

**CRAFT PRACTISED BY AFRIKANER WOMEN
DURING AND AFTER THE ANGLO-BOER WAR
1899-1902 AND THE APPROPRIATION OF
SIMILAR CRAFT IN THE WORK OF SELECTED
CONTEMPORARY SOUTH AFRICAN ARTISTS.**

Joan Alkema

This dissertation is presented in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of
Masters Degree of Technology Fine Art
Durban University of Technology.

September 2009

DECLARATION

I, Joan Alkema, declare that except for the quotations indicated in the text, this research is my own original work and has not been submitted at another institution.

Joan Alkema.

APPROVED FOR FINAL SUBMISSION

Mr. J. Roome



Date: 7th January 2010

MAFA (Rhodes University)

DEDICATION

To my husband, children, mother and late father, for their love, understanding and never ending support.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank my supervisor, John Roome, for his support, understanding and great patience.

I also want to thank my co-supervisor and friend, Hennie Stroebel, who supported and shared his expertise on aesthetics and technical issues freely with me.

I thank the Durban University of Technology for accepting me as a student.

I want to thank the following people for sharing their time and knowledge with me:

Mrs. Adri Fenwick Zastron library.

Arend Kouwenhoven .

Mr. Joseph Ramathebane, Pellier Huis Museum, Bethulie.

Mr Richard Motingwe, Caledon River Museum, Smithfield.

Mrs. Fleur Wade-Jones, Albany Museum Grahamstown.

Mrs. Madelein Joubert, Kerkplein Museum Alliwai-Noord.

Mrs Jomien Havenga, Drosdy Museum Swellendam.

Mrs. Mollie Havenga, South African Women's Federation.

Mrs. Brink, South African Women's Agricultural Association.

Radio Sonder Grense.

Mrs. Simona Sharp, Landbou Weekblad.

Mrs. Wietse Van Deelen, Iziko Museum Capetown

Editor of the Smithie, Smithfield.

Mr. Johan Jordaan.

Alysia Prinsloo.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation was researched in two main parts. The first enquiry was to establish whether the Afrikaner women practised any form of craft during their time of interment in the Anglo-Boer War concentration camps, during 1899-1902. The second part explores the appropriation of craft within the Post-Modern context by five South African artists.

During this research into the craft practises of Afrikaner women in the concentration camps, I discovered that this particular issue has not been satisfactorily documented. The reasons for this are directly connected to the patriarchal system of the Calvinist Afrikaner. The impact which this system had on the craft practices of Afrikaner women and the lack of documentation thereof, are discussed.

The paucity of information on Afrikaner women's history led to primary research where I gained the information I needed from the descendents of interned women. The findings of this research includes various forms of needlecraft such as embroidery, quilting, crocheting, and dress and bonnet making. Amongst the artefacts found were two ceramic dogs made in the camp. Various forms of tin and wire artefacts were also found.

The contribution to the impoverished Afrikaner women by Hobhouse, the South African Agricultural Association and the South African Women's Federation is explained in relation to this dissertation.

The freedom that Post-Modern thought created amongst artists enabled them to explore exciting ways of executing their art. The five South African artists whose work I chose to explore are Billy Zangewa, Sue Pam-Grant, Gina Waldman, Antionette Murdoch and Nirmi Ziegler. Their art practices are varied but the common denominator is the incorporation of various forms of traditional feminine craft into their work. They subvert the patriarchal order, draw attention to land issues, explore women's fragility and raise awareness concerning the abuse of the environment. I conducted an interview with Ziegler and relied on written documentation for the research concerning the other artists. I also made use of my own analysis and instinct as a woman and mother to interpret some works.

As an Afrikaner woman I execute my work by using traditional feminine craft and specific motives found during my research. I deliver commentary on the lack of

documentation of all of Afrikaner women's history. I use myself as an example of an Afrikaner woman and document my own history within the greater Afrikaner history which is contained and embedded within the history of South Africa.

My research into and documentation of the craft practises of Afrikaner women during and directly after the Anglo-Boer War adds to the body of knowledge concerning the history of Afrikaner women. The same applies to the work of the five artists I explored. The diversity of material, concept and execution of their work will add some knowledge to the existing body of knowledge about their work, but more so to the documentation of women's history.

Preface

The following conventions have been applied to this dissertation:

- The Harvard referencing system.
- Left indentations indicate direct quotations.
- “-“ is used for direct quotations within a sentence.
- 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

DECLARATION	II
DEDICATION	III
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	IV
ABSTRACT	V
PREFACE	VII
TABLE OF CONTENTS	VIII
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	IX
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 1	5
CHAPTER 2	28
CHAPTER 3	36
CHAPTER 4	45
CHAPTER 5	54
CHAPTER 6	77
CONCLUSION	94
REFERENCES	97
BIBLIOGRAPHY	100

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1.1: Example of christening dress and various baby bonnets. Huguenot Museum Franschoek.	6
Figure 1.2: Example of various bonnets executed by the women of the French Huguenots. Huguenot Museum Franschoek.	7
Figure 1.3: Example of crochet work executed by the women of the French Huguenots. Huguenot Museum Franschoek.	7
Figure 1.4: Examples of christening dresses executed by the women of the French Huguenots. Huguenot Museum Franschoek.	8
Figure 1.5: Examples of paper cutting work executed by the Fench Huguenots. Huguenot Museum Franschoek.	8
Figure 1.6: Examples of candlewick embroidery and quilting executed by the women of the French Huguenots. Huguenot Museum Franschoek.	9
Figure 1.7: Bonnet (4.578c) worn by 1820 British Settler, Mary Hayward, when she set foot on South African soil in 1820. Albany Museum Grahamstown.	10
Figure 1.8: Example of 1820 British Settler child's dress. Albany Museum, Grahamstown.	10
Figure 1.9: Tapestry embroidered by Mary Price Adams, 1820 British Settler. Albany Museum, Grahamstown.	11
Figure 1.10: Sampler brought to South Africa by 1820 British Settler child, Ann Potter. Albany Museum, Grahamstown.	11
Figure 1.11: Quilt made by 1820 British Settler. Albany Museum, Grahamstown. (3836) The tacking stitches are visible on some of the hexagons.	12
Figure 1.12: Example of fusion between Xhosa and Eurocentric craft	12
Figure 1.13: Embroidered Frames.	17
Figure 1.14: Covered Blanket (Laslappie kombers) Howick Museum, Howick	18
Figure 1.15: Tin Mug, Pellier Home Museum. Bethulie.	19
Figure 1.16: Hand Sewing Machine Smithfield Museum. Smithfield.	19
Figure 1.17: Wire Basket. Old Church Museum. Alliwai-North.	20
Figure 1.18: Sunflower Quilt. Caledon Museum on view at the Drosdy Museum Swellendam.	20
Figure 1.19: Detail of Sunflower Quilt	21
Figure 1.20: Goatskin Jacket. Swellemdam Drosdy Museum.	22
Figure 1.21: Close up of detail of buttonhole executed in blanket stitch	22
Figure 1.22: Ceramic figurines	23
Figure 1.23: Mosaic Pot in the Women's War Memorial Museum, Bloemfontein.	23

