

ARTS AND CENSORSHIP IN SOUTH AFRICA 1948-2000

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August 2000

Dissertation submitted in partial compliance with the requirements
for the Master's Degree in Technology: Fine Art (Printmaking) in the
Department of Fine Art, Technikon Natal

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

Acknowledgments:

I wish to acknowledge all the individuals who agreed to be interviewed for this paper, with special thanks for his supportive help to Mark Hipper, and the friendly cooperation of Bongiwe Dhlomo. I also acknowledge the patient guidance of Tony Starkey, who helped me maneuver through the process. I also wish to thank Technikon Natal for financial assistance.

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Abstract

This dissertation is concerned with the effects of censorship on the arts community during the apartheid era in South Africa, and in the post apartheid era that followed. Through interviews and various sources, a picture will be presented that examines the contrasts and similarities of the two eras.

Chapter One will present an overview of South African history, from its beginnings in 1653 to the first popular election in 1994. It will show how the religious beliefs and accompanying attitudes of the in-coming colonialists created a social atmosphere in which the system of apartheid was able to flourish and grow. It will also show how apartheid ultimately crumbled under pressure from growing resistance and violence among the people it sought to control.

Chapter Two is comprised primarily of the results of several interviews with selected artists, showing how the various individuals thought about censorship, how they dealt with all the restrictive laws, and how they were able to pursue their art making under these conditions. Personal experiences illuminate the effects of such censorship, and opinions about the value and necessity of censorship are summarized. Various of the interviewees talk specifically about what actions they took under the apartheid regime, and how they viewed, and continue to view, the role of the artist in society.

Chapter Three uses several case studies to illustrate what is currently happening concerning censorship and art in the post-apartheid era. Opinions and reactions to current conditions will be presented, and specific instances of censorship or attempted censorship will offer a comparison with the previous era. This will illustrate how much liberty artists today enjoy in South Africa. Several significant issues are raised by such examples; issues of potency and importance to any culture. Finally, the artists themselves look ahead, and provide a picture of the future for arts in this society.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to critically examine the effects of censorship on South African art and artists, during the years 1948 to the present. It will thus include the post-apartheid period to demonstrate how things have changed (or not changed) and developed since 1994. The aim of this scrutiny will be to give an overview of the history of censorship in South Africa and the role played by the selected artists and writers in either resisting, or complying with, prevailing laws and attitudes.

This examination will focus on a number of selected South African artists, including significant examples, such as Andrew Verster (b. 1937): *"unashamedly gay, his works have no doubt disturbed many South Africans with their subject matter."* (Bently, date unknown) and William Kentridge (b. 1955), for whom *"apartheid has inevitably spawned his images of the disenfranchised. Yet he is equally preoccupied with the universal plight of the dispossessed."* (Friedman, date unknown) In addition, Breyten Breytenbach (b. 1939), *"an Afrikaner boy with his roots in Bonnievale and Wellington who married a Vietnamese woman, spent seven years in a South African prison, became a French citizen, and long ago left the Dutch Reformed Church to become a Buddhist."* (Snyman, 1998:116-117) will provide valuable information, as will the views of Penelope Siopis (b. 1953), whose *"primary subjects are the representations of women and other ethnic groups that have been subjugated by white, middle class, patriarchal histories."* (Geers, date unknown) Kendell Geers (b. 1957), himself *"the abandoned product of a failed experiment; a hybrid of cultures and identities; a contradiction in terms."* (Williamson & Jamal, 1996:15) as an art critic, has much to say. The author will discuss the work of the anonymous child artists that constructed the short-lived 'Peace Parks' in December of 1985, (Williamson, 1989) which now exist only in a smattering of photographs. The experiences of black artists will be offered as well.

David Koloane (b. 1938), for example, *"associated with the Ainslie style"*, (Sack 1993) offers views from his times, as does Bongiwe Dhlomo (b. 1956), whose prints speak *"simply, eloquently and with the authority of lived experience about the reality of forced removals."* (Van Der Berg, no date) Most of the selected artists were active and exhibiting during the period under discussion, and they will talk about their experiences under cultural censorship. Particular emphasis will be placed firstly on how these artists responded to such censorship, and secondly its effect on the art they produced.

Due to the limited scope of this project, the selection of artists interviewed is not comprehensive. That remains for future researchers. This paper is limited to a selected number of particular individuals whose experiences the author believes have significant relevance to the topic under discussion.

What is censorship? The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English (6th Edition, 1976) defines it as *"the power to suppress whole or parts of books, plays, films, letters, news, etc. on grounds of obscenity, seditiousness, etc."* Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (G & G Merriam Co., Springfield, 1977) calls it, simply, *"the institution, system, or practice of censoring."* a process that *"deletes material considered harmful to the interests of [an] organisation."* According to the Quality Paperback Book Club Dictionary of Ideas, (1995:88,) it is the *"suppression by authorities of material considered immoral, heretical, subversive, libellous, damaging to state security, or otherwise offensive. It is generally more stringent under totalitarian or strongly religious regimes, and in wartime."* Whichever definition used, it is clear that censorship is used by authorities to control what the public is allowed to see, hear, and read.

Most frequently censorship is imposed because of a belief that something has objectionable sexual references, or is blasphemous. Marcia Pally tells us that in the United States censorship:

is offered to the public as an elixir of safety...proponents suggest their cure will bring an improvement in life: rid yourselves of pornography, Catcher in the Rye, or the Maja Desnuda, and life will be safer, happier, more secure. Get rid of the bad pictures and one is rid of the bad acts. (Pally, 1994:14)

Censorship exists to some degree in all countries and cultures, including the United States, where free speech is protected by constitutional law. The founding fathers, when drafting the American constitution after 1781, realised the value of a free and open discourse of ideas. Protecting society from dangerous ideas was not the immediate concern. *"The principle behind freedom of expression is not that it automatically secures what one thinks is good and true, but that it is society's best chance at truth in the long run."* (Pally, 1994:163)

At times, individuals and the public demand censorship, whether it is Japanese historians, desiring to edit out Japan's aggression in World War Two from school textbooks, or those who wish to deny the Holocaust. On occasion people want protection from frightening, challenging, even threatening notions. It always depends on the cultural view shared within that society, but fear is the prime motivation.

Therefore:

image blaming is easy to understand and peddle; it provides bumper sticker explanations for human motive and action. It relies on the flattering notion that without invidious outside forces like rock music or film, people would be good. (Pally, 1994:16)

The second question concerns the function of art in society. Is art a persuasive, influential propagandistic medium that can sway public opinion? Or is it a social side issue; a decorative fringe benefit of a prosperous culture? It is the opinion of this writer

that art functions somewhere in between such extremes. Its influence rises and falls in society. It can be both a peripheral activity whose function is obscure to the majority of the populace, and a potent element. It all depends on the society and the artists that it produces at the time.

Naturally, in normal communication between one human being and another... misunderstandings are few...but there are extreme cases, and first among them is aesthetic communication, where the message is deliberately ambiguous precisely to foster the use of different codes by those who, in different times and places, will encounter the work of art. (Eco, 1967:140)

Art has the ability to influence peoples' minds, and therefore is watched over by various social agencies. Each of these watchdog agencies has an agenda. Religious groups seek to ensure conformity to their particular belief system. Politicians seek to have influence over the beliefs of those they govern. Business is concerned about profit. They all require power to realise their agendas. Small victories over weak or defenceless targets can make the victor appear to be powerful, and gives such an agency its cachet of actual power. When ideologues, religious or otherwise, identify an opponent, they seek to demonize that opponent, ensuring that their victories put them in a position of moral power. Such situations make censorship a potent tool.

Art is an easy target. Artists often operate on the fringes of society, and not infrequently, deal with controversial issues. As a result, they are vulnerable to criticism and attack by self-appointed moralists. A recent example is that of the American photographer, Robert Mapplethorpe.(1946-1988) Art critics have acknowledged the skill and sensual beauty of his photographs, and their startling sexual content. It was his homoerotic subject matter that led to the rigid suppression of his show at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington DC and the vitriolic attack on the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). The NEA is an organisation funded by taxpayer money which is used to

support art projects. *"Republicans began the heaviest assault on art and artists in America since the McCarthy-Nixon witch hunts of the early fifties."* (Fritscher, 1994:108-109) This attack was fuelled by a right wing Christian desire to suppress freedom of expression, especially in the public depiction of sexuality. The NEA may have provided the funding for the Corcoran Gallery to present the Mapplethorpe exhibition, but:

Never forget: (1) that the exhibition and famous trial occurred after Mapplethorpe died, and (2) Mapplethorpe himself never ever received a penny from the National Endowment for the Arts. (Fritscher, 1994:250)

The Durban artist Andrew Verster himself experienced a similar situation when a show of his, in the 1970's, was removed from the Durban Art Gallery. In his artwork he had tried to glorify the male form in the same way as the female form. *"Indeed, his celebration of the male form is the basis of much of his work."* (Buntly, no date) A member of the public found the show objectionable, and reported it to the authorities who closed it down. Why it was censored, Verster himself does not know, because after the show was moved to another, less official venue, *"the police came, and they looked at it and said 'we don't find anything wrong with this'."* (Verster, 1999)

Censorship, religion and racism are often closely related. The dominant culture defines the norm through censorship, (as well as other methods such as law enforcement, economic division and political manipulation,) eliminating cultural differences that involve minorities. *"Christianism has saturated us with iconography in which white is good, dark is not. It was a program for hate."* (Ventura, 1985:34) One group's values, importance and worth, are considered greater than those of another group; that is to say more correct, more moral. That is unambiguous racism. It was there in American history. *"Being black determined where you could live, where your kids went to school, who you could sit next to on the bus, whom you could love and marry."* (Harris,

1993:16-17) It was there in the Immorality Act (1927, amended 1957) in South Africa, which characterised interracial marriages and relationships as moral questions:

Behind the storefront of gentility hid, and perhaps still hides, an edifice of white supremacy and segregation so rigid and so codified that in 1949 the racist society of South Africa could have turned to the American south to learn the system of apartheid. (Harris, 1993:14-15)

Such censorship arises out of fundamentalist interpretations of the Bible. The primary religion in both the United States and South Africa is Christian, but fundamentalism occurs in all religions, as reflected in recent local Hindu outrages to the local Christian minority in India, or by the excesses of the Taliban in Afghanistan, in its fanatical pursuit of its vision of a society based on Koran law. It explains how a notoriety-seeking contemporary artist like Andre Serrano, in his work 'Piss Christ' (1986) can so easily prick social sensibilities by immersing a crucifix in a jar of his own urine.

But censorship always carries with it a danger. This is as true in South Africa as in the United States or anywhere else. The danger is that the dominant class in a repressive society controls social opinion by extending its particular view. It assumes the mantle of morality and becomes the primary censor. But:

...as soon as a group sets itself up as the final moral arbiter of other peoples' actions, especially when its members believe they have discovered absolute standards of right and wrong, it marks the beginning of the end of tolerance, and thus reason and rationality. (Schermer, 1997:124)

When that happens, when censorship becomes a matter of official government policy, it too easily becomes a tool of political manipulation and repression. Sue Pally claims that:

the experiment of Democratic pluralism proposes that one tolerate lists of books one dislikes to safeguard those likes from the reach of well-meaning citizens like oneself,

who also have lists...having established the precedent of censorship, there is nothing to stop one's views from being silenced next. (Pally, 1994:162)

In order to remain a free people, and to enjoy our freedoms, of speech and of liberty, such misuse of censorship by government must be guarded against. *"The condition upon which God hath given liberty to man is eternal vigilance."* (John Philpot Curran, Irish judge, 1750-1817).

The aim of this dissertation, therefore, is to discuss the impact of censorship on South African society, and in particular, the arts; before, during, and following the years of National Party rule. In order to understand how and why apartheid came to have the significant and oppressive influence it had, one must be aware of its religious and cultural origins. To that purpose, Chapter One will provide a religious and cultural background for the years prior to the election in 1948 which swept the NP, and its apartheid system, into power. Chapter Two will concentrate on the experiences and opinions of selected artists regarding censorship during the apartheid era. Chapter Three will assess the censorship situation in South Africa since 1990, with several contemporary case studies.

CHAPTER ONE: *The Religious and Cultural Context of Censorship in South Africa*

SECTION ONE: *Previous History and The Prelude to Apartheid 1653-1948*

European settlers came to South Africa in the 16th and 17th centuries, as did the English Puritans to North America, to make a new home. They were Dutch and German Calvinists, and French Huguenots, fleeing discrimination and persecution, seeking a land where they could pursue their own beliefs. *"Their voyage had been made a one-way ticket, and they carried their image of 'home' with them, to be reconstructed on foreign soil."* (Tannahill, 1992:316) Their fundamentalist beliefs were strong. These beliefs translated into a rigid, racist view of the indigenous people that they encountered.

They were primarily farmers and found a large area of rich, unoccupied land. These rural farmers, later called Boers, were patriarchal, and fiercely independent.

"Lacking both an intellectual and an entrepreneurial class, [they] failed also to develop a working and an artisan class. What evolved was a semi-literate peasantry, with the social status of a landed gentry." (Sparks 1990:43)

They cared little for city ways and became involved with a power struggle to control the countryside with which they strongly identified..

It must have been easy to feel superior to the cultures they found around them: cultures with no tradition of written language, no cohesive national identities, practising public nakedness and living by social behavioural codes that the European fundamentalists would have considered barbaric and sinful. Their Calvinist beliefs gave them the feeling of being a chosen people, an outlook that implied that the views of the other were inferior. Such a belief allowed them to see themselves as superior to their black neighbours.

Such a belief system was heavily patriarchal, and there was a strong link between the abuse of blacks and physical abuse at home. The Boer women and children were also regarded as inferiors.

"I was struck by the extreme violence in several of the white Afrikaner homes, as well as the profound sense of ownership and entitlement to abuse that some Afrikaner fathers revealed toward their children." (Russell, quoted in O'Hara, 1998:40)

The same fundamentalist endorsement that justified their treatment of blacks also reinforced the belief that men were the unquestioned, absolute rulers in their homes.

The world-wide institution of slavery prevalent at the time permitted the Boers to develop large, prosperous farms. In addition to enslaving the indigenous groups around them, other slaves were brought in from different parts of the world: some from Arabic countries, but particularly from the different cultures in the islands of Indonesia. These slaves had no common language. Because they needed to communicate with their Dutch masters, they developed a patois that displaced high Dutch. The resultant creolised language was called 'Afrikaans': its speakers 'Afrikaners'. The first book written in Afrikaans, al Qwal-al-Matin, published in Cape Town in 1856, was in fact printed in Arabic script. *"It was six years later that the first book in the Afrikaans language was written in Roman or western type script."* (Nadvi quoted in Davids 1980:xxvi)

In the 19th century, the British took over control of the Cape Colony, and by implication, all of southern Africa. In spite of their own racial policies, the new administration freed the slaves, and introduced enlightened liberal policies towards blacks that the Boers found intolerably offensive.

"And yet, it is not so much their [blacks] freedom which drove us to such lengths, as their being placed on equal footing with Christians, contrary to the laws of God and the natural distinction of race and religion. It was intolerable for any decent

Christian to bow down beneath such a yoke, wherefore we rather withdrew in order to preserve our doctrine of purity." (Ann Steencamp quoted in Sparks, 1990:105)

Thus began the Great Trek. In nine years, fourteen thousand Boers moved inland and north, confronting the Zulu and the Ndebele nations. After fierce and costly battles, they subdued the blacks and annexed the land. This great trek eventually became sanctified as a holy pilgrimage. It was so sacred a topic that in 1930, when Stuart Cloete's book Turning Wheels was published, it was officially banned. The book was considered offensive because it dealt with the realities of the Great Trek; the squalor and earthiness of its characters, rife with extramarital sex. It was still on the proscribed list in 1956. *"There was lust in the laager, so you can imagine the outcry."* (Nadine Gordimer quoted in Merrett, 1994:10)

The South African Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902 was an attempt by Britain to destroy the growing Afrikaner nationalism. It was pursued viciously by both sides, with attendant claims of atrocities and abuses. Yet after their victory, the British gave Afrikaners their sovereign independence in the provinces where their numbers predominated. This was a betrayal and a marginalization of the blacks. It effectively made the whites the sole owners of the land and the country.

Generally speaking, South Africa remains a strongly religious country. *"Unlike many other societies, the State in South Africa is still inextricably bound to religious beliefs. Religious morality and civil morality are inseparable."* (Ngcokovane 1989: 7) Such a close association, coupled with the sense of divine mission, enabled the Afrikaner to *"legitimise apartheid, both in theory and in practice."* (Ibid)

Afrikaners felt superior to the blacks around them. They felt special, with a unique relationship to God.

"Our history is the greatest masterpiece of the centuries. We hold this nation as our due, for it was given us by the architect of the universe, which makes one feel that Afrikanerdom is not the work of man, but the creation of God." (D.F.Malan quoted in Ngcokovane, 1989:12)

It was a question of survival. The very existence of the Afrikaner depended on white dominance. To be on an equal footing with the indigenous peoples would mean the death of Afrikanerdom. *"There could be no common South African society."* (Sparks 1990:148) White Afrikaners felt they had to maintain their separateness from all others.

In 1857 this sentiment was reinforced, sanctified and approved by the New Dutch Reformed Church (Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk - NGK). This approval arose out of the conflict between the ideals of Christian faith and the Trek Boers' *"passionate hostility to the idea of 'gelykstelling' (equalising)."* (Sparks 1990:154) Whites refused to share 'Christian privileges' (Holy Communion) with people of colour. In Synod, the church that year declared that *"If, on the account of the weakness of some, the cause of the Kingdom of God might suffer,"* (Ibid:155) then the different races would celebrate communion separately. This decision enshrined racism in the Dutch Reformed Church, and set the precedent for apartheid in the future. It was a watershed moment and was the initial step for subsequent historical events in South Africa.

A political and cultural inner circle called 'The Broederbond' was formed in 1918 in Johannesburg. It was a secret organisation of high-ranking and prominent Afrikaners that manipulated and controlled every aspect of Afrikaner life, including the NGK. This secretive body was the driving force behind the introduction of apartheid, and using the holy justification provided by the NGK, it promoted actions and policies to protect Afrikaner nationalism. At its peak in the 1970's, the Broederbond claimed 12,000

members, who "swore to serve the cause of Afrikanerdom in some religious initiation ceremony conducted in darkened rooms." (Ibid:176)

In the 1920's the National Party, which represented Afrikaner interests, began to win increasing support in national elections, ultimately culminating in the major political victory of 1948. It could not have done so, however, without the support of all the white voters, including English speakers. *"It has become customary to blame the Afrikaners for what had gone wrong with the country...but they were not alone in this."* (Van Wyk 1991:64) Indeed, British intellectual support extended all the way back to the British settlement at Cape Town in 1795. In fact, the *"first group of theorists to outline a systematic ideology of segregation were English, rather than Afrikaans-speaking."* (Dubow 1989: 22) The British, suffused with their own feelings of racial superiority, supported Afrikaner goals, failing to see any necessity to share power with black Africans. *"It is an open secret that the English, by and large, were by no means less racist than the Afrikaner."* (Van Wyk, 1991: 64) In 1948, the same year Mahatma Ghandi was assassinated, the National Party (NP) enjoyed popular white support, and won the election.

"It is not only untrue but also unjust and, in present-day South Africa, unwise to perpetuate the myth that racial discrimination and injustice were invented by the Afrikaners, or that they were the only perpetrators of prejudice against non-white South Africans. The rapid implementation of apartheid was possible because it was an extension of long-standing, deep-rooted segregation which had divided the population on racial lines." (Hendrickse, 1998:23)

The state and the church converged in the NP. Unquestioned reliance on their version of the Bible dictated their actions. *"The world may differ from our interpretation [of the Bible]. That will not influence us. The world may be wrong."* (J.D. Vorster quoted in Ngcokovane, 1989:180) The 1951 Statement of Fundamental Principles of Calvinist

Political Science, issued by the NGK, claimed that the church had a right to delve into politics. (Ibid, p. 148-150)

In the years prior to World War Two, several future NP leaders did their graduate studies in Nazi Germany's universities. *"Notably Meyer and Diedrichs drunk deeply of the intellectual waters there."* (Furlong, 1991: 87) Finding much in the philosophies there to bolster their own ideas, they brought those racist and social Darwinist policies back to South Africa with them. Thus the rise of the Afrikaner coincided with the rise of Nazi ideology.

Whites and blacks did mix socially on the fringes of the society, in illegal township bars, called 'shebeens'. This was a cautious relationship, tentative in the growing political atmosphere, because:

"fringe men knew that sooner or later officialdom would stop the [jazz] sessions [at the Crescent Restaurant in Johannesburg] on the grounds that there is bound to be trouble when blacks mix with whites. But it was good while it lasted - and quite without trouble." (Henry Sono quoted in Williams, 1997:272)

However, trouble did brew in the townships, with the development there of black gangs. The African National Congress (ANC), formed in 1912, took firm root as the party of the disenfranchised majority.

In the election of 1948 the NP assumed full, unchallenged power. Almost immediately the NP began to install apartheid legislation. This was at a time when dictatorships elsewhere in the world had been defeated, and human rights were becoming world-wide concerns. It coincided with the 1950's and 1960's anti-colonial struggles elsewhere in Africa. The NP apartheid policies turned South Africa into a pariah state.

"The Afrikaner state is illegitimate. A minority regime which can only be maintained through violence has forfeited its right to exist, because it is unjust in conception and application." (Breytenbach quoted in Sparks, 1990: 211)

The apartheid regime instituted several laws aimed at two goals: the separation of whites from the other races, and the imposition of strict sexually repressive ideals on the population.

"When [colonial powers] came upon peoples who were not only dark, but who moved with a suppleness that whites had denied themselves, - who were in their evil bodies without denial - then everything we'd denied ourselves came to face us. It was unbearable." (Ventura, 1985:33-34)

First, the Population Registration Act of 1950 sought to classify every registered South African citizen *"as a white person, a coloured person, or a native, as the case may be, and every coloured person and every native...shall be classified...according to the ethnic or other group to which he belongs."* (Population Registration Act, 1950) This reflected long-held Afrikaner thought. *"I say for this country, we ought to class every man who has black blood in him as a native, and exclude him from the franchise."* (white farmer quoted in Williams, 1997:178)

This was followed by the 1950 amended Immorality Act #21 that sought to *"prohibit illicit carnal intercourse between Europeans and non-Europeans."* It was an insult to those of mixed blood, marginalizing them, depriving them of group identity, and implying they should never have existed. It forbade *"interracial marriages and sex across the colour line. Films and books were strictly censored for salacious material."* (Sparks, 1990:35) The Act was revised in 1957, criminalizing even a kiss. Ultimately the Act was repealed in 1985.

These Acts revealed the sexually repressive, racist nature of apartheid. This was a direct result of Calvinist fundamentalism that saw not only racial mixing, but sex as sin; perhaps the greatest sin of all.

"By some mysterious alchemy, sexual purity came to neutralise other sins, so that even the moral oppression and physical barbarity that became characteristic of the Christian Church in later medieval and Renaissance times scarcely appeared as sins at all in comparison with the sins of sex and heresy." (Tannahill, 1992:161)

South African Puritanism, with its strong roots in Christian history, complemented the traditional male and female roles in the country; that of passive women and patriarchal, domineering men. In such a repressive society, women do not fare well. *"It is interesting to note that the best predictor of inequality between men and women was the prevalence of religious fundamentalist groups."* (Dr. Edward Donnerstein quoted, Peron 1996: 90) Where free speech is restricted, sexist attitudes proliferate.

