was about recording, as faithfully as possible with his own aesthetic interpretation, the Black urban landscape. This dual personification of his activity – creative and historical – was according to Richards (Ed Geers 1997: 86) misconceived by some of his comrades as an unacceptable ambivalence in a situation of political emergency. He states, "In the link between history, art and politics, language carries perhaps a special burden. For, in this picture, it is almost only through the title that we secure a fragile but critical foothold in a specific history. The narratives attending these pictures are in a sense funneled through and compressed in these titles" (Ed Geers 1997: 86).

Township art proved to be a transitory phenomenon. It was the predominant mode of a specific historical period in Black visual representation. By the middle 1970s the process of Westernization was accelerated by concerted efforts to provide Black Africans with a visual arts education system. With the Soweto uprisings, the psychological transition from philosophic and introspective, of the 1960s, to a more combative and assertive attitude, in the late 1970s, transformed the nature of Black African art (Verstraete in Nettleton and Hammond-Tooke 1989: 170). The stereotyped images of the downtrodden, suffering Black man/woman that pervaded township art was no longer adequate to express Black realities. According to Verstraete (ibid) the rise of Black Consciousness implied that Township Art came to be perceived as negative by Black artists themselves and therefore, a more assertive sense of identity was sought. This, in turn, encouraged black artists to search for valid forms of visual

expression based on contemporary philosophical trends regarding Black consciousness.

According to Berman (1983: 25), not only was the content of South African art undergoing change during the 1970s, art forms themselves were affected by recent technological innovations and new attitudes towards existing media and processes. Though not taken up by many South African artists of this period, the new media [photography, film, video, installation] were to become the pivot of progressive Fine art expression in the local and International art world in the 1990s.

The 1980s ushered into South African and International art, a return to traditional perceptual imagery. According to Berman:

In a world split by violence and disillusionment, fragmented by conflicting values and radically polarized perceptions of the truth, the realities and meaning of life itself were being called into question. In revolutionary ardour of the young 20th Century, the old orders had been emphatically discredited. But the brave new world had not transpired. And, faced with the disintegration of traditional morality, the destruction of the natural environment, the brutal and iconoclastic waves of terrorism and assassination, society was seeking reassurance in attempts to define reality and meaning (Berman 1983: 26).

In South Africa the socio-political landscape was in a state of flux. The colonial order was crumbling in the face of mass resistance and international sanctions. In this context few progressive artists were still disposed to maintain, as Berman (1983: 26) states, "that the medium is the message" which dominated the White South African and International art scene since the 1960s. Meaning had become the central motif for the contemporary artist. In so saying, with the advent of the Twentieth Century's conceptual and stylistic changes in art, artists locally and abroad explored the motif of meaning through a plethora of artistic styles and concepts.

The search for meaning, which Berman speaks of above, continued in the visual arts in South Africa to deal with human injustice, cultural identity and resistance. However, some progressive South African artists again took up the landscape genre as a valid medium of contemporary expression, for it was on the physical landscape that the White colonial legislation was played out. In so saying, the twentieth century saw artists experimenting with varying philosophic concepts and stylistic influences. In this respect, the traditional notion of the landscape artist has to be redefined.

Contemporary cultural production is constructed on the Post-Modern concepts of eclecticism and pluralism. In this context, an artist working in the landscape genre might at the same time be working figuratively, abstractly or conceptually. The candidate will therefore identify some artists who might not exclusively be working with landscape, but whose landscape images have become markers in South African visual representation through the 1980s.

In Sfiso Ka Mkame's *Letters To God* (1988) [Fig 15], the South African landscape has been fragmented into a series of snapshots that represent township life. The narrative of images is a direct response to the contemporary Black African landscape of the 1980s. "Here are the shanties and the gangs, the police vans and the protesters, the mothers and the jails" (Williamson 1990: 109). Ka Mkame's representation is emotive and raw. The vignettes become splices that make up the formal landscape. The horizon line is constantly spliced by the next image, offering the viewer no escape from the events happening on the landmass. The title suggests that this letter is directed to God. Letters can give us an insight into places we might not be physically present in. They can offer information about events and happenings within these places. Writing a letter to God about this environment therefore removes God, as omnipotent and ever present, from this landscape of terror and chaos. Does the work in this context become

a spiritual request for help, or is Ka Mkame merely supplying visual information about the events and happenings that constitute the Black African landscape?

Jules Van Der Vijver (1951-) picks up on the themes of the socio-political landscape of the 1980s in a serigraph titled, *Isandhlwana 1879-1979 No 3 – The Battlefield* (1980) [Fig 16]. This work references, as does Skotnes's *Image Visit to a Battle Site*, the battle of *Isandhlwana*. As has been stated, this was the last instance in which a Black South African nation was able to resist white colonial power. According to Williamson (1989: 16) the image represents the struggle between traditional tribe and emerging industrial might. The silent archetypal South African landscape has been violently disturbed by the abstract geometric shapes that explode across the top plane of sky. The red shapes could denote the British redcoats who were defeated in battle here against the Zulus. They could also suggest the advance or decline of Western colonial civilization in South Africa. Van Der Vijver's use of the square and the rectangle are typically based on western geometry. They oppose the natural forms of nature and are alien in this landscape, as opposed to the circular shapes of traditional African cultures, which can be seen in the cone and the mound that belong to this landscape. The titles dates, 1879-1979, suggest that the historical Kwazulu – Natal battle site has become a metaphor for the present 1980s socio-political landscape. In South Africa, Black resistance movements in the late 1970s promoted Black pride and militant resistance to White colonial rule. The battle of *Isandhlwana* in this context became a beacon in the consciousness of the young militant Black South African, one hundred years later.

Penny Siopis further explores the themes of the South African colonial military history in a painting titled, *Patience on A Monument – "A History Painting"* (1988) [Fig 17].



[Fig 15]

Sfiso Ka Mkame, *Letters to God*, 1988, 128 x 91 cm, Oil pastel on paper



[Fig 16]

Jules Van De Vijver, *Isandhlwana 1879-1979 No III – The Battlefield*, 1980, 69 x 89 cm, Screenprint,

Siopis's painting critically investigates history as recorded from a dominant White patriarchal point of view. According to Williamson, *Patience on A Monument – "A History Painting"* is one of a number of ironical history paintings that Siopis produced in the 1980s. She states:

In this body of work Siopis casts a cool revisionist eye on genre painting in which the climatic moment of a notable event (usually military) receives the respectful attention of an artist. Such canvasses are vast and the central figures, embodiments of such manly virtues as courage and patriotism, strike heroic poses (Ed Herreman, 1999: 37).

In *Patience*, the figure of a seated woman is engaged in the very ordinary activity of peeling a lemon. She is domestic and anti-heroic. Her back is turned to a landscape constructed from myriads of miniature battle scenes – with British redcoats, Boers, adventurers, missionaries, black warriors, slaves, Voortrekkers, traders and others – all overpainted photostats of illustrations from history books of battle scenes establishing White colonial dominance over the Black indigenous people of South Africa (Williamson 1989: 20). The objects on which the woman is seated, and from which the monument is constructed, is the debris left behind by the process of colonization. Through using the traditional model of European landscape representation, then subverting and deconstructing it, Siopis focuses the viewers' attention on the terrain of sexual politics and the part it played in defining the landscape of oppression and discrimination. A Black female in an anti-heroic gesture has finally conquered the South African landscape that was defined by White colonial male legislation for three hundred years. Siopis's *Patience* in retrospect forecast the inevitable downfall of White colonial rule in South Africa.

Wayne Barker's *Transit Culture* (1990) [Fig 18] extends the themes of South African colonial history through critically examining Pierneef's representations of the South

African landscape. Jamal, in his essay in Contemporary South African Art, The Gencor Collection (1997) suggests that by way of entry into Barker's work one can consider the following from JM Coetzee's *Age of Iron*:

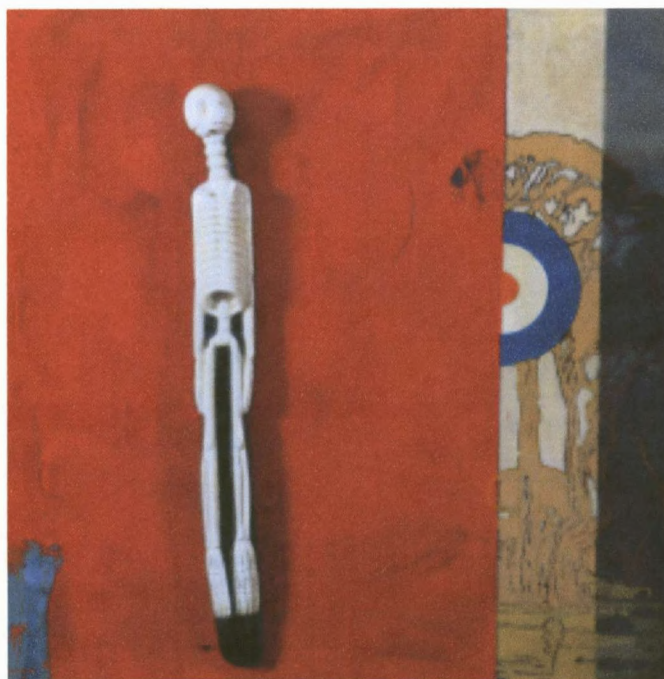
Let me tell you, when I walk upon this land, this South Africa, I have a gathering feeling of walking upon Black faces. They are dead but their spirit has not left them. They lie there heavy and obdurate, waiting for my feet to pass, waiting for me to go, waiting to be raised up again (Ed Geers 1997: 161).

In context to the above, Barker's landscape seeps with history, with blood. According to Jamal (ibid), there is an unnerving sense of the eternal return of the oppressed, the damned and the murdered. In *Transit Culture* this anxiety is graphically in evidence. Barker splices Pierneef's heroicised vision of the land, with its contemplative and cool blues, with a depthless invasive square of blood red. In so doing Barker manipulates the viewers' eye – the surface red reads as depth, the deep blues read as surface. Jamal (Ed Geers, 1997: 162) claims that that this perceptual warp demonstrates Mitchell's point in which the dreamwork of imperialism is "folded back on itself to disclose both the utopian fantasies of the perfected imperial prospect and fractured images of unresolved and unsuppressed resistance" In Barker's *Transit Culture* a double indictment is at work: against the classical landscape art of Pierneef and against the lies upon which power – aesthetic and imperial – subsists (Jamal in Geers 1997: 162). As in Coetzee's *Age of Iron*, the suppressed corpse surfaces in Barker's landscape as a found object, which is a sculpted skeleton by Venda artist Johannes Maswanganye. Again, the crudity and abstraction of Barker's red and white panel challenges the preoccupation with depth. Naturalistic illusion, created through the technique of perspective that allowed the viewer to negotiate Pierneef's landscapes, has been flattened. Perspective in this context is a decoy. Pierneef's perfected ideological landscape has been rendered impure. For Barker culture is in transit, never a given (ibid). Landscape art is therefore not merely a recording of surface terrain.



[Fig 17]

Penny Siopis, *Patience on a Monument – 'A History Painting'*, 1988, 200 x 180 cm,
Oil paint and collage on canvas



[Fig 18]

Wayne Barker, *Transit Culture*, 1990, 118 x 127 cm, Oil and found object on
canvas

Rather as Jamal (ibid) states, "any address of the land must plumb its unseemly innards – discover the tale that lies 'heavy and obdurate' beneath the surface, 'waiting to be raised up again'. For it is not only nature which breaks through man made structures, but man himself".

CHAPTER THREE

INTRODUCTION

In Chapter Three the candidate intends to investigate post-colonial attitudes towards the South African landscape from 1994 – 2004.

Section One will define post-colonialism for the purposes of this study and provide a brief history of post-colonial South Africa.

Section Two will contextualise Post-Modern cultural production and post-colonial landscape theory, through a discussion of the work of Willem Boshoff (1951-), William Kentridge (1955-), Clive Van Den Berg (1956-) and Mduduzi Xakaza (1965-).

Section Three will analyze and evaluate contemporary representations of the South African landscape through a discussion of the work of Sandile Zulu (1960-) and Jeremy Wafer (1953-).

CHAPTER THREE

SECTION ONE

AN OVERVIEW OF POST-COLONIALISM IN SOUTH AFRICA

The theoretical complexities that are present in discussing and defining colonialism are even more apparent when trying to decipher the term post-colonialism. In so saying, the candidate's intention is not to analyze post-colonial discourse, with its ever-evolving theoretical debates and critiques, but to try and establish a definition of post-colonialism as a term that defines the contemporary South African condition. As with colonialism, which by the 1930s "had exercised its sway over 84.6 per cent of the land surface of the globe" (Loomba 1998: 15), post-colonialism has to be viewed in terms of its mutable states, which are defined by diverse site and time specific post-colonial beginnings.

The word post-colonialism is not given an independent entry into the Oxford English Dictionary. According to Mishra and Hodge in Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory (Ed Williams and Chrisman 1994: 276) it is still a compound in which the 'post-' is a prefix which governs the subsequent element. "Post-colonial' thus becomes something which is 'post' or after colonial" (ibid). Loomba (1998: 7) adds that the prefix 'post' complicates matters because it implies an 'aftermath' in two senses – temporal, as in coming after, and ideological, as in supplanting. She states:

It is the second implication which critics of the term have found contestable: if the inequities of colonial rule have not been erased, it is perhaps premature to proclaim the demise of colonialism. A country may be both post-colonial (in the sense of being formally independent) and neo-colonial (in the sense of remaining economically and/or culturally independent) at the same time. ...Even in the temporal sense, the word post-colonial cannot be used in any single sense. Formal decolonization has spanned three centuries, ranging from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the Americas, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, to the 1970s in the case of Angola and Mozambique (Loomba 1998: 7-8).

In context of the above, where does colonialism end and post-colonialism begin? Loomba's point is that these diverse post-colonial beginnings, as stated above, indicate that colonialism was challenged from a variety of perspectives, by people who were not all oppressed in the same way or to the same extent. Thus the politics of decolonization in parts of the Americas, Australia or South Africa where White settlers formed their own independent nations is different from the dynamics of those societies where indigenous populations overthrew their European masters (ibid: 8). Added to that, White settlers were historically the agents of colonial rule. Their own subsequent development – culturally as well as economic – did not simply align them with other colonized peoples. No matter what their differences with the mother country, White settler populations were not subject to the genocide, economic exploitation, cultural decimation and political exclusion felt by indigenous peoples. The situation in South Africa is a point in fact. Jolly (1995: 22) claims the Nationalist Afrikaners' "continued to see themselves as victims of English colonization and ... the imagined continuation of this victimization was used to justify the maintenance of apartheid".

Loomba (1998: 12) suggests it is more helpful to think of post-colonialism not just as coming literally after colonialism and signifying its demise, but more flexibly as the contestation of colonial domination and the legacies of colonialism. This position would allow us to include people geographically displaced by colonialism. It also allows us to incorporate the history of anti-colonial resistance with contemporary resistances to imperialism and to dominant Western culture (ibid). In so saying, the neo-colonialist or imperialist practices that define the contemporary world are an obvious obstacle to any unproblematic use of the term post-colonial. Anne McClintock points out in her reading The Angel of Progress (1994) the extent to which the formerly

colonized countries can be considered post-colonial is both variable and debatable.

She states:

The fact that the major imperialist nation, the United States, can intervene militarily in the Gulf against a country which it continued to arm and encourage up to the brink of hostilities, or under the guise of humanitarianism in Somalia, a country to which it had previously denied aid; the fact that it can do so while claiming the highest moral authority ('doing God's work', as President Bush put in the case of Somalia); the fact that articles and editorials in respectable newspapers such as the *Sunday Telegraph* can "call for the West to go back to Africa and sort out the mess into which their incompetent national governments have led them – all of these indicate how many of the attitudes, the strategies and even how much of the room for manoeuvre of the colonial period remain in place" (Ed Williams and Chrisman 1994: 291-303).

In the context of this research, the candidate cannot further explore the dynamics of contemporary colonial/imperial objectives. However, this discussion is important in contextualizing the elusive nature of what might constitute the term post-colonial.

A suggested approach for trying to pin down post-colonialism can be found in the texts of Jorge De Alva. In Colonialism/Postcolonialism (Loomba 1998: 12) Alva suggests postcoloniality should "signify not so much subjectivity 'after' the colonial experience as a subjectivity of oppositionality to imperializing/colonizing [read: subordinating /subjectivizing] discourses and practices". He justifies this by arguing that new approaches to history have discredited the idea of a single linear progression, focused instead on "a multiplicity of often conflicting and frequently parallel narratives" (ibid). Therefore, he suggests that we should "remove postcoloniality from a dependence on an antecedent colonial condition" and "tether the term to a post-structuralist stake that marks its appearance" (ibid). Alva's statement is worth unpacking for it leads us into the heart of the controversy surrounding post-colonial studies today. In so saying, the candidate will only briefly outline some of these debates in order to contextualise the term post-colonial.

