

THE INFLUENCE OF THE FINE ART MARKET ON THE WORK
PRODUCED BY BLACK SOUTH AFRICAN ARTISTS (POST 1994)

THEMBALAKHE SHIBASE

DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

DURBAN

SOUTH AFRICA

JANUARY 2009

**THE INFLUENCE OF THE FINE ART MARKET ON THE WORK PRODUCED
BY BLACK ARTISTS (POST 1994)**

THEMBALAKHE SHIBASE

**DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT IN COMPLIANCE
WITH THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MASTERS DEGREE IN
TECHNOLOGY: FINE ART IN THE DEPARTMENT OF FINE ART, DURBAN
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY**

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

Thembalakhe Shibase

APPROVED FOR FINAL SUBMISSION

Mr. J. Roome

Date: January 2009

MAFA (Rhodes University)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the following people for their valued assistance in making this dissertation a reality: John Roome for his passionate guidance; Anthony Starkey in his capacity as the Head of Department - Fine Art, for his understanding and patience with me as a post graduate student and member of staff; and finally, the Durban University of Technology Library - City Campus staff, for their helpfulness in sourcing research material, patience and tolerance.

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the chronological relationship between the fine art market and the work produced by black South African artists since the emergence of a black urban class in the 1940s. It stems from the hypothesis that historically the art market had (and to some degree, still has) a major influence on the works produced by black artists in South Africa.

In the introduction I contextualized the title of this dissertation by discussing the definitions of the terminology which feature therein. In Chapter One I have contextualized the study by looking at the historical background (the pre-1994) of South African art. I have specifically looked at how the socio-political conditions of that time influenced the work produced by black South African artists, hence the emergence of Township Art and Resistance Art.

In Chapter Two I looked at the roles played by art institutions, galleries, and organizations in the stylistic developments made by black South African artists between the 1950s and 2000. The discussion of the influential role played by such informal institutions as Polly Street Art Centre, Jubilee Art Centre, the Johannesburg Art Foundation and many others on black artists forms a greater part of this chapter. Also included in this chapter is the discussion which examines the hypothesis that many black artists who do not have a formal academic background constitute a greater part of the informal art market. Tommy Motswai, Joseph Manana and Sibusiso Duma are examples of such artists and their work is discussed in depth. David Koloane, De Jager, Anitra Nettleton and other writers who have made literary contributions to South African art history, have been extensively cited and critically engaged in this chapter.

In Chapter Three I discussed contemporary perceptions of the formal art sector, particularly in the post apartheid period. In this regard I looked at what defines mainstream or high art and how it differs from the marginal forms of art which are discussed in the preceding chapter. In this discussion I looked at the work of Sam Nhlengethwa, Colbert Mashile and my own work. In my discussion of their work I mapped out the characteristics of contemporary mainstream art, focussing primarily on 2-dimensional art.

PREFACE

The following conventions have been applied in this dissertation:

- The Harvard referencing system.
- Double indentations and single spacing indicate direct quotations.
- " - " used for direct quotations within a sentence.
- ' - ' used to indicate titles of publications.
- Titles of artworks are written in italics within inverted commas.
- Illustrations are referred to both by their figure numbers and titles of the works they depict.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
PREFACE.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.....	vii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER ONE	
A REVIEW OF TOWNSHIP AND RESISTANCE ART.....	4
CHAPTER TWO	
THE SOUTH AFRICAN ART STRUCTURE: A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF THE ROLE OF ART INSTITUTIONS, ORGANIZATION AND ORGANIZATIONS (1950 - 2000).....	30
CHAPTER THREE	
THE MAINSTREAM ART MARKET: DEMAND FOR A CONTEMPORARY APPROACH TO ARTMAKING (PAINTING) - POST 1994.....	87
CONCLUSION.....	110
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	112

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- Figure 1. Gerard Sekoto, *Hotela Bantu*, oil on board, 1939.
- Figure 2. John Mohl, *Snow Morning, Sophiatown*, oil on board, 45 x 60 cm, 1942.
- Figure 3. John Muafangejo, *Windhoek People Pray for Peace and Love*, linocut, 34 x 34, 1977.
- Figure 4. Thami Mnye, *Let Us Support the Fight!*, Screenprint, 29 x 27.5 cm, 1982.
- Figure 5. Thomas Nkuna, *Amandla ilizwe iAfrika*, oil on canvas, 1989.
- Figure 6. Durant Sihlali, *The Green House, 2nd Avenue, Alexander*, watercolour, 1979.
- Figure 7. Ephraim Ngatane, *Soweto Reflections*, oil on canvas, 1970.
- Figure 8. Joan Miro, *Tic Tic*, oil on canvas, 1927.
- Figure 9. Wassily Kandinsky, *Improvisation No. 30*, oil on canvas. 1913.
- Figure 10. Louis Maqhubela, *Untitled (Abstraction)*, 1974
- Figure 11. Dumile Feni, *Man, Horse, Man*, black on paper, 21 x 22 cm, (undated).
- Figure 12. Tommy Motswai, *Happy Mother's Day, Mom*, crayon on paper, 54.2 x 74.7cm, 1989.
- Figure 13. Tommy Motswai, *Meeting Hello*, crayon on paper, 47.8 x 67.7 cm, 1990.
- Figure 14. Tommy Motswai, *The Artist Man Tommy and Evelyn, Children Lenyalo at Lake from Florida Park*, pastel on paper, 1991.
- Figure 15. Joseph Manana, *Lost Generation*, gouche on paper, 44 x 59 cm, 2004.
- Figure 16. Joseph Manana, *Learning to Ride*.

- Figure 17 Trevor Makhoba, *Don't Fall in Love at Night*, oil on board, 60 x 80 cm, (undated).
- Figure 18 Sibusiso Duma, *The Ghost*, gouche on paper, 75 x 125 cm, 2002.
- Figure 19 Sam Nhlengethwa, *Miriam Makeba and the SA Big Band*, collage and oil on paper, 2003.
- Figure 20 Sam Nhlengethwa, *Sharpville*, photo, collage, watercolour and pencil on paper, 1992.
- Figure 21 Colbert Mashile, *Untitled*, watercolour on paper, 2004.
- Figure 22 Colbert Mashile, *Legal 9 (Hot Charcoal)*, oil on canvas, (undated)
- Figure 23 Themba Shibase, *Reddish-Pink Circle*, acrylic and oil on paper, 2004.
- Figure 24 Themba Shibase, *Urbanization*, acrylic on canvas, 2006
- Figure 25 Themba Shibase, *Power and Military Might*, acrylic and charcoal on paper, 2008.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE FINE ART MARKET ON THE WORK PRODUCED BY BLACK ARTISTS (POST 1994)

INTRODUCTION

This study is based on the hypothesis that the fine art market has significant influence over the type and content of works produced by many contemporary black South African artists. It is primarily focused on artists working within the practices of painting and other related 2-dimension mediums. Whilst this study has great potential to be extensively broad, I have consciously chosen to focus only on painting and its related mediums. To a large extent, this decision is informed by the fact that this topic is directly pertinent to me since I am a black South African artist who mainly experiments with various 2-dimension mediums. In the context of this study's title the terms, contemporary, influence, and fine art market have the following meanings:

Contemporary

The dictionary definitions of this term are: living at the same time; of the same age; belonging to the same period; up-to-date; and modern (Cassell's Concise English Dictionary, 1992:280). In the context of this paper 'contemporary' assumes the definition, up-to-date, more than any other from the list of definition stipulated above. To further elaborate on its definition, contemporary has been used to define present time or to be more precise, 'today'. It should also be noted that, all of the artists referred to as 'contemporary black artists' in this paper were living and practicing artists at the period when this study was conducted. To a certain degree, the stipulation of 'post 1994' at the

end of this paper's title is intended to specify the time or period to which 'contemporary' alludes.

Influence

The Cassell's Concise Dictionary (1992:701) provides numerous definitions for the word 'influence'. Amongst those, the following allude to its meaning in the context of this paper: agency or power (upon) serving or tending to affect, modify or control; power to move, direct or control, ascendancy (over); the effect of such power.

Fine Art Market

The Fine Art market is an extensively broad term hence it is not possible to provide a precise and absolute definition for it. However, as a result of its frequent usage in art literature, symposiums, art talk, etc, there is a general conception of this term by art scholars and the art audience as defining the various activities of the fine art industry. Amongst these are: curatorship, gallery management, exhibitions, art criticism, to the very essential aspect of the fine art industry, i.e. formal and informal art education. For the purposes of this study the South African fine art market is discussed in context of both the pre and post apartheid eras. In this regard the study looks at how the selected artists are rated and categorized within the above mentioned periods. The role of institutions such as art schools, galleries, and media in rating artists will be closely examined.

In Chapter One I will contextualise the study by looking at the historical background (the pre-1994) of South African art. I will specifically look at how the socio-political conditions of that time influenced the work produced by black South African artists, hence the emergence of Township Art and Resistance Art.

In Chapter Two I will look at the roles played by art institutions, galleries, and organizations in the stylistic developments made by black South African artists between the 1950s and 2000. The discussion of the influential role played by such informal institutions as Polly Street Art Centre, Jubilee Art Centre, the Johannesburg Art Foundation and many others on black artists will form the greater part of this chapter. Also included in this chapter will be the discussion which examines the hypothesis that many black artists who do not have a formal academic background form a greater part of the informal art market. Tommy Motswai, Joseph Manana and Sibusiso Duma are examples of such artists and their work will be discussed in depth. I will map out typical characteristics of the informal art sector which are prevalent in their work. David Koloane, De Jager, Anitra Nettleton and a few more other writers who have made literary contributions to South African art history will be extensively referenced and their views critically engaged.

In chapter three I will discuss perceptions of the formal art sector, particularly in the post apartheid period. In this regard I will look what defines mainstream art and how it differs from the marginal forms of art which are discussed in the preceding chapter. In this discussion I will look at the work of Sam Nhlengethwa, Colbet Mashile and my own work. In my discussion of their work I will map out the characteristics of contemporary mainstream art (painting).

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 A REVIEW OF TOWNSHIP AND RESISTANCE ART IN SOUTH AFRICA: (PRE - 1994)

Township Art

It is virtually impossible to critically discuss aspects of contemporary South African art, more especially that of black artists, without a need to delve into certain areas of our recent art history. Township Art¹ and Resistance Art² seem to be the most logical aspect of that history in which to begin any study that seeks to unravel the complex nature of contemporary South African art and its status quo.

David Koloane (1999: 332) asserts in his paper titled 'The Identity Question: Focus of Black South African Expression' that the term 'resistance' effectively became synonymous with South African arts in 1982 at a conference held in Gaborone under the theme 'Culture and Resistance'³. Koloane further suggests that, '...it became evident that a culture of resistance had arisen in challenge to the apartheid system'.

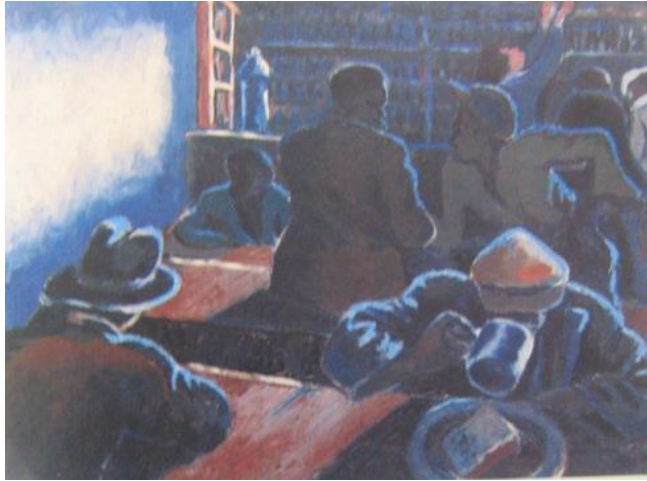
¹ Frances Verstraete (1989:152) defines Township Art as "a category of paintings and graphics in urban black art which emerged on the South African art scene in the late 50s and 60s". Various authors propose different dates of origin of this South African art movement or genre. Whilst the exact time of origin may be an uncertain subject, there seems to be consensus to the claim that the 1960s and 1970s was a period where this kind of art flourished or climaxed.

² Sue Williamson (1989:8) suggests that Resistance Art in South Africa assumed an explicit profile after the 1976 Soweto students uprising. In support of her claim she states that, "Before 1976, a trip around South African art galleries would have given very little clue to the socio-political problems of the country". Williamson implies in this statement that prior to 1976 South African Art did not explicitly portray the unjust and oppressive socio-political conditions in the country.

³ David Koloane is one of South Africa's leading artists and well-known international curator and critic. He has contributed critical commentary to several books and journals including *Seven Stories About Modern Art in Africa* and *Third Text* (Enwezor and Oguibe, 1999: 424).

The latter implies that this culture of resistance would have been initiated by those who had the most pressing need to realize the demise of apartheid, in which case, it would have been predominantly black artists. It should, however, be noted that traits of this visual activism can be traced as far back as more than two decades before the 1982 'Culture and Resistance' conference. The works of such artists as George Phemba, Gerard Sekoto, Ephraim Ngatane, Ernest Mancoba, and others from this era attest to this claim. Township Art became the common term accorded to the work produced by these artists. Often very indirectly, these artists assumed activist roles in the context of their time. De Jager (1992: 45), describes Township Art as a distinctive black artists' movement in South Africa which dominated the 1960s and 1970s as part of black South Africans' general awareness of identity in that period. Highlighting the context from which this art emerged, he explains that this was a time when black South Africans were totally disenfranchised of all political rights, a time when their human rights were totally denied and violated. De Jager then goes on to assert that black artists from different art backgrounds responded to this kind of oppression, and that, "...Township Art, by the very nature of its origins, invariably had to contain strong elements of protest" (De Jager, 1992).

De Jager's latter assertion provides one with a credible basis from which to assume that activism and protest were the principle conceptual characteristics of Township Art.



1. Sekoto, G *Hotela Bantu* 1939 Oil on Board 30 x 40cm

Perhaps, at this point we should refer to an example of a work produced in this era to test the validity of this assertion. Sekoto was amongst the above mentioned forerunners of this movement. In '*Hotela Bantu*' 1939 (figure 1), he figuratively portrays a scene with black men dining in what seems like a scruffy, black urban, low working class diner. There is limited lighting in the room, despite the strong beam of light focusing on the wall in the far left hand side of the picture. The source of this surrealistic light appears to be some sharp sunlight beaming through an unseen window on the imaginary opposite wall. The black diners in the hotel have been rendered such that their individual identities are not accessible, but possess a collective identity instead. A male figure facing our view in the fore right hand corner of the image has before him on a large plate, a not so titillating piece of bread. The larger portion of his face is hid behind a mug as he consumes its contents. Our view of the remaining small part of his face (particularly his eyes) is blocked by his hat. Sitting on the opposite side of the table but, at the extreme left, is another anonymous figure with his back against the viewer. He is also wearing a hat which denies the viewer access to his face. The inevitable question at this stage is why does Sekoto go through so much trouble to deny his viewer detailed access to the individualistic identities of the hotel's occupants?

If one is to provide a credible answer to this question, he/she should take into consideration other strategies or devices that have been employed by the artist in this piece to symbolically convey meaning. Many of such devices are already inherent in my above description of '*Hotela Bantu*'. One of those which may not have been mentioned, but is vital to this discussion is - the symbolic and or expressive use of colour. The overall dark-shadowy blue visual rendering of '*Hotela Bantu*' invokes a sombre emotional

response to this picture. The mood in the depicted environment is neither entirely subdued nor blissful. It invokes an ambivalent response to it. There is, however, an implied sense of shame in the gestures of the anonymous figures. May be this is what Sekoto wanted the viewer to take away with him/her from the picture, the subtly exposed impression of the deplorable and undignified place held by black people in the then divided South Africa. If we go by this view than it follows that De Jager's above suggestion that invariably all Township Art contained elements of protest is indeed acceptable.

An alternative view of '*Hotela Bantu*' would be that it was purely derived from the artist's desire to record his social and cultural surrounding without necessarily making critical political commentary. There could very well be some truth in the latter supposition, even though I personally prefer to go by the former.

Considering the fact that '*Hotela Bantu*' was painted in 1939, almost twenty years before the full blooming of Township Art, it therefore qualifies as a good example of work from the formulation stages of Township Art, particularly, painting. Attesting to this view, Frances Verstraete (1989: 154) suggests that Sekoto's scenes of urban life in District Six and Sophiatown are a prototype for later township art.

A comparative view of Sekoto's works and that of his earlier mentioned contemporaries clearly reveals that they had a common approach to painting. Subject matter is one aspect of their painting which highlights the most commonalities. Esme Berman (1993: 112) states of Sekoto's work that,

...he chose his subject matter from the scene around him: the backyards and ramshackle houses of Sophiatown; the pedestrian traffic along the dusty streets; a woman engaged in her domestic chores....

When listing these, Berman could very well have been listing the subject matter of works by Sekoto's contemporaries in painting such as Mohl, Phemba, and Ngatane for all of these artists paid particular attention to the very same subject matter. Mohl's '*Snow Morning, Sophiatown*' 1942 (fig 2), perhaps, best testifies to this claim.