Other Acts sought to isolate and further render the different population groups powerless. Dating back to 1923, the Native (Urban Areas) Act, already on the books, and revised again in 1927, sought to segregate groups in 26 urban areas. The Land Act allowed blacks to own certain land, and outlawed squatters, thereby effectively making blacks alien in white South Africa. *"The goal is that eventually there will be no black South Africans."* (Cornelius Mulder quoted, Sparks 1990:136-137) The Group Areas Act of 1950, which referred to *"either the white group, the coloured group, or the native group"* (Act 41, 1950) had already enforced racial segregation, by *"control of the acquisition of immovable property and the occupation of land and premises."* (Ibid) It gave the Director-General the power to *"define any ethnical, linguistic, cultural or other group of persons who are members either of the native group or of the coloured group."* (Ibid)

The Publications and Entertainment Act of 1963, (later revised in 1979) empowered censorship and controlled publications, the press, performing arts and exhibitions. Censorship, in the hands of anonymous people not answerable to the

public, defined obscenity. Arguments for the censoring of pornography said that such material offended the 'privacy' of individuals, and:

"in the final analysis, public morality is the set of deep-rooted rules as to how man should act toward his fellow man, and it is based on mutual respect for life, limb, dignity, privacy and property." And in a footnote: "The protection of privacy is accentuated by a number of authors as the basis of the limitation of the publication of explicit sex and nudity, also based on 'the [Japanese] sense of shame', a characteristic which the court regards as distinguishing man from animal." (Van Rooyen 1987:52-53)

That is a fundamentalist view. Arguments for censorship based on 'morality' masked a political agenda of racial separation and control.

CHAPTER ONE

SECTION TWO: *The Institutionalisation of Apartheid 1948-1985*

An unusual argument has been put forward to the effect that the acceleration of the development of apartheid, following the NP victory in 1948, might actually have hastened its demise. *"There are those who hold that the worst form of racism that came with apartheid accelerated the birth of freedom in South Africa."* (I.C.Meer, 1998: 6) It is clear that severe apartheid restrictions changed passive resistance into more open, and increasingly resolute, defiance. Without the strictures of apartheid, the course of racism would have perhaps followed the historical directions seen in other countries like the USA and Britain.

Following its victory in the 1948 elections, and bolstered by a mandate from the white voting population, the NP embarked almost immediately on a program to implement and solidify apartheid. *"The Nats saw it as the final triumph of Afrikaner nationalism over British imperialism, which indeed it was, and as a great step forward, which it wasn't..."* (Van Wyk 1991:63) Despite the passive resistance campaign begun by the black and coloured populations in 1946, the NP proceeded with its apartheid legislation.

In 1949 parliament passed the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, aimed to curb interracial 'mongrelization'. This was indicative of a dichotomy deep in the heart of apartheid. *"Sex is at the very heart of racism."* (Arnold 1996:19) In 1950, they passed the Suppression of Communism Act, which declared *"the Communist Party of South Africa...to be an unlawful organisation."* (Act #44, 1950) This was supported by the Broederbond-dominated NGK, which made a public statement in 1951 that allowed the church to act, by divine right, in the political sphere. The statement included the

following: *"It is obvious that not everyone should have the vote. Not only underdeveloped groups, but those who are openly in rebellion against God, such as Communists."* (Ngcokovane 1989:149-150) Clearly religious fanaticism must have an opponent.

"If not a rival church, then religious liberals, secular modernists, God-denying Communists, or some other incarnation of evil becomes the enemy. Irrational religious anger demands a target." (Spong, 1991:3-4)

This was the same year the Group Areas Act and the Population Registration Act were passed. It was the year the Indian Representation Act was scrapped, which took away the Indian franchise. Also in this year, Afrikaner leadership held a conference in Bloemfontein to justify the institutionalisation of apartheid. Its purpose was to eliminate infiltration of local black culture into the church. The belief in white supremacy and the necessity for power and prestige served as the strongest of motivations for this conference. They rejected black participation in the government because of their deep fear of black majority rule, not to mention their revulsion of a racially mixed population. H. F. Verwoerd expressed it this way:

"Europeans must continue to dominate what will be the European part of South Africa. This appears clearly from its proposition that, in its belief on the basis of an inherent superiority, the European must remain master and leader. The only possible way out is the second alternative, namely that both adopt a development divorced from each other. This is all the word 'apartheid' means." (Williams 1997, p. 252)

The NGK, the NP, and the Broederbond all believed that they were doing God's will. (Ngcokovane 1989, p. 184)

The ANC responded by adopting a militant stance. The same year the Bus Boycott was begun, and continued for several years more. The Prevention of Illegal Squatters Act, which prohibited anyone from entering onto any land or building, *"without the permission of the owner or lawful occupier of such land or building, whether such land is enclosed or not."* followed. (Prevention of Illegal Squatters Act #52, 1951) It was part

of a larger package of other laws and restrictions. The ANC launched a multiracial Defiance Campaign in 1952, to oppose the unjust laws. By 1955 the ANC had also adopted the Freedom Charter. It expressed the ideals that South Africa belonged to "*all who live on it, black or white.*" (Centre for Cultural & Media Studies, June 1985:19) and proposed a human rights agenda.

In the same year, the government declared the black suburb of Sophiatown to be a white suburb. On February 10, 1956, in "*one of the most infamous of the apartheid-era forced removals,*" (Kast, 2000:2) the residents were forcibly relocated, sans money or possessions, and the suburb renamed, with the "*less-than-subtle name of Triomf.*" (Ibid:2)

The NP government responded to acts of resistance and rebellion quickly and brutally. In 1956 the government held 'treason trials' of 156 activists. Extensive censorship was instituted. The Cronje Commission of Inquiry in Regard to Undesirable Publications recommended that literature seen as "*indecent, offensive, or harmful by the ordinary, civilised decent reasonable and responsible inhabitants of South Africa*" (Merrett 1994:35) be labelled as 'undesirable'. The Bureau of Information rationalised its actions: "*We do not have censorship. What we have is a limitation on what newspapers can report.*" (Merrett 1994:115) The assumption was that 'decent, civilised and responsible' inhabitants also meant, exclusively, 'white'. This censorship included, significantly, control of court reporting. The 1956 list of banned books ultimately amounted to 4,000 titles. In 1958, H. F. Verwoerd became Prime Minister.

"MacMillan, the British Prime Minister, on a visit to South Africa in 1960, addressed a joint session of the two houses of Parliament and warned South Africa to prepare herself for the freedom-seeking winds of change blowing through Africa - a warning shrugged off by us Nats." (Van Wyk 1991:106)

Thus began a significant year for South Africans. In perhaps the most galvanising event experienced in the struggle, the massacre at Sharpeville acted as a catalyst. Euphemistically referred to as 'The Sharpeville Riot' in some apartheid-era texts, (Berman 1983:XVII) the world was shocked when:

"trigger-happy members of the South African Police callously opened fire on - and brutally murdered 69 men, women and children whose twin sins were being black and protesting peacefully against the pass laws." (Nyatsumba 1997:262)

Ignoring international criticism, the NP "responded in the only manner they knew: they moved swiftly to ban the PAC and the ANC and throw into jail leaders of these organisations." (Ibid:263)

People could no longer afford to ignore what was happening in the country. "Its powerful image of peaceful protest ending in violent death burned itself into the soul of black resistance, and changed its course of action in a fateful way." (Sparks 1990: 235) Nelson Mandela was arrested two years later in the Natal Midlands, and stood trial for sabotage in 1964. Speaking from the dock, he said:

"During my lifetime, I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal I hope to live for, and achieve." (Van Wyk 1991:107)

These were hardly the thoughts of a crazed terrorist, yet he did not see the light of his own freedom again until 1990.

Feelings of rebellion and the desire for change intensified. Some Afrikaners themselves felt it, and responded. "Various Afrikaner authors started writing in a new style which included crude language and explicit sexual descriptions - phenomena which had previously been taboo in Afrikaans literature." (Van Rooyen 1987:14) Legislation was drafted into law to deal with it. Perhaps the most significant and influential of these was the Publications Act of 1963.

In language fit to mask the nature and intent of censorship, a reasonable-sounding explanation of the Publications Act was offered. It aimed to:

"keep pornography and blasphemous material out of the country, to maintain religious freedom and peace, to prevent harm to relations between population groups, and prevent real damage to the safety of the state." (Ibid, p. 20)

But it was made clear that the board of censors weren't simply given a free hand to make whatever arbitrary decisions it wished. The appearance of legality was important. *"Those who control publications in South Africa can exercise their authority only in terms of the powers granted them in the Publications Act. (Silver 1984:8)*

These authorities identified themselves with European culture, and the expression of their basic philosophy sounded fair, even reasonable.

"In South Africa, as in most of the western world, freedom of speech is one of the cornerstones of our society. It should not be curtailed unless there is a clear necessity to do so. The stifling of another man's point of view, of criticisms and grievances, is apt, in the long run, to cause more problems than it solves." (Ibid:17)

There was a long list of acceptable forms of expression permitted under the guidelines laid down in the Act. One could criticise the government, sympathise openly with Socialism, the ANC, or the Freedom Charter. One could petition to free Nelson Mandela. Even *"the mere use of revolutionary words such as 'suffer', 'oppressed', 'struggle', are aggravating, but not undesirable per se."* (Ibid:29-33) Criticism was, according to the Publications Appeals Board, considered to be necessary, to allow voice to those who had no official national position. *"Tolerance should be displayed towards black writing as blacks do not have representation in Parliament."* (Ibid:112)

But in many other ways, the Act undercut such apparent freedom to enforce the government intent. *"The interests of the state must always precede the individual."* (Furlong 1991: 96) The control exercised by the Publications Appeals Board was total. *"No film or*

video cassette intended for public exhibition may be screened or distributed with a certificate having been issued by the Directorate." (Van Rooyen 1987: 6) And their powers went further. *"The Directorate may, in the cases of publications and public entertainments, act without a complaint."* (Ibid:6) In other words, board members could do as they personally saw fit. In the lengthy list of negative factors that would influence their decisions, they did not bother to define 'propaganda', assuming its meaning was clear. (Silver 1984:117-118) All rested on the judgement of the various committees on the board. For instance, when it came to reporting on police activity:

"a portrayal of police violence may be treated under provisions of 47(2)(a), which deals with matter that is indecent or obscene or offensive or harmful to the public morals, as a description of violence is included under this paragraph." (Ibid:139-140)

In the context of Sharpeville this passage describes police behaviour as obscene, but ironically, to report on it was considered an offence to the state and not permitted under the morality clause. *"Statements that relate to defence force atrocities have been held to prejudice the [national] interests."* (Ibid:151) In this way the legal system was able to effectively muzzle reporters and control what view the public had of government authority and its institutions.

Writers were the principal targets of such legislation and control. The reason was simple.

"The vehemence with which the authorities persecuted writers was seated in the realisation of their power to communicate universal values so dangerous to the authoritarian, conformist state." (Merrett 1994:200)

The stated purpose of censorship, to protect society from pornography, racism and religious tensions, masked deeper motives. *"The government claimed it was concerned to control indecency, blasphemy and community views, while its opponents argued that the real aim was the wholesale control of dissidence."* (Ibid:61)

Visual artists responded in 1963 with the formation of the Amadlozi Group. The artists included Cecil Skotnes (b. 1926), Sipho Khumalo, Eduardo Villa (b. 1915) et al. As Skotnes says, *"It showed a cross-section of influences."* (Skotnes Interview, 1999) It shunned decorative African art, and aimed instead to expose *"South Africa's unromanticized harsh social reality."* (Hyatt 1985:7) This art became known as 'Protest Art', concerned with *"making controversial, thought-provoking statements about South Africa."* (Ibid:7) In the succeeding years, artists re-evaluated their social roles, with the rise of black consciousness. *"Art promotion became an increasingly politicised activity."* (Skawran quoted in Lessing 1994:277) But artists didn't share the same position of threat to the system that writers did. *"If it was in book form, radio form or play form, it was censored. If it was in visual art form, it was ignored."* (Botha interview, 1999)

Nevertheless, for people involved in creative expression, the situation was stifling and oppressive. The state was afraid of such people. *"If one looks closely at South Africa's security legislation, it can be said summarily that all laws are intended to forestall revolution."* (C.J. van Der Merwe quoted in Gordimer 1980:57) The American writer E. L. Doctrow, addressing US Congress in 1992, over the funding debate of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), which was being attacked by right wing ideologue Senator Jesse Helms, said:

"I speak of the latent, underlying jealousy we have for the elevated expression that is personal, uninvited, powerful: that almost automatic anger we have for a kind of witness and truth-telling that does not proceed from, and is not endorsed or accredited by church or corporation, or family, or other governing institutions of our society; the work of independent witness, the willingness to articulate that which many may feel, but no one dares say." (Doctrow 1992:34-35)

The effect of such censorship was to silence writers and playwrights, and make any creative artist think more than once or twice about what he or she would say in

public. As Bongiwe Dhlomo said, *"There was a lot of self-censorship, in order to avoid being censored."* (Dhlomo Telephone conversation, 1999) Artists lived in fear of prosecution.

"What is more important is not that which was practised outside, but which was self-censored. [It was] the symbolic responses through the art work to the moral and social injustice, which in a sense became very problematic..." (Botha, 1999)

Censorship frequently takes the form of the state exercising its power to speak, and the silencing of other dissenting and challenging voices. *"It is to begin to create a realm of approved speech, an orthodoxy of discourse, and it is to privilege the speech of those who would deny it to others."* (Doctrow 1992:34) Such control is *"not only bad for artists; it's bad for us all. It's all censorship, and I say to hell with it."* (Ibid:65)

Also passed into law at this time was the Immorality Act of 1963, amending the Act as written in 1927, and further amended in 1957, that specifically proscribed *"sexual offences between white persons and coloured persons."* (Act #23, 1957) 'Coloured' persons were defined as *"any person other than a white person."* (Ibid) A white person was somewhat ambiguously defined as *"any person who in appearance obviously is, or who by general acceptance and repute is a white person."* (Ibid) It thereby outlawed interracial marriages or sex. It was tested the same year by a book published as specific criticism of the Act. Written by 'Des Troye', a nom-de-plume, it was titled An Act of Immorality. The plot concerned love across the colour line. (Merrett 1994:62) It was summarily banned. In fact, this same stance was hypocritical. *"It has since been proved that many Afrikaners, among them some of the most prominent, had 'black' blood in their veins, dating from their early Cape days."* (Van Wyk 1991:103) That could explain the vague language of the definition of a 'white' person in the Act.

Afrikaners themselves were seeing holes in the apartheid scheme. Henrik W. van Der Merwe, former Afrikaner missionary, was never happy with apartheid. He

began to think differently from his peers, when he witnessed his brother "call a coloured woman a 'vrou', which is a respectable term, instead of a 'meid', which we called coloured women." (van Der Merwe interview, 1998) It shocked him into "thinking of coloured women as women, and not coloured." (Ibid) Alt Van Wyk tells of the shock he experienced the first time he confronted the sexual appeal of a beautiful black woman, saying:

"it was quite a sight, severely jolting my most fundamental political convictions with the unexpectedness of its effect. Imagine - a committed Christian Boer, and a Nat to boot, getting a kick out of a pair of black legs. Black simply wasn't supposed to be beautiful, especially as the law took a close interest in wayward white men." (Van Wyk 1991:12-13)

A group of better educated, urban dwelling Afrikaners was growing in the cities, working alongside British business counterparts, and "aware of the unworkability of apartheid, chafing at its economic restrictions, and not least, embarrassed by its crudity."

(Sparks 1990:316) Cracks were beginning to appear in the arbitrary line drawn between the races by the government. Poet Breyten Breytenbach had to flee into exile after six years of imprisonment, in part because he was married to a Vietnamese woman. It was clear that the desire for political power was the chief motive for apartheid.

"These laws were enacted, not to prevent the spread of Communism, but for the purpose of silencing the opposition of the large majority of our citizens to a government intent on depriving them of the most elementary human rights." (Bram Fischer quoted in Merrett 1994:76)

As an inevitable consequence, violence increased on both sides of the power struggle. "If a law disempowers, it encourages violence. So the law is violent." (Karelse 1998:6)

In 1965, world attention began to focus on the expanding Viet Nam War. In 1966 Prime Minister Verwoerd was assassinated.

"Millions of blacks suffered under policies of which he was the grand architect, and many must have hated him. Yet he was killed by a man born in Mozambique, the illegitimate son of a white father and black mother." (Van Wyk 1991:83)

The racially mixed suburb of District Six in Cape Town was declared a white area, and homes were bulldozed and destroyed. There were more forced removals. The level of violence of resistance escalated, and the NP government responded in 1985 with the declaration of a State of Emergency.

CHAPTER ONE

SECTION THREE: The End of Apartheid 1985-1994

The violence and chaos of the period 1960-1990 was unavoidably reflected in South African art. In 1963 the Amadlozi Group strove to exhibit a new African sensibility. It rejected the then current notions of African Romanticism, with its lush landscapes and calm scenes of traditional village life, in favour of the "harsh social reality" they saw around them. (Hyatt 1985:7) This approach became designated as Protest Art in the 1980's, and it attempted through the use of various and unconventional media, such as the so-called Peace Parks, to raise consciousness and make statements about the social and political realities of South Africa. The movement was led by black artists, eager to claim their own experience. These black artists felt that white artists were too removed from black reality to be able to make credible comment about the black experience, or to use such experience as legitimate source material as a basis for art.

"Because of this country's forced separate development, white art cannot identify with or show sympathy for the black cause in any real participatory way. As Andrew Verster opined, 'one cannot suffer by proxy'." (Hyatt 1985:10)

Black artists were rarely reviewed by critics, or exhibited in the mainstream galleries.

The Broederbond worked tirelessly to assure its ascendancy and the fruition of its goal, the dominance of its vision of Afrikaner ideals. The Broederbond screened prospective members in secret, 'black-balling' those they found wanting. Most of the Afrikaner population itself were unaware of how deeply this secret organisation had penetrated into their lives. So much so, that by 1974 these 'watchdogs of the Afrikaners' (Van Wyk 1991, p. 38) were in virtual control of every institution in the country,

deciding who spoke, what they said, and who was allowed to hear. *"Apartheid was keeping us in our little boxes, trying to keep us in our old patterns."* (Klinghorn 1998)

While it is true that any political sovereignty has the right to defend itself, the prosecution of censorship in South Africa was as far from the ideals of democracy as it is possible to get. The Appellate division of the Supreme Court in South Africa, in the case of the State versus Moroney, 1978, defined a censorship committee as:

"an extra-judicial body, operating in an administrative capacity, whose members need have no legal training, before whom the appellate has no right of audience, who in their deliberations are not required to have regard for the rules of justice designed to receive a fair trial, whose proceedings are not conducted in public, and who are not required to afford any reasons for their decisions." (Gordimer 1980:5)

Censorship that followed the guidelines of undesirability as listed in the Immorality Act #21 could be seen as racially motivated. A play in which a white woman was married to a black man was banned on the grounds that *"the black community would find the derogatory references to blacks harrowing and abhorrent."* (Silver 1984:47) This prompted a reply by no less than Bishop Desmond Tutu, who said of the play that *"this was not the case. It was in fact a criticism of [section] s-16 of the Immorality Act, and certain attitudes that were part of the South African community."* (Ibid) A similar justification was used to condemn another play about which the Publications Committee wrote:

"a substantial number [of South Africans] would be perturbed by this to such an extent that it would affect race relations considerably. This visual portrayal of a sexual kiss [between a black nurse and white patient] is so unusual that it would shock many and contribute to the animosity between the races." (Ibid:164-165)

As writer Nadine Gordimer (b. 1923) knows, sex and race were the primary concerns. In the controversy over her 1979 book Burger's Daughter, which was listed as 'banned' as soon as it came out, she could only conclude *"it is the fact that Bassie is a black*

child, and Rosa, his companion, a white one, which constitutes the 'indecent', 'offence' and 'harm to public morals'." (Gordimer 1980:21) John Dugard put it this way:

"these statutes aim to insure that the South African reading public is deprived not only of 'lust-evoking' magazines, but also of serious literary works which transgress the strict moral code of the Calvinist establishment or which question, radically, the institutions and practices of an apartheid-based society." (Ibid:67)

But South African citizen, activist and member of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), Scotty Morton told of how such censorship was circumvented. As there existed no 'prior censorship', books had to appear first before they were banned. There would then be *"a flurry of buying and distribution, Black Sash or whatever."* (Morton, 1998)

The decision in 1975 to declare Afrikaans the 'teaching language' of the country led to the 1976 Soweto riots, where students went to the streets in great numbers to protest *"the inferior quality of education, the authoritarian nature of school instruction, and the racist content of the curricula."* (Brittain & Minty 1988:12) In the violent confrontations that followed, thousands of students were shot down, *"mostly as the result of police use of firearms."* (Ibid) The government had become the enemy of its people. The following year Black Consciousness Party leader Steve Biko was beaten to death while in police custody.

In this volatile climate, seventeen organisations and two newspapers were banned. Other publications were intimidated into a 'neutral' policy, but as Zwelakhe Sisulu, activist and 1986 detainee said:

"when the newspapers in this country claim to be neutral, they are actually serving the interests of the ruling class. No reporter can be objective and no newspaper can be neutral. For newspapers to be acceptable, they must reflect social reality." (Ed. Unknown 1988:20)

To subsequent criticism of their acts as censorship, the Bureau of Information replied *"We are still in the process of perfecting the free flow of information."* (Merrett 1994:115)

In 1978 B. J. Vorster resigned and P. W. Botha became the new Prime Minister. The following year saw an economic boom. The price of gold soared and trade unions were formed. When Nadine Gordimer's book Burger's Daughter was banned, the author's response was to do nothing.

"I had the right of appeal on my own behalf, against the original committee's decision, but did not exercise this right because I am opposed to censorship and do not associate myself with any tribunal provided under censorship legislation." (Gordimer 1980:2)

Artists were beginning to take a stand. A large number of artists met at a conference in Cape Town in 1979, titled The State of Art in South Africa. At the end of the conference, the participants adopted two resolutions, one of which *"urged artists to refuse participation in State-sponsored exhibitions."* (Editor Unknown 1979) until the government included black artists equally in the educational process. The resulting boycott would hurt financially, but reflecting what must have been in many artists' minds, Breyten Breytenbach said *"the artist who closes his eyes to everyday injustice and inhumanity will without fail see less with his writing and painting eyes too. His work will become barren."* (Breytenbach quoted in Williamson 1989:8)

In 1980, as the gold price soared, the violence in South Africa was spreading. The solemn watch towers still visible today that surround the Sasol refinery in Durban offer mute testimony of government response to an act of sabotage committed there in 1980.

In 1981, artist Benz Kosten created a satirical advertising campaign for apartheid. Early on Sunday mornings he would put up his posters around Johannesburg, and they would be quickly defaced by the police. In 1983 the UDF was formed in Cape Town. The gold price fell. The Broederbond, principle architect of apartheid, began to change its attitude, *"as more Afrikaner intellectuals perceived the need for reform."* (Sparks 1994:71) Effort was expended to resolve the historical dilemma of *"how to abandon apartheid and come to terms with the black majority without losing control of the country and ultimately the national identity of the Afrikaner volk."* (Ibid)

The government proposed radical changes to the constitution, which met with a great deal of resistance from conservative legislators. The ultra-right-wing was expelled from the conservative Nationalist party. Pieter de Lange, chairman of the Broederbond at the time, said:

"We Afrikaners thought we needed many things to secure our future; segregated living areas, no mixed marriages, and all that. But the reality is we can remove the Group Areas Act tomorrow, and it's not going to make a difference. It will mean we will wake up one day and realise that nothing has changed, that we are still all right. That will open the way to asking the question: Why do we need a white government anyway?" (Sparks, 1994:73-74)

Entrepreneur and gaming tycoon Sol Kersner opened the fantastic and incongruous resort of Sun City in the bantustan (self-governing homeland) of Boputhaswana, which only underscored the ironies in this country. As Matthew Krouse, then director of the Market Theatre put it:

"Sun City, that pariah of cultural pariahs on Earth, showcased an endless chorus of nipple caps and g-strings on stage as it sold a string of bad X-rated films on screen. There were black prostitutes and white clients carrying on as though apartheid was at work on another planet." (Sun Times 1988:5)

Sun City was simply a relief valve for those whites wealthy enough to afford such an escape from Calvinist South Africa.