According to Loomba (1998: 13) Alva wants to de-link the term postcoloniality from formal decolonization because he thinks many people living in both once colonized and once colonizing countries are still subject to the oppressions put into place by colonialism. He justifies this by post-structuralist approaches to history that suggest there is no single history, but a multiplicity of histories. It was not only post-structuralists who discredited master narratives; feminists also insisted that such narratives had hidden women from history. Anti-colonial intellectuals also espoused a similar view. "However, the idea has received its most sustained articulation within post-structuralist writing. Thus Alva suggests that postcoloniality is, and must be more firmly connected to, post-structuralist theories of history" (ibid). Recently, many critics of post-colonial theory have blamed it for too much dependence upon post-structuralist or post-modern perspectives [which are often read as identical]. Loomba states:

They claim that the insistence on multiple histories and fragmentation within these perspectives has been detrimental to thinking about the global operation of capitalism today. The increasing fragmentation and mobility of communities and peoples needs to be contextualized in terms of the new ways in which global capitalism works. According to this argument, an accent on multiplicity of histories serves to obfuscate the ways in which these histories are being connected anew by the international workings of multinational capital. Without this focus, the global imbalances of power are glossed over, and the world rendered seemingly shapeless (Loomba 1998: 13).

However, a too-quick enlargement of the term post-colonial can indeed paradoxically flatten both past and contemporary situations. As has been stated, by the 1930s colonialism had exercised its sway over 84.6 per cent of the land surface of the globe. This fact alone reminds us that it is impossible for European colonialism to have been a monolithic operation. From its inception it has deployed diverse strategies and methods of control and of representation. The legacies of colonialism are therefore varied and multiple even though they share some important features. Loomba (1998: 16-17) suggests that if the term post-colonial is taken to signify an oppositional

position or even desire, as Alva suggests, then it has the effect of collapsing various locations so that the specificities of all of them are blurred. Moreover, she continues, “thought of as an oppositional stance, ‘post-colonial’ refers to specific groups of [oppressed or dissenting] people [or individuals within them] rather than to a location or a social order, which may include such people but is not limited to them” (ibid: 17). In this context, post-colonialism becomes a vague condition of people anywhere and everywhere, and the specificities of locale do not matter. In part the dependence of post-colonial theory upon literary and cultural criticism, and upon post-structuralism is responsible for this shift. We therefore are left with the critique articulated earlier – that post-structuralism is responsible for current inadequacies in theorizing postcoloniality.

To further the debate, Loomba suggests that the problem with the prefix does not only lie with the ‘post’, but also with ‘colonial’. She states:

Analysis of ‘postcolonial’ societies too often work with the sense that colonialism is the only history of these societies. What came before colonial rule? What indigenous ideologies, practices and hierarchies existed alongside colonialism and interacted with it? Colonialism did not inscribe itself on a clean slate, and it cannot therefore account for everything that exists in ‘postcolonial’ societies (Loomba 1998: 17).

In her essay Can the Subaltern Speak? (Ed Nelson and Grossberg 1998: 211-313) Spivak cautions against the idea that pre-colonial cultures are something that we can easily recover, warning that “a nostalgia for lost origins can be detrimental to the exploration of social realities within the critique of imperialism” (Spivak in Nelson and Grossberg 1998: 211-313). She suggests that pre-colonial is always reworked by the history of colonialism, and is not available to us in any pristine form that can neatly be separated from the history of colonialism. Spivak is interested in emphasizing the worlding [both the violation and the creation] of the third world by colonial powers and therefore resists the romanticising of once colonized societies “as distant cultures,

exploited but with rich intact heritages waiting to be recovered..." (ibid). Loomba (1998: 18) furthers the debate by claiming that other critics have also criticized the tendency to eulogise the pre-colonial past or romantic nature culture. She goes on to suggest "while such cautioning is necessary, it can also lead to a reverse simplification, whereby the 'Third World' is seen as a world defined entirely by its relation to colonialism" (ibid). In this context, its histories are flattened and colonialism becomes their defining feature, whereas, in Vaughan's (Ed Loomba 1998: 18) words, "in several parts of the once-colonized world, historians are inclined to regard colonialism as a minor interruption in a long, complex history".

Post-colonialism is therefore a word that is useful only if we use it with caution and qualifications. As was determined in the discussion on colonialism, the ideology of post-colonialism can only be viewed through its historic, cultural and geographic variables. Mishra and Hodge (Ed Williams and Chrisman 1994: 284) therefore suggest that we are not talking about one post-colonialism, but many postcolonialisms. In this context the term postcolonial becomes useful as a generalization to the extent that "it refers to a process of disengagement from the whole colonial syndrome, which takes many forms and is probably inescapable for all those whose worlds have been marked by that set of phenomena: 'postcolonial' is [or should be] a descriptive not an evaluative term" (Hulme in Loomba 1998: 19).

We can conclude therefore, that the word post-colonial is only useful in indicating a general process with some shared features across the globe. If however, it is uprooted from its specific locations, postcolonialism cannot be meaningfully investigated, and instead the term begins to obscure the very relations of domination that it seeks to uncover (ibid).

In the context of this research the question now arises, when in South Africa did colonialism end, and where does post-colonialism begin? To begin to unravel the complexities of this debate, the candidate suggests that we again refer to the definition of colonialism as defined in Chapter One: 5, which states that colonial ideology can be defined as "the forcible takeover of territory. With this came the appropriation of material resources, the exploitation of labour, and interference with political and cultural structures of another territory or nation, in order to re-structure the colonized space to fuel European capitalist expansion". As was stated by Jolly above, the settler Afrikaners continued to see themselves as victims of English colonization. With the forming of the Republic of South Africa in 1961, South Africa's membership to the Commonwealth was terminated. British colonial rule was transferred into the hands of the nationalist Afrikaner settlers. If we consider the definition of colonialism as described above, it becomes evident that colonial rule did not cease with the forming of the Republic. The Afrikaner nationalists continued to implement the guiding principles of colonialism, applying them now to fuel White South African capitalist expansion. In this context, does post-colonialism in South Africa then begin with the victory for the ANC in the first democratic elections in 1994? Loomba (1998: 10) states that the internal fractures and divisions caused through colonialism are important factors to consider if post-colonialism is to be anything more than a term signifying a technical transfer of governance. As has been stated by Davidson in Chapter Two: 5, although the colonial pillars of apartheid crumbled on legislative paper, they were built into every practical field of the country's life. In so saying, the candidate suggests that the definition of post-colonialism as described by Hulme in this Chapter provides us with a working model with which to begin our journey into post-colonial South African visual representation. He suggests that post-colonialism refers to a process of disengagement from the

whole colonial syndrome and that it should be a descriptive, and not an evaluative term. In South Africa this disengagement happened in 1994 with the shift of power in governance and with the dismantling of the colonial apartheid system.

However, the shift of power did not complete the transition to total democratic rule. Robinson and Tuttle in Africana (Ed Appiah and Gates 1999: 1761) claim that for the next two years negotiators representing all the members of national unity worked to craft a new constitution. The constitution of 1996 provided for shared rights and responsibilities among the central government. With this the conceptual and physical borders were transformed within South Africa. The process began with the re-mapping of the physical landscape, from four colonial provinces into nine post-colonial provinces. With this new geography came a new awareness in understanding and redefining the politics of South African space. According to Jubie Matlou in an article in the Mail and Guardian (January 28-February 3 2000: 37), the Municipal Demarcation Act of 1998 was based on a demarcation process that is in line with the long-term goal of local government transformation. Matlou (Mail and Guardian January 28-February 3 2000: 37) states, "according to the 1998 Act, the demarcation process should lead to the promotion of integrated social and economic development based on an inclusive tax base". In the same article Michael Sutcliffe argues that the demarcation process is at the heart of post-colonial government transformation. Sutcliffe states:

Demarcation of municipal boundaries seeks to transform local government by bridging the gap between the rich and the poor, and the urban/rural divide, in relation to access to basic amenities of water and sanitation, electricity and other infrastructure needs of poor communities (Mail and Guardian January 28-February 3 2000: 37).

In so saying, the new conceptual borders triggered a barrage of criticism and resistance from a range of communities across the country. The most controversial

includes objections on the basis of economic considerations, racial exclusivity and provincial cross-border cases (ibid). Resistance to the demarcation process triggered some of the bloodiest conflicts since the 1960 Pondo peasant revolt on the Eastern Cape/Kwazulu-Natal border (ibid). Richard Griggs states:

Conflicts over boundaries can be rooted in a poor delimitation, incomplete negotiations in which major role-players are excluded, or because decision-makers have a weak understanding of the role and functions of boundaries. The creation of South Africa's nine new provinces in 1993 is a recent example of both poorly delimited boundaries and a process that excluded major role-players. Territorial trade-offs between politicians of various parties superseded expert attention to social, cultural, economic, and political phenomena. Opportunities for public referenda were sidelined. The resulting security problems from several violent disputes were enormous and the impact of too many poorly run provinces continues to be very costly in economic terms (Ed Bradley and Schofield 2000: 2).

With this demarcation process of South African space came a number of new legislative acts. According to the Department of Land affairs web page (<http://land.pwv.gov.za/home.htm>), the government's post-colonial vision toward the land is stated as "An equitable and sustainable land dispensation that promotes social and economic development". Its mission, "to provide access to land and to extend rights in land, with particular emphasis on the previously disadvantaged communities, within a well-planned environment" (ibid). With this mission statement came the legislative act, Restitution of Land Rights Act 22 of 1994, which states:

To provide for the restitution of rights in land to persons or communities dispossessed of such rights after 19 June 1913 as a result of past racially discriminatory laws and practices; to establish a commission on restitution of land rights and a land claims court, and to provide for matters connected therewith (<http://land.pwv.gov.za/home.htm>).

In 2003 this act was amended. The amended Bill states:

To amend the Restitution of Land Rights Act, 1994, so as to empower the minister of Land Affairs to purchase, acquire in any other manner or expropriate land, a portion of land or a right in land for the purpose of the restoration or award of such land, portion of land or right in land to a claimant or for any other land reform purpose; and to provide for matters connected therewith (<http://land.pwv.gov.za/home.htm>).

In an article entitled Whites' Land VS Landless Blacks in This Day (Issue 62, January 7 2004: 14) Lafraniere and Wines present us with a story that defines the reality of the politics of South African space in 1994. They state:

At first blush, the jumble of corrugated-steel shacks sprouting from 123 acres of flat countryside is a mirror of thriving towns all over the nation. Thousands of barren yards, marked by chicken wire fences and festooned with clothes-lines, face dirt lanes dignified by hand-lettered wooden street signs... About 15 000 Black South African's call Gabon home. It is their home – but not legally. The city of squatters is built on part of the 13 square miles of farmland where Abraham Duvenage, its White owner, has grown corn, sorghum and soya beans for half of his 73 years. Indeed, Gabon was a hayfield until about three years ago, when families of a nearby township decided it was free and took it. "I've been farming there for more than 35 years, and now it is going downhill"; he fumed as his 18 employees tilled the remaining open pasture. "I, an individual farmer, have to take the brunt of all these lawless people". Eunice Rosila, 30, a resident in one of those chicken-wire enclosures, begged to differ. "The main point is, we don't have a place to stay", she said. "We've got a right to be here, because the owner was not using the land" (Lafraniere and Wines This Day Issue 62, January 7 2004: 14).

This tug of war is part of an intense conflict that defines the reality towards physical space in Southern Africa. It pits tens of thousands of White landowners against millions of Blacks left landless by colonialism. Since the 1994 elections, many of these landless have waited for democracy to correct that disparity. Ten years down the democratic line, the government has transferred only two percent of white-owned farmland to the previously disadvantaged, in relation to the thirty percent promised by Government leaders in 1994 (ibid). According to Glen Thomas (ibid), deputy director of the land-reform programme, a fast growing political faction called The Landless People's Movement, has threatened to start taking over White farms this year. Black peasants and labourers have lodged claims with the Land Affairs Department for seventy percent of all Kwazulu-Natal's commercial farmland. Thomas (ibid) goes on to state' "Some claimants are not waiting for government rulings. Squatter invasions of farmland are now an everyday occurrence... We might reach a crisis point at some

point, if people become impatient at the speed at which we are delivering... They may start rising against the government". That would have seemed outlandish years ago, but any sense that South Africa could safely ignore land inequity vanished in 2000 when Zimbabwe sent paramilitary forces and peasants to seize virtually all the nation's White-owned farms. Economic and political chaos ensued, as farm output collapsed and foreign investors fled. Thomas (ibid) and others say South Africa is different: its leaders are politically secure and committed to the law, while Zimbabwe's president, Robert Mugabe, employed land seizures to bolster rural support for his government in the face of growing urban opposition.

According to Lafraniere and Wines (This Day Issue 62, January 7 2004: 14) the crisis that exists today in South Africa's is aided by the fact that the nation's Black-run government has given land reform a back seat to other priorities. "Land transfer programmes remain perennially under-financed by a government preoccupied with HIV – Aids and crime, and doubtful that giving land to the penniless peasants will do much to better their lot" (ibid). In a nation where more than half of the population is urban and one in three workers is unemployed, how far land reform can alleviate injustice is a matter of debate. Steven Friedman (ibid), senior scholar at the Centre for policy Studies, states, "People know perfectly well that if they are going to improve their livelihood, they aren't going to do it on the land". Other experts say that this argument overlooks the value of a plot of land for a vegetable garden to countless families with no income, particularly in a nation where rural poverty is crushing. In addition, it "underestimates the wealth that could be spread by breaking up the vast White-owned farms that dominate commercial agriculture (Lafraniere and Wines: ibid).

The debate continues, but what does remain indisputable is the tension and disparity that does exist between White landowners and the Black landless. The colonial landscape that was defined through Afrikaner legislation has finally been transformed through democratic demarcation and new legislation. This process however, has resulted in exposing the complexities that constitute the re-construction of South African space. It is within this context that the post-colonial landscape is still being defined.

CHAPTER THREE

SECTION TWO

SOUTH AFRICAN LANDSCAPE REPRESENTATION, 1994-2004.

According to Nash (Tate Modern issue 21, 2000: 62-63) over the past two decades, there has been a revolution in the art historical understanding of landscape. A new generation of landscape theorists has sought to demonstrate, as this research has exposed, that picturesque sites, the principle of planar recession, and the Claudean use of foreground figures, all have a political dimension that owes much to the class of origins of landscape conventions and their passage through the Whig idiom of British painting. Nash states:

Landscape became the focus of critical work that began to explore the relationships between those classical landscape aesthetics – picturesque, panoramic, sublime, beautiful, pastoral – and practices which materially shaped the representation of actual landscapes represented in paint and print, and the complex material and imaginative developments – mercantile and industrial capitalism, individualism, urbanization, nation-state, identity and class formation – that can be called modernity. Landscape, it was found, was not only intimately bound up with ownership of land, but also with the production of modern, western versions of subjectivity. Landscapes, ostensibly simple images of rural places, were caught up in definitions of class, nation, gender, whiteness, morality, civilization, as well as 'nature' (Nash in Tate Modern issue 21, 2000: 62-63)

The interrelatedness of landscape painting and the ideology of White settlement and Afrikaner nationalism have been established in this research. In the context of post-colonial South Africa the question now arises, how do we interpret the land today? At this stage in South African history, with the corrosion of national boundaries, global industrialization, fractured cultural communities, the notion of 'one land one nation' and the cosmopolitan culture of art making, "How" Jamal (Ed Geers 1997: 155) asks "in Post-Modern terms do we read our land and the psychic and material components which define it?"

To attempt to answer Jamal's question, it is the candidate's intention to explore some of the concepts that define landscape representation within contemporary cultural production, through a discussion of the work of William Kentridge (1955-), Clive Van Den Berg (1956-) Willem Boshoff (1951-) and Mduduzi Xakaza (1965-). The candidate will contextualise South African visual representation of the land within the broader framework of international trends such as the Land/Earth Art Movement in the 1960s and 1970s, when the landscape and its representation were being challenged by artists who were searching for new approaches to representing the land. This movement and its concepts therefore, provide a framework for a Post-Modern and post-colonial reading of the land and its representation in the South African context.