In this picture Mohl depicts a morning scene in Sophiatown where two black female figures are in the midst of clustered houses. The two women appear to be involved in a conversation and typical suburban morning domestic activity. Smoke billows out of chimneys on top of surrounding houses which leads one to the idea that they might be chopping wood for the fire place to keep their families warm whilst preparing breakfast. The fallen snow adds to the overall lightness and romantic mood of this picture. Similarly to Sekoto's '*Hotela Bantu*', Mohl has denied the viewer detail of the two women's individual identities, only not by hiding their faces, but by placing them further back away from the foreground. Mohl has employed perspective as a strategy to deny us access to the two women's faces and because of this; they are recognizable only as black or African women. Sekoto employed the same strategy in one of his very popular pictures, '*Yellow Houses – a Street in Sophiatown*' 1940⁴.

What was further common in the work of these early township artists was the manner in which their subject matter was rendered.

⁴ Berman (1993:113) states of *Yellow Houses* that, "This picture differs from many of Sekoto's other Sophiatown paintings of the time in that the emphasis is on the setting, rather than on its human occupants". This work holds an important place in South African Art history because it was the first work by a black artist to be acquired into a museum collection.



2. Mohl, J *Snow Morning, Sophiatown* 1942 Oil on board 45 x 60cm

They depicted the above listed subject matter such that the scenes were romantically pleasant to the viewer. So pleasant and picturesque that one has to search deep for the subversive element in the works.

Logically, one supposes that work produced in the context of that time would have been depressing in nature or expressive of the inhumane and degrading conditions under which black people lived in the townships. This supposition is even more applicable if we assume the conception of an artist as a socio-political respondent or commentator. Contrarily, very rarely is this true in the context of the era in question. Surveying works from this period, one realizes that the latter supposition is not entirely true. As mentioned earlier, an overwhelmingly large body of work produced in the early part of Township Art portrays mundane and sometimes joyful moments in the township.

In cases where the subject is township dwellers, they appear rather indifferent to their situation. Themba ka Mathe, in his review of the exhibition titled 'Art and Urbanization' which was held in Johannesburg states the following regarding Sekoto's work featured in that exhibition...

For Sekoto, the everyday is the triumph of human spirit over the deplorable social and economic conditions he and hordes of other urbanized black people lived through in Eastwood and Sophiatown. Of course, Sekoto does not open his mouth when he speaks anymore. He was speaking to me through his two paintings '*Six Pence a Door* and *Women and Child*' (Mathe: n.d).

I am not suggesting that black artists from the above mentioned period ineffectively contributed towards the struggle against apartheid. Nor am I suggesting that their

contribution was less valuable in creating an awareness of the ill conditions under which black people were subjected to by the apartheid regime. I am, instead, suggesting that their protest against the oppressive regime was not largely explicit. It was more passive or subversive in nature. Attesting to this view, Mathe's earlier remark suggests that the works of such artists as Sekoto and his contemporaries placed emphasis on the 'triumph of human spirit over the deplorable social and economic conditions' under which they lived. Shedding some insight into this matter, Shaun De Vaal (n.d.) states in his article titled 'South African Art' that, 'Sometimes South African art seemed to float above the political issues of the day; at other times it tackled them with vigour and insight'.

The passive content in the works of these artists does not necessarily permit us to discredit or deny them their rightful place in South African art history, especially since they were so evidently influential to the generations of black painters who followed in their footsteps. However it does raise some important questions which I shall return to following my discussion of Resistance Art.

Resistance Art

When De Vaal in his above remark states that 'Sometimes South African art tackled the political issues of the day with vigour and insight', he could very well have been referring to a period commonly known as Resistance Art. This is a period in South African art history where the political content in most artists' works became very explicit. The 1970's leading up to the 1990's saw an intensified production of this kind of art. The 1982 Culture and Resistance conference mentioned earlier by Koloane seems to have

been the big inspiration in South African art production during this period. A common trait of this art is that it was generally aimed at subverting or undermining apartheid ideology and, to a large extent, commentating on the socio-political condition of that time. Coupled with this, Resistance Art was arguably used as an instrument to mobilize the masses into action against the apartheid regime. To elaborate on this point one could say that during this period of South African art, most artists (particularly black artists working in two-dimensional medium) explicitly portrayed the anxious socio-political condition in South Africa. After all it should be considered that, liberation movements such as the African National Congress officially encouraged cultural activism⁵. Attesting to this, Phil Molefe (n.d.) states in his paper titled 'Culture is Struggle's Weapon' that...

Responding to the paper entitled Preparing Ourselves for Democracy, delivered at the African National Congress leadership seminar earlier this year by Albie Sachs, the Cultural Desk said it did not think seeing culture as a weapon of struggle was "wrong", "banal" or "devoid of real content (1990: 21).

Artists working with all kinds of different media focused their creativity on denouncing the regime and calling on masses to intensify efforts towards the demise of apartheid. In this regard, printmaking gained a lot of popularity, especially amongst black artists. The reputable Rorke's Drift art centre in Kwa Zulu Natal (then Natal) had a huge influence in the spread of printmaking amongst black artists, though other mediums were also taught

⁵ To mount efforts aimed at increasing international outcry over apartheid in South Africa, the liberation movements led by the ANC turned to cultural activity such as the arts to conscioutise the masses in the country and international community. This effort took many forms. In the context of Visual Arts, major South African art exhibitions, conferences and festivals e.g. 'Zabalaza Festival' (1990 - London) were hosted abroad.

in this art centre⁶. Artists such as John Muafangejo, Azaria Mbabtha, Cyprian Shilakoe, Helen Sebidi and Thamsanqa Mnyele are amongst some very prolific black South African artists who, at some stage in their early careers were involved with Rorke's Drift in one way or the other; some as just students and others as both students who later became teachers in the same centre and elsewhere.

There could be varying suggestions as to why printmaking gained prominence amongst black artists at this particular time in history. Amongst these are the following: it is a more graphic form of art, it can be mass produced and it is arguably a cheaper and convenient medium for artists to reach out to a wide audience simultaneously. If one consolidates these ideas, it becomes quite possible to view this kind of art as poster art, especially if one considers the context in which artists who fall under this category used it. The number of artists who contributed in this regard is extensively large. To establish it in the context of this discussion would detract me from my topic. It is, however, worth mentioning that it could possibly begin with the early students of Rorke's Drift such as those mentioned above even though their denunciation and subversion of apartheid is less obvious, in a similar way to that of Sekoto and his contemporaries in painting. One should bear in mind the fact that these artists were, after all, trained by missionaries, hence Muafangejo's work, for a example, often depicted scenes from a religious background in his graphic works such as *'Windhoek People Pray for Peace and Love'*

⁶ According to De Jager (1992:85) the Rorke's Drift art centre was first opened as an art school for black artists in 1961 at Umpumulo in the then Natal, now KwaZulu-Natal. Two years later it was moved to what would be its permanent location at Rorke's Drift until its demise in the 90s [NB: currently, attempts are being made by various artists and organization to revive its art teaching activities]. De Jager also asserts that Peder Gowenius, a Swedish missionary was the man who was tasked with establishing this art school. The latter suggestion is worth noting because it highlights a significant phenomenon in South African art history; the role played by colonial missionaries in the introduction of western traditional art practices to black artists.

1977 (fig 3). This view prematurely attracts one's attention to the question of what influence/s did institutions like Rorke's Drift, Polly Street Art Centre in Johannesburg, and other community art centres have on the type of work produced by these artists. I shall return to this point under my next sub-heading.

It is important to note that as early as the mid 1960s Muafangejo had already introduced text in his work as a device to contextualize his pictures. He could also, arguably, have used this device as an aesthetic strategy. This strategy would soon be typically employed by most black artists who worked in the printmaking tradition in South Africa, though in a more literal fashion in works of such artists as Thamsanqa Mnyele and Judy Seidman.

In *'Windhoek People Pray for Peace and Love'* Muafangejo depicts a scene with people clustered together such that they are exposed only from chest up, except for the priest on the lower far left hand side of the picture. He, in his white robe, stands out more than all the rest in the crowd. The title of the work didactically reveals that this gathering is actually a prayer meeting. The words spelling the title of the work have been composed in circular format in the middle of the crowd, with the figures standing around it as if looking into the circle with three graphic depictions of crucifixes. Typical of most artists of that period who worked with relief-cut Muafangejo has employed the overlapping of figures as the only strategy to create an illusion of perspective in this piece. Despite his employment of this strategy the work still has a relatively flat and graphic feel to it. Intense contrast has been achieved by rendering people in the crowd in an alternating fashion between dark and light tones or black and white. This device to create contrast was standard practice in the tradition of relief-cut printmaking, a tradition which is still

common amongst printmakers who work with this medium today. Similarly to Sekoto, Muafangejo was clearly drawing his inspiration from his immediate surroundings, only in his case it was more than just that. His work was to a large extent influenced by his Christian outlook on life.

That same view to life, perhaps, explains why Muafangejo and many of his contemporaries would have been more subtle in their stance against apartheid. As already implied earlier, this passivity in the works produced by black South African artists was the norm until the late 1970s leading up to the decisive 1982 Culture and Resistance conference. The 1976 Soweto students' uprising was a major contributor towards this phenomenal change in artists' attitude towards their role in South Africa and in the struggle therein. Attesting to this sentiment Sue Williamson (1996: 8) states that...

Before 1976, a trip round South African art galleries would have given very little clue to the socio-political problems of the country. Strangely divorced from reality, landscapes, experiments in abstraction, figure studies, and vignettes of township life hung on the walls.

Artists in this era took a much more direct stance against apartheid. They, particularly those from townships, produced work that assumed the role of a tool or instrument to be utilized in the fight against apartheid. The once subtle images such as Mohl's *Snow Morning in Sophiatown*' (fig 2) in painting and Muafangejo's *Windhoek People Pray for Peace and Love*' (fig 3) in printmaking were largely replaced by images depicting angry people in the townships fighting the state police and army.



3. Muafangejo. *Windhoek People Pray for Peace and Love*
1977 Linocut
34 x 34 cm

The lively and picturesque township scenes which had once been a popular subject matter of such artists as Ngatane, Phemba, Sekoto and their likes now depicted township dwellers protesting on the streets; raised clenched fists (symbolizing solidarity); armoured police and military vehicles patrolling the streets blockaded with burning tyres, and other related subject matter. Images from this era clearly reveal that, during this time South Africa was at war and the front lines of that war were drawn on the streets of the townships. Mnyele's *'Let us Support the Fight'* 1982 (fig 4) is a good example of such work in the context of printmaking.

In this picture Mnyele has employed three distinct strategies which locate his work firmly within typical Resistance Art and they are: expressive use of colour, a figurative narrative and text. In the first he has expressively used a combination of only three colours: red, black and white. Red has been used to give the image a rather daunting mood of heat, pain, and conflict. Formalistically, it has also been used as a lighter which contrasts the black composition of the figures of the police and or military personnel, and that of the unarmed crowd made up largely of women with children on their backs. In the second strategy, Mnyele rather didactically depicts the state forces waving their rifles at this unarmed crowd of women and children who seem to be standing in defiance of the threat before them. In the third and very important strategy, he has incorporated text into his composition. The text has been incorporated such that it is part of the composition and not just super imposed over it. Close to the top edge of the horizontally elongated picture sits white text against a red background and it reads:



4. Mnye, T. *Let us all Support the Fight!* 1982 Screenprint 29 x 27.5 cm

LET US ALL SUPPORT THE FIGHT! On the bottom edge of the picture sits the boldest text in this composition (also white) and it reads, *NO TO RESETTLEMENT!* Immediately above this text lies the smallest line of text which reads, *INYANGA, KROMDRAAI CROSSROADS SOEKMAKAAR, THE PEOPLE SAY* (and then joins the line which reads 'no to resettlement'). Due to its graphic quality and the fact that it bears a clear text message, calling on people to join the fight against the oppressive regime, this picture clearly embodies the role of Resistance Art in the then troubled South Africa.

As mentioned earlier, printmaking became the most commonly used medium by many artists, especially in the townships. It should, however, be noted that the contribution made by artists in the fields of painting and other mediums also made its presence visible in that same period. Thomas Nkuna's '*Amandla ilizwe iAfrika*' 1989 (fig 5) embodies similar elements to Mnyele's '*Let Us All Join the Fight!*', except that in Nkuna's picture there is no literal text. However, the didactic narrative portrayed in the scene clearly has an equivalent weight to Mnyele's picture in its conveyance of meaning.

Other than an explicit oppositional stance against apartheid, Resistance Art differs from Township Art in that it is not exclusively accorded to black South African artists. It includes artists of different racial backgrounds. The list of non black South African artists befitting this category is endless. It includes such artists as Penny Siopis, Manfred Zylla, and Jane Alexander whose work, '*The Butcher Boys*' 1985-6 epitomized the role of art in the then politically tense and disgruntled South Africa.

It must be made clear that the emergence of Resistance Art did not entirely bring to end the production of works which assumed the nature of Township Art.



5. Nkuna. T. *Amandla ilizwe iAfrika* 1989 Oil on canvas

Traits of this kind of art persisted right through the 1980s and 90s to present day, wherein artists like Tommy Motswayi, Sibusiso Duma, Welcome Danca (the latter two being much younger and newer in the scene than the former) and many others are still vigorously producing work which can be viewed in the same light as Township Art.

Even during Resistance Art's climax in the 1980s, a period when artists (as discussed earlier) were very explicit in their work about their position against apartheid, there still were a number of black artists who produced work that represented the black subject in a docile manner. Shedding some insight into this view, Sue Williamson (1989: 8) suggests of black artists' production back then that, "Dependent on sales through art galleries to white market, black artists tended to produce carefully non-confrontational work – scenes of a jostling township life or traditional rural vistas". It should be noted at this stage that the ethos of this paper is based on this sentiment, and therefore I shall re-examine it further under the sub-heading entitled Art Market in South Africa to follow here under.

The earlier mentioned stereotyping locates the works produced by black South African artists in a generic realm of 'passive visual art protest' against white domination and oppression or simple depictions of township and rural scenery. As hinted above, in my opinion some traits of this stereotyping are still prevalent today. It should, however, be noted that the demise of apartheid diminished if not ended the context in which Anti-apartheid or Resistance art was produced.

Alluding to the above sentiment Sue Williamson (1996: 7) states in the introduction of her book titled 'Art South Africa' that, "...so profound has been the change on the level of aesthetic freedom since then that in the new South Africa of 1996 the idea of producing a

book devoted purely to the socio-political themes underlying the visual arts would seem absurd". Williamson made this remark twelve years ago, and back then it would have been only two years into a new democratic South Africa. In view of the time that has lapsed since 1996, it is fair to say that following the demise of apartheid South African art has been increasingly changing into much more than that which can be defined in simple terms. With the fall of apartheid, artists no longer had to speak in a communal voice. This newly realized freedom meant that they could now explore South African-ness from an anecdotal or personal point of view. The big question that faced all South Africans, particularly those who had been oppressed by the previous regime was what it meant to be finally free.

Earlier I remarked that art embodying common traits of Township Art survived through the 1980-90s, a period in our art history which saw art take a firm and clear stance against the apartheid regime and that this kind of art is still present today. Based on this, it is quite clear that this kind of art enjoys some kind of 'sustained' market.

The two most important questions (in the context of this research paper) which arise from this discussion are: *who were the patrons of these artists and to what extent and/or in what way did patronage influence what they produced?* These questions have been the centre of current debate on this subject. If one looks at the place occupied by the above mentioned artists in our art history, it is quite obvious that they enjoyed a great amount of patronage in the art market of their time. I shall address these questions under my next sub-heading which focuses directly on the question of patronage and its influence over the work produced by black South African artists in the pre-democratic South Africa.

1.2. THE TOWNSHIP ART MARKET IN SOUTH AFRICA

If one is to provide a credible argument to the question of patronage in South African art (pre or post-democracy) it is imperative to introduce that discussion with an overview on western perspectives on African art at large. Such an ambitious undertaking cannot be adequately engaged in the context of this study; however, I will delve into some of its aspects.

In my view the majority of mainstream contemporary African artists both within Africa and in the Diaspora are directly or indirectly involved in the debate around western perspectives on African art. This debate is usually the central theme for many African artists who live and practice in the west. The content of their work is often marked by an intense focus on identity politics and post colonial discourse⁷. Yinka Shonibare, Johannes Phokela, Moshekwa Langa, Churchill Madikida, Tracey Rose, Berne Searle, and other contemporary African artists have developed a reputation for their explicit negation of western perspectives on Africa and African art. Another common factor in the practice of these artists is that they do more than just question or subvert the west's stereotyped view of African art. They also often experiment with non traditional mediums such as video, performance, installations, etc. when visually expressing their ideas. These mediums arguably constitute what is generally referred to as contemporary and cutting edge art. In the context of South African art, such mediums feature more in the work of white artists

⁷ According to Wikipedia (2008) Identity Politics is “Political action to advance the interests of members of a group supposed to be oppressed by virtue of a shared and marginalized identity...”. Stuart Sim (2005: 286) defines post colonialism as ‘the writing after empire’: the analysis of both colonial discourse and the writing of the ex-colonized.

than black artist. Their incorporation in the works of the above listed contemporary black artists is a factor which distinguishes or excludes these artists' work from the general western misconception of African art. It should be noted, however, that all of these artists have a western orientated academic background. This implies that their training has extensively exposed them to international art trends (especially western art trends). I shall return to this discussion under the next subheading wherein I will be discussing the influence made by various institutions in the works produced by black South African artists.