But pressure was coming at Prime Minister Botha from all directions. He needed to maintain a 'strong man' image to deflect his party's criticism. He was backed by people like his Defence Minister, Magnus Malan, who loyally helped Botha evolve "*the total onslaught' philosophy in the 1980's that turned South Africa into a militaristic state.*" (Sparks 1994:106) Out of fear of being cast as a 'volksverraaier', or traitor to his people, Botha backed away from his proposed reforms in his 'Rubicon Speech' of 1985. There had been advance publicity about a 'giant step away from apartheid', but it "*turned out to be a damp squib that disillusioned South Africa's few remaining friends in the world, and triggered the start of serious international sanctions.*" (Ibid:5-6)

In 1983, the Black Sash Movement, comprised of mainly white women opposed to apartheid, issued the first call to end compulsory military service for white male South African citizens. This led to the formation of the End Conscription Campaign, (ECC) by a coalition of human rights, religious, women's' and students' groups. "*For the first time in the history of war resistance, Jewish, Hindu and Muslim groups became involved.*" (Cock & Nathan 1989:314) The ECC established committees in both black and white communities against the SADF (South African Defence Force), "*to publicise the illegal occupation of Namibia, and to support those resisting military service.*" (Cawthra 1986:76)

Such a groundswell of resistance threatened everything the government stood for. The ECC:

"mobilised large numbers of whites in anti-apartheid activities, and was regarded by the black community as making a major contribution to building non-racialism." (Cock & Nathan 1989:308)

The government took such a threat seriously. The justification for official policy was "*as a struggle between 'Communism' and 'Western Christian Civilisation'"* (Ibid:318)" which is why the ECC was a thorn in its side. "*The very existence of the war resistance*

movement challenged these notions." (Ibid: 318) More than that, the ECC opposed other aims of the government. "It also succeeded in inciting people of all races at a time when security force actions in the townships were generating a high level of racial tension." (Ibid:314)

This resistance compounded pressure on a beleaguered Botha, and led him to declare a State of Emergency in 36 districts, in 1986. Out of all the flaring violence arose a relatively quiet, peaceful protest. Children had been out in the street, instead of attending school, coming into increasingly violent confrontation with the police. In the Transvaal, however, with the support and help of adults:

"groups of youths organised themselves to do something about [the rubbish littering the townships]. Using tools 'borrowed' from the family tool box, they went about cleansing debris from the streets and open spaces." (Williamson 1989:88)

The resultant spaces, organised and decorated, became known as Peace Parks, or Peoples' Parks.

All members of the community became involved. The purpose was to improve the quality of everyone's surroundings. Local businessmen used their trucks to haul away rubbish. The children created fences, decorations and constructions to creatively individualise each park. They painted various objects with donated paint. *"Part of the mood was taking political power, expressed in their inclusion of symbols and slogans of resistance." (Editor Unknown 1990:80)* The parks were places for people to socialise, and indulge in political activities.

They had a purpose, however; a statement to make. *"Many symbols recurred in all the townships, and one of the most common was the cannon, built from a variety of debris, all of which pointed to the police station." (Ibid:81)* Police began to fear these parks, with perhaps some justification, because they were arsenals, full of piles of rocks and tires whose use, in a besieged township, they were familiar with. Seen as *"expressions of culture' of the*

people," (Williamson 1989:88) and full of political content, the police and the army "removed all the rocks and tires, and in the process maliciously destroyed many of the parks." (Editor Unknown 1990:81) As Kendell Geers put it, the parks "represented an art form whose optimism threatened to undermine the misery and ugliness of the townships. This was contrary to what apartheid had set out to achieve, and so the security forces had to systematically destroy them." (Ferris, Moore 1990:24) None of the parks survived.

"The legislature has, through some of its own legislation, and the application thereof, given cause for deterioration in [these] racial relations." (Van Rooyen 1987:102) Responding to pressure to make changes, both internally, and from the international community, the government finally repealed the Marriage and Immorality Acts. This eased some tensions, and marginally opened the door to future freedoms.

"Blacks and whites can now eat in the same restaurants, use the same rest rooms, go to the same movie theatres, join the same army, carry the same government-issued I.D. cards, and exchange wedding vows with any partner, whatever their colour or hairstyle." (McCarthy quoted in Editor Unknown 1988:88)

Some felt that changes were moving too fast. Censorship was still employed in an attempt to hold the line. An art exhibition that opened in Cape Town, called Images of Our Time: Toward a New Culture, (1986) was banned under the state of emergency regulations. It later reopened as Untitled. "I was also picked up by the police in 1985 and had the life kicked out of me for suggesting that the government legalise dagga and distribute it in Parliament so that the members could chill out a bit." jokes comedian Mel Miller. (Suter 1988:11) And in 1987 black artist Nelson Mukhumba killed his family and himself as a result of frustration with the white dominated art world. Black artists were beginning to receive recognition, but it hadn't come soon enough for him.

An increasingly paranoid government clamped down even harder on opposition organisations and events. Zwelakhe Sisulu was censured for calling for a 'Peoples' Education' in the townships, to replace the wholly inadequate existing system. The government claimed he "*endangered and undermined the maintenance of public order.*" (Van Wyk quoted in *Editor Unknown* 1988:13) The 1987 Artists Against Apartheid Exhibition in Johannesburg was cut short. Explaining their actions to critics, the Bureau of Information responded with "*There is no ban. It will just not take place until further notice.*" (Merrett 1994:115)

"In the late 1970's political pressure and the rise of black consciousness led to a revaluation of the State of Arts in South Africa. Art promotion became an increasingly political activity." (Skwaran quoted in Lessing 1994:278) Artists were finding their voices. A Human Rights Exhibition opened in Durban in 1988. The same year The Neglected Traditions exhibition, curated by Steven Sack, opened in the Johannesburg Gallery. It was the first major show of work by black artists in the country. "*I regard art as a weapon against injustice.*" (Lucas Seage quoted in Williamson 1989:65)

Events were reaching a crescendo. There was an inescapable sense that change must come. As in the United States, the government of South Africa had used the spectre of Communism as a justification for many of its actions. When Botha accused Bishop Desmond Tutu of supporting Communism through his support of the ANC, instead of staying true to Christian values, Tutu replied:

"My theological position derives from the Bible and from the Church. [They] predate Marxism and the ANC by several centuries. The Bible teaches that what invests each person with infinite value is not this or that arbitrarily chosen biological attribute, but the fact that each person is created in the image of God. Apartheid, the policy of your government, claims that what makes a person qualify for privilege and political power is that biological irrelevance, the colour of a person's skin. That is clearly at variance with the teaching of the Bible and the teaching of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Hence

the Church's criticism that your apartheid policies are not only unjust and oppressive, they are positively unbiblical, unchristian, immoral and evil." (Sparks 1990:279-280)

Apartheid was at a crisis point. It was clear that the policy was not working. Its messianic purpose had dwindled, and most Afrikaners, seduced over time by urbanisation and commerce along with their British counterparts, sought the benefits of a Capitalist economy. In 1989 Botha resigned, and was replaced by F. W. De Klerk as Prime Minister.

In 1990 events began to accelerate. The government continued to pursue clandestine negotiations that had been in the works for some time with the ANC. Eventually Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners were released from prison, and the ANC, PAC and the SACP were unbanned. In an amazing and long-overdue statement, issued at the Synod in Bloemfontein, October 14, 1998, the Dutch Reformed Church stated as *"wrong and sinful"* the philosophy of apartheid. *"The theological justification [of apartheid] is a travesty of the gospel and in its persistent disobedience to the word of God, a theological heresy."* (Dispatch Online 1998) Further:

"The DRC has erred in allowing the forced separation of peoples to be seen within its fold as the demand of the word of God; that the Church should have disassociated itself from it at a much earlier stage, and that any attempt by a church to defend a system of this nature on biblical/ethical lines is a serious misconception incompatible with the teachings of the Bible." (Van Wyk 1991:87-88)

The doors were opening. Fuelled by a hunger to once again participate in the international community so long denied them, artists rushed through. *"As if trying to make up for lost time, the country, with the aid of institutions and galleries world-wide, has emerged as the toast of the contemporary African art world."* (Zaya & Enwezor quoted in Williamson/Jamal 1996:11) And it was freedom of expression that the artists sought, not political confrontation. *"While some still advocate culture and art as weapons, others have*

moved beyond such demands, and are now pleading for better art." (Skwaran quoted in Lessing 1994:277)

In South Africa today artists of all colours and backgrounds can be seen exhibiting together. The emphasis has switched from the liberation struggle to questions of identity. Artists now seek to define what it means to be not white, not black, but South African. It is not yet a perfect settlement, as will be discussed in later chapters of this paper. Still, the atmosphere is ripe with possibility and potential. *"South Africa has within itself the ability to transform both its image and its role. It can lend its energy to the huge continental hinterland north of it. It has that potential, and more."* (Sparks 1989:397)

The next chapter will focus on a discussion of the attitudes of artists, writers and other cultural workers to censorship, and their individual experiences during the years of apartheid.

CHAPTER TWO: *The Arts and Apartheid 1948-1994*

SECTION ONE: *Censorship of the Arts During Apartheid*

The era of apartheid in South Africa was a unique historical occurrence in the twentieth century. Its extreme measures of oppression and repression demanded the utmost in courage and ethics from the people who opposed it. Each individual responded with either bravery or cowardice, activism or evasion, as could be expected in such a situation. Censorship was one of the tools used by the authorities to stifle political and cultural dissent and control public thought. It was this situation, amongst others, with which artists during this period had to contend.

Individual artists sought to find ways of working within, or around, the law, in order to interpret the reality they experienced every day. How they confronted ethical questions raised by the circumstances, and how they viewed the effects censorship, will comprise the substance of this chapter.

Using information gathered from a broad range of interviews and publications, it is intended that this chapter will show how cultural workers responded to the constraints imposed by censorship. There were a variety of responses that reveal and illuminate how individual opinions differed.

During the years 1948-1990, no two artists in South Africa experienced censorship in quite the same way. Fear kept some artists inactive, but certainly aware of what was going on. *"Like most South Africans, we just went on with things, knowing that things were not right, but feeling a little impotent to do anything."* (Verster 1999) Due to the belief held by the authorities that in the cultural domain writers and playwrights had the power to effect a threat to the stability of the state, they were subjected to constant scrutiny and control.

Playwrights and acting troupes were followed, harassed, and arrested. *"They banned artists, and went after them. You were precluded from using the State's theatres."*

(Govender, 1999) Sometimes the harassment was merely verbal.

"We were rehearsing a play out in the so-called 'Bantu' Social Centre, and we were a mixed group. And they [the Special Branch] came and they barged in, and they said 'What are you Coolies doing here? This is supposed to be for Kaffirs.' Of course, that didn't frighten us. We just went on with our work. That's the chance we had to take." (Ibid)

Still, there were times when discretion was the better part of valour. *"Of course we were careful to cover our tracks as much as we could, during rehearsals. You see, I don't believe in leading with your jaw."* (Ibid)

"The government of the day thought censorship was, in reality, good for them, in keeping information that they didn't want people - the general public - to know about. It served them." (Dhlomo 1999)

To speak out invited heavy repercussions. Controversial writers were banned, or like Breyten Breytenbach, jailed first, and then forced into exile. *"So many writers were banned because the government itself saw what they were writing as being effective. [It] reflected their own anxiety about the role of art as a force of change."* (Van Graan 1999) It is not hard to see that there was a racial motive behind government censorship.

"It affects the opportunities of people. It creates better opportunities for white people, and restricts black people, and in that way it restricts black creativity. That means you only get certain forms of art being produced, and that's by white westerners. African art is neglected or ignored." (Van der Merwe, 1998)

There were many facets to censorship, some more subtle than others. One could write, and even publish a good book, but in getting it to the people, there were many hurdles to overcome. *"Huge bookstores quantitatively refused to keep any works by black authors. They would keep the kind of work they liked."* (Govender 1999) Writers questioned just exactly how much influence their work had. *"You must remember the high rate of*

illiteracy and the lack of libraries, so we didn't reach a very wide public." (Gordimer quoted in Godwin 1998:34) Still, the government's actions indicated a high level of fear and suspicion of certain writers, and their possible influence on the public.

The situation was decidedly different for the galleries and the plastic arts. While some visual art provoked a strong response, most of it was virtually ignored. *"The exhibitions were done in the town, the openings were done there; nobody took any notice of it at all."* (Skotnes 1999) This allowed visual artists a certain freedom, a unique opportunity to make statements.

"There was an artist who did work around the Steve Biko event. But he was a white artist. Paul Stopforth. These drawings were supposed to be part of an exhibition that was representing South Africa, going to Chile, I think. But the government stopped this exhibition because they felt this was not the kind of stuff to send overseas." (Koloane, 1999)

Paul Stopforth (b. 1945) was, in fact, one of five artists selected to send work to the 1981 Valparaiso Biennial. Two of the five declined to participate. Because the work by the three remaining artists *"related specifically to local events and circumstances,"* (Berman, 1983:463) the government refused to submit the entries. The Department of National Education said that it *"could not be expected to promote and finance officially the exhibiting of such work abroad."* (Ibid) That, however, was a rare case of censorship. *"I think the visual arts were able to get away with a few things, without being seen as a threat to the State. I don't remember any artwork, at any point, completely banned or completely censored."* (Dhlomo, 1999)

Only actions or ideas that rang government alarm bells caught their attention, especially artistic expressions that were overtly political. *"Specifically accessible to the masses. If it was in book form, radio form or play form, it was censored. If it was in visual art form, it was ignored."* (Botha, 1999) It was felt, and this was largely true, that galleries

only attracted an intellectual, and principally white, audience. *"The venues in which visual arts were practised, the galleries and museums, were very very exclusive forms. People of colour essentially felt threatened by these forms. They didn't feel free to access them."* (Ibid) No visual artist's message spread very far.

"In western capitalist society, the power of the visual arts to persuade and dissuade are very, very minimal. It becomes a luxury pursued [sic] article convened in a very exclusive venue accessible to only a few people who are in fact persuaded already. So the State, in its crude way, doesn't perceive the arts as being a threat in any way." (Botha, 1999)

This meant that *"galleries and museums became repositories of enormous critical reaction to the apartheid state, without actually being censored."* (Ibid)

This was the irony. Artists were able to voice their views, but they were preaching to the converted. No one else was listening. In this way, they threatened no one. *"I think artists are a minor part of society."* (Skotnes, 1999) In fact, it was far more likely that the artists themselves would be threatened. *"I think South African society has been a threat to South African art, in its complete ignoring of it."* (Botha, 1999) The police were always there anyway, watching, because no form of personal expression was above suspicion. *"The term 'progressive' was attached to people who had a visible social profile. Because you were sitting in a position of power, they expected your voice, because you had access to power, to utilise it to speak."* (Ibid)

Reasons for censorship ranged from charges of 'blasphemy', through accusations of political destabilisation, to labels of 'pornography'. It was a time of *"rigid orthodoxy"*. (Verster, 1998) Anyone espousing a view outside the racist, Calvinist regime was the enemy. One example was the 'Rubin' trial. *"They indicted this fellow Rubin for blasphemy, on a series of drawings of the crucifixion."* (Skotnes, 1999) At the small show of drawings in Johannesburg, that opened January 22, 1963, someone complained, the

pictures were removed, and Rubin indicted. *"The one drawing that they picked, it was the crucifixion, and below the cross was a white man with a Sten gun, and a big black fellow with a spear. They were doing each other to death beneath the cross."* (Ibid)

Harold Rubin (b.1932) was defended at his trial by advocate George Lowen, who had fled Nazi Germany in the 1930's. He was one of a small handful of attorneys opposed to the apartheid government. His case was supported by testimony from Cecil Skotnes, actor Richard Daniel, writer and poet Uys Krige, and Heather Martiniessen, professor of Fine Art at the University of the Witwatersrand. Judgement was handed down March 11th. The government had been trying to promote the recent censorship bill, which was opposed by 117 cultural workers. *"Almost the entire creative force of painters and writers banded together and objected to the launching of the censorship bill."*

(Skotnes, 2000) The government decisively lost its case. *"I think the Rubin case was really a stopper to a hell of a lot of programs."* (Ibid) Though the case proved to be an embarrassing defeat for the government, it revealed the censorial mind at work.

Some visual arts exhibits were considered dangerous. One exhibition at the Market Theatre in 1978 was closed down by the Special Branch for being *"too subversive"*, (Koloane, 1999) as it concerned a demand for *"the release of detainees."* (Ibid) And of course, overt sexuality was a threat to the views of the day. *"The back of the Sunday paper always had these sort of racy pictures, with black bars over the breasts of busty women."* (Hipper, 1999) This is similar to contemporary censorial practices in American newspapers. *"You went to watch films like The Rocky Horror Picture Show, and the guy in front of you that's watched it thirty-five times already, and three weeks later it'd get banned. I mean, we were living in a rather absurd society."* (Ibid) Authorities were compelled by their

philosophy to control the flow of information. *"It had to be, if you are a tiny, tiny group trying to rule over - it's got to be authoritarian."* (Verster, 1999)

Many artists felt it was necessary to respond to these restrictions. They felt they could not keep silent, and would not allow such laws to restrain their expression.

"Images played a crucial role in the production of a collective political imagination. Politically charged work was both necessary and considered effective." (Siopis quoted in Atkinson, 1999:251) Speaking out was seen as establishing the moral high ground. *"Using one's skills and experience in whatever way possible to conscientize people, to express outrage, to record censored histories and so on were amongst the more pressing and cultural artistic orders of the day. (Ibid)* Artists with integrity could not present an untrue picture of things. In response to criticisms of his paintings of 1988, which reflected the dark and anxious times, Andrew Verster said: *"These are not happy times, and I cannot make happy works...I wonder if it is possible to make heroic paintings today."* (Verster, Source Unknown, 1988)

Some felt compelled to speak out against what to them seemed an utterly stupid application of the strict apartheid ideology.

"I worked for the South African breweries once. At one marketing meeting I pointed out that they didn't have a single [advertising] poster showing blacks consuming beer. Almost cost me my job. Even at that time the ideology was so strong, good marketing principles didn't apply." (Govender, 1999)

It was an extremely important ethical issue for artists.

"To remain silent, or not to speak of the 'other', in the face of outrageous injustice, would have been immoral. Retreating into academic formalist abstraction or sanitised imagery - would have been unconscionable." (Sieman Allen quoted in Atkinson, 1999:35)

Artists did what they could, on whatever level they could, sometimes at risk.

"My wife and I both made contact with black people. At times when very few white people would do it, we did many things that were against the law." (Van der Merwe, 1998)

To speak out required bravery, and the time had come to do so, if one was a responsible person. *"Apartheid erected a clear logical moment, a moral, critical moment for artists to respond to."* (Botha quoted in Becker, 1998:24) It was vital at that time to inform people of what was going on around them. It remains equally vital today.

"[Unemployment, street crime] were not better in the old days of the apartheid regime. They were kept out of sight." (Gordimer, 1999:21) Making something visible or 'transparent' was an active stroke against censorship.

Black artists, further marginalized than white artists, and with even fewer resources available to them, had to be more inventive and resourceful. *"Black artists couldn't exhibit their work in galleries, because of various reasons. They couldn't afford framing, and couldn't present their work properly, so galleries did not want to show their work."*

(Koloane, 1999) In addition, only certain kinds of art received any favourable response.

"[black artists] were derided for producing 'township art', set upon for experimenting with abstraction, while protest art drew fulsome and uncritical approval." (Bristowe, 1992) Also:

"The problem is that because there were no formal institutions at that time, the black Africans were not allowed to be enrolled in the technical colleges or universities." (Koloane, 1999) This made the struggle of black artists, seeking the same opportunities for self expression as white artists, more difficult.

The mechanism of racism effectively eliminated the black voice. Some black artists experienced censorship and banning. Bongiwe Dhlomo said that after working late at night at Technikon Natal, *"on a number of occasions, I would leave the prints that I had printed overnight to dry, because I was working on rice paper."* (Dhlomo, 1999) She speculates that her imagery, drawn from the things she saw during the forced removals, must have upset some of the daytime Technikon students enough to react

with destructive hostility. *"On two occasions,...they communicated even clearly...twice I found these two pictures squashed, or shredded."* (Ibid)

Others experienced sudden arrest. *"The police would just arrive, and you'd just be carted off. And you'd be interrogated, simply because you set up a basis to talk with people who you've been separated from."* (Botha, 1999) Such assault, either on his work or his personal freedom, created a feeling of pride. *"It would have meant, in a sense, that I was being effective as a creative person. Whatever I had to say was serious enough or would be taken seriously enough to be muzzled."* (Ibid) Attempts to speak were stifled and repressed. *"A couple of posters that I created were banned not only for the distribution, but for the possession. It was a way of celebrating 'anti-apartheid'."* (Van Graan, 1999)

Some artists tried to avoid heavy censorship by living in seclusion, keeping a 'low profile', or going into hiding. Members of the gay community were targets. *"We were under threat the whole time, because it was illegal. So you lived a hide-and-seek life. We knew we were pariahs, and that was it."* (Verster, 1999) When someone like Andrew Verster did try to speak, he found his work banned. *"I wanted simply to, in a matter-of-fact way, talk about the male as object, as opposed to the female. I wasn't trying to make a big political statement, and I was kind of surprised at the result."* (Ibid)

The apartheid system encouraged and actively created betrayal of artists by their colleagues. *"I came across spies all the time. This young girl came in tears to see me one day and said she had just had a falling out with her boss. It was the Secret Police."* (Ibid) Such a confrontation cost Verster, and affected others as well. *"I lost my job through that. And the students that supported me lost their degrees. They could not sit for exams."* (Ibid) There was no one that you could trust. Old friends and long-time colleagues would suddenly exhibit a previously unseen face.

"A friend of mine, one of the lecturers, was along with the Secret Police. And I'd known him all the time I was at the university. He and a friend, when I was in Johannesburg, broke into my house. He staged a burglary, for which somebody eventually went to jail." (Ibid)

The repercussions went far beyond the borders of South Africa. People aligned with the struggle encountered problems and unfair treatment, based on false impressions.

"In 1982, in the aftermath of the black consciousness [movement of the] '70's,...black separatist colleagues unceremoniously revoked [Gordimer's] invitation to speak at an African literature conference in Texas." (Roberts, 1998:25)

Nevertheless, those who were politically involved reached out to do what they could.

"My moment was in 1977 when I was approached by a student who had just come out of prison, who'd been banned after that, Rashid Amir. There was a young guy giving up everything for what he believed in, and we got close, and that was my baptism, really." (Verster, 1999)

"There's a private history too in my case including a garage where I was once duffed up as a communist and a 'kaffirboetie' for opening a car door for a black woman. It was a hateful moment, but a perversely joyous memory." (Beckett, 1998:35-36)

Creative people did keep their focus on the duty to speak up, to tell others what was going on around them. Circumstances were not always pleasant, and the task not easy. But the community of South African artists, perhaps more so than elsewhere, adopted and accepted the ideal that art must serve its community. Perhaps that is the result of the oppression caused by such censorship. Arts communities in other countries which have not experienced a similar situation, are not likely to share to the same degree the belief in the necessity of social responsibility.

CHAPTER TWO

SECTION TWO: Attitudes of Artists Towards Censorship

It is hard to believe that any artist would support censorship. The practice of art is heavily involved with personal expression, even though such personal expression does not always find favour in society. *"As [Jaques] Sellschop [MTN Corporate Relations Group Executive] puts it, art that charms some might well offend others."* (Atkinson, 1999:5) Thus the issue of censorship is a sensitive one, and the role of the censor in society very controversial. *"I would say ninety nine percent of the artists, whatever their language was, [were] against censorship. Especially among the writers who were, in the majority, Afrikaaners."* (Skotnes, 1999) Censorship is an unacceptable restraint to the artist.

"It's like deflecting attention from the real issues. And I think those pro-censorship lobbies are completely stupid. They're the most vociferous lobbies, and everybody's most terrified of opening their mouths against them." (Hipper, 1999)

However, the cultural and social atmosphere in South Africa has long been a conservative one. Understandably, a few artists agreed that some restrictions or guidelines were necessary. Sometimes it is simply a matter of taste. *"I find anything crude, really crude, objectionable. Mindless violence I object to. But I would never suggest that they be banned."* (Skotnes 1999) Courtesy should dictate how some things are presented to the public. *"The only thing I think that makes any sense is limiting the distribution and display of images, because that's fair enough for some people who don't want to see."* (Hipper, 1999) Where to draw the line is the question, and it is not one with an easy answer.