In his essay Landscape into Land Art in Landscape and Western Art (1999: 201), Malcolm Andrews argues that landscape art, "as conventionally conceived and executed, is a framed representation of a section of the natural world, a cropped view, selected and reduced so that it can be a portable memento of an arresting or pleasing visual experience of rural scenery". He goes on to suggest that the land becomes landscape once this kind of conceptual process has begun, and some way before any material reproduction of the image has been generated. Andrews states:

The implication is that landscape art does not happen in nature, it is an abstraction from, an appropriation of, nature such that, once the process has issued in an art object, one might say (pointing to the land) 'there is the original', and (pointing to the painting or photograph) 'here is the artist's representation'. The distinction bestows a mystique on the 'original', a different kind of value on the artifact, and generates a tension or a dialectic between the two. It also renders both artist and spectator as detached observers of nature. The process terminates in what is perceived as a profound distinction – 'art' and 'nature'. That dialectic is part of the condition of landscape art and since the Renaissance, has given a wonderful energy and complexity to western traditions in representing landscape, in literary as much as in visual forms (Andrews 1999: 201).

In the Twentieth Century, this distinction between art and nature has become increasingly problematized.

In beginning to answer Jamal's earlier question, let us consider Kentridge's work.

In *Colonial Landscapes* (1995-1996) [Fig 19, 20, 21, 22], Kentridge critically investigates the way in which landscape in South Africa has been represented since its colonial inception. As has been established in this research, the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth century landscape artists such as Le Vaillant, Baines and Pierneef, depicted broad open spaces in the tradition of Romanticism and European landscape painting, showing little or no interest in depicting the human condition or the history of colonization embedded in the landscape. According to Christov-Bakargiev in William Kentridge (1998: 26), this reflects the colonial vision of White South Africans prior to urbanization. *Colonial Landscapes* question these earlier depictions, "exposing the fallacy of a romantic ideal of pure, unadulterated 'nature' in an area of Africa where the terrain has been ecologically disrupted and abused by the growth of mining plants" (ibid). These charcoal drawings on paper were sourced from a nineteenth century volume of the diaries of colonial African explorers, illustrated with engravings of the exotic 'other' travelers were passing through (ibid). They are lush and bountiful imaginary African landscapes. In an interview, Christov-Bakargiev (1999:22) questions Kentridge about this imagery present in *Colonial Landscapes*. Kentridge responds by stating, "these were nostalgic visions of how people wished a new world could be made, my drawings suggest how this was not possible". Imposed onto the black charcoal drawings are red pastel marks which according to Kentridge (1998: 23) "are both beacons erected in the landscape and the surveyor's theodolite markings of the image in a viewfinder". These marks indicate how the representations of such landscapes were more projections of, and onto, the land than accurate depictions.



[Fig 19, 20]

William Kentridge, *Colonial Landscapes*, 1995-96, 120 x 160 cm, Charcoal and pastel on paper



[Fig 21]

William Kentridge, *Colonial Landscapes*, 1995-96, 120 x 160 cm, Charcoal and pastel on paper

When critically analyzed, what also comes to the fore is that within this lush landscape are the markings of culture's effect on nature. Kentridge in this context counters the Arcadian view with the reality of a landscape ridden with mining and civil engineering detritus, elements that represent the fact of human passage and are historical traces of the history of South Africa. According to Christov-Bakargiev (ibid: 26) the landscape appears like a drawn scene or an imperfectly erased text to be recovered and read through. In this context, as Jamal (Ed Geers 1997: 158) states, "the land was never an Eden, never a site for pure contemplation, never a sphere which affirmed the perceiver's being in a manner which could be regarded as 'pure'". Rather, the South African landscape has always invoked anxiety and fear, has always been the subject of the dreamwork borne of cultural domination. The South African plateau was perceived as a space rather than a place, a boundless zone condemned to exploitation. Jamal states:

It is not surprising then... that the relation to the land resulted in an 'ever more aggressive means of securing the boundaries of one's property'. No reciprocity existed between the interlopers and the land. A set of private binaries, or defences, were set up between interior and exterior, self and other, culture and nature. Today these binaries are no longer intact, the categories no longer mutually exclusive.... Hence Kentridge's embattled interplay of land and material culture (Jamal 1997: 159).

This dialectic between the laws of nature, culture and art, which is present in *Colonial Landscapes*, has forced an increasingly ambivalent re-envisioning of the South African landscape. According to Christov-Bakargiev (1999: 47) "the history of Johannesburg, richest city in the continent, is an unbroken tale of rapid, wholesale exploitation of the land for its mineral wealth, beginning at the end of the nineteenth century". Being the environment in which Kentridge lives and works, it is no surprise that the bereft landscape, plundered and ravaged, is a prominent motif for Kentridge.



[Fig 22]

William Kentridge, *Colonial Landscapes*, 1995-96, 120 x 160 cm, Charcoal and
pastel on paper

Christov-Bakargiev states:

His effort to capture something of the truth behind the landscape's seemingly neutral appearance is nearly always grounded in a position of cultural critique, as well as a certain ambivalence concerning the limits of what the compromised landscape is capable of communicating. Not only is Kentridge signaling that this ruined vista is as much his cultural inheritance as the idyllic Eden was to his forebears, but in his refusal to ascribe to any ideological position to nature he is also pointing out the inherent connections between ecology and civil rights (Christov-Bakargiev 1999: 49).

As Jamal stated above, South Africa was never an Eden, never a site for pure contemplation. Just as it is dangerous to return to an imagined distant past in order to invest one's belief in a South African natural paradise where humankind is perfectly situated with its surroundings, so it is pointless to try and imagine a present-day Africa that has returned to a state of pre-colonial harmony with nature [if one ever existed].

As has been stated in the discussion of South African visual representation between 1948-1994, following the trajectory of modern Western art, the conventionally figurative tradition of landscape and its representation of specific places were succeeded by abstraction and the eternal and universal certainties of high Modernism, out of which the conceptual movement was born. Internationally, the shifting borderline between art and nature became the locus for some of the most exciting artistic activity in the last third of the Twentieth Century, which involved making art on location. The landscape in this context was no longer simply a subject of art, but the locus and raw material.

According to Nash in her article Breaking New Ground (Tate Modern issue 21, 2000: 61), the artists of the 1960s and 1970s rediscovered the environments outside their galleries and began to make work in nature or the wilderness rather than just represent it. Nash states:

While this move was in part an attempt to escape the commercial confines of the gallery and art market, many artists produced aesthetically beautiful work which reproduced the heroic individualism of the romantic landscape tradition. But as site-specific artwork began to proliferate, it was often joined to more overtly

environmental, political and social concerns, addressing social relations and working through collective and plural landscape meanings (Tate Modern issue 21, 2000: 62).

The influence of the land/earth art movement of the 1960s and 1970s produced, in the South African context, another vehicle of expression through which to re-envision the South African landscape. Clive Van Den Berg's *Mine Dump Project* (1995) [23, 24, 25,26] was part of an exhibition entitled Sometime/s Brief Histories of Time, on the Johannesburg Biennale in 1995. According to the curator of the exhibition, Sunil Gupta, in the Biennale catalogue (1995: 220), "Clive Van Den Berg is the South African artist who in my opinion, best marries the notion of fine art in a public space while addressing the issue of time. His *Mine Dumps Project* will be a temporal piece reflecting the gradual erosion of the material possessions of White South Africans". The *Mine Dump Project* incorporated two mine dumps, one next to the freeway linking the city and the airport, and the other flanking the Soweto highway (Jamal and Williamson 1996: 52). The choice of sites reveals Van Den Berg's long term pre-occupation with "how history and memory inscribe themselves upon the land, and the way the physical characteristics of a city impact upon the life of its inhabitants"(ibid). South Africa post 1994 has again been opened up to international arenas, Van Den Berg's choice of using the highway between the city and the airport reflects his concern with connecting Johannesburg to the international world through, in Nash's (Tate Modern issue 21, 2000: 62) words, "collective and plural landscape meanings". In this context, Van Den Berg's utilization of the highway connecting the city to Soweto reveals the realities of the South African condition that were created through Afrikaner legislation. The erosion of this colonial system in The *Mine Dump project* was created through burning White South African iconic images onto the landscape. According to Williamson And Jamal (1996: 52), his giant head, armchair, double bed and staircase



[Fig 23]

Clive Van Den Berg, *The Mine Dump Project*, 1994, 61 x 92 cm, Chalk Pastel on paper

were shaped and illuminated by braziers. By creating the work on the physical landscape, van Den Berg's objective was not only to create a public art, but also to draw attention to the most contentious and problematic sites: the mine dumps.

Williamson and Jamal (ibid: 55) further suggest that for van Den Berg, "these remain one of the most charged signs of the avarice of Johannesburg". As Van Den Berg states:

They are manifestations of history, although unrecognized as such. It's incredible how naturalized they have become. People see them as geography rather than as manmade things which have been piled up as a result of labour. I wanted to make people look at them again and to recognize that they were our past. It really troubled me that they were disappearing, that the mining companies were reprocessing them. I may be cynical... it disturbed me that we were going to be left with a city which had no markers to why it had started (Williamson and Jamal 1996: 55)

The fire drawings still remain visible today. Williamson and Jamal (ibid) state that to ensure maximum and lasting visibility, the grass was embossed and cut with a weed-eater so that even a year later, because the grass grows at different rates, you can see the memory of the images. Taylor and Bunn in Excavations (npd: 1), discussing Van Den Berg's work from the 1980s, state that the string of lights in Van Den Berg's work serves as a kind of mnemonic, an aid to memory, in which the tracery form of some image once burned upon the eye, is now illuminated only by the flickering candles of the memory. In the *Mine Dump Project* this string of lights was created through fire and arranged in recognizable iconic shapes. Taylor and Bunn state:

In ways, this device could be described as a visual equivalent of Freud's "mystic writing pad". Freud, ever seeking concise analogies for human psychic processes, writes of this child's toy, in "Note on the Mystic Writing Pad" (1925), as a metaphor for describing the way traces of all mental processes are preserved: impressions are left on the pad even though the surface has been cleared for fresh inscription (Taylor and Bunn npd: 1).

In this context fire becomes incandescent and transient to Van Den Berg. In burning the iconic images of what constitutes White middle class South Africa, Van Den Berg is



[Fig 24, 25]

Clive Van Den Berg, *The Mine Dump Project*, 1995, Installation views

essentially closing the chapter on South African colonial history. In South Africa the destructive yet transformative power of fire can be seen through the landscape every winter. Its ability to destroy and transform become key readings in *The Mine Dump Project*. Fire in this public work acts as a way of branding, as an act of burning into memory. According to Williamson And Jamal (Jamal and Williamson 1996: 52), the potency of Van Den Berg's fire drawings remains indisputable. In creating work in a public space, the work caught the imagination of what Van Den Berg terms "a chance audience" (ibid). According to Jamal (Ed Geers 1997: 152), in an essay entitled Zero Panoramas, Ruins in Reverse, Monumental Vacancies, the work of the late American earth artist Robert Smithson, who designated pumping derricks, unfinished highway construction and sewer pipes as key components of a contemporary landscape marked by blandness, accelerated change and decay, randomness and disorder, "never sought to fix or memorialize the sites which they transformed... His remained a world 'bleached' and 'fractured' – postindustrial and postlapsarian" (ibid). Van Den Berg's *Mine Dump Project* parallels Smithson's approach to the land in that the abandoned hopes of which Smithson spoke were not only a consequence of exhausted industrial structures, but also a consequence of exhausted categories that defined landscape art. Hence, the term Zero Panoramas, Ruins in Reverse, Monumental Vacancies not only alludes to the progressive collapse of classical categories of landscape representation such as the picturesque, but also to the collapse of the colonial structures that defined the politics of South African space. Jamal States:

For the modern artist, caught in a world 'bleached and fractured', there is no longer a saving distance and point of mediation. The eye is divested of all sovereignty in the moment of apprehension. The relationship between the perceiver and the perceived is no longer one of reciprocity, balance, or composure. This breakdown has resulted in disclaimers such as that by Michael Heizer, Smithson's contemporary: 'I don't care about landscape. I'm a sculptor. Real estate is dirt, and dirt is material' (Ed Geers 1997: 154).



[Fig 26]

Clive Van Den Berg, *The Mine Dump Project*, 1995, Installation view

The investigation at this point, where land becomes landscape, raises questions about where the artistic engagement with the site begins and ends. Open-air painting in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had taken the artist out of the studio to a more intimate confrontation with the site. Andrews (1999: 201) suggests that it was usually assumed that such an engagement was part of a process: it was a deliberate excursion in order to enhance the authenticity of the record of the site, but it was understood usually to be an excursion from the studio and eventually back into the studio, and what eventually emerged from the studio would find its way on to the walls of public galleries or private homes. In this context the gallery contextualizes and mediates the framed representation of the landscape, which the artist has already manipulated in order to produce the image. In a further framing, the gallery itself is contextualized within its broader culture, given social meaning, and manipulated by political and economic forces (ibid). As has been previously stated in Chapter Two, Section Two, from the 1960s onwards, the prioritizing of the art object as a commercial commodity gave way to the prioritization of the process, to the raw materials, to the artists developing ideas and their implementation and to the activity of art making. According to Andrews (ibid: 203) a quite deliberate dirtying up of the art gallery became one of the expressions of these new priorities, sometimes quite literally, in the dumping of natural materials from the land – rocks, trees, earth – onto the floors of the gallery rooms.

Consider the work of Willem Boshoff, entitled *Psephos* (1994/5) [Fig 27].

Commissioned for the Gencor building in Johannesburg, the work was made to celebrate South Africa's first democratic election. Consisting of nine glass-fronted boxes in a large rectangular frame, each box is filled with pebbles, arranged light on

dark or dark on light to form a St Andrew's cross. The nine units of the work stand for the nine new provinces of South Africa. Boshoff collected the pebbles to represent each region, the people who occupy the land, and the concept that their rights must be respected by those entrusted with the custody of the country's mineral wealth (Rankin in Geers 1997: 58). In this context we can parallel Boshoff's work process to the processes of artists of the British Land Art Movement of the 1960s and 1970s who, unlike some of their American contemporaries, approached the land with a sense of delicacy and sacrosanctity (Andrews 1999: 213).

Through Boshoff's collection of pebbles from the nine different provinces of South Africa, the space traversed through the new national borders became an essential process in the creation of the artwork. The pebbles, created over thousands of years in their particular natural environment, resonate with the geological information from the site they were taken from. In this context, the pebbles themselves become specific markers for the South African provinces. The dumping of natural materials from the land into the gallery, which Andrews alludes to above, is approached by Boshoff in a meditative way. According to Rankin (Ed Geers: 58) the units were "painstakingly formed by lowering the pebbles into the glass cases with a long-handled spoon".

As in Van Den Berg's work, *Psephos* encapsulates ideas of South Africa in transition. The collapse of the colonial order was marked by the first democratic elections in South Africa. This political change is evoked by Boshoff's arrangement of pebbles into diagonal crosses. According to Rankin (Ed Geers: 58), in the run up to the 1994 elections, the cross became a symbol, not only of the sign that each voter would make, but of the whole notion of transition to democracy. She goes on to claim "an erudite reference to democracy was also embedded in Boshoff's allusion to the ancient Greek practice of using pebbles or *psephos* to vote, reflected in the title" (ibid). Jamal (Ed Geers 1997: 162), in discussing *Psephos* suggests, "The import of the work is not



[Fig 27]

Willem Boshoff, *Psephos*, 1994/95, 205 x 301 x 9 cm, Mixed media

picturesque but discursive". The simplicity of the crosses, the historical moment of it's making, is easily seen. Here, it seems is a land reborn. The privilege and power associated with the word is replaced by a sign that every South African can make. And yet this cross, which cuts through cultural barriers and which signals our new democracy, to Jamal, also harbours its ominous opposite. Jamal states:

For a voter's cross is no mere sign of triumph. Its very scoring across the land militates against its inaugural intent. For the cross which signals liberation also marks a cancellation. A perverse reading? Perhaps. And yet, once Boshoff's rhetorical gesture is set aside, we are left with a serialized cancellation of the land – a zero panorama, a purported monument which can also be seen as vacant (Ed Geers 1997: 162)

According to Nash (Tate Modern issue 21, 2000: 64-5) landscapes have featured in contemporary cultural production in art that reworks the traditional pictorial formats and addresses the implications of the conventional landscape tradition. In so doing, the contemporary artist does not simply deconstruct landscape as an aesthetic category. Instead of assigning them to history, they constructively recharge images with the politics of the present. This recharging/re-appropriation, of the landscape as a physical post-colonial space, and in the fine art context as traditional landscape representation, can be found in the work of Mduduzi Xakaza. In an exhibition at the African Art Centre (Durban) in December 2003, Xakaza's oil and acrylic paintings on canvas depict rural landscape scenes from Maphumulo and KwaZulu-Natal Midlands. According to Xakaza's artist statement on the African Art Centre website (2003: 1-2), "he bases his compositions on real scenes but plays around with forms and colours in order to create specific visual effects that help him express particular moods of nature. For Xakaza, landscape is a living entity and thus possesses a soul of its own". In the Mail and Gaurdian (January 9-15 2004) review of Xakaza's show, Sudheim states that as an admirer of the brooding, romantic landscape paintings of nineteenth century master Casper David Friedrich, Xakasa was attracted to the element of the sublime in nature

that reminded him of his childhood years in Maphumulo and encouraged him to revisit some of these memories through a long journey of self discovery. However, as his statement suggests:

The element of power in the depiction of the land itself, by early British traveler artists, who depicted parts of Africa as a metaphoric unoccupied 'wilderness' or 'paradise', ready to be conquered and tamed for colonial purposes, played a major role in shaping Xakaza's artistic approach to the same theme (African Art Centre online 2003: 1).

