

A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF CLOTH BEAD
SCULPTURES MADE BY RURAL FEMALE ARTISTS
IN KWAZULU NATAL (1970 TO 1999)

BY

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

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Date

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother,
who has been working hard to support our family
and is the person who has been my inner
strength to further my studies
and is the reason for my life.

Acknowledgements.

I would like to express my grateful thanks to all those colleagues, relatives, institutions and friends who have all supported me in many ways during the research for this dissertation.

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My thanks as well to all those who helped and contributed in various ways, but who I have neglected to mention here.

PREFACE

The following conventions have been applied to this dissertation:

- . The Harvard System of referencing has been used.
- . Double indentations and single spacing indicate direct quotations.
- . “–“ used for direct quotations .
- . ‘–‘ used for quotations within quotations.
- . [–] used for the candidate’s insertions in quotations.
- . Titles of publications and works of art are underlined.
- . Illustrations are referred to by their figure number in brackets.
- . The candidate has used the term Black to describe people living in South Africa and who are of African descent, in preference to the term African.
- . The candidate has used the term White to refer to people living in South Africa who are of European descent.

Abstract.

Cloth bead sculptures are art objects made by female artists from cloth, beads, wood, wire and other materials that are stitched by hand. They are freestanding representations of the human figure, animals and inanimate objects and have traditionally been important ritual, as well as aesthetic, objects in Zulu communal life.

The research for this dissertation was based on qualitative methods which brought together information from the women discussing their life and work. These discussions with individuals and groups looked at the women's own explanations of their work, including its traditional, ritual and communicative functions in rural Kwa Zulu Natal. They also discussed their experiences in selling their artwork in relation to the past discriminatory practices of apartheid South Africa, which was the context for their lives.

From the 1970s some rural women brought some of these figures to Durban for sale in the streets to supplement their meagre resources. Later the African Art Centre became the main retail outlet for selling African Art and Craft and white people associated with it became the "official" spokespersons and interpreters of such their art work. This had the consequence of depriving the rural women artists of their own voice. They were thus not able to give their own interpretation and explanation of their work. Interpretation of these sculptures in the dissertation has taken into account the traditional communicative role of bead figures and the symbolic function of colours, patterns and textures created by the beads and other materials.

Cloth bead figures brought in for sale to local and international buyers always represented more than simple decorated figures to the artists themselves. Indeed these bead figures, like other works of art produced by black South Africans, became a vehicle for the

expression of political consciousness in the late apartheid era as a part of a wider Black consciousness.

As the candidate's own life has had some strong parallels with the lives of the women artists, in particular his calling as a diviner and healer, an autobiographical account provides a context for his involvement with their work. Recent exhibitions of the candidate's work in South Africa and Australia has involved acknowledging and using some cloth bead sculptures of the women to represent their voice at this time.

The dissertation concludes with a summary of the factors which denied the rural female artists a voice, and points to the future role of black artists in raising the nation's consciousness in relation to the need for reconciliation and equity in the new South Africa.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

This dissertation is an exploration and critical examination of cloth bead sculptures made by female rural artists in KwaZulu Natal. As South Africa moves historically from an apartheid state to a multi-cultural and multi-racial democracy there is a need for Black artists to recover and discover anew the cultural meanings in traditional art forms and practice. In a spirit of truth and reconciliation, the candidate believes the task of the contemporary Black artist and teacher is to bring to consciousness those traditional cultural meanings in a way that makes them accessible to contemporary South Africans.

The difficulties in doing this are considerable as one has to struggle to express these meanings in a 'foreign' language and in an academic format. A form that constrains the author from using the personal pronoun 'I' to claim ownership and responsibility of the views being expressed. In order to relate the historical aspects of cloth-bead sculptures to the same social, economic and cultural forces that have shaped the candidate's life, he has been obliged to step outside the formal academic constraints in Chapter Four. The meanings and spiritual power argued for in the case of the cloth bead sculptures, are proclaimed again personally in the biographical fragment presented in this chapter. This gives significance to the argument advanced in Chapters One, Two and Three and at the same time it expresses the problems of identity for the black artist in post-apartheid South Africa. The issues of perspective in respect of language, symbolism and meaning remain central to the argument of the dissertation in all of its chapters. In describing the objects made by the artists under discussion, the candidate believes that the word "doll" is not appropriate, since it is a term from the English language used during the colonial period as part of an imposed culture.

As a result, it became integrated with indigenous African culture, leading to the loss of the true name and meaning of these objects. Cloth bead sculptures in the context of this research are defined as art objects that are freestanding representations of the human figure. Also included are representations of inanimate objects made from cloth, beads, wood, wire, and other materials. They are stitched by hand.

Both Preston-Whyte and Thorpe used the term cloth bead sculpture when they stated that it seemed appropriate because those figures and groups of figures are both free standing and decorative (Nettleton; Hammond Tooke: 1989:142). Thorpe (1994:72) believed that the term cloth bead sculpture avoids the Western term "folk art" and well describes the figures. Cloth bead sculptures, fertility dolls, fetish dolls and many other names have been imposed on these objects. These names were unknown to the artists who were not consulted in the naming of their artworks in their own language. Therefore, the term created a shift in their meaning, their ownership and their cultural value. It negated the roll of the individual artist. Underlying this process was an enforcement of racial and cultural domination by the ruling white South Africans during the era of colonisation and apartheid.

The shift from traditional craft making of the figures to a more unusual (now well-known) artistic form began in the 1970's. The dates 1970 to 2001 will be used to indicate the period of cloth bead sculptures under discussion. The first research method employed has been that of a search through the published secondary sources about cloth bead sculptures in Southern Africa. This literature includes Art Gallery catalogues and essays as well as unpublished theses. The various collections of cloth bead sculptures (such as those in the Durban Art Gallery; the Tatham Gallery in Pietermaritzburg and The National Museum in Cape Town) have also been an important source of information.

The candidate believes that although writers like Preston-Whyte et al (1989:20) began to acknowledge the creators of these objects as artists or sculptors and not crafters, they did not pursue the implications of this conceptualisation any further. Thus, the artists status and role within the community were never properly acknowledged by this omission. In subsequent chapters, the candidate will demonstrate that the published writing on this form of artistic production in South Africa was by critics who were writing from a European perspective, and largely ignorant of the complexities of Black people's culture. As a result, they did not appreciate the cultural significance of the cloth bead sculptures, or the social and economic reality of the artists involved.

The significance of the study is to look anew through Black eyes at this particular art form of cloth bead sculptures and the women artists who produce them. In particular it is an attempt to give these women a voice about their art and about their lives. The struggle to survive under the conditions of apartheid was made all the worse, because they both felt their art was not given proper recognition and they themselves had no voice to explain it to a wider public. The study, in particular, will demonstrate the vital connection between the art making and the divination processes which are manifested in cloth bead sculptures. This need to approach the subjects of research as subjects, not as objects, as so often occurred in colonial Africa has been highlighted in two recent works. Peter Rigby in *African Images: Racism and the End of Anthropology*, (1996: ix-x) says:

Finally, since the purpose of this book is to examine the *broader* implications and consequences of intellectual work, not only in anthropology but in other fields related to the study of human beings, I feel I am fully justified in turning a critical anthropological gaze upon these writings. I suggest that anthropology [can cope with the urgent issues] only if it abandons its commitment to a position of a positivist, empiricist, autonomous enquiring subject and adopts a critical and dialectical framework of knowledge. This may be achieved" *only by using the kinds of thinking and knowledge (that is their dialectical forms) to which receptive anthropologists have been exposed in the predominantly non-capitalist societies in which they have lived or been brought up. I refer in this book mainly to African societies...*[candidate's emphasis].

Secondly, the South African born anthropologist and scholar, Archie Mafeje (1991: iii), noted the need to decode writings by writers and commentators on Africa, where they wrote from the cultural perspective of the rulers and the powerful, rather than from the perspective of the ruled and the powerless. In response to these problems evident in the literature, the candidate made a significant response in this study to the methodology behind the various methods of research used. The candidate believes that in order to achieve the objectives outlined above a number of different qualitative research methods had to be employed.

One method employed was participant observation, where the candidate travelled into the rural areas to observe and participate with the artists in their home settings. This provided a dense source of information about their lives and struggles, as well as the local significance of their art.

Further more the candidate used a series of structured, but informal, interviews in their home language (*isiZulu*) to get basic demographic information and personal details. These interviews were recorded and subsequently translated into English. It should be pointed out that there is a cultural difficulty in using questionnaire and interview methods. They are not really suitable, because such interaction may display a sense of being disrespectful. In such a case an elderly woman may find it offensive to be questioned by a younger person. In order to get some details about specific areas of their work, their perceptions of their art as culturally significant, as well as their feelings about it being a commodity for sale, the candidate arranged for some informal gatherings called *indaba* where the women artists discussed these issues which affected them as a group. This kind of 'focus group' technique is much more suitable and culturally appropriate when the research involves older people from Kwa Zulu Natal.

Another very important source of information for this dissertation came from the candidate's interaction with the female artists at Technikon Natal from 1997-2001. Working with them in a collaborative, the candidate has been able to see their lives and artistic work from yet another perspective. It is from this perspective of seeing their life and artistic struggles that the candidate wanted to let their voices speak through this thesis. The parallels of these Black women's stories with his own family's story has led him to necessarily highlight the social context of the artistic production by Black artists in South Africa with his own autobiographical story.

Thus the research is giving voice to our combined story. The women and their work are not simply objects for study, but active subjects with a voice that is joined to that of the candidate. The primary data collected from various crafters and artists reveals their life experiences that have been transferred into the arts and craft objects. The artists and crafters also spoke about their day to day experiences they have gathered from their encounter with the craft markets. Thereafter the candidate believed that it was vital that through the writing of this document, that the neglected artist's voice be taken seriously. During the research the candidate found that realities about the relationship between the crafters and those who market and sell their work has not been written about.

Thus, most of what the interviewed artists and crafters have mentioned in this document (as primary data) has never been written about before. Most (art and craft) historians of the past, and present, focus on the crafted objects, not on the people who produce them and their relationship with the craft industry. In this case, the candidate intends to credit the artists and crafters for their work by providing these documents, which would become a platform from where they can openly tell their stories to the world.

The difficulties of doing this in the context of formal post-graduate research are considerable. Bill Bottomley (1971:216) described the difficulties in this way:

This chapter is about doing research, specifically post-graduate research, in such an atmosphere of orthodoxy. In particular, it is my contention that [at the personal level] a sort of intellectual Gresham's Law operates, in which the higher ideals of scholarship and scientific advance are driven out, mediated or otherwise made subservient to the more practical demands of the research experience; the chief demand being the necessity not to violate too much the world-taken-for-granted of orthodox social science.

The same problems certainly exist for the post graduate student in art or cultural studies as it does in the social sciences. A further difficulty of how to represent the subjects of study emerge when the researcher is working in a society that has been dominated by social inequality and social injustice.

Myron Glazer (1972: 59) states the problem in the following way:

Field workers often immerse themselves in societies characterised by deeply rooted social inequality. ... Yet the analysis of human suffering places a special burden on researchers. They are constantly plagued by their own feelings of bitterness and anger. Their scholarly detachment and struggle for objectivity often lead to a profound sense of guilt and impotence. Some hope to strike back through their writings.

Others less patient Join the downtrodden and suffer their fate. The candidate has had to struggle with feelings of bitterness and anger about the life these women artists have had to suffer. However every effort has been made to be as objective as possible while giving voice to the women, to their art work and problems related to the marketing of their work. In group discussions with the artist participants in this current research, the issue of lack of respect emerged as an important issue. This is not suprising since it is important to note the way in which black artists were devalued in the language of many reports. For example, it is inappropriate and disrespectful to refer to mature African women or men by their names without at least including their surnames and correct title and indicating their marital status, as has been commonly practised by writers of South African art history.

For example Jo Thorpe (1994:28) in her book It's Never Too Early, used photographs of both white and black women to illustrate her text. In one photograph a white woman is identified by both her name and surname, whilst a black woman is only identified as a

“Sangoma”. This is followed by a photographic image of a black woman titled Rural Woman with Traditional Bead Work. All the images of white people in this document, are identified by their first name and surnames. In this study the candidate will endeavor to use full names and include family praises in some cases. Unlike family names, surnames and family praises are the main identity signifiers that control and show the historical relations between the families. For example, related individuals will share the same praises.

The candidate recognises that the African Art Center has tried to bridge the gap between artists and their customers by introducing the writing of artist’s biographies.

Hlengiwe Dube (13/09/2001) indicated that many crafters live in the rural areas where they do not have direct addresses and telephone, and this hinders communication, making it difficult to reach them. Anthea Martin (13/09/2001) mentioned that they do try to put the artist’s name on the art work, more especially if it is a major piece of sculpture the artist is identified. Juliette Armstrong, who was present at the interview, also agreed by saying ‘If you can put the artist’s name on the artwork, you can identify him/her’. Anthea Martin further stated that if an artwork is a cloth-bead sculpture, not just a stock item like a bird, the artist’s name is identified.

Hlengiwe Dube (interview:2001) said in the case of baskets for example, the special ones are identified by the artist’s names. The candidate acknowledges that there is some identification of the makers of arts and craft which is sold through the African Art Center. During the fieldwork, where the candidate visited a number of museums and art galleries, (e.g. National museum, Cape Town, Durban Art Gallery and Johannesburg etc.). Cape Town, the candidate came across a lot of collected beaded sculptures collected from KwaZulu/Natal. Some of these pieces, which were bought from African Art Center and other collectors, indicated that the artists, titles and the origin of the art work were unknown. The candidate believes that this problem is not only seen in contemporary work, but is further experienced with antique pieces. Some of the collectors have not understood

the need to document antique pieces, indicating at least their origins. In 1998 at the Johannesburg Art gallery, the curator showed the candidate shelves of beaded items collected from all over the country. The tragedy was that the art works were not documented and not catalogued. That meant that the communities from which they came from did not have a clue about their existence in the gallery.

In the recent years the candidate bought a number of beaded pieces from the antique sale at the African Art Center (see Figure 1), these items clearly indicate that the artist is unknown even though the place of origin has been indicated. The candidate's concern in this regard is that South Africa continues to lose a record of its indigenous wealth and knowledge. Unfortunately once material culture items are dislocated from their place of origin, they lose all the meaningful knowledge attached to them. On the other hand the candidate acknowledges that the African Art Center started its own private collection, was named after Jo Thorpe. Later this collection donated to the Campbell Collections (of the University of Natal). This collection has been thoroughly documented by the curator .

The candidate believes that even if such collections have been preserved, there is a large amount of both contemporary and antique works of art that the country has lost, and continues to lose, from being sold to overseas arts and crafts markets. During the seven month study visit to Western Australia (1999), the candidate found that there were attempts to collect and bring back aboriginal artworks and crafts to the Aboriginal Communities. In South Africa (e.g. KwaZulu/Natal, where the candidate is based) he experienced that such art and collections are still far away from the communities who made them. Most of these collected items are not accessible, and are not known to exist by most black communities . This goes to the extent that most black communities do not have any knowledge of the existence of art galleries and museums, not to mention their function and services they have to offer.

Figure 1 Artists Unknown, Antique beaded pieces, Bought from African Arts Centre, Beads metal Buttons, 1960's, Tugela Ferry, Msinga, Candidate's Collection.

Above

Top Left: Ithemba, 1960's, Tugela Ferry, Msinga region, Ipoco, Pondo region.

Middle Right: Amasowenhloko, 1960's, Pondo region.

Below

Top : Isitimela, 1960's, Pondo region.

Bottom: Isiyeye, 1950's, Transkei.



Thus the candidate's argument is that presently the art collections are not accessible to black communities. The Western world believes that it is important to collect and keep on collecting material cultural objects for museums , private collections and galleries. As a Black person, the candidate believes that by doing so, one dislocates and removes vital cultural resources from their environment. The dislocation of such objects leads to a removal of the indigenous knowledge that is attached to both the object itself and the environment.

Therefore once these material culture objects are dislocated they lose their cultural value and meaning. For instance it became a very difficult task for the candidate to re-attach the meaning behind the making of cloth bead sculptures, especially those which had been collected. The geographical location of the museums and galleries is one factor that brings about the inaccessibility of collected material culture objects by black communities. For instance the Campbell collection (which includes the Jo Thorpe collection as it was previously known) is situated far away from the Durban city centre, in the heart of a residential area occupied mostly by white people. The candidate therefore suggests that the government should apply a decentralisation policy on the museums, galleries and other institutions, which house material culture objects. By introducing such institutions to the neglected rural areas and townships, the black population will then gain a fair access to this valuable information.

CHAPTER TWO

THE POLITICAL, CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL CONTEXT OF CLOTH BEAD SCULPTURES

To fully understand the underlying meaning of the artworks in question, one must recall the political situation from which the black artists in South Africa emerged.

Mutwa (1996:26) writes:

When black people applied for a passbook, they had to wade through the coals of hell itself before they could hold the cursed little book in their hands. Blacks had to go from office to office, stand in queues for days and even weeks ends, spend money on trains and bus fares day in and day out and return home empty handed each evening. By the time the people made any progress they usually were heavily in debt because of having to borrow money from neighbours and friends to travel to town and stand in queues of misery.

In South Africa, from 1960 onwards, there was a new wave of growing black consciousness as the African National Congress and other liberation groups chose either exile, prison or revolt.

Within the complex developments at this time, initially during Dr Verwoed's premiership, a black presence in the cities was tolerated only for work purposes. In addition, housing was segregated on a colour basis. Between 1960 and 1983 three hundred thousand coloured people and one hundred thousand Indians were relocated. The biggest impact though was on 3.2 million blacks who were forcibly removed to impoverished areas in the homelands set up by the government. The state used the army, a spying system and modern methods of surveillance to quell dissent (Frost, 1988:86).

Apartheid not only denied black South Africans equality and basic human rights, it also prevented thousands of people from neighbouring Southern African states from entering the country.

Pat Nunn (1998:6) stated that her family 'migrated to Australia because of apartheid'. As Swaziland (from where they came from) at the time had no tertiary education, it meant that the only hope was going to the Republic of South Africa, where education was graded by colour. The majority of black people were denied access to a good education. The Nunn family did not want a second grade education for their children, nor for them to be considered inferior. After an awful experience at the Lavumisa border post where the South African border post staff inspected their children's hair, to decide whether they could enter the country, Pat and her husband decided to migrate to Australia.

Black artists in the townships and the homelands began to portray and document daily events through any medium available, for example Umkumbane (Figure 2) by Trevor Makhoba, 1988. Cloth bead sculptures cannot be excluded from this resistance art of the black consciousness movement. Artworks such as Policeman by Thandi Mchunu, (Figure 3) made from wire, cloth, beads, wood and silver buttons bears an undisputed testimony to the military surveillance to which townships and homelands were constantly subjected. According to Williamson (1989:41), the work titled Policeman made by Thandi Mchunu in 1987 (Figure 3) is a figure dressed in a grey uniform with shiny buttons, a figure of authority. The leaders of both organisations (i.e. Inkatha Freedom Party and the United Democratic Front) repeatedly called for an end to the violence, but politically linked incidents of murder, arson, rape and intimidation continued. The work by Mavis Mchunu titled Boys With Guns made in 1989 (Figure 4), is an example of a violence related

Figure 2 Trevor Makhoba, UMKHUMBANI, 1988, Painting, African Arts Centre Collection.



Imkhambane (Cato Manor) - Eat and Let's Go by Trevor Makhoba 1988

Figure 3 Thandi Mchunu, POLICEMAN, 1987, 305mm, buttons, cloth, wire, African Arts Centre Collection.

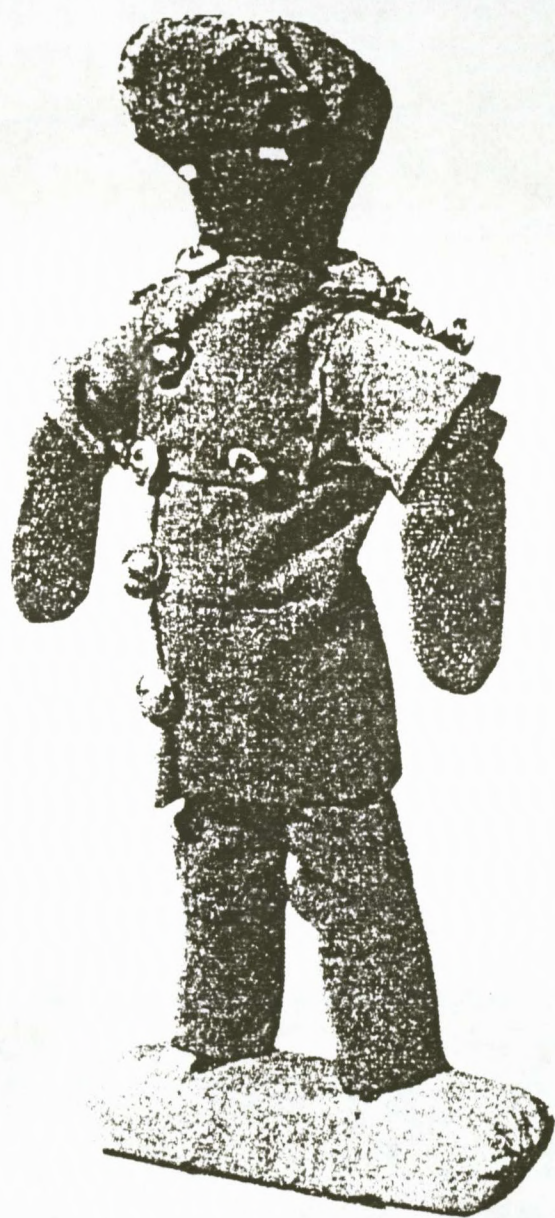
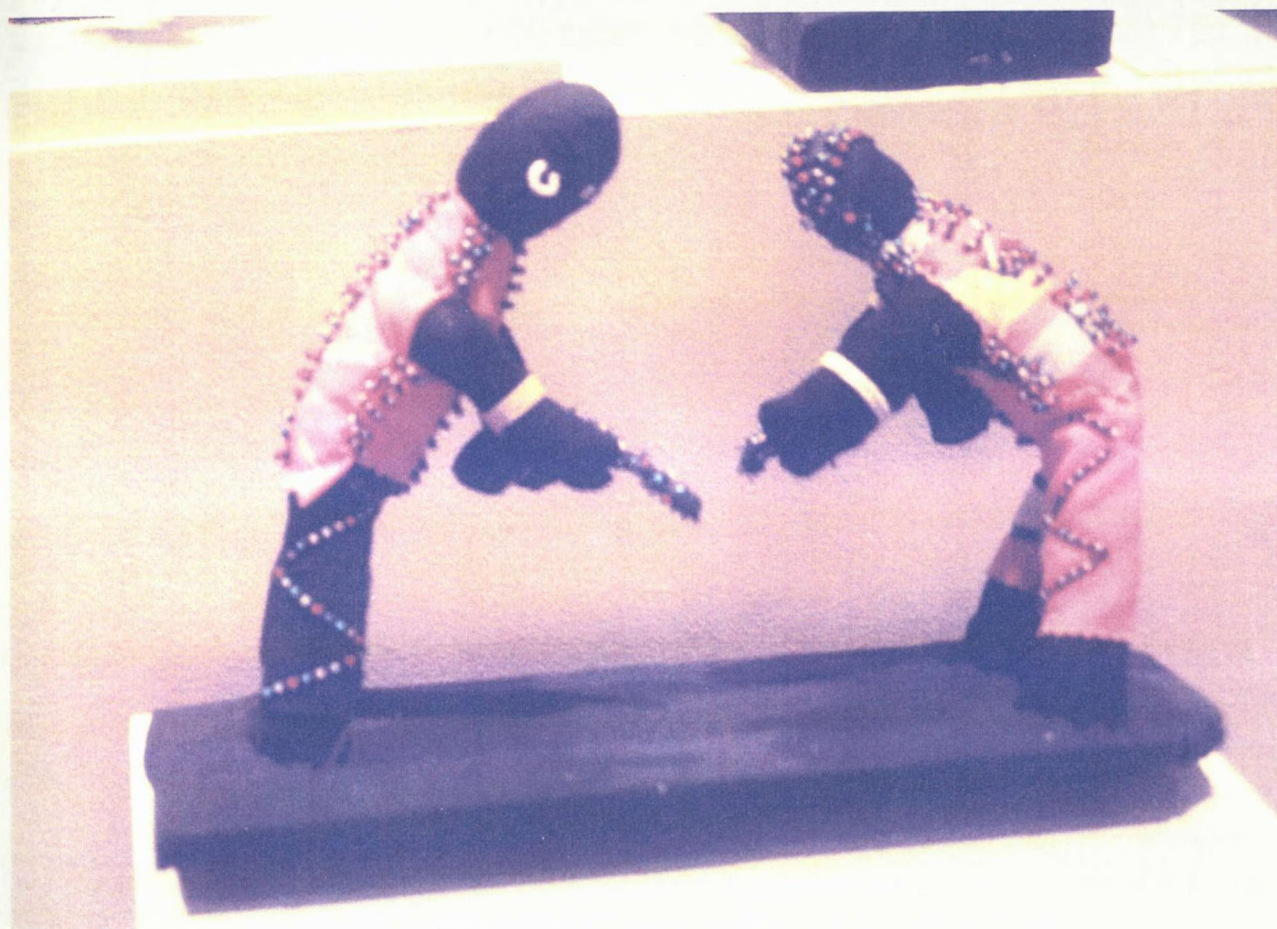


Figure 4 Thandi Mchunu, BOYS WITH GUNS, 1987, National Museum, Cape Town.



experience. The artist's response and contribution to 'peace' is depicted by Mavis Mchunu's cloth bead sculpture titled Peace in our Land made in 1989 (Figure 5). All the figures are seated with arms open as if they are reaching out for one another, to complete a circle around a table.

Frost (1998:91) states that "The Black Consciousness Movement emerged so as to mobilise opposition and help black communities rid themselves of their inferiority and dependency". Often the masses in black communities had to work for white people in farms or in households as cheap labourers (See Figure 6). It was here that black people were often treated inhumanely, which lead to a feeling of inferiority (Frost, 1998:91).

The candidate agrees with Gareke's (1999:110) statement that "Within society, each and every one of its members is responsible for having an opinion, for questioning, approving or rejecting the decisions taken by those who govern." Furthermore the candidate recognises that such human rights were not given, especially to black people (Figure 7). According to Bernstein (1975:6) the pass laws restricted the freedom of movement, and a choice of occupation of the African people. Every single black male and female over the age of 16 years had to carry a pass at all times, and produce it on demand by a police officer. As far as section 10 of the Bantu Urban Areas Act, was concerned, after 1964 there was an effective embargo on the entry of women to the urban areas, other than on a visitor's permit for a specific period. "The wording of the regulations suggest that exceptions might have been made, but couples who applied for a wife to join her husband, found that in practice, permission was not granted" (Bernstein, 1975:7).

This cruel mental and physical control was enforced by raids on home in the night by armed police to check permits, and beatings or jail for failure to produce one. This was accompanied by random

Figure 5 Thokozile Gwala, THE TEA PARTY, 1998, wood, wire, cloth, plastic and beads, Durban Art Gallery Collection.



Figure 6 CITRUS FARM WORKER, Photo by Abisang Tullman.