Figure 1.24: Hessian Sampler by Hester Botha, Vryburg concentration Camp. Arend Dieperink Museum.	24
Figure 1.25: Crazy Paving Flag Nasionale Kultuurhistoriese Museum. Pretoria	24
Figure 1.26: Sympathy Card.	25
Figure 1.27: Crocheted Our Father.	26
Figure 1.28: Needlework Booklet	26
Figure 2.1: Photograph of Emily Hobhouse at the Women's War Memorial Museum in Bloemfontein	30
Figure 2.2: Example of a lace collar executed in the Wag-'n- Bietjie lace pattern at the Women's War Memorial Museum in Bloemfontein.	32
Figure 2.3: Detail of 'Wag-n-Bietjie Pattern designed by Emily Hobhouse.	32
Figure 2.4: Handbag made at Koppies Lace School by Johanna Osborne at the Women's War Memorial Museum, Bloemfontein.	32
Figure 2.5: Example of lace samples Emily Hobhouse brought from England to show the Afrikaner women and girls she taught. Emily Hobhouse Collection Women's Agricultural Association Museum, Stellenbosch. (Tel. No. 021 8865064)	33
Figure 2.6: Example of lace making equipment at the Women's War Memorial Museum, Bloemfontein	33
Figure 2.7: Spinning Wheels imported by Hobhouse from England for her weaving schools. Women's War Memorial, Bloemfontein	34
Figure 3.1: Crochet table cloth in white crochet cotton by Mrs. H. Coetzee	40
Figure 3.2: Tapestry embroidered handbag and purse by Mrs. H. van Wyk	41
Figure 3.3: Embroidered Tablecloth in white cotton fabric and white embroidery cotton by Mrs. A. Heyns.	41
Figure 3.4: Embroidered handbag, purse and cloth by Mrs A. Heyns	41
Figure 3.5: Crochted and tapestry tablecloth executed in coloured and white embroidery cotton and white crochet cotton.	42
Figure 3.6: The final panel of the Kieskamma Altarpiece	43
Figure 4.1: Suffrage banner, Museum of London, London. C1911. Applique and embroidery	48
Figure 5.1: Infinite Possibilities. 2005. Billy Zangewa. SilkTapestry	56
Figure 5.2: Unsung Heroes. 2004. Billy Zangewa. Silk and embroidery cotton. 72x50cm	57
Figure 5.3: Cut Away Here Sue Pam-Grant. Tissue paper, thread	60
Figure 5.4: Detail of <i>Flower of imperfection</i> by Sue Pam-Grant. Material, found objects, sewing tissue.	61
Figure 5.5: <i>Threads</i> (installation) Gina Waldman. Tapestries, fabric, wool and hair.	66

Figure 5.6: <i>Threads III (iv)</i> Gina Waldman. Oil on canvas and threads	66
Figure 5.7: <i>Soetsappig</i>	68
Figure 5.8: <i>As hy weer kom</i> Measuring tape and wire.	68
Figure 5.9: <i>Lang Bene Kou</i> Mannequin legs, fabric, embroidery cotton.	69
Figure 5.10: <i>Tuisteskepper</i> Plastic tablecloths, sponge.	69
Figure 5.11: <i>In-and Outside</i> 2008. Nirmi Ziegler	72
Figure 5.12: <i>Celebrate</i> 2008. Nirmi Ziegler	73
Figure 6.1: <i>Bell Tent</i> 2009. Joan Alkema	80
Figure 6.2: <i>Pomegranates</i> 2009. Joan Alkema	81
Figure 6.3: <i>Table Cloth and tea Cosies</i> 2009. Joan Alkema	82
Figure 6.4: <i>Wire Fence</i> 2009. Joan Alkema	83
Figure 6.5: <i>Wire Fence</i> 2009. Joan Alkema (Detail)	84
Figure 6.6: <i>Wire Fence</i> 2009. Joan Alkema (Detail)	84
Figure 6.7: <i>Wire Fence</i> 2009. Joan Alkema (Detail)	85
Figure 6.8: <i>Knitted Wire and Video</i> 2009. Joan Alkema	86
Figure 6.9: <i>Knitted Wire and Video</i> 2009. Joan Alkema (Detail)	86
Figure 6.10: <i>Pomegranates</i> 2009. Joan Alkema (Detail)	88
Figure 6.11: <i>Hands</i> 2009. Joan Alkema	89
Figure 6.12: <i>Hands</i> 2009. Joan Alkema (Detail)	89
Figure 6.13: <i>Herkoms en Toekoms</i> 2009. Joan Alkema	90
Figure 6.14: <i>Herkoms en Toekoms</i> 2009. Joan Alkema (Detail)	91
Figure 6.15: <i>Herkoms en Toekoms</i> 2009. Joan Alkema (Detail)	92

INTRODUCTION

Firstly it is necessary to define craft and the importance of craft in the context of this dissertation. Craft is an inherent part of the history of humanity. Archaeologists study artefacts to understand history. These artefacts are usually bits of craft that survived the erosion of time. It is the craft practices of a group of people that support the historical facts of that specific group. Sue Lynn-Williams, an expert in the field, defines craft as:

Any work of a culturally homogeneous people, produced by artists who have received no formal training in art. It is intimately connected with the culture of a people, and for this reason the pieces take on more than simply an aesthetic appeal. ...it is inextricably linked with religion, beliefs, ritual practices and every-day life of the people who created it (2006:13).