Any enquiry into western perspectives on African art is most likely to set off with colonialism as its starting point. Colonialism in Africa is a subject which has been vastly written about. Sidney Kasfir⁸, one of very prominent contributors in this field, states, that, "...a controversial debate that has surfaced in the past few years concerns the perception of African art as a mirror image of Western colonial history" (1999: 88). There are many interpretations which can be drawn from this provocative statement. My interpretation of it is twofold. The first considers African art (in a broader sense) as a western construct, meaning that its general conception is a misguided phenomenon to begin with. The second is an obvious interpretation and very pertinent to my discussion. It considers African art as a major constituent of the colonial mission. At this point I must draw my discussion back into the South African context by returning to the question of patronage.

⁸ Sidney Kasfir is Associate Professor of History at Emory University. She has written extensively on African art and has published essays in numerous journals. One of her most outstanding literary work is the book *Contemporary African Art* (O. Oguibe and O. Enwezor, 1999: 442).

As mentioned earlier, such artists as Sekoto, Mohl, etc, clearly enjoyed some form of patronage during their time. In the case of the latter two artists, for instance, the church or mission had great influence in the formation of their careers as artists. Emile Maurice states in his essay 'Art, Heritage and a Posse of Pioneers' (2006) that...

...both Sekoto and Mohl were educated at mission schools and reared according to the missionaries' axiom that "to be Christian was to be civilized and to be civilized was to be Christian". Maurice goes on to say that, '...both benefited from the goodwill, assistance, training and patronage of white liberal benefactors and collectors, without whom they might not have become such significant figures in history' (2006:55).

Maurice provides us with a possible answer to the first part of the question, even though it may not be a detailed one. Implied in his statement is the notion that these artists' financial and other support primarily came from the white community. In the light of this, one can conclude that this white community was, in fact, their sole market. This brings me to the second part of the question and that is, to what extent did this market influence the type of work Sekoto, Mohl, Phemba, and others produced⁹?

Maurice shares some critical insight into this particular inquiry when he argues that...

...in tandem with the colonial and apartheid view that blacks were a race apart, what many white collectors expected of African artists was an art that, through their eyes, represented not simply cultural difference, but perceived cultural apartness" (2006:57).

An important point to note in the above citation is that which concerns white collectors' expectations of African artists. Implied in Maurice's suggestion regarding this matter is that white collectors expected black artists to produce a particular type of art, and that this

⁹ The phrase 'type of work' in this statement denotes the nature of the work stylistically and content wise.

type of art should maintain the general perception of black people as different to and lesser than white people. Maurice elaborates on his argument by adding that, "And such works were those depicting the *authentic*, mystical and exotic African..." (ibid). It is therefore logical to regard this view as a possible reason why the earliest township artists could arguably have been influenced by their white market. It also gives us more insight into this paper because; to a large extent it informs the hypothesis on which this study particular is based.

So far, Maurice's assertion clearly supports the view or suggestion that work produced by black artists (particularly from the formative stages of township art) was influenced by their white market. This sentiment is indirectly reiterated, again by Maurice, when he discusses Mohl's discontentment with the reality of having an exclusively white audience to his work as a result of the black community's lack of art literacy. Elaborating on this point he cites Mohl saying, "You see there is no difference to them, I mean the ordinary African, between a photograph and a picture" (Maurice, 2006: 58). Mohl's remark clearly provides us with what can be read as an important reason why black artists of his day had a largely white audience and market. Another factor which obviously contributed to this situation would have been the uneven distribution of wealth (in favour of white citizens) amongst the country's population. Black South Africans, typically living below the poverty line as it were in those days, would not have had the financial means to purchase artworks or financially support artist in any other way. Their inadequacy in art literacy, as mentioned by Maurice above, further reduced such possibilities even further, firmly

leaving the white market as the only avenue which black artists had at their disposal to earn themselves a living through their trade.

This situation would have manifested itself in the works of these artists in more ways than one. I have already discussed the most obvious and important of these in this chapter i.e. passivity in the works of early township artists. In this regard I interrogated both the technical and conceptual strategies employed by Sekoto in his '*Hotela Bantu*', and Mohl in his '*Snow Morning - Sophiatown*'. What emerged out that discussion was the observation that these artists were not explicitly condemning the Apartheid regime in their art. They were also not very explicit in portraying the negative aspects of their common subject matter i.e. the township. These factors lead one to the assumption that, perhaps, they did not want to produce work that would have upset their white buyers' conscience regarding their privileged socio-political position in comparison to the black communities. If this is true, than their work and the nature thereof can, actually, be said to have been influenced by their market.

This view, however, does not mean that Sekoto, Mohl, Phemba, etc, were only concerned with pleasing their white audience and earning themselves some money in the process. Maurice's earlier citation of Mohl expressing his discontent with how his own community lacked enthusiasm and interest in art testifies to this view. Maurice states about Mohl that, "...he rallied to the cause, committing himself to promoting art as an 'important thing,' and pre-empting in a small way, the drive to take art to the people in the 1980s, when it was shown in cinemas, civic centres,..." (2006: 58).

This goes to show that Mohl, like some of his contemporaries, did actually want to reach out to his own community through his art but had to make best out of a very complex situation.

CHAPTER 2

THE SOUTH AFRICAN ART STRUCTURE: A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF THE ROLE OF ART INSTITUTIONS, ORGANIZATIONS, GALLERIES (1950s - 2000s)

Art Institutions: Polly Street Art Centre

Under the previous sub-heading my objectives were, firstly to test the extent to which the assertion that the type of work produced by early black township artists was largely influenced by their white market; and secondly to examine the relevance of Kasfir's suggestion that African art is the mirror image of Western colonial history in the context of South African art. These two points are still relevant in this section of the paper however, the main objective in this particular section is to examine the role played by art structures such as institutions, organizations, and galleries in influencing the type of work produced by black artists (focusing my attention more on painters).

In this discussion my focus will gradually shift away from the formative stage of Township Art and move into its mature period and beyond. I will begin by paying particular attention to the period beginning in the late 1940s (soon after Sekoto's departure to live in exile) to post 1970s. I will also include some aspects of South African painting today. It is important to note that this was a period after the demise of colonialism but at the height of Apartheid. Amongst several possible implications stemming from the demise of colonialism in South African art and its patronage, logically, would have been the diminishing number of missionary schools and their input into art training. The latter was replaced by what turned out to be a phenomenal feature in

the story of South African art i.e. community art centres. There are several community art centres which have made remarkable input into the character of South African art, especially that of black artists. However, for the purpose of this study not all will be discussed in detail. A discussion of only the key art centres should be enough to illustrate my argument on the historic role played by community art centres in shaping the nature and style of work produced by black South African artists. One very prominent of such institutions has already been discussed earlier in this paper under Resistance Art, i.e. Rorkes Drift. The second is Polly Street Art Centre (commonly referred to as just Polly Street) in Johannesburg. David Koloane states that this centre was established in 1948 (1989: 213). Koloane, further suggests that...

Community art centres, since 1948, have become the only available venues where young black students can learn creative skills in the disciplines of music, drama, dance, and fine art which were absent from the curricula of most (if not all) black schools (Nettleton, 1989: 213)".

Because of its vital role in the development of black urban artistic expression, it is necessary to discuss how Polly Street's attitude towards training black artists could have influenced the kind of work they produced. It is also important to relate that discussion to Kasfir's earlier assertion regarding African art as a mirror image of western colonial history. To do this I will take Kasfir's assertion and apply it in the context of South African art and its patronage (from a historic point of view). By patronage I mean in both terms of buying art and supporting its development with teaching and infrastructure or resources.

Polly Street Art Centre is a very good example of an institution which provided patronage befitting the above described kind of support to black artists in its day. It should be noted that at the time when this centre was established, black communities were largely art illiterate (as per Maurice's earlier citation of Mohl). Koloane amplifies this very sentiment when he states that, "The black artist...is mostly untutored, often with no academic background and generally works under dismal conditions in the absence of proper facilities" (ibid). Koloane's remark was made in the context of South African art almost two decades ago. With the demise of Apartheid a lot concerning black artists' competitiveness in the art industry has changed. Much of this change can be attributed to several reasons including the fact that the black population which previously had been strategically denied access to a good quality higher learning experience can now enrol into major academic institutions to formally pursue and acquire necessary knowledge and skills, thus positioning themselves as competitive professional artists in the mainstream art industry.

What is missing or, perhaps, not emphasized in Maurice's earlier statement regarding the black community's art illiteracy problem is the fact that, whilst this may have been the dominant situation in South Africa, there was a small but growing number of black people in urban areas who were interested in gaining more knowledge of art. Such people went to the extent of enrolling in institutions such as Polly Street Art Centre, in the case of Johannesburg, wherein they received informal training which prepared them, to a certain degree, to be professional artists.

According to Koloane (1989: 214), government in the 1950s (through its Non European Affairs Department), and the private sector (through several liberal white organizations) initiated cultural projects to revitalize the social lives of black people who were employed in the city. This, perhaps, explains the growing number of black people living in the suburban districts of Johannesburg who developed an interest in art amongst other things, moving away from what I described earlier as art illiteracy. Koloane further suggests that Polly Street arose out of such political initiatives. This is an important bit of information to consider because, in essence, it implies that Polly Street was an initiative of both the then white oppressive government and white liberals or private sector. The value of such a claim in the context of this paper is that it places Polly Street at a very interesting position in relation to Kasfir's earlier assertion concerning African art as a mirror image of the West's colonial history. In order to effectively test whether Kasfir's claim applies to our view of Polly Street's influence in black South African art production we must consider two important factors. The first concerns the background of the centre's administrators and or tutors. On this note, Koloane (1989: 214) states that Mrs. E. K. Lorimer was the first instructor appointed by the authorities to co-ordinate various activities of the centre. According to Koloane, she was followed by a series of white instructors who offered their services voluntarily. It is important to consider that, chances are very likely that those white instructors' teaching methodology could have been largely influenced by the 'colonial gaze'¹⁰.

¹⁰A common stereotyping which was perpetuated by the colonial gaze on African people is that, by nature they are artistically talented. This misconception bases itself on a number of western anthropological fallacies. Alexander Junod is, perhaps, a fitting example of many European anthropologists who perpetuated the ill-conceived theory that Africans are a primitive people whose closeness to nature distinguishes them from the civilized and or modernized western civilization.

The second factor concerns the centre's syllabus and its influence on the work produced by black artists who were trained in it. For this reason it is therefore more significant than the former in the context of this paper. Based on accounts made by artists who were trained in Polly Street, the most outstanding and influential figure out of all its tutors was Cecil Skotnes. In an interview conducted by Koloane on Durant Sihlali (a former student of this centre who eventually became a remarkable figure in Township Art), the latter gives us some insight into Skotnes's influential role at Polly Street. In his reply to Koloane's question whether he (Sihlali) benefited from the crit sessions given to the centre's students by Skotnes he stated that...

I think some people did benefit, but I don't think I gained much. I remember one particular day I brought a painting of a township sunset for review and Cecil Skotnes said that the effects I had achieved in the painting were due to a happy accident! You see, he was encouraging a particular direction among the students which was that of painting in an expressionistic manner (Sihlali in Koloane 1989: 217- 218).

Sihlali's remark is vital to my study because it clearly and directly illustrates what is meant by 'influence' in the context of this paper's title. For this reason this remark needs to be closely interrogated and unpacked. I want to pay particular attention to the part where Sihlali suggests that Skotnes was encouraging a direction towards abstract expressionistic painting. Viewed from the context in which Sihlali made this remark, it can easily be read as suggesting that Skotnes was authoritatively engineering the kind of work which his black students were ought to be producing. Considering the political context of that time, I think it is important to interrogate the appropriateness of this approach more closely.

My stance in relation to the above discussion is that, in the context of education it is not unusual for a tutor or educator to steer his students toward a certain direction. Having said so, still, a more desirable teaching strategy is likely to be that which equips learners with an ability to independently search for knowledge and apply it into their lives; in other words, to be self-reliant in generating, articulating, and applying ideas into real life situations.

In the context of art, however, the degree to which an art educator's students follow on his/her footsteps is of colossal importance. On the one hand if, for instance, they follow too closely on his/her footsteps they can easily be dubbed as his imitators - in which case their art is denied any sense of autonomy and originality, thus losing credibility. On the other hand, if their work shows pre-approved traits which also appear in their teacher's work but still holds a convincing sense of originality; it stands a greater chance of being received in the same light as that of the teacher¹¹.

In art practice throughout the world (even though this may arguably be best recorded in western art history), the largely favoured pedagogical approach has been the notion of the master artist imparting his knowledge to younger artists of the next generation through an

¹¹ A good example of this kind of situation is the relationship between the work of the late Kwa Zulu Natal based painter Trevor Makhoba and that of his students. In the mature stage of his career Makhoba took numerous young black painters under his wing as 'apprentices'. Amongst them were young and developing painters Sibusiso Duma and Welcome Danca. The similarity in technique and vision between the work of these two young artists and that of their former teacher is uncompromisingly close. Because Makhoba was much more experienced in the field of painting (work that made socio-political commentary on contemporary society), the quality and value of his work is a big step ahead that of his students. I shall return to aspects of this thought later in this chapter, under my discussion of art galleries - their influence on the type of work produced by black artists. In that part of the discussion, Duma's work will be discussed in more detail since he is one of the artists who are the primary subjects of my study.

apprentice programme¹². In the context of today's formal education the 'master' is substituted by a reputable artist with a like academic profile.

At this point I will revert back into my discussion of Sihlali's remark regarding Skotnes' influential role at Polly Street. The latter discussion supports my earlier suggestion that, as a teacher, Skotnes was not acting out of the ordinary by steering his students in a particular direction. But this situation gets complicated if we take into account the political context of the time. This was a time when there were deep racial divides between blacks and whites in South Africa. The ethos of apartheid was that the white minority should be positioned above the black majority population in every positive aspect of life. Art was no exception to this racist ideology, which brings me to the complexity of the issue brought forward by Sihlali's remark.

The complexity of this issue lies in the fact that Skotnes was a white instructor and Sihlali his black student. White instructors were trained in very western orientated academic institutions (the University of Wit-waterstrand in Skotnes's case) and would also have been exposed to a lot of European art trends in their travels abroad. As a white artist

¹² Similarly, knowledge and skill in the making of indigenous arts (commonly referred to as craft) in South Africa, (and in this case I will look at Kwa Zulu Natal), was passed on from master to apprentice for many generations. In this context the master was usually the 'father' or 'mother' of the learner where domestic artifacts such as pots, tools and objects of personal adornments are concerned. The more specialized artifacts such as weapons were generally produced by specialist craftsmen who also would have acquired the necessary skill of their trade through an apprentice programme continuing the tradition respectively. Commenting on works shown in the exhibition titled 'The Zulu Vision in Art' which featured in the 1988 Standard Bank National Arts Festival, Jill Addleson states that...

"The knowledge they accumulated became a heritage which was passed on from generation to generation: mother taught daughter beadwork and pottery; and father instructed son in basketry and carvings" (Lantern, 1990: 63).

trained in the western tradition, Skotnes was merely imparting that tradition to his students. Elaborating on this view Koloane states that...

The reputation of the centre grew considerably under Cecil Skotnes's enthusiasm and optimism. It is evident that, with his academic background and creative experience, Skotnes formulated a basic structure of tuition to assist students to explore their potential (1989: 217).

Skotnes would later radically shift his approach to teaching from the above mentioned structure of tuition to what seemed more like its opposite. On this note Koloane explains that...

Jack Grossert, an art organizer for the Department of Bantu Education, who was also the principal of the Ndalen Training College in Natal, persuaded Skotnes to take a different view of the way art should be encouraged among black pupils. He was critical of formal art instruction. It was he who drew Skotnes' attention to the spontaneous expression which was developing among urban Black artists of Johannesburg and convinced him finally that the emergence of an indigenous expression was not dependent on the teaching of traditional forms (1989: 18-19).

A fundamental question which inevitably poses itself at this point regarding the above citation is, 'to what extent was his teaching influenced by firstly, his academic background and secondly the earlier mentioned fallacies of the colonial gaze?' Koloane's above statement does give us a rather vague answer to these questions. Based on his statement we can say that Skotnes' years of teaching were influenced by his academic background and, with time he became growingly convinced by Grossert's theory to such an extent that he applied it to his own teaching at Polly Street. It is important to note that

Grossert's approach is, perhaps, a good example of a colonial gaze informed fallacy.

Attesting to this view, Louis Maqhubela states in an interview with Koloane that...

I was always at loggerheads with Skotnes on his insistence that black artists did not require any kind of tuition because of their natural ability to paint. What annoyed me most about this fallacy was that it did not apply to white artists, but to us blacks (Maqhubela in Koloane, 1989: 219).