Citrus farm worker (Photo by Abisag Tüllman)

Figure 7

POLICE ATTACK WOMEN DEMONSTRATORS AT CATO
MANOR, 1959, Durban, Photographer Unknown.



Police attack women demonstrators at Cato Manor, Durban, 1959

violence in the streets from reactionary forces. The system of oppression led to joblessness, starvation, deprivation of educational opportunity, no access to medical treatment and other basic human necessities, side by side with privilege and power.

It is in this context that black artists in South Africa, including bead cloth sculptors, expressed the inhumanity of their oppression. Art making became a potent, if silent, protest following the torture and killing of those who resisted their oppressors. Art making became a symbol of the contradiction that was South Africa.

Credo Mutwa (1964:530) states :

The black man of Africa is a being who has puzzled the whole world and it would appear that the more the rest of the world tries to learn something about the African man, the further they drift away from the truth. This is simply because all foreigners try to evaluate what they learn about Africans in terms of their own preconceived ideas and against their own standards of civilisation and social and political thought. The African can only be studied against the strange workings of his own mind and those who do not appreciate this should refrain from attempting to study him.

Any critical evaluation of African art, including that of cloth bead sculptures by non-African historians and writers, must be included within the context of Mutwa's statement. Denied a voice or access to what may have been written about their artworks, in a language other than their own, the makers of cloth bead sculpture remain unable to give full accounts of their intentions. The outcome is a domination of written information by writers such as Jo Thorpe, Prof. Preston-Whyte, Frank Jolles, et al. The absence of the artist's voice is a crucial issue. The artwork receives exposure to the media and the public whilst the artist remains invisible. This is an act of cultural discrimination and oppression.

Birth on a Hospital Bed, 1998 (Figure 8) is a sculpture by Sizakele Mchunu. It has a connection with Credo Mutwa's (1964:508) statement that :

Many white people believe that black women are differently built or less sensitive to pain because childbirth does not seem to worry our women overmuch. Most of our women can give birth to babies unaided. The truth is they are taught at their Initiation school how to give birth under self hypnosis.

For most black rural communities in KwaZulu Natal and elsewhere, clinics and hospitals are sometimes several hundred kilometers away. For example, in the Isithumba region in KwaZulu Natal there is only a mobile clinic, which only opens between the hours of nine the morning and four in the afternoon. A medical doctor is only available once or twice a week, during office hours. There may be emergency facilities and pharmacies available, but for further medical care one has to rely on the hospitals, either in Pietermaritzburg or in Durban. Both cities are more than thirty kilometers away from Isithumba. Therefore pregnant women have to depend on the traditional skills of giving birth, as well as raising their babies.

The late Sizakele Mchunu died giving birth, and her work Mourning Woman Beside Coffin, 1987 (Figure 9) is a testimony of these inadequate health facilities as she perceived them earlier in her life. Umlazi township (mentioned elsewhere in this document) is not really different in terms of facilities from the rural situation. In the 1970's there was only one medical clinic, which had to serve more than 1000 000 black inhabitants of the community. The candidate's elder sister had to give birth at home with the aid of the neighbour's wife in 1987. A single mother, renting a room from the house of our neighbour, also had to give birth being aided by our neighbours in 1999. The other dimension to the medical dilemma is that where medical facilities are available,

Figure 8 Sizakele Mchunu, BIRTH ON HOSPITAL BED, 1998, cloth,
beads, wire, wood and wool, African National Museum, Cape
Town.



Figure 9 Sizakele Mchunu, MOURNING WOMAN BESIDE COFFIN,
1987, 300 mm, wire, cloth and cardboard, National Museum
Collection, Cape Town.



Mother grieving beside the coffin of her child.
 "Moesder leue langs de studekin van haer kind.
 Lomama alda waeren belidokis yomgewabo yomtewana

Baby in a coffin.
 Babu in 'u donidokis.
 Umotwana chibukisai yomgewabo

they are often too expensive and inaccessible to those people at grass roots level.

Credo Mutwa (1964:534-535) states that Zulus send love letters made out of beads to their lovers (which is true), and that each colour means something (which is not strictly true). Man developed a spoken language, which was sufficient for communication, but the problem arose when one could not pass knowledge onto descendants. Hence, a written language developed. The earliest sign languages discovered date from the Middle Stone Age and later developed into elaborate pictures called pictographic writing. Artists today, including those under discussion here, are recording and transmitting their life experiences through visual three-dimensional sculpture. Progressively cloth bead sculptors pass knowledge and skills to their descendants.

A selected number of cloth bead sculptures (Figure 10) made by the women subjects of this study were exhibited as a part of the candidate's exhibition in the Midland and Fremantle Galleries in Western Australia, in 2000. Sales of these art works went back to the artists in KwaZulu Natal. The inclusion of these artworks was part of the candidate's contribution towards empowering the disadvantaged black people from this region by exporting their work to the Australian Arts and Craft audience. The Australian exhibition is a good example where black artists organised and presented both their work and issues behind it, without the interference of the middleman. Both the candidate and women artists involved come from the same geographical region, speak the same vernacular language and share similar cultural, political, social, economic and religious backgrounds. The candidate's role there was not to represent, but to present, our circumstances as a group of black, South African rural and township artists. According to Zulu/African values towards gender, the emphasis is not put on the differences but more on the unity of both genders

Figure 10 (Above) Isaac Khanyile, UNTITLED WORK, 2000, (Left) 2m x 1m, (Right) 1.40m x 1m, acrylic on canvas, Artist's Collection.

(Below) Gcinani Mchunu, Thembi Mchunu, Babazile Mchunu and Buyisile Ndlovu, BEAD CLOTH SCULPTURES, 1999, Height 300mm, wood, beads, wire and cloth, Artist's Collection.



that constitute a family. For example the Zulu King's children young or old are called *Abantwana*, meaning children. They all share the same status whether one is a male or a female. This culture does not stress gender differences, but stresses the importance of unity which constitutes a family. The candidate draws from this culture where his position must not be defined by his gender, but by his position within the African/Zulu family. The candidate's intentions are the presentation of the issues that affect the total unity or systems.

As one of ten Commonwealth arts and craft award winners, it was possible for the candidate to be an ambassador not of only the artists in question, but for all South Africans, especially the marginalised black communities. The candidate therefore believes his position was different to that of the culture broker whose main focus is on interpreting and marketing. In the context of this study a culture broker is defined as a person who is a mediator between the producers of arts and craft and the consumers who are mostly overseas customers. Misrepresentation of the aspirations, experiences and social values of these rural black women by writers has been common. Jo Thorpe (1994:72) stated "Cloth bead sculptors have combined traditional bead craft skills with cloth and a variety of materials in a way which has enabled them to illustrate, as a painter might, a vision of their lives and the things they see around them". Nowhere within Thorpe's book were the sculptors given the opportunity to relate in their own words and language their choice of materials and source of imagery.

Deputy Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology Bridgette Mabandla in the catalogue to an exhibition titled Evocations of the Child, wrote:

The contribution that women are making in respect of craft is essential

in addressing the social economic needs of craft practitioners. Although it is important to keep alive the desire to conserve communal values, it is even more important that women should determine for themselves at what level they wish to survive and how valuable they consider their craft to be. In the preservation of their culture and crafts, women have to decide for themselves what they consider to be peculiar to and valuable in their cultures (Dell et al, 1999:8).

It appears that there's an urgent need for the Department of Arts and Culture to introduce structures that empower and protect artists from exploitation by the middleman. Such structures have been introduced in Australia to empower and protect Aboriginal artists from exploitation and to ensure human rights of the artists. According to Ms Nalda Searles (Interview:2000), a member of the Arts Foundation of Western Australia and fellow of the Arts and Craft Council of Australia, there are government organisations whose function is to promote, protect and advise artists on all matters pertaining to indigenous visual arts, music theatre and dance performances.

Their policy priorities the employment of indigenous people in these structures. This ensures full participation in the development of indigenous Australian arts. The candidate believes that, to date, black women artists in South Africa have largely been deprived of this right. Their voice as translated into their artworks and representing those communal values has been ignored. Credo Mutwa (1964:538) wrote, "a loud-mouthed braggart would write on a calabash sending a message to all and sundry that it be known that he is like a lion and fears no one". It was not just the male braggart that wanted to send messages. Whilst the apartheid regime silenced the vocal voices of black women, their art carried to all who were prepared to understand it. They were visual messages of their historical and social circumstances.

Little is known of the role of healing contained within the cloth bead sculptures. Women artists used their construction as a means of confronting very real fears. A representative fear that emerged in the research discussion related to a woman's husband who commutes between Johannesburg, a crime infested city, and Durban. The social and political circumstances dictated that he may return to her infrequently. There was a real fear that laws of the land could break up her family. The labour and pass laws restricted the ability of women and their children to visit their husbands.

There were fears that her family may be set upon violence caused by contemporary political ideologies. Those women who left their families because they were without sufficient food and education, left to become alienated in their motherland in order to raise another woman's children (a privileged white woman's in most cases) in the city and towns for a meagre wage. These women artists in question, like their husbands, who commuted between these cities, found that they also had to travel to Durban and Pietermaritzburg to sell their art works.

As early as four in the morning they would leave their families in order to arrive on time. Arriving as early as six am, those selling beadwork were already congregating on the busy street near Durban's Berea Station. Those women artists that live and work at the Durban Station would depend solely on one another for protection against clashes that could occur with outsiders.

Thorpe (1994:75) states "For lack of medical attention the late Sizakele Mchunu died at home giving birth to twins in 1969. Many of Sizakele Mchunu's works portrayed the joys of motherhood, birth on a hospital bed indicated the pride and pleasure of her experience of giving

birth". The candidate believes this is a distorted interpretation of the real meaning of Mrs Mchunu's sculpture and that it represents her fears of childbirth and is a foreshadowing or premonition of her untimely death. A death in this case aided by unjust discriminatory laws, which led to inferior, or absent health and medical facilities. The late Sizakele Mchunu's sculpture is an exposition and a silent protest against the discriminatory laws and policies of the apartheid era. It further poses questions about gender inequalities and racial discrimination. Thus, Sizakele Mchunu used the only method available to send a message to the outside world of the fatal conditions black women were experiencing, and which caused the death of many babies even before her own. Her message was intercepted, moderated and re-interpreted to be acceptable to the international marketplace by a culture broker.

Sizakele Mchunu, late in her career, produced sculptures of coffins which Thorpe does not mention as part of what she claimed is "Sizakele Mchunu's portrait of joys of motherhood". Rather these sculptures carry messages revealing the rural women's anger against the inhuman system to which they were subjected to.

Writers like Preston-Whyte, Thorpe and others, failed to reflect the conditions from where black artists came from and the changing consciousness arising from those conditions.

Credo Mutwa (1964:508) states that :

Man know that of your parents your mother ranks higher than your father. Females play a more important role, like the Great Mother, our Goddess of Creation, a woman be she one's wife or one's mother exists in the past, present and future at the same time and she does not belong to one's father or oneself, but to those as yet unborn and to ones ancestors. This is why Bantu regard the killing of one woman as so great a crime that it needs a thousand men to die in a battle of vengeance. The separation of a man from

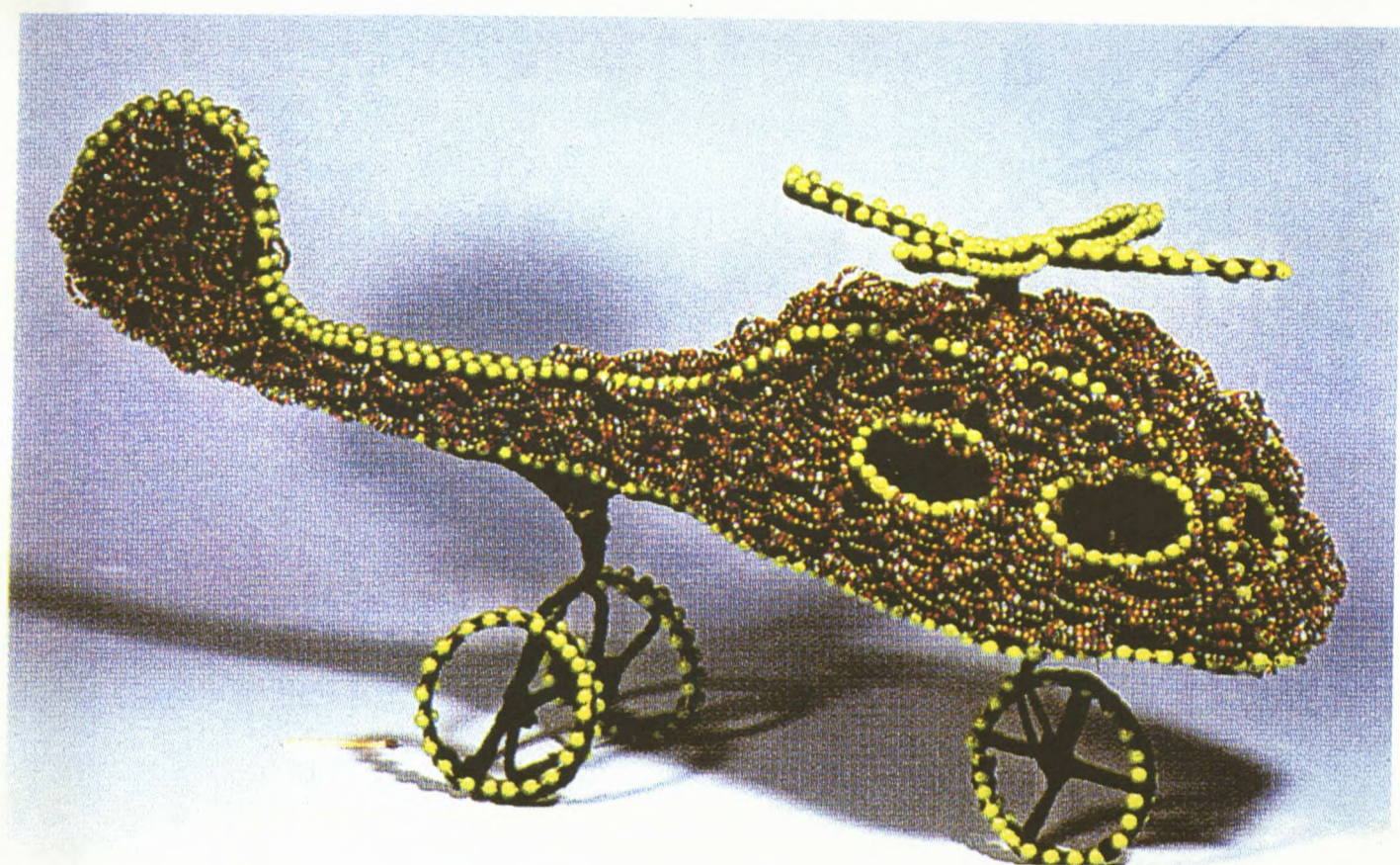
his wife by an external influence is listed as one of the three high crimes and calls for a war of vengeance and punishment.

Credo Mutwa (1964:508) noted that the Bantu can tolerate the cruellest humiliation and violence inflicted upon him, however if a man's wife, mother, sister or daughter is harmed or insulted he is bound by high law to carry out just retribution in the extreme. If he fails in this, the responsibility falls onto his children or subsequently his children's children. The works by Mavis Mchunu Boys With Guns, 1989 (Figure 4) and Gabigabi Nzama's work Umehlokahulumeni, Helicopter, 1997 (Figure 11) clearly indicates this. In this case, the artist's work becomes a direct reflection of both the maker and her environment.

Credo Mutwa (1964:511) says that, "The wood carvings signified the depredation of slave hunting around the Congo by the Belgians, Arabs, Portuguese, Germans and British. Passed from generation to generation as a reminder of that exploitation it added hatred of white people, and lead to the tragic and violent chaos and bloodshed of that region". The artist's work thus becomes a vehicle to transit information from one generation to another even after the death of that artist. This is an option black rural artists used to display their circumstances and plea for aid from outside communities who ultimately became recipients of their artworks.

According to Peek (1991:24) "A diviner's work is often compared to following a trail. A diviner must go beyond his clients responses and reveal the unknown". The candidate believes that Sizakele Mchunu and a large number of other artists mentioned and those not mentioned in this document fall into this category. In her sculpture, the client is presented with an aesthetically

Figure 11 Gabi-Gabi Nzama, UMEHLOKAHULUMENI, 1987, wire, cloth and beads, African Arts Centre Collection.



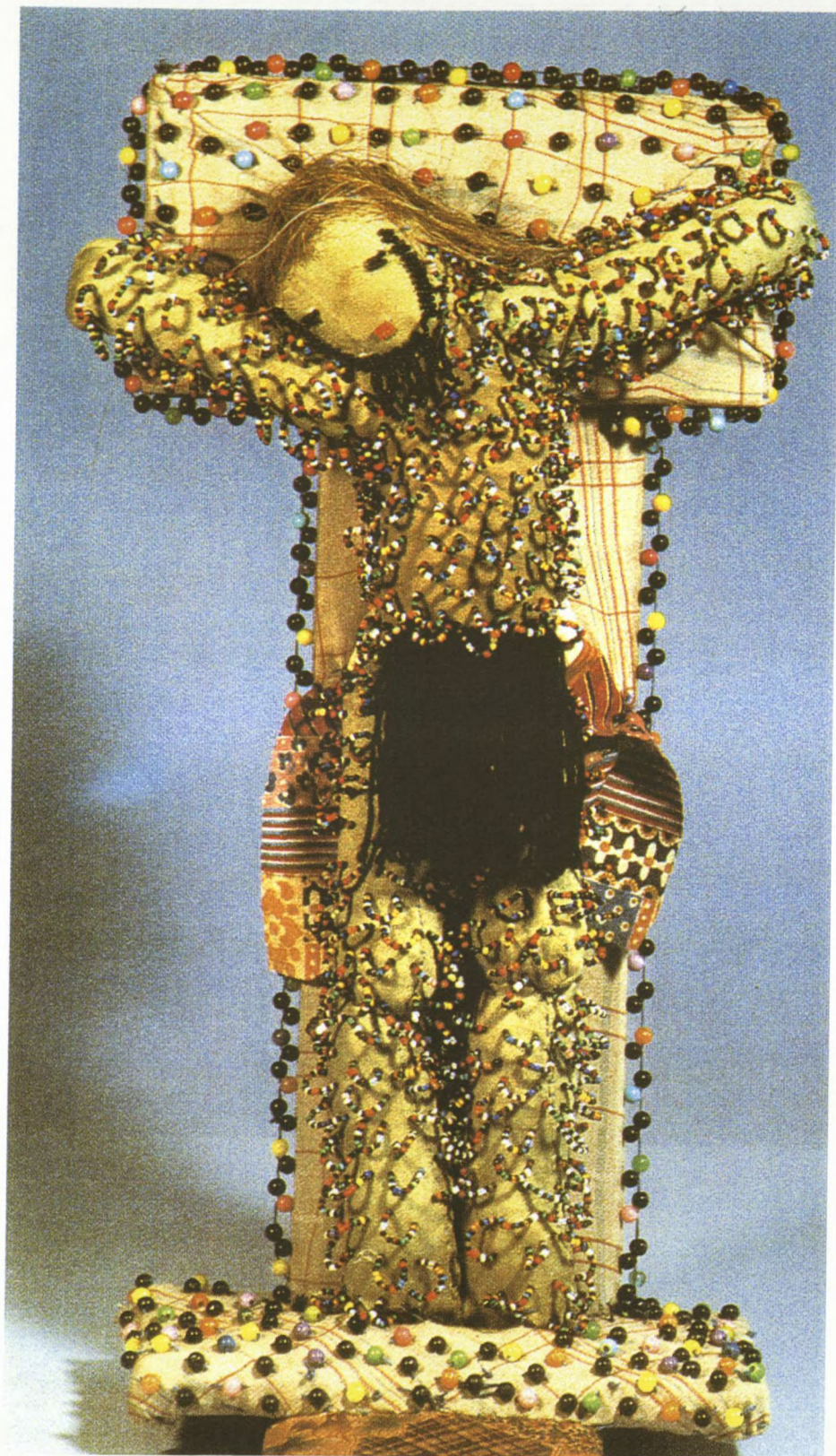
beautiful art piece which also heeds the unforeseen message of how the artist will die and the cause of her death. This indicates the artist is a diviner and the work an act of divination. This medicative process which accompanies the act of creating an object, from its non-visual form to a tangible and informative structure, is an act of divination in its own right.

Peek (1991:24) further states :

Divination is a woman's thing and if a man gets possessed he becomes a transvestite as he is playing the role of a daughter rather than a son. Because of the dangers associated with being a diviner, the call 'which comes from the ancestors or superhuman powers may at first be ignored. An individual selection may be signaled by patterned abnormal behaviour'. Suspicions about such signs are confirmed through divination and insanity or even death for the chosen individual may result if the correct response is not made. High intelligence, good memory and especially personal control must be manifested.

There is an relationship within the cloth bead sculptures between the fertility dolls and the religious beliefs of their makers. They cannot be separated. Sizakele Mchunu's work titled Crucifix (Figure 12), depicts a contradictory portrait of Christ's figure. It has long blonde hair, a short beard and the waist area is covered in long black un-beaded woollen attire closely related to the African *isigege* (a young girl's skirt). Thus the figure begins to represent both masculine and feminine forms. It suggests religious contradiction and confusion by the maker. Probably this is an indication of the culture broker's influences, when suggesting certain themes to the artists that will be attractive to the tourist market. On the other hand this work may be a representation of the clashes between the Christianity, brought about by the missionaries and the traditional African beliefs systems embodied in the Zionist church movement. The latter statement is visible within the Mchunu family tree, explained later in this document.

Figure 12 Sizakele Mchunu, CRUCIFIXION, 1988, size unknown, wood, beads, cloth and wool, African Arts Centre Collection.



Credo Mutwa (1964:507) notes that :

Each race, each nation, insists foremost, in utter self-righteousness, that its own beliefs are the only true ones and that other races are nonsense and plain barbarism. Likened a race without its religious beliefs as a Nation without a soul.....There are Two kinds of religions, the first that is flexible and allows the human mind free play for the betterment of inhumanity. Second that which demands blind unquestioning compliance. The second type resisted change of any sort and was laid down by men who wanted to make sure that those who followed would forever remain in a spiritual prison.

Kirby (1994:60), talking about material objects, states that "To a certain extent I believe that these art objects have lost their pure sense of being South African traditional art, because talk about traditional rituals and beliefs have been suppressed, thereby preventing an objective balanced view of African traditional religions". He continues by noting that "this suppressing attitude not only prevails among missionaries but also sociologists, explorers and Western thinkers as a whole". The domination of the white people in the cultural control of these art objects is clear, as most of the documents written by the culture brokers which the candidate has researched contain no obvious reference to the artist's voices. Any verbal communication from them is entirely absent. English titles further disconnect the artist's intention from the artwork or its story and further weakens the true meaning of words or expressions from a vernacular language. This raises a question as to why Zulu artworks (be they sculptures, paintings or prints) are given English or foreign language titles rather than that of the people's own language which they are able to understand.

CHAPTER THREE

THE INTERPRETATION AND DOCUMENTATION OF CLOTH BEAD SCULPTURES.

The female artists from Kwa Zulu Natal who make cloth bead sculptures and who are the subjects for this research are unanimous in their assertion that beadwork is not simply about making objects for sale, but is an important form of communication. As already noted in the introduction, cloth bead sculptures in the context of this research are defined as art objects that are freestanding representations of the human figure, animals or other inanimate objects usually made from cloth, beads, wood and wire. Great skill is involved in stitching them by hand. While to the artists involved in the research inquiry they represent layers of meaning and a form of cultural communication, most of the literature on cloth bead sculptures is by white writers talking to a white audience, without any reference to the cultural exchange involved.

Women artists in question from the rural areas brought (and still bring) their artworks, from their rural communities to the city in order to sell them. The candidate believes that it was by coming to the city that the artists concerned learned to express themselves more fully in combining indigenous knowledge with the demands of the urban market. They were assisted and directed by the mediation of a few individual white people, such as Jo Thorpe connected with the marketing of the art objects.

From the 1950's onwards under the system of apartheid there was a mass movement of African communities from the rural areas to the cities. This movement continues today. The journey made by those rural women artists from 1930 up to the present cannot be separated from the factors that caused such migration, such as poverty and a lack of educational and health facilities.

Art making became a vehicle of communication through which they could make a stand and have a voice. The titles given to cloth bead sculptures confirms the themes surrounding the stories behind them. For example Minister Blessing a Woman, 1987 (Figure 13), Crucifixion (Figure 12) by Sizakele Mchunu and Bride Giving Presents to her Husband (Figure 14) by Mavis Mchunu.

To the women themselves there was a feeling that their art was at least a channel of communication. When asked about the message behind their work, the artists (Interview:1999) said that the message is sent to Africans to retain their traditions and culture and that it should never fade away. Tholani Mchunu said, "that is why we make and sell our beadwork, we want everyone to know our background, and who we really are" (Interview:1999). Along those lines Babazile Mchunu agreed with her, and said, "If one have noticed, lately even the whites are wearing the African attire, especially the Zulu attire including bead work" (Interview:1999). Sizakele Mchunu's Mourning Woman Beside Coffin ,1987 (mentioned in the previous chapter) may be interpreted as her grief for her lost baby. In its deeper meaning the figure alludes to the struggle and fight for the basic human rights such as free access to health and medical services which were not, and are still not available.

The high infant mortality rate in rural areas is directly linked to the lack of these basic services. Access to clinics and clean water supplies are basic and essential human rights. Their absence from these rural areas are a constant source of anxiety to these women and mothers. During a recent visit by Australian Aboriginal artist Fiona Folley to Mandeni (twenty kilometres north of the Tugela River) she noted that "the country is still experiencing an economic apartheid with a whole generation of uneducated indigenous people unable to find jobs". While the image of rural poverty and neglect is not appealing, Preston-Whyte (1989:124-125) suggested that the contradictory ethnic image of rural Africa appeals to both white outsiders seeking to capture the essence and mystery of Africa, and the black insiders who seek their identity as a tangible linking factor between themselves and their cultural tradition in the rural areas.

Figure 13 Thandi Mchunu, MINISTER BLESSING A WOMAN, 1987,
215mm, beads, cloth wire and wood, African Arts Centre
Collection, Durban.



Figure 14 Mavis Mchunu, BRIDE GIVING PRESENTS TO THE GROOM, 1987, 215mm, beads, cloth, plastic, wood and wire, National Museum Collection.



Contemporary bead and

*During the 1980s, Zulu-
Valley of a Thousand Hills
beaded cloth figures of
observed in their local
made for sale, are an
market opportunities as
commentary by women
everyday lives.*

Preston-Whyte and Thorpe (1989:20) wrote about fertility dolls, referring to them as African figures. They testify that these figures easily captured the imagination of both local and overseas buyers, through a combination of visual and aesthetic appeal and a heady dose of the mystery and latent eroticism associated with 'tribal' initiation and preparation of young women for courting and marriage.

The candidate suggests that the above statement has been written from a Western perspective, viewing African culture as the 'other'. The statement omits to mention that the 'local and overseas buyers' would be predominantly white people, thus raising the issue of the cultural bias of the interpretation. In fact, initiation ceremonies have always been a highly secretive and spiritual process and breaching that process invites strict punishment and spiritual disaster (Van Wyk, 1999:59). This statement is an ideological avenue used by the culture brokers to attract white overseas customers. It does not enhance the interests of the black people's culture, and their well being. The figures referred to carry no tangible traces of the writer's claims, nor do these writers clearly display examples or evidence for such claims.