In *Landscape Road to Vuma II* [Fig 28] Xakaza's depiction of the landscape falls within the stylistic conventions of the European Romantic tradition. Adopting, as did Baines and Pierneef, the magisterial gaze over the landscape, Xakasa employs traditional methods of illusion and perspective for reading the scene. The road, which thrusts the viewer into the painting from the right bottom corner, extends in a descent towards the middle distance of the landscape. From there, the eye is pulled along a diagonal in a mountain range that extends to the far distance, eventually ending in the atmospheric far distant mountain ranges. At first glance, the viewer is left with the feeling that Xakasa has merely appropriated traditional methods of European visual representation and applied them, as the other traveler-artists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, to the South African landscape. Upon further investigation it becomes apparent that Xakaza as a Black visual artist, informed of post-colonial discourse and Post-Modern attitudes towards contemporary cultural production, has as Nash (Tate Modern issue 21, 2000: 64-5) states, "constructively recharge[d] images with the politics of the present". In *Landscape Road to Vuma II*, Coetzee's (1998: 39-42) discussion on the picturesque in South Africa, which was discussed in Chapter One, Section Two: 3-4 can be applied in critically engaging Xakaza's work. Firstly, the ochre's, browns, fawns and grey's of the South African landscape have been reintroduced in Xakaza's landscape, in relation to the rich range of green's which



[Fig 28]

Mduduzi Xakaza, *Landscape Road to Vuma II*, 2003 80 x 100 cm, Oil on canvas

Coetzee (ibid) suggests were so apparent within colonial representations. Secondly, because of the damp climatic conditions of Europe, colonial representations within the picturesque genre represented a landscape that was moist, with foliage rich in its aesthetic appeal. In *Landscape Road to Vuma II*, the dry climatic conditions of northern Kwazulu-Natal are represented as objective and true to the landscape being observed. Thirdly, Coetzee (ibid) claims there is always cloud movement in the skies of Europe because of the moisture in the air. Light and shadow never stand still. Xakaza's painting depicts the typical light of the Vuma area, which in Coetzee's (ibid) words "tends to be harsh and bright and transitions from light to shade abrupt. The skies are blue and light and shadows static.

Landscape Road to Vuma no 2 in this context becomes a representation of a physical place rather than a subjective space. According to Xakaza artist's statement (African Art Centre online 2003: 1-2) it depicts, amongst other things, "a symbolic reclamation of his land which is to be harmoniously and proportionately shared among all citizens of a democratic South Africa. It also reflects his identification with the soil and soul of his land – his heritage". As Thomas Weiskel (Coetzee 1988: 55) points out in his discussion on the sublime, "What happens to you standing at the edge of infinite spaces can be made, theoretically, to 'mean' just about anything".

According to Nash (Tate Modern issue 21, 2000: 63), if traditional landscape representation is unlikely to be found in the portfolios of the avant-garde, contemporary art in a wide range of media and styles, in galleries, in natural environments and in public spaces, continues to address the relationships between body and place, but through a more radical sense of the geographies of identity. The contemporary vocabulary of cultural production incorporates the spatial language of borders, border-crossings, location, dislocation, place, displacement, home, belonging that reflects

material and imaginative geographies. "The apparently universal theme of human relationships to place has been revised to take critical account of the axes of identity – gender, race, ethnicity – through which the human has been differentiated, and the specific geographies of the movement of people, capital, culture and things, colonial and post-colonial, that have shaped and interconnected places" (ibid). In this context, as landscape representation was a potent mode of engaging with the concerns of the past, contemporary artists have explored themes of landscape through location and identity, themes of the Post-Modern post-colonial present.

CHAPTER THREE

SECTION THREE

THE REPRESENTATION OF POST-COLONIAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE LANDSCAPE IN THE WORK OF SANDILE ZULU AND JEREMY WAFER.

In a Post-Modern sense the landscape is a text, an intellectual space or site of discourse, comprising a series of signs that carry ideological and psychological meaning (Arnold, 1996: 40). In extending the themes discussed in Chapter Three, Section Two, the work of the two selected artists provides an insight into how we can read the land as text in a post-colonial South Africa.

Section One will critically investigate the work of Sandile Zulu, who through the use of the natural elements of fire, water, wind and soil, engages with the themes of "creation and destruction, colonization and decolonization, to revolution and liberation, to purgation and cleansing, to purification and renewal" (Atkinson 1998: 1).

Section two will explore the work of Jeremy Wafer. On the internet site of David Krut Fine Arts (Wafer: 1), Wafer's work is described thus: "His sculptural and print work has remained informed by an artistic language which is modular, minimal and contemplative, and which varies in aesthetic effect and social purpose. By way of conceptual sensibility that is at once rigorously structured and radically open, Wafer explores with extreme subtlety the complex territories of location, culture and identity".

Section Three will investigate a two-person exhibition that brought together the work of Wafer in a show entitled *Topographies*, and Zulu, in *Points of the Delta*, which was held at the Michael Stevenson Contemporary (Cape Town) in 2003.

CHAPTER THREE

SECTION THREE

JEREMY WAFER

According to his curriculum vitae, Wafer was born in Durban in 1953 and received his B.A. (Fine Art) degree from the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg in 1979, majoring in sculpture and art history. Moving to Johannesburg, he completed his B.A. (Honours) in History of Art at the University of the Witwatersrand in 1980. Wafer received his M.A. (Fine Art) from the same institution in 1987. From 1983-2002, Wafer taught as a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Fine Art at the Technikon Natal in Durban. In 2002 he took up the position as Head of Fine Arts at the University of Witwatersrand (Bunn 2002: 19), (Krut: 1), (Smith, issue 39: 1).

According to Frost (2001: 30), Wafer, "working as an artist in South Africa since 1986 to the present, has been party to an extraordinary historical moment. The events, theoretical and political struggles, and new conceptions of identity and culture that have marked this time are central to the social field which informs Wafer's body of work". The dissolving of the Nationalist's separatist ideology through democracy has, as stated in Chapter three, Section One: 9-12, exposed the complexities that constitute the redefining of South African space and culture. The problem of cultural amalgamation was predictably heightened in South Africa post 1994. The question that started surfacing in the reality of the [re]construction process was: "How could new identities be forged, and old power relations dissolved"? (ibid: 49).

In the context of this research, it is the candidate's intention is to critically investigate how Wafer [re]defines the politics of South African space and its [re]presentation, through an artistic language that is "modular, minimal and contemplative" (ibid: 7). It is through this language that Wafer explores the territories of colonial power and post-colonial transformation, to which Frost refers above. For this reason, the candidate will only critically evaluate work post 1994. In addition, because of Wafer's concern with exploring themes of culture and identity [which in Post-Modern terms cannot be removed from location] in much work post 1994, the candidate will only consider work that deals specifically with the theme of land/space, in its Post-Modern and post-colonial context. As Nash has stated, see Chapter Three, Section Two, the contemporary vocabulary of cultural production incorporates the spatial language of borders, border-crossings, location, dislocation, place, displacement, home and belonging that reflects material and imaginative geographies. It is through these Post-Modern themes of land that the candidate will, in Frost's (2001: 7) words "attempt to tease out the richness and value of this potent, socially nuanced and contemplative language".

According to Frost (ibid), "Growing up on a farm in KwaZulu Natal in the 1960s exposed Wafer to the materiality of objects and, as a consequence of this, to the metaphoric power of materials". In addition, in an interview with David Bunn in the exhibition catalogue titled Survey (2002), Wafer states:

On the farm there were always things been made, things been done, crops harvested, fields burnt, holes being dug, fruit packed, a chain of productive activity which one was close to and part of. My sense of place, of being located in my own space, was produced by the afternoons spent walking through the cane breaks down to the reed banks on the river boundary or cycling the big black bike along the district road to the store for the bread and post, walking across fields holding the measuring rod for my father, surveying new orchards, or watching the sugar cane being loaded on to the railway trucks on the way to the mill. The other side of this image of un-alienated plentitude was however increasingly and unsettlingly present if only at the corner of one's eye: the servant's room at the edge of the

garden, the sprinklers on the lawn between the red veranda and the dusty compound, ... My work has, I am sure, been formed by these experiences: Johan Khosa, a Mozambiquean migrant worker, teaching me welding in the farm workshop; counting the number of trees in the citrus orchards from the aerial photographs of the farm; lying in the heat of January on the cool cement floor looking at pictures of the palace of Knossos in Arthur Mee's Children Encyclopedia (Bunn 2002: 15-16).

Wafer's words are worth unpacking for they lead us into the heart of his conceptual and technical concerns as an artist post 1994. Firstly, the contemporary themes of borders, location, dislocation, place, displacement, home and belonging, were all experienced by Wafer as a child in his relation to the farmland/home. Secondly, as a playground for a young child, the physical, material landscape that surrounded Wafer must have also given way to more imaginative/metaphoric geographies. According to Frost (2001: 7) "throughout his work the preoccupation is with their metaphoric possibilities". Thirdly, the farm activity of mapping, surveying, measuring, counting and quantifying have become principal themes for Wafer, post 1994. Fourthly, Wafer's text also exposes the South African reality that was defined by colonial rule and Afrikaner legislation. In this context, Wafer has produced work which tackles the theoretical formulations of post-colonialism, which according to Frost (ibid: 34) "dominated South African 'culture speak' in the period following the democratic elections of 1994".

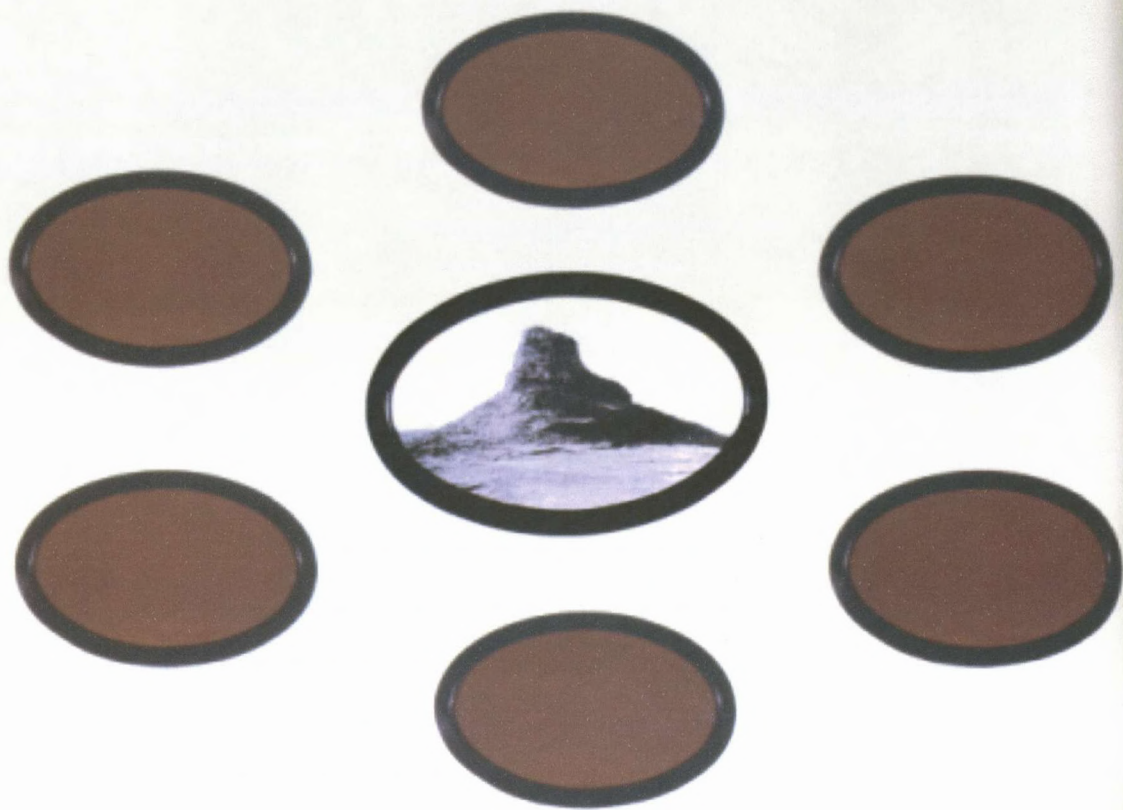
Wafer's response to the post-colonial imperatives was to produce a set of images that acknowledged post-colonial protocols, even as they also, at times, remain independent of them. In *Isandhlwana* (1995) [Fig 29], the central oval framed black and white photograph of the famous battle site is surrounded by eight glass covered red oxide ovals. As has been stated in relation to the work of Skotnes and Van Der Vijver, *Isandhlwana* is an ideologically charged site; it remains a symbolic marker in the resistance to the colonial objective.

The oval, that characterizes much of Wafer's work, becomes essential in how we read this Post-Modern and post-colonial representation. In discussion of Wafer's earlier work, Frost (ibid: 10, 22) refers to how the naturalistic language of [landscape] representation has been defined by fixed-point perspective. This perspective, if not carried through to its fixed point on the picture plane, reproduces circular openings [the tops of the funnel, shaft and dome, motifs that characterize much of Wafer's work from the 1980s] as ovals. Wafer in this context consciously challenges and deconstructs the traditional modes of landscape representation, which according to Frost (2001: 10) "challenge the safety of viewing associated with naturalism". This disarticulation of looking is reinforced by the dialectic that is constructed through the readable [photographic] image surrounded by frames which contain no narrative codes. Frost states:

We might now think of these "empty" ovals as voids or absences which promise a plentitude of meaning for the readable image, that of the photograph of the battle site. Conversely, these voided ovals "speak" of what the readable image suppresses. The contrast set up by this silent/spoken binary has the effect of conceptually isolating the central image, while the whole image is further disarticulated when we conceive of the ovals (which structure all the images) as potential circles. The effect of this imagined form of looking is not only to destabilise the codes of three-dimensionality, but also to emphasise the lie that the arrangement and size of these "illusionary" ovals does not conform to the laws of perspective (Frost: 2001: 22-23).

To further the discussion, the elliptical frames can also represent framed vignettes from the colonial nineteenth century. Wafer, through minimalist repetition and the non-referential [created through the red-oxide surfaces] has suppressed all the subjective and illustrative information that the viewer expects to find within these frames. A tension is set up between ideas of colonial domination and submission. Frost further suggests that in the post-colonial context, there is another tension that exists in *Isandhlwana*. She states:

If we see this set of ovals as a sign of something "other" to the marker of post-colonial knowledge (the photograph) and if this set isolates the central image



[Fig 29]

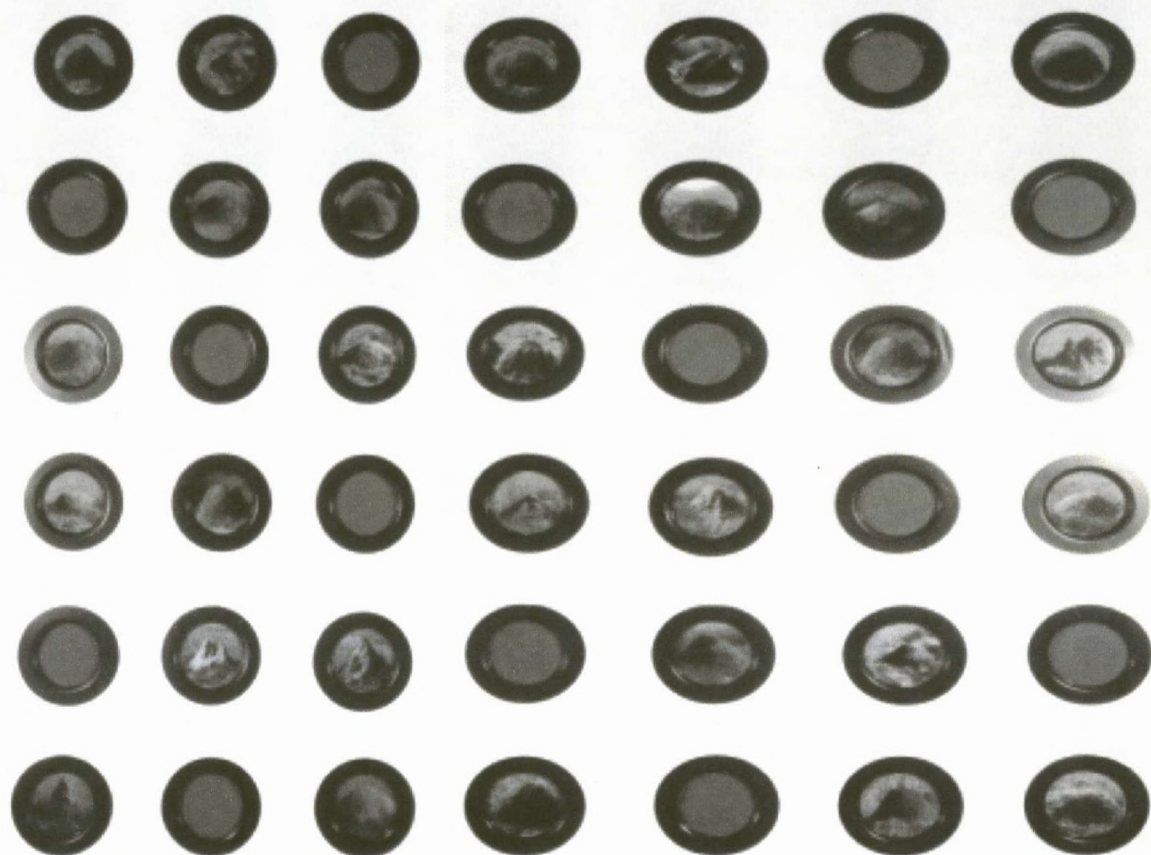
Jeremy Wafer, *Isandhlwana*, 1995, Dimensions variable, Black and white
photograph and glass-covered red oxide ovals

(because of the double vision that the arrangement of ovals – seen as potential circles – implies), we could read these “empty” signs as the effect of what the photographic image represses. The image might then be read as a meditation, not only on the triumph of the Zulus against the power of colonialism (although this meaning is obviously there), but also as a contemplation of what histories inevitably left out (Frost 2001: 35).