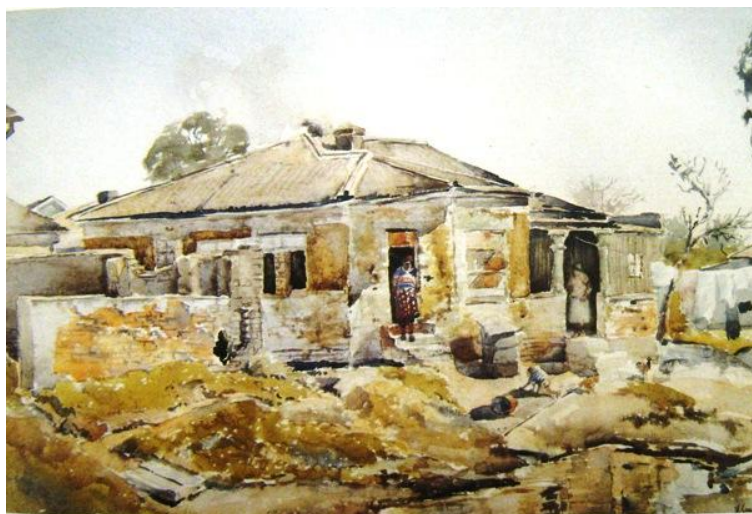
I will now return to the above two questions regarding Skotnes' own influences and how they might have manifested themselves in his approach to teaching. To address these questions I will critically look at some examples of works produced by black painters who were tutored by him. As part of that exercise I will be mapping out some common traits in the works of those artists. Whilst still on this point, I will further discuss how these traits had a rippling effect on black artistic expression in South Africa.

Sihlali, as it already has been established earlier, was one of them. Whilst he may not have assumed the 'abstract direction' early in his career (see fig. 6), a close look at work produced by many of his contemporaries who attended Polly Street indicates that they certainly adopted aspects of expressionistic painting in their work. The works of such artists as Louis Maqhubela, Ephraim Ngatane, and Ezrom Legae, perhaps, serves as good examples.

Of these artists, I will discuss one of Ngatane's works as an example with which we can measure Skotnes's influence on his students. In 'Soweto Reflections' 1970 (fig.7), Ngatane clearly shows signs of being extensively influenced by expressionistic tendencies in painting. In this image very little attention has been paid to detail. The picture comes very close to being a complete abstract image except that it does feature

some figurative elements in it. Two distorted but still accessible human figures stand in the middle of the composition. There is one other less accessible anthropomorphic figure located slightly to the middle right of the composition. The environment, as stated earlier, is not clearly defined. Ngatane has used very visceral and expressive brush gestures which, despite being loose, allude to a township scene. Similarly to the works of the forerunners of Township Art, 'Soweto Reflections' is marked by a very flamboyant pallet consisting largely of contrasting primary and a few secondary colours. It should be borne in mind that this kind of emphasis on the use of colour was in keeping with modernist canons of painting. Whilst its subject matter may not be as visually accessible as that of Sekoto's *Hotela Bantu* (fig. 1) or Mohl's 'Snow Morning' (fig. 2), it still reads as a 'pretty picture'. A pretty picture which does not explicitly portray the artist's negative outlook to his subject and or inspiration, i.e. the township. In this picture Ngatane seems to have been particularly concerned with experimenting with technical and or formal aspects of painting, a trait that was initially common in the works of early abstract expressionistic painters from the west. This is clearly evidenced by the manner in which he has balanced his palette between cool and warm colours, as mentioned earlier. It is also evidenced by how he has incorporated into his brightly coloured composition loose black marks which suggest informal buildings such as those commonly seen in townships and informal settlements.

A similar but slightly thicker black painterly mark has been used in illustrating the earlier mentioned human figures. The following quote from the Michael Stevenson contemporary art gallery website best captures the character and essence of Ngatane's painting technique.



6. Sihlali, D. *The Green House, 2nd Avenue, Alexander.* 1979

Watercolour

Ngatane's interest in the ambiguities of abstraction set him apart from the descriptive style of other township artists. In this work he fragmented the forms of the houses and people to the point where they disintegrate into amorphous shapes over which he has superimposed a rhythmic grid of lines to intertwine the elements of the image (Michael Stevenson Contemporary, 2007).

The kind of distortion or abstraction that occurs in this picture is similar to that seen in the works of early European abstract expressionistic painters such as Joan Miro and Wassily Kandinsky to randomly pick a few. In Miro's work abstraction is pushed beyond any recognizable figurative renditions. It is, however, alluded to by the biomorphic shapes which at first glance resemble recognizable creatures or insects as seen in *'Tic Tic'*, 1927 (fig. 7). Kandinsky's *'Improvisation No. 30'*, 1913 (fig. 8) perhaps, comes closest to the kind of abstraction displayed in Ngatane's *'Soweto Reflections'*. It primarily comprises of a contrasting warm and cool palette with black painterly gestures alluding to a vaguely figurative object, i.e. a canon with smoke billowing out of its barrel almost as if it has just been fired. The overall visual effect of both Miro and Kandinsky's work can be summed up as, harmonious expressionistic colour compositions. The very same can be said for Ngatane's *'Soweto Reflections'*. In the light of the above, if we go by Sihlali's remark regarding Skotnes steering his students towards abstraction, it is clear that indeed the nature of abstraction in Ngatane's work indicates that he received training that encouraged western formal tendencies of abstraction.



7. Ngatane, E. *Soweto Reflections* 1970 Oil on canvas



8. Miro, J. *Tic Tic*, 1927. oil on canvas



9. Kandinsky, W. *Improvisation No. 30*. 1913.

Oil on canvas

As mentioned already, Ngatane and his Polly Street scene contemporaries were some of the few black artists back then who did receive art tuition, tuition which clearly exposed them to international tendencies in painting. This exposure, according to Koloane, was crucial in setting black artists free from Grossert's concept of the untutored black artist. Illustrating this point, Koloane suggests of Louis Maqhubela's work that, his quest for artistic growth could not have been contained within the limitations of his natural ability as a township artist had he not been exposed to European art (1989:219). To fully appreciate the value of Koloane's claim, perhaps, it should be mentioned that after winning a prestigious mixed race national art competition known as *Artists of Fame and Promise* in 1966, Maqhubela toured European art galleries and Museums as part of the winning prize for that competition. During that time he got widely exposed to European tendencies in painting such as abstraction. According to Koloane (1989: 219), Maqhubela's work radically changed upon his return from his tour of Europe. It subsequently showed signs of his newly gained influences from Europe. These were marked by abstract compositions, some of which are similar to those I have already discussed in Ngatane's work. To illustrate this shift in Maqhubela's work I will discuss one of his works produced in the period following his visit to Europe.

In '*Untitled (Abstraction)*' 1974 (fig. 9), Maqhubela has employed a very modernist vocabulary. The image is abstract expressionistic in nature despite the presence of a vague anthropomorphic shape placed on its middle left section. Black solid lines of varying thickness haphazardly illustrate a disorderly and clustered environment of very vaguely recognizable shapes in the mid and upper sections of the picture. These shapes

emerge from a soft background largely made up of subtle tones of earthy colours with hints of light greys and blues. The softness of the background creates an impression of an organic space in which the abstractly rendered shapes float eternally.

Even though the earlier mentioned black solid lines and shapes are a dominant feature in this composition, a warm reddish quadrilateral shape at the bottom right hand corner of the picture also sets off an interesting visual relationship with the cool blue spot to its immediate left. Here Maqhubela clearly employs the Abstract Expressionistic idiom in his use of colour. He has clearly abandoned references to his material world of the 'township' as we know it. Instead, he has gone one big step further than Ngatane's *'Soweto Reflections'* (fig. 6) towards appropriating a western abstractionist canon.

It should be borne in mind that this piece was made after Maqhubela had completed his earlier mentioned tour of Europe where he would have been further exposed to this kind of work. This exposure would have enriched his experience with abstraction from Skotnes's early experiments at Polly Street.

By abandoning recognizable forms, he invites the viewer to take part in the construction of meaning at spiritual and emotional levels. It is this aspect of his work which I think sets him apart from the school of 'township artists'. Whilst many of them were preoccupied with depicting their reality i.e. township life, he progressed to a point where he was depicting his emotional reality. A world marked by chaos and disorder yet, like cosmic reality, in the midst of all that chaos there is a natural sense of order which balances all.

In drawing my discussion of Polly Street toward a conclusion I would say whilst the centre might have played a very significant role in developing a distinct South African black urban visual culture, black artists' quest to explore other visual vocabularies was growing beyond its curriculum. This notion is best exemplified, first, by Maqhubela's earlier rejection of Skotnes's adherence to Grossert's approach toward teaching black students. And secondly by the fact that while he [Maqhubela] may have been exceedingly vocal about this issue; there were other black artists who also put up a front against stereotyping of black artists. On this note, Koloane states that, "While Louis Maqhubela was the first painter to break out of the 'township' mould, younger artists of the middle sixties and early seventies, some of whom were protégés of the Jubilee Centre or were self-taught, resisted the 'township art' label attached to some members of the Polly Street group"(1989: 228).

In the context of this study, Koloane's above assertion is essential because it reveals that from as far back as the sixties and seventies, black artists had already developed an awareness of the stereotyping and peculiarity with which their work was received.

Later in this chapter I will critically discuss one of the hypotheses onto which this study is based. In that discussion I will look at how the work of black artists has been persistently stereotyped¹³. I will also discuss how, in my view, some contemporary black South African artists have successfully avoided such stereotypes and how others are still caught up in it.

¹³ Stereotyping in the context of this statement denotes the peculiarity and preconception with which the work of black South African artists is received by the general audience.



10. Maqhubela, L. *Untitled (Abstraction)* 1974



11. Feni, D. *Man, Horse, Man.* (u.d). black ink on paper. 21 x 32 cm

2.1.2 Black Art Organizations and Centres

At this point I want to shift my focus away from Polly Street and briefly look at the contribution made by other informal art institutions which offered art tuitions to black artists. Polly Street's historic role in forging an urban black visual culture is undoubtedly colossal. Expanding on this sentiment Koloane states that, "The Polly Street Art Centre became a prototype for future informal institutions..."(1989: 227).

Bearing testimony to this claim is the fact that even after Polly Street closed down, its spirit and teaching ethos were reincarnated into the many informal institutions which followed it in Johannesburg and surrounding townships. One of such institutions is the Jubilee Centre which I mentioned in my previous discussion.

Of particular importance in this part of my discussion is Koloane's earlier claim that there were other artists in the sixties and seventies who rejected the title 'township art' which was synonymous with the Polly Street group. In that discussion I cited Koloane stating that some of those artists were protégés of the Jubilee Centre. It therefore seems convenient for me to begin my brief discussion of other informal art centres with Jubilee.

The Jubilee Centre

The Jubilee Centre was, in actual fact, the first reincarnation of the Polly Street Center. On this note, Koloane (1989: 220) states that, "The closing of the Polly Street Centre was due to the fact that the Non-European Affairs Department's recreation section acquired new premises in a relatively new building, known as the Jubilee Centre, in Eloff Street's

Motortown area". Koloane further states that Skotnes continued as the instructor at the new premises. Based on the latter, it may appear safe to assume that, up till this point, Jubilee was still very much the old Polly Street centre in new premises. But this is not entirely true, as we have already learnt from my earlier citation of Koloane's claim that some of those younger artists of the mid 60s and the 70s who resisted the 'township' label attached to some members of the Polly Street group, were actually protégés from Jubilee Centre. This clearly implies that there must have been some kind of slight shift in the art making approach employed by students who were admitted at Jubilee and that this approach differed from that of those artists from the old centre in Polly Street.

Describing the nature of their work Koloane (1989:228) states that, "Their work became intuitive and introspective and their technique linear and sparse". He goes on to add that these artists used media such as pencil and charcoal, and that their work had a stark and vital impact (see fig. 11). On this note, Koloane seems to champion artists such, as Dumile Mgxaji (a.k.a.) Dumile Feni, Winston Saoli, Leonard Motsoso, etc as examples of artists who fall under this category (ibid).

My view in this matter is that despite their shift away from the type of work produced by their predecessors at Polly Street, their overall contribution towards the development of a new and distinct South African black visual vocabulary was exceedingly outweighed by that of the Polly Street group. This is exemplified by the fact that, though their contribution does have some significance in the history of South African black visual culture, not many of the artists practicing in this genre had very long lasting professional

careers in comparison to their counter parts. However, one who does stand out as a notable exception from those listed by Koloane above is Dumile Mgxaji¹⁴.

The first major change in the make-up of this new centre would have been in 1966 when Skotness left to pursue his own practice as an artist. According to Koloane (1989:220) Sidney Kumalo took over from Skotnes in 1967. Koloane further claims that Kumalo also left after a while and he was succeeded by Ezrom Legae a year later in 1968 (ibid).

At this point I want to further qualify the claim I made earlier in this discussion that Jubilee was a reincarnation of Polly Street. Jubilee's connection to Polly Street went beyond the fact that the centre had moved from Polly Street to these new premises, and that Skotnes continued instructing therein. The connection I'm alluding to concerns the above mentioned successors of Skotnes in the driving seat of Jubilee Centre. Both Kumalo and Legae were protégés of Polly Street Centre. They both had undergone Skotnes's tutelage as students at the old centre. It is therefore fair to assume that, though they would have had ideas of their own and maybe even a different approach to teaching, to a large degree these would have been influenced by their experience at Polly Street. It should be borne in mind that Polly Street was their first and only exposure to a formal and structured learning environment.

Other than being successors to Skotnes in running the centre, another significant factor about Kumalo and Legae is that they became the first and second black instructors

¹⁴ It should be noted that, though Feni (born 1939 - 42, died 1991) may have been largely self taught; he did receive some tuition from different people amongst which Ezrom Legae, Cecil Skotnes and Bill Ainslie are included. This exposure to a wide source of influence, in my view, was vital in shaping his skills, skills which saw him rise to the level where he was selected to represent South Africa at the 1967 Sao Paulo Biennale (Dolby, J. in Proud, H. 2006: 174).

(respectively) to manage and run an art centre of this magnitude. Considering Apartheid's white supremacist ideology which plagued the country in those days, the appointment of the latter as instructors in such an establishment marks a truly significant point in our art history. In summing up my short discussion of Jubilee Centre within the scope of this paper I would say, the contribution it made in the development of a South African black visual culture is intricately intertwined with that of Polly Street.

Mofolo Art Centre

According to Koloane (1989: 220-21), in 1980 the Jubilee Centre was renamed the MofoloArt Centre. This renaming of the centre was subsequent to the Non-European Affairs Department's move from Eloff Street's motortown area to Mofolo township. Koloane further states that Dan Rakgoathe became the first instructor of this centre. Mofolo went on to produce some of the most distinguished artists of that time. These include such names as Anthony Nkotsi, Cyril Manganye, etc.

At this point the only connection this centre (Mofolo) has with the Polly Street centre is that it was born out of Jubilee which in turn was born out of Polly Street as discussed earlier in this section of the paper. The successive running of the centre by former Polly Street protégés was broken by the appointment of Rakgoathe who received his training in Rorkes Drift, Natal (Koloane, 1989: 222). Having been trained in a completely different art school, Rokgoathe would have obviously brought in a fresher and different vision to the centre.

FUBA, FUNDA, and The Johannesburg Art Foundation (JAF)

Due to the fact that there is hardly any reliable scholarly material which primarily focuses on the emergence and subsequent roles of the phenomenon of black art institutions and centres, detailed information on this subject is very scarce. In the course of this study it emerged that there still needs to be a great deal of research done in this field. Whilst detailed accounts of how these institutions functioned may not necessarily be the core business of this particular study, an insightful breakdown of their aims and objectives would surely have been helpful in my attempt to examine the role they played in the development of a distinct South African black visual culture. Koloane's paper titled *The Polly Street Art Scene* (1989) and De Jager's *Images of Man* (1992) seem to be the seminal texts in this niche of South African art history; hence I have thus far referred to both of them numerous in this paper.

It is due to the above reasons that I have chosen to discuss FUBA, FUNDA, and Johannesburg Art Foundation collectively. Unlike Polly Street and Rorkes Drift, for example, who have been the subject of several critical papers (more so for the latter); these three institutions have played an immensely significant role in shaping South African art yet they are hardly critically discussed in literary work. Very often in the course of this study I have come across the names of these three institutions in artists' biographies but not where they are the primary subject.

It is important to consider in this discussion that, from the late 1960s to 1980s (a period in which many informal art schools were established) the number of black people who

showed interest in pursuing a career in the arts industry rose quite substantially in comparison to the formative years of Township Art. In my view, this increase was fuelled, amongst other reasons, by the fact that under apartheid law black people could not enrol into white academic institutions¹⁵. Implications of such laws meant that, unlike their white counterparts, black people who wished to pursue art as a professional career in which they could practice with the necessary academic qualifications were deprived of this opportunity. On this note Verstraete (1989: 170) states that...

In the late 1960s and early 1970s the process of westernisation was accelerated by concerted efforts to provide blacks with a visual art education on wider scale through the establishment of art schools, many organised by blacks themselves, university Fine Arts departments, sponsorship programmes and cultural contact.