Preston-Whyte and Thorpe provide no clear account from the makers of the figures of fertility dolls that initiation ceremonies were, in fact, associated with eroticism. Leaders of Sotho initiation schools explained that fertility dolls, which included the introduction of Western Barbie dolls, are used because they are "beautiful" and therefore appropriate symbols of graduation. For example, Figure 15 of 1995 made by an unknown artist. Nowhere was it said that the dolls invited an erotic response from the participants or viewers who accompany these rituals (Gwintsa, 1999:31). Again, this account conveys a subtle misrepresentation of African history by the use of a vocabulary that tends to discredit the seriousness of African culture and its vital role in the black community.

Figure 15 (Left) Artist unknown, BARBIE DOLL DRESSED IN TRADITIONAL NDEBELE, 1995, 310mm, beads, thread, grass, animal hide, plant, fibre, plastic, Johannesburg Art Gallery Collection.



By omitting a reference to men it suggests also that only women underwent initiation. Whereas in fact, both men and women are prepared for adulthood through ceremonies. During these processes the main emphasis is on respect of self and others, education in the role of being a responsible adult and the beauty and pride of being an African man or woman connected to one's ancestors. Significantly, animals are slaughtered during these ceremonies. The inflated bladder (from a goat or ox) filled with human breath symbolises and reinforces the spiritual connection. The figures are made to express these human, social and family values and are included within the meaning of them (Van Wyk, 1999:65).

Many western writers dissociate diviners from creativity and the creative processes, yet they are in fact very much linked to the making of these artistic African figures. Many researchers, including Veliswa Gwintsa, (1999:27) recognize the problem of not being able to access the full knowledge contained within the figures, as such knowledge only resides with diviners. Mutwa (1996:27) said, "the so called Witch Doctors of Africa are scientists, psychologists, para-psychologists and artists". He (Credo Mutwa) is both a high *samusi* (Diviner) and a practicing artist.

The question must be asked as to what extent does this approach retard the development of a unique South African arts and culture in the new socio-political and economic dispensation? The reinforcement of Eurocentric forms and subjects found in doll-making bear witness to this process: for example work by Mavis Mchunu Tennis Match, 1984 (Figure 16) and White Mother and Baby, (Figure 17) by Mavis Mchunu 1984; Black Mother and Baby, (Figure 18) by Celani Nojiyeza 1995.

The socio-political, cultural and economic experiences faced by the women revealed in response to the questionnaire, interviews and discussion groups are similar to those experienced by the candidate's parents in the same period. The candidate's parents arrived in Umlazi Durban in 1962 after being forcibly evicted at *Umkhumbane* (which

Figure 16 Mavis Mchunu, A TENNIS MATCH, 1984, wire, beads, cloth, wood and plastic, African Arts Centre Collection.

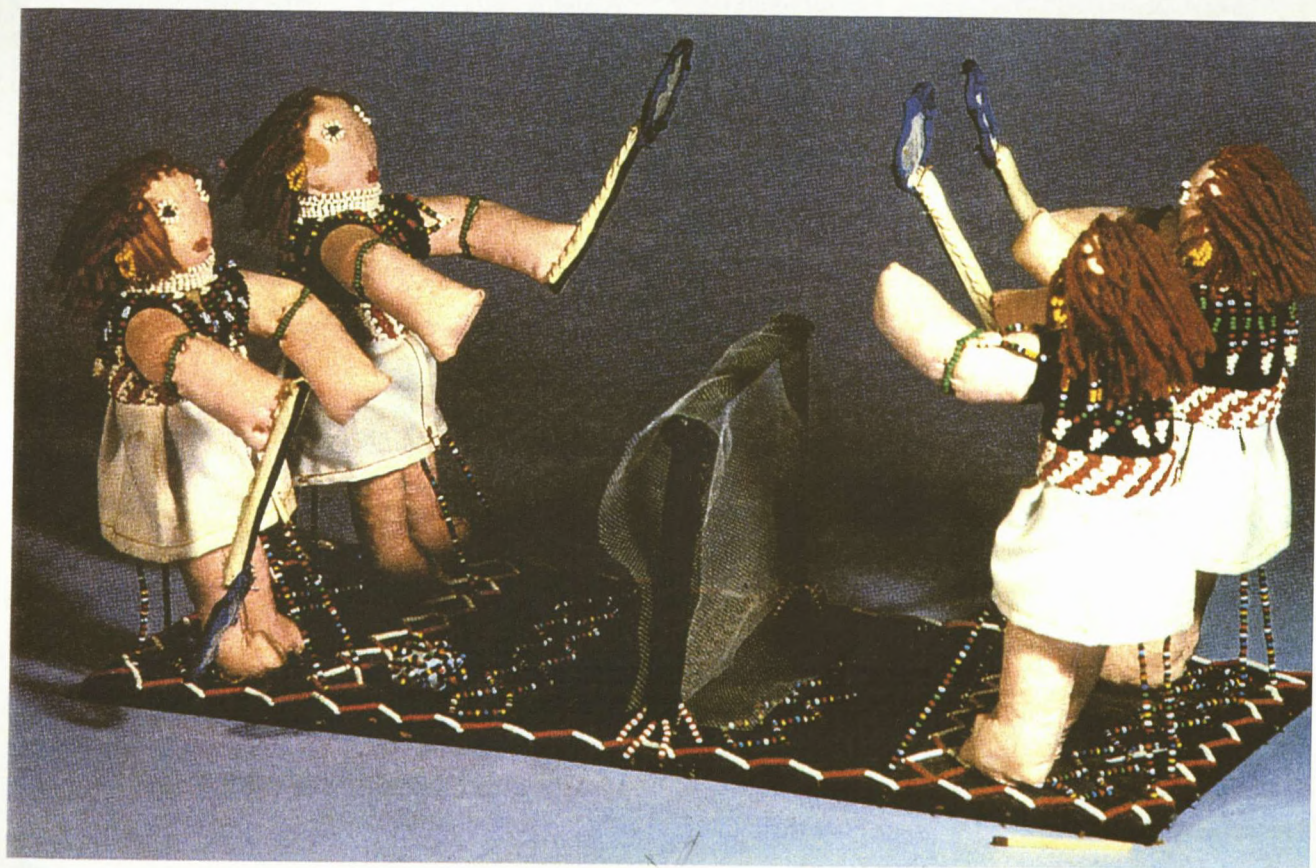


Figure 17 Mavis Mchunu (Left), WHITE MOTHER AND BABY, 1984,
African Art Centre Collection.

Figure 18 Celani Nojiyeza (Right), BLACK MOTHER AND BABY, 1995,
African Arts Centre Collection.



White Mother and Baby (left) by Mavis Mchunu 1984, African Art Centre Collection
Black Mother and Baby (right) by Celani Nojiyeza 1995, African Art Centre Collection

was a multi-racial informal settlement) because of the Group Areas Act.

Originally they came from Zululand, with the candidate's late father coming from Matubatuba and his mother from the Empangeni region. The significance of the candidate's mother being a former traditional healer, and the candidate's calling to become a diviner and his contribution as an artist from Kwa Zulu Natal that arise from this cultural and political setting, are explored later in the thesis.

According to Preston Whyte (1988:63) cloth bead sculptures emerged through the community of Zulu-speaking women from the Valley of a Thousand Hills, near Durban. Initially they attracted buyers because of their originality, beauty, colourfulness and ease of transport as a tourist product. The art forms grew from the making of single figures into a tableaux of animals, birds, miniature helicopters, sewing machines, radios and latterly into groups of figures engaged in everyday activities. The availability of glass beads and scraps of material used, and the skill of the maker, affected the forms of these objects. The cloth bead sculptures are unique and present a remarkable departure from traditional beadwork, and art forms, which were almost totally focused on personal adornment .

In her writing Preston-Whyte focused on the outsider issues of encounter and mediated in a germ rather than on insider issues of indigenous meaning. The candidate believes that these objects have proven themselves to be a visual system through which knowledge is documented about one's origin, language, age, gender, marital status and social standing .

A Zulu woman (of a specific age, not just any female) in creating her beaded love letter which communicates her desires, is using the same visual language which the women artists have applied to their cloth bead sculptures. Jo Thorpe (1994:4) stated that in 1955, when she was working at Michaelhouse school in Balgowan, she bought a love

letter from one of the cooks and she constantly wore it. Later she felt guilty about persuading someone to sell her such a personal thing. This personal involvement is evidence that the objects in question are not about beauty, but they present a possible physical and non-physical communication system between people. A communication system with a complex language that is well understood by those who own it and is at times incorrectly interpreted by those who do not.

It has been common practice for cultural outsiders to represent these sculptures as contemporary departures from tradition, whilst ignoring their roots in order to facilitate their popularity in the market place. In addition, the importance of their cultural intent to the communities from which they came has been ignored, especially the many cross-references to customs and beliefs. Thus the meaning is approached in a number of ways. The candidate will present some of these meanings as conveyed by the women in the following accounts of specific pieces of art.

With cultural sensitivity one can read the following symbolic characteristics inherent in figures representing black rural women during the past and present; for example the work by Khulelephi Mahlambisa titled A Well Dressed Woman, 1987 (Figure 19) and the untitled work by Thembi Mchunu made in 1999 (Figure 20).

1. The head and face position is confrontational rather than submissive. That is, the eyes are represented as sharp, forward looking and alert.
2. The stance of alertness is confirmed by the arms being ready at the side rather than folded or hidden.
3. Legs are made straight and with both feet firmly on the ground. This is achieved by fixing the figure to square wooden blocks, which at the same time creates a solid platform for stability.
4. For those upright standing figures, the overall message is one of alertness and pride, inherent in the erect nature of the pose.
5. Some other figures are made to mimic some other aspect of human movement or activity such as kneeling, walking or sleeping which represents the daily activities of

Figure 19 Khulelaphi Mahlambisa, A WELL DRESSED WOMAN, 1987,
285mm, cloth, beads, wire and wood, National Museum, Cape
Town.

en lewer terselftertyd subtiel
alledaagse belewenisse.



Figure 20 Thembi Mchunu, UNTITLED WORK, 1999, 300mm, wood, beads, cloth and wire, Artist's Collection.



ordinary people.

The materials which are used also carry a direct and or indirect reference to other social characteristics. For example the garments and colours can carry the following information :

1. Where the artists come from and their community identity,
2. The social role of the figure. For example in Figure 20, the figure mimics a *sangoma* or a diviner through the appropriate colours of the garments. In this case the choice of beadwork for the headdress and hair style is that which clearly represents a *sangoma*.
3. The age or age group and marital status is represented by the use of specific colours and materials. In Figure 19 this is evident in the hair dress form and style which indicate the married and matured women.
4. Similarly the different sexes are clearly defined by using different attires and body shapes.
5. The total appearance of the figure in terms of the colours and textures found on the costumes signify both the cultural values and the respect accorded to such persons in the real world.

Preston-Whyte (1988:67) noted that “The ability of the sculptures to portray the realities of their makers daily experiences shocked buyers more than entertained them at times. In Sizakele Mchunu’s works mentioned above titled Birth On A Hospital Bed, (Figure 8) 1998 and Twins (Figure 21) made in 1988, it is difficult to accept that works such as these were made solely to make money for the artist.

Whatever the reason for their creation, she remained poor and marginalised until her premature death. The process of self-healing and emancipation of her people brought about by making these figures is primal. And yet, most writers put forward the contention that commercialism was the motivating factor for these women.

Figure 21 Sizakele Mchunu, TWINS, 1988, wire, wood, wool, cloth and beads, African Arts Centre Collection.



The candidate believes that this view was a result of apartheid policies, lack of language skills and no real desire to fully understand the themes put forward by the artists. All these responses show the history writers as failing to render the true meanings of the artworks. An example is the helicopter piece by Gabigabi Nzama (1987) (Figure 11) entitled UMehlokaHulumeni. Lightly the title is defined as The Eyes Of The Government. Yet, this title means personification of the object into a living person.

Therefore this artwork in question must not be viewed as an object, but must be viewed in terms of whom it represents, in this case the 'white Apartheid government'. Furthermore this should be viewed against the prevailing conditions of that time. At the time this piece was made police helicopters were harassing the communities under the guise of searching for dagga; it was at the time of political strikes. The sculpture was certainly not made as an object of beauty or for pleasure.

Those who had been caught and tortured by police and soldiers acting on behalf of the government feared helicopters as monsters. They were nicknamed *Umehlo-kahulumeni* because they were used to control movement and activities like the eye of a giant being. Behind this name there is a feeling of unhappiness and force. This is shown in the sculpture in the form of the large dark circular windows. The beads used are dark on a black cloth, which indicates death. The form of the sculpture suggests a reference to an animal form which is often used by the artists in their work .

Issues of identity, ceremony, divinity and culture are contained and observable in a female figure made by Mahlambisa titled A Well Dressed Woman (Figure 19). The total appearance of the sculpture identifies the artist's geographical origin and people as eMachunwini through a dress code.

A diaphanous cloak around the shoulders shows respect by a married woman to the ancestral spirits of her husband. This respect is reciprocated by the husband and honours her as a married woman. The diaphanous cloak is connected to divinity by its white colour. Light, purity and cleanliness are associated with ancestral spirits and transcendence.

During *Umemulo*, the coming of age ceremony, when a beast has been slaughtered for a daughter who has come of age, a light cloak of fat is extracted from the beast's stomach. This act is also carried out during initiation ceremonies for diviners. The figure has white eyes, mouth and legs symbolising lightness and purity. Its headdress is a reflection of its maker's headdress, which in turn reflects a close connection to those worn by *sangoma's*. The sculpture, considered in this manner, is Mama Mahlambisa's self-portrait.

Long before the colonisation of Africa the practice of making fertility dolls existed. A childless woman would consult an *inyanga*, herbalist, or an *isangoma*, diviner, who might prescribe that the woman carry a doll on her back. This act represents a spiritual, cultural and emotional function. It is believed to hold a healing magic connecting its user to ancestral spirits who may release the barrenness. During *Umemulo*, a girl would be given a fertility doll in a necklace as a charm to ensure child bearing.

According to Elizabeth Dell (1999:11) "Fertility dolls are small anthropomorphic forms fabricated by women with a believed ceremonial use in the performance of specific rituals where they function as intermediaries between women and their power to reproduce in both life and death." A diviner, through consultation, becomes that intermediary. The fertility dolls function as tools of instruction to young initiates, used by tutors in enactments of sexual and social roles.

Contemporary cloth bead sculptures have not replaced these fertility dolls in their meaning as such; they are made by artists (including men) and have more to do with social and political comment.

Writers tend to agree on this. Nettleton (1989:142) notes "That cloth bead sculptures were not intended as 'dolls' either for play or as nebulous fertility symbols.

Therefore it would be incorrect to classify them as such. Zulu cloth bead sculptures are a relatively new development that has grown from the traditional beadwork made and worn by Zulu people. They deal with the experiences of the world, political and social situations". Though the artworks became increasingly marketable products, their deeper functions were primarily to educate and inform global societies of conditions and issues experienced by their makers such as underprivilege, rural marginalisation and discrimination.

The mature apartheid period in which they were developed indicates this particularly through the work Umehlo kahulumeni by Gabigabi Nzama previously described.

This work silently comments on the physical methods used by the apartheid government to control black people both in rural and urban areas and is a comment on the horrors associated with these objects and human activities.

The sculptures were developed when political parties such as the African National Congress, who opposed the apartheid regime, were being persecuted for open political activities.

Elizabeth Dell (1999: 11) further indicated that other authors used a range of English nouns such as 'figure', 'doll', 'form', 'child'. English names were substituted for the original vernacular ones. 'Child' is for example *ingane* or *umntwana* in Zulu, *nwana* in Tsonga or *umndwana* in Ndebele. The naming of these figures implies the relationship to its owner and maker. However cloth bead sculptures represent a variety of human figures, both female and male of different ages, animals, birds and objects.

In the case of fertility dolls, the female social dress code is emphatic in the figures and the figures articulate the physical status of the maker's marriage and family relationships.

Fertility dolls are closely associated with play according to most writers and Dell (1999: 11) noted a ritualised game played by prepubescent girls and boys and supervised by their parents. Woods (1999:79) states "Zulu women made small bead covered dolls for their own enjoyment and perhaps that of their children. The figures, approximately seven centimetres in diameter, are made with cobs or pieces of wood as a foundation. Fragments of material are wrapped tightly onto the block where bead work is attached."

Preston Whyte (1988:66) wrote, "cloth bead sculptures are made completely different in concept, design and execution allowing for the individuality and creativity of the artist.

In the making the artist experiments and tests her learned and intuitive skills by combining found scraps of materials such as wood, wire, cloth, beads, bottle tops, pins, lace etc."

Woods (1999: 79) in discussing problems of translation, interviewing and secrecy suggested that there are various kinds of fertility figures which include fertility charms and dolls for play, that have magical powers but the latter is not given its function.

Veliswa Gwintsa states that it is not clear which figure belongs in which category. Anthea Martin from the African Art Centre (Craft News Autumn (1999 :17) wrote

"Traditionally craft objects (including fertility dolls) were made for domestic or ceremonial use. Today these objects can be purchased as decorative collectables which has enlarged the craft making market and is a viable means of earning a living".

Most researchers agree with the fact that there is a wealth of talent in local communities that deserves to be given public exposure and recognition, but it has always been left unsaid how and why the craft objects were made for domestic or ceremonial use.

Culture brokers such as Thorpe focussed her energies on collecting and marketing, with the idea of documenting an aspect of contemporary material culture, but appears to have ignored attempts to properly document her collection. in terms of providing names of artists and dates of works . This is evidenced by the fact that more of the works in the Jo Thorpe's collection have little or no reference to the artist or date of origin.

The candidate's concern was raised when discovering that information, associated with the use of fertility dolls and other craft objects in ceremonies, no longer exists in the oral history of those communities who made them. The only information available is that written in English books and art catalogues found in specific urban museums and galleries. In both instances, black communities had little or no access to this information because of the previous discriminating policy of the previous government and the problem of illiteracy.

The traditional education system, whereby knowledge passed verbally from generation to generation, could not be maintained when these cultural objects were removed from their original environment and there has been no other structure put in place to support this shift.

A direct annexation of an aspect of African culture occurred, leaving a gaping wound. Although there have been some financial benefits to the makers, this wound is within the communities who lost their tradition and culture.

Praise has been given at the highest levels to certain culture brokers for their contribution towards the development of arts and crafts in KwaZulu Natal. At the same time, generations of rural black people, the makers, will never come to fully understand how and why these artworks came into being because of lack of access to the historical documentation.

Eleven experienced doll-makers were introduced in a series of workshops held in conjunction with the exhibition "Evocations of the Child: Fertility figures of the South African Region" at the Durban Art Gallery from December 1998 to January 1999. Hlengiwe Dube and Anthea Martin from the African Art Centre, and Kate Wells from the ML Sultan Technikon Design Department, ran the workshops from the boardroom adjacent to the Centre. Dolls made were exhibited at the African Art Centre and Professor Eleanor Preston Whyte opened the display. The doll makers were given

materials selected and supplied by the Centre. In a subsequent report on the artworks made during the workshop and written by Ms Martin (1999:17) none of the women involved were given the opportunity to express their own views on the choice of forms, materials and meanings within the body of figures completed. This omission perpetrated the past practice of denying craftworkers an opportunity of a voice in stating their motives as artists. The sculpture are connected to indigenous traditions except that they were made specially to be consumed by the external audience of tourists or visitors.

When black women artist's voices are omitted by the 'other' or 'foreigners' who are acknowledged as experts of an indigenous culture whose language they do not speak or understand, the wound is deepened.

Martin (1999: 17) wrote,

"whilst the artists were working the viewers watched with emotion. The artist ripped fabric into pieces and pulled it firmly around the central core shapes then applied a final neat cover of fabric which was stitched into place and then the form tested for stability and uprightness. Form and shape was paramount to the success of this process, decorating these forms came next, beading, embellishing with buttons, metal wires, hair extensions in wool and thread, porcupine quills, wool pompoms, twisted plaited grass, waistbands, aspects of traditional dress incorporated giving each doll specific identity. For example as a married woman, a young bride, a *sangoma*."

However if the women had been given the opportunity to explain in their own words with the help of direct translation the very specific intents of each individual, it would have added a far greater dimension whilst positively empowering the artists in the process. One must question how much meaning in African art has been overlooked and misinterpreted by this system of intervention.

Ms Martin (1999: 17) continued: "the single structure dolls, in general, required to be fully beaded and this aspect concerned the women who spoke a lot about the escalating costs of beads. We discussed using interesting fabrics and other surface textures like grass work etc to cover the bases and therefore cut down the amount of beadwork used in each doll." Though Martin recognises that the beading is an important aspect she

does not state why. In addition the artists are directed to alternatives of material usage which, although helps to reduce costs, led to the obliteration of the original cultural meaning contained within the artwork.

This workshop highlighted the process which, through a lack of proper understanding of the meaning and value of materials used in the making of the artworks, leads to a loss of information. By replacing the recognised or data coded materials (each bead colour denotes specific information) contained within the encoded language of the object, obliteration of meaning occurs. Initially it was this language which assisted foreign researchers in the field to recognise artworks by their ethnic identities, the origin of the artist and the artwork. With new materials introduced at the behest of culture brokers there is a real danger of losing ethnic identity, meaning and freedom of choice and expression. However the candidate acknowledges that ethnic identity cannot be frozen in time.

Frank Jolles (1994:42) refers to this identity as "style, colour, scheme and pattern." 'Style' refers to the combination of colours and patterns that characterise the beadwork of a region; 'pattern' refers to the distribution of colours over a surface and 'colour Scheme' refers to the conventions that constitute the style. He continues by noting that "Among the Zulu beadwork may be worn on occasions of a ritual nature, such as gatherings in honour of the ancestors, but it is not part of the ritual. It is also seen on the accoutrements of the diviner (*isangoma*)". Jolle's account of the function of the bead is misleading because, it remains as an object of empowerment whatever its application within the culture. Here a person of assumed authority does not appear to understand the deeper knowledge embedded in these objects.

In a conversation (Interview:1999) with a Zulu woman, (who wanted to remain anonymous), the candidate was told of recent advice from her traditional healer. When the healer prepared *ubulawu*, the traditional medicine that connects her to the ancestors,

two white beads, representing her grandmother and grandfather were collected. The two beads were mixed with medicine and this was beaten with a twig whilst the healer spoke. The beating produced a white surf or foam, which was wiped onto the head, face, shoulders and arms of the patient. This example indicates the important position the bead occupies within healing in Zulu culture.

Proctor (1993: 61) states that Mary Gqada, a diviner from Gugulethu in Capetown, "Claims that the power of ritual beadwork is more than symbolic". According to her, beads are intrinsic to healing and other rituals because they themselves actually possess power. Furthermore the rituals are inconceivable without them.

Mary Gqada said she felt strong when she was wearing them and also maintained that the fact that much of her beadwork is very old adds significantly to its power. Proctor (1993:6) further claims that Gqada attaches great significance to the colours of beads and beadwork designs that might appear in dreams or visions.

According to Proctor (1993: 61) Gqada believes that red beads symbolise blood while a particular powder -blue bead symbolises the sea or water. Blood, a life giving force, and water, which is associated with spirituality, both have powerful symbolic connotations. Proctor (1993: 61) wrote, "it is often that diviners communicate with spiritual forces under water. All this is helpful in interpreting dreams, visions and other symptoms, and therefore in proposing resolutions to problems." The candidate believes that researchers and writers need to become sensitive to the deeper meanings and internal values of the function of beads and their associated materials, that in the cloth bead sculptures, or findings will result in misleading and mis-representative data.

Nyamende (1994:21) states that diviners are to the people of the Eastern Cape, what psychiatrists are to the American society, irrespective of the influence and level of school education reached by the individual members of this community. This is especially true of

the Zulu in the region of KwaZulu Natal and is contained in interviews with many artists. If Nyamende's (1993:21) description of a diviner is followed, there is no difficulty in accepting the cloth bead sculptors as artists with a calling or gift to be the equivalent of psychiatrists of the nation. Irrespective of the influence and level of education reached by individual members of this community, diviners fulfill the same role as in American society.

It is vital to understand that it is the candidate's intention to show the strong link between these processes which have been never considered by white researchers and culture brokers. Christina Jikelo (1993:21) states that she came from a very traditional background of Mfengu origin, where roots are actually traced in traditional beadwork. This notion is relevant to this research as it reinforces the intent of the candidate. Davison (1993:23) confirms that beads are considered carriers of mystical powers, whereby the beaded costumes worn by diviners, in both rural and urban situations, might transform the body of the wearer and play an active role in effecting contact with the spiritual realm. This raises the question, that if the wearer can be transformed by the use of beads is it possible that a user or a viewer can be affected? The candidate believes there is a close association of energies associated with these cloth bead sculptures.

This association of mystical energies totally negates the idea that their use is decorative. In terms of this the term decoration is inappropriate to define the mystical language contained within and intended by their makers. The candidate, through this research, concludes that bead cloth sculptors are either diviners or they are indirectly connected with traditional healers and prophets in some way. Writers like Thorpe (1994:72-74) and others have tended to focus on these sculptures as a source of income, but have neglected to explore their cultural and aesthetic meaning. In reality, the making and selling of these sculptures by informally educated artists from the rural areas and townships did not greatly finally benefit those makers. However, it contributed to subsistence needs in an erratic way. They remained poor due to their

Figure 22 MALNUTRITION AND DISEASE ON A FARM IN NATAL,
Photo by John Seymour.



Figure 23 FAMILY LIVING CONDITIONS, Photo by John Seymour.



Family living conditions

p113-123) is quoted stating that beadwork also helps to regulate behavior between individuals of opposite gender. Twala further states that beadwork is a form of art with discipline .

Here too, Zulu craftswomen accept certain fundamentals such as:

- Beadwork communicates between unrelated males and females, avoiding the discomfort of direct initial discourse on the sensitive subject of personal relations.
- Beadwork flows from females , the designers and manufacturers to males- their traditional clients.
- Men wear beadwork to show involvement with women they may marry, incestuous implications preclude beaded gifts from mothers, sisters and daughters.
- Beadwork symbolism is encoded within a limited number of colours and geometric figures .
- Colour symbols have alternative values but those assigned to geometric figures are constant.
- Values assigned to colours are in groups of positive and negative alternatives , except white which has no negative connotation (African Studies, Volume 10, No 3, 1951)

According to the candidate's experience, beads cannot be isolated from the number of other materials with which it is used. It is vital that when we try to acquire the meaning of beaded art works such as the beaded sculptures, we must also look at the colours other materials which have been included. Most writers have only focused on the nature of colours and designs created by beads in a given beaded sculpture or beaded necklace.

Coloured cloth materials, which are often used in cloth bead sculptures, have a vital

inability to be economically independent . During the group discussion (Interview:1999) the artists concerned said "We have worked for so many years and yet we underachieved. Even if a customer came to put an order for artworks we would not be able to sell them, because we do not even have money to buy the materials". Gcinani Mchunu for example has been doing this work for the past twenty three years as her only source of income.

The candidate's argument, in this case, is that the claim that craftsmen earn some money from their art (Thorpe 1994:75) creates an image of an economically normal society. Whereas, these artists were always silenced and suffered in poverty and socio-economic prejudice. Furthermore the artists in question (Interview:1999) said that " We are definitely not happy with the way and the conditions under which we live, whether one has a husband or not, whether he is working or not, it is all the same".