I found that this definition applies to the craft of the cultural group known as the Afrikaner. This cultural group known as the Afrikaner spoke the same language, they mostly belonged to the three major Afrikaans protestant churches, namely the Dutch Reformed Church, the Reformed Church and the Nederduits Reformed Church. The rituals of baptism, holy communion, marriage and funerals in all three churches have not changed since these churches were proclaimed. The Afrikaner adhered to a strict patriarchal system, and only the boys could inherit from their parents. Furthermore they were mostly farmers and the dress code was very strictly implemented to be in adherence to biblical scriptures. For example the Bible states that women must have long hair and in church her head must be covered. This led to the habit of having 'church clothes'. This meant that each family member had a specific set of clothing that was only to be worn for church, funerals and weddings. This habit only changed recently.

Lynn-Williams emphasises that craft is an inherent part of the history of humanity:

More than any other art form, it reveals a development not only in artistic traditions, but also in human evolution. It is the history of our species (2006:17).

The African continent was colonised by many European nations. I am, however, only concerned with South Africa. In this dissertation I will follow the route of the craft that was brought by the three main groups of colonists to South Africa. These facts are a

given. For the purposes of this dissertation I will use these historical facts to support my argument. The first group of colonists were the Dutch who settled at the Cape of Good Hope. They were followed by the French Huguenots and the 1820 British Settlers. I will establish each of the skills in the form of traditional crafts that each group brought to South Africa.

From there I will follow the route to the Afrikaans Republics by way of the Great Trek and the start of the Anglo-Boer War in 1899-1902. An intensive study will be made of the craft practised in the Anglo-Boer War concentration camps by the Afrikaner Women who were kept captive in these camps.

The different skills of the women in the camps will be determined by my research. There is a paucity of information concerning the written history of craft practiced by the women in the Anglo-Boer War concentration camps. The reasons are manifold and will be discussed in detail. Through primary research I have established that craft was indeed practised in the concentration camps. This dissertation will also explain the lack of documented knowledge concerning the needle craft of the Afrikaner women in the concentration camps due to the patriarchal order and the marginalisation of women's history, as part of the entire history of the Afrikaner. The marginalisation of women is a universal and ancient phenomenon, as Lerner states:

For nearly 3000 of the 4000 years of recorded History of Western civilisation the record mainly concerns the activities, experiences, and achievements of men. Not all men, either, but a narrow group of powerful elites (1993:248).

Thereafter a study will be undertaken of the craft taught to Afrikaner Women by Hobhouse after the war. The use of craft to empower the poverty stricken Afrikaner women after the war through the establishment of Lace and Weaving Schools in the pre- 1994 provinces of the Orange Free State and the Transvaal, will also receive attention.

The influence and input by the South African Women's Federation and the South African Women's Agricultural Association as a movement to empower Afrikaner women after the war will be discussed. In this chapter I will compare the use of craft by groups of women to empower women after the struggle for freedom in Post-Apartheid South Africa. Here I will make a comparison of the role craft has played in the empowerment of women, spanning 100 years.

Art or craft can never be divorced from the environment, politics, religion, weather, culture or the history of a nation. Every one of these elements plays a crucial role and influences the development of craft in a specific culture.

During the course of this dissertation the influence of the history of South Africa and the fusion of knowledge of particular Eurocentric crafts with other indigenous crafts in South Africa will be discussed and analysed.

The influx of Calvinists into this young Southern African nation strengthened the patriarchal system. In South Africa one of the new protestant churches that were proclaimed is still known as the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk. I was brought up in this church that until today adheres to a patriarchal order. Under the patriarchal order women were excluded from participating in life in general. This in turn led to the exclusion of women from documented history. Women, however have been historically denied that form

of transcendence by being excluded both from the making of history and from identifying in any direct way with it's creators (Broude and Garhard,1982: 45).

South Africa, in particular, embodies a nation with wide and diverse political, cultural, religious and artistic roots. This means that the assessment of art and craft can never be made in isolation as South Africa is a virtual melting pot of cultures and these influence all art and craft practises in South Africa.

The art and craft of the Afrikaner Women, which were practised during their time of interment in the Anglo-Boer War concentration camps, (1899-1902) is no exception. Their skills were influenced by their own histories, both in Europe and in South Africa. These skills were deeply embedded in the history of the Afrikaner as well as the history of the Afrikaners religion.

This will be followed by an in depth discussion of the work of Billy Zangewa, Sue Pam-Grant, Antionette Murdoch, Gina Waldman and Nirmi Ziegler as artists appropriating traditional craft to execute their art and deliver social commentary on diverse social issues.

In order to evaluate and appreciate the work of Zangewa, Pa-Grant, Waldman, Murdoch and Ziegler it is imperative to acknowledge the turbulent history of South

Africa and all the role players that contributed to the melting pot of knowledge during the last 400 years.

The past is a given, it makes reorientation possible. In the past we find the structure from where the present has originated and the future will be built (Muller, 1972: xi).

A variety of cross cultural influences is used today by artists in the Post-Modern context. The language of art is used to deliver social commentary and mainly women artists are using traditional feminine craft, such as embroidery, crocheting, knitting, weaving and quilting to subvert a variety of social issues. Through making use of feminine craft women artists can:

continue their commitment to political activism and evolving images, materials and the processes that address concern central to women's experience and their personal, sexual and cultural identities (Chadwick, 1996:380).

The art of contemporary South African women artists will be assessed in the light of the body of knowledge which existed for the past 400 years in South Africa. Germaine Moolman of Contempo, states that women and in particular Sue Pam-Grant, Antionette Murdoch and Gina Waldman are questioning:

...the fundamental assumptions surrounding gender roles through the use of the very materials that traditionally constrict women: dress patterns, tape measures, tapestries. The art of these women thus becomes a potent social commentary on what it means to be a woman in the 21st century (2006:53).