Amongst some of the most prevalent of the art schools referred to by Verstraete above were the FUBA, FUNDA, JAF and Kathlehong Art Centre in Johannesburg, and numerous others including those I have already discussed in this section of the paper. In Cape Town the Community Arts Project played a highly notable role in this regard. As already mentioned in Verstraete's above statement, there were many of such art schools. Some, however, had a much shorter life span than those I have mentioned here but still made a worthwhile effort to encourage creativity in black urban communities.

Shedding some insight on the subject of art schools which made a significant contribution to the development of professional black artists Koloane states that the first centre to

¹⁵ Hendrik Verwoerd's infamous Bantu Education Act (No. 47) was intended to deprive young black students any sense of a wide choice of career possibilities. Black people, in the eyes of the state, were primarily supposed to provide cheap labour hence higher education would not have been a favourable thing to have (Education Under Apartheid: 2008).

provide a full-time art programme was the Mofolo Art Centre in Soweto. He further explains that the FUBA and FUNDA Centres, and the Community Arts Project subsequently structured their tuition courses on a higher level, offering diploma courses and metric art courses. Koloane then asserts that this initiative widened the horizons of students for higher education in the visual and performing arts (Nettleton and Hammond, 1989: 227). Reiterating this view De Jager (1992: 190) states that...

These societies and most of these centres came into being not only as resistance to the state education and other policies, but at the time also as an alternative. Many black artists felt that mainstream South African art had largely become irrelevant to their needs and perceptions, and those of Black society in general.

De Jager's remark, though brief, manages to spell out the significance of these institutions in the development of black artistic expression in South Africa. Their historic role in this regard warrants their inclusion in a study of this nature.

In my discussion of Polly Street I placed a lot of emphasis on Cecil Skotnes' influential role in shaping the artistic vision of black students he came into contact with during his long tenure as its principle tutor. I also discussed the complications which arose from the fact that he was a white tutor educating black students at the height of apartheid. The 1970s Johannesburg art scene saw Bill Ainslie, another white artist and patron, play the role which had once been played by Skotnes during Polly Street days. Ainslie played a vital role in mentoring young and developing black artists in Johannesburg and some of its townships during the period this period. According to De Jager (1992: 190) he was also instrumental in fostering close relations between black and white artists.

Highlighting Ainslie's involvement with some of the informal art institutions which emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, De Jager (ibid) states that...

In 1972 he founded a teaching studio in Johannesburg which culminated in 1982 in the Johannesburg Art Foundation. He was also closely associated with the establishment of the FUBA centre in 1978, the Alexandra Art Centre in 1985, and the Thupelo Art Project in 1986.

Many of these institutions produced artists who went on to become influential figures in the South African art industry. The 1970s and 1980s house hold names of black urban professional art practice included such people as Anthony Nkotsi, James Mphahlele, Charles Nkosi, Thomas Motswai, and others (De Jager, 1992: 283). Many of these artists' careers have at some point taken a boost from being involved with such black artists' organizations as those mentioned earlier. Motswai, for instance, is a living example of an artist who received training at FUBA and went on to become a remarkable professional artist. He is still producing work today. Whilst his name may be very common in the South African art scene, the position he occupies is arguably on the periphery of mainstream art practice¹⁶. This view applies to many other black artists who do not have a formal and or academic art education background. I shall return to this line of thought in my discussion of the informal art market.

¹⁶ Mainstream in the context of this study denotes academic art practices and the center of contemporary art discourse. It further denotes the market domain of this type of art. Amongst several characteristics which mark this domain, are major high art galleries which set the standard for cutting edge art in the country. The Goodman Gallery, Michael Stevenson Contemporary, and Bell Roberts Contemporary are some notable examples of such galleries.

The African Art Centre (AAC)

So far my discussion of art centres has largely been centred on examples of art organizations and black artists from outside KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). By far the majority of institutions mentioned above were/are based in Johannesburg except for Rorke's Drift. The latter, as mentioned in the previous chapter, was located in the Natal Mid-lands. I want, at this point, to turn my attention to the KZN art scene. In this regard the African Art Centre (AAC) will be the subject of my interrogation.

The AAC was established in 1959 under the auspices of the South African Institute of Race Relations. In 1982 it gained its autonomy as a non-profit organization and has been operating as such ever since (www.afriart.org.za [accessed 04 August 200]). This organization has played a very important role in supporting black artists in KZN. Currently under the directorship of Anthea Martin the AAC is a standing example of the earlier mentioned institutions which are run by white personnel but serving and supporting communities of black artists.

Whilst the AAC may have the latter in common with other art centres which emerged in its time, it is unique in more ways than one. To mention just two, firstly the AAC does not provide direct tuition or skills development to the artists it works with. In this regard the AAC merely facilitates the learning of underdeveloped aspiring black artists by means of raising and managing funds which are used to run weekend art classes known as Velobala. The AAC appoints tutors who are also trained artists to run these classes. There is no fixed place where these classes take place but for the past 8-10 years they have been held at Durban University of Technology: Fine Art Department studios. This is

partly due to the fact that AAC premises are purely used for art and craft retailing (a point I shall elaborate on later in this discussion).

The second important factor about the AAC which clearly sets it apart from the earlier mentioned centres is that its main focus is on facilitation of sales of works produced by black artists as opposed to offering art tuition. It therefore follows that the core aspect of their business is marketing and selling the work of local black artists who, to a large extent, have no formal art back ground.

Their facilitation of sales occurs in various forms. Three most distinct of these are as follows:

The first is the consignment system whereby the selling artwork is kept in the shop for a certain period. If sold in that period, the AAC keeps a fixed percentage of the income and the rest goes to the artist. If the work does not sell in the period stipulated in the consignment contract between the artists and the AAC, then the period may be extended or the work is returned to the artist. The second form of sales facilitation employed by the ACC is by documenting the work of an artist and marketing it to potential buyers listed in the centre's clientele records. In performing this task the ACC plays a similar role to that of an art agent. Similarly, in this case, if the work sells the AAC keeps a certain percentage of the selling price and the rest goes to the artist.

The third and final example pertains to exhibitions of artists' works. So far I have been referring to the context in which the works are sold at the AAC as 'the shop'. The reason for this is that there exist within the premises of the AAC two distinct spaces, one which operates as a shop and the other as the gallery. The former stocks everything from craft objects such as traditional Zulu pots, paintings by local black artists, to objects that can

be categorized as contemporary craft and design i.e. key holders, wooden platters, vases, and other house hold objects which have been reinterpreted into art décor.

The latter on the other hand, is a designated space for art exhibitions. In their new premises at Florida Rd in Morningside, Durban, this space is much smaller than the shop. It is in this space that artists such as Duma, Sibisi, Manana, etc, showcase their art. This space does not follow the convention of a typical mainstream ‘white cube’ gallery. Because of its limited wall space, by default, it dictates the scale of the works produced by those artists who exhibit in it thus adding on to a long list of predetermined characteristics of their work.

It is for these reasons that I have included the AAC in this study. I think that it best exemplifies the meaning of the word ‘market’ in the context of the title of this paper. More so because the marketing approach employed by the AAC seems to centre itself on the ethnicity and locality of the artists it showcases. This argument will be adequately addressed under my next sub-heading wherein I shall critically interrogate the role played by similar kinds of establishments in generating stereotypes of black artists and their work.

2.2 The Informal Art Market

Before proceeding with this discussion I want to begin by clarifying what the term 'informal art market' denotes in the context of this discussion. This term presupposes that its opposite form, a 'formal art market', also exists. My argument is largely informed by this presupposition. Shedding some insight in this matter De Jager states that...

A large number of new and unknown artists regularly come on the South African art scene. Many of these are Black artists. They do not immediately, or even ever, join the formal art sector, i.e. their work is not promoted and sold through the large and recognized commercial galleries (1992: 172).

De Jager's claim is very significant in the context of this discussion because firstly, it affirms my earlier suggestion that both the phenomena of the formal and informal markets exist and secondly, it briefly highlights their differences. On this note I am drawn to De Jager's description of the formal art sector as 'the large and recognized commercial galleries'. Expanding on that discussion, De Jager suggests that artists operating in the informal art sector sell their work from their homes, studios, or through galleries on the fringe of the art market (ibid). Two points should be taken into consideration regarding this description of the informal art sector. The first is that the informal art market or sector is far wider in its constituency than implied in the above description. In my view, an important point about this sector which is not mentioned by De Jager pertains to the academic background of the artists who form a significantly large part of it. Very often these artists do not have formal academic qualifications in art practice. Those who do would most likely have received their training from informal art schools. I will discuss examples of such artists later in this section of the paper.

The second point relates to the notion of the 'large and recognized commercial galleries'. On this note I want to point out that De Jager made the above statement more than fifteen years ago. The galleries which he most likely was referring to would have been such galleries as Alder Fielding, Lidchi, Egon Guenther, Gallery 101, and Gallery 21, the major commercial galleries of that period (Nettleton and Hammond, 1989). It should further be considered that he made this remark in a context where he was discussing the black South African art scene of the 1970s. Of that art scene he explained that some of the artists came to the notice of the art loving public and established a fine reputation for themselves (De Jager, 1992:172). It is also worth noting that the art loving public to which he was referring would have largely consisted of the white community and patrons.

Koloane (1989: 225) in comparison to De Jager on the subject of approaching black artists' work states that...

Louis Maqhubela and Ephraim Ngatane had sell out exhibitions in the sixties and early seventies. The local art-market assumed a patronising attitude to the work, regarding it as a step-child of mainstream South African art.

Koloane clearly has a different opinion to De Jager on the question of how work produced by black artists of the 1970's was received by the art audience. On the one hand De Jager seems to have accepted without contention the positive manner in which their work was received. On the other hand, Koloane clearly challenges that very positive reception of their work. It should be understood that Koloane is not directing his negative view to the nature or quality of the work produced by black artists, but instead

he directs it to the attitude of the art audience of that time. Here I refer to the part of his argument where he suggests that the local art market held a patronising attitude to the work of black artists.

Koloane's opinion is particularly significant to me because it is in line with my hypothesis that in the context of South African art, the market has historically been unfair and prejudiced against black artists and their work. Galleries, curators and critics generally advocate the pursuit of such values as originality, creativity and excellence in art making. In this regard my assertion is that historically these values have not been applied equally when appreciating work produced by South African artists from across the race spectrum. They seem to have been exclusively applied in the approach to the work of white artists¹⁷. When engaging work produced by black artists the contrary seems to have applied and to some extent, still does today. For example, despite much heated discussion on this issue in various forums it is still not uncommon to hear or read about black South African artists' work in contexts where it is categorized as 'Zulu bead-work', 'Vhenda sculpture', or 'Ndebele painting' and so on. These categories do nothing more than ascribe the various types of art produced by black South African artists to their respective tribes. The importance of the maker (artist) in the story of the artwork diminishes and that of his or her tribe takes centre stage. This unfortunate practice by some curators and writers particularly surfaces in discussions of work produced by black

¹⁷ It should be noted that whilst such values may have been the core aspect of the criteria that was used to assess white artists' work, there still were traditions and canons which restricted white artists from being completely original and avant-gardist in their respective disciplines. A good example in painting is Maggie Laubser (1886 - 1973) though she belonged to a period much further back in history than the seventies. According to Berman (1993) following her contact with European art after the First World War, Laubser was distinctly influenced by German Expressionism. Upon her return to South Africa in 1924 she experimented with her new realized artistic vision to the dismay of local critics. On this note Berman (1993: 69) states that, 'Almost without exception, the critics condemned the works as the inept and clumsy failures of a painter quite incapable of imitating natural appearances'.

artists with little or no formal academic background. This approach to their work does not permit the unsuspecting audience to engage the work without preconception. Instead it reduces it to a product of a collective i.e. the tribe, thus its meaning becomes subject to the audiences' general knowledge of the tribe. That knowledge of the tribe is often informed by both fact and myth.

This reading of black artists' work is even more bizarre if we take into account the fact that ethnic or tribal categorizing of art is not even slightly attempted in addressing work produced by white artists, hence there exists no such terms as 'Boer art', 'Afrikaner art' and 'South African - English Art'. Furthermore, this view towards black artists' work completely contradicts the earlier mentioned notion of pursuing originality, creativity and excellence (see page 60). It is perhaps, for this reason that Koloane suggested that the art market held a patronising view of black artists' work as though it were a step child to main stream South African art. In essence this view implies that the work of black artists was seen to be of a lesser quality and standard in comparison to that of their white counterparts. If we go by this line of thought, it follows that this imbalance had (and still has) influence over the process of attaching monetary value to art produced by black artists.

I will now revert to my discussion of the post 1970s. Discussing the issue of black artists who attracted the attention of the market in this period, Koloane (1989: 225) states that...

The new artists' work attracted a host of independent dealers with varied motives. This fringe development of the art market was to prove disastrous for some of the newly-emerging young artists. They were encouraged to

paint in a particular crude and naïve manner so as to present the kind of 'African' identity demanded by both the local and overseas markets.

Koloane's above claim is very significant in the context of this discussion. I am particularly interested in the second part of his claim because in my view this practice still persists today. The AAC, for example, markets itself as an establishment which trades on good quality African art and craft, both of which are usually based on the theme of 'African-ness'. Furthermore, Koloane's claim best illustrates the context in which the term 'influence' has been used in the context of the title of this paper. That the market historically exerted significant influence on the type of work produced by black artists is loudly reiterated in Koloane's assertion that these artists were also required to mass produce specific subject-matter such as 'mother and child', 'musicians', and 'dancers' because they were well received by the market (1989: 225). Again I will refer to the AAC as an example in this regard. The school of black artists who frequently exhibit in this establishment often showcase work with similar subject matter to that mentioned by Koloane above (as will be discussed in the work of Manana and Duma). I must stress, however, that the themes which occur in the work of these artists are usually inspired by the artists' place of location in KZN. They often depict such subject matter as rural landscapes of KZN, variations of the mother and child theme, and romanticized notions of contemporary Zulu-ness.

Tommy Motswai

I will now examine the validity of Koloane's claim by discussing the work of Tommy Motswai, one of several black artists to emerge in the 1980s and still practicing today. He is a very good example of an artist without a formal academic background except the training he received in informal art schools. Motswai first came into contact with art at Kutlwanong School for the Deaf between 1968 and 1979. He would later attend art courses offered at FUBA and the Johannesburg Art Foundation respectively. In the latter institution he studied under Ainslie (Proud, H. 2006: 302). Motswai largely works two-dimensionally. Amongst the foremost distinguishing characteristics of his work are: his extensive use of cheap materials, the relatively small scale of his work, and his naïve or child like style which ironically is marked by a peculiar attention to detail of the urban and suburban environments. These characteristics are amongst those which Koloane is referring to when he argues that black artists were encouraged to paint in a particular crude and naïve manner.

In *'Happy Mother's Day, Mom'* 1989 (fig.12), Motswai depicts a very 'naïvely' rendered kitchen scene with a woman turning over an egg on a frying pan. The woman's body is positioned square to the picture plane and yet her feet face towards the left. This results in an awkward posture, especially if the image is viewed from a naturalistic perspective. But duplication of nature does not seem to have been a governing factor in Motswai's mind when he made this picture and many others similar to it in style. His subject's facial features have been undisguisedly treated in a cartoon-like style. This device takes the image further away from a naturalistic perspective. The environment (kitchen) in which

this woman is located seems to have been completely derived from the artist's imagination. The manner in which he has articulated this imagined reality resembles that which normally appears in children's book illustrations. The kitchen cupboard and the stove behind the woman have been rendered in curved lines which negate their normal rigid rectangular nature in life. Even the colour scheme used by Motswai in this picture adds to it being seen in the light of illustration. Soft yellows and light browns for furniture and blue and white stripes for *Mom's* dress are very schematically balanced. Her white apron with pink spots makes her even more appealing as an imaginary character playing the role of a mother in a happy home. All of the above in addition to the title of the work result in this piece being seen as a cliché.

The style employed in this image is not the kind that is informed by academic conventions of drawing. Instead it strikes me more as naïve or child like drawing which invokes sentimentality. On this note De Jager held a completely different view. He argues that the basis of Motswai's work is a desire to directly communicate his impressions of life without pretensions or preconceptions (1992: 172). De Jager's attitude towards Motswai's work is uncritical. He does not challenge Motswai's motive for using a distinctly crude and naïve style. De Jager's attitude seems to perpetuate the earlier mentioned patronising attitude of the white market towards the work of black artists. This attitude is reinforced by the fact that De Jager's publication, *Images of Man* 1992 holds a very influential position in the discourse generated by art produced by black South African artists. However this publication remains one of the very few texts which made a considerable attempt to critically engage black artists' work from new and non biased perspectives.