The artists in question and other rural black communities (outside this study) had to survive from poverty, diseases and malnutrition, which was already prevailing in the 1970's. (Figure 22) and (Figure 23) are a good example of not only the living conditions, but of also the diseases caused by malnutrition and unhealthy conditions in KwaZulu Natal. Hilda Bernstein wrote, "The lack of job opportunities in the reserves and the extreme poverty leads inevitably to sickness and death. Kwashiorkor, scurvy, pellagra and beri-beri are rife, tuberculosis and other diseases associated with malnutrition and poverty were wide spread . Deaths from starvation , particularly among children, were common". (Bernstein, 1975:23). Makhosi Ndlovu (Interview:1999) mentioned to the candidate that her life situation in not good, because, she had nine children and the money she earn from sales of her art works is far too little far too little for her to support.

It is said that beadwork, excluding items used by ritual specialists, relates in some way to courtship and marriage. Regina Twala (African Studies, Volume 10, No. 3 , 1951

importance in emphasising the messages behind the art object. *Sangomas* use red, white and black cloth in their diviner's dress code. This is carefully combined with corresponding beads to conclude the intended message. A young *sangoma*, who has just been initiated, would wear a white cloth attire with white beads and paint her body with white clay. A headdress which is a combination of black wool and white beads announce that the person wearing it is a matured diviner. The candidate concludes that without one being able to speak and understand Zulu language, one cannot totally understand the culture of Zulu people and their material culture objects. It is for this reason that the candidate emphasise the need for black people to be given the platform to become writers and story tellers of their history and tradition. When black people write about their culture, especially in their own vernacular, their researched data would reach far deeper than that of their fellow western researchers. The candidate suggests that education and the transfer of the skill of writing skills about oneself and material culture objects that black artists make, is not only a right, but it is a necessary key to empowerment and freedom of expression. In this respect, it is the candidate's intention to translate this document into Zulu language in order to make it accessible to the indigenous audience.

The minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology (Draft White Paper ; 1996:25-26) supports this view when she states that:

Education in Arts, Culture and heritage should embrace opportunities for making, performing and presenting as well as appreciating the many expressions of South African cultural heritage to realise the rights of all South Africans to participate fully, contribute to and benefit from an all inclusive South African Culture. The transformation of literature in education, must be seen in the context of widespread illiteracy and a history of language discrimination. This and the absence of an entrenched reading culture even amongst the literature sectors of society, calls for full utilisation of literature in education policy to develop speaking, reading, writing comprehension and critical skills.

CHAPTER 4

SECTION ONE

THE MARKETING OF CLOTH BEAD SCULPTURES

In the art world, as in the world of all big business, the success of the middleman depends upon the separation of buyers from primary suppliers. Social, legal and bureaucratic barriers are erected at every level of the economic system to maintain the distance between the primary suppliers of art and their ultimate consumers. Julliette Rosette (cited in Preston-Whyte, 1980:75) wrote that the producers and the consumers of the art, "live in quite different cultural worlds that achieve a rapprochement only through the immediacy of the artistic exchange".

Preston-Whyte further wrote that the broker is often drawn not from the culture of the artists and craftspeople themselves, but from the west, and in the Third World situations from the ranks of the colonizer (1980:75) .

Art dealers earn their livelihoods as go-between, moving objects and artifacts across institutional obstacles which often they themselves have constructed in order to restrict direct contact or trade (Steiner cited in Myers , 1995:151). In this chapter the candidate will give a background to the marketing of cloth bead sculptures in Durban, problems associated with this process, and recent developments initiated to provide a solution to the problems.

Jolles (1994:54) states that the first trade dolls, modifications of a type used in Zulu courtship customs, were made in the 1930's. Black women sold craft going door to door in the white

areas of Durban. The doll maker's problem at that time in Natal and elsewhere, was to discover which types of dolls would sell . The ability to gauge aesthetic appeal across a cultural divide demanded a familiarity with the target culture that the doll maker could not be expected to possess. Yet, the first doll makers selling their products door to door do not appear to have encountered difficulty identifying and understanding their market.

The African Art Center was established by the Institute for Race Relations (1984:6). They had good facilities necessary for the sale of artworks and access to a communication network which included telephones and newspapers to advertise their position. It is for this reason that the African Art Centre became a place where local white buyers and tourists accessed local craft. The rural women artists had already been over fifty years in this trade and understood the shift of their customers. The women artists in question still sell their work at the African Art Centre, and more over they have never stopped selling their work on the beachfront since the 1930's up to the present.

It is important to note that the women's own evidence, as well as that of Jolles (1994:54) , assert that black rural women artists had brought their work (which Jolles then called the Zulu trade dolls and which now are being called cloth bead sculptures) to Durban as early as the 1930's.

The African Art Centre began selling art and craft as means of raising money for the Institute and to assist in the economic empowerment of rural people, one of the Institute's aims.

Jolles gives no account that this form of production and selling was a failure for the women involved . It seems rather that the practice in fact showed potential for growth and expansion.

Indeed it was the potential in the trade for that led to it being taken over by the rise of culture brokers. The group areas act and other apartheid laws prohibited black people from accessing businesses in town, so the only avenue left for the women was door-to-door marketing if they were to retain any independence. It must be remembered that the majority of these women had no other employment, and that still remains the case.

In consequence, despite the intervention of the culture brokers and whatever their intentions, the economic situation of the makers remains at poverty level after over seventy years of production. Jolles (1994:54) states that the culture brokers "were anxious to create employment by adapting indigenous craft to a modern market". The system developed by the culture brokers, conditioned the crafters to accept approval of the color, form, structure and shape of their product as a prerequisite of purchase. The artists concerned made the candidate believe that dictating led to a production dilemma where makers were, and still are, turned away and had to return to their homes with unsold products. Because of their ignorance of marketing and product development, the artists perhaps didn't understand why they have had their work rejected. Contact between maker and consumer, which maintains individual variations, was denied and the culture brokers controlled style. This lack of direct interaction created a major problem.

The bead workers lost the opportunity to understand the true nature of their consumers and the possibility of becoming independent of the culture broker. The culture broker's approach created an artificial market. This remained an unreal situation, irrespective of how sensitive and artistically orientated the mediator was. The producers, who possess highly refined techniques in the field of their production, are persuaded to accept the judgement of others

in crucial areas of design. The information from this research indicates that black artists (including cloth bead sculptors) in KwaZulu-Natal who operated under the oppression of race, religion, culture, tradition and creed, conditions that were exacerbated even more for those who were not educated, felt powerless against the culture brokers they had to deal with. Preston-Whyte (1969:124) cites a study done by Jules-Rosette in 1984 where the term 'culture broker' for the middleman was used. She states that the culture broker operates simultaneously as a mediator of style and taste and as a predominant medium through which commercial transactions take place.

They range from managers of curio stores, whose motive is profit, through to directors of private galleries, who often combine commercial motives with the promotion of black art, and non-governmental organizations and development projects who saw the need to promote Black economic opportunities. Jules-Rosette (cited in Preston-Whyte, 1989:124) states that culture brokers are an extremely mixed bag and their motives and sales strategies are often in conflict. In South Africa the majority of culture brokers are white people, with a small minority being Indian merchants.

Operating for many decades, under the apartheid government with its dehumanizing policies, most of these dealers accepted the fact that black rural and urban artists were poverty stricken and uneducated. Some culture brokers used this impenetrable political and social system to play a superior role, dictating not only the style and taste as Jules-Rosette (1984) puts it, but also the quality and quantity. They also provided the narrative and written text on the historical development of the arts and culture of the black people in this country.

Preston-Whyte (1989:123) refers to black rural women artists (bead makers) as people of the post-colonial period, who had a different and changing way of seeing. The candidate believes that this different and changing way of seeing refers to beadwork becoming a focus for both local and pan African views, offering emancipation, especially for black rural women. Preston-Whyte (cited in Thorpe, 1994:78) wrote "It is not only the political situation that separates these women from their clientele. They came from rural communities that have for decades been relegated to the periphery of National life. For this reason the journey to Durban is far more than a mere marketing trip, it is also a path to a new world of experience and personal expression". What is not mentioned from the above statement is that this journey to Durban has always been an unsafe pilgrimage that had no guarantee of safety. Thus the woman's survival depended on them working in groups, rather than working and living as individuals. Some African craftswomen from the furthest regions in KwaZulu-Natal have settled in Durban along the beachfront and outside the Durban station.

To all these craftswomen and female artists, the common survival strategy is that of working together in order to communicate with and fees families who are left back at home. Messages and other needs are given to those who are leaving the city temporarily. Messages coming from families back from rural areas are passed on to those going to Durban. Mrs Mkhwanazi (Interview: 1999) is in the Durban station group and also has sold her work along the beachfront areas for the past twenty years. She has been working with the candidate for the past four years. She mentioned that over the years they experienced difficulties in case of sudden deaths among craftswomen.

Furthermore, Mrs Mkhwanazi said that if an individual came from an unknown area, it became impossible to know about cases of illness and death in the family. In case of fights among the craftswomen or with outsiders, they depended on the support from their friends in the group. The candidate experienced a similar incident where one of the women artists, with whom he worked with, suddenly died (see Figure 24). The late Mrs Ndwandwe's home is situated somewhere near the Swaziland border (Pongola area) and she had no relatives or friends among the women groups mentioned above. It was after several weeks that the candidate got to know of her death, and yet could not trace her home, to pay his last respects. Mrs Ndwandwe died late in November 1999, in her home after a short illness. She had a creative spirit and a good sense of humor. It was a great privilege to work with her.

Women artists in question from the rural areas brought (and still bring) their artworks, to the city in order to sell them. The candidate believes that it was by coming to the city that the artists concerned learned to express themselves in combining indigenous knowledge with demands of the urban market place, which were directed by the few individual white people connected with the marketing of the art objects.

From the 1950's onwards there was a mass movement of black communities from the rural areas to the cities, during the time of colonialization and apartheid which continues today. The journey made by those rural women artists, from 1930 up to the present, cannot be separated from this and from the factors that caused such migration. According to Bernstein (1975:11) in the distorting mirror of apartheid, all black workers outside the reserves were immigrants, who left their own country to work in the white South Africa, a different country. This precept was

Figure 24 (Left) THE LATE MRS MKHWANAZI, (Right) MRS
NDWANDWE, Photo by I. Khanyile, 1999.



then applied not merely to those workers from rural areas who sought employment in towns, but also to those settled communities of black families who had been town-dwellers for two or three generations.

Bernstein (1975:8) further states that, "the unique structure of South African society (then based on apartheid) did not only discriminate against women as such, but reduced African women in particular to the very lowest status, virtually stripped of rights and of opportunities to improve their position". Over and above this they were also stripped of those things which are considered basic rights throughout the world, that is the right to live with their husbands, the right to bring up and care for their own children (rather black women had to leave their children on their own, to bring up white women's children (Figure 25) and the right to lead a normal kind of family life . Furthermore apartheid was based on the desire of the politically dominant white minority to maintain a system of intensive racially based exploitation (Bernstein, 1975:9). Therefore the situation under which the rural women in question operated was unjust and left no choice to those subjected to such conditions.

In terms of exhibiting the cloth bead sculptures, many craft people rely on culture brokers who in many cases are the curators of these exhibitions. It appears to be an acceptable norm not to share information or to educate the crafters about what, and how, everything is done. Many interviewed crafters and artists including Ceaser Mkhize and Thaba Dlamini (Interview:2001), indicated that after working hard creating art work, they finally submitted their work to the venues concerned.

The artists then sit waiting for the opening day of the exhibition and there is no other involvement

Figure 25 ONE THIRD OF WOMEN EMPLOYED IN SOUTH AFRICA
WORK AS SERVANTS, Photo by Tony McGrath.



One third of women employed in S. Africa work as servants (Photo by Tony McGrath)

in curating the exhibition. The candidate sees a problem if the crafters and artists at the grass-root level are not given an opportunity to participate in the marketing of their product. So much of the confusion, uncertainty, and a sense of exploitation as expressed by crafters and artists who lack a formal education, comes from being uninformed. Therefore the candidate suggests that crafters and artists, especially those who supply the retail outlets, should not be kept ignorant of the information and activities that affect their production, income and livelihood. Generally speaking, in craft retail outlets there are no records which show the artist's name and address from whom they bought the work. Artists have no connection with their customers who eventually buy their work (see Figure 1).

It also appears that the customers may not be able to get information about the artist who produced the artwork, since the artist's work is not properly documented i.e. the artist's name, title of work, year in which the work was made, materials and the artist's origin. Richard Maphumulo (Interview:2001) said "I have sold many of my works through the African Art Center, but it never happened that I was invited to meet my customers, nor being told who bought my work so that I can communicate with them later on. I also don't think that they are interested in letting us meet our customers, because they think one might otherwise directly negotiate with the customers and in that way they might be excluded. Many artists (including myself) have been told that the customers like their work and that the artists must continue to produce such items".

Anthea Martin (Interview:2001) when questioned about this practice, said that the majority of

clients were tourists who lived in other countries and it was difficult to bring maker and buyer together.

The candidate believes that the buying and selling of traditional African Art and craft (including cloth bead sculptures) has many hindrances that prevent equal economic growth to all those involved. The candidate believes that the marketing of African art objects to and white retailers (who in return would further sell the objects to tourists with the intention of making a profit) promoted the marketing process in urban areas. Tourists who traveled around Africa (and other parts of the world) collected unusual artistic objects as souvenirs to take home. When white retailers realised the potential of the art market, they began collecting art objects in bulk, with the aim of further selling them for a profit to tourists in their own areas. The candidate believes that there are some similarities between Angolan immigrants in Namibia and Zulu rural artists discussed in this document. Angolan immigrants would travel one or two days on foot or bicycle with the aim of reaching the Okavango territory where they sold their wood carvings (1976:353). Zulu rural women and men still often travel long distances from the remote areas to urban areas (e.g. Durban and Pietermaritzburg) where they sell their art objects.

Here their major customers are white retailers and tourists. Africans are not normally customers, but the candidate discovered that during certain Zulu cultural activities such as marriage ceremonies, African families would visit the marketing sites such as the Durban station. Here they would buy wooden carved trays, spoons ranging from 30cm to over a meter in length, indigenous grass woven objects, Zulu beer pots and Zulu beer vessels made from clay.

At times some rural women potters visit the townships carrying a lot of beer pots, selling them

door to door.

The candidate recalls that, during his eldest sister's wedding, elderly rural women from their kinships in Empangeni were requested to weave a large number of grass mats and other grass woven artifacts. Mrs Ngema, who is a woman diviner and lives at Umlazi township, is often visited by the candidate. She has long been a collector of the well known Nesta Nala's ceramic beer pots. Unlike tourists who collected these art objects as souvenirs, African communities buy them for cultural purposes. Hence Mrs Ngema utilizes Nala's ceramic vessels as medicine containers that are a part of the traditional *Sangoma*'s initiations, and for beer drinking during these ceremonies (see Figure 26). These records are approximately 20 years old.

This is similar to Angolan wood carving which traditionally served religions (1973:353). In (Figure 3) Zulu ceramic pots are seen as part of ceremonies in Mrs Ngema's dining room. Here they are repainted with both red and white clay which are often used for body painting during the *sangoma*'s initiation process. Therefore the pots are treated the same as the *sangoma* who is being initiated, as they both get painted with either red or white clay. The colour being used depends on the stage of the one being initiated .

The Okavango tourists market's potential led to the development of the roadside marketing of wood carvings (1976:353). The candidate realised that this is not different from the wood carving stands that are often found along the main coastal road that stretches in KwaZulu Natal from the south coast, to the far north coastal regions. One often finds wooden carved art objects which include animals, walking sticks, traditional knob-kieries and functional objects. This is similar to

Figure 26 Nesta Nala, CERAMIC BEER VESSELS, Mrs Ngema's Private Collection, Photo by I. Khanyile, 1999.



Angolan immigrants, who sell their art objects to cars passing by. It is said that Angolan immigrants who sold their art objects in Okavango territory, were aware of the marketing principles and as such they would discuss the merits of their work in relation to price. They would further find out what their customers wanted to buy and they would repeat those objects that sold and not repeat the unwanted ones. Their communication with white customers was through Afrikaans and *fanakalo* for those who were not familiar with Afrikaans.

Jo Thorpe and Prof. Eleanor Preston-Whyte were two of the many people involved in the establishment of the African Art Centre, when it was registered in 1984. Before 1984 they initially collected art and crafts around the Nongoma and Inanda areas and put them on sale as part of the Institute of Race Relation's fund raising objective. Funding gained from these sales fulfilled several purposes of the abovementioned Institute (1994:6,7). The Institute was occupied chiefly with research and investigation. This work at both national and local level ranged from an investigation into the inadequacy of local transport to the economics of Bantustans.

Politicians, industrialists, market research consultants, scholars novelists, journalists and National and International organizations looked to the Institute's fact finding work for dispassionate and objective material (Quintin Whyte 1964:4). Their offices were based at Colonial Chambers in Durban's West street.

The Institute believed that the sales of artworks would benefit the craft makers and artists. Only later was the artwork's value as a medium of communication in a divided society recognised.

It is important to note that the women's own evidence, as well as that of Jolles (1994:54) assert that black rural women artists had brought their work to Durban as early as the 1930's, and so had

introduced the selling of African art and craft within the urban centre before the establishment of the African Art Centre by the Institute of Race Relations (Jolles, 1994:54).

In terms of methods of transaction Anthea Martin (Interview:2000), the Director of the African Art Centre, mentioned that it depends whether the products being sold by the craftsmen are in demand or not, and whether the Centre has the financial resources available to buy the product or not. She went on to state that as a result of the craftspeople presently producing high quality products, the organization usually buys everything. In order to control overcrowding, the bead workers and wire-basket makers alternatively bring their work to the Centre every two weeks. Beginning from last year (2001), the African Art Centre introduced a system whereby the craftsmen receive their payments from a bank. Anthea Martin (Interview:2000) indicated that this new banking system prevented them from carrying a lot of cash around after payment and further assist them in saving their money.

According to Martin (Interview:2000), when the quality is not good enough, the organization gives advice to the artists on how to improve the product. After the alterations are made, the work is brought back to the Centre. For example, a new product like beaded bags are brought to the Centre by the craftspeople with a problem relating to the zip of the bag. The organization discusses the problem and then returns them to the makers, who are responsible for the proper adjustments of the product, after which it is returned to the Centre.

The candidate noticed that in principle there seems to be general agreement that the African Art

Centre aims to look after the well being of the artists. This is supported by African Art Centre's aims which are:

- to assist individuals and self-help projects
- to provide an income for rural and urban people
- to provide incentives for artists and craftspeople
- to communicate and document contemporary trends in African art and craft

Ilala Weavers, which is a craft outlet from Hluhluwe- KwaZulu/Natal, has a mission statement which is "To improve the income and living standard of Zulu people through their own efforts, by developing a cottage industry, guidance as to market requirements and marketing results products" (2001:1). The Ilala weaver's outlet is a private business that was started by Carol Sutton over twenty eight years ago. It is situated just outside Hluhluwe, not far from the National road (N2).

According to Sutton, their business supports over 2000 men and women who make handcrafted items and sell them directly to the shop. The crafters undergo some sort of training program where they are guided to make use of their talents and skills in creating marketable products. Sutton (Interview:2001) said that sometime in the past grass woven baskets became unmarketable. They then taught the crafters to change their product. The basket weavers then started to make interior design products which today are in demand. Sutton buys these products from the rural women in big volumes . The shop buys craft items from weavers five days a week. Products made by crafters are ornaments such as Christmas dolls, stars, medallions, bells, cards, trees and Zulu nativity dolls.

Many of the weavers that supply Sutton's shop come from the most remote rural areas in and

around Hluhluwe. Sutton (Interview:2001) further explained that most of these areas have no infrastructure such as roads, shops, clinics and schools.

The concerned crafters depend on the income they receive from their hand work. Sutton (Interview:2001) also mentioned to the candidate that since they buy from the crafters in large volumes and charge a minimum mark-up, other crafters come up and buy the finished products from her shop in order to sell along the N2 route. In this case they are targeting the passing motorists and this is one of their options. Sadly, Sutton told the candidate that not long ago she lost her son who was murdered in Maputoland . His death was associated with a robbery where R5000 was taken from him. He was in Maputoland buying hand crafted items.

According to Sutton (Interview:2001) the crafters are not taught business skills like marketing and the pricing of craft items . She further said that the reason they do not do this is that they have a lot of work running their business and do not have time to teach them business skills.

When crafters come to sell their work at her shop, she negotiates with them in order to determine the price of their product. Her main goal is to create jobs . Sutton wrote in her publication Ilala Weavers (2001:2) "The Christmas project began as a means of developing existing talents and to provide employment for a group of 40 Zulu women in the remote Mfekanyi area of Northern Zululand". The above mentioned businesses (the African Art Centre and Ilala weavers) have stated goals and aims which are directed at developing the talents of crafters to manufacture marketable products which get sold in their tourist shops. By so doing they implement their main aim which is job creation for crafters and artists.

Figure 27 Siza Mkhize and Thafa Dlamini Untitled Work, 2002, 30cm,
wire, cloth and beads, Artist's Collection, Photo by I. Khanyile.



It appears that without this sort of system, this community would not survive. When critically evaluating both businesses at hand, the candidate acknowledges their positive effort in creating job opportunities for concerned rural communities. At the same time the candidate realises that this very positive effort does not totally empower the crafters as it does not give them training in the pricing and marketing of their goods. The businesses have never seen it important to empower these communities by providing crafters with informal business skills, which would have :

- led them to new positions within this industry.
- provide them with entrepreneurial skills which they could employ when starting their business.
- allow the crafters to become independent and not conditioned to only rely on these businesses for income.

There is a long history of an association between the African Art Centre and the cloth bead sculptures from the rural areas. The Bat Centre is also involved in hosting exhibitions of the cloth bead sculptures as well as becoming the outlet for these objects. For instance Thafa Dlamini and Siza Mkhize's works were sold through the Bat Centre. During the interview with these two artists, the candidate found that they were preparing for their solo exhibition, which was to be held at the Bat Menzi Gallery in November and December, 2001 (see Figure 27).

At the African Art Centre, Miss Hlengiwe Dube (a shop manager and buyer of crafts) is involved with the collecting of the artists and crafters work. In her position she decides on those art and craft objects that they buy direct from the artists in order to sell them later and those that The

African Art Centre sells by consignment. When she was asked what does she do when an artist or crafter bring his/her work to the African Art Centre, she said "I first check the quality, I ask where he/she comes from, in order to find out about the artist, how much does the crafter wants for his/her work. If the price given by the crafter is too little, I then raise the price and if the price is too expensive, I then say we can try and sell it for you through consignment" (Interview:2001).

Hlengiwe Dube (Interview:2001) was asked if she questioned the crafter about the material value and time put into the making of the price. She replied by saying "That's why we always make sure that if he/she asks for a less price we always put it a little bit up and if it is too much we ask him/her if we can sell her through consignment". Another question was asked about how she arrives at the price, for instance R20 for a piece . Her reply was "If the artist asks for too little, I know the amount of beads that go into, for instance, a beaded bracelet. Ten rand is for beads, then there is transport and time spent making it. That is the price calculation". Anthea Martin (Interview:2001), responded to the same question (of a procedure that they follow when pricing art and craft works brought to the African Art Centre) by saying "We have been selling craft for a very long time. Hlengiwe Dube our shop manager and buyer has been buying and selling these things. She has an idea of the market value of these things and whatever can be sold for. So that is how she arrives at the price, at a market related price". She further said that their pricing of artwork is always based on their experience of selling similar items and on what the markets can take.

Juliet Armstrong (Interview:2001) indicated that the African Art Centre had a responsibility

to explain to the artists and crafters about how they run their business, to explain issues relating to their responsibilities in terms of rent , water, electricity, parking etc. Furthermore they should discuss with the crafters how the African Art Centre is a non-profit organisation and how their profit is ploughed back in the form of exhibitions, workshops for artists and crafters. It became clear that the artists and crafters had to be educated about their relationship to the centre. During the interview with the African Art Centre, the candidate explained to the staff that there was a lack of information to educate and explain certain controversial issues to the concerned artists. Especially the issues of pricing procedures and policy.

It was further explained that when the crafters are educated about the marketing procedures they have to follow (in this business of making and selling of their crafts) they get empowered and that is capacity building . Otherwise when crafters are not given proper knowledge and information on how the craft market is run, they will always be trading in the dark and that will result in the ongoing uncertainty and the feeling of being exploited. This interview with the African Art Centre staff (2001) made the candidate realise that a lot of information is not explained to the concerned crafters who come to sell their work to the centre. Recently (Interview:2001) the candidate visited Kwa-Mshazi village with Mrs Mary-Jane van Rooyen and Nombuso Mteshane (both members of the Inkosinathi Arts Project) and Karin Giesen, a visiting artist from Holland. The meeting with the women artists was led by Mrs Mabaso whose home was the meeting point . The visit by the white woman to this village made the black women artists aware of the potential for the sale of their works.

The candidate's involvement in this meeting made it easy for both the Zulu artists and the Dutch artists to communicate by translating the information in Zulu to English and English to Zulu. At the end of the day both parties had come to certain agreements where the Mabaso group were commissioned to produce a number of cloth bead sculptures, which Karin Giesen was going to introduce to the local markets in Holland. This activity was an attempt to build a direct overseas market for these bead workers. The candidate discovered that even though there was a problem with language communication between the two parties, the concerned black rural artists were very aware of marketing principles such as pricing and well articulated the merits of their work in relation to price. The discussion covered issues such as the price of buying materials (beads and different coloured cloths), and the time they spent making sculptures.

At the end the artists presented their price which was R500 per sculpture. The candidate recalls that they (the candidate and Mrs Karin Giesen) had already bought similar sculptures from the National Gallery in Pietermaritzburg. This had taken place a week before their visit to Kwa-Mshazi village. Those sculptures bought at the National Gallery were much cheaper than the ones directly sold by the artists to their customers. Therefore the rural artists women gained as there were no middlemen involved.

The candidate realizes that artists in remote areas in KwaZulu-Natal such as KwaNgcolosi and Esithumba are rarely visited by tourists who would buy their craft in bulk. Most of these rural women artists only come into contact with white people when they come to the cities like Durban, where they sell their art works. The lack of tourists visiting these remote areas becomes

one factor that influence the artist movement to the cities, where they find markets which have developed due to the influx of tourists.

The candidate discovered that most of the black women from these rural areas are not familiar with the cities and are afraid of getting lost. Some of the husbands still do not easily grant their wives freedom to go to the cities by themselves, and thus most black rural women spend most of their time in the rural areas. For example Mrs Mabaso's group had this problem, when the candidate tried to organize a meeting during which they were going to visit Durban Art Gallery. The rural women artists from the Isithumba group only knew the directions from the Berea market to the African Art Centre in Gardner Street.

In cases like these, the candidate would take the initiative to orientate groups of rural women artists and crafters to the city, especially showing them important institutions such as the Durban Art Gallery, the Workshop complex and the African Art Centre. The candidate would further take the initiative to take these groups for a walk about of the Gallery's collection. Often the artists show great interest once they see some of their work, or names of artists they know, especially bead work and images of Zulu traditions and culture which are sometimes exhibited in the Gallery. The candidate believes that such institutions need to look at opening opportunities for rural communities to learn about the existence of these collections.