"Censorship can be affected in various ways. Instead of advocating a blanket kind of censorship, we should go that route...sort of scheduling in such a way that it is not readily accessible to sensitive minds, impressionable minds." (Govender, 1999)

Other artists, notably those acting as concerned parents, would accept some limits of access. *"It is a good thing actually to not give access to underage children - not to see*

that movie." (Dhlomo, 1999) This is not seen as direct censorship, and the difference is clear.

"It's not exactly the same as censorship where the journalists could do their interviews and write their stories, and those stories would be blacked out. That is blatant censorship. You say 'my child should not read this book at this age. She or he will read that book when the time comes.'" (Ibid)

It is a question of the age of the viewer, and involves the responsibility and judgement of the parent. *"You know your child's way of receiving information, you can actually let them see it."* (Ibid) It's not a blanket censoring, and it does not last permanently, *"...knowing that at a certain stage they will read it."* (Ibid) Dhlomo would primarily limit her children's access to material she deems too violent or vulgar.

However, many artists questioned did not think that even such censorship should be permitted. *"It shouldn't be up to anybody else to choose on my behalf. The moment that you give me the right to vote, you also acknowledge my maturity to decide what should be right for me."* (Botha, 1999) Any form of restraint is anti-democratic, and linked to, or could easily lead to, autocratic control of information. *"The political monitoring of the individual is something that I am completely against."* (Ibid)

In particular, identifying pornography as a civil danger is a very suspect reason for establishing censorial precedent.

"Pornography has never harmed society. I also think it probably keeps a lot of violence pacified. Instead, much harm has come from censorship and Puritanism. I think a lot of the violent sexual crimes in South Africa is in direct relation to the violently anti-body, anti-sex attitude that was forced on everyone here." (Hipper, E-mail 1999)

Called into question here are some of the social assumptions made by this society. It is the artists who are questioning the assumption that pornography warps young minds.

"I don't mind if a twelve-year-old kid goes, and for fifteen years of his or her life they masturbate themselves furiously, to kind of adjust that central fantasy. I saw some real ruddy shit when I was a twelve-year-old. That's why I don't care what you see. Human beings have a great capacity to absorb visual stimulation, contextualize it, and not have it so-called derange them." (Botha, 1999)

Anti-pornography assumptions may be spurious. Crime and rape statistics linked to pornography *"don't exist. They're not true... They're ideological fabrications."* (Ibid) It is a difficult question for everyone, and therefore society has no right to impose its strictures on anyone. *"It's such a wide field, it's a minefield."* (Koloane, 1999) Artists should thus be allowed the maximum of freedom of expression.

"It's like going to watch a blue movie. People who make the movie have their own view as well. In a democratic society I feel they have the right to portray whatever they portray, even if to other people it might look demeaning." (Ibid)

Favouring censorship poses a problem for an artist. *"I think that being in favour of censorship is a contradiction."* (Bailey, 1998) Some expressed the opinion that the government should avoid trying to control self-expression.

"Things like open sexual cohabitating, or whatever, or crudities of that sort; I wouldn't object, but just ignore it. I don't think there's anything that demands the whole huge government or parliamentary attack on these things. I do think that sort of thing can be handled under home conditions." (Skotnes, 1999)

The fear is that the censorial mentality can set some dangerous precedents. *"If you create a precedent where you can implement censorship, then you acknowledge that censorship is necessary there, and then you introduce it here, and then you think it's necessary there, and so we go on."* (Botha, 1999) To put it bluntly, *"Censorship is a form of Fascism."* (Bailey, 1998)

"What we need to do," urges playwright Ronnie Govender, *"is to expose people to the more beautiful things in life, as much as we can."* (Govender, 1999) It is a question of how society is oriented to its own culture. *"If there were censorship there, and the censorship said*

'Look, out with this kind of shit, this low-life kind of shit,' rather, let's say how best we can bring in good stuff." (Ibid) Artists, Govender feels, bear much of the responsibility for that.

Chiefly, he is concerned about the low quality of most commercial fare. *We must aim for work of a higher kind of quality, of a better quality, of a higher calibre. Work that deals with issues on a different level."* (Ibid) But even Govender, with his desire to remove 'highly commercialised stuff', draws the line at who can say what exactly must go. *"I don't think it would be right, now, for anyone to make hard and fast judgements in terms of what is violent and what is pornographic."* (Ibid)

The desire for some kind of censorship can arise out of specific social fears. *"We always feel protective about our children, because if you talk about censorship, immediately people think about children, protecting children."* (Koloane, 1999) But does fear justify employing the hand of the censor?

"From some quarters will come indignant and righteous utterances about 'filth' and 'ugliness'. Those who make these statements must be prepared to defend not their views on art, but their moral values in a society where racial and sexual injustices are rampant." (Arnold, no date)

Censorship is a tool that can be used by an authoritarian regime to prevent any social or political change. And change is what can be most frightening to people. *"The only justification that one can have is that one wants to keep society the way it is. One is afraid of change."* (Hipper 1999) People comfortable with the system and willing to permit any method necessary to maintain it, would necessarily wish to prevent dissemination of any contrary viewpoint.

"Not only are you geographically separated from people, but you are threatened in your social and emotional intercourse with people of the 'other'. And that is why the idea of censorship is a very profound thing, and it underscores the whole cultural production of a nation." (Botha, 1999)

Therefore, it seems that censorship is primarily triggered by *"Fear. Only that: fear. Fear is always irrational; fear of the unknown, fear of losing your power."* (Verster, 1999)

There are many things that South African society is fearful of. *"Fear of bodies, dreadful fear of bodies, and sexuality, and fear of changes, losing control, and fear of something that's different than oneself."* (Hipper, 1999) It's a fear of anything that looks strange or threatening to someone.

"Censorship is a product of essentially having adopted a limiting view of what it is your psyche can dissipate. People implement and seek censorship in order to establish kind of power vectors, or ways in which you monitor the individual. That's really the basis for it. It's all about power." (Botha, 1999)

The basic assumptions that people have are particularly vulnerable to external threat. *"When that is challenged, then that also challenges peoples' basis on which they have their own identities, their ideas of who they are. Censorship is a mechanism to protect one's particular way of life."* (Van Graan, 1999) In the Middle Ages in Europe, blasphemy against the teachings of the church was deemed enough of a threat to society that it was punishable by death. This is how potent fear can be, and how it leads to censorship today. It comes *"from those Christian beliefs that it is important that structures are put in place that uphold those values."* (Koloane, 1999) That fear is present in all religions, in all societies.

The sensitivity of the issue of censorship is obvious to artists and actors, journalists and performers. It directly affects their livelihood, and the pursuit of their careers. But it is questionable whether anyone else shares the same concern. *"To creative people, censorship is more of an issue than maybe to the consumer, to the people who will read or receive the work."* (Dhlomo, 1999) So long as their own sphere of awareness remains unchallenged and undisturbed, it is hard to make people share the concern. *"In South*

Africa, there is a lack of criticality in people. The assumption is that most people don't know what they're choosing anyway." (Botha, 1999)

For most people, the former government's policy was what they grew up with, and all that they knew.

"Most people were probably subscribed to the conservative notions morally, that the government had. So they might have supported some of the things that the previous government might have implemented, in terms of censorship, in the name of morally protecting the country." (Van Graan, 1999)

People in the townships especially, did not have the tradition of visiting art galleries. So if something in an exhibition was identified as obscene, *"If you told them this thing was banned because it showed an erection, they never want to bother going near a gallery."* (Koloane, 1999) They would be less likely to be concerned with censorship. *"Their minds are not as open as somebody who is used to arts and creativity; whose mind is more open and has more empathy to life."* (Ibid)

There might be other reasons why most people generally are unaffected by these issues. *"People are ignorant of visual art through the fault of the media and the market structures of the art world."* (Bailey, source unknown, 1988) Most often it takes something specific to arouse peoples' interest. *"It is only when it strikes some particular part of their lives, whatever their lives might be, or whatever group it might be, there'll be a reaction."* (Skotnes, 1999)

Controversy, as we have seen, is a product of the censorial mind. If something upsets you, you regard it as the problem. If attitudes were more tolerant, less things would be labelled 'objectionable'.

"I am often astonished at the difference between my impulses and how they inform the work, and how the final work is seen. I think that people tend to over-interpret images. For them, it doesn't correspond to any known image of society, hence

the lack is found in the images, rather than in the viewer." (Kentridge quoted in Atkinson, 1999:IV)

When an artist creates something that stirs debate, it can reveal the edges of intolerance. As Andries Botha (b. 1952) states:

"It becomes controversial when you start asking the right questions. When you ask difficult personal questions, or you ask problematic civic questions, the tendency is for people to wish to monitor that, to structure that in a way that it can hopefully disappear. Remove the problem." (Botha, 1999)

These are the social limits commonly desired by a society when:

"something threatens their existence, their mode of life, their way of life, their understanding of who they are. When people feel threatened in those kind of ways, they try a whole range of ways to resist whatever the threat is. And censorship is one mechanism, one way of doing that." (Van Graan, 1999)

After all, such difficult questions go against the grain of society. *"The experience of the artist [isn't as] popular, even [coming from] the same side of the community."* (Dhlomo, 1999) It is important to remember that censorship is no benign thing. Artists see it as destructive to the creative process, and a major autocratic tool in the sealing off of debate, expression, and social change.

Does society then need controversy? Michael Van Graan (b. 1959) believes that: *"Insofar as society is a dynamic one, if one wants to make progress, both intellectually and morally and other kinds of things, we need to be constantly challenged."* (Van Graan, 1999) But one must be cautious of controversy for controversy's sake. Controversy itself can act as a negative factor. As Bongiwe Dhlomo says:

"I'm actually not sure if controversy is useful, or that we should find other ways, without controversy, making art and artists have a voice. I don't think there is a role for controversy in art. When controversy is created, then it helps to have a very strong base of why it is created. Otherwise...it actually makes us artists look very unimportant in society." (Dhlomo, 1999)

Not every artist agrees with Dhlomo. Mark Hipper (b. 1960) says: *"I don't think controversy is a bad thing. I think controversy causes interactions. If we all had the same opinions, there'd never be any controversy, and we'd never learn anything."* (Hipper, 1999) In fact, in the regular pursuit of the artist's job, controversy may well be unavoidable.

"Artists are generally alive to life around them, and they see these contradictions, and they mention, they state these contradictions and the very statement of these contradictions brings them up against oppressive regimes, repressive regimes. It's inevitable. If you're an artist in society, you will of course come up against these contradictions." (Govender, 1999)

And controversy is involved with the responsibility that rests on the artist's shoulders. In this respect, Botha agrees:

"It relates to this issue of how you respond as a compassionate individual to a sense of social and moral process. Because if you take it on, you become public. Risk is implied with that. You don't court risk, but risk is something that is part of the issue that you will have to take, as a by-product of your visibility." (Botha, 1999)

During the apartheid years following World War II *"when there was outright censorship, it had gone to the ridiculous extreme of banning 'Black Beauty' and 'Othello'.* (Govender, 1999) Such bannings seem ridiculous now, but the effects of such actions have far reaching consequences. Hipper believes:

"We've had years of censorship, and now they're trying to argue that we've got the highest sexual crime statistics in the world, and child rape and that we're going to solve this by censoring. We've had censorship. That's what it's caused. There is a direct correlation between censorship and what we have now, because we are afraid of sex." (Hipper, 1999)

The society that tolerates censorship cannot avoid being affected by it.

"Censorship is a limitation of the individual initiative. (Botha, 1999) It separated and divided South African society, and "from that, the conservatives...that promulgated such laws actually took the country a hundred years back in terms of understanding and creativity." (Koloane, 1999)

Ultimately censorship destroys all creativity, and leads to *"the introduction of mediocrity."* (Bailey, 1998) It separates people and intimidates them. It inhibits them from action. And under apartheid, *"most of the artists couldn't expand or explore their work further. And some of them were reduced to doing marketable work. Because most of them had families, and they had to earn a living."* (Koloane, 1999) Most artists view censorship as having no redeeming qualities or value whatsoever. Andrew Verster sums up the issue of censorship when he says *"Bad. Always bad. Because it narrows the mind, it closes the mind down. I can't see a single advantage of it. Not one."* (Verster, 1999) These attitudes emphasise the on-going relationship between artists, who feel stifled by censorship, and governments which feel the need to control what is accessible to the public. Such uneasy relationships are not unique to South Africa, but are be found the world over.

CHAPTER TWO

SECTION THREE: Artists' Responses to Apartheid Censorship

In South Africa during the apartheid era, mixing and cooperation between artists from different race groups was discouraged by a wide range of laws. This situation however did not deter artists. Nadine Gordimer notes:

"My own natural preoccupations always have been in the arts, in which race, or colour, or even language differences were an irrelevance in common enthusiasms, the realm of imagination that couldn't be annexed, even by apartheid...I rejected, and actively opposed racism. I played my small part in the liberation struggle, and I know that as a result, I am South African." (Gordimer, 1999:21)

Artists found ways to work together, because of their shared interests, and *"the common denominator was art. John Roome, Jannie Jordan, and Andries Botha, all those people, I got to know them. We got to know each other, because of this common denominator, as friends."* (Dhlomo, 1999) Some artists took a more pro-active stance, and out of a desire to spread the interest in art, sought ways of working together. During the 1980's, Andries Botha and colleagues in Durban established the 'Community Arts Workshop', *"a learning facility for black people who didn't have more formal learning situations."* (Botha, 1999)

The work that was produced under these restrictive circumstances was shaped by the times. *"I think what informed our work was the consequences of the day-to-day degradation of humanity that took place as a result of the political chaos in South Africa."* (Botha quoted in Becker, 1998:24) Sometimes, artistic statements could be loaded and obvious. *"This image is particularly powerful in 'Alleenspraak in Paradys', where the female form is constructed from tyre rubber. The material has many connotations, especially in the South African context."* (Brown, no date) Tyre rubber referred to the practice of 'necklacing', where rubber tyres were placed around the victim's neck, doused with gasoline, and set alight. At other times the artwork spoke only to those who knew what was going on.

"There's an artist called Ezrahim Legaen, who just passed away recently. He did a series based on the [Steve] Biko [murder], but he used the chicken symbol; the anatomy of a chicken, in various dismembered forms. That's a metaphor for the Biko event. So there were various ways and symbols that the artist used which couldn't then be read overtly by the system at the time." (Koloane, 1999)

The work didn't always meet with popular favour and support. Nevertheless, in spite of controversy, esoteric metaphor, or blunt depiction, artists continued to produce their art. The overwhelming concern was the act of making art itself.

"At the time, just being an artist was already an act of defiance. The townships were specifically built as a labour pool for industry, so who the hell were you to try and do something that was out of the constants of what townships were built for? So I think being an artist or being a musician was going against the grain." (Ibid)

It automatically placed artists on the fringes of society. *"You were a rebel, because you were not actually conforming. An act of defiance, in a sense." (Ibid)*

Many artists worked covertly, continuing to produce art while escaping the abusive notice of the South African Police Special Branch. *"We had the underground radio...and an underground press being established. Back in 'Radio Freedom', for instance, which had been broadcast from outside South Africa into South Africa, you could pick it up if you had a sufficiently sensitive radio." (Botha, 1999)* 'Radio Freedom' was an illegal operation outside the borders of South Africa, used as a means to get the word to the people. But such defiance could be dangerous. *"One of the black men that worked at the University eventually disappeared. And eventually we found out that he'd been arrested for operating a clandestine radio station." (Ibid)* Defiance could even result in death. Speaking of an event that occurred in John Vorster Square, Johannesburg, on October 27, 1971, Govender says *"This was about the time when [Achmed Timol was] thrown from the building on the top. They were throwing people from the sixth or seventh floor, even higher. [Timol] died;*

a great activist." (Govender, 1999) But if you were sharp and quick, you could get away with some things.

"I did this musical satire called 'Offside'. The Special Branch approached me and said 'We want your script.' And I said 'but we don't have a script.' 'What do you mean, you don't have a script?' 'No,' I said, 'This is all extempore. [sic] We get up there, and then we sing a song, and then one thing leads to another, and I leave it up to the actors.' The play was structured in such a way that it appeared to be spontaneous, of course." (Ibid)

Ronnie Govender and his colleagues mounted plays using a facility at the M. L. Sultan Technikon. All went well. They were relatively invisible until "one day, one of the newspapers gave us a very nice review." (Ibid) He and two of his assistants were summoned to the office of the Technikon Principal, and subjected to much verbal abuse. His response: "I stopped him short and I said 'You have just libelled me. You have defamed me in the presence of these two people. I am going to sue you.' Very, very calculated, very cold." (Ibid) Retreating, the principal "started speaking to me very reasonably about this." (Ibid) Govender was content with scoring a limited victory, and this allowed him to continue his work.

"I think there were a number of us who weren't intimidated by the oppressive measures taken by the State. We were not 'cowed' by it. We just went along, doing our work. If you could do things in different ways, and get across what you wanted to say to the public, I think you've achieved something." (Ibid)

There were ways to express what needed to be expressed, even as the authorities tried to restrict free expression. Some images on T-shirts were banned, so that one couldn't wear them. Enterprising artists then printed

"the image at the back of the T-shirt, not in the front, where normally the image sits. Usually it's placed on the chest. So they were on the back, so a person could wear a jacket and also wear the shirt, and go to a rally. And everybody they would then take all these things off, and have the image. The artists were helping empower the black community in the struggle." (Dhlomo, 1999)

Artists were struggling to make their art, as well as just simply survive. The public needed to be informed about what was happening around them; information kept from them by government control. Namibian Artist John Muafangejo, targeting no audience in particular, but feeling the need to speak, felt impelled to send his *"necessary and urgent messages to 'someone out there'."* (Munitz, no date) He hoped that his art would find its audience.

Everything was tried in the face of massive difficulties. Distribution channels were rigidly controlled. *"Some of the books that were published never saw the light of day."* (Koloane 1999) The government's racist policies created economic censorship as well.

"The townships [didn't] have any facilities or resources. So we tried some venues where we knew people would come, like churches or schools or community halls. We were doing most of these makeshift exhibitions, just to bring some kind of awareness to the community." (Ibid)

In a bid to get the message to the people, via images on T-shirts and posters, *"we actually used symbolism. We also used language that was understood by the people that we were talking to."* (Dhlomo 1999)

Other artists opted for direct, outright resistance, seeing no need (or perhaps feeling they had no right) to remain covert, or hidden. Koloane remembers that:

"My art training I got from an artist called Bill Ainslie, and he had a few students, and I was one of those few students. I was the only black student at the time, during the apartheid era, and the laws did not permit for a black to be part of, you know, an integrated school. I was there discreetly...but Bill Ainslie finally wanted to defy the laws, and he felt that education was everybody's right. So he allowed me to [attend] the classes, but there were always security police hovering around." (Koloane, 1999)

Bill Ainslie (1934-1989) did what he could.

"Ainslie's vision will be remembered. He launched the Johannesburg Art Foundation from a series of rented houses. In the sixties it was revolutionary - a non-racial institution in the heart of Johannesburg. He was involved in setting up other institutions like FUBA, FUNDA, and the Alexandria Art Centre. He co-founded the Tupelo Art Project with David Koloane in 1985." (Bristowe, 1992)

Sometimes it worked, and worked well.

"The Ainslie Studios later became a non-formal Art Centre. They got bigger premises. This became the first non-formal integrated art centre in the country, where black and white students could become integrated. [The Government] realised there was nothing harmful, although they were always present, always raiding the place, harassing Bill Ainslie and his wife." (Koloane, 1999)

Such support for integrated schooling and experience had echoes elsewhere in the artistic community. *"I think all the time artists really tried. At the height of the State of Emergency, we could do workshops, and mix completely. There were artists coming together, and artists from the States, and Canada." (Dhlomo, 1999)*

There were, of course, flashpoints, where artists' efforts met with serious official resistance. One had to stand one's ground.

"In 1987, in one of our workshops, we had an artist from Canada, Wayne Peacock. [The police] came and actually took us - a huge fight, with these two white people, Bill Ainslie, director of the Arts Foundation, and Renthie Gompile, the guest and leader of the workshop. And I couldn't take it any more. I just stood up and said 'We are working here in a group of artists, and none of you as the white world of South Africa has ever bothered to know we exist. All of a sudden we are your black artists. And I think you should make a point of contributing, or a point of keeping quiet'." (Ibid)

In this and other confrontations, the sheer audacity of resistance cowed the authorities, who weren't always clear on what to do about artists. Ronnie Govender:

"We finished the show, it was about half past eleven. There was a huge car park, and I opened my boot, and we had a couple of beers. And for just about fifteen, twenty minutes enjoying the night. Suddenly, like a military exercise, these vehicles came along; caspiers and the works. Surrounded us! And these guys got out, as if they'd cornered a bunch of terrorists, gangsters. They were pretty aggressive. The language that was used was pretty aggressive, and I got angry. I lost my cool. I said 'Go do your damndest! You got absolutely no fucking right to talk to me like that.' We were all off to the police station." (Govender, 1999)

Artists refused to serve the state. *"[Kendell] Geers is one of 143 young men who made a public statement in August 1988 refusing to serve in the South African Defence Force."*

(Williamson, 1989:69) The costs of such overt resistance could at times be high. As already mentioned, some artists paid with their lives.

"As many as ten of my [Community Arts Workshop] students were murdered, or disappeared. People that worked on the staff were held, and interrogated. Harassment took place by the civic authorities constantly; electricity being switched off; being summoned; being visited by health authorities." (Botha, 1999)

The Community Arts Centre in Durban was eventually closed down by the authorities.

The struggle was wide-spread, influencing all major artists. "[Breytenbach] helped start the publishing firm Taurus, which printed books by Breytenbach and Brink, and others who were likely to be banned, selling the books by mail, rather than through bookstores." (Olivier quoted in Goodwin & Schiff, 1995:300) In response, the government used every trick, every rule, every scheme it could to silence dissent, including what the artists themselves produced.

"It wasn't funny when the prison drawings were used against Breytenbach in his second trial. 'To prove I was continuing to be subversive and trying to overthrow the government by subversive means.' I think that was very funny indeed." (Breytenbach quoted in Bell, 1998)

"Credit belongs to Cecil Skotnes, whose sterling effort at the Polly Street Art Centre in Johannesburg between 1952 and 1960 were largely responsible for awakening an interest in art among black youths." (Williamson, 1989:17) The Poly Street Centre was established in 1950 as a cultural centre by Mrs. E.K.Lorimer. In 1952 Cecil Skotnes (b. 1926) was appointed to the staff, and through his efforts, the Centre had 40 students by 1954. It was "the launching pad for the first large-scale venture of urban black South Africans into the plastic arts." (Berman, 1983:338)

Another example was the Cultural Centre established in rural KwaZulu Natal on the famed battleground of Rorke's Drift. Established in 1962 by Peder and Ulla

Govenius, two Swedish Lutheran missionaries, it moved to its present site in 1963.

Azira Mbatha, (born 1941) who became an internationally known print maker, was one of the founding artists. This centre is famous for its creativity and its weavings.

No artist that was interviewed agreed that controversy or censure was the goal of his or her actions.

"One doesn't go out there deliberately to be controversial, or deliberately shock. If it happens, in the way that you observe things, that some people are shocked, that's par for the course. Your work has got to in fact speak for itself." (Govender 1999)

Controversy was a by-product of the impulse to inform the populace. *"I decided there were obvious risks to be taken in your cultural production. There was a high level of this, where it was a calculated risk." (Botha, 1999)*

"You've got to realise that you're in a country that has enormously different opinions. You've got fundamentalism on all sides. You don't want to offend anybody." (Verster, 1999)

Artists felt at times compelled to alter their vision, their expression, due to circumstances. They were reluctant to admit that they censored themselves, even though *"There was a lot of self-censorship, to avoid being censored." (Dhlomo, 1999)* There were serious, pragmatic reasons for doing so. *"We stopped our run ourselves, even though it was a full house right through. We did that because some of our guys were working, you see? And it was part time, and they had to come back to their work." (Govender, 1999)* Direct confrontation was dangerous, and usually foolhardy. *"We ended up doing things not in the straight-forward manner that we are able to do now." (Dhlomo, 1999)* Some disagreed that their actions were self-censoring. *"There are a hundred ways of expressing something, but there's only one that's right. That's not censorship, that's the creative process." (Verster, 1999)* Self-censorship could even be seen to serve a political function.