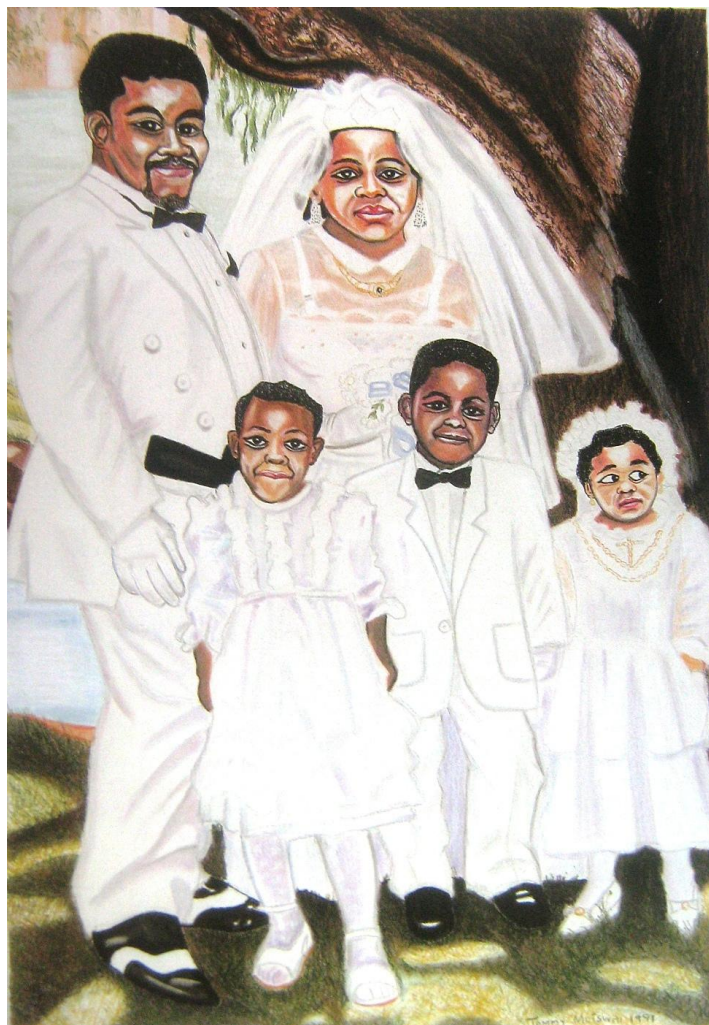
12. Motswai, T. *Happy Mother's Day, Mom.* 1989 Crayon on paper
54.2 x 74.7 cm



13. Motswai, T. *Meeting Hello!* 1990 crayon on paper 47.8 x 67.7 cm

It must be noted that not all the criticisms I have levelled against Motswai apply to his entire body of work. Some of his other work does showcase convincing characteristics of a tutored hand. In *'The Artist Man Tommy and Evelyn, Children Lenyalo at Lake from Florida Park'* 1991 (fig. 14), for example, Motswai convincingly portrays a reproduction of a poised wedding picture.

How then, does one explain the stylistic naivety of the previous two works (fig. 12 and 13) and many others like them? The answer to this question lies in Koloane's earlier claim that black artists were encouraged to produce work that was particularly crude and naïve. This means that Motswai possibly made a conscious decision to employ a very particular style in his work, a style which appeals to a steady market. In my capacity as a contemporary practicing artist, I strongly hold the view that the market to which Motswai's work appeals is a fringe market. It is not, the same market as that of such artists as Sam Nhlengethwa, Colbert Mashile, Mustafa Maluka, and other more main stream black artists. I do acknowledge, however, the fact that his work does provide a good point of departure into the debate of what mainstream art is. This perhaps explains Motswai's extensive representation in leading South African art museums and corporate collections. I shall return to this point at the end of this section of the paper wherein I will briefly discuss the different types of collectors in the South African art industry and their influential roles.



14. Motswai, T. *The Artist Man Tommy and Evelyn, Children Lenyalo at Lake from Florida Park*. 1991. pastel on paper. 101 x 69.5 cm

Joseph Manana

Between the years 2000 - 2003, I had the privilege of being enrolled in the same art class with two of KZN's very interesting contemporary painters. They were Siphiwe Zulu who has gained local acclaim for his colourful stippling (with acrylic paint on canvas or paper) technique; and Joseph Manana whose work is generally marked by a very clean and crisp palette, usually consisting of a well balanced colour scheme between cool and warm colours, almost to a point of graphic design standards. In retrospect, to have been a young black art student who barely knew much about the local art scene, it was indeed a privilege to have these two men as my fellow students. Manana and Zulu had a wealth of experience in the field of painting as untrained or self taught artists before finally enrolling into the art school at the then Technikon Natal and now Durban University of Technology. This meant that they were much older, both in age and experience, than all of their fellow students.

In our second year of study, which turned out to be our last year as fellow students since both these men did not complete the three year diploma course in Fine Art, we chose painting as one of our two majors. It was at this time that I got to learn a lot about these two artists' background in the local and national art scenes. It was here also that I was introduced to the duality of 'high art' vs. 'low art'. As stated earlier, these two artists had both been sustaining themselves and their families as full time artists for years prior to enrolling in the art school. It soon became clear that their rich art background was not necessarily contributing positively to their studying. Crit sessions held at the end of each two week module proved to be an unpleasant event for many students who could not take critical input from lectures very well.



15. Manana, J. *Lost Generation* 2004 Gouache on Paper 44 x 59 cm



16. Manana, J. Learn to Ride (date unknown)

There was nothing unusual about this tension as far as I was concerned, but not for Manana and Zulu. Their experience proved to be a big stumbling block in their learning experience and would later lead them to resenting the type of art education they were receiving from the art school. Learning that the skills and style which they acquired over many years were not always appreciated by those who held a much more authoritative opinion than their general audience was painful. What was even more painful, as Manana would often say, was realizing that their art was seen to be far lesser than another form of art and that this form of art was what they now had to learn to master. In other words they had to get rid of their preconceived ideas of what art was and absorb new and estranged notions of what art is.

Towards the end of our second year of study, Manana and I had grown closer as classmates, closer enough for him to share some of his thoughts regarding his dilemma. In our discussions it became clear to me that he was more than just concerned about having to learn new approaches to painting. He was concerned about the fact that the type of work he had been producing over many years was regarded as marginal to that which was taught at the art school and yet it was that same art which earned him and his family bread at the end of the day. This situation tore him apart because, though he did acknowledge the value of what the art school was offering him, he still needed to make a living. What further complicated the issue was that he was simultaneously working on a number of commissions whilst studying.

He would explain to me and another fellow painting student, Nkanyiso Ntshingila, that it was not easy for him to produce work that differed from his usual vocabulary because

that vocabulary had earned him a steady client base. He feared that the experiments which were encouraged at the art school were not going to be welcomed by his clients if they made their way on to his canvas. Again in retrospect, what was interesting about this situation was that Manana understood very well that his clientele consisted largely of white patrons and most importantly overseas clients who, to some degree, can be categorized as tourists. He also understood exactly what his clients wanted to see and that was the themes earlier mentioned by Koloane i.e. 'African identity' in its most simplest and naïve of forms. Some of his work based on these themes was available for sale through the consignment system at the AAC. The AAC played a very crucial role in marketing Manana and Zulu's work in addition to many other black artists as mentioned before. In the case of Manana, the marketing strategy employed by the AAC was that his work portrayed the social reality of black people in black communities. Speaking about his work, Manana often said that it was about black people's everyday struggles and sometimes joy. He was, and still is, a close observer of cultural changes that his people are going through as a result of shifting cultural, social and political climates. A piece which, perhaps, best illustrates this kind of concern is *'Lost Generation'* 2004.

In this picture Manana makes commentary on a very common scourge in our society i.e. the alarmingly large number of youths who lack vision and aspiration but instead waste their time on drugs and alcohol. The title of the work, *'Lost Generation'*, clearly alludes to this interpretation of the work. He depicts in the background a group of young men who appear to be sitting on a yellow ochre ledge and conversing as they indulge in alcoholic beverages. Behind the men is a plain blue colour which acts as some kind of back drop

intended to create an illusion of depth. On closer observation, however, that depth is not very well achieved. The plainness and flatness of the blue appears as if it is a solid wall against which the men are leaning with their backs. This reading of the image is rather awkward because it is not possible for the men to sit on a vertical wall with no horizontally protruding surface.

In the foreground of the image, Manana depicts a woman carrying a young man who could her son on her back. He is supposedly too intoxicated to walk. She is approaching the men in the background with her back at a slight angle against the viewer. Manana has achieved a slightly convincing use of perspective in positioning this figure in the foreground. The woman and the man she is carrying on her back are slightly bigger in size than the men depicted in the background. Her feet are located lower on the picture plane than the rest of the figures. Her head should have been higher up in the picture plane, above those of the men in the background in order to achieve a well balanced perspective. But it is not, hence I earlier said Manana has 'slightly' achieved convincing perspective. These devices are commonly employed in 2-dimensional art that portrays nature realistically. If an artist employs them in their work than automatically the work is judged by standards of that convention. Any unintentional deviation from the conventional use of such devices by the artist often results in their perceived failure in the craftsmanship of their work. Such is the case in Manana's *'Lost Generation'*.

If gauged by the usual standards of realism in painting, there are some clear inconsistencies in his work. The disproportionate-ness of the figures portrayed in this image and some of his other work (see fig. 16) is an example of such technical shortcomings. Another worrying factor about Manana's portrayal of nature, particularly human

figures, is his apparent use of a formula. The manner in which he has portrayed the men in the background of this work is a good indicator of this observation. They all appear as though they are variations of the same person posing in different gestures.

The colour scheme employed by Manana in this picture is very well balanced between warm and cool colours. The colour of the clothes worn by the depicted people also plays into this attitude. This results in the image assuming a very graphic quality. I must stress that this practice is very common in the work of painters who showcase their work at the AAC, one of which is Sibusiso Duma whose work I will discuss shortly hereafter.

Unlike Motswai whose style is intentionally 'naïve' as established earlier, Manana's artistic vision reads as if it wants to be a realistic portrayal of nature but, as a result of the above mentioned technical glitches, he falls short of this. Instead he undesirably falls into the category of the so called 'African self taught artist', a term which is often used by art dealers when marketing this type of art. This practice perpetuates stereotyped notions of African artists being incapable of thinking outside the paradigm of tribal and township art.

Sibusi Duma

Duma is one of KZN's young and developing painters. As mentioned earlier in this paper (chapter 1: 32) he does not have an academic background in fine art but was apprenticed to the late KZN based Trevor Makhoba along with other trainees. According to Hayden Proud and Gabi Ngcobo (Proud, 2006: 310) in 1994 Makhoba initiated the Philange Art Project in Umlazi. They also claim that this project benefited about 18 young artists.

Welcome Danca and Themba Siwela, also young black painters based locally, are distinguished examples of Duma's fellow trainees under Makhoba's tutelage (ibid).

Makhoba had a very strong influence on the work of his students. This influence can be traced in their technique, subject matter and themes. In order to fully appreciate Duma's work one must first make an attempt to understand his mentor's (Makhoba) artistic vision. It should be noted that Makhoba was also a self taught artist¹⁸. Proud and Ngcobo (Proud, 2006: 310) state that...

Trevor Makhoba's art is uniquely grounded on his experience of life and contemporary events in Kwa Zulu Natal. He reflects on this experience.... with elements of the satirical that combines social realism with the surreal.

The work of many other black artists who have emerged out of KZN also focuses a lot on their experience of life and contemporary events in their place of location. In other words, particularity of their location in KZN becomes a common theme in their work. The second part of the above citation is essential to understanding how this view applies in Makhoba's work. His work was often based on grim and sombre themes such as crime poverty and disease (HIV and Aids in particular). Though very disturbing in nature, these themes are a reflection of our social reality. Because Makhoba made use of a very graphic visual vocabulary, those who come to contact with his work are forced to face subjects they often would rather not.

¹⁸ This creates a very interesting situation if compared to the roles played by Skotnes and Ainslie in training black artists. It should be borne in mind that, on the one hand both these men had a rich academic background which informed their teaching. On the other hand, Makhoba's artistic vision and teaching methodology, was only informed by his personal experience as an artist.



17. Makhoba, T. *Don't Fall in Love at Night* (undated) oil on board 60cm x 80cm

An even more interesting aspect of his work is his ability to use a surrealistic vision in order to achieve a balance between the sombre mood and an imagined humorous atmosphere. The resulting effect is work that confronts the viewer in a provocative way yet also permitting him/her some lighter moments in engaging it as seen in '*Don't Fall in Love at Night*' (undated).

The above kind of sophistication is scarce in the work of his students. In instances where it does occur, it often borrows excessively from Makhoba's style thus raising questions of originality as per my earlier discussion (page 32). Amongst some of the characteristics which Duma has clearly absorbed from his mentor are, firstly his use of bright flat colours in areas where colour is vastly applied. Secondly, his extensive use of a contrasting palette of cool and warm colours. In this regard blues and yellows are often the most dominant colours of his palette. The third and last characteristic which is clearly borrowed from Makoba is the unique manner in which he depicted his human subjects. Black people in their various surroundings were his most common subject. Makhoba depicted human figures in a way that was not entirely true to nature. He exaggerated certain features of their anatomy, almost the same way as that seen in comic art. This stylistic decision seems to have been informed by general stereotypes of African people's anatomy. Female figures, for instance, would often be depicted with extraordinary large breasts and buttocks. He often depicted male figures in their traditional Zulu attire, boasting big bellies and muscular limbs.



18. Duma, S.

The Ghost 2002

gouache on paper

75cm x 125cm

In urban scenes, men are often depicted in various clothes which are carefully considered to indicate their class or position in social hierarchy. In both his male and female figures the faces often show exaggerated features e.g. a big flat nose, a wide mouth with thick lips. This device allowed him to effectively manipulate the facial expressions of his figures to invoke a sense of humour. Though it seems innocent in Makhoba's work but this device can be detrimental to the integrity of the work since it plays on derogatory stereotypes of black people. What counter balances this potentially negative aspect of his work is the grim reality it references. It was this ability to counter balance humour and tragedy in his work which set him far apart from his apprentices, including Duma. Though the majority of Duma's work may not be at the same level of sophistication with that of his mentor, there are however some instances when his work does strike a balance between humour and sincerity. *'The Ghost'* 2003 is one of such works.

In this piece Duma depicts a scene in which a male skeleton in the foreground is approaching a rural home stead with his back against the viewer. He is carrying, in one hand a brief case and on the other an 'iwisa' (traditional stick). In the middle ground of the picture a women appears to be startled by the sight of the approaching skeleton to a point where she drops her broom as she flees. Another woman in the background also has her back against both the approaching skeletal figure and the viewer as if fleeing. Typical of Duma, the narrative in this picture is not hidden, yet it lends itself to multiple possible interpretations, an irregular tendency in the works of many artists who fall in his category. One very convincing such interpretation is that the work makes social commentary about black men who leave their families behind in rural areas to live and

work in cities. With HIV and AIDS at pandemic levels in the country this often means that the risk of exposure to sexually transmitted diseases for these men is very high. This risk is also extended to their spouses or life partners at home upon their return. This is the exact moment from which Duma's picture takes its cue. Posing a similar, regard Proud and Ngcobo suggests that "...a ghost may symbolise bad blood...This bad blood could also allude to the rampant HIV and AIDS in rural communities where a man as a bread winner might migrate to the city to work and, as often happens, find pleasures with other women" (Ngcobo. and Proud. in Proud, 2006: 338). If we go by this interpretation of the work than it would be fair to say that Duma's work, in this particular case, humorously addresses a very serious social concern. Earlier I commended Makhoba for his balancing of humour and tragedy in his work. If we take into consideration the fact that by far the larger client base of the AAC consist of tourists, one wonders if the use of humour in such work does not also serve as a marketing strategy to ensure adorability of the work.

2.2 Validation of Creative Output: Public and Private Collectors

Following my views on Motswai, Manana and Duma's work, one would expect that such work is regarded as 'non-sophisticated' and 'poor quality' by certain art audiences. It follows that this attitude should be reflected by poor sales of their work. This presupposition should be truer in the case of the academically orientated art audience consisting largely of critics, curators and collectors with a keen interest on 'new' and 'cutting edge art'. The findings of my research, however, have revealed that this is not entirely true. Motswai, for example, is represented in some of the most established and

authoritative public and private art collections in South Africa. Some notable public institutions which represent him in their collections are: Durban Art Gallery (DAG), Johannesburg Art Gallery (JAG), Iziko (Formerly the South African National Gallery) and others. His work also features in some of the country's top university art collections. The University of the Witwatersrand and the University of South Africa are notable examples in this regard. Standard Bank, Amalgamated Banks of South Africa (ABSA) and Sasol are amongst some of the major corporate institutions which feature his work in their art collections (Cherie de Villiers Gallery, 2008).

What all of these institutions have in common with each other is that they are usually bound by their status as public institutions to collect a wide variety of art genres in order to fairly represent diverse forms of creativity from communities they serve. It must be noted that the criteria of collecting used in corporate collections may sometimes be informed by the individual corporation's business ethos. With regards to private art collectors, it makes sense to say that in the context of South Africa it is this type of clientele which constitutes the 'informal art market'¹⁹. By 'private art collectors' I am also referring to the general public whose motivation for buying art is simply to decorate their homes.

¹⁹While I may have included tourists in this discussion as a component of the informal art market, it should be noted that there does exist an art genre of 'Tourist Art' which has a very distinct art market, often referred to as the 'Tourist Art Market'. Though a part of the informal art market, this market is not the main subject of this study. It features in this discussion purely because sometimes there are overlaps between art genres that occupy the periphery of mainstream art industry and those in the main art industry.

I must reemphasise that the majority of the local art client base consists of the white community. Private collectors play a very important role in both the formal and informal art markets. Their role is not very easy to critically evaluate and falls outside the scope of this discussion.