Most concerned crafters and artists have shown a lack of information about what happens to their work after they have sold to the middleman. Such crafters and artists do know about the local Gallery and Museum collections of their work. The candidate found that the adverse economic conditions explained by the rural art and craft communities leads them to want to learn craft and art skills. In most cases rural women crafters and artists share their knowledge and skills. They take the initiative to work together and thus often come in groups to Durban where they sell their work. For instance Mrs Mazeka is an initiator for the group from KwaNgcolosi. The crafters would at times bring other's work to sell on their behalf, that is when those individuals are unable to come for themselves. According to Mrs Mazeka (Interview:2001), she was initially approached by Mrs Mabaso who motivated her to join her bead workers group.

What made her want to join was the fact that she had five children and it was difficult to bring them up without money. Mrs Mabaso patiently taught her the beading skills. Even though they (Mrs Mazeka and others) were very keen to pursue this career, their basic problem was to find some money that would help them to buy basic materials such as beads and cloth. Mrs Mabaso's group became very excited when they eventually met the Dutch artist Karin Giesen (mentioned above), because she was happy to assist them with basic funding which was to be used by the concerned bead workers to buy materials. The bead workers mentioned to the candidate that at times they wished to work, but could not because of financial problems. Their homes were also far from the city (Durban) and they could not afford the transport fees.

The candidate believes that there is often a power struggle between the art and craft producers and those running the marketing of these products. Mrs Mazeka (from Mrs Mabaso's group from

KwaNgcolosi) (Interview:2001), openly rejected a middleman in Durban. Mrs Mazeka said that he would sell beads to them and also bought the finished products from them. Whilst his beads were expensive, he would dictate the price of each work he bought, which was lower than the expected price. Mrs Mazeka (Interview:2001) said that when women artists complained about this the middleman said that there are many people he buy from and they should leave if they do not want to do what he wanted.

The candidate discovered that it is not easy for the bead workers to stand up against the economically strong middleman. Some crafters have formed themselves into groups or co-operatives such as 'Izikhwepha Zethu', led by Miss Pat Khoza and Ms Phumzile Dlamini from the Durban Art Gallery, 'Qhubumnotho', led by Lindiwe Nyathikazi, Mrs Mgenge from 'Bambithuba' and Miss Cwengekile Cele from 'Ukwenzakwethu' et al. These crafter's and artist's co-operatives note that they lack marketing and management skills and that as crafters their position has always been that of producers who are not involved in the decision making. Mrs Mabaso's group indicated to the candidate that often the crafters had to borrow money from the families and neighbours in order to travel to and buy materials in Durban. The above statement concurs with Miss Pat Khoza's statement (Interview:2002) that often crafters would come to their office asking for money to buy bread and transport money to return home. This occurred after the crafters had spent money in buying materials and transport. The candidate discovered that bead workers from KwaNgcolosi (near the Valley of Thousand Hills) in the village called eMshazi were faced with a similar problem. The bead workers from eMshazi (Interview:2001) have grouped themselves with an aim to work together.

The aforementioned group came together under the leadership of Mrs Mabaso who is also a bead worker. They are a group of eleven crafters, some of whom specialize in making beadwork and some who make cloth bead sculptures. During the interview with the candidate, the concerned crafters said that once they used to buy beads from a middleman in Durban, who in return would buy the finished objects from the crafters (Interview:2001). The crafters were made aware that he bought from them and sold their work overseas. According to Mrs Mabaso's group, the middleman would always dictate the price of the finished products and as a result the bead workers suffered a loss, not recovering the money used to buy the beads from him. It was for that reason that this group stopped buying and selling finished products to the middleman.

The candidate acknowledges that the crafters and artists in both cases rely on these culture brokers and their willingness to pay them a fair price for their work. In both circumstances the crafters are powerless communities who are not in control of their product and its income, which today determines their survival. The candidate realizes that much has not been done towards the training of crafters to become entrepreneurs so that they can be totally in control of both the production and marketing of crafts and management of their businesses. Much effort has been placed on skills training for crafters to improve quality and production, but the craft outlets market the craft products. Furthermore the candidate has become aware that there are some new initiatives that are taking place in KwaZulu-Natal, and elsewhere, that begin to address the above imbalances. There is also an increasing number of African rural women who are now becoming the leaders of craft rural co-operatives, funded by private businesses and the government. The candidate notes that most of the privately owned craft businesses and

non-profit organisations involved in the craft industry are managed by non-Africans (Europeans and Indians) but that this situation is changing. The emerging involvement of Africans in craft development, marketing and management is an improvement in this sector.

Ms Dudu Myeni is one example of such an improvement, where as a local business woman in the Mbonambi region of KwaZulu-Natal, she has been running an adult literacy program. Her program is made possible through partnerships between her company Skills Dynamics and Richards Bay Minerals (RBM). This partnership has existed for more than two years. According to the workplace reporter (05/12/2001), their plan for the adult literacy graduates, and anyone else from the community, is to learn to make quality traditional bead work and woven baskets which will be sold locally and abroad.

Once trained, the crafters will continue to supply the centre, with a small percentage of their profits being retained to fund ongoing training, so that the project will in time become self sustaining. Furthermore they (RBM and Skills Dynamics) also plan to introduce entrepreneurship and business skills training for the learners from the nearby schools as part of the economic and management sciences learning area. These skills will enable them to raise funds for their schools and in the long term give them the option of self-employment, should they be unable to find jobs when they leave school. The candidate believes that Ms Dudu Myeni's approach towards solving the problem of illiteracy, unemployment and poverty, is appropriate. Her approach looks at empowering the community to being more independent, by putting the community's needs first. Providing adult literacy training programs to crafters makes them more empowered than other rural communities who cannot read and write, or even count their own money. Some

of the craft marketing organisations in this document which have been operating over many years, did not realise the need for the literacy programs as part of the craft community development campaign . Ms Dudu Myeni's approach seems to go beyond the craft community and reaches to the local schools, who will in the future receive entrepreneurship and business skills training. In the near future the up and coming generation will have an option of becoming both craft producers and small craft business managers.

Such people will not be dependent on cultural confinement, but will be more independent.

The candidate believes that the role which is played by Ms Dudu Myeni (and many others not mentioned here) is a vital one since she also acts as a role model that many African rural women crafters need to see. This enhances up their low self-esteem and encourages them to want to become craft entrepreneurs. It is because of Ms Dudu Myeni's training centre that traditional artists like Ms Sikhosiphi Nene are employed (since 01/05/2001) to carry out training. In the past the traditional crafters did not get opportunities to be employed as full-time of part-time workers, in either the formal schools or community centres. In most cases the crafters were working as self-employed people. This had become an acceptable norm.

The situation being created by Ms Dudu Myeni opens up more horizons. Ms Dudu Myeni's hope is said to bring other stakeholders on board including the government departments, by further developing the crafts training aspect to comply with the National Qualification Framework (NQF) Band 2 as the exit level. The candidate believes that such an inclusive approach will provide positive results when the local African craft communities learn to work in partnership with the private institutions, in other developed self-sustaining training and business

centres. They will thus move away from the dependency syndrome brought about by some of the past craft business operations.

The candidate also believes that there is a sense of indigenous knowledge, redevelopment and preservation in Ms Dudu Myeni's craft classes . According to the reporter (05/12/2001), crafters learn how to make intricate beaded jewelry such as necklaces, bracelets, anklets, Aids-pins, woven baskets and ilala place mats. They are also being taught how to dye the reeds different colour using natural traditional methods. These include crushing and boiling the fruit of the indigenous *umnqandane* tree to produce ochre, and soaking the reeds in a rusty tin can for a month to create the colour grey. The candidate believes that such knowledge is vital. Ms Dudu Myeni's program does not overlook or undermine the importance of indigenous craft knowledge. In a way this encourages the introduction of indigenous knowledge. Some of the craft training centres encourage alternative materials, other than indigenous ones, and also introduce new themes such as Christmas tree ornaments.

The candidate believes that the continuous westernization of African culture and its people has been debated in depth by some concerned individuals. Frank Marawa's (Interview:2001) argument is that Durban should have its own traditional Zulu experience. According to him crafters should be assisted to sell their wares at competitive prices, particularly those who fall outside the mainstream craft markets. Many of these are African women struggling to survive who live in squatter settlements and have little in the way of support systems. Marawa (Interview:2001) further states that the visitors want to see traditional Zulu dancing within the city itself. They want to try genuine Zulu food and buy African craft, and not goods imported from

China and sold on the city's pavements. He further believes that the main problem is that crafters do not have the basic economic skills to determine the selling price for their goods.

They are also unaware of changing international trends and therefore continue to monotonously produce the same products for which they get little money. The crafters further had to compete against the sale of foreign goods (Interview:2001). The candidate agrees with Marawa's statement above and furthermore the fact remains that crafters have operated under the product development directions and guidelines put forth by some culture brokers and individual craft dealers. It is here that the candidate believes that there is a need to render basic economic skills to crafters, to replace the marketing and management of duties which were done by the culture brokers. However, it should be noted that these mediated craft works can be read as valid material culture 'text'.

The candidate believes that another problem is that African artists and crafters do not get opportunities to gain knowledge on how both national and international exhibitions are organized. The candidate found that many African artists who have been operating over a long period of time cannot themselves organize their own craft exhibition. It is mostly the culture brokers who have information of how to exhibit, or how to find venues, and the connection to national and international arts festivals. These individuals do not share information with the crafters, whose work is mostly transported by the cultural brokers to be exhibited and sold at such events. The inability of the artists and crafters to fully participate in such events is caused by inadequate knowledge, thus leading the crafters to depend more on the culture brokers. Crafters are not aware of the changing international fashion trends which is because of their ignorance of

such things. They need to be educated in this matter. The candidate has found that the crafters have been conditioned to produce what the culture broker tells them will sell. The candidate sees that the danger in doing so is that crafters, like machines, reproduce in large quantities similar goods because of over supply. There is also a problem of the production of artificial African crafts and in this case Marawa (Interview:2001) speaks of the need to revive and re-introduce the genuine African traditions and customs by building proper structures to propagate this.

The candidate found that some African arts and crafts community developers and entrepreneurs seem to share a similar vision of what is needed to be done in order to upgrade the standard of arts and crafts markets in Durban. Marawa (Interview:2001) has a vision of Durban's own authentic arts and craft village. At the same time Oscar Ngcobo's vision for Durban is to have a permanent African market and a crafter's village, where its cultures can combine to offer varied cuisine, produce and handicraft (Interview:2001). The candidate believes that the stand taken by these African entrepreneurs as role models, especially in the arts and craft fields, is commendable as it addresses the possibility of the indigenous artists and crafts orientation as entrepreneurs in an independent situation. Ngcobo and Marawa have ideas of a craft centre that is staffed and managed by crafts persons.

African entrepreneurs like Frank Marawa, Oscar Ngcobo and Ms Dudu Myeni are vital role models for African crafters and they are setting trends that the African crafters can emulate. Delport (Interview:2001) reported that Oscar Ngcobo's business, Gone Rural Safari Curios (also operated by his colleague Vusi Mabuyakhulu), created work for 500 women in rural parts of KwaZulu-Natal, KwaNdebele and Swaziland. The crafters make jewelry, beadwork, baskets,

mats and masks. Ngcobo's successful export business, with offices in Durban and California, has a turnover of about R1 million annually. The candidate believes that such achievements can become a reality if one receives a proper education that is accompanied with relevant marketing management skills, such as those received by Oscar Ngcobo at Technikon Natal. The candidate sees a continuous problem facing the African crafters who lack business skills, and there is a persisting frustration amongst crafters who try to sell their products outside the mainstream of culture brokers.

Liz Clarke (n.d.) reported that African crafters from Mfekanyi district in Hluhluwe (North of KZN) toiled for weeks on their baskets in the hope that delegates to the Racism Conference in Durban would snap them up. But selling crafts in the city can be an uphill struggle as they found out. When they tried to sell their grass woven baskets near Kingsmead Cricket grounds during the NGO's forum, they were sent away as they were not part of the craft exhibit. When they tried to sell at the Amphitheater, they were told they weren't wanted there either.

The city has not provided any infrastructure in the form of a building that is accessible for African crafters to be able to market their craft like the Indian Victoria Market building which houses Indian traders. The candidate has met African crafters who wish to trade outside the system of the culture brokers but have no other alternative. If they wish to be independent entrepreneurs, they have to consider spending having spent their lives away from their families who are left back in remote areas. It has been mentioned in this document that hundreds of African crafters have for many years now found themselves in the streets of Durban, e.g. the crafters living and selling their crafts outside Durban station. The candidate also found that it is

only recently that the crafters who sell from the beachfront are now allowed to sleep there. Before this they had to find themselves accommodation elsewhere.

The candidate's experience with the situation from the Durban beachfront is that during the period where there are major activities relating to surfing events, Indian and European traders who do not sell their goods permanently there are able to rent suitable temporary stores which are constructed there. The candidate notes that these traders are more economically stable and are able to afford rental for stores and moreover have the business and marketing skills which the African crafters do not have. In a telephonic discussion (19/12/2001) between the candidate and Frank Marawa, he stated that his idea was to build a big African craft centre that will be able to house large numbers of crafters, unlike the already existing craft centres which are relatively small venues that only take in small amounts of products. His ideal centre will be a business structure that will have its own parking space for cars and tourists buses.

He is looking at a centre which will be the biggest venue in this country, where all tourists who search not only for Zulu craft, but for genuine African craft, would be encouraged to visit. He intends to involving all the stakeholders including the government art and craft structures, the mayor of Durban, educational institutions such as Technikon Natal and all other relevant stakeholders. Marawa (Interview:2001) mentioned that since the crafters are financially exploited, now is the time for them to be provided with a venue which will be accessible to them. It is here where he believes that the crafters would not become suppliers to culture brokers or other traders, but would get an opportunity to sell their work directly to the tourists without the middleman. It is within this structure that crafters would receive constant guidance and quality

control of products by encouraging indigenous craft products and dismissing imported products. The centre will further assist the crafters by providing advice through experts on marketing, selling and exporting the products overseas. In this way crafters would earn international currency. Furthermore the centre would employ monitors in order to make sure that the principle of putting the crafter's interest first is being followed .

According to Marawa, the building of the centre stands to correct a fragmented craft market which at the same time is inaccessible to crafters who want to sell their products to tourists. There are two ways in which art objects and cultural objects enter the markets. Either they are bought from village inhabitants who are motivated by financial or personal reasons to sell family heirlooms and ritual paraphernalia, or they are purchased from artists who produce directly for the export trade. All these objects are collected by professional African traders who travel through rural communities in search of whatever they believe can be resold.

Most of the suppliers have little or no idea where these objects are destined, why they are sought after and for what price they will ultimately be bought (Steiner 1995:152). The candidate believes the above statement true because most of the interviewed rural artists in this document had no understanding of where their art objects were destined to and their economic value thereafter. Once these objects are moved into cities (Durban is an example) craft traders are the ones with direct contact with European or American clients and other local collectors. The candidate further observed that most craft traders are individuals who operate at a professional level. Steiner (1995:152) states that their experience enables them to discern certain

criteria underlying Western definitions of authenticity. They know, through trial and error which items are easiest to sell, and they can predict which objects will fetch the highest market price. The craft traders also use their marketing experience which is a key to a successful sale of the craft object. Such marketing experience and skill include the knowledge of how to present the craft objects to the prospective buyers who often look for quality, value and authenticity . The candidate found that craft traders carefully assess the quality of the products they buy from crafters and put more focus on skill training to crafters in order to receive acceptable products.

The candidate found that both the African Art Centre and the Bat Centre are running a number of skills training programs for rural crafters. The Bat shop for instance, (under Margaret Daniels and Marisa Jordaan) are presently engaged in a skills development programme with the Limpopo craft community. During the candidate's interview (2001) with both Daniels and Jordaan, it was stated that the Bat shop is involved in the development of an educational program which is intended to become accredited by the National Qualifications Authority. During this interview, the candidate observed that much of the focus on such programs has its focus on skill training towards the making of crafts that would supply the craft traders.

Most of these programs do not address the lack of and the crafter's need for, knowledge of how craft markets operate and how to develop a small craft shop, and strategies implemented when one presents craft products to prospective buyers. The candidate further found that the Bat shop (like the African Art Centre) does not have a pricing policy from which the crafters would refer to.

Marisa Jordan (Interview:2002) mentioned that the price given to the craft objects depends on the quality of the object and whether the crafter or artist is well known or not. Therefore when the crafter (e.g. a telephone wire basket weaver) is a well known supplier to the shop, his/her work will be given a higher price. The unknown crafter will obviously receive a less price, no matter if the quality and size of work is similar or bigger than the known crafter. It was from this discussion that the candidate observed that the Bat shop managers directly decide and control not only the quality and quantity of the crafter's products, but also the price.

The craft producers in this case are not empowered to be in control of what to produce and its price value. The candidate recognises that the group of crafters who follow the city craft traders mode of business tend to become totally dependent on the craft traders. Whereas the private craft entrepreneurs who are directly linked to their customers and their business, tend to show signs of economic development and growth in size of their sphere of influence. Lyse Comins (Wednesday, March 6, 2002) wrote about Lawrence Chikerema , a Zimbabwean crafter who has become a small craft entrepreneur outside the Avonmore Spar in Greyville, Durban. Chikerema, who travels to and from Zimbabwe, customers from the area . Here he supplies them with gifts for family and friends abroad and a convenient outlet for traditional African art pieces. Even though this kind of artist is not operating in a business environment such as a craft shop, the choice of his business spot has been a carefully chosen one. The six years of experience in selling his work in this area provides him with an opportunity to learn more about his craft business as a money making activity.

Chikerema constantly has to make independent decisions about what his customers need, the

quantity and the quality of craft products to be sold, and furthermore the pricing of each and every item to be sold. The candidate recommends that culture brokers whose aims and objectives are towards the development of the craft industry should now pay more focus on the teaching of business skills to crafters, to provide the fundamental business skills that would empower crafters to want to become small craft entrepreneurs. Crafters need knowledge and skills on how to set up a small business and the management thereof. Crafters have proven to be highly productive and good suppliers of African crafts, but now need to become entrepreneurs. The candidate believes that the crafters need to be empowered to become business wise in order to become independent and autonomous entrepreneurs. The candidate also recognises the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology's effort to empower crafters by providing the basic business skills through workshops and information. The handbook called Craft South Africa, is an important information document which contains questions and answers on how to become a craft business person. At this point in time, the candidate would recommend that this informative handbook be printed in indigenous languages and be made available to all of rural craft communities.

The supply of this information should be accompanied by extensive and continuous practical teaching and learning situations in order to bring about more understanding of business concepts and the practical engagement of crafters towards craft business. The candidate believes that through the practical business teaching and learning situation the crafters would gain not only knowledge, but also motivation and courage to want to become professional craft tenders and not just craft producers. The candidate also realises that there is a vital need to re-introduce Art and

Craft as a subject in both township and rural schools which at present is not available.

Furthermore this subject must be accompanied by the economic and business skills necessary in one becoming a business entrepreneur. This combination of initiatives, the candidate believes, would lead to the development of a thriving arts and crafts industry in KwaZulu Natal. In addition, crafters would become empowered and capable of naming their own craft businesses.

CHAPTER FOUR

SECTION TWO

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CRAFT CO-OPERATIVES IN KWAZULU NATAL.

In the section the candidate will discuss initiatives that have led to the establishment of craft co-operatives in KwaZulu Natal. The section will be presented in the form of four interviews with five individuals, who have been instrumented in establishing craft co-operatives. They are : Pat Khoza and Phum'zile Dlamini, Nelisiwe Mgenge, Cwengekile Cele and Lindiwe Nyathikazi.

Interview with Pat Khoza and Phum'zile Dlamini held on 16 January 2001 at the Durban Art Gallery.

According to Pat Khoza, the Education Officer for the Durban Art Gallery, the gallery covers places like Umlazi, Kwa-Mashu, Chesterville, Clermont etc, which are all places surrounding the Durban Metro.

Most of the workshops that the office run are directed at providing skills training which help crafters to produce good quality products. At times they have to teach the crafters and artists business skills, such as pricing for their products. Khoza also mentioned that at times (during the workshops) the crafters would approach them requesting help regarding business skills. Some individual crafters found it hard to give the price of their work. Sometimes those who had been

taught how to price their work ignored the knowledge they had acquired.

The syllabus which was followed by former black schools did not offer business training, especially for students who were doing arts and craft. One of the objects of the workshops is to teach these basic business skills. Business training at this stage would have equipped students with necessary skills and knowledge of how to start and manage their own small businesses. In the past it was not seen to be a problem when students were not offered formal business training. The pricing of the craft made by students at the time was the concern of the parents. The art teachers were only involved in the pricing of the craft and art products when the selling of those products was for the benefit of the school.

There was an abundance of natural and waste material that the artists and crafters would gather without paying, thus making a profit. Today arts and craft workers have to buy material in the cities to sell their work. Here they expect the middleman to be honest with them and buy their art and craft products for the price they request. However, in some cases, the middleman undermines the artist's proposition and the skill behind their work and refuses to pay them fairly.

Khoza then suggested that artists must be taught business skills and be made aware of how much money they spend on material and how much time they spend on making the product. They must also be made aware of how much energy is involved in this whole business. It is part of an art educator's responsibility to make the artists and crafters aware of the fact that it is not a right way of conducting business if you sell your work at the lowest possible price, for the sake of getting whatever money the buyer can give you. The right way is when you correctly include all the

money spent on making the product (i.e. materials etc), the time spent creating the product, the transport costs involved, the actual expertise or design etc. When all these factors are combined, they constitute the price of the product. To solve the problem of the lack of business skills for a large number of artists and crafters in this region, Khoza and Dlamini (the Education Officers for Durban Art Gallery) have indicated to the candidate that they have started a community outreach project called *Izikhwepha Zethu*, which translated into English means "Our Power". This project is made up of seventeen women, all of whom are the leaders of different art and craft non-profit organizations. Their aim is to teach all skills necessary to the business of arts and craft, which include marketing skills, to the leaders who will in turn go back to their organizations and pass these skills on to their members.

The organizations come from in and around Durban. The leaders in the organizations are Mrs N. Mgenge from "Bambithuba", Mrs Cwengekile Cele from "Ukwenzakwethu", Miss Thembekile Mganga from Dabulizizwe School, Vee Nyathikazi from "Qhubumnotho", Miss Pinky Madlabane from T.A.G.E, Miss Phum'zile Mchunu from "Mthombowolwazi", Mr Themba Mkhize from "Luganda C " in Marianhill, Miss Busi Mlotshwa from "Qhubela" in Durban Central, Miss Patricia Dove from Wentworth Community, Ms Zama Thembekile from Clermont Community, Ms Phum'zile Dlamini and Ms Pat Khoza both from the Durban Art Gallery.

Khoza informed the candidate that most workshops given to crafters and artists are conducted over a short period. At the end of each session people are not given certificates of any kind as proof of having acquired skills. She pointed out that this could be a reason why people lack interest or not be motivated to attend these workshops, even if the workshops lasts for a very short

duration. She then suggested that it is now the time that a system is set in place where those attending the workshops are given reports. She felt that reports motivate the crafters and artists, while at the same time making them see the importance of the skills taught. Although people did not receive reports or certificates, Khoza and Dlamini have kept the records of all those who attended the workshops and they sometimes use these records to invite them for further workshops during the year.

Khoza also mentioned that one of the problems faced by black crafters and artists is that in addition to the poverty they are facing, they also have to pay rent, electricity and water bills which makes it almost impossible for them to be able to buy enough material. She further stated that:

“...What I realized is that they go out to buy material such as beads and cloth, which are very expensive. They then make articles that are worth praising. Then those people who can afford to buy these artworks are the minority. At the same time the problem is that the crafters are then compelled to give their work to these people who can buy them to decide on how much the artworks and the crafts are worth and when the crafters should come back to collect money. This is a problem because these people are then forced to return home (empty-handed) hungry and without money. It is a problem because at times these people come to our offices asking for money to buy bread and transport money to return home”.

Interview with Nelisiwe Mgenge of the Bambithuba Women's Development Project, held at Technikon Natal on 22 February 2001.

Nelisiwe Mgenge is a representative of the Bambithuba Women's Development Project which started in 1989. In 1989 their organization was disturbed by violence in their area and as a result they could not operate up until 1994, when they re-started their work. Nelisiwe Mgenge comes from Ntuzuma and the project is based in Ntuzuma Training College.

Women belonging to the Bambithuba project come from rural areas. Only a few can read and write. Women gained their knowledge and skills in craftwork through informal training relations from home. Some of the women who went to school also gained craft skills through informal craft education. According to Mgenge the women in her organization do not attend workshops run in urban areas. However Mgenge mentioned that the women of her organization have once attended an exhibition at Ndwedwe, have been in Inanda to see other women crafter's work and are also connected with the women's craft organization from Phoenix. Other than the above-mentioned connections the Bambithuba women crafters have never attended craft workshops to upgrade their skills. They depend on their skills and ideas to create their work. It is only now that Mgenge is organising workshops with officials of the Izikhwepha Zethu Outreach project, based in the Durban Art Gallery. Women from rural areas (as including those from her organization) are normally excluded from information about such workshops.

It is during these workshops that women will get an opportunity to discuss issues, to see what they are capable of doing and how that can be improved, and how can the women crafters can gain knowledge as to where they can sell their work. In this case, women kept their work in boxes without being able to sell. Many got discouraged and stopped making craft. Nelisiwe Mgenge said that as she could not read, she would not know about the workshops offered by the Durban Art Gallery. Many rural communities who cannot read and write do not receive information about arts and craft activities which are taking place outside their environment. Sometimes information comes from radio and television about workshops and exhibitions in Durban, but rural communities do not attend such activities. The main reasons put forward by many people is that

they do not have money to attend such activities and since they do not know the city they feel they would not be able to find the venue. The solution to this problem is to have people from the organizations based in urban areas to go to rural areas to motivate crafters to come to these centralised activities. The lack of information in rural areas is due to the fact that most of the urban based organizations do not go to rural areas to do workshops as Nelisiwe Mgenge says "In the rural areas information is scarce, just no information- if there is something new, it is because someone met somebody in the city and gave her that information". Nelisiwe Mgenge's solution to this problem is that rural crafters must delegate representatives to go to learn from workshops in urban areas and to come back and inform or teach the rest of the rural craft communities.

Mgenge stated that the government arts and craft representatives and the non-governmental organizations never came to their area to discuss issues around arts and craft with the local people. The candidate's experience with most rural areas, including Isithumba, is that there is no infrastructure of structures built for such informal training of people. It is difficult to communicate with rural people, because of the lack of telephones and the inadequate road system. It is then impossible to find urban organizations who are prepared to overcome these problems in order to reach out to these rural communities. Instead, organizations which Mgenge is talking to wait in the cities for the crafters to come to them and workshops are the main activity that take place in urban areas. There are exceptions where rural areas have arts and craft institutions like museums and galleries. It is here then that workshops and more information on craft issues are available.

Mgence said that someone coming from rural areas to Durban is surprised to see that the craft made by rural crafters is controlled by white people once it gets to the city. She further said that sometimes when one gets to workshops or exhibitions you might hear a white person inviting you to bring your work to her, since she helps crafters to sell their work. Once you bring your work then they charge you for exhibiting it. The exhibition itself does not belong to you as an artist, but to the white person, who also owns the space. You are then left aside without knowing what is going on since you don't understand the whole thing.