"You had no contact with the international world. This idea of self-censorship, not allowing yourself to have a debate with the outside world; it was the progressive political movement, to call for an international and a national cultural and economic boycott, to disempower the apartheid state. You couldn't have any public acknowledgement and interaction and discourse as a South African within the international community." (Botha, 1999)

So some voluntarily desisted. Not normally targets for repression, they became liable if they spoke out. *"I felt that self-censorship was important. Not important, but necessary."* (Dhlomo, 1999) In post-apartheid times, artists have the luxury to satirise themselves censoring themselves.

"At the moment, I've got an exhibition on with little pictures of erections, and various things like that. Over each picture, I put a little curtain. And it was above children's height, so if you wanted your children to see it, you had to lift them up. And if you wanted to be shocked, you could lift up the curtain. I said 'tongue-in-cheek' self censorship. And the thrill of lifting the curtain was more exciting than the work underneath." (Verster, 1999)

Some artists, however, felt no need to take any such action. *"It never crossed my mind to censor myself. I've never been any part of any thought process on that. And I can't see that I would. If I made a series of drawings that included almost everything, I would make the drawings."* (Skotnes, 1999) And yet artists felt torn by ethical questions.

"The galleries, the museum system, and especially what was happening politically at the time, demanded a kind of redefinition of the artistic practice, where the symbolic response through the artwork to the moral and social injustice became very problematic." (Botha, 1999)

Each artist individually had to balance the problems and the risks, and find the way to come to an answer to the questions. There was no one set way. *"I'm sure there must have been many instances of self-censorship, as well as cases of strategy in the case of 'what is the bigger picture?' And as an issue of principle, do we kind of silence ourselves?" (Van Graan, 1999)*

As an institutionalised ideology, apartheid demanded more from the South African cultural workers and artists than would be common in a more stable, more egalitarian atmosphere. It was seen as the artist's job. It was the reason for making art.

"It's not good enough, in an immoral time, for you to just be 'good'. You've got to 'do'. You're working and you're taking a risk, to validate your existence in the privilege, in a very problematic time. Everyone in South Africa paid a very enormous price." (Botha, 1999)

CHAPTER THREE - *Art and Censorship in the Post-Apartheid Era: Selected Case Studies*

SECTION ONE - *Attitudes and Responses to the New Dispensation*

As part of a study of censorship and the arts in South Africa, it is important to question the current situation, and to interrogate possible developments in the future. The experiences of artists during apartheid are valuable for comparison with censorship in the present day. Thus what these artists have to say about conditions today is as vital to a discussion of censorship as what they reveal about the past. *"If you are involved in the arts, you are involved in the arguments involving censorship."* (Dhlomo, 1999)

The end of apartheid has brought a number of changes for South African artists. *"It's a bittersweet thing; more ways better, and more complex and worse than before."* (Van Graan, 1999) Though there is still currently a censorship board, its make-up is more representative of the various facets of the country's diverse cultures. And because the current South African constitution protects human rights, *"there is a debate now at this moment in time. Here is a leadership that has committed itself to an open society, to an accountable society. I don't think we are going to get to the repressive kind of regime that we had in the past."* (Govender, 1999) Across the artistic spectrum, optimism and hope for the future is the predominate view.

"There's really no political censorship going on," said Andries Botha. *"The fact that [South Africa] responded to that control with prosecuting a very liberal constitution, is a sign that South Africa doesn't want that kind of monitoring."* (Botha, 1999)

Cecil Skotnes *"can't see any political censorship being carried out...can't see censorship being of a validity at all."* (Skotnes, 1999) And this illustrates, as Beezey Bailey (b. 1962) puts it, *"that South Africa is a free country."* (Bailey, 1998)

The historical miracle of a peaceful transition from apartheid to majority rule is not lost on the artists.

"It's very significant emotionally and spiritually for me that it had to be black South Africans who exercised redemption rather than retribution. It was very significant." (Botha, 1999) And looking at contemporary art exhibits, "you can really see that the climate has changed a hell of a lot." (Verster quoted in Bell, 1997:13)

"We've had four years of absolute wonder," Verster says. "I think we've gone an enormous way...we haven't been let down by the ideas that I still believe in...By and large, I think we are getting there." (Verster, 1999) Artists feel freed from the fear of official retribution for speaking out.

"The conditions in which we now have to pursue Democracy are slightly better than the conditions were under apartheid... We no longer have to face detention, we no longer have to be harassed. I'm very disturbed by a much more complex condition in which you seem to be a critic or a dissident, or whatever; you're labelled a 'racist' or a supporter of the past regime." (Van Graan, 1999)

Perhaps such freedom makes some people nervous. *"That's for many people a problem, because people find freedom a real, real threat. (Verster, 1999) Of course, the situation isn't all that simple and clear cut.*

Outside pressures on artists to conform and obey have a dampening effect. *"It's much more difficult to be a dissident in a context where internationally and otherwise, everybody wants this South African miracle to work." (Van Graan, 1999) Partly it is a problem of funding. More money is available with fewer strings attached to it. But in practice, some artists are still fearful of upsetting the current government, and thus affecting their access to the funding. "It's probably a lot more self-censorship now than it was before." (Ibid)*

Younger emerging artists don't share the same urgencies of their predecessors. Increasingly coming from middle-class backgrounds, students both black and white are *"more interested in what's happening in the global debate about visual art, than the way in*

which that global debate is relevant to local politics." (Botha quoted in Becker, 1998:25) Andrew Verster feels that *"there is so much art today that doesn't deal with any issues."* (Verster quoted in Bell, 1997:13) and Botha is sceptical about South Africa as a global player, when he says that *"You then have to look at the reality of South Africa as a place that is in fact not that."* (Botha quoted in Becker, 1998:25) But for Breyten Breytenbach, *"People take notice of what's happening in the cultural world these days."* (Snyman, 1998:117)

In fact, at this point in history, South African artists are able to define themselves. *"South Africaness now is an itinerary (and a topography) of becoming in the making."* (Breytenbach quoted in Ollman, 1999:113) For Andries Botha, being in South Africa *"is everything I've dreamed about. It's everything I've wanted. I'm happy. I've never been happier. The air is full of oxygen."* (Botha, 1999) He loves the freedom to do whatever he wants. *"I can hang out with everyone. If I want to hang out with a person of colour, or make love to her or whatever, I can just do it."* (Ibid)

Most artists feel liberated in terms of their work. *"Personally I feel free to do what I do, and what I do is write about contemporary South Africa as a playwright."* (Van Graan, 1999) The door is open for all to express themselves freely. *"At this stage of the game... even the extreme right has the right to have its say."* (Govender, 1999) David Koloane echoes these sentiments when he says *"I feel more free, yes, or I wouldn't be talking to you now."* (Koloane, 1999) But for him, beyond the fact of social freedom, *"for an artist, the most important thing, more than censorship, is the opportunity to create, to have an environment that is conducive to creativity."* (Ibid)

While Bongiwe Dhlomo agrees that things have changed, she feels that *"things could have changed even better, or even more, if the new government had actually embarked on training."* (Dhlomo, 1999) For her, it's not enough that things are open and free. There

must also be education. "*Within five years there hasn't been any training that is going to help teachers.*" (Ibid) And she can only conclude that "*the change at the moment is really based on the people who are practitioners anyway.*" (Ibid)

But conservative attitudes continue to exert strong influence on society. For example: when Minister Marlene Ferreira went to preach at a DRC (Dutch Reform Church) in the Free State, old attitudes were very much in evidence. "*We came to sing for God,*" said one unidentified Afrikaner of her sermons about the Bible and tolerance. "*[the Blacks] have got their own church.*" (Producer unknown, 1998) Ferreira spelled it out. "*Some of them told me bluntly it didn't matter what the Bible said...they wanted to be exclusive...they cannot function outside of it.*" (Ibid) After all, it would be difficult to expect so sudden a social change to produce a mass transformation in attitudes. Fifty years of apartheid and a four hundred year history dominated by Calvinist ideology won't simply roll over and disappear. The censorial mind lives on.

"*Part of the problem,*" says Mamphela Ramphele, Vice Chancellor of the University of Cape Town, "*is being those seeing themselves as occupying the moral high ground.*" (Ramphele quoted in Morris, 1999:9) People are more accustomed to group thinking, she said, and are "*too tolerant of totalitarian impositions.*" (Ibid) This is visible in instances such as the June 1998 issue of Femina magazine that was removed from the racks at Checkers Food Stores. This was the result of the magazine publishing some nude fashion photos that were deemed "*offensive to the majority of shoppers.*" (Mercury Correspondent, 1998:3) No passage of law or change of government will automatically, immediately or effectively eliminate such historically evolved attitudes. That requires the long, laborious, and attention-demanding process of education.

Another example concerns members of the censorship board, who classify sex videos in the belief that some videos are so harmful that *"even if acquired by a consenting adult, would encourage rapists,"* (Streek, 1999:6) in spite of much international research and evidence to the contrary. Even important entertainment figures can't escape the closed mind:

"Outraged prudish viewers have forced the SABC to pull the sensual commercial promoting the film 'Devil's Advocate', because of the split-second in which actress Charlize Theron showed a little less than all for the camera." (Unaccredited, 1998:2)

Ms Theron in 1999 was the focus of yet another controversy concerning a TV advertisement she made concerning awareness about rape.

The claim of negative and destructive effects caused by explicit material is a debatable one. Pippa Green believes *"The inherent ignorance of would-be censors aside, it begs another question: do dirty songs and pictures increase the average man's propensity to rape? The evidence is inconclusive."* (Green, 1996:46) In an American research paper, concerning the effects of pornography, it was found:

"there is a higher correlation with such macho magazines as 'Guns and Ammo' and Field and Stream' than there is with girly magazines like 'Hustler' and 'Penthouse'." (Ibid) Further, *"in states dominated by the religious right, women suffer more discrimination than in those states where people have the right to choose."* (Ibid)

In fact, argues one letter writer, censorship itself is harmful. *"Sexual miseducation is a grave danger to our children,"* says Trevor Davel, (Davel, 1998:24) where *"casual attitudes propagated by movies used to be offset by images of love and care."* He doesn't trust words to do the job. *"Sex is an intimate and loving act...and this is the image that our children need to see...Hiding sex, making it a dirty activity, takes away the love, and makes sex a tool for casual gratification."* (Ibid) He further states that *"a parent who censors such [loving] images cannot be approached by a child for sexual advice."* (Ibid)

In the 'new' South Africa, Bongiwe Dhlomo is *"finding myself against the same kind of wall."* (Dhlomo, 1999) Under this kind of common attitude, artists are perceived as a threat, even by the new regime. *"The new guys do not know how they can use us."* (Ibid) But it may be more than that. *"I have witnessed first-hand the expediency of morality in South Africa, the easy changing of sides and positions without guilt or remorse."* (Geers quoted in Williamson/Jamal, 1996:58)

"When we think about the apartheid government, we actually find that a number of things that are coming up, they are coming back on us." (Dhlomo, 1999) And it's true. With the old entrenched mindset, such attitudes *"can come back into the fold, subtly at first, and then they can actually take roots, and become normal again."* (Ibid) She warns us that *"the traditional conservatism of apartheid as a whole comes back, rears its head."* (Ibid) As Mike Van Graan put it, *"I think basically what we are in is just a different phase in the struggle for Democracy. The ending of apartheid was only that; the ending of apartheid. It won't be the coming of Democracy."* (Van Graan, 1999)

The forces of censorship (the censorial mind) may not be far enough away in the past as many people would find comfortable. ANC MP Ned Kekana, in an attack on the media that he typified as 'liberal', said *"Government intervention was needed to ensure a more pluralistic press."* (Brand, 1999:2) And in a statement right out of South Africa's apartheid past, (See Chapter 1, Section 3 of this dissertation, Merrett, 1994:115) Minister of Defence Patrick Lekota said, when speaking about party members criticising each other, *"this was not, as some Philistines would want us to believe, a Stalinist suppression of opinion. Rather it was control of the flow of accurate information."* (Sole, 1999:6) But such attitudes, it must be said, are not widespread. The Supreme Court of Appeal passed down a judgement recently in favour of the freedom of the press, which said, in part:

"If we recognise, as we must, the democratic imperative that the common good is best served by a free flow of information, and the task of the media is the process, it must be clear...that the media has a duty to provide information." (Soggot, 1998:2)

"There's no censorship now," says Andrew Verster, (Verster, 1999) and he should know, because "I'm actually on the appeal board of the publications board." (Ibid) What the board actually does is categorise publications and films, and offer "...simply advisory things, saying 'this thing should be restricted to...' or 'parental guidance' and things like that." (Ibid) In its own informational pamphlet, the board defines its mission "to help promote respect for South Africa's diversity by ensuring that adults can make informed choices whilst protecting children." (Editor unknown, 1999:2) Verster sums up his attitude as a member by saying "I would, if I were totally free, and I'm not, censor nothing...I'm all for people making up their own minds...I think that anything goes, I really do...unless you hurt someone else." (Verster, 1999)

There's no way to avoid the reality that it is "the utterly casual way in which sex is used for pleasuring that gets Christians agitated." (Evans, 1998:20) It is not unusual. "Reactionary public attitudes to sex are pretty standard fare on our continent." (Smith, 1998:9) This is reflected, principally, in the way that people talk about sex. Alex Sudheim calls sex "one of the most profoundly mysterious aspects of the human experience." (Sudheim, 1998:3) It is mysterious largely because public discussion of sex is so difficult for most. That is an educational problem, and as Janet Smith goes on to state, "Necking is not 'undesirable.' It's deeply desirable, because it's what kids do...they won't manage to stop beautiful young things, Christian or not, from having sex." (Smith, 1998:9)

It comes down to a definitional problem. Sex offences can be described fairly accurately: "Oral, anal or vaginal penetration or even simulated sexual intercourse under coercive circumstances can constitute rape." (Streek, 1999:6) People, however, seem to have

less clear of a vision of what constitutes pornography. The above identified actions fit most definitions but other elements are often included. Simple nudity, in a series of posters of various couples kissing, exhibited and published during Valentine's Day, 1998, by the national music chain Musica, caused an extreme reaction. (Figure 1) Complaints described the posters as *"immoral and disgusting, vulgar and capable of enticing people to rape and sex."* (McCoy, 1998:5) even though the posters *"showed neither genitals or nipples."* (Ibid)

Something as simple as a painting showing an erect penis was offensive enough to provoke its removal from an exhibition at the Durban Art Gallery in February, 1998. Reshada Crouse, the painter, said *"It reflected a die-hard sexist trend, in which male genitals depicted in their role as sex organs remained taboo."* (Philp, 1998:3) *"Besides, I don't see it as pornography."* As Brenden Bell, director of the Tatham Gallery said, *"It seems to be an unacceptable symbol of lust."* (Ibid) In an article by Khadija Magardie, she seems to confuse pictures of naked women provocatively posed in men's magazines, or what she calls *"the tits and ass formula"* (Magardie, 1999:6) with the meaning of pornography. She says it bluntly: *"Erotica, a form of sexual art that can be mutually beneficial for both sexes, is the same thing as pornography."* (Ibid)

Such censorial sensitivity extends to speeches on television. It seems, however, to be selective. One is still treated to the scatological and sexual crudities in television movies and sitcoms, and everything appears to be permitted, *"except for a few obscenities and 'God's bleeped out under censorship lingering from South Africa's Calvinist past."* (McNeil, 1997) There are countless examples of this to cite, but it goes further than that. On a June 5th 1999 showing on the E-TV channel at 8:30 PM, of the movie Passage to India, a scene showing an event in a cave was excised. The scene was a critical one in which the whole

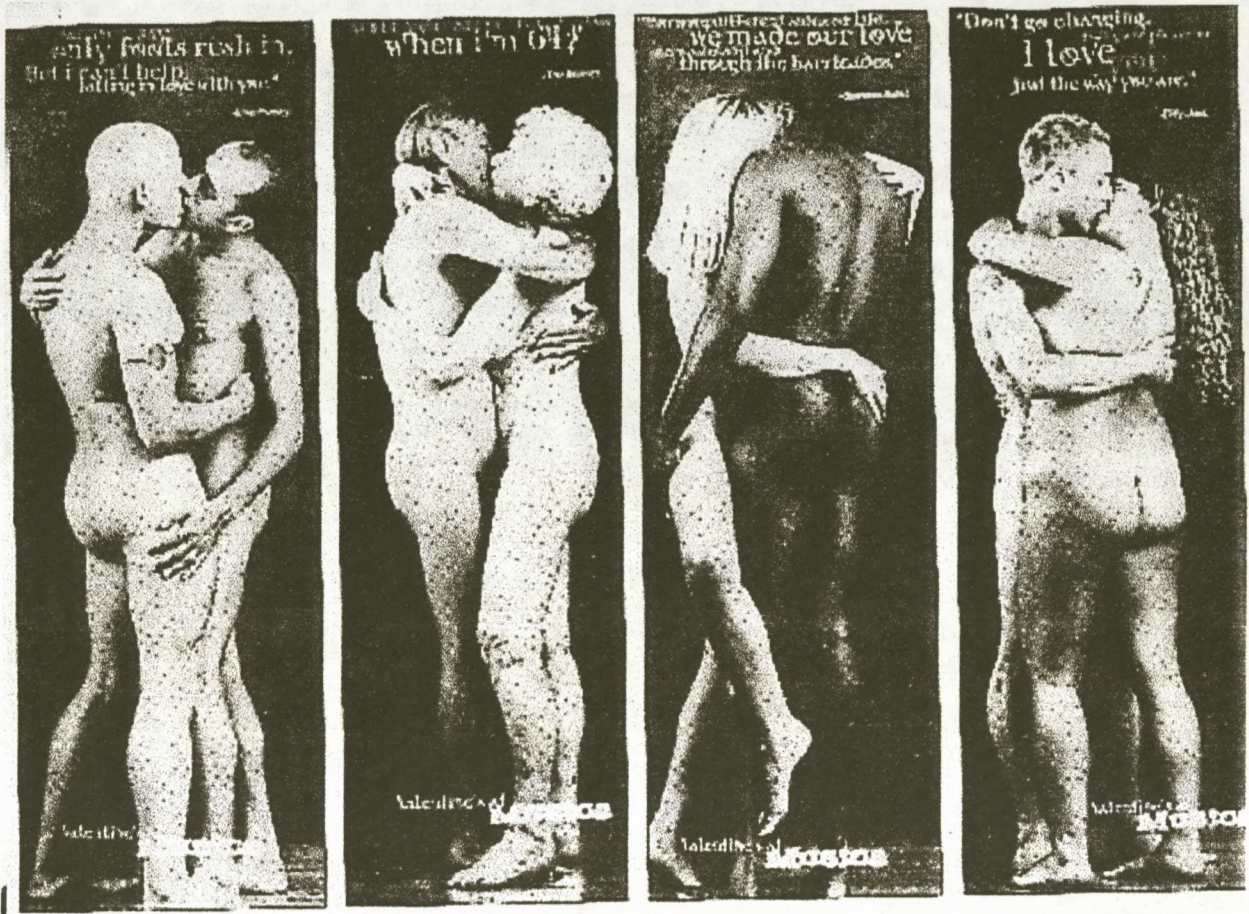


Figure 1. Musica Advertising Posters, 1998

point of the movie rested. It involved the possible rape of a white English woman by an Indian male. *"Why even show the movie?"* asks Gerri Williams. (Williams, private conversation 1999) *"If the whole point of the movie is a supposed rape, why even show it if the scene is removed? Is it just to show beautiful scenes of India?"*

A similar inexplicable excision occurred in the showing, (M-Net channel, 18 March 1999) of the British film Secrets and Lies, also concerning the rape of a white woman by a black English soldier. Why the censors saw fit to remove the scene, the emotional heart and purpose of the film, remains a mystery. One can suspect that some racial agenda is at work here, perhaps an unhappy residue left over from apartheid.

It verges on hysteria. Chris Roos, a teacher in the town of Cullinan was fired from his job in June 1999 for using the story Unto Dust, by Henry Charles Bosman, in his class. It featured the word 'kaffir', a derogatory South African term for a black person, akin to the American term 'nigger'. Black parents complained when they saw references to it on test papers their children brought home. *"I explained to them the word is insulting, illegal, racist and offensive, but also told them why it was used then, and in the book."* Mr. Roos said. (Monare, 1999:4) Several other black people called the local newspaper, saying they were *"infuriated by the Cullinan parents' over-reaction."* One caller said *"That was very stupid of them. The story is directly opposing racism."* (Ibid) Perhaps it is, as Pieter-Dirk Uys says that *"The new democracy has put old enemies to pasture, and new enemies to work."* (Dirk-Uys, 1999:10) And as a travelling comedian and satirist, he can say *"as long as language, the greatest weapon of confrontation and reconciliation, is firmly kept in the mouth, and not given the power of a bullet, children will not resent their colour or race or religion."* (Ibid)

Some current examples of censorship controversies involving South African art and artists can best illustrate current attitudes. University of Stellenbosch artist Mark Coetzee hung an exhibition during April-May 1998. In it he recreated the "symbolology of power". (*Pedra Lama, catalogue*, 22 April 1998) This symbolology (sic) related heroic monuments to an erect penis. (Figure 2) "*Censorship once again raises its ugly little head*," reported Chris Roper, (*Roper 1998:4*) A previous exhibition where Coetzee had married images of a penis with an open bible, had "*raised the predictable ire of the religious right. His work was damaged, and eventually taken down.*" (*Ibid*) This time there was no hesitation. "*Just before the opening, his work was removed.*" (*Ibid*) Some students ensured that the catalogue of the show was obtained and circulated, but the damage was done. He had been censored.

"As usual," writes Roper, "*the debate is not about who is offended by what...it's about who has the civic power to excise what offends them.*" (*Ibid*) Coetzee's work was not done as an irresponsible exercise, but carried with it some meaning.

"Coetzee is no 'enfant terrible', naively attempting to create a furore by his overt use of sexual imagery...A clear equation is posited between the erect male member and the columnar monuments of nationalism. And other power structures. Thus the use of male genitalia is entirely justified as part of a visual critique of the collapsing masculinist values." (Pollack, 1998:22)

"It was not the issue of its contentiousness which got the work removed," said Gregory Kerr, professor of Fine Arts at Stellenbosch, and curator of the show. "*Had Coetzee hung the work by the Monday, instead of hanging it at the last minute on the day of the exhibition, (Wednesday)...[the PR department] would have prepared themselves for the onslaught.*" (Kerr, 1998:26) Kerr had to decide between popularity in the art community, or protecting the art department and its students. "*The results of Coetzee's (we believe publicity-seeking)*

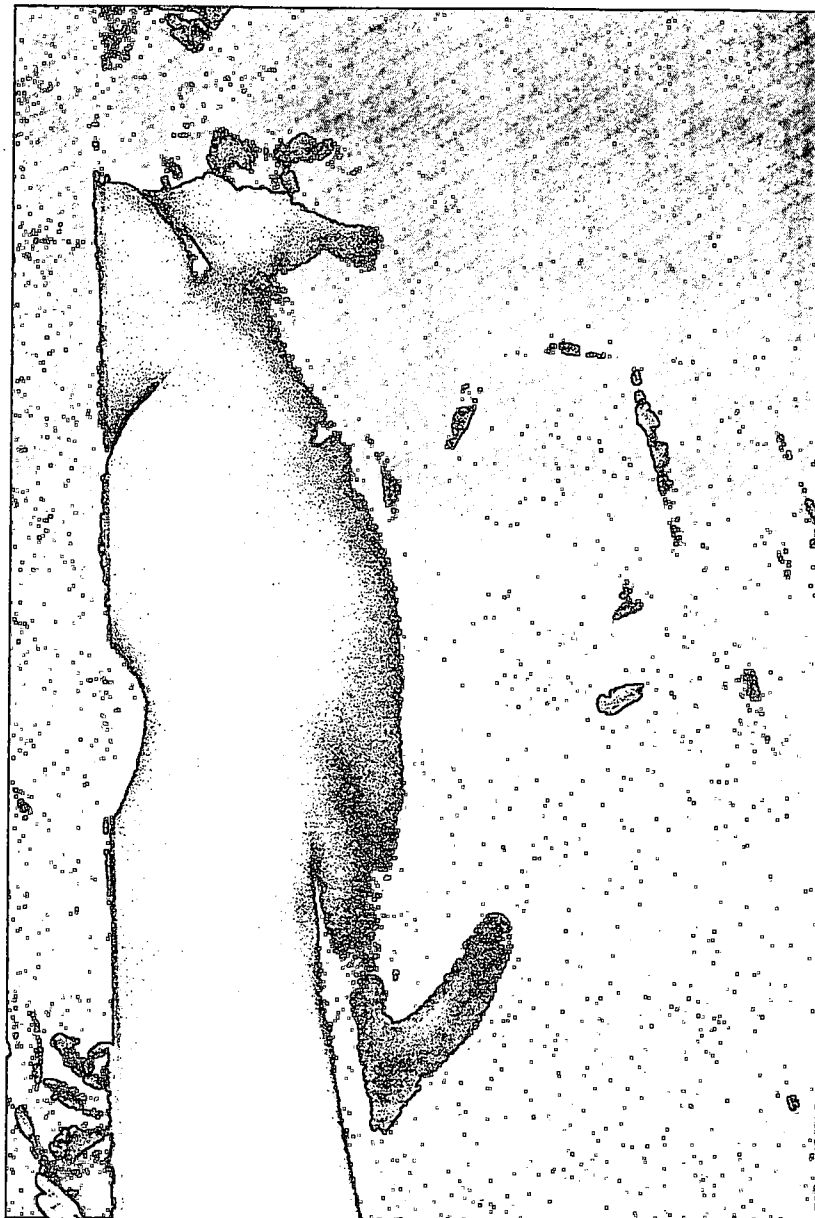


Figure 2. Triptych, oil painting by Mark Coetze, 1998

tardiness was to ultimately censor himself and to do a grave disservice to the interests of art."