In both the formal and informal art markets private collectors are integral parts of the process of validating artists' creative efforts. This view is more applicable in the case of the informal art market than in its contrary whereby the media and academic discourse play a much more influential role. A common phenomenon in the informal art market is that, the more a type of work is collected by private collectors the more artists are inclined to massively produce it or something similar to it. Motivation for this behaviour is that 'it sells'. This mass production of the same motif results in that type of work being reduced to the status of craft thus losing value since craft is generally viewed as inferior to fine art. Some artists do this consciously and at their own discretion but many, especially, those who operate in the fringe of mainstream art practice are encouraged by art dealers as per Koloane's earlier suggestion (see pages 61 -62) . Expanding on this note but in the context of the 1970s Koloane (1989: 225) explains that...

The lure of a 'fast buck' and what unsuspecting artists thought was a short-cut to fame and fortune became the twin sirens of temptation and misfortune and proved detrimental. The artists did not realise that they were being systematically exploited, and their creativity emasculated, by unscrupulous dealers.

This was the trend back in the 1960s and 1970s and, to a large extent, still is today. As long as fringe markets which support the kind of work produced by the likes of Motswai, Manana and Duma still exist, black artists who do not have alternative means of earning income will always be vulnerable to the lure of a 'fast buck'.

CHAPTER 3

THE MAINSTREAM MARKET: DEMAND FOR A CONTEMPORARY APPROACH TO ARTMAKING (PAINTING) - POST 1994

3.1 Mainstream Art

In the previous chapter my main objective was to discuss the influential roles played by different art establishments and institutions in the stylistic development of work produced by black artists from the 1950s to 2000. In that discussion I extensively interrogated the question of how informal art education and the art market, influenced the type of work produced by black artists. In this chapter I will discuss how since 1994 a growing number of black artists avoid producing work that is characterised by stereotypes such as those discussed in the previous chapter. In this regard I will primarily focus on the work of Sam Nhlengetwa and Colbert Mashile. As a contemporary artist with a traditional academic background myself, I will also reflect on my own experience of dealing with the South African art industry.

In the previous chapter I expressed my concurrence with De Jager's indirect description of the formal art sector as 'the large and recognised commercial galleries' (1992: 172). Whilst this may seem like a simple and ideal description of the formal art market, it is also too broad to be accepted without contention. It is, therefore, important that I should begin by expanding on this description prior to engaging on what I have set out to do in this chapter.

Today, 'Mainstream' in the context of 'mainstream art market' denotes not only major commercial galleries but a whole lot of other vital factors. Two such factors are: media coverage and academic discourse.

Media

It is common knowledge in the art industry that media such as the press, radio, internet, and television play a key role in generating publicity for art exhibitions. Some outstanding local examples of such publications are: The Mail and Guardian (which has a dedicated art section) - news papers, Art South Africa - art journals and Artthrob - online journals. Usually it is very expensive for galleries to obtain advertising slots in such media. But still many galleries, especially those which occupy the centre of the local art industry, adhere to this practice. They hardly have a choice in this matter because like in any other business, it is crucial to advertise your product well in order to effectively compete in the markets of your trade²⁰. One can then deduce from this assertion that the more financially established galleries such as The Goodman, Michael Stevenson Contemporary, Bell Roberts Contemporary and other powerhouse galleries in the local art industry can afford their artists more exposure in the media thus positioning them (artists) at the centre of local art discourse. It follows therefore that such galleries and the artists they represent serve as bench marks against which we measure competence and excellence of our artists. However, there are other galleries that also showcase exhibitions which push the boundary between high and low art, thus effectively contributing to a healthy contemporary art discourse, yet they cannot necessarily be classified as major

²⁰ What is interesting to note at this point is that costs incurred this way are not always covered by the gallery. The KwaZulu-Natal Society of Arts (KZNSA), for example, usually obligates exhibiting artists to pay for the costs of advertising. This includes costs incurred in the printing and posting of invitation cards.

commercial galleries. The KZNSA in Durban and AVA in Cape Town are perhaps the most notable examples in this regard²¹. These galleries hold reputable positions in the local and international art scenes for their role in grooming young and developing artists. They serve as a springboard from which many emerging artists leap into successful professional art careers. I, for example, am one of such artists²². It is this aspect of these galleries that, perhaps, attracts the media's attention.

Media is not only used to advertise exhibitions as may have been inadvertently implied earlier. It also serves as an effective means of publishing exhibition reviews. In a country such as South Africa where the majority of the public does not possess adequate knowledge of fine art, the media holds a very authoritative and influential voice. On this note Kwezi Gule states that, '...I noticed that for the most part, the only writers who were prepared to engage with the larger public on art issues were journalists' (2006: 215). The vast majority of South Africans who are not art literate depend on media to decide for them what is good or bad art. This leads to a situation where the type of work which appeals to the 'taste' of those in the writing fraternity will enjoy their acclamation in art reviews. The resulting effect, as Gule suggests, is that, 'many people do not buy what they like but what they think they are supposed to like' (ibid).

This does not, however, mean that those who write about art in South Africa enjoy enough power to randomly criticise or approve artistic tendencies. They also

²¹ What distinguishes these two galleries from the previous examples is that they are section 21 organizations. Their status as public organizations requires that they hold an inclusive approach in their mission and vision statements. In addition to this, these galleries also have an obligation to support underdeveloped and emerging artists.

²² In 2004 I was selected to participate in the Young Artist Project (hosted by the KZNSA) as a young and emerging artist. The work I produced for that show culminated in to my first solo exhibition. The media exposure I received in that exhibition subsequently led to several galleries approaching me to participate in their group exhibitions between 2004 and 2006.

intellectually challenge each other's notions of what is good and bad art, or what is high and low art²³. By doing so, they keep the discourse 'alive'. Those artistic tendencies which do not feature in this debate automatically land on the margins of the local art scene thus constituting the informal art sector.

Academic Art Discourse

Due to the fact that the majority of those who write about art in South Africa are either practicing artists with an academic background or just academics in well established institutions, their writing in the above discussed media generally assumes an academic stance towards the subject of local art and tendencies thereof. Because in the apartheid era black people were deprived of a good quality art education which would have allowed them chances to occupy central and critical positions in art discourse, the majority of people who hold such positions in the South African art industry are white. Amongst the more established names in this regard are Colin Richard, Virginia Mckenny, Emma Bedford, Rory Bester, Andries Oliphant, Tracy Murinik and many others. In the light of this, it is fair to assert that much of the discourse generated by work produced by black artists prior 1994 would have been largely informed by western attitudes towards the art of the 'other'²⁴.

The demise of apartheid has resulted in a gradual integration of black people into academic institutions which had been previously reserved for whites. Thembinkosi

²³ This kind of critical engagement amongst those who write about art is exemplified in Sean O'Toole's citation of Ivor Powel's statement that, "To those who would dismiss Tillim's work on the grounds that it is not fine art photography but photojournalism... I offer the following riposte: Fuck 'em" (O'Toole, 2004: 8)

²⁴ This assertion does not necessarily imply that all pre-1994 white contributors in the South African art literary discourse were biased or prejudiced against black artists. However, since apartheid was based on racial difference and championed the concept of white supremacy, it is theoretically impossible to argue that 'some' white writers would have been more objective and less prejudiced against black artists' work in their reviews than others.

Goniwe, Kwezi Gule, Sipho Mdanda, Gabi Ngcobo are amongst the few but growing number of black graduates who have since 1994 been actively involved in broadening perspectives on local art production. This emergence of 'alternative' voices in local art discourse has opened up opportunities for black artists to experiment with new media and themes that locate their work outside the framework of western perspectives on the art of the 'other'.

Since 1994 there have been several curated exhibitions aimed at showcasing new experiments and discourses permeating through the work of South African artists of all races. These exhibitions have been staged both locally and abroad. The two, perhaps, most notable of such exhibitions are, *A Decade of Democracy - South African Art 1994 - 2004 from the Permanent Collection of Iziko: SANG*, and *A Decade of Democracy: Witnessing South Africa*. The former was curated by Emma Bedford, then curator of contemporary paintings and sculpture at Iziko - SANG, and the latter by Tumelo Mosaka in collaboration with other cultural theorists from South Africa and the United States²⁵. These exhibitions were aimed at mapping out the artistic and conceptual developments in the work of South African artists in the first decade of our democracy. The emphasis in these exhibitions was not necessarily on work produced by black artists in particular but by all artists of the newly born nation²⁶. It is important to note that the majority of black artists who featured in the most significant of these exhibitions have a formal academic background. This implies that these artists have been schooled in a tradition which

²⁵ A significant aspect of this exhibition is that it was conceived by theorists based between both South Africa and the United States. It initially made a tour of the States between 2004 and 2005 before being brought to South Africa (Van Wyk, 2004: 5).

²⁶ In accordance with the title of this dissertation I have consciously chosen to primarily focus on the work of black artists.

embrace and promote academic art discourse thus locating them at the centre of contemporary art practice in the local and international art scenes. It should be borne in mind that, earlier in this chapter, I inferred that mainstream art practice is determined through a combination of factors, amongst which media and academic discourse play a vital role.

At this point I will interject the preceding discussion by bringing into the picture the notion of black artists who do not necessarily have a formal academic background from mainstream academic (previously 'whites only' universities) institutions yet their work invariably qualify as 'mainstream'. Some prolific examples of such artists in the South African contemporary art scene are: Samson Mudzunga, Jackson Hlungwane, Noria Mabasa, Johannes Segogela, Johannes Maswanganyi, Philip Rikhotso, Phuthuma Seoka, Willie Bester and many others working in the sculptural idiom. Trevor Makhoba (1965 - 2003), Esther Mahlangu, Dumile Feni (1939-42 - 1991), Charkes Nkosi, Sam Nhlengethwa are some few examples amongst many artists who work in 2-dimentional media (Proud. 2006). What many of these artists have in common is that their work neither falls neatly under the categories of mainstream (formal) art nor under African traditional art (informal). These artists occupy the blurred space that exists between these two categories. This assertion is perhaps best exemplified by the fact that though many of them work in media which supposedly locates their work outside academic art practice, the inventiveness with which they use it in presenting their interpretations of the world merits their inclusion in contemporary art discourse. In the following section I will interrogate this thought further by looking at how Nhlengetwa who predominantly works

in the painting, collage and printmaking idioms manipulates this media to produce work that places him at the centre of contemporary South African art.

3.2 Integration of Black Artists into the Mainstream Art Industry

Sam Nhlengethwa

Nhlengethwa is a very well established South African artist. Born in 1955 (Johannesburg - Springs), a mere seven years after the official beginning of the apartheid era (Proud, 2006: 306). He is part of a wide generation of black artists who lived and practiced during the trying times of that era. Having lived his youth at a time when being black meant he could not study art in a formal academic environment, he received his training at various informal art schools. These include the Johannesburg Art Foundation (1976 - 1977) and the Rorkes Drift Art Centre (1977 - 1978) where he obtained his diploma in fine art (ibid). Nhlengethwa's work covers a wide range of themes which include labour (exploitation of black people), political (oppression), interiors (private spaces), music and personal emotions (his affection for jazz and love for his brother) [ibid]. One of the most distinguishing characteristics of his work is that in his pursuit of the above mentioned themes, Nhlengethwa uses imagery which clearly references black people's historical experiences in the townships. The most striking of these is his *Glimpses of the Fifties and Sixties*, a series of collages which he produced in 2003. In that series Nhlengethwa used images which he cut out of archival material such as magazines and other documentary publications to reconstruct imagined moments of the fifties and sixties in black townships (O'Toole, 2004: 81). He does not only depict the dark and gloomy times



18. Nhlelengethwa. *Miriam Makeba and the SA Big Band* 2003 collage and oil
On paper



19. Nhlelengethwa *Shaprville* 1992 Photomontage, collage, watercolour
And pencil on paper.

under oppression, but also include happier times such as seen in *Mariam Makeba and the SA Big Band* (2003) where despite the monochromatic tones of the collaged archival images, the picture still invokes a joyous mood of song and dance. Sombreness was featured in this series through such works as *Miners Showering* (2003) and more.

While I may have consciously categorized Nhlengethwa as an example of contemporary black artists whose work does not perpetuate the earlier discussed stereotyped notions of African-ness for marketing reasons (see page 62); there still are some serious areas of concern emanating from his work. One such concern pertains to the content of his work. As discussed in Chapter One of this paper, images from both Township and Resistance Art were characterised by the same content as that largely evident in his work. Shebeen scenes, riot scenes and other related themes are the most common subjects in this regard. Perhaps the key questions that ought to be put forward at this point are firstly, *what makes his work different from typical Township or Resistance art?* And secondly, *what qualifies it as an example of contemporary mainstream art?*

In approaching these questions it is important to note that the images referred to above were produced in 2003, nine years after the demise of apartheid yet they are still characterized by Township and Resistance Art content and vision. If we compare '*Miners Showering*' with '*Sharpeville*' 1992 (figure), for example, there is hardly any difference in the content of these two works yet they were produced at completely different eras of South African history - the former in the post-democratic era and the latter in the pre-democratic era as clearly indicated by its title which alludes to the infamous Sharpeville massacre of 1960. It is therefore fitting to deduce from this assertion that '*Sharpeville*' can

be regarded as a reflection of the stifled political climate in which it was produced. This leaves '*Miners Showering*' in an awkward position since, as stated earlier, it was produced nine years after the demise of apartheid yet its content still points back to the apartheid context. In view of the above, it would not be illogical to surmise that perhaps the compelling reason why Nhlengethwa does not seem to have significantly shifted away from the past to the present in his representation of the realities and experiences of black people is because of market influences. Nhlengethwa's art career materialized during the apartheid era, a time when it was almost a national imperative for black artists to produce work which either denounced apartheid or created an awareness of the plight of black people in South Africa. As discussed earlier in this paper, this kind of work had a big niche in the market of that time. This historical fact can be regarded as a motive behind his nostalgic content and artistic vision. In a review of *Glimpses from the Fifties and Sixties* Sean O'Toole raised concerns over Nhlengethwa's use of images which he (Nhlengethwa) claimed were from his personal archives, and therefore of sentimental value to him, in an exhibition where they were for sale (O'Toole, 2004: 81). In what reads like a disapproving voice O'Toole poses the question 'But why offer these private images for sale (ibid)?' Again a hypothetical answer to this question could be, market influence.

There could very well be other reasons for Nhlengethwa's persistence in basing his work in the same old themes, but in the context of this study, the above view is very enticing, a view which brings me back to the earlier two questions. In the light of the preceding discussion it is clear that there are no thematic or conceptual differences between Nhlengethwa's work and that seen in Township Art and Resistance Art, thus answering

the first part of the question. However, it is worth noting that his collage and photomontage techniques do place his work within a much wider practical discourse since these are devices whose origin is closely associated with postmodernist art tendencies. Still, this is not convincing enough to be offered as an answer to the second question regarding the qualification of his work as an example of mainstream art. It is perhaps at this juncture that market influence comes across as a possible answer to this question. In this regard I am drawn to the fact that Nhlengethwa is represented by the Goodman Gallery which, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, is one of the most financially established and influential galleries in the local art scene (see page 85). In that discussion I argued that, due to their influential positions in the local art industry, mainstream galleries do have the capacity to locate their artists at the centre of contemporary art discourse. What can be drawn from this discussion is that Nhlengethwa undoubtedly, typifies the complexity of the South African art market where there are very blurred borders between existing conceptions of mainstream and marginal forms of art.

Colbert Mashile

In the context of this study, Colbert Mashile belongs to the 'new or post-apartheid generation' of black South African artists. My arrival at this simple categorization of him is based on the fact that he is one of a growing number of young black artists who have, since 1994, obtained their qualifications through academic institutions that had been previously reserved for whites. However, it is important to note that unlike many of his peers, Mashile boasts a much richer academic background. He received his initial training at the Johannesburg Art Foundation where he obtained a National Diploma in Fine Art

(1992 -1994) prior to enrolling at Wits where he obtained a BA Degree, also in Fine Art (1996 - 2000) (www.galleryonthesquare.co.za). In view of the latter, it is fair to suggest that this exposure to the influences of both formal and informal art education (which are extensively discussed in Chapter Two and under sub-headings 'Media' and 'Academic Discourse' in this chapter) inform his approach to art-making. I shall return to aspects of this suggestion later in this discussion.