Mgence mentioned that it would help if the concerned white people would come to rural areas to inform artists about craft marketing. She mentioned that they have difficulty with getting materials.

The group of women Mgence belongs to also use cloth and beads as their basic materials. It is not easy to get money to buy materials. When one goes to Durban to buy beads they are very expensive. If one wants to mix both beads and cloth in her work it then becomes impossible. Especially because people are unemployed and therefore no one can afford to buy materials. The little that one can earn from her work is only enough to buy food and there is nothing left for materials. Even those who continue to struggle to do some work can't sell that work. She emphasised that the main problem is that there is no money for them to be able to buy materials even if they have time to work.

Nelisiwe Mgence continued to say that the issue with money goes a long way further than just buying materials. For instance when one needs materials one must go to the city, but one cannot afford to pay for a bus or taxi. In some rural areas transport to the city is also inadequate, and

where it is available, it is expensive. She stated that most rural people spend most of their lives in rural areas and have no knowledge about the city. They lack knowledge about where to buy materials, and other needs. Mgenge agreed that because of the poverty of rural people (artists and crafters included) they find themselves isolated from the city. Even when they hear about relevant activities happening in the city, artists and crafters do not participate because they lack the means to get there and do not have any idea how to get there. She further stated that it is difficult to get information and directions that will help you get to the venues.

Due to lack of knowledge and information about the city crafters would buy expensive materials, because they buy from shopping areas where beads and cloth are expensive. Mgenge further stated that another problem faced by crafters in rural areas is that artists are not provided studios where they can perform or do their work. Artists rely on their homes which are turned into studios. She said that in the past, as well as the present, government did not provide centres with adequate infrastructure that would look at the needs of crafters and artists. She further said that she has heard that the present government has put aside some money to assist artists and crafters in both townships and rural areas. According to her knowledge this money has not reached the artists at grassroots level.

Mgenge said that it is high time that black women crafters and artists do have centres (studios) where they could do their work. The government must assist so that these centres are built. Community halls which sometimes are used by groups of crafters are not equipped and are suitable venues for crafters and artists. There should be a specific centre for crafters to work from.

These could be divided into subsections which may include all varies forms of crafts. She stated that the disadvantage of the crafters who work at home is that they cannot receive financial aid from funding institutions. The funding institutions always demand that artists and crafters must be organised and have their own centres where they do their work. Funders often stress that they would not assist unless there is a secured centre. Mgenge further stated that such centres must be built around where craft communities live. This will make them accessible, without crafters having to travel long and expensive journeys.

Mgenge told the candidate that an organisation (whose name she would not mention due to the organisation's rights) based in Zululand called for rural women to attend a workshop. She attended that workshop representing the crafters from the community based organisation network. During the workshop, which was run by white people, they were encouraged to make their craft and give it to this white owned organisation which was going to sell their work on their behalf in the overseas market. Mgenge said "infact we (the crafters) were disturbed by the fact that we had to take our work and sell it through a white owned organisation. The community based organisation network encourages local people that they organise themselves wherever they are and must do whatever you do (i.e. arts and crafts) yourself".

She thought that it was dis-empowering the crafters if their work was to be sold through white organisation, rather than a black and disadvantaged organisation. She further mentioned that they thought this organisation would buy their work at a cheaper price, sell it overseas and make more money. Mgenge said that they experienced such things, where you would be given a little bit of money for your work and later was taken to the market where they would make a lot of money.

Mgence said that their organisation believes that it is high time that crafters should not be producers, but that they should also take charge of marketing and selling of their product and should not hand it over to white organisations. She said that this will develop their knowledge and they would be in position to do things for themselves. She further said "We can communicate with other people outside this country and learn ways and means of discussing issues and selling our work to other countries ourselves. If this white organisation invited us to this workshop to teach us about these processes of how to take your work overseas, this is what we are looking for, because we want to learn that. White people who say they are here to educate us, they must really do that by practicing what they preach. But if they market our work for us without them teaching us how, we shall never know that to do in order to market our work".

According to experience, during workshops crafters are not taught anything except being told what they can make. In other words, they are not taught new skills, but skills only they use are those they already have. When the product is finished the crafters hand it over to the organisation. Crafters may then be asked about the price of each product. Mgence mentioned that the problem with that is the fact that rural crafters have never been taught how to calculate the cost and price of such products. They are then given an inappropriate amount of money for their work. All the work collected here would then be taken for exhibition and ultimately sold for a much bigger price.

Mgence said that during the pricing of the work by crafters those in charge do not come out to correct and help the illiterate crafters, so that they would charge more correct prices for their work. As a community based organisation we have attended workshops where crafters were taught

costing and this is why we were reluctant to take our work and give it to that white owned organisation. We needed skilled people who would teach us how we can operate on our own in the rural areas, to sell our work in the cities and overseas. When crafters give their work to white organisations they lose ownership and they become unknown. According to Mgenge artists should sell directly to their customers and allow themselves to be represented by the middleman. The artist remains unknown because of the false representation by the middleman. It further appears that when the work has shifted from its maker to the middleman it is here where the work becomes part of the middleman's project, (which in most cases is about helping the artists). Here the focus moves away from the artist who is by this time without a voice as to what should happen to collected items. The main focus and responsibility is left with the middle man who has the power to decide the price. Mgenge stated that the artist's effort and activity is never realised. Mgenge said that "Our names are not known". At the end of it all, artists do not gain financially. Artists only receive a small amount of money, the rest is taken by the middleman.

Mgenge mentioned that at present the relationship between the middleman and the crafters or artist is an unfair one. Even though crafters are aware of this case, as long as someone offers money the crafters will accept this as better than nothing. The relationship between middleman and black rural crafters is an unfair one, but because these crafters lack knowledge of this business, they accept anything they are being offered. Sometimes crafters are given an order by the middleman to make so many art objects and later they would be given a little bit of money which is not equal to the amount of work they have produced. Later the crafter would realise and understand that would have made better money if they did not sell their work through middleman. Mgenge stated that now is the time for crafters to learn how to produce, to do the

costing, marketing and finally the selling of their work. Mgenge's suggestion is that black women's and crafter's organisation (both in rural areas and township) could be used as centres where the teaching and learning of these specialised skills could take place.

Interview with Cwengekile Cele held at Technikon Natal on the 20th January 2001.

Cwengekile Cele represents a black rural women's organisation based in Mpolweni. Their aim is to develop their community through sharing craft skills. By working together they also aim at providing employment opportunities. Her mother Mrs M.T. Cele started this organisation after realising that if her family worked with other community members it would be more fruitful. The idea of forming a rural women crafters co-operation would become an effective mechanism to fight against poverty. Prior to the coming together of the craft women the Cele family used to work on their own.

Initially, the Cele family painted pieces of clothing and later made cushions which were sold locally. The organisation was to be engaged with a number of other activities like agriculture which were outside the craft field. The connection between this organisation and the present study is that all the women crafters from rural areas and townships, whether they are informal organisations or not, suffered the same struggle. Most of the materials and techniques are very similar. The level of education of all the participants of this group are almost the same; the majority are illiterate Cele mentioned that in their co-operative rural women share all sorts of skills and ideas. They do not receive any professional help from the formal sector to teach them new skills. They do not attend craft workshops organised by other relevant government and non-

government organisations. The only assistance they receive is the engagement of the Department of Welfare from their area that tries to encourage their work. The Department of Welfare do not teach them skills or organise specialists to help them, but they often visit to view the women's progress. The "Ukwenzakwethu" (translated into English means "How we do things") organisation also receives financial support from the Department of Welfare and received from their products and the banking of the organisation's income.

At present the members receive no income. The money from sales of their products is deposited in a bank and some of it is used to buy materials. The members are informed of the amount that is being saved each month. This organisation has lost many of its members because people complain of not being able to afford transport and fees payable by the members that assist the organisation to continue.

The candidate's observation regarding the lack of knowledge in business skills among black rural and township craft communities, including this community in question, is the main problem. The lack of business skills leads to the downfall of many attempted co-operatives. Since the organisation cannot be properly marketed and manage their business the organisation cannot make a profitable income. Because of the lack of such relevant skills organisations not making a profit face losses. For instance, the "Ukwenzakwethu" organisation does not pay its members for their crafts, and as a result this organisation appears to lose its value for its members.

According to Cele's account, some of their members who represent the sub-committees of their organisation do not attend meetings, and they do not fulfill the responsibilities they were elected for. Some of elderly members who have been elected to perform certain duties may not be

requested by a younger person to perform certain duties. According to Zulu culture it is taken as disrespect if a younger person requests an elderly person to perform some duties. It is the other way round. Therefore, younger people who are in most cases are literate, run organisations.

Therefore the generation gap within members of rural crafters organisations create a problem. The problem does not only come from the fact that more younger people have been exposed to formal education, which has always become a barrier with elders who have not. Older people who have been conditioned to a specific order find it difficult to accept a new order, which is not based on age, but through education and skill training.

One need not to be an adult to become chosen to a particular position, but it is through one's education level that one can be honoured with a particular position. These are some of the basic problems that organisations initiated by rural crafters face, before the lack of funding and knowledge problems. As a young crafter Cele only started in the year 2000 to attend craft workshops from the Durban Art Gallery. For many years before this she gained knowledge of craft through her family. As has been mentioned earlier information of craft workshops does not reach the rural areas. Cele only got more information on craft exhibitions and workshops when she visited her aunt in Bonella, which is situated at the periphery of the city of Durban. Cele mentioned that if crafters in Mpolweni district want to respond to information which is in a newspaper, they have to travel over thirty kilometers to get to Pietermaritzburg and pay five rand (single journey) for their bus fare. The Zulu newspaper is less than a rand. Mpolweni district is situated between Greytown and Pietermaritzburg. The reason for this is that their district, like many surrounding rural areas, is still underdeveloped. For many people in such areas, they depend on the Zulu radio

for communication and news update.

She further mentioned that their areas now have electricity and tap water, one gravel main road and a mobile clinic that only caters for children. Anyone with health problems and emergency patients must go to Pietermaritzburg. Even though they do have tap water, they do have sewage and modern toilets. They also have been taught cloth-painting in order to create patterns and new designs. Painted cloth becomes useful in household decoration. The candidate notes that the teaching and learning situation offered through workshops of this nature in Durban depend on the knowledge and skills of the teacher. The teacher who is also employed in order to impart skills to those who voluntarily attend the classes. These classes are given according to a specific time and place which at any given time can change. Both the teacher and the learner do not have a major sense of urgency for the projects to be successful. The situation is free, hence it is on a voluntary basis and the crafters can always choose to continue or to stop. The classes are not expensive, since they have been made affordable for the crafters. The numbers of those who attend are not too much for the teacher.

The above situation is far different than that in the traditional teaching and learning situation in rural areas. Both the teacher (who has special craft skills and knowledge) and the learner (who is a member of the family or a relative) have a similar goal which is success. The successful transfer of skills and knowledge means a better chance for the family's survival. The successful making and selling of the craft objects means income for the household, where many family members might not be employed. The teacher here does not receive a salary for teaching the family. It is a responsibility, and in this case, craft making and selling has become a necessity for

their survival. In most families like that of Gcinani Mchunu, everyone in her family contributes to the household income by participating in the making of cloth bead sculptures. Craft making is an expensive situation, especially since the materials to be used are expensive and not available in the crafter's environment. Here knowledge and skills are passed over from one generation to another through traditional forms of education. In contemporary arts and craft workshops, most teachers receive their education through formal training where they become exposed to modern techniques and technology. Those teaching such workshops in art institutions also at times refer back to traditional rural crafters in order to gain traditional knowledge and skills, without which they cannot teach traditional beadwork, wood carving and pottery etc.

Since the selling of craft is closely associated with entrepreneurship, it makes it impossible for rural crafters to be successful in this field. Entrepreneurship skills are attained through formal education and most of the crafters lack this knowledge. As part of this lack of knowledge they cannot even calculate their prices properly. A crafter's workshop run by concerned education officers has begun to assist the crafters to learn about pricing of their crafts. It is here where Cele, and other crafters who also represent their craft organisations, attend the workshops with an aim to gather knowledge and later teach other in their respective organisations.

The craft products produced by crafter's under the 'Ukwenzakwethu' organisation are sold around their community. Cele mentioned to the candidate that during community gatherings, such as the pension days of each month, they advertise and sell their work to the pensioners. They have never sold their work in the cities such as Pietermaritzburg and Durban. The reason is that they don't have any idea where to sell their work in the city. Her market is limited to rural communities and

sometimes she also visits Bonella (which is situated on the outskirts of Durban) where she also sells her work. Cele mentioned that at times they compare their prices with others or make prices according to their general judgement. She further said that this has resulted in a loss since their method is not accurate. This loss has compelled many of their members to drop one of their organisation and those still present lack enthusiasm and commitment, since their organisation does not make profit.

Interview with Lindiwe Nyathikazi held on the 19th January 2001 in Durban

Nyathikazi aged 42, is a self taught crafter. Her mainstream work is beadwork. She makes all kinds of jewellery made from plastic and glass beads. Her work also includes combining beads and clothing, decorating Zulu headdresses and other African dresses which has become the fashion among black people of today. These garments are highly decorated with colourful beads similar to those of Zulu, Ndebele and Xhosa traditional colours. The candidate also observed that the cloth bead sculptures of Isithumba also make similar works. Many other women crafters elsewhere use beads decorating waistcoats and sell them at the African Art Centre. Even though Nyathikazi does not make cloth beads sculptures, the process that she follows in order to create her work is similar to that of the rural women crafters in question. She also works with rural women crafters under the "Izikhwepha Zethu" crafters organisation, which is the umbrella body of black rural women crafter's organisations.

Originally Nyathikazi came from Johannesburg and presently lives in Durban. She has a B.Paed degree from the University of Zululand. To develop her beadwork skills she studies what has already been made in both cloth and beads and then learns how such patterns are constructed.

During her school days (in Standard two) she did craft work, where they used brown mielie bags as part of their craft materials. Later Nyathikazi studied to become a teacher, but not of arts and crafts, since this subject was not part of her training.

Unlike many crafters, who make their work hoping that they will sell it, Nyathikazi makes her work according to orders she receives. She mentions that she makes samples to show to her customers and then when the customer has decided on what they want, she then makes it. Her work is similar to that of cloth bead sculptures in terms of the combination of materials she uses. While she decorates clothing and African headdresses using beads, she also uses safety pins in an interesting way. Unlike the bead cloth sculptors, many of whom do not belong to any co-operative, she belongs to a cooperative called 'Qhubumnotho' (which translates as 'economic development'), which is based in Durban. Their offices and working area is at 447 Smith Street, Durban in William Palmer Building.

Nyathikazi mentioned that as a group of women crafters they share knowledge, such as how to start your own business. She said that some of the women in their organisation are skilled as far as business management is concerned and that this strengthens their performance. The candidate observed that Vilakazi is in control of her work income situation, in terms of what to produce, how much to be produced (i.e. quantity and quality of her product) as well as the income she wants from the product. The level of her education is the force behind the development of their work. It is such skills which make this organisation (Qhubumnotho) able to secure its own venue, manage its business, market and sell its work without the need for the middleman. The above are some of the differences between this organisation and the majority of rural crafters who depend

upon the middleman in order to market and sell their work. Presently 'Qhubumnotho' crafters are applying to the government for financial assistance towards the development of their organisation's goals. They have a good level of business performance, a clear vision of the future and a good level of professionalism. This could be found in the following aims of the symposium which they organised on the 8th of February 2001, at the International Convention Centre in Durban. The theme of the three days symposium was "Women Economic Empowerment" with the following aims:

- to celebrate the emancipation of women from the shackles of domination by men.
- to review the South African women's current contribution and position in the country and to map out strategies to improve and safeguard her favourable position for the future survival of mankind.
- to recognise and showcase achievements by women in all sectors of the economy.
- to improve close business links through database creation and networking.
- to bridge the gap between small big business/ commercial operators.
- to foster a spirit of unity among women (Nyathikazi: 2001).

The 'Qhubumnotho' crafter's organisation is one year old and differs from the group of black rural women crafters who have been in the craft business throughout their lives. Due to the illiteracy problem the majority of black rural crafters in the past, as well as present, did not have opportunities to start their own businesses (thus had to depend on the middleman's organisation). Nyathikazi said that it is difficult for the crafters to gain any new knowledge and skills, because some of the private individuals, especially white people, would charge R150 per two hours of their time. She further stated that sometimes to learn just one skill would take the whole day and therefore crafters would find it impossible to afford it. She suggested that if there were schools where crafters can go and learn the skill they need, they would be charged much less than the

present situation. When an individual came to her to learn beadwork she would charge R50 per class per skill, not per hour. This appears more reasonable and affordable to many crafters who do not have beadwork skill and who want to learn it in order to start up their own small business.

Nyathikazi mentioned that sometimes some of the white people who run workshop projects use black rural crafters to teach those who attend bead craft workshops, since they themselves do not have these skills. She said that the organisation concerned applies for funding from the private sector and sometimes to the government. The candidate has observed that in a number of instances the white owned organisations indicated sometimes use Zulu names. At the first glance it is easy to assume that it is an organisation established by black crafters or artists to develop their economic situation, only to find that the top managing structure is entirely white.

Nyathikazi said black crafters only participate as producers for such organisations and are used during workshop programs for such organisations. Even though those who attend are sometimes instructed not to pay for workshops, the crafters are paid by the leaders of those workshops.

Nyathikazi said many crafters work very hard and produce a lot of work, but they cannot sell their products. This is because of the lack of marketing skills. The present marketing courses have been made too complicated. For instance the marketing courses that are sometimes given to rural crafters are not geared to their level of understanding. The course should be more practical for the learners to easily understand e.g. a crafter who carries samples of her work in her bag and shows people she meets in formal and informal gatherings and gives those who are interested her business card. Nyathikazi further said that she would advise other crafters to bring their samples to parties or anywhere where there would be a lot of people to sell her work..

Nyathikazi further said “ most of the craft and art courses are done in English and this is a major problem for crafters, especially since most of them are illiterate, they cannot even write their

names. So if the craft and art courses are run in English the crafters are not benefitting. For instance we went to Pretoria to attend the “women’s construction course”. Everything was run in English, whereas many people who were there to do construction work are illiterate and some did not go far with their school education. Some of the black women who were there sat quietly the whole time and did not participate. Later when I approached them and asked, why were they so silent, they told me that they do not understand the language which was spoken. Therefore if one brings pamphlets written in foreign language what do you expect from the participants”.

Nyathikazi suggested that the coming together of all the black crafter’s organisations under one umbrella organisation (as they have done to be part of Izikhwepha Zethu crafter’s organisation) is one way forward which will help to improve what is already existing. Their coming together will help them to control the quantity and quality of their craft products in order to avoid problems brought by the production of thousands of similar craft objects that end up not being sold. Many crafters display the same objects. The candidate has observed this problem to be true especially with the bead workers who sell their work along the Durban beachfront. If one woman crafter comes out with one idea everyone copies that product.

Nyathikazi said that the materials they use in their craft are very expensive. Moreover she is lucky because she lives in Durban where she can get her materials. Other crafters who are far from

Durban, for example those in Greytown, have no access to craft materials such as beads and cloth.

She further stated that there are many women who can make beautiful beadwork, but due to the inaccessibility of, and high cost, charged to beads it is impossible for them to be productive. The further you go away from Durban the more the cost of beads. The candidate has observed that the very few Indian shops in Durban that sell beads (i.e. both plastic and glass beads) to black women crafters would not give information about where and how they get their beads from. Since they are the only few people who are selling this product, their cost is very high. The rural communities who have traveled far to come to Durban do not have any choice but to buy this product. The candidate has also observed that the very Indian shops (where over the past years he has visited to buy his own beads) also buy finished beadwork from the crafters for a low price .

Nyathikazi indicated that if a crafter is working for herself and not working for someone else, she can make a good profit. She then gave her example and said "a certain shoe factory from Chatsworth (outside Durban) wanted them to do strips of beadwork for their sandals. The factory owners wanted to pay R2 per strip. Each crafter could only be able to make ten strips per day and therefore that would mean earning R20 per day. At the same time the crafter would have used her own money to buy beads, have transport costs, spend time and use skill and yet be paid R20 per day". The candidate observed that there are many experiences of exploitation that the rural crafters have mentioned. It appears that business owners such as these take the advantage of illiterate crafters who would do anything as long as it is called employment, even if they are exploited.

In a case like this some rural crafters would try to produce more beaded strips in order to make more money. Nyathikazi mentioned that there is no uniformity in pricing of the beadwork among rural crafters and most of them drop their cost down to a very low price to sell their work. In her example Nyathikazi said "during the recent Aids Conference in the International Convention Centre at Durban, crafters were given an opportunity to open their stores and sell their beadwork. Women from Ndwedwe and others who were there, they sold a lot of their products, whilst we sold just a little. The reason that they sold a lot was that they kept dropping their prices compared to neighbouring tables, trying to beat their prices". It appears that the above example is an example of the lack of business skills among rural crafters and is the chief reason of poverty.

Nyathikazi said "The consumers also seem to be aware of this weakness and they always look for the cheapest one. Especially because all these crafters sell the same thing, which is the same colour texture, size and quality. They have been conditioned to sell not to make profit, but to sell for survival. They sell in order to buy a bag of mielie meal at the end of the day". Nyathikazi advised that the women crafters in question should rather take the money they have and buy their families food. Rather than taking that money to travel a long distance to Durban, in order to buy beads, travel back to rural areas, later to come back with finished products and to sell for a very price and return home with nothing. She showed the candidate a beaded bracelet which was on the table and said "crafters sell this product for R3 and in the shops it is R10. Someone would travel a long distance from Ndwedwe to sell her work just for R3 and even though they can see some objects displayed on the shelves of such shops but they would not change".

Nyathikazi advised that a solution to this problem would be government supported schools that would run throughout the year, and not fast workshops. Such skill directed schools should be accessible to areas where they live. Crafters must not only depend on producing and selling beadwork, but should be taught to produce agricultural products that would support their families with food. Crafters must be motivated to make and sell their craft works rights where they live, rather than to travel to Durban and other far away places. As far as schools are concerned, Nyathikazi suggested that informal schools are more necessary thus to break down the formalities of a formal school. Each province would use both its indigenous language and English as part of its teaching and learning mediums. Such schools should be known as information centers which people could visit from time to time to get information and not wait for craft workshops which are available occasionally. Among the courses that should be taught in such schools is entrepreneurship, which will help stabilize the pricing of their products properly and a financial and business management course, and this will help them with knowledge of how to use money profitably. Introducing crafters to money saving schemes. To avoid exploitation of crafters by the businesses and individuals, the government should set up controlling laws that would protect and safeguard the interest of crafters.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has explored the art work and circumstances of selected rural female artists in Kwa Zulu Natal. In particular it has sought to show that while the cloth bead sculptures made by these artists has received wide critical acclaim, both in South Africa and overseas, their real life situation has been quite contradictory.

While the artists have produced a considerable body of art, the absence of the artist's voice has been a critical issue. While their artwork may have received exposure to the public and the media through various exhibitions, the artist has remained invisible and silent. The control of, and speaking for, the artists by various institutions and people can be viewed as a significant act of cultural discrimination, oppression and exploitation.

The artist's work thus became a vehicle for transmitting cultural information from one generation to another. Black rural artists used their work to display their circumstances and make a plea for aid from outside communities who ultimately became recipients of their artworks. However any critical evaluation of African art, including cloth bead sculptures, by foreign historians and writers must be seen in the context of colonization and more especially the apartheid system. Denied a voice or access to what may have been written about their artworks, in a language other than their own, the makers of cloth bead sculpture remain largely 'unable to give full accounts of their artistic intentions. The outcome is a domination of written information by others.

A further problem that emerges from this research is the complex, but discriminatory, financial position of the artists that arose from their dependence on the urban marketing system and white cultural brokers or middlemen. The female artists from Kwa Zulu Natal found themselves in a feudal relationship with this system and the culture brokers. I use the word feudal because the financial relationship is like that between a serf and the master. The sale of cloth bead sculptures, for example, provided the artists with only a very small income, while the sale of those works contributed to the generation of income for the culture brokers and retail outlets.

The other feudal aspect to the women's relationship was the lack of respect shown to them as people. A lack of respect that was often expressed in humiliating ways. The fact that they had to sit on the floor while waiting to sell their works, this practice according to Zulu culture is unacceptable. It is a sign of being disrespectful to stand whilst talking to a seated elderly or walk across above her legs whilst they are sitting on the floor. They were never allowed to discuss the meanings of their works; that they often had their work rejected in a publicly humiliating way (such as that any women artist who is unhappy about their treatment her work is publicly rejected), all served to demonstrate to the women that, although they might be artists, they were second class citizens in the economic relationship between buyer and producer.

Despite all the trials the women had to endure, their bead work always had meaning to themselves as an important aspect of communicating symbolically deep cultural meanings. It hurt them greatly that they were never able to be heard on the meanings of their work. Accompanying the rise of Black political consciousness, black artists in the townships and the homelands began to portray and document daily events through

any medium available. Bead cloth sculptures cannot be excluded from this show of resistance art.

As the candidate has demonstrated Umehlo KaHulumeni, 1987 a helicopter made of wire cloth and beads, bears an undisputed testimony to the military surveillance to which townships and homelands were constantly subjected. Further examples are works by Thandi Mchunu titled Policeman, (1989) and the work titled Boys with Guns, (1987). The rise of the Black Consciousness movement emerged as to mobilise opposition and help black communities rid themselves of their inferiority and dependency. It is along this line that black artists in South Africa, including bead cloth sculptors, expressed the inhumanity of their oppression. Art making became a potent if silent protest following the torture and killing of those who resisted their oppressors. Art making became a symbol of the contradiction that was South Africa.

In addition, these female artists are transmitting their life experiences through visual three-dimensional sculpture. Working from their homes in the rural areas, the makers of cloth bead sculptures passed on knowledge and skills to their descendants without discriminating between boys and girls. They thus have an important educational role in the transmission of culture. A further conclusion of this research is the fact that within Zulu culture there is a strong connection between artistic creation, divination and healing. Diviners play a crucial role in helping people see the connections between their social and physical disease and hence play a role similar to that played by the psychiatrist in western societies.

The artist's role is also to communicate these connections, including the important connections between the past and the future, between one's ancestors and ones descendants. The candidate concludes that the parallels between his own life experiences, and that of the women, put him in a unique position to be a part of their consciousness raising and hope for a new South Africa. He recently presented an exhibition, Dreams and Visions at the Moores Building Gallery, Fremantle, in Western Australia. This exhibition was dedicated to the disadvantaged and deeply wounded people in South Africa and Australia, especially to the healing of disadvantaged black people who have felt the trauma of fear and discrimination.

Roger Woods, a rural research worker with African experience introduced the candidate as the artist with the following words:

The paintings by Nathi Khanyile around the walls of this space are powerful and symbolic. There are paintings combining African and Aboriginal Motifs which provide a backdrop for an installation comprising of a circle of pots around a collection of African heads and a striking focal pot at the centre. Along the opposite side of the exhibition space you will see ten Zulu cloth bead sculptured dolls made by women artists from Kwa Zulu Natal and these provide an important cultural counter point to the larger painting of African women by Nathi above them. On the other two walls are paintings that provide cross references to other works and other exhibitions that Nathi has held in South Africa. The whole effect is, I am sure you will agree, is to turn this space into a sacred place. (Figures 38 and 39).