(Ibid)

More fortunate, perhaps, was Asiya Swalleh (b. 1973), University of Durban Westville Fine Arts graduate, with her degree show Principles of Lust. (Figure 3) She might have gone unnoticed had she not "*chosen to exhibit a series of woodcut prints so erotic as to guarantee outrage in the more conservative sectors of Durban's cultural melting pot.*"

(Shevlin, 1998:2) Her reason for this exhibit was "*to depict the sensuality that, she feels, although an integral part of her culture, has been sanitised and sidelined by colonialism.*"

(Atwood, 1998:22-23) Swalleh is quoted as saying:

"Many members of my community feel that sexual exposure is Eurocentric, but in reality it has always been part of our culture...it is believed that all things sexual are a Western import...it is my hope that my work will help to enlighten and educate my community." (Ibid)

While her motives are supportive of feminism and female empowerment, and express her belief that "*a desire for sexual variety is natural,*" (Meijer, 1998:3) many members of her Muslim community, including fellow students, reacted with shock, accusing her of simply creating pornography. "*Sex is as normal as any other biological function,*" she insists, and yet "*this aspect has been forgotten in the raucous debate surrounding pornography.*" (Atwood, 1998:22) The controversy surrounding her exhibit prompted playwright Ronnie Govender to create his one-act theatre piece, Back to the Faith, which concerned "*the impact that religion has on decisions that individuals have to make.*" (Unaccredited, 1999:12)

Sex and pornography are not the sole controversial issues in South Africa today. Racial and gender identity remain sensitive flash points. In 1991, before the 1994 election that brought an official end to apartheid, artist Beezey Bailey upset the art



Figure 3. Principles of Lust relief prints by Asiya Swalleh, 1998

world by entering a work in the Triennial under the name of 'Joyce Ntobe'. He used "a very African name; the name of an African woman." (Putter, 1992)

"The joke", of course, is that signed by Ntobe, such works would probably be perceived differently, and received more favourably - which has already happened, and which is a valid point that the artist makes." (Munitz no date)

Andrew Putter concludes "Beezey Bailey may be full of crap a lot of the time, but no one can say that he's not adept at preparing temptingly tasty food for thought." (Putter, 1992)

His manipulation of the situation in order to expose the bias of selection committees echoes the work a year earlier of artist Wayne Barker who came to public attention in much the same way. A "crude, highly decorative work" that he made, while awaiting his more serious painting to dry, was entered in the Standard Bank National Drawing Competition in 1990 as a work by a man named 'Andrew Moletsu'. "The former was rejected and the latter was accepted, raising a number of embarrassing questions," (Geers Exhibition Invitation 1992) Obviously racial identity is still a sensitive issue.

In what might be seen as a 'Rite of Passage', several female artists have used themselves as objects in their own works, frequently naked. For example, Kym Burmeister (b. 1978), third-year student at Technikon Natal, created a video of herself strolling naked under a clear plastic dress through the aisles of a grocery store. (Figure 4) It was exhibited at 'Red Eye @rt', a monthly arts celebration at the Durban Art Gallery, August 6, 1999. It was described as "a provocative video installation by 'gender terrorist' Burmeister." (Unaccredited, 8/6-12/99:11) Burmeister says "women are seen as commodities, just like groceries...I'm challenging the accepted notions and empowering myself as a woman working with nudity." (Quoted in Bell, 1999:17)

She is only the most recent in a series of similar displays in recent years. Bernie Searle (b. 1964) is a Cape Town artist whose Colour Me works at the Cairo Biennial early



Figure 4. Performance Piece, Video Still, Kym Burmeister, 1999

in 1999 caused a storm of controversy. It was *"a reaction to the artist using herself, stark and confrontational, lying naked covered in carefully sifted spices."* (Murnik, 1999:5) *"Placing myself or my body in the work,"* she explains, *"exposes other aspects of my identity. For example, gender...therefore [it] involves a process of claiming."* (Ibid)

Similar sentiments were voiced by Durban artist Carol-Ann Gainer (b. 1967), described by Suzi Bell as *"a seriously talented artist and post-modernist babe"* (Bell, 1998) For an exhibit at the NSA Gallery in June Of 1958, she displayed herself in the pose of the nude in the Manet painting Olympia (Figure 5) because, as she said,

"posing naked addresses the issue of who owns what. At first I was going to hire someone to model at my exhibition, but then I felt that would be exploitative. I decided I should rather expose myself." (Ibid)

In Cape Town, in 1997, Tracy Rose exhibited herself in the same way, *"by displaying her naked body for consumption."* (Roper, 1997:12) Her display aimed to make the point: *"the commodification of women takes two forms. The first is using them as slave labour,"* (Ibid) and more to the point, *"reduces women to the status of things to be looked at, where the primary association must be concerned with gender."* (Ibid)

Political sensitivity has also taken its toll of producers of art. Mike Van Graan, magazine editor, left his post as advisor to the Minister of Arts and Culture, Science and Technology, because:

"it had become too compromising to be associated with a department whose mismanagement ...and general incompetence at senior levels was beginning to undermine the very vision and principles articulated by the arts community," (Van Graan, no date)

He then began his critical magazine Cultural Weapon. Funding for it, provided in part by the Netherlands embassy, was finally withdrawn, after the Director General of the Department of Arts and Culture, Science and Technology, Roger Jardine,



Figure 5. Performance Piece, photograph, Carol-Anne Gainor, 1998

allegedly spoke to the Dutch Ambassador. The magazine had been critical of Mr. Jardine.

It was a *"disgraceful act of censorship,"* Van Graan claims. It was part of a pattern that showed the Director General to be *"anti freedom of expression, to be threatened by the arm's length principle."* (Ibid) Van Graan admits the death of his magazine has impacted on the arts community. *"People say they really miss it because it was something...in which they had access about information, and to critical opinion about different things that were happening. Now there's a complete dearth of that."* (Van Graan, 1999)

While the above cases are serious and of great importance to the various artists involved, the very real impact of current attitudes and censorship can be more effectively gauged if one looks more closely at some landmark case studies. These will be examined in the following sections.

CHAPTER THREE

SECTION TWO - *Mark Hipper and Issues of Child Pornography*

In 1998, Mark Hipper, a lecturer in Fine Art at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, opened an exhibit of his work titled Visceral. It was shown at the Rhodes Gallery as part of the Grahamstown Arts Festival, and it ignited a storm of censorial furore and controversy. The show contained "*sexually explicit images including three paintings of a young boy holding his erect penis.*" (Roper, 1999:16) (Figure 6) The reaction to the exhibition heated up when:

"The 'Weekend Post' called it a 'Kid Porn Outrage'. Maureen Barnes condemned it without actually seeing the show. Columnist Robert Kirby advocated censorship, and Deputy Minister of Home Affairs Lindiwe Sisulu flew in to back up hysterical calls for banning." (Ibid)

It thus became a "*controversial test case for the two-month-old Films and Publications Act.*" (Sulcas, 1998:16)

The National Council on Child Welfare alleged that "*vulnerable children were used in sexual poses*" and that the exhibit would "*promote, contribute, and justify the sexual exploitation and abuse of children.*" (Ibid) The controversy raised two issues. One concerned the difference between art and pornography. The other was the far more sensitive issue of taboos concerning a child's sexuality. Hipper was cleared of the accusations of child pornography when the review board found that "*no live child models were used,*" and that "*the exhibition does not promote the sexual abuse of children.*" (Ibid)

This did not satisfy social worker Pearl Bletcher, who said that "*in the context of her work, she couldn't see Hipper's art as anything but an incitement to sexual behaviour and an infringement on the rights of children.*" (Ibid) Lindiwe Sisulu, herself a strong supporter of child pornography legislation, complained that legal restrictions prevented her from

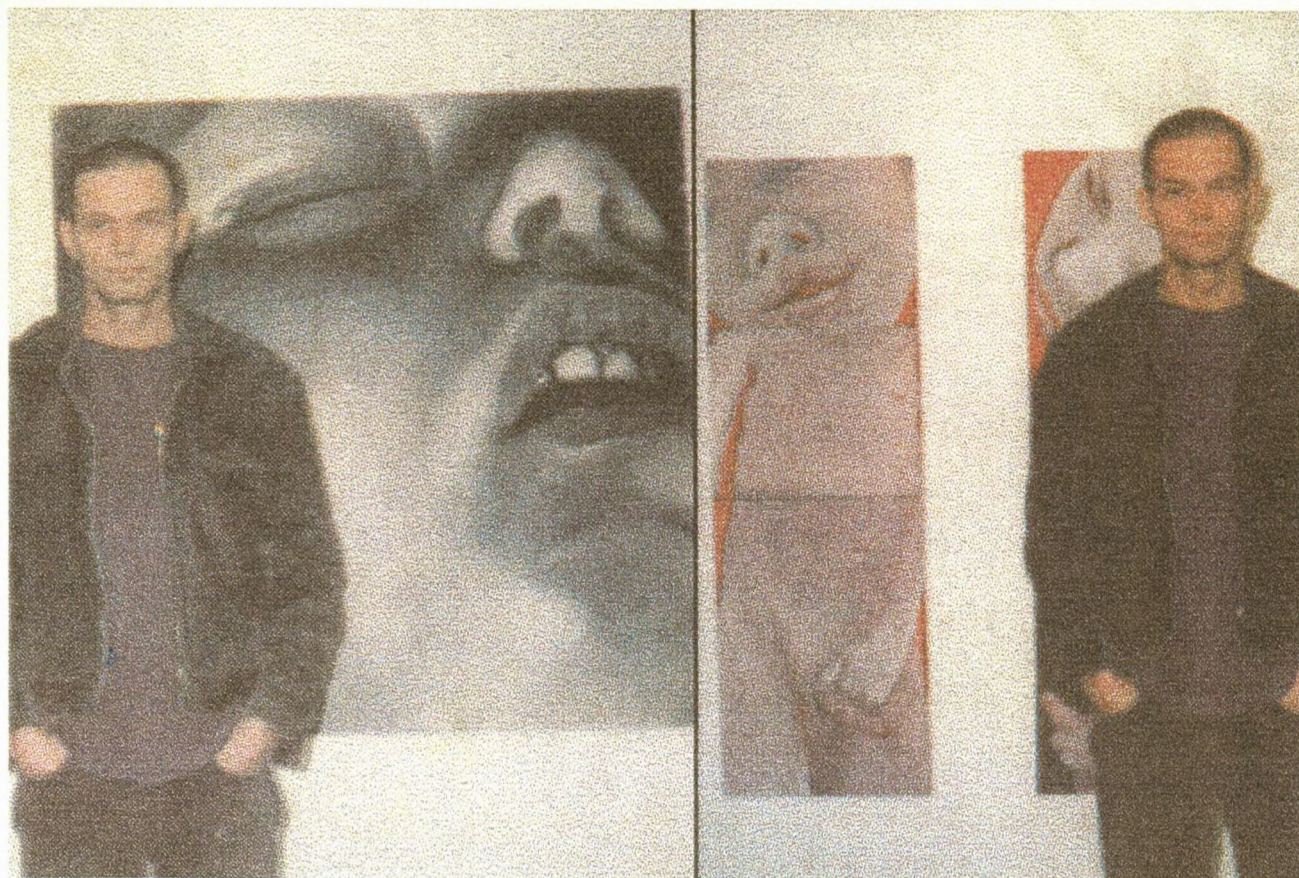


Figure 6. Visceral, oil paintings, Mark Hipper, 1998

taking action against the show. *"I could instruct the police to remove [the exhibition], but the next day Rhodes University would sue me for breach of their constitutional rights."* (Sisulu, 1999:19) While bona fide art was exempt from censorship laws, the exception, according to Sisulu, was *"where it portrays a person who is under eighteen...in a lewd display of nudity, with genitals in a state of arousal or taking part in a sexual act."* (Ibid) According to her, *"children come first, freedom of expression second."* (Ibid)

Robert Kirby expressed his opinion about *"what a lot of people believe is little more than child pornography going as art."* (Kirby, 1998:10) Criticising a defence of Hipper's show by Nana Makaula, head of the new censorship board, he claimed that she *"effectively preserved [the show's] delights for those who wanted them in the first place."* (Ibid) These were people he typified as *"diseased adults who take their pleasure from child pornography."* (Ibid) Not a writer given to understatement, he went on to include Hipper's show in the category of *"Sleazy exhibitions by third-rate artists."* (Ibid) Pearl Bletcher, herself not much less restrained, confessed *"I'm foaming at the mouth. It is absolutely absurd; it's disgusting. The age restriction of twelve was a joke...we are shocked and horrified."* (Tribune Correspondent, 1998:4)

Lindiwe Sisulu remains strong in her opposition to the law. *"The definition of pornography, in our legislation is wrong...but unfortunately right now that is the only working definition."* (Sulcas, 1998:5) She makes it very clear that *"for me, in terms of the legislation, my interpretation is very different. I still think it is child pornography."* (Ibid) Hipper, defending himself, responded by saying that:

"Regarding Sisulu's remark...she is very obviously unhappy with what she sees as a failure or flaw in the law, which prevented her from taking me to court, and prevented her from acting on her personal whim, to perceive my art as pornographic. It bodes little good for the future application of this law." (Hipper, E-mail 1999)

Nana Makaula did view Hipper's show, and regards the pieces as *"bona fide works of art. I didn't associate it with child pornography."* (Makaula quoted in Morris, 1998) As she put it, *"we should be allowed to be independent and use our judgement in these matters."* (Ibid) While Sisulu is authoritatively saying *"I am saying to you now, and I will say it tomorrow, we do not allow child pornography in whatever form."* (Dodd, 1998:3) Makaula argues that *"the board is constituted of people with senior degrees. We are intelligent people and it is an embarrassment to us and to her that she has made this public statement."* (Ibid) Defending the independence of her board, she said *"we cannot take instructions from her. It is wrong for her to make public statements on what the board should do. It is totally unacceptable."* (Ibid)

Mark Hipper is aware that in the new South Africa, his position is more secure than it would have been under the previous regime. *"If I'd done that back in 1984, they would have locked me up, or taken me to court, or something like what's happening in America at present would have happened."* (Hipper, 1999) Still, he adamantly tells us that *"my art is not made to arouse somebody to sexual tumescence."* (Hipper, 1998) He feels that most people have no idea what art is about, *"and then they get outraged, because something is allowed to be excluded from any censorship because it has aesthetic values."* (Hipper, 1999) Maureen Barnes, for instance, describes Hipper as defending his art *"...in the same terms that artists always use when they are trying to make critics feel ill-informed, narrow-minded and lacking in artistic understanding."* (Barnes, 1998:11) Again, in her criticism is the idea that some people need protection for *"not the least of which is their dignity."* (Ibid), which is a defence that is reminiscent of apartheid reasoning.

The question is a serious one; whether or not the hard-won, fought-for freedoms guaranteed by the constitution are made irrelevant when the 'dignity' of a child is in

question. Part of the debate included the relationship between pornography and child abuse. Artist Terry Kurgan (b. 1958), who two years before this was involved in controversy over photographs of her naked son, said *"The fuss is in the eye of the beholder."* (Sulcas, 1998:5) In her opinion, and reflecting the results of much research, *"Adults who respond to the work as if it were transgressive were bringing their own projections to bear."* (Ibid) Like Hipper, she feels *"taboo and repression actually create desire, far more dangerous to children than anything Mark Hipper could do in a lifetime."* (Ibid) *"These rules are pretty new...I think it is an untried law, and I think it's an untried practice...there hasn't been any history of these laws being dealt with in South Africa."* (Hipper, 1999)

"Bold new legislation to stymie dealers of child pornography will come into effect tomorrow," stated a newspaper article. (Unaccredited, 31 May 1998:5) *"The new act makes the distribution, possession and importation of child pornography, including pornography on the Internet, prosecutable offences...it comes into effect in the wake of controversial cases that appeared unprosecutable."* The act gives the government far-reaching powers of censorship, such as the regulation of *"the creation, production and possession of certain material."* (Eveleth, 1999:4) Laura Polecutt, spokesperson for the Freedom of Expression Institute, said the act *"now defines all material relating to children which can be banned as 'child pornography', therefore closing the debate on the term."* (Ibid) According to Polecutt, *"Now, as in the dark days of apartheid, any person who is offended by a work of art can ask the state to censor it."* (Ibid) This is a direct result of the Hipper case, who responded with the belief that:

"The law reads like a laundry list of vague terms. What does 'sexually suggestive' mean, when applied to places, poses, or attire? Has congress invented a kind of Geiger counter for 'sexual coyness'?" (Hipper Lecture, July 1999)

Even more, he says:

"The very term 'child pornography' is so volatile that it deflects any serious examination of the issues it raises, such as what constitutes child porn, and who is harmed by it...nor is the discussion made any clearer by pretending that the depictions of eroticized children in advertisements or Hollywood movies have nothing to do with adult sexuality." (Ibid)

As he points out, "People continuously [believe] censorship is going to solve these problems, and I think it's complete bullshit. I think it's white-washing...it's like deflecting attention from the real issues." (Hipper, 1999) It is the nature of censorship against which Hipper directs many of his comments, when he says:

"Like you can clean [the problem of evil] out of the world by blocking it up, but you don't...Now they're trying to argue that we've got the highest sex crime statistics in the world...and that we're going to solve this by censor. We've had censorship. That's what it caused...because we're afraid of sex." (Ibid)

His view on what is defined as pornography is that:

"There is no harm in porn, I also think. It probably keeps a lot of violence pacified. Instead, much harm has come from censorship and Puritanism. I think that a lot of violent crime in South Africa is in direct relation to the violently anti-body, anti-sex attitude that was forced on everyone here." (Hipper e-mail, 1999)

He finds pornography "perfectly blameless...pornography has never harmed society." (Ibid) This same sentiment is echoed by other artists who have had their own brushes with censorship, such as Andrew Verster:

"I'm very ambivalent about child pornography ...I'm not certain that the children are always victims...I really hate these causes now and ten years later there are other causes, and children are the thing of the moment." (Verster, 1999)

As Hipper put it:

"There's no sense in censoring images on the basis that they might, in certain, or indeed, in all contexts, be satisfying someone's prurient interests. Where is the sense in that? We surely have better, more important things to do." (Hipper Lecture, July 1999)

His exhibit, about which "not a single, written complaint had come from the public," (Martin, 1999:48) was attacked by Sisulu and child welfare officers only after the 'Weekend Post' led with a story titled 'Festival Kid Porn Outrage' (Ibid). Mark Hipper

responded to all this furore by saying *"these accusations...voice the fear that there is a direct relation between the image and reality...The tacit faith here is that 'pornography' is the root of our social evil."* (Hipper lecture, July 1999) He pointed out that:

"Most of the people who are committing violent crimes in this country do not have recourse to video games, porn movies, or any other similarly suspect entertainment...we are afraid of knowledge, particularly sexual knowledge...ignorance does not make moral beings of us...nor, of course, does censorship." (Ibid)

In conclusion, Hipper says that:

"I think our society's big fear - and this is true in regard to America and Britain - is that of the body and things sexual. It is regarded as a threat...it marks the point of greatest difference and therefore threat to somebody who is insistent that a society needs homogeneous values and homogeneous culture, in order to be humane, democratic and ethical. Which I think is bullshit. Tolerance, surely, is the ideal state." (Hipper e-mail, 1999)

CHAPTER THREE

SECTION THREE - *Steven Cohen: at the Boundaries of Taste*

One of the practitioners in South Africa of a "*largely deracinated art form*" (Atkinson, 1998:Internet) that of performance art, is Steven Cohen (B. 1967), whose outrageous body of work "*has begun to define what performance art in a localised context might mean.*" (Ibid) He is one of a rare group of artists, which includes Carol Ann Gainer, who are practising an anti-market form of expression that is an "*attenuated latecomer to the local art world, washing up on our shores some twenty years after its European and American heyday.*" (Ibid) The relevance of performance art to the current financially depressed South African art world is unimportant to Cohen. For him, "*the nature of performance is in its transience, an elusive act that must continually reinvent itself in new spaces.*" (Ibid)

Cohen began as a print maker who specialised in depicting penises. They were works that could be accepted on standard aesthetic levels, as "*witty, charming, even aesthetically pleasing.*" (Atkinson, 1997:Internet) He offended the gay community during the Gay Pride march of 1996 by displaying a banner which read "*Give us your children - what we can't fuck we'll eat.*" (Ibid) He received strong criticism for contributing to the stereotyping of gays as paedophiles. His list of shows and exhibits is impressive. He has worked hard. "*I have spent my life making art with love,*" he says, "*and the doing has been its own reward.*" (Ibid)

After a hospital stay that saw him confined for glandular fever, during which "*I'd seen my skin go yellow and my piss go black.*" (Cohen, 1997:Internet) Cohen had something of an epiphany. Having appeared 'in drag' (dressed in female clothing) in public only once or twice before, he now realised his body "*was a powerful medium. I*

couldn't wait to get well and work with it." (Ibid) And he has been a regular performance artist since then, appearing in drag and outlandishly accessorized costumes ever since. *"Now, when I'm tired of canvas and ink, I put down my brushes and put on my make-up."* (Ibid). He has been no stranger to controversy from then on.

For example, he appeared at a bridal show at the Killarney Mall in 1997. He and his partner, dancer Elu, tried to climb on stage, Cohen wearing a dildo in his anus. The performance was interrupted and they were ejected. His friend Michele, who was filming it all on video, was detained. The video footage was copied and then she was released. *"Apparently they thought we were from a rival fashion house and were trying to sabotage their show."* (Atkinson, 1998:Internet)

He disrupted a popular dance rave with a performance where he douched his partner in fake blood. *"They told us to stop because we were killing the vibe!" (Ibid)* At the Goldfields Kennel Club Dog Show he was threatened by the people when he tried to put on a performance piece. It frightened him. *"I don't like people with dogs, because in this country, dogs are used as attack weapons."* (Ibid) In 1998 he was thrown out of a celebration of Afrikaner nationalism at Fort Klapperkop for being dressed as a woman. *"I didn't expect such a violent reaction,"* he said. *"I wanted to see if Afrikaner culture could make way for this kind of thing."* (Colesbury, 1998:25) It obviously could not.