Seen in this way *Isandhlwana* marks the post-colonial moment without conforming to those post-colonial theories that foreground a static relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. Frost (ibid) states that Wafer’s image typically refuses such closure. In this context, *Isandhlwana* operates within the Post-Modern reading mentioned by Arnold in the Introduction to Chapter Three, Section Three. The landscape for Wafer has become a text, an intellectual space or site of discourse comprising a series of signs that carry ideological and psychological meaning. These meanings in *Isandhlwana* are not static. Wafer’s grammar remains open-ended and elusive. As Paul Edmunds in his review of the exhibition *Survey* (Artthrob: 1) states, “Clearly his work operates in systems and structures but their principle remains fractionally beyond your grasp”.

Another work that critically engages traditional landscape representation in a Post-Modern context is *Termite Mounds* (1995) [Fig 30]. It consists, in this case, of circular rather than oval frames with glass, which contain black and white photographs of termite mounds and red earth pigment surfaces. The work is arranged in a landscape format, seven frames wide by six frames high, which according to Frost (2001: 38) is “a display that reiterates the implicit idea of landscape as a western art form usually associated with painting”. Frost (2001: 38) further suggests landscape paintings usually imply an overall view of a large body of space, “in contrast to these painterly expectations, this contemplation is a multiple of sites at close range, making for an image that disarticulates the normal assumptions of landscape painting”. In an

interview with Wafer, Bunn (2002: 1) suggests, "there is in Wafer a resistance to 'landscape', a resistance to the temptation to understand locales as through perspectively organized for a single observing consciousness". Termite mounds in this context are the very antithesis of 'landscape' as stated by Bunn. The discourses of landscape painting, empirical investigation and taxonomic collections are, in the context of this research, established as integral in defining the Romantic and Darwinian mentality of the nineteenth century. *Termite Mounds* references, but deconstructs, this traditional visual language. According to Frost (2001:38), this collection of humble mounds is outside of the power relations that inform Darwinism and colonial representations (both textual and visual) of landscape. Frost (2001:38) states, "Implicitly, then, *Termite Mounds* might be said to occupy a postcolonial space, by deferring to the markers of colonial culture whilst differing from that implied value system". In so saying, as Wafer's work is metaphorically dense and hermeneutically open, *Termite Mounds* does not offer such a static post-colonial reading. Frost (ibid) claims that seen either vertically or horizontally, the play of variation between the narrative [photographs] and the silence [red pigment] in the medallions is consistently mathematical. Read conceptually, "the perfection of this mathematical variation alludes to the potential of a termite mound to represent a perfectly constructed social whole (ibid). Seen in this way, *Termite Mounds* goes beyond its implied post-colonial critique, "and becomes also a metaphorical meditation on complex and integrated social matrices" (ibid). According to Bunn, "They are earth forms that are somehow both random and systematic, the emanation of tremendous, seething activity at a minute scale, a type of active being that manifests itself in apparently topographical features" (2002:1). In considering the topography, the South African landscape, and the date, 1995, that *Termite Mounds* was conceptualized, the work "may be read as expressing a utopian longing for perfect social functionality, even as it could also be a dystopian



[Fig 30]

Jeremy Wafer, *Termite Mounds*, 1995, Dimensions variable, Black and white
photographs and glass-covered red oxide circles

acknowledgement that human societies (including a South African one), are never perfect" (Frost 2001: 39).

In considering Bunn's earlier reference to topographical features, and in extending the discussion on Wafer's conceptual approach towards the [re]representation of the South African landscape as a site of discourse, we can consider Nash's (Tate Modern issue 21, 2000: 63) article, which investigates international Post-Modern approaches towards landscape representation. Nash (ibid) claims that the formal conventions and aesthetics of cartography have featured in much contemporary art over the past few decades, providing a potent way of engaging with western traditions of spatial representation and figuring themes of location, place, travel and dislocation. She states, "Some of the work has been part of a wider critique of the privileged authority of maps and their use in the practical and cultural efforts of imperialism and other projects to control territory, register authority and exploit resources" (ibid). In an interview with Bunn, Wafer, speaking of topographical maps states:

Maps are interesting in that they provide a precise and richly detailed representation of a place, a place that one may not necessarily be in, that may be constructed in the mind. But maps also are made for purposes: to control and order, to locate territory, to mark ownership, to measure... Perhaps there is also a kind of objectivity in maps that I find compelling, a neutral sort of presentation of information without interpretation (in so far as possible)... I am also interested in the more theoretical aspects of representation. I spent some time in the 80s with Nelson Goodman's Languages of Art which raised my awareness of the limitations of naturalistic representation and highlighted the contextual and relational basis of "likeness". Maps are an interesting example of this in their use of a clearly coded relationship between the land and its representation (Bunn 2002: 2-3).

According to Frost (2001: 16) certain themes recur in Wafer's work for the idea of finding one's way, and by extension of mapping. These are utilised in *Stones* (2000) [Fig 31, 32] a site-specific installation on the *Xoe Site Specific* project organized by Mark Wilby at Nieu Bethesda, Karoo in 2000. Wafer mounted one hundred black and

white photographs of ordinary stones, ten metres apart, on a kilometre long fence. These photographs were mounted in double-sided ten centimetre-square frames. Wafer consulted a 1: 50 000 ordinance survey map to find an appropriate one-kilometre stretch of fence, which then served as the display for the photographs of the stones (Frost 2001: 16). According to Wafer (Bunn 2002: 11), the invitation was to work in and install works in the environment which could be permanent, temporary or ephemeral but should relate specifically to the selected site. Wafer (ibid: 11-12) further suggests that the brief indicated, "the artist would necessarily deal with the issues of culture, history and the natural and social environment". The title, *Xoe*, was explained as being a word that indicated "home place" (ibid) for the hunter/gatherer people who once inhabited the area. According to Wafer:

The Nieu Bethesda work had two phases: the first period was spent photographing individual stones on the barren outskirts of the village. The village itself is a spatial 1:1 map of apartheid separation and inequality. While the White village is celebrated for its picturesque and peaceful qualities, the adjoining township shares with all of its kind across the country the unpicturesque evidence of the displacement and deprivation of a rural poor... The site-specific work had a second, parallel manifestation at the Rhodes University Gallery which consisted of a 10m line of photographs of the same stones, a kind of micro version of the sited work (Bunn 2002: 12).

The visual grammar that defines much of Wafer's work – modular, repetitive and minimal – allows for a quiet and meditative spectatorship, which "involved literally being out in "nature", viewing its representation through cultural artifacts" (Frost 2001: 16). The photographic repetition of a hundred stones talks about mass, as it does uniqueness. This thematic recurrence, and variation, operates not only conceptually but also formally. Frost (2001: 16) suggests that, "Thematic reiteration enables Wafer to produce a visuality that is capable of being legible because it is so iterative, while at the same time his distinctive visual language remains dynamic, flexible, and contextual".



[Fig 31]

Jeremy Wafer, *Stones*, 2000, Site-specific installation, Black and White
 photograph in 10cm square frame. [Detail]



[Fig 32]

Jeremy Wafer, *Stones*, 2000, Site-specific installation, Black and White
 photographs in 10cm square frames

The photographs, placed in the physical landscape conjure up thoughts of scale, time, silence and being, aspects of nature rather than culture. The cultural feature [besides the representational photograph] in the landscape that becomes essential in the reading of *Stones* is the fence to which these photographs are attached.

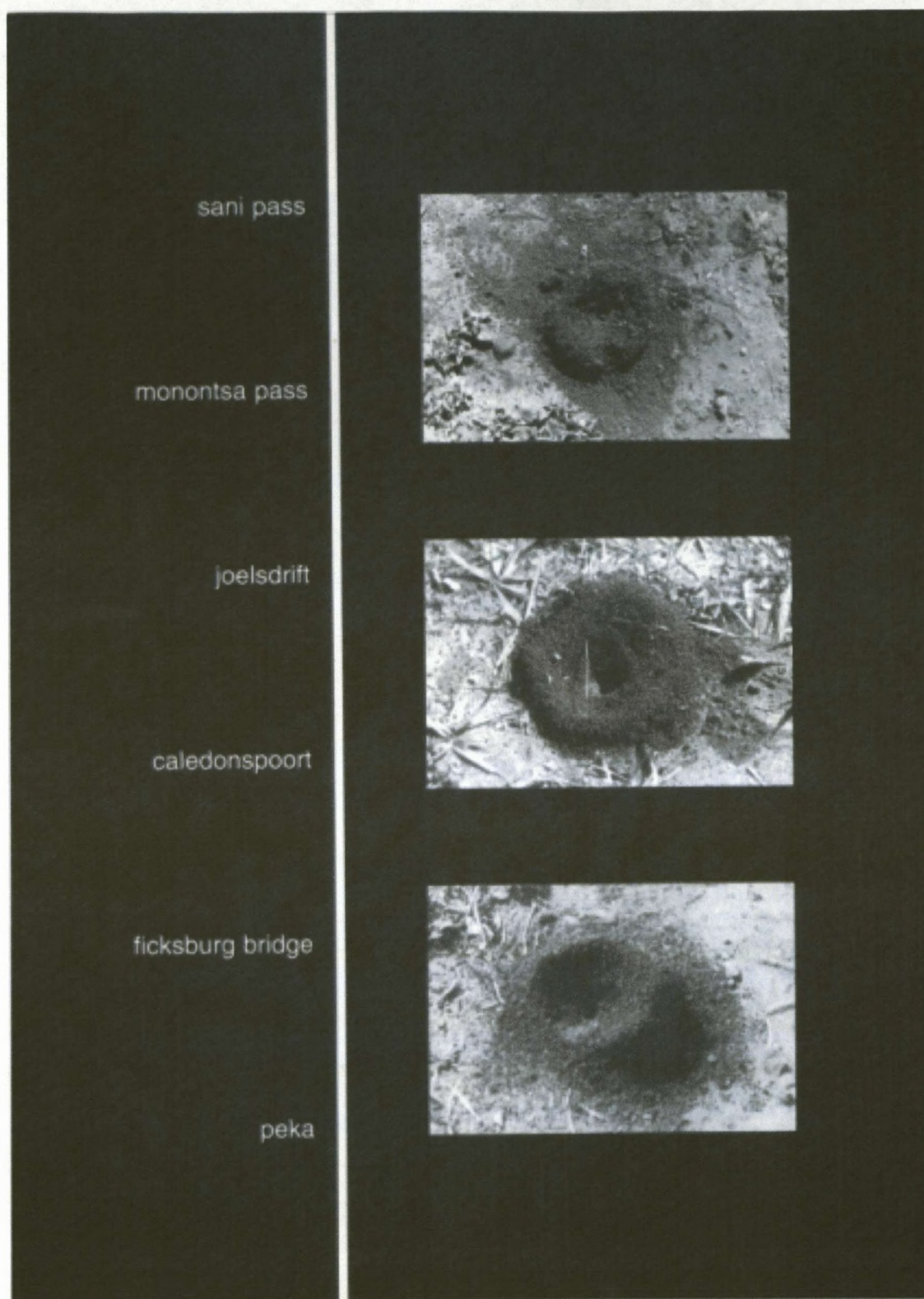
The fence in South African space is charged with cultural, social, political and historical readings. It defines, it protects, it contains. It acts in defining boundaries and creating borders. Bunn (2002:11), in speaking of his fascination for the evolution of different forms of border signification and control poses the question to Wafer, "What is a border, to you, and what a fence?" Wafer states:

Fence, wall, line on the road, line on the map, point beyond which you may not go. My sense of a border is multiple: physical, political, psychological, emotional. I have used the mapped border, or the list of border post names as an equivalent to more internal states of experience and feeling... My initial idea [in *Xoe*] was to work with the fence as a spatial and political marker of forms of ownership which had effectively eradicated these people [Khoi San] and which continues as an indicator of different forms of competing possession (Bunn 2002: 12).

In the South African post-colonial context, *Stones* mediates between "earth, nature, culture, time and history, in a gesture that draws with it ideas of place, boundary, ownership, context, and by extension imagined or remembered histories of the Khoi San, Xhosa, Europeans, colonists, squatters, bywoners, farmers... to name a few" (Frost 2001: 42). The sensibility that structures these two displays [*Xoe* and Rhodes University Gallery] is "informed and questioning rather than simplistically politically correct" (ibid).

In extending Wafer's concerns with the themes of topography, the politics of South African space, post-colonialism and Post-modern representation, consider *Border* (1998) and *Antholes* (1998) [Fig 33]. Part of an exhibition at the Goodman Gallery [Johannesburg] in 1998, the work critically engages the historical challenge of

multiculturalism. Frost (2001: 50) claims, "This exhibition has much to say about African culture, colonial history, imagined communities, modernity and an 'African Renaissance'". *Border* consists of the names of South Africa's northern [moving towards Mozambique] and central border posts, written in sequence against a white line on a black wall. These names [for example Zanzibar, Schilpadshek, Ramotswa, Kopfontein] carry various histories: colonial, African and Afrikaner. *Border* is juxtaposed against forty black and white photographs of individual ants' nests. At a distance, *Antholes* could be read as a topographical map or aerial photograph of a section of land. Wafer in this context again denies access to the image as a traditional representation of the landscape. Viewed at close range *Antholes* reveals that representational space has been flattened. The images literally engage with details of the earth/land. The zero panorama to which Jamal alluded to in the discussion of Van Den Berg has resulted in this spatial dialectic in *Antholes*. In/out, near/far, space/time are set up as tensions that define our reading of the conceptual, minimal map. Frost (ibid) suggests that *Antholes* produces a meditation on community, nature, and culture as part of its reading, which activates the meaning of *Border* as the container of culture and community. Frost states, "The antholes may be read culturally in a way that includes biology (objective observation), sociology (the study of social systems) or even the idea of *Ubuntu* (where a person is a person only in community). Wafer's work according to Smith (Artthrob, issue 39: 1) is often characterized as "slipping in-between meaning". In this context, *Antholes* could be read as something entirely different: "a kind of existential beingness seen as an antidote to culturally saturated metaphoricity, or a meditation on a hidden set of non-human societies and their interrelationships" (Frost 2001: 50). Frost suggests that we should consider the conjunction of *Border* and *Antholes* in terms of a political meditation on the place, role



[Fig 33]

Jeremy Wafer, on left, *Border*, White writing on black wall and on right, *Antholes*,

40 Black and white photographs, 1998, Site-specific installation

and possibilities of the new South Africa in relation to its situation on the African continent. She states:

For this is not only an imagined new South Africa, discrete within its borders; rather if we conceive of this border as open, as a device which operates more like a set of portals or a membrane, instead of as a container, we might understand this image not in terms of what it holds, but as a transformational image which makes possible a rethinking of South Africa in relation to its neighbours (Frost 2001: 54).