The conquest of land and cultures by migrant groups in Africa and Australia has caused immense pain, sacrifice and suffering. A sacrifice made all the more poignant and hurtful because it has been ignored or dismissed as irrelevant by the dominant groups. As time passes though, we of the former conquering class finds ourselves in a spiritual void. We are becoming conscious that the myths, stereotypes and rationalisation about the 'denigrated other' has left us in a world without meaning and value. It is from the inner confidence and spirit of this 'despised and denigrated other' that the urge for healing and reconciliation comes in Khanyile's work. (Figure 40).

Khanyile's exhibition draws us into this healing circle of pots and heads and raises our eyes to the symbolic unity of the oppressed through his paintings, together with the figures made by the women and challenges us to see our own oppression in our false pride and feelings of superiority. We are called to see the unity of all humankind and to meditate on the meaning of sacrifice."

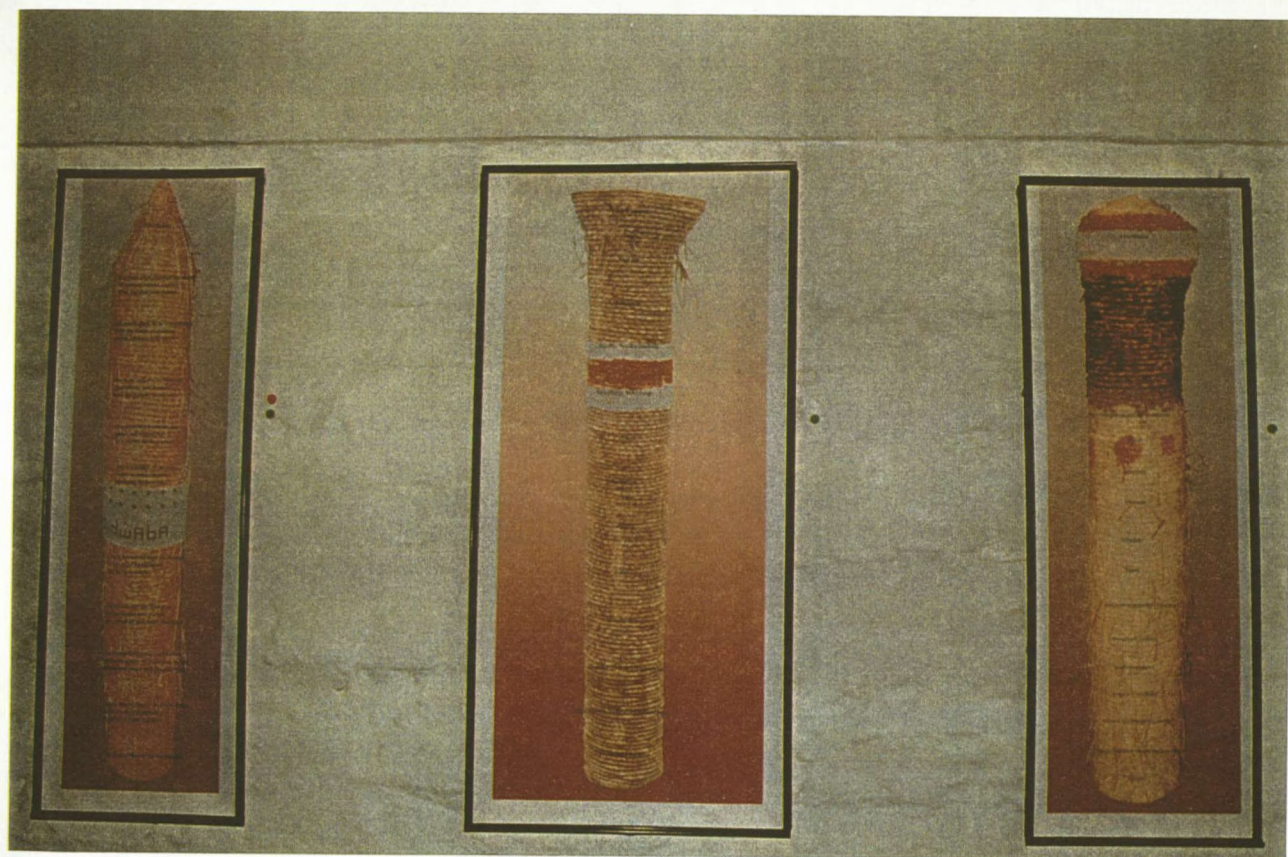
Figure 38 Isaac Khanyile, CEREMONY 1, 2000, 2m x 1m, dyed canvas with natural dyes, acrylic and red clay, Private Collection, Western Australia.



Figure 39 (Floor piece) Isaac Khanyile, DREAMS AND VISIONS
INSTALLATION, 2000, 12 Terra cotta head, 17 Terra cotta Zulu
traditional pots, Private Colletion, Western Australia.



Figure 40 (Wall piece) Isaac Khanyile, DREAMS AND VISIONS
INSTALLATION, 2000, 1m x 45cm x 3 photographic images
on canvas, Private Collection, Western Australia.



The female artists of Kwa Zulu- Natal have sacrificed much in the pursuit of their art. It is the hope of the author of this dissertation that their sacrifice has not been in vain. During this period black people in South Africa had no voice, and this certainly applied to the rural women artists in question. Books and many other references of the time were written by white people, with their own perspective, for white readers, about the South African situation.

At the same time a black person's position in relation to the issues being researched was reduced to only being that of an informant. The resultant research work had the problem of not being accessible to the indigenous people at grass root level, as they were unable to read and write foreign languages such as English. The candidate suggests a new pathway, unique to South African communities, in order to eradicate this problem of inaccessibility to academic information. Therefore the candidate strongly believes that published academic research work (including this document at hand) must go beyond the boundaries of selected few libraries from tertiary institutions

It is an undisputable fact that if the academic work such as this document could be translated in several African languages (of which in South Africa alone we have eleven) and be properly publicised in community libraries. In addition newspapers, educational and cultural programs on radio and television could be used as information channels. Then, all levels of South African communities would have access to this document. At the same time a larger audience could be drawn into such relevant discourse within an open platform of an Indaba (a National discussion). The concerned communities would be able to air their views reflecting back to the document.

But if this information (like many such documents) remains in the selected few library shelves, the majority of black people from the grass root level (to whom this research is about and for) will continue to be uninformed.

APPENDIX 1

REPRESENTATION, BIOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

In this Chapter I shall utilise the first person rather than the third person, since here I will deal with my autobiography. This thesis represents more than the fulfilment of my Master's Degree requirements. My intrinsic aim with this contribution is the achievement of a life long dream whereby I should become connected to my roots in a whole and infinite manner. Therefore this written contribution realises a desire that before the completion of my life I write something about myself, for myself, for my children's children and for my people. This document is a testimony to my existence, my history and my beliefs. If I am not to be misled by 'polluted anthropologist's opinions' (Teach, 1996:9), I intend with my whole spiritual being that this will be achieved here. My story provides a link with the stories, the narratives and the artistic expression of the women who make figures from cloth and beads.

My work with female artists and researching the nature of their work and life has been a significant experience in my own life. This work and research has not been a case of a superior educated person teaching these 'others' or researching them as objects, but a dialogue between black African people attempting to represent their world and culture through art. Exploring the cultural and spiritual roots of their work has deepened and strengthened the understanding I have of my own. In this Chapter I have been forced to throw off the passive constraint of academic form. This is necessary to highlight how the problem of interpreting artistic representation needs to be understood in the context of the intersection of the biography of the artist, with the history of his or her space and place.

Some Western critics may argue in post-modern terms that it is the text or object, not the intention of the author or artist, that is relevant. The argument here is that, in a country like South Africa, it is vital that we understand the biographical and historical roots of cultural expression.

One has to start with the contradiction of being expected to write this thesis in English, an imposed language, rather than my mother tongue (isiZulu). This is both a manifestation and proper reminder of colonialism and racism. It represents a continuation of a colonised mind and life situation where a candidate can not fully exercise the right of self-expression. There continues to exist an environment that does not allow for, nor extend, that privilege. The Zulu version of this thesis is an important task for later.

To begin with, I must ask the question, who am I? I will answer this from the perspective of black consciousness. This approach does not only approve of my existence as a human being, but more so of my being black and being African.

My true cultural identity has been infringed on by the many foreign attitudes, laws and customs whose sources have been introduced from elsewhere or developed and shaped by a colonial imposition. A primary example here is that of my parents, who at a certain stage of their lives, were forced to adopt new ways of survival. They gave me the Christian name of Isaac (according to the bible meaning he who laughs). My Zulu name Nkosinathi, culturally my first name, became my last name. Performing the ritual of 'bringing our ancestors', *ukulandwa kwabadala* or *ukulandwa kwabaphansi*, solved this dilemma.

On this occasion we went to the home where both my great grand parents and other family members had lived and died, the place of my first home, the residing place of my parents before they moved, searching for a better life.

I recall a moment where we had to communicate with our ancestors on their respective graves. Each of us present had to identify herself or himself with her or his name. Here I was confronted with the very real importance of correct naming. If death means a reconnecting with one's ancestors, then knowing my true identity by that naming is vital. Right naming signifies acceptance into the company of the ancestors.

All traditional African people have this in common, as for example Pat Nunn's story from Swaziland mentioned elsewhere in this writing. The 'songs of praise', which encompass the time from the present into the most distant past, recall, remind, and identify who one is and where one comes from. Art historians have continuously failed to identify black artists with their traditional names when documenting their artworks. To amend that I consider it an honour to now present that identity and accompany it with my own.

I am (Nkosinathi) Khanyile:

Ngwane

Mthiyane

Nqoba, Nqoba madoda

Salukazana saka Mthokazana

Velepheqe Velepheqe

Zondi

(Mother)

Nondaba
Gagashi
Lunqe
Mhlabushile
Zondi ngokuzonda unogwaja
Nina bakwa Nyawana zimhloshana
Bakhwekhwethe
Manyoni (Mkhulu Grandfather)
Mlotshwa
Nina bakankomo ezidle'khaya
Zaswela umelusi
Mchobosa
Mafuyanduna
Nina baka Msumukazana kaManyosi
Nanesangweni ungawusika uwubhaceke
Mbhali
Mlotshwa
Madondo (Khokho Great Grandfather)
Nzimande
Nqukle
Amaguma angaphesheya kwegqila
Abangawudli umbilini,
besab'izis'ukuduma
Bangaweli ngezibuko
Abawela ngezimpambosi zomfula
Mgwenya obomvu ongaphesheya kwegqila
Nzimande.

The importance of cultural identity is that there as a constant reminder of who my
 ancestors are; their teaching shapes the way of relating to others, controls hereditary
 duplication, dictates which foods can be eaten and which must be avoided, how I must

respect myself and my ancestors. The information contained within these praises is the absolute foundation of identity and place within both my life and death.

It is my female ancestors who most deeply influence my sculptural art forms. Credo Mutwa's writings were influential in this realisation. He informs us that our African history has been shaped and even controlled more by women than men and that women occupy a higher rank in our society than men. "Past kings like Shaka were controlled by women, In the case of Nandi his mother, It was Ukabayi, the 'Aunt' of Mbopha and King Dingana who passed the final sentence of death upon Shaka (Credo Muthwa; 509).

Since I am an artist directly informed by personal dreams and visions, it is these that generate the forms, colours, structures and shapes, the very meanings of my imagery. Making tangible that which has only existed previously through a dream, or a vision, is an important fact to be considered in any understanding of my visual arts practice.

This ability to perceive and interpret dreams and visions is given the name of divination, and thus I am named a diviner. There are times when I receive a flow of poetic lines, a flow of visionary images; times when interpretation of events affecting other people confront me without obvious reason. Intuitive comprehension of issues involving individuals without any prior communication with those persons have been profound experiences for me. A visible link between those effects and my artistic forms becomes apparent as situations unfold.

In dreams I am flying from one place to another. Seeing people, speaking to people. I arrive at deep dams where I see people far beneath the surface. People who are not visible speak from behind me telling and showing me of others whom I will meet. Ever since I was a young boy I always wanted to have my hair plaited, until I had to learn to plait them without being assisted. My mother advised me to do so when the feeling came, but I should not allow anyone to touch my hair. Later in my life I began to dream about people with very long plaited hair. At times I dream about very old people, who have died a long time ago and yet in my dreams I tend to communicate with them. I

have dreamed of hurricanes and stormy seas that rose and covered the lands. I have been shown hidden secrets about things that have happened in the past.

Beyond that I am often told by others that I was present within their dreams and represented as a diviner or in the role of a healer using traditional African herbal medicine. A person was able to describe my home life through their dreams though they had never been present within the household.

My own mother was an *isangoma*, a diviner, for many years. In the preparation of different medicines all her children would be involved. However it is my elder sister and myself who have profound visions and dreams. My mother interpreted individual reactions to these visions and either directed a further specific ceremony or referred us to another diviner (*isangoma*) for more clarity.

The relevance of dreams and visions which I experience, and their influence on my being charged to divination, is echoed by other diviners from regions (recently this was prophesied by spiritual healers I met in Western Australia) where I have travelled and resided. It is difficult to communicate such a charge to others in so many words as their secrets reside within the learning, which may not be revealed.

In Western Australia I was introduced to a rural research worker, Roger Woods, who has spent time in Africa and is committed to the causes of better education, health and women's issues in rural Africa. After only one meeting he wrote a poem for me which I later used in one of my works Dreams and Visions, exhibited in Australia.

That poem was The Healer, dedicated to *Nkosinathi Khanyile* from *Roger Woods*.

His eyes shine through the depth
Of generations of women
Who see and understand

His hands glow with warmth
With the touch of creation
Giving connection to others

His body radiates an intimate
Masculinity and humanity
With female sensitivity

His presence occupies any
space and transforms it into
a sacred healing place.

He is a healer of peoples
men, women, nations
divining broken lines.

As diviner he taps the divine
root of all humankind
Making it whole.

He reconciles the fractured
Souls, hopes and visions in
A river of new hope and life.

His healer's eyes see beyond the
Shallow waters of the trivial,
His hands shape new possibilities.

Head, hands, heart - he crafts from
Africa's ancient alchemy
A balm of hope and love.

To even investigate this subject of divination within these writings is an issue that I am not totally knowledgeable about. The difficulties to be overcome through the process of becoming a diviner are many and at times in the extreme. For this reason, of many people called, most resist such a calling. For myself I have accepted it. However, I went through a ceremony that helped to calm it down, so that it doesn't totally take control of everything. At the same time my being an artist has given this divining energy a channel to flow through my art making. Thus it becomes through art making that I shall be a healer.

The materials I choose to combine within my art making have associations with traditional healing and it is the influence of divination energy which presents those choices to me. Grasses, beads, cow dung, horns, ochre and clay each have their place and function in healing (Figures 28-29). Their relevance as art materials is more than

Figure 28 Isaac Khanyile, OH MY COUNTRY, MY PEOPLE, MY CHILDREN'S CHILDREN, grass, terra cotta, beads, feathers and herbal medicine, 2000.



ISAAC NKOSINATHI KHANYILE

their physical properties; it includes what each represent within the African tradition.

These materials often mistakenly carry the reputation of being retainers from the past, used by illiterate and superstitious people. Nyamende (1993:23) states:

"A misconception placed upon the full meaning of them (materials), their contemporary use carries their original intent and extends it further".

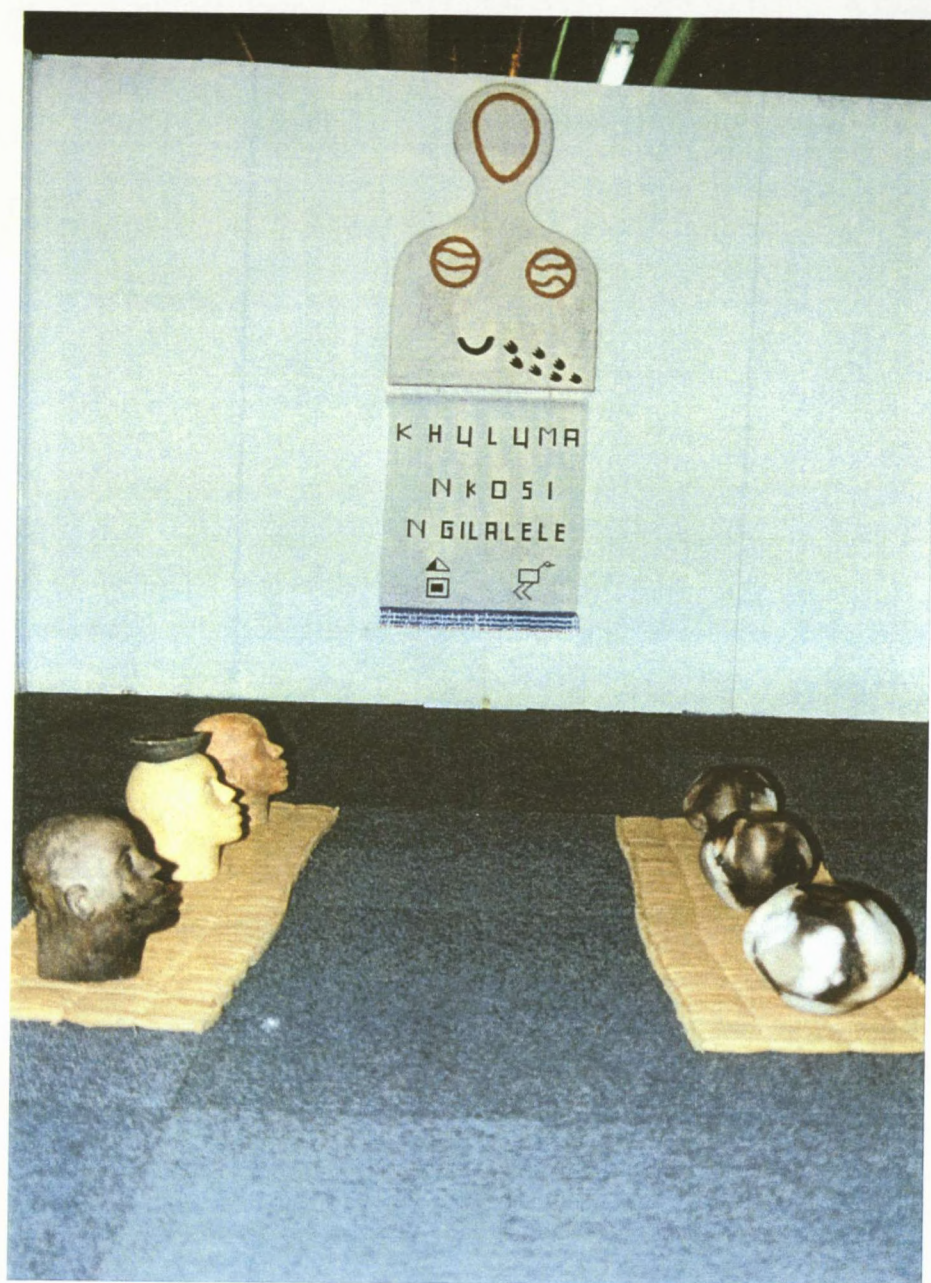
It is the intention within my artworks to portray an African visual language; a force, which is concealed to many, but which strives to bridge the gap between past and present. Through visionary imagery, which exists as the foundation of my work and which was similarly utilised by my ancestors, I stand as a messenger that flies from the core of 'ubuntu', the source, directly into the future. (Figure 29), Candidate's work, 2000). The complex language contained therein is largely unrecognised and often African art specialists or journalists looking at my work impose generic interpretations on it, as a result of the erosion of traditional knowledge by elements of Western civilisation.

I see the need for African people to realise who they are. To this end I am a combination of all my ancestors who have preceded me and those who will exist beyond me. The dilemma of existing within the two distinct cultures, the Western and the African caused extreme hardship for me. However, today I have learnt to convert this condition into positive results.

My double task is to receive clear visions, translate them into visual artworks faithfully, not compromising their intent, whilst at the same time making them accessible as a language which carries credibility to all peoples everywhere. Therefore to appreciate

Figure 29 (Wall piece) Isaac Khanyile, KHULUMA NKOSI NGILALELE, 2000, 160cm x 100cm, wood, recycled paper, clay, acrylic paint, metal and beads.

(Floor piece) Isaac Khanyile, ANCESTORS 2, 1999, Human scale terra cotta heads, beer or medicine Zulu pots and grass, Artist's Collection.



and interpret the full meaning and value situated within my work an understanding of both the historical, traditional and personal background attributed to my life must be considered. This imposed Western definition has failed to understand our ancestral language, has failed to enter our visions and our dreams, which are at the very centre of our cosmological beliefs and survival as fulfilled human beings.

Female figures, both naturalistic and abstract, connect my sculpture to my mother who was left to raise her seven children after the premature death of my father (Figure 30). She is a woman with ancestral spiritual powers and, beyond her, there is a revelation that these forms indicate a calling for myself to become a diviner in the future.

Therefore working with female figures, whilst being a man, is a manifestation of the ancestor who may be that forerunner in my divination calling. Interpretations focusing on the sexuality and male / female romantic issues attached to these figures fall far short of their real meaning, and reveal the error of a contemporary Western assumption. It is important to be aware that not all my figures are female, in certain installations there have been combinations of both male and female, and often the specific gender is elusive. The focus is not on sexuality, but rather on spirituality (see previous images).

The male diviner trainee or professional can be seen wearing a skirt, in most cases a red skirt trimmed with white beads. This covering connects the wearer directly to the major ancestral power. The power or energy of my dreams connects me with my ancestors who are leading me to divinity, which I serve to fulfil through teaching and healing for others and myself.

The images that I create are related to supernatural powers which are beyond the understanding of ordinary man. My background as an individual is both 'different' from

Figure 30 Isaac Khanyile, AFRICAN QUEEN SERIES FROM NUMBER 4 TO 8, 1999, Human scale female torsos, beads, Zulu ear plugs, recycled paper and metal, Artist's Collection.



others, yet is also the same as all others. These figures are not about physical woman, but about me, myself and the non-physical energies that connect me with all human beings. The inner-self seeks to be emancipated from the self into the 'world', which includes 'otherness'. The world has treated me as the 'other', where my life, my existence, my blackness constructs itself as a target. Foreigners in my motherland 'Africa' imposed an apartheid system designed to separate African people from their roots and their African dignity, to direct a force of racism and inequality towards that target. My artwork attempts to recover the strength and dignity of our human values as they were in pre-colonial times. Therefore, to understand more fully where my artwork is situated, one must grasp not only my present socio-economic and political circumstances, but also the privilege of being black and African and the impact my work has on the black community.

The strength of my art lies in its ability to heal and effect positive changes to communities globally rather than existing to invite Western perceptions about its meaning and values de Villiers (1998:21) states:

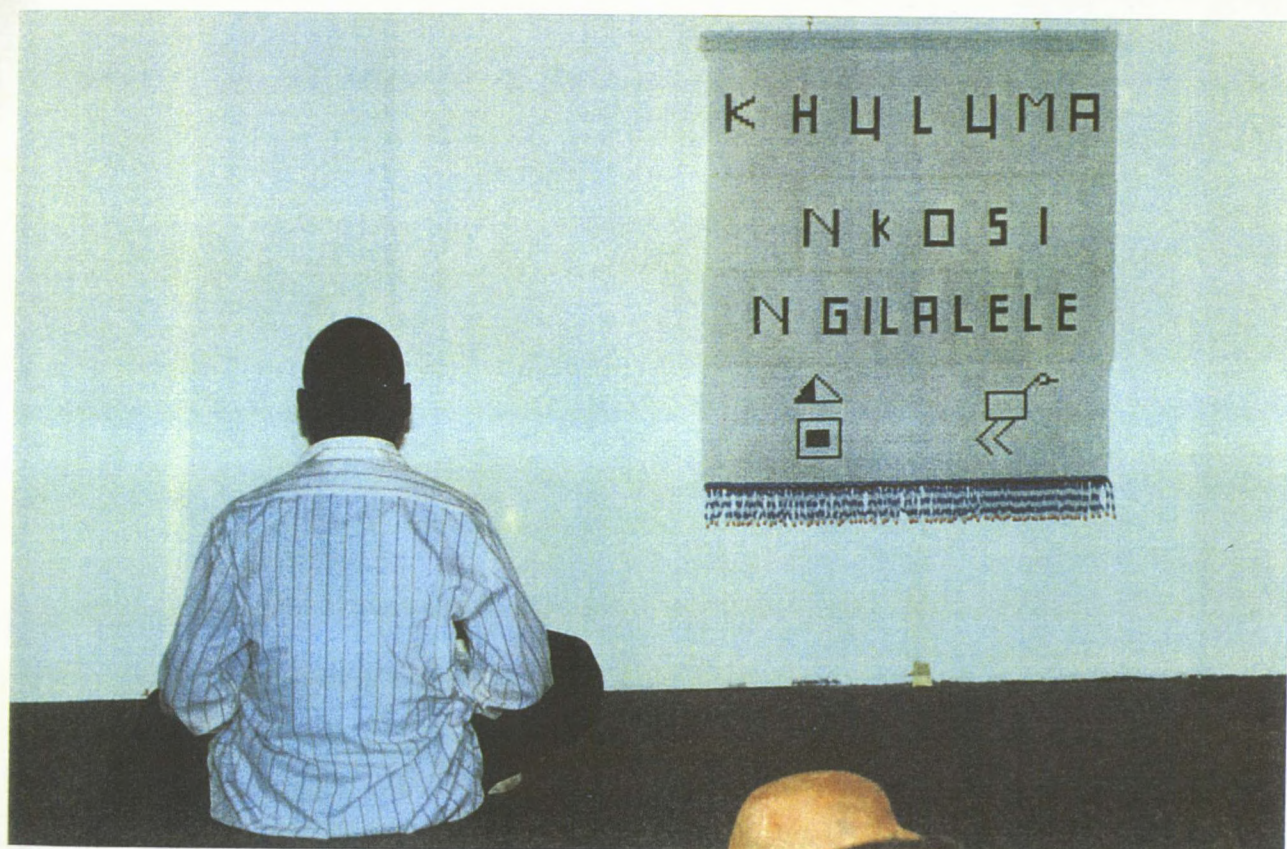
In the stasis of the objects Khanyile captures a quiet strength. This gives the work a sense of immeasurable strength. The work speaks to the soul and also calls for a deeper connection to the inner self-leading to a state of meditation, which is thus provided by the space around which the objects are positioned. There is a strong sense and symbol for becoming a diviner and reflection for the higher energies and ability to heal where both the artists and the viewers are subjected to this condition to be healed by using the artwork as a magical or healing object.

The work titled Khuluma Nkosi Ngilalele, 2000 (Figure 29), is a wall piece which was part of a large installation. Here it is seen with the floor piece titled Ancestors 2, 1999, consisting of three heads and three Zulu traditional medicine vessels, which contain Zulu traditional herbs. The ceramic head in the middle is used as a container to burn

Zulu incense. Both these art works became an altar piece. The photograph was not posed or arranged in any manner. It is one of many images which were taken during the art exhibition, where numerous people from different religions and diverse backgrounds reacted to the installation, by using the exhibition space as a meditation space. This work came about as a vision or dream where I came across the most holy person I have ever dreamed of before. I believed right at that moment that it was God. It is from that moment of belief that I said these words "Khuluma Nkosi Ngilalele", which could be translated as "Lord, speak I am listening". The meditation process whereby the viewer reflects on the work becomes the same process I had in my dream. The viewer is using a similar meditative journey to become one with, or be connected with, his ancestral spirits; with his God(s) and with his soul.