The last chapter will discuss my own work. To execute my work I have made use of traditional feminine craft and specific craft motives found during my research. In this way I deliver commentary on the patriarchal system in which I grew up. I seek to redress the lack of historical documentation and acknowledgement of Afrikaner women's craft practises in the Anglo-Boer War concentration camps 1899-19102.

CHAPTER 1

This chapter will investigate the craft practices of Afrikaner women interned in the Anglo-Boer War concentration camps (1899-1902). My research has conclusively proven that the Afrikaner women in the Anglo-Boer War concentration camps (1899-1902) had the necessary skills of sewing, embroidery, ceramics, quilting, drawing and painting. They were also proficient in working with wire and could make tin cups from discarded tins.

However, when dealing with any form of human activity, in this case the craft practised by Afrikaner women in the Concentration camps during the Anglo-Boer War, it is imperative to take into account the historical and political circumstances which existed at this specific time in the history of the Afrikaner.

It is commonly recognized by art historians that socio-political events influence the development of art in a specific country or continent. Art is a medium by which thoughts are expressed and social commentary is voiced concerning unwanted and inhumane political practices. In this dissertation I will concentrate on the circumstances pertaining to the three main groups of settlers, namely the Dutch (1652), the Huguenots (1667) and the 1820 British Settlers.

There are many examples of political, economic and religious reasons why people migrate. The Dutch contingent that arrived in South Africa came for economical reasons: to establish a halfway station for their mercenary ships to and from the East. The Huguenots and British Settlers fled their countries of birth to escape persecution because of their religious beliefs. These three groups chose to resettle in South Africa.

The Dutch arrived in 1652 under the leadership of Jan van Riebeeck at the Cape of Good Hope. Amongst these colonisers were women and children. These women brought with them knowledge of specific skills practised in Europe prior to their arrival at the Cape. The Dutch women had knowledge of embroidery, tapestry, quilting, and general needlework. They soon passed this knowledge on to their slaves and servants, who became expert needle women. The Dutch also encountered the Khoi and San groups, who had their own craft e.g. necklaces made from fragments of ostrich shells, wood and seashells. This was the first fusion of craft in South Africa between different cultural groups. Soon the French Huguenots followed the Dutch to the new colony. According to Wietse van Deelen, curator at the Iziko museums Cape

town and director of social and family studies, the textile artefacts concerning the early Dutch colony at the Cape have been put into deep storage as they are renovating the museums. Therefore I could not obtain images of artefacts of the early Dutch settlement. She could however confirm that the Dutch settlers brought the skills of needlecraft with them from the Netherlands. This included embroidery, garments, crocheting and the making of bonnets.

The French Huguenots, a group of people fleeing religious persecution by the Roman Catholic Church arrived at the Cape colony in 1687. The gift they brought to South Africa was their knowledge of spinning, weaving, engraving, tapestry and hat making. This group of Calvinists adhered to strict patriarchal¹ beliefs, strengthening the existing patriarchal faith prevalent at the Cape of Good Hope.

Figures 1.1-1.6 are examples of needle craft executed by the women of the French Huguenots. Huguenot Museum Franschhoek.



Figure 1.1: Example of christening dress and various baby bonnets. Huguenot Museum Franschhoek.

¹ A social system in which men dominate. A social system in which men are regarded as the authority within the family and society and in which power and possessions are passed on from father to son. (Encarta Tesauros.2002)



Figure 1.2: Example of various bonnets executed by the women of the French Huguenots. Huguenot Museum Franschoek.



Figure 1.3: Example of crochet work executed by the women of the French Huguenots. Huguenot Museum Franschoek.



Figure 1.4: Examples of christening dresses executed by the women of the French Huguenots. Huguenot Museum Franschoek.



**Figure 1.5: Examples of paper cutting work executed by the Fench Huguenots.
Huguenot Museum Franschoek.**



Figure 1.6: Examples of candlewick embroidery and quilting executed by the women of the French Huguenots. Huguenot Museum Franschoek.

During 1820 the group known as the 1820 British Settlers arrived. The women amongst this group possessed knowledge of tape-thread work, tatting, knitting, smocking and open thread work. Embroidery, crocheting and weaving were favourite pastimes. Many examples of these skills have been preserved in both private and public collections. Figures 2.7-2.11 are examples of needle craft executed by the women of the 1820 Settlers.

These three main groups settled into their new lives and the Cape of Good Hope became a busy harbour town that lay on the route between Europe and the East. According to Pretorius in her book *Die Geskiedenis van Volkskuns in Suid-Afrika*, ceramics, spinning and weaving were seldom practiced in the new colony before the war, as these goods could easily be imported from *Europe*. In addition to that the farmers farmed with indigenous sheep that carried very little wool. Weaving was practiced only sporadically after Merino sheep were imported. Flax for the production of cotton did not grow well at the Cape, as the Cape was too wet during the winter months. Cotton and linen industries were never established at the Cape as it was easy to import both from Europe (1992:9). Some farmers went in search of new grazing for their cattle. This group of people became known as the Free Burgers.



Figure 1.7: Bonnet (4.578c) worn by 1820 British Settler, Mary Hayward, when she set foot on South African soil in 1820. Albany Museum Grahamstown.

This bonnet is made of white cotton and the peak is stitched through to support it. The ample fabric stitched into the back of the bonnet left room for the long braided hair of the woman wearing this bonnet.



Figure 1.8: Example of 1820 British Settler child's dress. Albany Museum, Grahamstown.



Figure 1.9: Tapestry embroidered by Mary Price Adams, 1820 British Settler. Albany Museum, Grahamstown.

This tapestry was executed by Mary Price Thomas that sailed in the “Chapman” to a new life in South Africa.