As Richard Griggs, in his discussion on boundary regimes states:

Rigid perceptions of boundaries lead us into conflicts because they blind us to the constant need to monitor, analyse, negotiate, and adjust them... Imagining international boundaries as hard-lines also creates a false consciousness through the reification of a social construction. Rarely are boundaries a physical given reality... Most boundaries are created by humans to organize their activities in the world... Thus, they seldom exist as objects in space nor can they always be located with precision. For instance, all international boundaries are invisible planes (constructed by human conventions) that connect the sky overhead to the mineral and hydrological wealth below the earth's surface and extend 200 or more miles out to sea (Ed Bradley and Schofield 2000: 4).

This view of a map with hard line states has taught us to see boundaries as immovable lines in the dirt that act, as Frost mentioned above, as containers of wealth and authority. Griggs (ibid: 3) goes on to discuss how, prior to the Europeans, most boundaries in Africa were not hard-lines, but consisted of overlapping spheres of authority that permitted access to resources by common agreement.

Griggs suggests:

One could argue that the ecological, political and economic survival of Africa will ultimately depend on a return to the earlier, more flexible African attitudes towards boundaries. For instance, one can imagine concentric circles of sovereignty within African regions that allow for more peaceable co-management between local, national and regional scales of human organization (the concept of subsidiarity)... These are not prescriptions but possibilities when we begin to see boundaries as negotiable entities that can be adjusted to changing times and needs (Ed Bradley and Schofield 2000: 3).

In this context, Frost's suggestion of a border acting more like a membrane is analogous to Griggs in his description of a more traditional African approach to land division [which is based on models of the natural environment]. It is the candidate's suggestion that in this context Wafer's *Border* and *Antholes* could be seen as to reveal two systems of land division. The first is represented in the straight line and text of the border names, which refers to the European [colonial] hard-line approach. The latter, represented as the circular antholes, refers to the traditional African custom of overlapping spheres of authority. In discussion of the *Termite Mounds*, Frost (2001: 39) suggests that there is a logic that exists between these mounds, which are found throughout southern Africa. She states, "The collection of photographs operates as self-consciously 'scientific' evidence that termite communities exist over an extensive geographical area, inviting us to think about the links – and by extension about the possible non-scientific 'maps' – that guide the actions and relationships of these communities themselves" (ibid). In the photographing and mapping out of these 'communities', Wafer offers the viewer a utopian vision of the possibilities of a transformed South African space through, the almost Darwinian, observation of natural social structures.

In critically evaluating the work in this chapter, it becomes evident that "there is never, in Wafer's work, a separation between its social field and its visual structures – indeed, this viscosity is even invoked at times as a form of politics itself (Frost 2001; 42). As Wafer states:

This interest in what has become a fairly standard position on the conceptual and theoretical aspects of representation is linked particularly in some of the work on this exhibition [Sasol Art Museum, Stellenbosch, 2002] to an increasing awareness of the politics of space: that spaces are not merely "natural", defined by position and materiality, but are part of a complex matrix of social, political, cultural and representational discourses (Bunn 2002: 3).

In so stating, Wafer's visual vocabulary critically, metaphorically, meditatively and intellectually explores the concepts of South African space and its representation through a holistic vision based on the notion that the "personal, political, intellectual, emotional and theoretical are interwoven in both the motivation and need to make art work and in the work itself" (ibid).

CHAPTER THREE

SECTION THREE

SANDILE ZULU

Sandile Zulu was born in Ixopo (KwaZulu-Natal) in 1960. He received his early training from the Rorke's Drift Ecumenical Lutheran Church Centre, "a Swedish-mission-funded project set in an ideal environment in the rural area of Dundee" (Koloane in Herreman 2000: 30). He received his Bachelor of Arts in Fine Arts, with honours, at the University of Witwatersrand in 1993. His work has appeared in many solo and group exhibitions, both nationally and internationally. He currently lives and works as a professional artist at the Amokhona Art Centre, southwest of Johannesburg (Richards in Herreman 2000: 147), (Atkinson 1998: 1-3).

In his artist's statement for the FNB Vita Art's Award on the Mail and Guardian website, Zulu states:

Fire and water, wind and soil are essential elements of life. These elements, my apparatuses, offer not only a context for engaging with socio-historical issues, but also the criteria by which to enter the emotional, theoretical and critical framework for analysis of my offerings. As psychological elements, fire and water, wind and soil allude to life, to creation and destruction, to colonization and decolonization, to revolution and liberation, to purification and renewal. My interest is in evoking the idea of human existence and experience, and of the social and psychological struggle for freedom of creative desire and imagining the essentials that stand for life. It's a framework of choice in search for a position that is substantially outside the mainstream rhetoric and identification (Atkinson 1998: 1-2).

Zulu's artist's statement reveals the content of his work as being defined by time and site specific concepts [socio-historic, colonization, decolonization, revolution, liberation, purification, renewal] through a creative process that refers through space and time, to the essential elements of the natural world [fire, water, wind, soil]. In using physical

matter from the natural world/landscape in the context of fine art, the work of Zulu echoes the Earth/Land artists of the 1960s and 1970s who engaged with the landscape through non-traditional forms of representation. Through the manipulation of the elemental forces of nature, Zulu's creative process also references the ancient art of Alchemy, which physically was defined by a process of transforming base metals into gold. Metaphorically, this process was essentially a vehicle for the attainment of spiritual enlightenment through purification. In so saying, to simply defer Zulu's work to the concepts and techniques that defined the Earth/Land Art Movement is an over simplification. To simply consider him a creative spiritual adept is a gross misunderstanding. Zulu, whose work is informed by the dynamics that define the reconstruction of South African space and culture, by the debate of contemporary cultural production, and by the creative process as conceptual and spiritual expression, offers us a visual experience that is multi-layered and open-ended. In discussing Zulu's work in Liberated Voices (Ed Herreman 1999: 149-153), Richards, referring to the conceptual vision that characterises much contemporary South African art, suggests "Zulu's cool, calculated systemic passion points to a more properly minimalist mentality, quite different from the often bombastic and overblown rhetoric and figurative craftiness that characterized much of South African visual art before the turn of this remarkable decade. It was not without reason that overblown representation characterized the past era. But such inflationary symbolics are... now ending". It is with this ending that brings new beginnings. It is within the context of these beginnings that the candidate will critically investigate the work of Sandile Zulu.

To absorb the multiple readings of Zulu's work in relation to the South African landscape, Richards in Sandile Zulu: Incendiary devices, has written a vivid description of the landscape that surrounds Amakhona Art Centre. He states:

Each winter the long grass around the Amakhona Art Centre... is deliberately set on fire... there is a constant danger of fire on the highveld, where flames are fanned by waterless seasonal winds and fed by grass mortified by cold. Many fires are lit; for warmth, for light, for mischief. Many go wild. A pall of smoke often hangs over the veld on the way to the centre.

Amokhona itself lies in no-mans land. Somewhere between the eroding frontiers of Soweto's sprawl and the fenced, manicured, once white suburb of Maraisburg... it is built on dead ground – old goldmining property fallen on hard times. Wall and wire enclosed enclaves of industry generate haphazard islands of activity round about.

Eternally peeling eucalyptus trees grow randomly in ranks in the parched, ashen grassland. The ranks recall their original cultivation for props in mineshafts and the million gutted tunnels of gold greed running far below the surface. These trees are alien... They imperil indigenous growth already struggling for moisture in soil sterilized by the side-effects of extracting precious metal from fortified veins of rock.

Mine dumps yellowed by iron pyrites ("fool's gold") lie scattered across "a wasteland secreted in the suburbs groin... shallow, violent bleak, a drained and shadeless wedge of earth, uncultivated, mired by money miners (Abrahams 1986: 259-60). Some dumps are patterned by grids of stiff pampas grass... The grids trap shifting sand retarding erosion and the stinging cyanide-inflamed dust from blowing where it doesn't belong... Below the blackened, flaking skin of the land, the earth is now the last resting place of pulverized toil, filled with the barren powder of dead energy...

The dark mouths of disused shafts exhale hot air. Protected by barbed wire brandishing rusted red skull-and-crossbones signs... some are camouflaged by improbably verdant vegetation... The only green grass around is that moistened by the meeting, in the shaft of the mouth, of bowel vapor and outdoor air. Weathered trenches furrow the ground like evacuated fortifications from unfinished battles.

If you raise your eyes and look, really look, beyond the false horizon of smog, you can see wide open spaces, a clear sky, agriculture... (Richards in Herreman 1999: 147-148).

Richards's visual description of the industrialized wasteland that defines the South African highveld landscape gives us a context in which to place Zulu and his work. As Richards (ibid) states, "Fire, wind, water, grids, grass, roots, recycling, barbed wire, alien growth, graves... industry agriculture, migrant labour, frontiers, camouflage, struggle, anthropomorphic nature; the allegorical rubble of Sandile Zulu's art".

According to Koloane (Ed Herreman 1999: 30), Zulu's early work "comprised a series of 'fire paintings', in which he scorched the canvas or other surface with a blowtorch or similar device to create form, texture, line and tone". Fire, as the defining medium in much of Zulu's work, contains a dense history that extends back to the myth of Prometheus who stole fire from the gods and presented it to man. In the South African context, fire is a signifier that conveys multiple readings. Richards (ibid: 157) states that not too distant from Amakhona, at the Swartkrans caves, archeologist C.K. Brain discovered signs of tending and control of fire by very early hominids (perhaps the earliest). Richards (ibid) goes on, "Brain speculates that the early stages of fire-management would have relied on gathered fire from naturally occurring conflagrations", and while "the gathering of fire is not as impressive an intellectual achievement as deliberate fire-making, it must nevertheless have been an immensely important milestone in the manipulation of the natural environment by early hominids". The San and Khoi used fire for domestic purposes and ritual. Black African communities of the early iron-age that settled in South Africa, brought with them techniques of using fire for the manipulation of iron into domestic implements and weapons. To Wilgen and Scholes, colonialism and the control of fires are inextricably related. They state:

Colonization of Africa by European peoples, many of whom brought an abhorrence of fire with them, was marked by attempts to prevent fires. Such attempts were made for various reasons – to protect forest resources, to prevent the putative destruction of grazing, to protect infrastructure or crops, or in often misguided attempts at the conservation of indigenous plants. As an understanding of the role of fire in the ecology of African ecology developed, these strategies were replaced that recognized and utilize fire as an integral process in the ecology and management of vegetation (Ed Herreman 1999: 156).

Fire was utilized by the colonial forces [both British and Boer] during the wars of dispossession against African cultures, to destabilise these communities and their armies by burning down their homesteads. In the Second Anglo-Boer war the British

forces used the same practice to destabilise the Boer renegades through pursuing the 'scorched-earth policy'. According to Richards (Ed Herreman 1999: 157) "fire is prolix in the even darker, more recent history of South Africa". One of the earliest acts of defying *apartheid* came in the 1950s when Mandela and other Black leaders, including countless ordinary people, set fire to their pass books, which restricted a Black individuals movement during the *apartheid* era. Then came the Soweto uprising of 1976, which according to Richards (ibid) was "arguably the primary moment in establishing our archive of historical fire: burning buildings, burning brush, burning barricades, burning buses, burning bodies". The necklacing's of the politically unstable 1980s saw a tyre, petrol and matches being turned into a deadly weapon. The images documented through these fires have been burnt into the psyche of South African culture. Fire has also featured much in the last few years in the burning of informal squatter settlements, which are often started by the fire needed for lighting [candle] or cooking [gas burner]. Run-away agricultural fires have highlighted the crisis of drought that has persisted in South Africa over the past decade. But the image of fire has not been more vivid than in the revelations arising from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which saw the proximity of fire, as entertainment and fire, as trauma became horribly real. Jacques Pauw states:

In a dry ditch on the slightly elevated river bank, a shallow grave was dug with bushveld wood and tyres. The two corpses were lifted onto the pyre and as the sun set over the Eastern Transvaal bushveld, two fires were lit, one to burn the bodies to ashes, the other for the security policemen to sit around, drinking and grilling meat. "Well, during the time we were drinking heavily, all of us, always, every day. It was just another job to be done. In the beginning it smells like a meat braai, in the end like the burning of bones. It takes about seven to nine hours to burn the bodies to ashes. We would have our own little braai and just keep on drinking" (Ed: Herreman 1999: 159-160).

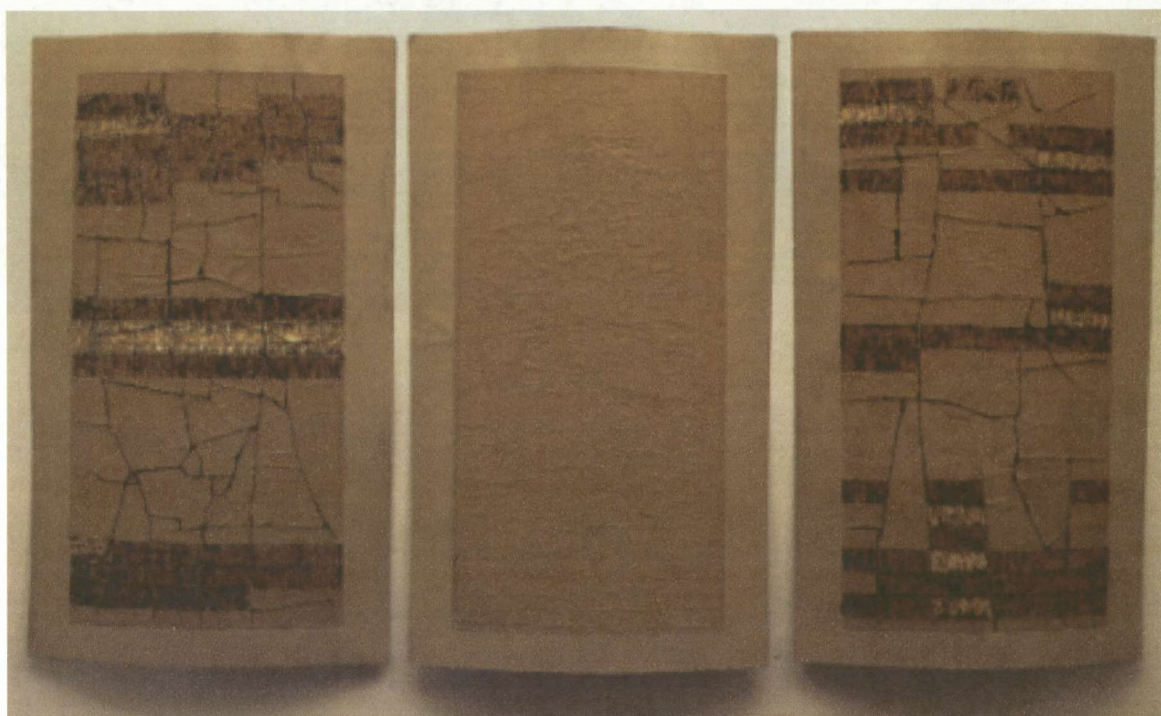
As Richards (ibid: 159) so accurately suggests, "Fire is in the blood of South African art, and perhaps a major trope in narrating our lived experience. It would be difficult to

overestimate its power – whether benign or malignant – in the image bank of this part of the world”. For Laurent Deveze (Ed Williamson and Jamal 1996: 70), “the fight is everywhere in Sandile Zulu. To spend all his life to burn things in a continuous torturous way, to destroy with meticulousness all the support of your work, is something very strong”. The candidate suggests that when critically analyzing the works to be discussed below, the element of fire needs to be read within all its contexts and histories as stated above. Zulu claims, “ I use flame as an alternative approach to normal methods. I want to feel the relationship between the material and me” (ibid: 73). Fire in this context has become Zulu’s paint. He utilizes flame as another artist would a brush, video or camera. Deveze goes on to state:

The first time I saw Sandile Zulu work in Amakhona, he made me think of a researcher. Laying them on his desk, he was meticulously manipulating matches, touching them with heavy brown paper and setting fire to them like magic. Following with extreme caution the biting of the flame on the cardboard, Sandile makes incredible discoveries: what turns the burning into a track, and what makes the consumed become an incandescence (Ed Williamson and Jamal 1996: 70, 72)

What becomes important in this text is Deveze’s reference to Zulu as a researcher, who relies on models of intellect and empiricism, and to Zulu’s process as being one of magic, which traditionally is activated through intuition and the natural world of the elements. Magic within the context of fire, and within the history of art, have long established traditions.