Sangomas use a similar meditative process in order to foretell people's illnesses and the way to cure them. I believe it is such an immeasurable spiritual strength that invites and empowers individuals to connect deeper into their inner selves. There have been numerous mystical occurrences whereby certain individuals came and requested help with their personal problems (see Figure 31). Such events were not documented since everything happened intuitively, as we have seen with the image mentioned above. The photographic image now stands as a testimony of the spiritual strength behind my work. There have been many other healing incidences that varied from people who received medical treatment, to those who received advice on their personal problems. The latter are incidences that occurred intuitively and the person was told of her present life situation without her or him informing the candidate.

Figure 31 Isaac Khanyile, KHULUMA NKOSI NGILALELE, Photo by I. Khanyile, 2000, 2m x 1m, Photographic image on Canvas, Private Collection, Western Australia.



At times the cure was derived from the exhibited art works. At one stage, during the same exhibition in Cape Town mentioned above, I used and prescribed incense (*impepo*) for a young patient who suffered from skin-sores, and also to use it as a drinking and application medium. Like Credo Mutwa (1996: 23) I am also blessed with a very strange gift ; the gift that does not only bring me visions, but that makes me see things before they happen, and reveals the reasons why such things happen. The process of consultation has been an informal situation, always personal and private, thus I will not be in a position to give further names or formal references of the people involved. I intend that the work has power to air its voice about itself and its maker without the suppression of misinterpretations. That voice is the language of healing and transformation based on the enhancing spirit of *ubuntu* (humanity) and unity among all nations.

Living within an oppressive apartheid system laid the foundation that gives me courage to seek ways and means to begin an initiative; to preserve, re-evaluate and record our own traditions, to be a role model to our younger generation in instilling a sense of respect, pride and dignity in our community. Practicing as a visual artist and teacher is the cornerstone of that initiative. "Credo Mutwa's grandfather was a *sangoma*. As a child he carried his own grandfather's medicine bags full of traditional medicine and sacred objects, to ceremonies. As an adult he pursued a teaching profession then showed a proclivity for art, particularly sculpture, and still later was called to become a *sangoma*." (Larsen 1996; 21).

As children, my younger brother and I would be asked by my mother, then a practicing *sangoma*, to carry her bags to ceremonies and to prepare medicine for her patients.

Today my mother, who married my late stepfather in a traditional manner, no longer practices as a *sangoma*. She has returned to the Christian faith she followed as a young woman before she became a healer.

Despite becoming a teacher of Geography and the Zulu language I was always drawn to the arts. Now as a professional visual artist there is also a steady journey, one that is recognised by many diviners as a calling towards the task of divination. Within three years of fine arts study I had started to make heads, and was seeking a way to express the spiritual desire that were confronting me. In painting self-portraits my head and shoulders seemed to be floating above the landscape. This may subconsciously represent the many dreams of floating or flying from one place to another I have experienced.

This installation was triggered by a dream wherein I saw my grandmother and grandfather. It was situated in a land where I was searching for them. Going from house to house inquiring as to their whereabouts. I met a person who showed me an old house apparently where they were. I entered the very old place; it had a corrugated iron roof that had cracks in it. It was inside, though through the cracks rays of light shone down; tiny particles of dust were floating in the beams. Inside I searched, entering another room where I found my grandmother and grandfather sleeping on an old bed. They were covered by a blanket of spider's web.

My Grandmother's wrinkled face appeared older than my Grandfather. Both of them resembled Egyptian mummies so tight was their skin over the bones of their faces, their

colour close to the mixture of red and yellow ochre, earth colours. I knew immediately from this that they were dead. Unafraid, I ran to my grandmother and embraced her crying. This distressed crying awoke me and still I was weeping. No words had passed between us to cause this, but suddenly my heart was filled with a sorrow that I had never felt before.

Credo Mutwa (1996:4) wrote, recounting his dreams of meetings with great grandparents "I began to have visions of people, very old people, grey and wrinkled people, people who spoke things to me which I could not understand".

I have had visions, sometimes of fearsome animals, which mutate into people, both known and unknown to me, monstrous figures becoming human giants or ordinary people, being chased by visionary figures intent on killing me, and being unable to escape because of a leadened body. Almost at the point of capture, I suddenly rise and fly as a bird. In slow motion I rise above houses and hills flying till I land safely away from my enemies. I land easily and comfortably, gliding down like a duck onto water without causing a splash.

Daytime visions come in many ways and cause great unease to me. Voices in my ears speaking of people I am about to meet. Elongated objects, a piece of cloth or metal, a stick, which evolves into a snake. An empty room I may enter seems to contain a snake and I must search for it before the feeling dissipates. To understand such visions I seek translations and interpretations from my mother, family *sangomas* and healers.

Each accredits them to my ancestral spirits. I record these translations for later use in my sculptures. Credo Mutwa (1996:23) writes, "I have been cursed with a very strange

gift. The gift of seeing things before they happen". Similarly I have been confronted with situations where on speaking to a person there comes a moment when I suddenly see through him, or her, and speak of things I had no prior knowledge of regarding them. These issues shape and dictate my artworks. Meanings and connections to people may inform me of deeper and more complex issues associated with both theirs, and my past, present and future existence.

This grasp of knowledge is important when dealing with much South African art and which should include the documentation of cloth and bead sculpture. Writers, predominantly white, have access to education in their mother tongue and are positioned to make interpretive decisions on what, how and for whom to write. However, rural indigenous people in South Africa without access to proper education, are often illiterate even in their mother tongue. These people in the majority have had no consultation on, or dialogue with, what has been written about their art, and have to rely on oral Education.

Even later after the event, they have been unable to comment on any interpretation that has been made. The question arises as to when shall the artist's own story become a priority. Non-engaged speculation by white writers, historians, and critics ignores so much of the artist's intent. This indicates that the need for a thorough knowledge of the artist's background is essential and accurate writing is to be presented, especially in multi-cultural contexts.

For example van der Walt (1999: 3) writes of my works:

"Khanyile moves away from the figurative tradition towards the abstracted and sophisticated works which are still African in reference. Drawing on traditional Ndebele patterns and forms which in some way, evoke a feeling of African landscape"

Stevens (1999: 29) notes of my works (Figure 32):

"There is an innovative use of material: recycled and reworked paper pulp barely dusted with chalky colour and in their use of abstract shape and pattern. It appears that circles, anvil shapes, or cones carry pictographs to evoke South African history and pre history, such as palm prints reminiscent of Bushman art or Ndebele like pattern. His art works have a magical, talismanic quality, and are about Africa in a sophisticated, conceptual, but never illustrative way."

Though the writings of these journalists allude to the spiritual qualities of my artworks, they fall short of fully understanding them. There is a relationship to Ndebele patterns and San (Bushman) art present in some cases, but it is the shapes and forms whose meanings escape those writers. To interpret the forms as phallic or as representations of fertility symbols is also inappropriate. There has long been an interpretive conclusion that African sculptures predominantly refer to fertility, or imitates the form of sexual organs. Often the importance of mysticism is overlooked.

There is the argument that a work of art speaks for itself and the viewer has the right to interpret (write) as he or she reacts within the scope of their own knowledge, tastes etc. Yet this can lead to incorrect statements, misleading views, critiques and terminologies that develop during this process of naming, defining and categorising. This speculation tends to alter and negate the meanings intended by the artist. The language that is physically expressed by my installations (and by other African works of art) is as important as the personal verbal expression that accompanies the work of art; it indicates story telling within a cultural tradition.

deVilliers (1998:21) writes;

One cannot help but be moved by the mystical, mysterious works by Khanyile. Perhaps (they) are more mysterious to the Western mind than the African, or perhaps the way he fuses Western art-making perspective's with African materials, techniques, imagery and traditions ensures that this work exudes

Figure 32 Isaac Khanyile, WE ARE NOT ALONE, 1999, 180cm x 100cm, wood, recycled paper, red clay, ink, horns and beads, Artist's Collection.



mystery for Africans as much as Westerners. One first impression when looking at the long conical basket suspended against the backdrop of the invitation is that of a phallic symbolism. But that would be a facile interpretation. Seen in their actual scale, and viewed in conjunction with the title, other view of the twelve towering pillars crafted out of ilala grass, clay beads and cow dung becomes clear.

In the stasis of the objects, Khanyile captures a quite strength and indestructible strength. This gives the work e sense of immeasurable strength. The work speaks for the soul

The writer saw twelve pillars taken from an installation of about sixty . Each of these pillars symbolises the varied individuals that make up African humanity, appearance not just "womanhood" as expressed by deVilliers (1998: 21) in her commentary.

I wrote (Khanyile ,1998) :

My work tries to bring about a message of hope and spiritual healing which does not focus on Western or Eastern ideals of religion. It is influenced by traditional belief in African culture, as diverse as it is, and more specifically Zulu culture and customs. I subscribe to the view that although African art is also fine art, but it goes far beyond that. I combine traditional and contemporary (Western) techniques indicating that our art is not static, also to try and bring about contemporary elements which afford installation options.

Wathint' Abafazi Wathint' Imbokodo (Figure 33-34) is an installation, which stands as a symbolic monument to celebrate the African renaissance. The concepts of *umuntu*, *ubuntu* and *isintu* are the foundation of African identity. Tumelo Mosaka (1998: 4) wrote "*Isuntu* is the collective experience a way of life in Africa that is influenced by cultural, political and economic forces, and is about the direction that incorporates African culture as a reference point to articulating human experience."

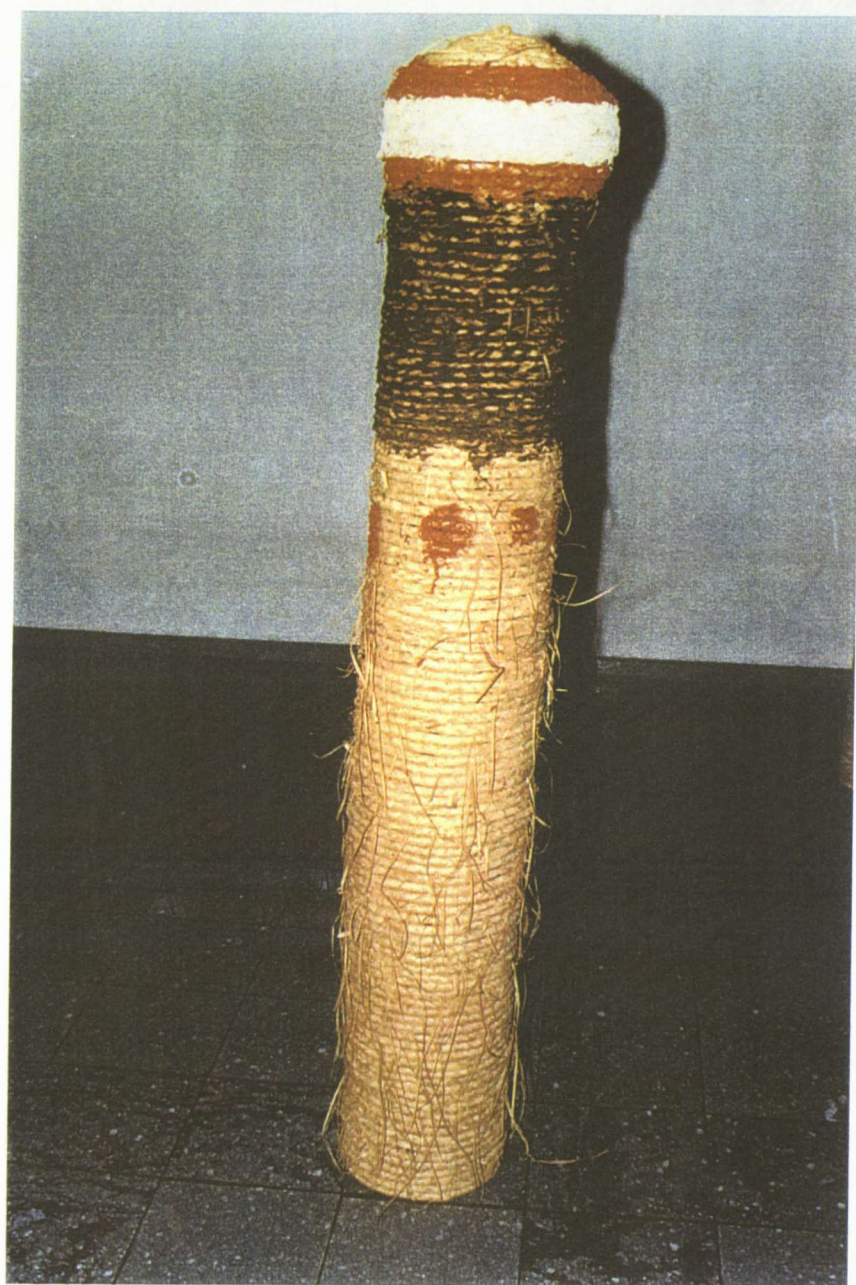
Wathint' Abafazi Wathint' Imbokodo is a reflection of the united front of black women.

A political stance equivalent to 'you touch one you touch all'. Put simply, interfering with black women was a declaration of war. An example of this is the politically united

Figure 33 Isaac Khanyile, WATHINT' ABAFAZI WATHINT'
IMBOKODO, 1999, 2m-red and white clay, cow dung, wire and
grass, traditional herbal medicine, hippopotamus's skin, Private
Collection and Artist's Collection.



Figure 34 Isaac Khanyile, WATHINT' ABAFAZI WATHINT'
IMBOKODO, 1999, 2m-red and white clay, cow dung, wire and
grass, Artist's Collection.



stand black women took against the carrying of passes during the apartheid rule. The upright position and standing together of the pillars affirms the notion of 'ubuntu' which denies individualism, whilst favouring community and unity.

This artwork strives to represent the 'new South Africa', a key solution to Apartheid's past history. The standing together of pillars, or totem poles, suggesting the working together of a group of women artists to make possible this visual unity. It calls forward praise for black women, for their emancipation and holistic empowerment, especially those in rural areas. It points to the possibility of social, political, economical and educational empowerment of the underprivileged rural community of women through art. It refers to a recognition of their existence and their right to fully participate in nation building.

The exaggerated form and shape of the pillars reflect traditional African figure sculpture, the basic cone and cylindrical form echoed by the circular form and movement found in Zulu grass woven huts. The pillars with enlarged cylindrical tops follow the shape of a Zulu women's headdress (*isicholo*). The surface texture of the pillars comes from the basketry-weaving pattern and the coiled nature of African ceramic beer vessels. When making this installation, my intention was to create a monumental figure that pays tribute to all political prisoners who stood together against the inhumane injustices of the apartheid regime, especially the black women activists. Unity is becoming the powerhouse to cure those past traumas and acts as a generator for reconciliation and peace in this country. Presented within a given space its sheer size confronts the viewer. The encircling of pillars overwhelms a viewer standing amongst them. Similarly, they evoke a sense of belonging to, and becoming one of the totems, giving strength and

power through the national community. Read spiritually it is the symbol of the sacred mountain, the church where God, ancestral spirits and humanity reside. The height and shape of the pinnacle represents the antennae connecting heaven and earth. The layout marks a sacred space for meditation and prayer that serves to connect the artists who made them to those who view them. It brings to the senses a specific ceremonial occasion within the structural network of African religious practice.

It represents a deep spiritual ceremony in which my ancestors celebrate the talent and achievement of my forefathers, which manifests itself through me. Where the artist is not the creator, but is the tool or messenger, sent to fulfil a specific spiritual task on earth. Its outcome is a visual celebration capable of giving healing power to all that read it. It is a construct given to the artist in the form of dreams and visions that speak of the past, present and future.

Cultural identity is indicated through the materials used in the construction of the artwork; grass, clay, glass and plastic beads and cow dung. Coloured clay is smeared onto the surface connecting the beadwork. Those clay colours indicate specific symbolic aspects of African culture. Tumelo Mosaka (1998:5) states that *isintu* "is a philosophy of life, that is in keeping with the identity of African. This identity is shaped by an experience of dis-empowerment rather than a racial divide. *Isintu* frames cultural practices and thoughts within an African perspective promoting Black Consciousness."

Included in the installation Amagugu AKwaZulu (Figure 35) are white beaded strips attached to a woven mat. Zulu words and patterns in black beads, worked into the strips, read *amagugu*, *akwazulu*, *ukuhlonipha ukhamba*, *isidwaba* and *amathwasa*. The use of

Figure 35 Isaac Khanyile, AMAGUGU AKWAZULU, 1996, 2m x 1m,
beads, grass and recycle paper, Artist's Collection.



recycled paper pulp instead of traditional clay to make large rounded white pots suggests a link between the West and Africa. The pots are placed on *Inkatha*, beaded rings usually worn on the head to support the pot whilst it is being carried. *Inkatha* also refers to the notions of unity among people gathered around the beer pot whilst drinking. It further propagates the idea of a 'halo' signifying spiritual upliftment of the pots placed upon them, indicating a high intention.

Similarly, so many things are rounded, the Zulu kraal, men drinking beer, rounded head rings worn by kings like Cetshwayo, and the cosmology of Africa. The circle indicates a certain spirit. The placement of the head rings and beer pots in this artwork alludes to the poetic meaning of the beaded words. *Ukuhlonipha* speaks of respect for ancestors and other human beings. A drop of beer is spilled on the earth within the beer-drinking circle to include others as a symbol of sharing. *Amathwasa* are those who enter initiation to become *sangomas*. Respect for traditional African education giving knowledge of the past and future is represented here. *Isidwaba* is the leather skirt worn by married women who gave birth to the Zulu nation. The connection between the husband and wife's ancestors, which is marked by the change of her surname to that of her husband, marks the step from being an unmarried girl into the status of a matured married woman.

The fresh smell of *incema*, straw and the quiet colours of white, beige and a touch of black create a soothing atmosphere. The white of the beer pots elevates them to a spiritual realm; white intended as the purity of spirit. Colour and texture coupled with diffused light enhance the ambience of quietness and contemplation intended. Natural materials locate its proximity to earth. Placement at floor level encourages the viewer to

lean or bow low to appreciate the intent. Here one's body language then represents *abaphansi*, those on the ground. The name given to spirits.

The installation Amasiko Ma-Afrika Amasiko of 1996 (Figure 36) is a combination of Zulu beer vessels and heads made of terracotta. They form a semi circle on a grass mat (*ucansi*). A beer pot is placed in front of each life sized head. You end up on your haunches in front of them. Not only on one's haunches, but sometimes even on one's knees, ultimately paying full respect to the higher spiritual powers (*abaphansi*) (City Vision reporter 1998). That reporter on her haunches viewing the semi circle also completed the circle, thus joining my ancestors in their beer drinking celebration.

Amasiko Ma-Africa Amasiko won the 1998 Volksas Atelier Award 1996. This carried with it a residency and exhibition at the Cite International des Arts in Paris and included further travel to Germany and subsequent exhibitions there. Meijer (1996: 3) quoted Mr Starkey (then the head of the Fine Art Department, Technikon Natal) as saying "Winning the award is a tribute to Khanyile's persistence and development of a personal vision in the African context. He is a role model for all young art students in his disciplined and committed approach to his studies, his questioning of the status quo and his ability to marry art and craft. He will become an artist and a teacher of repute who will contribute to the creation of a truly South African Art".

The title Amasiko Ma-Africa Amasiko means culture; my Africa culture. de Beer (1996:41) says "The artwork reflected the artist's hopes for the future path of the country. It also stated that all of us in South Africa need appropriate culture in our lives. If it is the case that too many people are deprived of it, the country will ultimately suffer.

Figure 36 Isaac Khanyile, AMASIKO-MA-AFRIKA AMASIKO, 1996, 2m x 1m, Terra cotta human scale heads and Zulu beer pots, Collection National Museum, Pretoria .



The artwork Ancestors 1, 1995, (Figure 37) developed from my first installation of over thirty terracotta heads made in 1995. The thirty heads were exhibited on a layer of sand in an open room. In retrospect this represented the rising spiritual power of my ancestors and marked my own calling towards becoming not only an artist, but through art becoming a healer and a diviner. The heads were made to represent all of my ancestors from whom I evolved and from whom I shall go to. A dream previously mentioned where I met my sleeping grandparents covered with spider-web, was a revelation for me to search for those ancestors.

The power or spiritual energy of my dreams serves both as an intrinsic motivation for the documentation of them, and as a direct line of communication between my ancestors and myself. It is through this complex network of energies that I am involved with teaching and healing.

Kendal Buster (1995), a visiting American artist and lecturer, commenting on this installation of heads in a letter stated

"I see the hidden idea of life and death, the ancestral spirits, the power which evokes inner emotions. The sense of silent strong ancestors standing behind, and yet each a self-portrait. Not limited to physical particulars, but what is embodied, that which stands behind, holding, supporting, as line that reaches back and back and back. Internally being a multiplicity of those who have gone before."

The work titled Oh my Country, my People, my Children's Children (Figure 28) consisted of beads, *incema*, grass, Zulu herbal medicine, smoke fired terracotta *izinkamba* and beer vessels. They are used here to represent a mystical function, in which *sangomas* and herbalists use clay pots to hold medicine, in this case *ubulawu obumhlophe* a particular medicine, that connects the maker to ancestral spirits.

Figure 37 Isaac Khanyile, ANCESTORS I, 1995, Terra cotta, human size heads and female torso in cement, metal, recycled paper and Zulu (*impepho*) incense and Indian incense, Artist's Collection and Private Collection.



The medicine is mixed with water and beaten with a twig whilst verbally calling those ancestors by their praise. A white foam is produced which approves the connection. Later the medicine together with its foam is used by the patient for cleansing purposes.

The clay pots holding the medicine rest on three strips of parallel woven straw matting resembling *ucansi* grass mats. These extremely thick woven mattings are long and narrow. Their thickness serves to elevate the pots and the torsos from the ground, rather than function as traditional mats. They also represent the human body lying down, both in the form of invisible ancestors who provide through my dreams the medicine and power to become a healer, and the spirit of the patient needing to be healed. Each pot is carefully placed on different parts of the body where healing is desired. Beside each clay pot is a beaded label stating the name of the medicine contained within. The beaded words indicate the intention of beads and the western language of formal education. A universal communication possible through the use of the alphabet. The material presence of beads suggests a secret language exclusive to healers. Beads represent a form of medicine with divine powers. All *sangomas* and traditional healers incorporate this medicine into their practices.

Lauren (1999:5) in commenting on this work states that,

"A central totemic clay figure resembling an all knowing sangoma presides over the collection. The work entices participation and one is forced to engage with its special dimensions in order to peruse and ponder the contents of each vessel. Yet it also appears to offer healing. This piece is a fresh thought provoking fusion of traditions, both European and African. Its magical power is not confined to what the viewers see with their eyes, but is what they feel in their hearts and souls."

Burning incense can be smelled even before one enters the installation site. Traditionally incense is used by *sangomas* to aid in connecting to the spiritual world. When a dark

quiet space is imbued with incense the diviner's sacred space is created. On entering a visitor must remove their shoes as the floor (earth) and surrounding structures become sacred. One must treat such a space reverentially. Every detail in my artworks carry within their forms, textures, colours, materials, placement, sound and light meanings which contribute to the interpretation of the total piece. As can be seen from this Chapter, without the knowledge of these meanings any discourse on it will fall far short of my intentions.

My artwork speaks for myself, Isaac Nkosinathi Khanyile: Who I am? What I will become? Where do I come from? Where I am going? The struggle to define my identity as a Black person, as an African in Africa. My role and position on this earth. My role as a healer and teacher and as an advocate for black artists of Kwazulu Natal (including the selected rural female artists in question) who have been denied their own voice for so long.

The candidate wishes to take this opportunity to recognise the following rural women artists who collaborated in the making of some of the works discussed in this Chapter.

- (1) Mrs Thembi Shozi
age 52
Ndwedwe (Emaphephethweni)
- (2) Thandiwe Agriette Mahlinza
age 52
Mtubatuba
- (3) Mrs Hlengiwe Buthelezi
age 25

Mtubatuba

- (4) Mrs Virginia Mthethwa

age 41

Mtubatuba

- (5) Ndota Sibongile Mkhwanazi (Mtshali)

age 32

Mtubatuba

- (6) The late Mrs Zungu Mandwandwe

age 55

Mdletsheni

- (7) Ntombitini Khumalo

age 52

Mtubatuba

- (8) Luthuli Vumeleni

age 50

Umgababa

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List of those interviewed

Name	Place	Date
Anonymous	Durban	12 March 1999
Mrs Tholani Mchunu	Isithumba	09 April 1999
Mrs Thembi Mchunu	Isithumba	09 April 1999
Mr Shozi	Isithumba	10 April 1999
Mrs Geinani Mchunu	Isithumba	10 April 1999
Mr Mchunu	Isithumba	11 April 1999
Mrs Babazile Mchunu	Isithumba	11 April 1999
Mrs Makhosi Ndlovu	Isithumba	11 April 1999
Mrs Beauty Ndlovu	Isithumba	12 April 1999
Group Discussion (with all the above artists)	Isithumba	12 April 1999
Mrs Mkhwanzi	Durban	20 April 1999

Miss Nalda Searles	W. Australia	26 March 2000
Anthea Martin	African Art Centre (Durban)	01 November 2000
Mr Shozi	Isithumba	10 April 1999
Miss Pat Khoza	Durban	16 January 2001
Miss Phumzile Dlamini	Durban	16 January 2001
Miss Lindiwe Nyathikazi	Durban	19 January 2001
Miss Cwengekile Cele	Durban	20 January 2001
Mrs Nelly Mgenge	Durban	22 February 2001
Miss Busi Mlotshwa	Durban	22 February 2001
Lindeni Ngcobo	KwaNgcolosi Group	28 July 2001
Zonzani Cele	KwaNgcolosi Group	28 July 2001
Beauty Pule	KwaNgcolosi Group	28 July 2001
Nomali Mabaso	KwaNgcolosi Group	28 July 2001
Mantombi Mzimela	KwaNgcolosi Group	28 July 2001

Nonhlanhla Mabaso	KwaNgcolosi Group	28 July 2001
Nombi Mazeka	KwaNgcolosi Group	28 July 2001
Cabanga Mabaso	KwaNgcolosi Group	28 July 2001
Mpumelelo Pule	KwaNgcolosi Group	28 July 2001
Funani Mabaso	KwaNgcolosi Group	28 July 2001
Babhekile Mabaso	KwaNgcolosi Group	28 July 2001
Celani Gumede	KwaNgcolosi Group	28 July 2001
Anthea Martin	African Art Centre (Durban)	13 September 2001
Juliet Armstrong	African Art Centre (Durban)	13 September 2001
Hlengiwe Dube	African Art Centre (Durban)	13 September 2001
Thafa Hlengiwe Dlamini	KwaMashu Township	01 November 2001
Ceaser Mkhize	KwaMashu Township	01 November 2001

Carol Sutton	Telephone interview (Hluhluwe)	27 November 2001
Frank Morawa	Telephone interview (Durban)	19 December 2001
Oscar Ngcobo	Morningside, Durban	03 January 2002
Margaret Daniels	Bat Centre, Durban	10 March 2002
Marissa Jordaan	Bat Centre, Durban	10 March 2002