Apart from his unique academic background, another interesting factor about Mashile is that he is one of South Africa's few young and prominent black artists who, despite a growing demand for 'multimedia art' by the contemporary art market, still mainly work in traditional media (painting and printmaking in his case). Also featuring in this category are such names as Mustafa Maluka, Johannes Phokela, Kudzanai Chiurai and a few more others, myself included. The work of this generation of painters is characterized, not so much by preconceived conventionality of their medium, but their attitude towards it. Their approach to painting is marked by an apparent effort to reclaim it from its rigid historical conventions into a new and experimental mode of expression. Phokela is perhaps, an exceptional example in this regard. In his work he addresses a wide variety of issues centred on 'identity politics', but the critical aspects of his work lies on his subversive use of images appropriated from western history of painting. His apparently playful yet serious reinterpretations of Dutch and Flemish masters such as Reubens and Jordaens 'weave a personal history into this historical canon' to put in the words which

aptly describe his work in the unpublished catalogue of the exhibition 'New Painting'²⁷. Because of his use of pastiche Phokela's work, unlike that of his earlier mentioned contemporaries, stylistically still makes direct reference to the historical western canons of painting that inform it. The works of his fellow contemporaries, on the other hand, idiosyncratically demonstrate an extreme shift from conventional painting both practically and conceptually. This kind of attitude radiantly permeates through Mashile's work. In his work Mashile demonstrates both stylistic as well as conceptual shifts from western conventional painting. In addition to these shifts, he has mastered the use of non-conventional media, particularly, acrylic (diluted with water) on brown card or craft paper, something he attributes to his early years of training at the JAF where financial circumstances compelled students to productively use cheap materials²⁸. On the use of this technique, Mashile explained that diluting acrylic with excessive amounts of water increases its fluidity and transparency (ibid). Because of its extraordinarily fluid nature, diluted acrylic forces one to apply it in quick and instinctive brush strokes (ibid). According to Mashile (ibid) the two most important benefits of using this technique are, firstly, that the paint dries quicker than usual thus allowing one to apply it in multiple layers in a short space of time. And, secondly, the crudeness of craft paper coupled with the organic border that characterizes most of his earlier works adds to his pursuit of an instinctive and non conventional artistic vision (ibid).

²⁷ New Painting was an exhibition curated by Storm Van Rensburg in 2006. The conceptual premise of that exhibition was to map out and showcase new and experimental tendencies in contemporary painting (South Africa).

²⁸ In 2004 I had the privilege of participating in a four weeks residency programme with Mashile and two other artists at Caversham Centre for Artists and writers. In that residency Mashile and I shared the same cottage. This gave me an opportunity to thoroughly engage him on matters pertaining to this study. Some of the information used in this paper is based on notes I took following our discussions.



20. Mashile *Untitled 2004* watercolour on paper



21. Mashile *Legal 9* (date unavailable) oil pastel
On paper

I will now discuss selected examples of Mashile's work which support my earlier argument that he has made both the conceptual and stylistic shifts from conventional painting. In this regard I have selected '*Untitled*' (figure 20) 2004 and '*Legal 9 Hot Charcoal*' (figure 21) (undated). Prior to engaging in that discussion it is important to begin by considering the conceptual basis of his work. On that note the website 'Artprint SA' quotes him as saying, 'I come from a place that is shrouded by powerful cultural norms and customs' about himself. The website further states that he...

...explores the psychological impact of traditional circumcision and initiation rituals on initiates. He also explores the often problematic narratives collective cultural determinants within these communities (Artprint SA: 2009).

This description of Mashile's work locates his work within the broader conceptual arena of 'identity discourse'. It should be borne in mind that the latter is a common theme in mainstream contemporary art practice, both in the local and international art contexts.

In '*Untitled*' (figure 20) Mashile depicts what appears to be a raised tank of water with water oozing out of four outlets located around its base. Below the raised tank are what appears to be crops of some sort, and the streaming water is supposedly irrigating them. Unlike his usual work on paper, this piece is marked by a very minimal colour scheme. The sky ranges between very light and mid tones of grey. The crops have been crudely textured with black conte and given a light wash of yellow. As per my earlier discussion of his media, in this work Mashile has used very cheap and crude material, which negates the notion of artworks as sacred objects that ought to be preserved and therefore must be

produced with only the best materials available. This sense of crudeness is reiterated by the loosely demarcated border. While the narrative in 'Untitled' may appear to be simple and straight forward, it should be considered that Mashile often employs the use of metaphors in his work. In this instance, for example, the raised tank with water flowing out of its base signifies the notion of man as a conduit for life to his fellow men, almost in a similar way to that echoed in the concept of 'ubuntu' (2004).

An inescapable aspect of Mashile's above and other earlier works is that, though he maintains that it reflects his way of dealing with his psychological trauma, ironically it can best be described as visually pleasing. His use of the modernist vocabulary such as that seen in the work of Mark Rothko potentially results in his work being viewed as embodying the 'art for art's sake' values which characterized the modern era of painting. In what is, perhaps, the most accurate articulation of the above analogy, Michael Smith wrote in a review of his (Mashile) show that...

Mashile readily acknowledges the influence of the Colourfield offshoot of Abstract Expressionism, particularly Mark Rothko, in his approach to layering colours. Like Rothko his formats are often divided into horizontal bands; that is where the similarity ends; however, Mashile eschews pure abstraction and populates his images with loosely rendered structures and abodes, hybridised figures and accoutrements of rural life (Smith: 2008).

'Legal 9' (figure 21) best exemplifies Rothko's influence on Mashile as per Smith's above suggestion. That Mashile 'eschews pure abstraction and populates his images with loosely rendered structures and abodes, hybridised figures and accoutrements of rural life' is a point worth noting in Smith's statement because it addresses the concern I raised

earlier regarding his use of the modernist vocabulary which potentially results in his work being seen as more aesthetically pleasing and less conceptual. Whilst Smith's statement encourages us to look beyond the modernists influence on Mashile's work, I must admit that there are some clear characteristics of commercial art in his (Mashile) work as a result of which, it can be argued that it is not mainstream.

In my earlier mentioned Caversham discussions with Mashile, the question of market influence on his work came up in numerous occasions. Mashile held the view that it is not easy to claim that it is the market trends which dictate or influence artists to produce certain types of work. He argued that the dynamics of the art industry is a complex phenomenon, and that the reality could actually be the other way around, in which case it is the artists who influence the markets thus setting trends as opposed to following them. On this issue, Mashile also brought up the question, 'why should artists be ashamed to produce work that sells (2004)?' The nature of this question is rhetoric and requires a dedicated platform in order to be adequately engaged. However, in the context of this study, it implies that the question of market influence on the work of artists is a debatable issue with no ultimate answers.

My Own Work

'Hybrid Culture' 2008, an exhibition which serves as partial fulfilment of my Master's Degree in Fine Art and therefore the second part to this paper, showcases work I produced over the past five years. The greater part of the work is based on a wide variety of ideas and themes ranging from 'Hybrid Identity' in which case it challenges notions of

'authentic' identity, to 'Socio-Political Concerns' wherein it focused on some of the most critical issues in contemporary Africa as shall be evident in my discussion of selected works. Amongst the above mentioned concerns are issues of land and ownership of it, wealth, poverty, political instability, and other related issues. The greatest motivation behind the production of my work in the duration of this period has been, largely, to increase my understanding of the media I work with and to push it (media) beyond its preconceived limitations. In this regard I work with a variety of media, but predominantly with acrylic and oil on board, canvas, and paper. For drawing I usually work with traditional media such as pastels, charcoal, led and pencil. Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish between a painting and drawing in my work because of my mixed media approach. My drawings serve as both preparatory works for paintings and as a means of experimenting with ideas, in which case they can be regarded as works within their own right. In general, the key aspect of my work is that it is an ongoing experiment which looks at life around me for inspiration hence I maintain that this extensive body of work is informed by my daily life experiences as an urban inhabitant. Admittedly as an artist my perspective on the greater world is informed, first and foremost, by my immediate environment and cultural milieu. It is for this reason that in my work I usually reference urban life.

Regarding the question of whether my work can be categorized as mainstream contemporary art, the above discussion already provides what can be regarded as some characteristics of mainstream art.



22. Shibase *Reddish - Pink Circle* 2004
Acrylic and oil on paper



23. Shibase *Urbanization* 2006 Acrylic on
canvas



24. Shibase *Power and Military Might* 2008
Mixed Media on paper

In this case I am particularly referring to the above discussed content of my work. Because of its focus on notions of identity and more especially Post Colonial Discourse, my work does qualify as mainstream. It should be borne in mind that Post Colonial Discourse is a major theoretical component of postmodernism, a phenomenon which is often described as a philosophical view of the world that discourages grand narratives. This aspect of postmodernity forms an underlying current to my work in both the practical and conceptual levels. Further more, my unconventional and experimental approach to painting and drawing, which are commonly regarded as traditional media, also qualify my work as mainstream.

'Reddish-Pink Circle' 2004 (figure 22) is an example of my earlier works of mixed media on paper. In a similar way to *Mashile*, stylistically it is inspired by the Abstract Expressionists' vocabulary, a tendency which occurs in numerous other works including *'Urbanization'* 2006. On closer observation, however, in the bottom right hand corner of the image there is some figurative motif i.e. a small illustration of a scene with a communication tower, a tree and a hut. This scene is encircled by a bright red-pink from which the title of the work is derived. The rest of the image is marked by bold brush strokes of the colours pink, purple and black. These brush strokes result in a dense but captivating atmosphere.

The underlying theme in the work is hinted at in the above mentioned figurative scene. It highlights the urban - rural dichotomy which is a major part of South Africa's social reality. The communication tower is a recurring motif in many of my works from this period. It symbolises the hegemony of technology and information in our age, a critical

aspect of the above mentioned urban - rural dichotomy since the greater part of the population which is located in rural areas has very limited access to technology and as a result are deprived of information. This reality results in an undesirable situation in which there is a great imbalance in the population's participation in the economy of the country.

It is this kind of critical engagement with contemporary issues, coupled with visual experiments, which has resulted in my work being included in some of the most significant shows in South Africa and also abroad. Examples of such exhibitions are, the earlier mentioned *New Painting: A group Exhibition of Recent South African Art* 2006, *Spier Contemporary Art Exhibition* 2007, *MTN New Contemporaries Exhibition* 2008 and others. Media coverage of my work generated from these and other exhibition has clearly played a big part in locating me in within contemporary discourse. With regards to the question of market influence on my work I have always been wary of dealers and institutions which entice me with financial gains to produce work which meets their preferences. However, being an art lecturer as well as an artist, means that I am always exposed to the zeitgeist of the local and international art scenes. This implies that, more or less, at all times I am aware of what the art markets demand. I try to be honest with myself and not reproduce what the market demands but stick to my artistic vision. However, I must admit that it is difficult to argue that my awareness of market trends does not have a subconscious influence on what I produce.

Conclusion

The hypothesis on which this study was based is that the art market exerts influence on the majority of black artists and that this influence can be stylistically traced in their work. Inclined to that thought was the notion that there exists two major types of art markets i.e. the formal and informal art sectors. The informal sector, on the one hand, has been defined as largely consisting of those artists and galleries who operate on the fringes of the mainstream art sector. On the other hand, mainstream art has been defined as a much wider phenomenon characterized by such factors as major academic institutions, academic discourse, media and major commercial galleries.

In my examination of the above hypothesis it emerged that, this hypothesis is particularly true in the case of those black artists who depend on their art sales for a living. However, the line between these two art sectors or markets is not always clear. The work of such artists as Nhlengethwa, for example, bears more stylistic characteristics of the Township Art idiom - an outdated mode of expression, than of contemporary mainstream art yet he is held at high regard within contemporary art discourse. In the case of Motswai, though he has been categorized in this study as a black artist who belongs to the informal art sector, perhaps in a lesser degree, his work also exemplifies the complexity of the earlier mentioned hypothesis.

Amongst important findings revealed by this research concerning contemporary notions of marginal and mainstream art is the fact that, academic discourse, media and major galleries such as The Goodman Gallery, Michael Stevenson, Bell Roberts and others, play an influential role in defining contemporary mainstream art. Also on the note of mainstream art in South Africa, the study has confirmed my presupposition that the post 1994 period is marked by a growing number of young black artists with a formal academic background, and that these artists do manage to avoid producing work which negates stereotyped notions art by black artist. It must be noted, however that even in the case of these artists the line between marginal and mainstream is sometimes blurred.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Addleson, J. 1990. The Zulu Vision in Art. *The Lantern*. 60.
2. Artprint SA, 2008. Colbert Mashile [online]. Available at:
<http://www.artprintsa.com.colbert-mashile.html> [accessed 10 January 2008].
3. Africus. 1995. *Johannesburg Biennale: Catlogue*. Johannesburg
4. Bedford, E. 2004. *A Decade of Democracy: South African Art from 1994-2004 from the Permanent Collection of Iziko – South African National Gallery*. Cape Town: Double Storey Books
5. Berman, E. 1993. *Painting in South Africa*. South Africa: Southern Book Publishers (Pty) Ltd.
6. Cherrie de Villiers Gallery, 2004. *Tommy Motswai* [online]. Available at:
www.gallery.co.za/motswai/artistinfo.htm [Accessed 27 November 2008].
7. Enwezor, O. and Hassan, S. (eds) 2001. *Nka – Journal of Contemporary African Art*, (Vol)15. USA: (Publ) African Studies and Research Center- Cornell University.
8. De Jager, E J. 1992. *Images of Man: Contemporary South African Black Art and Artists*. 1st ed. Former Republic of Ciskei: Fort Hare University Press.
9. De Vaal, S. (n.d.) *South African Art* [online]. Available at:
<http://www.southafrica.info> [accessed 05 June 2007].
10. Education Under Apartheid, 2008. *The Bantu Education Act* [online]. Available at: <http://countrystudies.us/south-africa/56.htm> [Accessed 6 December 2008].

11. Enwezor, O. and Oguibe, O. (eds) 1999. *Reading the Contemporary: African Art from Theory to the Market Place*. London: Institute of International Visual Arts. 424.
12. Golinski, H. and Hiekich-Picard. 2005. *New Identities*. Germany: Ostfildern-Ruit. ule.
13. Gule, K. 2006. On the Uses and Abuses of African Art History for Life. In Hobbs, P. 2006. *Messages and Meaning: The MTN Art Collection*. Johannesburg: David Krut Publishing. 215
14. Jamal, A and Williamson, S. 1996. *Art in South Africa: The Future Present*. Cape Town: David Philip Publishers (Pty) Ltd.
15. Johannesburg Art Gallery. 1989. *Gerard Sekoto: Unsevered Ties*. Johannesburg. Johannesburg City Council
16. Kasfir, S. 1999. *African Art and Authenticity: A Text with a Shadow*. In Enwezor, O and Oguibe, O. (eds) *Reading the Contemporary: African Art From Theory to the Market Place*. London: Institute of International Visual Arts. 88.
17. Koloane, D. 1999. *The Identity Question: Focus on Black South African Expression*. In Enwezor, O and Oguibe, O. (eds) *Reading the Contemporary: African Art From Theory to the Market Place*. London: Institute of International Visual Arts. 332.
18. Koloane, D. 1989. The Polly Street Art Scene. In Nettleton, A and Hammond-Tooke, D. (eds) *African Art: in Southern Africa - From Tradition to Township*. Johannesburg: AD. Donker (Pty) Ltd. pp. 213.

19. Maqhubela, L. (n.d.) In Koloane, D. 1989. In Nettleton, A and Hammond-Tooke, D. (eds) *African Art: in Southern Africa - From Tradition to Township*. Johannesburg: AD. Donker (Pty) Ltd. pp. 219
20. Michaelstevenson Contemporary. 2007. *Ephraim Ngatane* [online]. Available at: www.michaelstevenson.com [Accessed 25 May 2007].
21. Mathe, T. (n.d.) Art and Urbanization [online]. Available at: www.artthrob.co.za [Accessed 6 June 2007].
22. Maurice, E. 2006. Art, Heritage and A Posse of Pioneers. In Hobbs, P. 2006. *Messages and Meaning: The MTN Art Collection*. Johannesburg: David Krut Publishing. 55.
23. Museum of Modern Art. (1990). *Art from South Africa*. Oxford: Museum of Modern Art.
24. MTN Foundation. 2006. *Messages and Meaning: The MTN Art Collection*. Johannesburg: David Krut Publishing
25. Museum of Modern Art. 1990. *Art from South Africa*. Oxford: Thames and Hudson
26. O'Toole, S. 2004. Editorial. *Art South Africa*, 3(2): 8
27. O'Toole, S. 2004. Sam Nhlengethwa. *Art South Africa*. 2(4)81
28. Proud, H. (ed.) 2006. *Revisions: Expanding the Narrative of South African Art*. SA History Online and UNISA Press.
29. Sim, S. (ed) 2005. *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*. 2nd ed. USA. Icon Books Ltd.

30. Smith, M. 2006. *Colbert Mashile* [online]. Available at:
<http://www.artthrob.co.za/06may/artbio.html> [accessed 10 January 2009].
31. Verstraete, F. 1989. *Township Art: Context Form and Meaning*. In Nettleton, A and Hammond-Tooke, D. (eds) *African Art: in Southern Africa - From Tradition to Township*. Johannesburg: AD. Donker (Pty) Ltd. pp. 152
32. Veronique, T. 2002. *Taxi-006: David Koloane*. Johannesburg: David Krut Publishing
33. Van Wyk, G. 2004. *Adacade of Democracy: Witnessing South Africa*. USA: Axis Gallery and Sondela.
34. Williamson, S. 1989. *Resistance Art in South Africa*. Cape Town: David Philip Publishers (Pty) Ltd.
35. Williamson, S. and Jamal, A. 1996. 1996. *Art in South Africa: The Future Present*. Cape Town: David Philip Publishers (Pty) Ltd.
36. Wikipedia. 2008. *Identity Politics* [online]. Available at:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Identity_politics [Accessed 28 April 2008].