In *Landscape with Spheres: Study in Spaces and Structures* (1995) [Fig 34], Zulu explores the concepts of space/land, borders/boundaries through the mediums of fire and water. As has been stated in Chapter Three, Section One: 8-12, redefining the politics of South African space is an essential aspect for transforming the colonial space of South Africa into a post-colonial reality. Consisting of three separate panels of



[Fig 34]

Sandile Zulu, *Landscape with Spheres: Study in Spaces and structures*, 1995, 122

x 245 cm, Fire and water on cardboard

equal size, Zulu deconstructs the cardboard surface into abstract grids and modules, which have a long history within the context of fine art. According to Richards (Ed Herreman 1999: 154) the grid, "and all that it implies aesthetically, could refer here [Zulu's work] to specifically modernist dispositions largely hostile to figuration or representation as conventionally understood". Seen in this context, *Landscape with Spheres: Study in Spaces and Structures* can be viewed politically as the dissolving of colonial borders in South Africa, and aesthetically, as a deconstruction of traditional European landscape representation. The three panels when critically examined reveal that Zulu has set up a dialectic associated with viewing. The grids, modules and manipulated cardboard surfaces bring to mind aerial views of the landscape and patterns of land cultivation. They also reference images of physical matter at microscopic level, the structure of cells and the veins coursing through a leaf or a human body. The paradoxical references to earth/air, fire/water, in/out, land/body, destruction/renewal, immediate/distant, textural/scientific, concept/process, object/field, are consistent themes that characterize much of Zulu's work. Discussing *Landscape with Spheres: Study in Spaces and Structures*, Zulu (Ed Williamson and Jamal 1996: 73) states, "Boundaries could be read as that which existed before, but they are made of burnt marks which suggests destruction of barriers or the bandaging of a body after being hurt". For Zulu, fire has a dual import – to destroy and to renew. Through the creative act of mapping the pictorial surface with fire and cleansing it with water, Zulu creates a new space/landscape within the post-colonial South African context. He also treats to the wounds left by colonial history through a process of 'bandaging'.

Landscape with Spheres: Study in Spaces and Structures in this context suggests a process of transformation and renewal after a turbulent colonial past. In so saying, Zulu's work, in the typical Post-Modern context, remains open-ended and eludes a prescriptive reading. As has been suggested earlier, the tensions set up between time

and site-specific issues are differentiated by the consistent use of the elemental building blocks of what constitutes the natural environment. Zulu's work in this context could therefore also be seen as exploring the dynamics of what might constitute matter and life at a very primordial level.

In furthering the discussion of Zulu's paradoxical binaries, let us consider his installation, which was part of an exhibition entitled Graft, held at The National Gallery for the 2nd Johannesburg Biennale. According to Richards (Ed Herreman 1999: 154), part of Zulu's modular impulse is captured in his use of natural forms, for example root and rhizome that physically make up the work *Endangered Roots* (1997) [Fig 35], which is one in a series of works that shapes the installation. The viewer is confronted by an ordering, in lateral layers, of neatly sectioned bamboo tubers. Within this gridded structure each piece of cut bamboo has been cleanly cauterized or branded.

Interleaved among these surfaces are ranks of sweet potatoes, which in the South African context is staple food for many people. Impaled at one or both ends of each potato is a section of weathered barbwire that had been long exposed to the natural elements.

Richards (Ed Herreman 1999: 155) claims that when exhibited at the National Gallery, "this organic conglomerate actually grew. Purple, green-leaved shoots emerged from various nodes of the sweet potatoes, slaves to the invisible organic energies and the artificial light of that particular 'white cube'".

In starting to unravel the multiple readings that constitute *Endangered Roots*, one is reminded of Richards's description of the once industrial mining landscape surrounding Amakhona. Through using industrial and natural materials that define this landscape, Zulu [re]represents the land as a contemporary place. The South African landscape in this area is no longer defined by sweeping vistas and fecund earth, rather

the post-industrial landscape of the highveld is scarred and scattered with mining detritus. As Jamal (Ed Geers 1997: 161) states, "In this desolate landscape there is nothing wholly human. Here human kind has been superseded, the land it sought to master destroyed". The branded, cut and cauterized surfaces of this organic cube suggest the manipulation and destruction of the landscape, as it did, a "systematic scarification, recalling practices both agricultural and somatic (plowing the earth and marking the body respectively) – practices familiar to us, albeit mostly outside the metropolis" (Richards in Herreman 1999: 154). Through the process of cauterizing these materials, Zulu, using the traditional practice of dealing with an infected wound, suggests that through metaphorically cauterizing the scars that define the South African landscape and its culture, a process of healing and transformation is possible.

Another visual reading that is created through the careful layering of these elements into an organic cube is the neatly packed piles of vegetables that have been sold in the streets of South African metropolises since the liberation of public space around 1994. The politics of space has been redefined. Free trade and free movement has opened up the metropolis to business ventures on all levels, from the corporate executive to the vendor on the street. With this came the availability of space and resources for all South Africans.

The growth of shoots that emerged from the nodes of the sweet potatoes, as mentioned by Richards above, have the effect of camouflaging the violence inflicted by the barbed wire to the flesh of the vegetable. As the landscape that surrounds Zulu has adapted to its industrialized state, it still lives. As the organic cube has been mutilated and scarred, it still has the capacity to renew itself and grow. Richards (Ed Herreman 1999: 155) states, "although some of the entry wounds grew weeping molds, the barbed wire seemed of a piece with the shoots. As a whole, the work staged a kind of



[Fig 35]

Sandile Zulu, *Endangered Roots*, 1997, Site-specific installation, Root, rhizome,
bamboo, sweet potatoes, barbed wire

organic insurrection, a generative violence invoking the potential organic reclamation of a hitherto anesthetized cultural space”.

According to Atkinson on the Mail and Guardian website (1998: 1), Zulu's work for the 2nd Johannesburg Biennale “was an aesthetic pleasure: a tactile anti landscape of burned veld grass, obscenely rooting sweet potatoes, dung and soil, it was presented in a minimalist grid of control”. Atkinson's statement reveals much about how landscape is represented within the Post-Modern context. Although defined by elements from the physical landscape that one would find in traditional landscape representation, this anti landscape calls to mind Jamal's essay Zero Panoramas, Ruins in Reverse, Monumental Vacancies (Ed Geers 1997: 151-162) and Andrews essay Landscape into Land (1999: 201-223), both discussed briefly in this research

Frontline One: Grassroots Rising (1997) formed another part of the Graft installation. The tactile anti landscape to which Atkinson refers to, deals as much with minimalist structure and modules, as it deals with organic surfaces. Here, laid out on the floor, stretched a long double row of knots of long grass, partly burned. These were arranged root to root, “with the fine, fibrous, complex roots ‘containing’ the furrow between. The suggestion of hair and nest stimulated a strongly sexual and gendered reading of the space” (Richards in Herreman 1999: 155). *Frontline One: Grassroots Rising* appeared again at the FNB Vita Art Awards at the Sandton Civic Gallery in Johannesburg (1998) under a new title, *Abduction of the Text: Main Theme from “Grassroots Frontline”, fire and water, wind and dust/soil* (1998) [Fig 36]. Richards (Ed Herreman 1999: 155) suggests that often, and significantly, Zulu includes media in the titles of his works'. Played out differently this time, Zulu constructed rows of bundles of burned grass and contained them within meticulously arranged rows of newspaper which were tied into

reef knots and signed (Atkinson 1998 1). The knots themselves were lightly scorched, giving the sensation of burned and flaking skin. According to Richards (Ed Herreman 1999: 155), burning paper itself had a particular value during the resistance to *apartheid* in that one way of neutralizing the effects of tear gas was to hold a flaming clump of newspaper in front of one's face. In considering *Frontline One: Grassroots Rising* and *Abduction of the Text: Main Theme from "Grassroots Frontline"*, fire and water, wind and dust/soil, Zulu's anti landscape must be contextualised within the binaries and multiple readings that constitute his work. It is the candidate's intention therefore, to deconstruct the works through their titles to find a way into these readings. These titles refer to the dynamic interactions between history, culture, nature, landscape and art.

The associations of the term *Frontline* that immediately trigger the imagination are its historical references to battlefields. The frontline are the first to engage with the enemy and in the context of South Africa are the first line of resistance against the colonial endeavor. Within the Zulu army of the nineteenth century, the first warriors into battle received the greatest honours from the King, then Cetshwayo (Laband and Thompson 2000: 19). *Frontline* can also be a cultural reading defining post-colonial South Africa. The colonial order and all its legislative systems have crumbled, thereby rendering those of us who experienced this historic moment, as the first wave/frontline of the new dispensation. *Grassroots Rising* simultaneously brings to mind the "culture speak" (Frost 2001: 34) that defined much post-colonial South African discourse post 1994. *Grassroots* in this historical and cultural context refers to the ordinary people that constitute the South African population who, after been suppressed through colonial [Afrikaner Nationalist] ideology, are now rising into a society based on principles of democracy. In its context to nature, *Grassroots Rising* activates mental images of the



[Fig 36]

Sandile Zulu, *Abduction of the Text: Main Theme from "Grassroots Frontline"*, fire and water, wind and dust/soil, 1998, Site-specific installation, Grass, roots, newspaper, fire, water, wind, dust/soil

natural environment/landscape physically growing and living, therefore creating a sustainable ecology in which this culture can survive. Zulu's choice of burning and knotting contemporary local newspapers is a pertinent one. *Abduction of the Text* could be read in terms of access or denial. News and information were limited and monitored in the apartheid years in South Africa. Post 1994, all people have the right to [access] information. On the other hand, these papers are also filled with the hard and sometimes painful complexities that define a culture in the making. In burning and knotting this information [denial], Zulu transforms the text through fire, thereby metaphorically purifying culture.

Culture and nature have in these contexts been transformed through the creative act itself. Again, through Zulu's working methods, use of natural materials and his utilizing the elemental processes of nature to transform 'base culture' [colonial] into 'gold culture' [post-colonial], we are reminded of the art of the alchemists, or closer to home the San, who through the creative process and by way of fire, sought spiritual renewal which defined the well being of the community. Suggesting body and land, destruction and renewal, history and present, culture and ecology, and the transformative process of art, these works engage the viewer through processes that are based as much on the researchers concept and intellect, as on the magicians intuition and insight into the elemental world.

Returning to the Graft installation, arranged on the wall above *Frontline One*:

Grassroots Rising, were a series of works that looked like traditional weapons. Titled *Frontline Three with Centurion Models* (1997) [Fig37], this work comprised finely grass covered and fire-branded industrial moulds, marsh reeds, barbed wire, and sharpened metal shafts. As was discussed in relation to the militaristic aspect of *Frontline One*, *Frontline Three with Centurion Models* is a direct reference to the almost clichéd



[Fig 37]

Sandile Zulu, *Frontline Three with Centurion Models*, 1997, Site-specific installation, Fire, water, wind, soil, metal, wire, reed

imagery from, among other things, school book illustrations showing ranks of shielded, plumed, armed indigenous warriors camouflaged in the long grass of the South African veld. In *Frontline Three*, Zulu deconstructs this "image lexicon of colonial conflict in a directly material and semiotically complex way, concretizing and institutionalizing the historical imagery and ultimately rendering it disquietingly museal" (Richards in Herreman 1999: 155).

In context of Zulu's creative vision, to close the readings of *Frontline One: Grassroots Rising*, *Abduction of the Text: Main Theme from "Grassroots Frontline"*, *fire and water, wind and dust/soil* and *Frontline Three with Centurion Models* within a specific historic and cultural framework, is to deny the works of their rich and multiple layering, both conceptual and physical. In so saying, to avoid analytical repetition in further critically evaluating these works, the candidate will conclude by considering Arnold's suggestion, in the Introduction to Chapter Three, that the Post-Modern landscape is a text, a site of discourse comprising a series of signs that carry ideological and psychological meaning. Zulu has in this context created a conceptual and visceral text that is placed within a specific locale, but which also moves through it. His works engages our psychological and emotional sensibilities, never prescriptive, always open. Returning to a portion of his artist's statement, as paraphrased in the beginning of this section:

Fire and water, wind and soil are essential elements of life. These elements, my apparatuses, offer not only a context for engaging with socio-historical issues, but also the criteria by which to enter the emotional, theoretical and critical framework for analysis of my offerings. As psychological elements, fire and water, wind and soil allude to life, to creation and destruction, to colonization and decolonization, to revolution and liberation, to purification and renewal (Atkinson 1998: 1).

CHAPTER THREE SECTION THREE

SANDILE ZULU AND JEREMY WAFER

More recent articles, defining the realities of post-colonial South Africa, have been included in this research to contextualise the politics of the South African space/landscape in 2004. Zulu's *Points of the Delta* (2003) and Wafer's *Topographies* (2003) can be seen as visual texts that represent and describe this space as a site of discourse. However, the works of Zulu and Wafer never offer such closed and prescriptive readings; rather the works, through their open-ended and questioning nature, remain fractionally beyond our grasp (Edmunds 2003: 1) or slip in-between meaning (Smith 2003: 1). Meaning is never a given. In trying to define post-colonial South African spaces and its Post-Modern representations, meanings are constantly being produced by these two artists.

Since these two artists work has already been analysed in some detail, the candidate intends here to extend the discussion by exploring some of the key concepts that connect and define these two exhibitions. As Edmunds states:

The material, visual and conceptual connections between the artists' work are so strong that one is tempted to see a closer relationship than really exists. Ignoring all the intellectual baggage that prevents one from making too much of this connection, you can be certain that both artists deal with aspects of incremental change and permutation (Edmunds 2003: 1).

To begin the survey into the shows' investigation of "incremental change and permutation (Edmunds 2003: 1), let us consider the press releases on the

Michael Stevenson Contemporary website as a starting point. Di Conradie

states:

Zulu's *Points of the Delta* refers to the triangular-shaped land mass of sediment at a rivers mouth which accumulates over time and causes a river to disperse into a maze of smaller tributaries before flowing into the sea. Deltas have been of great significance to the development of mankind through agriculture and cultivation, and fertile soil deposited in the flood plains gave rise to great civilizations along rivers such as the Nile, Tigris-Euphrates, Indus and Huang. The Greek equivalent of the English letter D is Delta and is printed as an equilateral triangle. Another point of reference for Zulu is the 100 million year old star called Delta Cephei which belongs to Population II, a class of old stars found in the core and in the halo of the Milky Way galaxy. In the work for this show Zulu employs both the five pointed star and simpler triangle shape repetitively throughout his large and complex abstract works which he makes using fire, water, earth and air (Conradie 2003: 1).

Wafer's exhibition is described as follows:

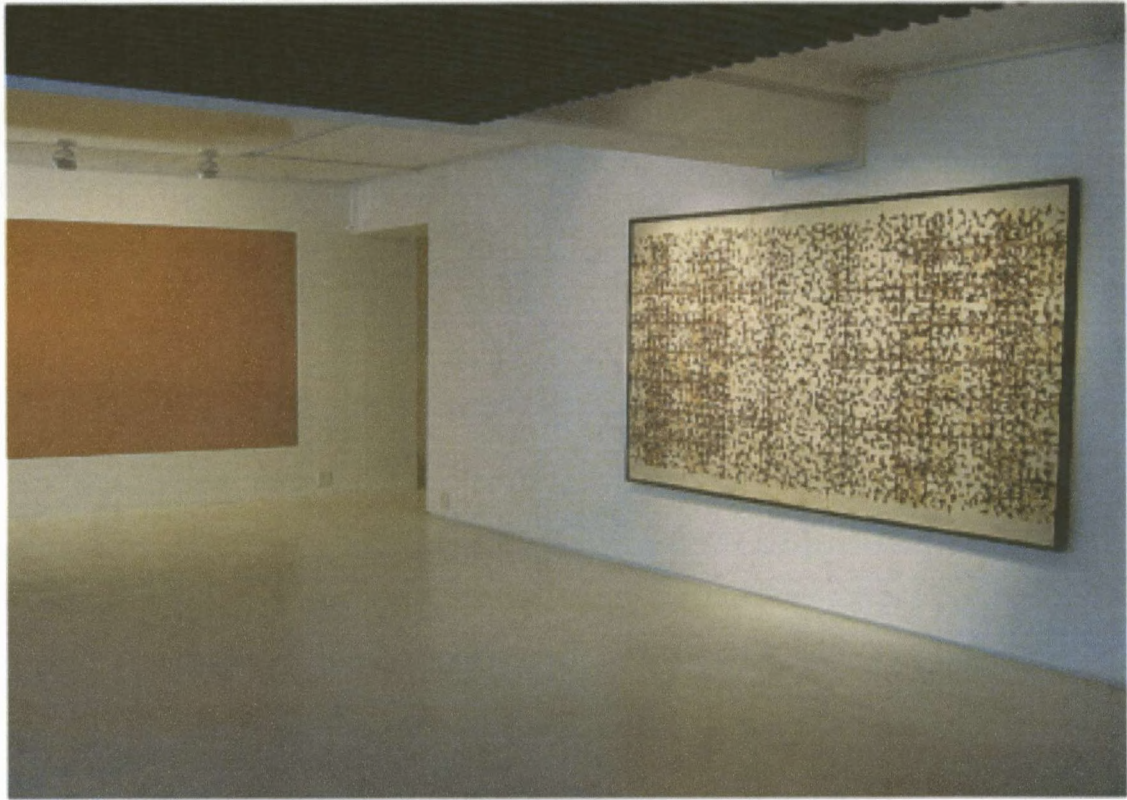
Topographies derives from the landscape motifs which run through most of the work on exhibition. While the landscape has been represented more obviously in the photographic pieces, either close ups of the ground, stones or in images made from aerial photographs the more abstract sculptures can also be read as alluding to land or landscape. Most of the work is simple in composition and generally regular and symmetrical in form which reduces the amount of incident and emphasizes inwardness and quietness. The repetitive marking of the surfaces or the repetition of similar images in a series relates to a growing interest in musical rhythm... So while *Topographies* relates to landscape it also relates in a more metaphorical way to things being marked or measured, a way of trying to find the measure of ones place in the world (Comrade 2003: 1).