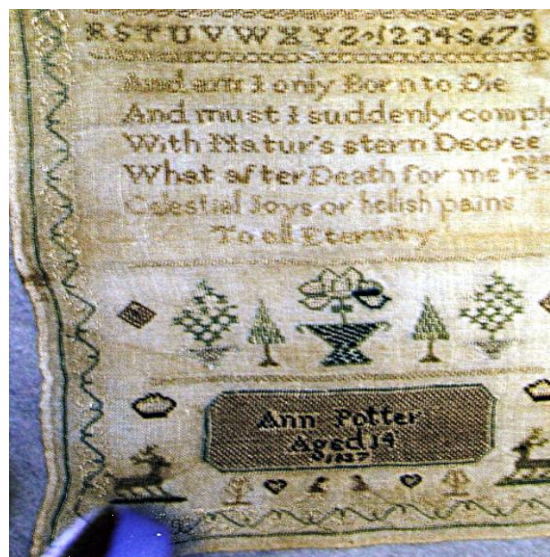


Figure 1.10: Sampler brought to South Africa by 1820 British Settler child, Ann Potter. Albany Museum, Grahamstown.

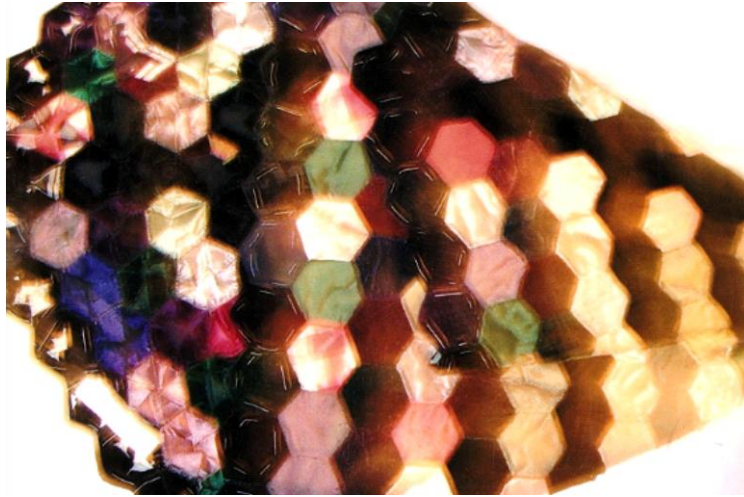


Figure 1.11: Quilt made by 1820 British Settler. Albany Museum, Grahamstown. (3836)
The tacking stitches are visible on some of the hexagons.

The Free Burgers who advanced into the interior encountered the Xhosa tribes at the Kei River, who were a split group of the Nguni Tribes. The Xhosa practised their own cultural craft, such as: bead jewellery, clay pots and skin work. Although the Xhosa and the Burgers were in conflict, exchange of knowledge occurred through their interaction with one another and so the body of knowledge of the women of this young country grew.²

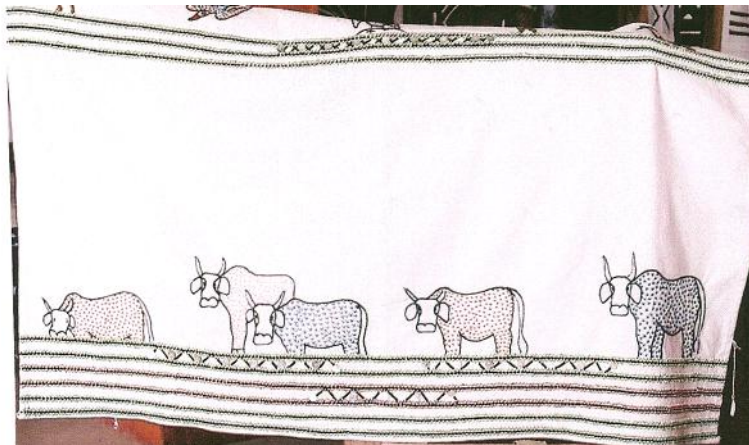


Figure 1.12: Example of fusion between Xhosa and Eurocentric needlecraft

Figure 1.12 is a fine example of the fusion of traditional European embroidery, adapted to speak a new language of art that was and still is of paramount importance to the Xhosa People.

² Mainardi acknowledges the result of a fusion of knowledge of art or craft practises when she states that when there is contact with new design traditions, art changes (Broude and Garrard,1992:335)

The advancement of white settlers and their servants into the great South African interior from 1838 became known as the Great Trek. Soon there were many groups moving north. Some of these groups settled and proclaimed the area where they settled as republics. Thus the Zuid Afrikaanse Republiek and the Republic of the Orange Free State came into being. Rich deposits of gold were found in 1886 in the Witwatersrand area which was part of the Zuid Afrikaanse Republiek (Transvaal). Gold and other mineral sources “were of great interest to the world power, Great Britain (Gilliomee and Mbenga, 2007:119).

Britain used the *Foreigner Problem* as an excuse to declare war on the new republics. Britain supported the quest of foreigners to obtain voting rights in the Zuid Afrikaanse Republiek. When Great Britain declared war on the republics every able bodied man and boy went off to war while the women and children were herded into concentration camps by the British army, on the pretext that it is a measure of protection for the women and children left unprotected on the farms.

Thus far I have traced the route craft took from Europe to the southern most point of South Africa and via the Great Trek to the autonomous Republics in the north. I have illustrated the influence of the three main groups of settlers and shown how environment, politics, religion and life style influenced known craft practices. Through following the timeline of the history of South Africa I have indicated that the Afrikaners found themselves at war with Britain and shown how the women and children came to be interned in the concentration camps.

The focus of the first part of this dissertation is the craft practised by Afrikaner women in these concentration camps, effectively in imprisonment. The situation in these camps was one of conflict and tension. The women were under tremendous stress in these camps and had no way of alleviating their stress. Thus some of them turned to the craft practices they were familiar with. Sigmund Freud believed the value of art lies in its “therapeutic use” (Aesthetics, 2003).

The conditions in these camps led to very little craft being practised during the years 1899-1902. The reasons for this are many fold. During a period of conflict raw materials and tools to practice any form of craft, are not readily available. Creativity was suppressed in some of the camps by subjection to death, starvation, disease and the environment. The captors, in this case the British army, placed no value on and in effect discouraged any form of manifestation of an own culture, including craft. The result is that very little room existed to practise creativity. Notwithstanding the

above, women need to create, and there is proof of such creativity in the camps, however minute. Significantly, in spite of these conditions, the collective knowledge of craft of six previous generations of women went into the camps and resurfaced after the war with the survivors of the concentration camps.