Cohen's work has been described as *"a circus of creative expression."* (Shevlin, July 1998:7) For a performance at 'Red Eye', an art awareness program of the Durban Art Gallery, he exhibited a video of himself, taken at a previous 'Red Eye' *"performing cartwheels in a tutu with a sparkler in his bum."* (Shevlin, August 1998:3) (Figure 7) In a performance piece called Once Upon a High Heel (Part One) Dog, done for the 1998 FNB Vita Dance Shongololo at the Playhouse Drama Theatre, he did *"a dancing dog*



Figure 7. Performance Piece, photograph, Steven Cohen, 1998

acrobatic routine with a butt plug." (Ibid) And he "covered himself in blood for the Durban July to make a point about crime." (Ibid) He was asked to leave. "My work challenges prejudices against traditional victims; gays, women, freaks, anyone who is marginalized." (Ibid)

- *"He's been called sick, boring and beautiful. He's been accused of reworking tired New York 1980's stuff," (Atkinson, 1997:Internet) Even his mother does not appreciate his performances. "I know what art is," she says, "and what you do is not art. Art is something that can be picked up." (Atkinson, 1998:Internet)*

"Is it Art?" asks Ingrid Shevlin. (Shevlin, August 1998:3) and Steven Cohen replies:

"Absolutely. Because it does everything that art should do. It's full of meaning and soul and honest expression that moves people. It provokes journeying in people and I think that's what art is all about." (Ibid)

His work has indeed provoked reactions, from "this is the biggest shit..." to "It's brilliant." (Ibid) Cohen is pleased, and says "This is good, because it creates discourse." (Ibid) As he claims, "My art has points of access, and if people don't understand, they begin to question and discuss." (Ibid)

The reactions are not entirely comfortable or amused. One person called a description of Steven Cohen's performance "a low-down cabaret act dressed up as art." (Artvark, 1998:16) The writer asks "Is this the slimy future of the Durban Art Gallery?" (Ibid) An audience which included teachers with their students reacted in shock to a performance by Cohen as part of a dance program at the Playhouse.

"Artificial blood had been spewed about the stage and at least twelve dozen eggs were smashed as Cohen did his thing in a see-through pair of tights." ...Such work has no place on a dance program. It is little wonder that dance is losing its audience when stuff like this is allowed to share the dance stage." (Ballantyne 1998:15)

At least two teachers called the display "*despicable*." (*Ibid*) Such responses to his work are important to him, because he performs outside the "*sanctioned - and bounded - public space*" of a gallery, with its "*neutralising power, its ability to absorb and give credibility to works that otherwise might be more powerful*." (Atkinson, 1997:Internet)

"I think Durban is desperate for some debate on art," says Ingrid Shevlin. (Shevlin, July 1998:7) Referring to the debate about the appropriateness of Cohen's performance at Red Eye, Gallery Director Carol Brown said "*The Durban Art Gallery no longer considers itself a temple, and currently acts as a forum where contemporary issues can be debated or challenged*." (Brown 1998:18) After Cohen's performance of Once Upon a High Heel (Part One) Dog won the prestigious Vita Award, Brown said that "*this was judged by the top art experts in the country who obviously considered it not only art, but good art*." (*Ibid*) Cohen commented "*I can't believe they were particularly enamoured of my work such that they prefer it to William Kentridge*." (Atkinson, 1998:Internet) But realistically he felt that "*it was less about me and more about announcing themselves as a new breed of judge*." (*Ibid*)

An invitation was extended to the columnist known as Artvark, who had complained about the performance in print, to attend one of Durban Art Gallery's contemporary art lectures. "*Contemporary art is not easy to understand, and for this reason, the Durban Art Gallery takes its role in education seriously*." (*Ibid*) There is no denying the impact of Cohen's work. A black Kwaito singer at the Red Eye event, said "*I will never forget that image of a white man half naked on roller skates with fire coming out of his bum*." (Shevlin, July 1998:7)

Kendell Geers, who "*kick-started the year's artworld politics with a work that seemed more hole than donut*," (Atkinson, 1998:21) locked himself in Fort Klapperkop in 1998 "*in the name of art*." (*Ibid*) The protests to his action came from many quarters: "*everybody*

from the African National Congress to the Afrikaner Volkswag (with the French Institute sandwiched in between)" (Ibid) Geers, responding to all the outcry, said they were "trying to unart themselves." (Ibid) It was in support of Geers that Cohen appeared at, and "was shown off the premises by Neo-Nazis in military gear." (Cohen, 1997:Internet) The deeper significance of Cohen's work may be that:

"I'm also messing with a society that is more shocked by the violence of my self presentation than by the actual violence they live with every day. I'm more real and threatening than reality." (Atkinson, 1997:Internet)

Such controversy as that purposely provoked by Cohen raises disquieting questions about the freedom of expression in South Africa. It is clear that there are lingering repressive attitudes, attitudes born out of traditional beliefs of many different cultures. *"Older eyes look on youthful experiment with suspicion. And fear: new ideas shock."* (Verster, 1998:13) and it is equally clear that South Africa is producing the artists to tweak these views. For now, artists and journalists, and others whose task is to speak in the public arena are still able to do so. But as will be shown in the next section, this ability may be censored at any time.

CHAPTER THREE

SECTION FOUR - *Max du Preez: Identity and Freedom of the Press*

Two events in 1999 propelled veteran media journalist Max du Preez into the forefront of political and cultural debate. One concerned the question of South African identity; the other involved Du Preez's dismissal from SABC TV. Both events raised questions related to the freedom of the press in the post-apartheid era.

The identity question was sparked by a column written by Du Preez, in which he wrote: *"I have a special request. Stop using the term 'African' to mean exclusively 'black'...because that implies absolutely that whites, coloureds and Indians can't be Africans."* (Du Preez, 1999:14) Why, he wondered, did *"a little detail such as my lack of pigmentation exclude me?"* (Ibid) He made it clear: *"I am also African and an Afrikaner."* It seems a simple, and obvious-enough statement. It was in fact supported by President Thabo Mbeki, who said:

"Binary opposites of the past, which depicted black and white, African versus European, conquered and conqueror, and dispossessed and dispossessor had to be discarded...Afrikaners are Africans." (Daily News Correspondent, 1999:3)

The response was surprising in its vitriol. Citing *"My history, my nation, my customs and religion,"* (Matshikiza, 1999:10) Professor Thobeka Mda, of the Education Faculty at the University of South Africa, called his statements *"arrogant, presumptuous, and ridiculous."* (Du Preez, 1999:12) and put forth the claim that *"whites who want to call themselves African are only saying so to claim huge pieces of land."* (Ibid) Du Preez responded with the argument that Professor Mda and her sister Likeza, who had also made statements on the subject:

"have clearly got stuck in the African-American mind set. They think and talk as if South Africans are also a disempowered minority...Thobeka and Likeza still cling to

the old dictum that the powerless can never be guilty of racism. And then they practice it." (Ibid)

It may be that racism such as this was involved in the dismissal of Max Du Preez, along with several others, from his job at the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC-TV).

"It is difficult, in the circumstances, not to become a little cynical, and to wonder whether pigmentation has now become an acceptable criterion, and white skin, particularly on a male, politically incorrect." (Streek, 1999:28)

One letter writer noted that: *"It is distasteful when I am advised by persons involved in the selection process that only a single race group, i.e. Africans, are being considered for an appointment."* (Unaccredited, 1998:5) Such a perception has many white, Indian and coloured South Africans seeking jobs abroad. The reasons for Du Preez being dismissed appear, however, to be more complex than simple racism.

To begin with, Max Du Preez does not fit the usual stereotypical version of an Afrikaner.

"A self-described anarchist as a Stellenbosch student, was himself one of the great rebels of the twentieth century Afrikanerdom, proclaiming his Afrikanerness to the skies while flamboyantly attacking the policies of the NP and the Broederbond." (Goodwin & Schiff, 1995:117)

This rebellion damaged his relationship with his Broederbonder father.

"Basically he denied I was his son." (Ibid:159) As editor of 'Vrye Weekblad', a radical Afrikaans language newspaper, Du Preez was involved in *"crusading exposes of misdeeds, murders and plots carried out by security forces."* (Ibid:87) This eventually led to *"multi-million rand lawsuits by police officials against the paper"* which was put out of business. Du Preez thus has had a history of fighting corruption, questioning authority, and speaking out, qualities which he brought to his job at SABC TV.

Because of his more than twenty years in journalism, Du Preez was hired as a freelance reporter/editor in 1994. After five years of working for SABC TV, on various current affairs programs, Du Preez's freelance contract was not renewed. The unexpected decision by Phil Molefe, editor-in-chief of TV News, took Du Preez by surprise. Molefe claimed that Du Preez was *"arrogant and did not respect the leadership of the SABC."* (Robinson, 1999:5) Ostensibly the event that created the situation was the last minute cancellation of a Special Assignment program, scheduled for March 30, 1999, on witchcraft. Special Assignment, Du Preez's weekly show, has won several awards, including special mention *"for the high quality of its journalism."* (Ibid) In a long explanatory article in the Mail & Guardian, Du Preez told what had happened:

"Here's the truth in a nutshell. I was unceremoniously axed from the SABC by the new management of television news because...it was simply the easiest option, because it had worked so easily in the past...I did not fit into the bosses' neat little picture of a uniformed, disciplined corps of soldiers who would blindly and unquestioningly execute the orders of the hierarchy." (Du Preez, 1999:10)

He maintains that there was no conspiracy or evil plot. He said his case illustrates a culture in South Africa *"that's taking hold again, because this comes straight from the owner's manual of the Afrikaner Broederbond in its heyday."* (Ibid:11) With his father's link to the Broederbond, he should know.

The episode of Special Assignment in question centred on witchcraft, and was cancelled because, in the words of News and Current Affairs director Thembo Mtembu, they used *"offensive visuals - the slaughtering of a goat during rituals,"* (Ibid:10) and later explained *"the slaughtering of the goat would have offended 'a million vegetarian Muslims'."* (Ibid:10) According to Sunday World editor Fred Khumalo, who was shown a tape of the program, *"the canning of the program...is an autocratic abuse of power, a reversal of gains we, as a society, have made with regard to extending freedom of information."* (Ibid:11)

When word of Khumalo's criticism reached management, a decision was made to dismiss Du Preez. In reference to the cancelled show on witchcraft, Du Preez "*received tremendous support from the public,*" (Radebe, 1999:4) with one writer opining that the show was axed by SABC executives in order not to "*alienate political personages like the rural chiefs.*" (Fouche, 1999:23)

All the parties involved, including top SABC management, exchanged charges and countercharges. The initial version was that Du Preez used abusive language and disrespectful gestures (i.e. 'the finger') to some of his superiors. To this, Du Preez responded:

"I think using the public broadcasters' news channel to defame one of its own staff with whom it is in a labour dispute, without giving that person a chance to respond, is the most blatant abuse I have ever experienced in twenty six years of journalism." (Du Preez, 1999:11)

Other possible reasons for his dismissal were put forward.

"Why get rid of them? [Du Preez and several other SABC employees] Especially when [SABC] has so many white bozos and dum-dums elsewhere in the organisation...maybe because most of them know how to suck up to political masters and are now assiduously vacuuming the nether regions of the new regime." (Saunderson-Meyer, 1999:10)

In listening to the explanations put forward to justify the dismissals, one "*could sense the return of the foul but familiar scent of propaganda.*" (Unaccredited, 1999:6) More disturbing motives for the whole event could be applied as well.

"Don't like to say too much about this because it might be interpreted as heresy, but the print industry is now witnessing affirmative action programmes which promote people of the right gender and colour." (MacLennan, 1999:2)

In his article, MacLennan also advised Du Preez: "*of course you were also supposed to show respect for those who really don't merit the top jobs in the current broadcasting pecking order.*" (Ibid)

Max Du Preez was not the only one who felt the sting of dismissal at SABC. Radio editor-in-chief Barney Mthombi resigned April 30. Although he was a senior staffer, and *"a journalist of some note,"* (Vapi, 1999:5) he was apparently not regarded as a popular figure, as if popularity were a criteria of job performance assessment. *"His departure has fuelled suspicions that there was a purge of independent journalists from the SABC to make it more ANC-friendly."* (Tsedu, 1999:2) His resignation followed that of his former boss, Govin Reddy, *"who was fired last year after he accused SABC of racism."* (Ibid) Tsedu defined the resultant situation this way: *"The biggest danger facing the SABC is not political interference but lack of skills and a culture or ethos of independent journalism...we cannot go back to the dark days of the old SABC."* (Ibid)

The problems, according to some writers, began when Reverend Hawu Mbatha was appointed SABC chief executive. *"Not a journalist by any stretch of the imagination,"* said one former SABC employee, who also said he had been appointed for one reason, *"that he is a smiling reverend."* (Vapi, 1999:9) His executive staff is *"a hungry breed, which looks set to reign like a junta...there is the sense that if you tread on its toes, like Du Preez did, you are gone."* (Ibid) Some senior employees, like Ms. Ida Jooste and editor Ami Nanackchand, were redeployed after accusations of bias towards some political parties in KwaZulu Natal were made against them.

Such moves have hurt the SABC. One of its former senior journalists described Enoch Sithole, then head of TV and Radio News at SABC, as a man *"whose journalistic career is short and negligible, [as being] on top of the heap."* It will lead to *"an erosion of quality journalism at the SABC."* (Ibid) Sithole defended himself by saying that *"some people are scared of transformation, especially now that it's being taken to its logical conclusion."* (Ibid) He complained that *"many people have not been praiseful (sic) when black*

people like me were placed in leadership positions." (Ibid) He acted like a determined man, ready to do what was necessary to fulfil his vision. "We will only stop once we have transformed the SABC into a reliable source of information." (Ibid) A source within the SABC defended him by saying "There are no visible facts to prove that transformation has failed, or is now backfiring. It is on track." (Ibid) Understandably, the actions taken have raised suspicions and concerns about "forces at work within the SABC management." (Sahadave, 1999:7) It has led to the suspicion that there is "some kind of cleansing occurring at the SABC. The reasons outlined by the SABC for the shock axing of award-winning producer Max Du Preez, [are] hardly convincing to a 'democratic, transparent nation'." (Ibid) Employees called the behaviour of the management unethical, and "can only compare with this country's pre-1944 era." (SABC Employee, 1999:20)

The Mail & Guardian described the situation this way: "It suffices to say that the sacking of Du Preez reflects the casual abuse of a public mandate, born of overweening arrogance to which we are quickly becoming accustomed where the powers that be at the SABC are concerned." (van Niekerk, 1999:22) The editorial continues: "[the SABC management] demonstrate to our shame how, when presented with the opportunity for self-enrichment and self-aggrandisement at the troughs of power, all men are indeed equal in their piggishness." (Ibid) As former SABC staffer Sarah Crowe says, "If this total abuse of power is not checked the public broadcaster will again become a state broadcaster and we cannot allow that to happen. It is not the right thing to do." (Crowe, 1999:19).

The situation continued for several more months, with many people accusing SABC and the management of bias and controlled news. It had a detrimental effect on

the quality of the news. *"In fact,"* commented Max Du Preez, *"the strong culture and ethics of proper journalism that existed at the SABC for the three, four years immediately after 1994 have been virtually destroyed."* (Tarr, Scott, 1999:15)

Board Chairman Professor Paulus Zulu was appointed by SABC to a task team to evaluate and investigate such criticism. The team's report completely exonerated SABC and its management of any wrong-doing. Mrs. Jane Duncan, of the Freedom of Expression Institute, spoke of *"the validity of the evidence that was presented, which the task team has largely seen fit to dismiss...the team compared journalists' allegations with management's allegations, and decided to side with management."* (Unaccredited, 1999:11) Du Preez was more blunt in his evaluation of the report that, he claimed, had lowered *"even further the morale of the people who work at SABC. They all know every word in that report is bullshit. I should never have wasted my time talking to the task team."* (Du Preez quoted in Ibid)

SABC management closed ranks against such criticism, and remained silent about other on-going investigations of management, including those concerned with irregularities in the handling of finances. By November of 1999, a new board of directors was proposed. Fifty-six candidates were interviewed for the job. Historian and journalist Allister Sparks was one of them, as was former apartheid government minister P. K. Botha.

In December 1999, President Mbeki extended the term of the current board for three months, in order to further evaluate the new board. During this time there were further allegations of mismanagement and graft, with counter charges of racism in the media. A forensic audit by the accounting firm KPMG (Klynveld, Peat, Marwich and Groerdeler) revealed several new irregularities at the SABC. Chief executive Reverend Mbatha ordered an investigation of the charges.

By the end of February 2000, Chairman Zulu's term of office ended, and President Mbeki was set to announce his replacement. As a parting shot, Professor Zulu said, in what some felt was an attitude of sour grapes for not being reappointed, that the board was "*dictated to from above.*" (Zulu quoted in Sapa, 2000:6) Later, Professor Zulu strongly denied the comment. But it revealed a belief by many observers that the SABC "*had reverted to its old 'Big Brother' or 'His Master's Voice' tactics.*" (Ntombela, 2000:8)

Towards the end of February President Mbeki announced that well-respected corporate affairs director for South African Breweries (SAB) Dr. Vincent Maphai, "*A man who headed the commission which drew up the existing structure of the South African government,*" (Makhayana, 2000:19) would lead the new board of directors of SABC. By the end of March, the chief executive of the news operation for SABC, Enoch Sithole, resigned under a dark cloud of scandal, which included false statements on his official documents regarding his citizenship, and fraudulent statements on his curriculum vitae. This wasn't enough for Du Preez. Referring to the news management as the "*new Broederbond*", he said:

"[only] a chainsaw, not a scalpel, will save the SABC at this late stage. The new board will almost certainly fail if they don't start fixing the problem by immediately replacing Reverend Hanu Mbatha... Snuki Zikalala should, as a matter of urgency, be redeployed to the defence force or the embassy in Bulgaria. He has simply done too much damage to get a second chance." (Du Preez, 2000:18)

More revelations continued to come to light. Chairman Maphai demoted and redeployed several managers named in the KPMG audit. Recommendations made by a private company, Gemini Consultants, that was hired to investigate the SABC's management structure, concluded that "*the newly appointed board, led by Vincent Maphai, appears to have its hands full in dealing with a corporation that is in dire need of a clean-up.*" (Matlou, 2000:5)

Since freedom of the press is essential to the atmosphere of freedom of expression, many South Africans waited to see if perhaps justice would prevail and the truth would yet come out. Mbeki and Minister of Communications Dr. Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri *"have given Maphai the order to clean up the place."* (Makhayana, 2000:19)

In mid-May 2000, the completed Gemini Report served as the motive for Maphai to dismiss the SABC's chief executive, Reverend Hwaka Mbatha. Mbatha's leadership was typified as *"one of the major stumbling blocks to efficiency and dynamism in the corporation."* (Powell, 2000:5) Under this, as well as other elements of restructuring, the intention is to provide the SABC with the public trust it needs to move into the future.

CHAPTER THREE

SECTION FIVE - *Gender and Racial Identity*

The following section is devoted to the controversy surrounding artworks in some 1990's art exhibitions and the critical reaction to these artworks. The controversy around the Martinessen Prize Exhibition at the University of the Witwatersrand in 1996 has been fully discussed and debated on the Internet. It also is part of a book of essays, The book Grey Areas, (Atkinson & Brietz 1999) consisting of a group of essays by different writers, was compiled around the issue of racial identity. Much of the material used here has been drawn from this book. Several issues were raised by the artworks on exhibition concerning censorship, and their significance to South African attitudes is worth examining.

In August of 1996, a commentary by Hazel Freidman in the Mail & Guardian (Friedman, 1996:22) concerning the piece which won the Martinessen Prize was drawn quickly into the contemporary debate concerning race and gender identities. The winning piece, by third year art student and rock singer Kaolin Thomson (b. 1977), entitled Useful Objects, (Figure 8) was described by Hazel Freidman as comprising:

"A half-smoked cigarette (the brand is Gauloise Blondes, which adds a clever pun to the work,) in a ceramic ashtray resembling a black vagina, lips, or a turd. Simultaneously it speaks of taboos, the body as a dumping ground, and, metaphorically, of violation - sexual and political." (Friedman quoted in Schmammann, 1999:227)

The ash tray-sized ceramic is currently part of the Spier Wine Estate Art Collection.

Several people entered into an expanding debate engendered by this article. Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Baleka Kgotsitsile, was upset because sculpture or ceramics were not covered by the Film and Publications act, and media



Figure 8. Useful Objects, ceramic sculpture, Kaolin Thomson, 1996

reports of such objects or discussion and review were outside the Act. She complained that *"a single-minded focus on upholding 'freedom of expression' has the potential to threaten peoples' dignity...pride and peoples' dignity cannot be trampled in the name of 'free expression'."* (Ibid) She referred to such expression and Freidman's review as adhering to *"some arbitrary artistic ideals."* (Ibid) The debate centred on the question of who had the right to speak for whom. *"The reason why it became more of a controversy and not just a sexist kind of event,"* said Bongiwe Dhlomo, was *"because the artist was a white woman and the viewer as the objector was a black woman."* (Dhlomo, 1999) The attempt by Kgositsile to ban reporting or reviewing of Ms. Thomson's ashtray echoed the 1963 Publications Act, described previously in Chapter One of this paper.

Other on-going controversies converged. An essay by Okwui Enwezor about an exhibition in Norway titled 'Contemporary Art from South Africa' began it all. His critical essay was brought to the attention of the South African art community in an article by Kendell Geers, in which Geers criticised the show's curator, Marith Hope, accusing her of entertaining *"old colonial prejudices"* and using the artists she had selected as *"fuel for [her] racist imaginations."* (Atkinson/Breitz, 1999:17) Enwezor had stated his position by saying that the resistance by the white community *"which suddenly finds itself a minority, and potentially the underlings of their (sic) former African vassals...[has] nowhere been more fierce than the representational ideology of white artists."* (Ibid) He focused specifically on the works of Pippa Skotnes, called Miscast, and Candice Breitz's Rainbow series, which featured photo-montages marrying body images of white women from men's magazines, with heads and faces of black women from 'ethnographic postcards'.

An essay by Olu Oguike, Beyond Visual Pleasures, concerning contemporary female South African artists, further singled out Minette Vari, who *"uses computer technology to morph her own features in such a way that they are fused with images of black women."* (Ibid) All this was brought into public attention by Freidman's article on Thomson's work. Also included in the debate were the charcoal drawings by artist Terry Kurgan (b. 1958) of her naked children, and *"the result is as predictable as the crude male attacks on white women artists who are allegedly hijacking the subjective experience of black women."* (Ruper, date unknown)

The question that came out of all this was *"who has the right to use which images, and what the authorising narrative ought to be."* (Atkinson/Breitz, 1999:20) According to Marion Arnold, *"recriminations multiply and the accusation that artists are speaking for others are flung forth"* She further states *"the 'right to represent others is a non-issue."* (Arnold, 1999:37) It is a question of name-calling, she says, and:

"It is more than contemptible - it is silly - to suggest that one is a racist for portraying black or white, male or female experiences...Racist merely is the fashionable insult...But in South Africa today, the racist slur is used to limit boundaries, to control creativity, and to cast aspersions on artistic action." (Ibid:38)

She feels, strongly that *"Of course artists speak for others. That is the nature of representation. Artists have a responsibility to make art...if they behave irresponsibly, it is because of their human failings."* (Ibid)

Neville Dubow agrees, and says that *"Artists should not have to wait for the right to represent anything towards which they feel impelled,"* he writes. In any case, *who is going to confer the right on them?"* (Dubow, 1999:127) Marlene Dumas insists *"Goodness as a personality trait has nothing to do with good art anyway. The moral of the story is not that artists should not do what they feel they have to do, but - as God says - do what you wanna do"*

and pay for it." (Dumas 1999:131) As Greg Streak put it: "I think one should be allowed to comment free of proscription and the inevitability of consensus." (Streak, 1999:267)

Arguing against Deputy Speaker Kgosisile's proposal to expand the anti-pornography elements of the Film and Publications Act to include traditionally excluded newspapers, Penny Siopis said that *"The news media are crucial for engaging in such debates and should be supported in their task, however difficult."* (Siopis quoted in Freidman, 1999:315) Bongiwe Dhlomo believes that *"the very arbitrariness of art presents a warning against any form of censorship."* (Ibid) Freidman, in her article quotes University of Witwatersrand Fine Arts academics as saying that *"It is essential that artworks such as 'Useful Objects' be opened to public scrutiny."* (Ibid)

At the heart of it, then, is another effort at censorship, and the stifling of public debate. This time, it is about the nature of identity and public responsibility.