Through unpacking the texts that elucidate *Points of the Delta* and *Topographies*, it becomes evident that the conceptual and physical processes that define the works of Zulu and Wafer, referred to previously in this research, are evident in these shows. The paradoxical binaries of in/out, land/body, destruction/renewal, immediate/distant, textural/scientific, concept/process, object/field, physical/spiritual, are revealed as being the conceptual connecting threads between the two artists. Their shared concerns with the

possibilities of restructuring post-colonial space and culture, through incremental change and permutation, lead to works that point in similar directions. However, as Edmunds suggests:

Both employ clearly iterated strategies and although in some places they both end up in similar places, Wafer and Zulu apparently approach their work from opposite sides. Where Wafer delineates, quantifies and categorizes subtle, ungraspable phenomena, Zulu's management of organic processes leaves one with the sense that they are just barely restrained, threatening to break the geometry he imposes (Edmunds 2003: 1).

Walking into the gallery, on the right wall hangs "a serene horizontal work of creamy panels of paper, attached to a support like screen" (Williamson 2003: 72). Zulu's *Labyrinth of the Elements III, fire, water, air, paper*, (2003) [Fig 38] presents a large dirty ochre field scorch-marked with patterns "whose logic just escapes the viewers grasp" (Edmunds 2003: 1). Worked onto wallpaper, this work further explores the paradoxical themes that define Zulu's conceptual and physical aesthetic. Zulu has used wallpaper as the primary surface which he has then burnt and scarred. This suggests that he is working with elements referencing the domestic and personal, as much as space/landmass and the impersonal. The surface again evokes convolutions of the brain as much as celestial phenomena, land mass as much as maps, destruction as much as renewal. The title, *Labyrinth of the Elements III, fire, water, air, paper*, suggests Zulu's concern with the creative process as being one of permutation, not bound by time, and replete with energy and possibility. As Williamson (2003: 72) states: "No one wields a flame as sensuously as Zulu, and here each panel is burnt with calligraphic Zen-like swirls, some as pale as café au lait, some which burn right through the paper. Meditative, with distanced authority".

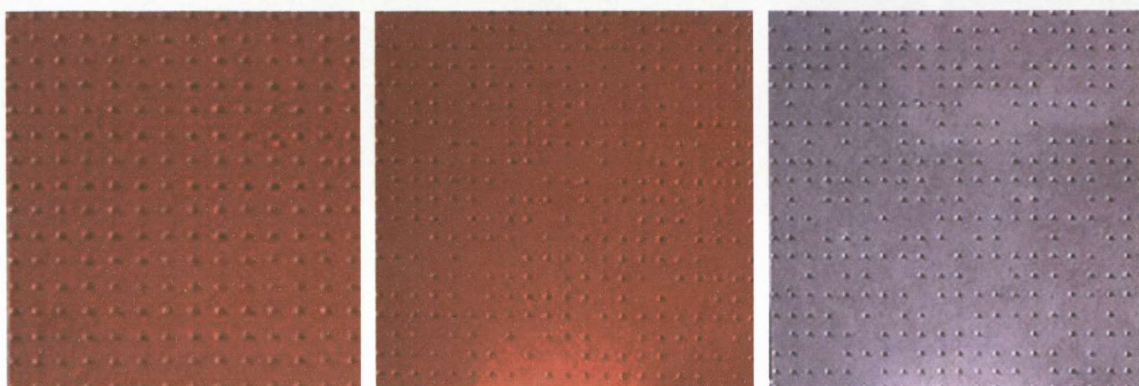


[Fig 38]

[on left] Jeremy Wafer, *Isandhlwana*, 2003, Site-specific installation, Paint, vinyl, lettering; and [on right] Sandile Zulu, *Labyrinth of the Elements III*, 2003, 160 x 300 cm, Fire, water, air, paper.

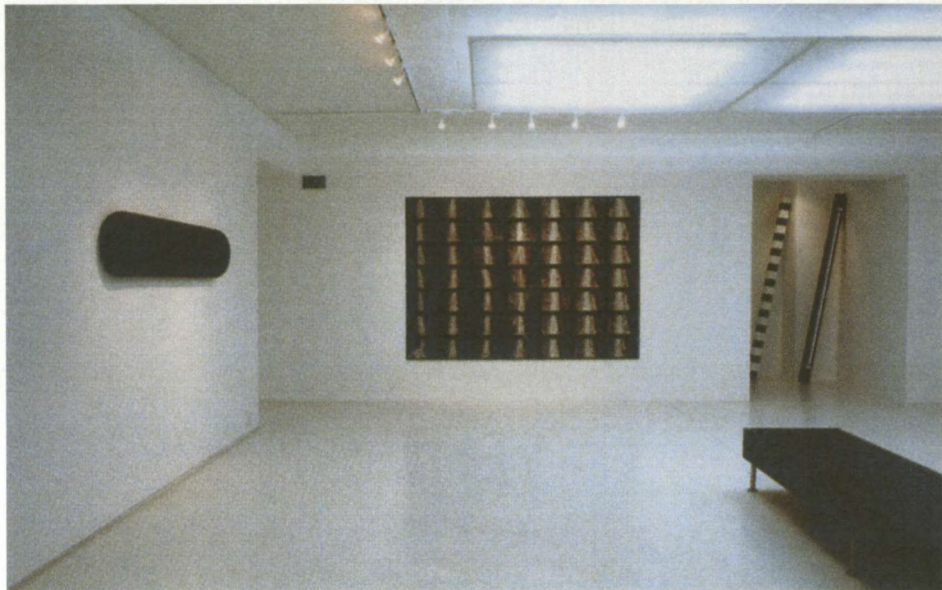
Facing the viewer in the same space is Wafer's *Isandhlwana*, (2003) [Fig38], which is worked directly onto the wall. Removed from the representational photograph that characterized Wafer's *Isandhlwana* of 1995, this large installation presents the viewer with a flat ochre – "map book yellow" (Wafer in Williamson 2003: 72) – field, marked at apparently random intervals with four digit numbers. Referencing surveyor's contour measurements, Wafer demonstrates "how abstract quantities and facts are imposed upon a landscape and serve to describe it in a way devoid of historical and sensual experience" (Edmunds 2003: 1). This randomness of numbers is the basis of *Triptych: Field* (2003) [Fig 39]. According to Williamson (2003: 72) this series consists of three panels, one with a surface of grey ash, and two with red-oxide, in which the grid of raised bumps is interrupted with spaces – determined by a dice-throwing exercise. *Triptych: Field*, in common with Zulu's *Labyrinth of the Elements III*, at once references body/scarification as much as it does an aerial view of land. The repetitions produced by the protruding nodes suggest geometry and order as much as they suggest organic shapes and randomness; Western culture as much as African culture, surface as much as depth, all through the intensive critical enquiry of a Post-Modern vision.

While *Triptych: Field* employs subtle, textured, abstract surfaces to engage with the landscape and its other binary codes, *Path* (2003) [Fig 40, 41] is a work that engages with the representational physicality of the landscape. Consisting of forty-nine black and white photographs in the traditional landscape format, *Path* is arranged in a grid seven across by seven high. A path traverses each photograph, which apparently proceeds from the bottom



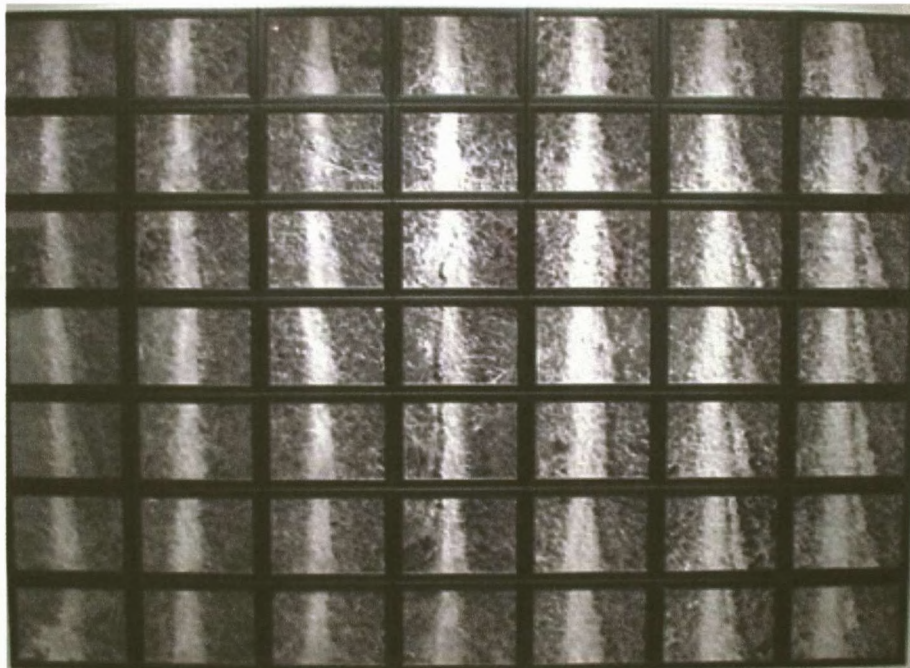
[Fig 39]

Jeremy Wafer, Triptych: Field, 2003



[Fig 40]

Jeremy Wafer, *Path*, Installation view, 2003, Site-specific installation, 49 Black and white photographs



[Fig 41]

Path, 2003, 49 Black and white photographs

of each vertical row to the top. According to Edmunds (2003: 1) it is not clear whether each of the seven rows depict the same path. Wafer's spatial dialectic, as has been previously discussed, makes the scale at which we are seeing the path difficult to determine. The grid suggests a succession of steps, or a collection of views assimilated to form a single experience. "While Wafer assembles a composite he also notes the impossibility or futility of such a task. His device serves both to illuminate and enshroud an experience of walking through the land " (ibid). The topographies to which Wafer refers are as much maps of the landscape as they are failures to document the unquantifiable.

Zulu's placing of Autumn leaves approaching *Insignia of the Delta II-IV* (2003) [Fig 42], neatly raked into four 'paths' running down the length of the room, is a geometric arrangement of organic elements that threatens to fall apart; yet they manage to maintain a precarious permanence. Green and white paint marks make their relation to the wall pieces clear. These wall pieces comprise a series of 'Delta' works. Edmunds (ibid) says that on either a dark green or dark green-blue background, Zulu has arranged a series of triangular foam shapes. Etched by fire and marked with paint, these are arranged in a variety of ways and allude to "star formations, villages from the air or turtles" (Williamson 2003: 72). The heraldic form of *Insignia of the Delta III* (2003) [Fig 42, middle] evokes a truncated Venus of Willendorf-type figure. This is flanked by two similar constellations *II* and *IV* [Fig 42, left and right] of cell like shapes that Edmunds (2003:1) reluctantly refers to as "turtle like shapes from above". Each seem to be a simple permutation or variation on the other, and each suggests mutability. Zulu's allusion to abstraction, the



[Fig 42]

Sandile Zulu, Insignia of the Delta II-Iv, 2003, Site specific installation

Venus of Willendorf-type figure and the turtle forms, make reference to universal creation myths. In the post-colonial South African context these myths, and the mutable states of becoming, are contemporary agendas in defining a 'new' South African space and culture.

Apart from the conceptual threads connecting the work of Zulu to that of Wafer, there is another sense in which their work converges. Both invoke the elements – Zulu in his corralling of fire, earth, air and water in the process of his production, and Wafer in the reference made to the land and landscape invoked by his use of oxides and other pigments. According to Williamson (2003: 72), "Moving from one body of work to the other, from Zulu to Wafer and back again, gives the viewer a fine sense of what it can mean to be a contemporary artist committed to the African landscape". In Wafer's case "there is something profoundly personal in the way Wafer engages with his terrain. The opacity of the works implies a private space akin to a childhood world of games and codes – with Wafer seeking and finding meaning where others may fail to see it" (MacKenny 2002: 54). For Zulu "in this new work [*Points of the Delta*] ... he delves deeper into his exploration of revolutionary acts and radical transformative processes" (Conradie 2003: 1).

CONCLUSION

The motivation for this research was born out of the fact that, ten years after the first democratic elections, questions of space and identity are still acutely relevant in defining a post-colonial South Africa. The topographies of colonial and apartheid power are being redrawn. Territories and boundaries are once again the site of negotiation; and associated with this are renewed questions of personal and collective identity. The first democratic elections in 1994 may have been the inaugural date of South Africa's post-colonial beginnings, but "punctual points of this kind are no more than dates in history books whose meanings are far from assured" (Delmont and Dubow 1995: 10).

This research initially set out to investigate attitudes, government legislation and visual representation relating to contemporary South African space/landscape. However, as the research evolved, the candidate became aware of the significance of the colonial landscape, both as physical space and represented place. This significance lay in the fact that post-colonial discourse and much Post-Modern representations of the South African landscape, are rooted in the deconstruction of traditional colonial representations and colonial discourses. Thus Chapter Two, which set out to create a link between the colonial and post-colonial, essentially became the foundation for this research. The implementation of [colonial] government legislation, that defined the politics of South African space, and its demise, has produced the physical and conceptual framework for this research. Twentieth century art movements, that challenged traditional models of representation, have produced the conceptual framework for contemporary landscape representation in this research. The title, *Terra Firma: Contemporary Representations of the South African Landscape* refers then to the history of the South African land/scape as a site of political contestation. It also

refers to how colonial, resistance and post-colonial representations of the South African landscape represent the changing ideologies towards this site. What is also revealed is the ever-shifting nature of what constitutes visual representation.

The theme of the South African landscape has, and will continue to be, a way of re-connecting the processes of our history with those of our social geographies.

[Re]defining the politics of space and culture is a continuous process. As Murphy Morobe (2004: 21) states: "The project of establishing a non-racial society cannot have a finite completion date. It is a continuous project. The legacy of apartheid is deeply embedded in everybody's subconscious, and we must draw it out, bring it out of the closet, deprive it of its subliminal abodes". [Re]representing the post-colonial landscape also becomes a continuous project with no finite answers. Delmont and Dubow state:

Consciousness and experience are not only traced along an epochal time-line or bound by history and its events, but are actively produced by the spaces in which we think, the spaces through which we move, the shifting network of sites, boundaries and partitions which mark our social environment and so mark our social being. Thus landscape functions metaphorically and physically. It is a space lived in, not one merely viewed. It is a context created, not one simply recorded. It entwines objective place with subjective emplacement; it measures connection and difference; it frames the terms of belonging and exclusion. All of these are markers which avow lived experience. As such, they become important in rephrasing and indeed fracturing the all too familiar solidity of an impersonal history (Delmont and Dubow 1995: 10).

It is by way of these binary contexts that the land/scape, as physical space and representation, has been exposed through this research. Given the complexities of our history, it is these paradoxes that remain at the core of South Africa's cultural consciousness. The selected contemporary artists all engage with the landscape and its representation in a historically and politically informed way. They have redefined how land as an ideological text may be read within the South African context. In so

doing, they tell the story of South Africa's shared and interconnected past, between colonizer, colonized and the liberated. They also critically investigate the traditional modes of landscape representation through contemporary approaches to cultural production. Through critical and constructive approaches to the contemporary landscape, these artists have shaped more inclusive and progressive versions on the themes of identity, belonging and location.

The South African landscape will always be a palimpsest: a ground of overlapping histories and identities, a site of accrued meanings and entwined experiences, some of which recede and others which are brought into sharper focus (Delmont and Dubow 1995: 10). In thinking about South African space in this context, what is exposed for further investigation is ways in which the landscape will be represented after this ten-year transition. When the complex present politics of South African space and culture has been redefined, what concepts will constitute contemporary landscape representation? In concluding, what also becomes apparent through this research is the lack of critical investigation into the land as a living organism that sustains culture. Vital in dealing with the land therefore, is not only how space is divided and politicized, but also how it needs to be ecologically maintained to support future South Africans.

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