The period of the Anglo Boer War 1899-1902 has been very well documented. Many books have been written by experts on the reasons that led to the war, the various battles and the signing of the Peace Treaty of Vereeniging. In addition to the recording of the male element of the war, many more books have been written on the suffering and death of women in the camps. True to form in a patriarchal environment the day to day lives of the women in the camps were seldom if ever recorded. The only records the British government kept were the number of deaths in each camp, the food rations for women who complied with the rules in the camp and the food rations for women who were being punished for so-called misdeeds. Celistine Pretorius remarks in her book *Die Geskiedenis van Volkskuns in Suid-Afrika*:

Dit is opvallend dat die unieke kultuurerfenis nog nooit in Suid Afrika te boek gestel is nie. Dit hou waarskynlik verband met die onstuimige geskiedenis van die land wat veroorsaak dat daar oorwegend aandag aan die optekening van staatkundige en militere gebeurtenisse geskenk is (1992:7)._(It is significant that the unique cultural heritage has never been documented in South Africa. It is probably because of the stormy history of the country, that more attention was given to the documentation of the state and military chain of events.)³

Pretorius explains the dearth of knowledge concerning the craft practises of women in the camps by highlighting the fact that state and military activities were male areas of concern. Because of the patriarchal system the Afrikaner practiced the male activities were experienced and judged as more important and therefore these activities justified documentation. However in the passing of time not all of the Afrikaner women's history was documented. Lerner explains this deficit of knowledge concerning women's history: "In the period when written History was being created, women already lived under conditions of patriarchy, their roles, their public behaviour and their sexual and reproductive lives defined by men or male dominated institutions" (1993:249).

³ My own translation.

The women who documented their daily struggle for survival and significant events in the camps were, without being aware of the academic and historical implications of their act, recording women's history, more specifically Afrikaner women's history. This knowledge was passed to new generations of women by women who survived the camps, as well as from women's diaries written during the war. This supports the fact that the history of women takes a backseat when dealing with history and that women were and are responsible for documenting their participation in the making of history.

Due to this dearth of knowledge about the craft practiced by women in the concentration camps, primary research became my major source of information. I travelled to various concentration camp sites and museums. I located experts on the Anglo-Boer War to interview. However, it became clear that the focus of their expertise was the battles and male inspired stories of the Anglo-Boer War. They had no knowledge of the craft activities that were practiced by women in the camps. I have not been referred by any expert consulted on this subject to any literature dealing with specific craft practised in the camps, nor did my own research reveal any specific literature on this subject. The references to particular craft that I found in literature were in war diaries, written by women while they were interned in the concentration camps. Once again women had to record their own histories. In the light of the fact that more than a hundred years have elapsed from the Anglo-Boer War, this lack of information and research is somewhat surprising and disturbing.

I contacted inter alia, Elria Wessels, an expert and author on the Boer women and the camps, and the director of the Women's Monument in Bloemfontein. In answer to my inquiry I received the following answer: "*dit is nog nooit regtig ondersoek nie*" (*it has never really been researched*).⁴ This remark led me to the assumption that not all of the Afrikaner Women's history had been recorded. According to Chadwick the history of women artists should "examine how art history is written and the assumptions that underlie its hierarchies" (2003:17).

Although Chadwick refers to artists, the same principle holds true for women's history in general. The fact that very little research has been undertaken to document the handcraft of the Afrikaner women in the concentration camps is an indication of Afrikaner patriarchal bias. According to Broude and Garrard:

⁴ My own translation.

the textile and needlework arts of the world, primarily because they have been the work of women, have been especially written out of art history. It is a male idea that to be “high” and “fine” both women and art should be beautiful but not useful or functional (1992:344).

It is of interest that the craft of the male Prisoners of War of the Anglo-Boer War is extremely well documented. I found a whole chapter on this subject in the book *Die Geskiedenis van Volkskuns in Suid Afrika* by Celestine Pretorius. This literature covers all the folk art or craft of the white population through South Africa's early history. However in the entire work there are photographs of only two articles made in the concentration camps by women.

Notwithstanding, my research can substantiate that craft however minimal was indeed practised in the camps. Most of the articles I have uncovered were products of necessity. Even so some of these articles are truly beautiful:

Women became artists in a society in which their efforts were likely to be the only art that most of the populace saw, certainly the only art most of them possessed (Broude and Garrard, 1992:337).

My research led me to various museums and monuments. I also used the media, newspapers, magazines and radio to appeal to South Africans to come forward if they are in possession of any artefact that could help me in my search.

Thus far I have uncovered the following articles:



Figure 1.13: Embroidered Frames.

Mr. Arend Kouwenhoven owns embroidered photo frames embroidered by his grandmother in one of the concentration camps. These frames were embroidered with fish scales on a dark green velvet by Mrs. Anna Sophia Jacoba Hugo, nee Steitler. The photographs in the frames are of her husband Daniel Hugo and of Daniel and Anna Hugo together on their wedding day. She obtained the fish scales from the fresh water barbell and yellowish the camp personnel gave the women as part of their rations. He is not sure in which camp Mrs. Hugo was interned, but it was either Aliwal-North or Bethulie. Barbell and yellowish are found in the Orange River and these two camps lie on the banks of the Orange River.



Figure 1.14: Covered Blanket (Laslappie kombes) (Howick Museum, Howick

Mr. Johan Jordaan is the owner of a blanket that was covered with material by his grandmother in the camp. The material was received from the camp authority, as well as the sewing machine that was used to cover the blankets. Army blankets were issued by the British to the Boer women and children, interned in the Howick concentration camp. The red, bare blankets were extremely rough and the women requested both fabric and a sewing machine from the authorities to cover the blankets. The request of the women was granted. The pretty fabric covering the blanket made it softer and warmer for the original owner, Ester Johanna Schoultz. The blanket was donated to the Howick Museum by Mrs. Anne Nicolaides (nee Smith) daughter of Ester Johanna Schoultz.