"If white artists and intellectuals become afraid to take up the issues that confront black South Africans, and become fearful of representing their relationship to these issues,...then cross-racial discussions may end. Artists and intellectuals of all colours could become intimidated, immobilised, and isolated from each other." (Becker, 1999:70)

In reference to Mark Hipper and Terry Kurgan, Emma Bedford illustrates the current attitudes when she says:

"Unaware of artists' intentions, and indifferent to the many and varied readings possible in these works, members of the public, sometimes supported by the press, sought to condemn the artists, often in the most offensive and personal ways...surely it is not a question of who speaks for who, but what is said and how it is said." (Bedford, 1999:72)

White artists can then find themselves in a quandary. *"What can I represent? And what language might I use? Does being white necessarily now mean not having a mandate to speak at all?"* asks Ruth Rosengarten. (Rosengarten, 1999:215) While agreeing that Enwezor and Oguibe have valid points, she goes on to say:

"These critics fall prey to a kind of fundamentalism that eradicates the right to all differences other than that condoned or ratified by themselves - self-promoted as experts and legislators - ends up flattening out the relevance of their arguments and looking increasingly like they are simply staking out areas in some kind of monopoly game." (Ibid)

Penny Siopis says *"It is ironic that in South Africa it is not easy to make credible 'political art' - art which protests against a repressive regime."* (Siopis, 1999:251) While she may be overstating the case, her comment underscores the difficulties facing artists in South Africa today.

At the heart of this debate is another, exclusionary, kind of view. *"Kgositsile's advocacy of some degree of censorship may seem to be merely a 'knee-jerk' reaction,"* says Brenda Schmahmann, *"but her response is of course also the product of her understanding about power relationships."* (Schmahmann, 1999:228-229) Kgositsile doesn't want to remove the art from the galleries, but rather doesn't want to see such art shown or discussed in the newspaper. What she is doing

"is complying with a traditional endeavor to separate 'art' from 'mass' or 'popular culture': she is in effect suggesting that 'art' should be limited to an elite audience rather than being accessible to a broad range of people who may be corrupted or disturbed by it." (Ibid:231)

The implications of such an attitude for South African art and artists are serious indeed. The debate returns to the question of the nature and effect of art, a question that was very germane to the apartheid era. The confusion is a product of the end of apartheid, and people find themselves enmeshed in turmoil as a result.

"People are released from the rigid confines of older horizons [and] at the same time exposed to an intense bombardment by new impulses. Both these sides of the process are ambivalent...[it is] potentially a liberation or emancipation from traditional bounds and a freedom to form one's life in new ways, but it is also a loss of security. And to be exposed to a crossfire of ideas for how to form one's life offers an access to rich languages for ideals but simultaneously a threat to one's feelings of authenticity." (deJager, 1999:113-114)

Bongiwe Dhlomo says:

"What gets forgotten about black South African artists is that besides the nature of the work they produce, their existence is a political statement...their use of found and recycled materials could be seen as trendy, but it could also be a political statement at many levels." (Atkinson, 1999:121)

For her, there is no problem if the use of the black body in representation is used with sensitivity. *"Take 'Useful Objects' by Kaolin Thomson. If the actual title had been what it ended up being called - a 'black vagina' - then it would have become harmful." (Ibid:124)* For Dhlomo, the question is one of effect. One knows that the work of art has accomplished something *"when those things happen. It's when people react, and then you have to analyse the reaction."* (Ibid) Lola Frost asks:

"Is it possible that we might begin to shift the debate from the issue of who is allowed to speak for whom, and its politically correct pitfalls, or the issue of speaking for/of others, and its post-colonial logjams, into a debate where we speak for ourselves and to each other?" (Frost, 1999:135)

The value and necessity of art supersedes the boundaries of the ethnic grouping of its creator. What matters is quality in execution and communication. *"Everyone has the right to make whatever art they like,"* argues Raymond Ngcobo.

"This does not depend on whether people are making public art (statues, sculpture, etc.) or private art. We need the best artists for the best art. If Van der Merwe is the best artist for the construction of the Steve Biko statue, let Van der Merwe remind us of where we come from." (Ngcobo, 1999:154-155)

Controversy arising out of art works opens up debate in the community, where complex and confusing issues get aired. Albie Sachs says:

"To me, it's obvious that artists can create anything about anything. When it comes to legal rights the South African constitution expressly refers to the right of artistic creativity, so in purely legal terms, there's no legal impediment whatsoever. (Sachs, 1999:221)

He goes on to note that:

"I followed the whole controversy about 'Useful Objects'...with intense sympathy for all sides...to say that Kaolin didn't have the right to do that would be wrong...but I also have an intense sense of sympathy with people who felt... 'this is extra pain and we are being burned - our parts are being represented in that way'." (Ibid, 222)

Sachs sees the importance of allowing the various voices to be heard because "I think there are strong points being made." And ultimately "This is a real example of good coming out of bad: there was a powerful reaction, and the gallery opened the matter up to debate." (Ibid:223) As Robert Greig puts it, the critic Enwezor "deliberately brings to the surface racial, ideological and gender issues, effectively elbowing aside Band-Aid rainbow nation rhetoric." (Greig, 1997)

Taking issue with Kendell Geers' accusation that Kaolin Thomson is being racist, Jack Ginsberg writes "calling anyone a racist or colonialist is the last refuge of a scoundrel, and does not advance the debate." (Ginsburg, 1999:137) He continues by explaining:

"Questioning who has the right to use which images or represent whom is just a reversion to the old censorship regime where freedom of speech was so restricted. Provided there is always the right of reply, ... anyone may put forward any opinion, or by analogy, use any image they wish." (Ibid)

For him, Kgositsile's stance "bodes ill for the culture of freedom of speech in the new South Africa, and needs no encouragement from the art community." (Ibid) He concludes by perceptively pointing to the fact that "South African art has always dealt with questions of race and will continue to do so, but we should not equate this with racism." (Ibid)

Sue Williamson says "Artists should be free to say the unsayable." (Williamson, 1999:291) For her, the responses of Oguibe, Enwezor and Geers to the artwork

"made one wonder whether one was witnessing the emergence of a new form of cultural apartheid, in which the colour of the artist's skin or his or her sex will determine the suitability of the subject matter in the artist's work." (Ibid:294)

About artists like Thomson, Breitz and Skotnes, she says "We must assume that they are working from a position of personal integrity and that they tell the truth... However unpalatable this may be, it is what they are supposed to do as artists." (Ibid:294)

Kaolin Thomson defended her work by saying *"We shouldn't be scared of using our bodies. People need to steer away from the idea that sex is bad."* (Constant, 1999:32) About the controversy, she said *"The whole 'vagina ashtray thing' made people think I was out to fight other causes, and I'm not. I'm fighting my own cause."* (Ibid) She responded to the idea of speaking for others when she said:

"Maybe when I'm forty,...when I've got to the stage where I can really be a woman that can represent other women, then I might take that responsibility. But I'm twenty three, and I don't know who the fuck I am, you know what I mean?" (Ibid)

She has since abandoned fine art for a career as a rock singer, saying *"I was quite unhappy there. The fine art scene is very cliquey and I don't lick arse."* (Bagley, 1999:38) She has no regrets, however, for what she did. Still, she stresses the fact that an artist can't hold back, for very good reasons. *"You need people to say whether it's shit or its great. It's a measure to whether it's worth anything."* (Ibid)

CHAPTER THREE

SECTION SIX: *What the Future Holds*

Whatever is in store for art and artists in South Africa will depend on entirely how each individual reacts to the unfolding reality of the future. The picture is far from bleak.

"For some, since the end of apartheid-induced boycott, the approval of the international community has meant more than engagement with fellow South Africans...interest in competitions ...is now being replaced with the desire to participate in the American and European art worlds, with the promise of exposure and economic opportunities." (Woods, 1998:87)

The interest is high, from rural artists working on traditional arts and crafts, to urban artists exploring technology-based media such as photography and video, and artists working in more conventional media like painting, sculpture, and printmaking. *"They can see what is happening in Europe and the United States and Britain."* (Koloane, 1999) The opportunities are increasing, and they want to participate.

Shut out as they were from formal art schooling, many black students received their training during apartheid in workshops, community centres or mission schools, the most famous of which was Rorke's Drift in Kwazulu Natal. Today, young artists that are still struggling with less than adequate education in rural areas or townships are finding new facilities and methods to aid in their development. Benefactors are stepping forward to fund projects such as 'The Centre' in Johannesburg, near the Market Theatre. *"We have about fifty or sixty artists. We also have a residency program for artists outside of South Africa. I think those kinds of incentives are essential."* (Ibid)

Though white artists might feel some reverse racism is at work, the transformation process is an attempt to level the field by making organisations and institutions more representative.

"For people to feel threatened by that is illogical...because they should actually be saying 'yeah, we need to work together and get to know one another.' What I'm saying is we actually have to celebrate this diversity." (Koloane, 1999)

All artists have important roles to play, *"in people collaborating, and trying to fuse a blend from all the different cultures."* (Ibid) In the future, the expectation is that no artist, black or white, should feel fearful of discrimination based on race. *"I can actually foresee capable people being representative...especially in the arts."* (Dhlomo, 1999)

According to Andries Botha, *"It's a profound starting point. And I say to you, the air blows through this country in a most powerful and compelling way."* (Botha, 1999) In his opinion, whatever problems exist are of less importance than the exhilaration of this new freedom.

"I'm seriously saying, with all these problems, this is the action for me. This is where I'm at. And from this point forward, I also want to be in action with the whole race. I want to say 'this is South African'. I want to get out there now. I want to DO it. I want to have these discussions in New York and Beijing, as a South African, for the first time really, fully and completely." (Ibid)

It will not be easy. Many white South Africans, anticipating a bleak future, and a lack of opportunity, are apprehensive. *"I think there's a sense of pessimism with a lot of the young [white] students, over changing roles and changing definitions of subjectivity and how [they] fit into the national need."* (Van der Berg quoted in Woods, 1998:88) Botha says:

"White South Africans have to really face the historical problem of the disenfranchising of black people...that may mean that affirmative action might actually put them out of action for a while...We've got to address these issues. We have to address them now, as a country." (Botha, 1999)

There is indeed the need to unify, according to Clive Van der Berg. But *"simultaneously you have to unravel the past...we have an appalling history...[but we must] at the same time believe that another reality is possible."* (Van der Berg quoted in Woods, 1998:88)

Botha assesses the situation by saying:

"Black kids, they're sharp as nails. Absolutely! And they want the action, man! We must make sure they get it. Because the future of South Africa is dependent on these young kids getting there." (Botha, 1999)

It implies a certain responsibility, and this will involve some problematic solutions. *"It is agreed that there is a need for affirmative action to correct historical imbalances." (Mahabir, 1999:11)* But care must be taken. At the upper levels of management and education, *"Seniority, determined by merit and qualifications, ought to be the only criteria for advancement." (Ibid)* That would motivate everyone to optimum performance. To do otherwise *"would be the purest formula to perpetuate mediocrity all around" (Ibid)* and see many talented folk of perhaps the 'wrong' skin colour drop out of the process. At the upper professional levels, requiring exceptional ability and skill, *"merit should be the sole criterion. Extraordinary talent at the pinnacle of a nation's collective human resources is too precious to be wasted in pursuit of agendas other than excellence." (Ibid)*

Old attitudes don't flush away merely by a change in government, or the passage of new laws. Whatever attitudes that four hundred years of colonial history have produced still linger, as well as generations of tribal traditions. For instance, when the Cape Town mayor Ms. Nomaindia Mfeketo tried to introduce the idea of the use of a condom at an HIV / AIDS awareness festival, she was booed by the youths present. *"It's the youth who are mostly dying with Aids,"* she said, but *"there is no seriousness among the youth. It's like a joke to them."* (Qumba, 1999:5) One student said *"People of her age are forcing us to use condoms while they are not using them. I think they should stop fooling us."* (Ibid) Ms. Mfeketo explained *"Their behaviour is linked to our traditional and cultural beliefs that older people can't talk about sex with the youth. We need to change these cultural beliefs."* (Ibid)

Other social observers put it more bluntly. *"I'm not convinced things will get better for artists,"* says Mike Van Graan. (Van Graan, 1999) While on a surface level there will be more money available, and more facilities, *"in terms of adopting critical positions of a controversial nature, I don't think that will ever really improve."* (Ibid) It alarms some people that *"The arts are so low down on the agenda, and money is being cut, cut, cut all the time."* (Verster, 1999) It's part of a disturbing picture. *"That is just plain dumb to do that. That worries me a lot."* (Ibid) It's a matter of orientation and focus. *"We can't just have a material society. We've got to have a society that has other values."* (Ibid)

Senior government officials are not blind to the possibilities of the arts. It is just not on their agendas. *"They know that arts and culture played a role in [the Liberation Movement]. They know the role of song, dance, and posters."* (Steve Sachs quoted in Woods, 1998:89) A recent furore erupted over several anti-rape television advertisements featuring actress Charlize Theron. Some letter writers labelled the advertisements as sexist and anti-male. These objections only demonstrated that the public censorial mind has not disappeared. Many questions arise, *"which need to be asked constantly, because if any group - males, blacks, whites, gypsies, Jews, gays...needlessly take refuge behind the censor's sword, the effect is to inhibit discourse, which in turn disempowers all groups."* (Editor unknown, 1999:24) Events involving censorship are, in fact, showing a troubling side. *"The central problem with censorship is that those who are given power tend to want to use it, and as widely as possible. What use is power, without the use of it?"* (Ibid)

The question goes beyond simply interdicting some artists who use nudity or sex in their art. The question arises concerning the orientation of the entire government, especially the ruling ANC (African National Congress). When a writer argues for *"moving from a procedural democracy of Western-type institutions to a more substantive*

democracy," (Xolela Mangcu quoted in Wynn, 1999:20) the question becomes "what would 'substantive' mean? Could it be Marxist? What else could be meant by the idea of substantive if not some means of forcing the will of the state upon the people?" (Ibid) Because, as writer Edmund Keenan Wynn states, "The fact that the African National Congress has for most of its existence been a Marxist organ is not a secret." (Ibid)

With the dust only just settling over the dismissal of Max du Preez from the SABC, it comes as a surprise that the ANC has decided "to endorse Pik Botha for the new board of the SABC." (Editor Unknown, 1999:24) As pointed out, "This is the man who sat in a cabinet that fashioned the SABC into a crude instrument of propaganda for the previous ruling party." (Ibid) Why this man is put forth as a candidate, now, by what has to be his former opponents, indicates that "The new SABC is content to perpetuate some of these unsavoury traditions." (Ibid) The SABC, thus involved in consolidation of power, and allowing transparency to be "jettisoned in favour of a cover-up," is the same institution that now "threatens viewers who do not pay their TV licenses with attaching their personal property." (Ibid)

Just as unsettling are the implications surrounding the proposed Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination bill, drafted by Thuli Madonsela, Director of Transformation and Equality in the Justice Department. "This act has several laudable intentions," says an editorial (Unaccredited, 1999:6), The bill "prohibits any form of unfair discrimination." (Sole, 1999:8) The Freedom of Expression Institute expressed its concern about implications for freedom of expression.

"In addition, the prohibited grounds for discrimination go further than the usual matters of race, gender, religious belief etc. to outlaw discrimination on the grounds of HIV status, social and economic status, nationality, language, or any other ground."
(Ibid)

This would easily become a legal minefield for artists, journalists and writers. For example, the bill states *"Special attention will be given to 'hidden' or subtle forms of unfair discrimination, including systematic, institutionalised, structural and subliminal unfair discrimination."* (Ibid) Such terms are vague and hard to define. And who does the defining?

Ideally, the press speaks for the public, and monitors the moves of authority, and is *"directly affected by any government's attempt to prevent people speaking their minds."*

(Unaccredited, 1999:6) Raymond Louw, chairman of the Press Freedom committee of the South Africa Editors' Forum, says: *"We are deeply concerned that the prohibitions...will make it difficult, if not impossible, for the media to report on certain aspects."* (Paton, 1999:7)

The Act could even require that *"books and historical records which contained racial statements would have to be destroyed."* (Ibid) Given that such a Draconian bill would virtually shut down most print journalism, and effectively stifle all voices, including those of the artists; and in the light of the power shift occurring at the SABC, then it is important to ask questions about the future of freedom of expression in South Africa. As of this writing, the bill and its proposed measures have been drastically modified to protect just those freedoms.

Echoing the quote by John Philpot Curran, with which this paper began, Bongiwe Dhlomo reminds us of the vital role that artists have, and must play to, in society.

"We actually have to continue being watchdogs of society. Outside and not inside of government...we are the ones that meter society, but we also are able to warn society if something goes wrong." (Dhlomo, 1999)

CONCLUSION

The state of the arts in South Africa at the present moment is complex. Many forces are at work, some positive and some negative. The reasons for all this are equally complex.

Perhaps remembering the days of apartheid, many artists are optimistic about the future. In his interview (10 February 1999) Andries Botha pointed out that increased general access to funding is better than ever, increasing opportunities for practising artists. He also said that artists now are able to unambiguously declare and define themselves. As a result, their work is therefore more liberated. Racial restrictions have been removed, allowing artists from previously disadvantaged segments of society access to the public forum.

But the picture is not entirely perfect. Many artists are nervously censoring themselves in order to avoid affecting access to funding, and after four hundred years of colonial rule, conservative social attitudes have not disappeared.

South African female artists frequently resort to the use of their own bodies in pursuit of definitions of identity. Since questions exploring sexual identity and sexuality can challenge religious traditions, many artistic expressions will continue to confront public beliefs, attitudes and perceptions.

It appears that the younger generation of artists now coming into national prominence do not share the trench-fighting experiences of the older artists. Their world has been democratic and open. To them, therefore, questions of identity will assume a different character.

Bongiwe Dhlomo in her interview (15 May 1999) points out that there is a firm and urgent need for more educational support in the arts. While doors have opened for

previously disadvantaged artists, and new cultural facilities are established in the townships, governmental agencies are cutting educational support and funding, especially for the arts. Help will have to come from elsewhere. Some artists are already exploring support from private corporations.

In spite of a new constitution, with its 'bill of rights' guarantees of freedom of expression, censorship remains an on-going problem for artists. Though no longer driven by apartheid politics, the segment of society which favours censorship still seeks to rigidly define issues like pornography and child abuse. This includes an almost hysterical need to control what appears in public. That, plus lingering racial stereotyping, makes the art establishment uniquely vulnerable to manipulation by an artist like Beeze Bailey, whose use of a clever alter-ego exposed entrenched racist and sexist attitudes.

Mark Hipper's drawings, particularly of young boys fondling their genitals, was aimed at the culture of denial. He was almost brought into court for such provocation. His images were demonized, unjustifiably labelled as pornography, and charged with inciting the prurient lusts of child abusers. Driven by the opinion of one politician, who sought the power to use her own definition of pornography in the case, a dangerous precedent for this new democracy was narrowly avoided. The question raised was one of whether or not the hard-won guarantees of the constitution could be simply swept aside in favour of the 'dignity' of a child.

Cases such as this cause artists to feel that the days of apartheid censorship are back. According to Hipper in interview (30 June 1999) and lecture (July 1999) all this arises out of a fundamentalist fear of the body, and all things sexual. Hipper's point about society's desire for ignorance, and his attempt to expose that, were echoed by

Terry Kurgan's pictures of her naked infant son. She also experienced a similar attack in the press. Both artists agree that it is the making of sexual taboos which creates problems such as rape and sexual abuse, not free speech. There is little harm in pornography. It acts as a social safety valve. This point is repeatedly made in Marcia Pally's book Sex and Sensibility. (1994)

Certainly someone like performance artist Steven Cohen provokes such fundamentalist fear. His act, a 'circus' of provocative homosexual imagery and costuming is designed to challenge such traditional attitudes towards "*gays, women, freaks, anyone who is marginalized.*" (Shevlin, 1998:3) As a result, he has shocked unsuspecting, unprepared school teachers and young children in the past.

Journalist Max du Preez fights against racial stereotyping by demanding that his identity as an African be recognised, even though he is a white Afrikaner. While his story may not be directly related to the arts, it reflects an attitude towards the constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression. His demands raised the ire of some black educators, perhaps operating from their own sense of apartheid-influenced stereotyping. His insistence on his identity speaks to the heart of what it means to be South African today.

But he came into bigger trouble when he ran afoul of his SABC-TV bosses. A crusading investigative journalist, he raised serious questions about the motives and censorial attitudes of the organisation's management. As of this writing, the SABC is restructuring under new management.

Kaolin Thomson's work, Useful Objects, raised yet another serious question concerning possible lingering colonial attitudes. Who gets to speak for whom? Can white artists make justifiable comments involving images of black people? Her frank

and sex-referenced object raised the ire of a government minister or two, who expressed regret that the Film and Publications Act was not restrictive enough to cover newspapers that publicised her case, or in fact media such as her sculpture, thus echoing the same censorial attitude expressed in respect to Mark Hipper's drawings.

Most artists cited in this dissertation strongly feel that they should be free to say what they wanted to say, even to the use of their own bodies in their expression of concepts, ideologies and emotions. Of course they acknowledged the fact that they expected their work to be subject to criticism, and they accepted that this condition is part of contemporary discourse.

These controversies thereby serve a vital function in the society. Under the new freedom, people are now entering into debates and dialogues concerning such issues as gender, identity, race, sex and HIV/AIDS. Under the previous government, such issues were not confronted in the public forum. Such discussion is positive, in any society, as it helps to educate people concerning issues of vital importance.

Artists in South Africa now are establishing relationships with international artists, organisations and markets. Formerly disadvantaged artists are realising better opportunities for public exposure. In addition, artists of all colours are beginning to work together. While formerly privileged white artists may be experiencing a decline in opportunity and influence, it is apparent this move is improving equality and arts opportunities across the board.

Bongiwe Dhlomo and Mike Van Graan may feel that some of the doors are in fact closing, and that the bitter experiences of apartheid may be recurring, this time under black ideologues in power. However, it is just as possible that this could reflect

the fact that the arts are low on the public agenda, with budgets and support being severely curtailed.

South African society is still in the process of change and transformation. The long history of colonialism and apartheid can't simply be cancelled, and its effects ignored. Because it is not known where this entire process will end, future researchers may want to devote time to some of the events and issues referred to in this paper.

Many momentous events in South African history which touch on censorship were larger, and beyond the scope of this document. The Dutch Reformed Church, for instance, and its support of racism in the context of Christianity, is a study worth a paper by itself. The role of the entire Afrikaner community is itself worthy of examination, as it is felt that such a study will reveal a far more complex picture than is generally known.

Events of the freedom struggle, in particular, beg more in-depth investigation. Even though physical evidence is scant, there are people living today who were involved in the Peace Park phenomenon. There are stories and narratives to record, and photographic evidence to make public. Further research should be done concerning resistance efforts by artists using T-shirts and posters. Currently, there is no regular publication or organisation that investigates and monitors censorship issues, such as child pornography.

A full history of Bill Ainslie and the Johannesburg Art Foundation would add significantly to the picture, as well as studies on the importance of such organisations as FUBA and FUNDA. The history and impact of Rorke's Drift would be a fascinating subject for a paper, as would be the history of Cecil Skotnes' Polly Street Art Centre. The

history of Mike Van Graan's publication, Cultural Weapon, which acted as an attack watchdog, would also be illuminating.

On-going events and issues, such as the developing power struggle and journalistic orientation of SABC-TV, certainly bear scrutiny and monitoring. A more thorough examination of artistic struggles to define self, in the South African context, would definitely be in order. And finally, there is significant research yet to be done on the influences and contrasts between traditional cultures, and the overpowering 'western' media, sometimes chastised as 'American' media, especially in the form of cinema and music.

This is indeed an exciting time to be involved in South African culture. The outlook is positive and the future bright. Rather than bury the past, greater understanding will come from exposing and discussing it. This process will enrich the culture of the world.

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