Figure 1.15: Tin Mug, Pellier Home Museum. Bethulie.

At the Pellier Home Museum in Bethulie I found a mug made from a tin can in a camp. Thus far I have not been able ascertain which camp, but presumably the Bethulie Camp.



Figure 1.16: Hand Sewing Machine Smithfield Museum. Smithfield.

In Smithfield Museum there is a hand sewing machine which went into the camp and came out of the camp after the war. This shows that Afrikaner women had the skill to

use such machines. The women were only allowed to take a few articles with them into the camps, and therefore this machine must have been of great importance to the owner.



Figure 1.17: Wire Basket. Old Church Museum. Allwal-North.

There are wonderful period pieces in the Aliwal-North Museum, but only a wire-basket made in the camp could be substantiated as authentic 1899-1902, by the curator Mrs. Madelein Joubert.



Figure 1.18: Sunflower Quilt. Caledon Museum on view at the Drostdy Museum Swellendam.



Figure 1.19: Detail of Sunflower Quilt

The sunflower pattern quilt (A3574) made by Commandant Geyer's wife, Johanna Geyer, in the concentration camp, is the property of the Calledon Museum. This quilt has been on loan to the Drostdy Museum in Swellendam, where I viewed it. The campsite where this quilt was made is not known, but the story is told that the Camp authorities made the fabric available to Mrs. Geyer. Presumably Mrs. Geyer was in one of the Transvaal camps as her husband was a Commandant in the Transvaal division. This quilt was executed in various coloured cotton fabric. The name of the pattern, "sunflower", is derived from the diamond shaped pieces layered in a circular pattern, to form an image reminiscent of a sunflower. This quilt consists of two large ovals with nine circular pieces over laid and under laid, to form an organic whole.



Figure 1.20: Goatskin Jacket. Swellemdam Drosdy Museum.

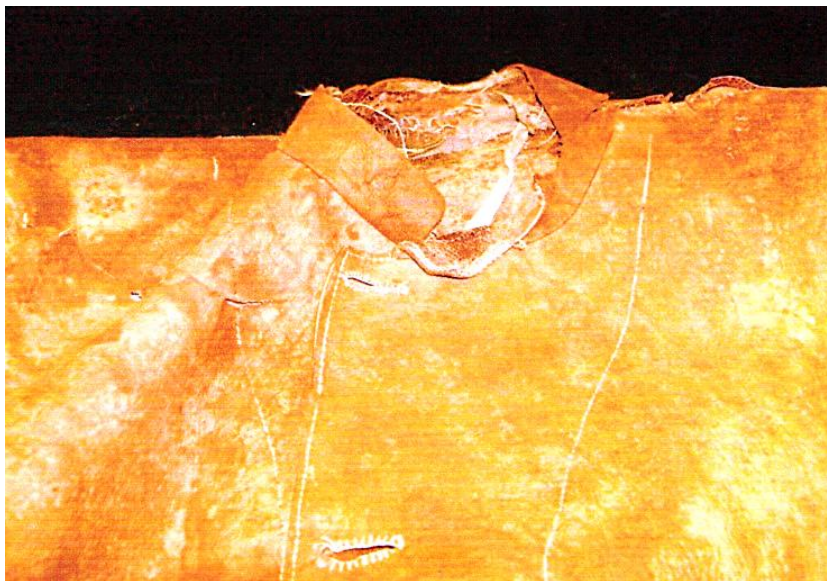


Figure 1.21: Close up of detail of buttonhole executed in blanket stitch

This goatskin jacket (B185) was made by women on commando, for one Frederich Rothman. These women were called 'camp followers'. This goatskin jacket was donated to the Drostdy Museum by the progeny of Frederich Rothman, according to Mrs. Jomien Havengha, Director of the Drostdy Museum.

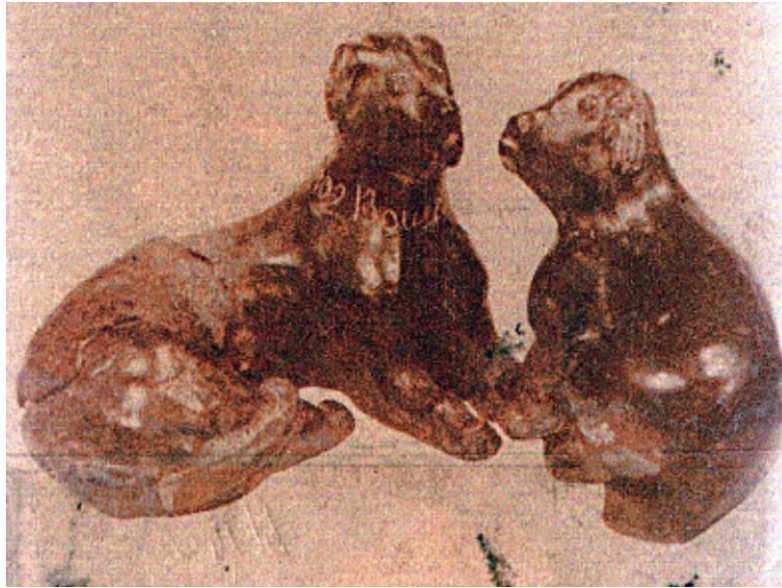


Figure 1.22: Ceramic figurines

In the book **Tant Miem Fisher se Kampdagboek**, Tant Miem, an inmate of the Standerton Burgerskamp, and later relocated to the Merebank camp, near Durban, writes about a Mrs Van der Walt that dug out her own clay and made small ornaments. Tant Miem writes that she was so impressed with this work that she purchased a clay dog from Mrs Van der Walt. Tant Miem promptly named the clay dog 'Bousfield', after the camp commandant. She also makes reference to a Miss. Badenhorst that created a Zulu impi from clay and a young boy that made an English officer on his horse, as well as a clay bull, under the tutelage of Mrs. Van der Walt.

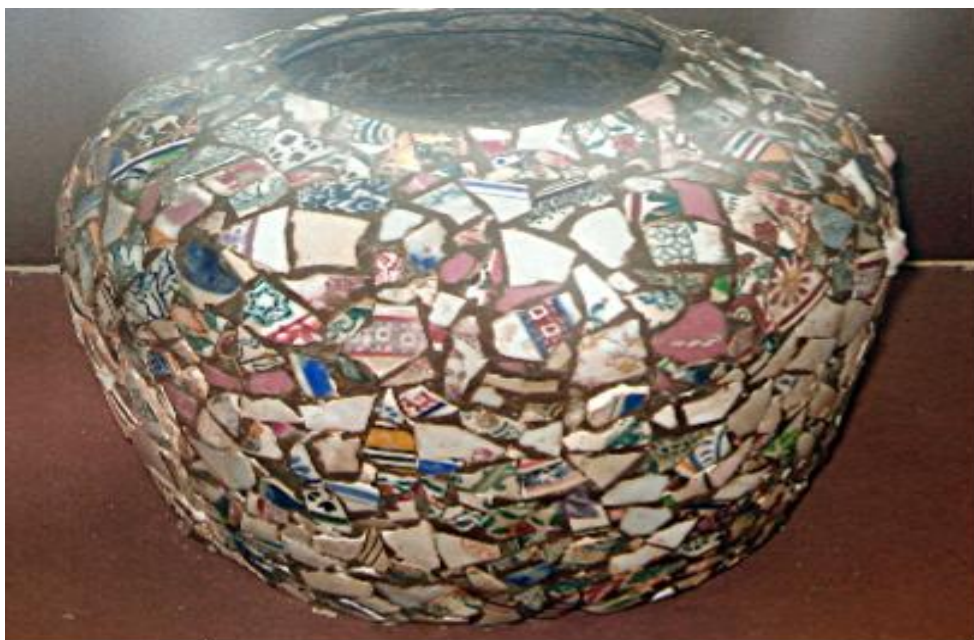


Figure 1.23: Mosaic Pot in the Women's War Memorial Museum, Bloemfontein.

This pot was not authenticated as executed in the camps but it proves that the women had knowledge of the craft of mosaic.



Figure 1.24: Hessian Sampler by Hester Botha, Vryburg concentration Camp. Arend Dieperink Museum.

Celistine Pretorius mentions two articles made during the Anglo-Boer War which she authenticated. In her book *Die Geskiedenis van Volkskuns in Suid-Afrika* appears a photograph of a sampler made of hessian in the Vryburg camp, by Hester Botha. (1992:99) This sampler is kept at the Arend Dieperink Museum.



Figure 1.25: Crazy Paving Flag Nasionale Kultuurhistoriese Museum. Pretoria

In the same book there is also a photograph of a flag of the Zuid Afrikaanse Republic (Transvaal) and the Republic of the Orange Freestate, made during the Anglo-Boer War (1992:120). This flag was executed in the 'crazy paving' quilting stitch and is the property of the Nasionale Kultuurhistoriese Museum in Pretoria.



Figure 1.26: Sympathy Card, Private Collection Alysia Prinsloo.

Chrissie Badenhorst, interned in the Merebank Concentration camp during the Anglo–Boer War, executed this card. This work is in the private ownership of Alysia Prinsloo. This work consists of a heart painted in ink on paper which contains the words:

Cecilia, Jacomina Kruger,
Geboren 23 September, 1894.
Overleden 11 Januari 1895

Abraham Johannis Kruger
Geboren 23 September 1894
Overleden 11 Januari 1895

Ontslapen in den Heer rust Zacht
Nu in u langenstillen nacht
Tot u des Engels roepstem wekt
En u't wachtend heil ondek.

The Kruger twins were a brother and sister of Sarel, Arnoldus Kruger who's mother was a grandchild of the Trekker leader Sarel Cilliers. The twins died before the war, but according to Alysia Prinsloo, the owner and descendent of the Kruger family, Chrissie Badenhorst, made the artwork to keep herself occupied in the Merebank Concentration camp.



Figure 1.27: Crocheted Our Father.

This crocheted Our Father was executed during the war and belongs to Mrs. Daniela de Klerk of Durbanville.

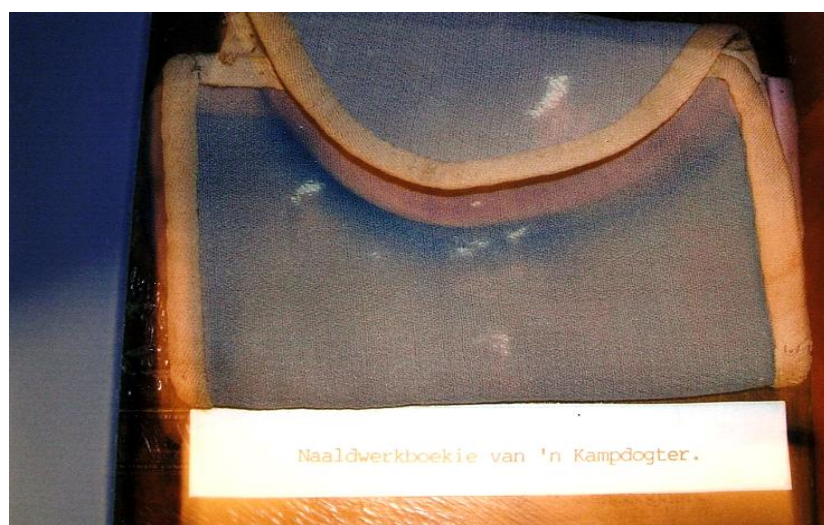


Figure 1.28: Needlework Booklet

This belonged to a girl in the Anglo-Boer War concentration camps. It has not been authenticated as being produced in the camp, but the fact that she possessed this booklet, is proof that not only did the women and girls possess knowledge of needle craft, but the mother had obviously passed the knowledge of needle craft to the daughter.

My research conclusively shows that the Afrikaner women in the Anglo-Boer War concentration camps (1899-1902) had the necessary skills of sewing, embroidery, ceramics, quilting, drawing and painting. They were also able to work with wire and could make cups from discarded tins.

Women who survived the concentration camps possessed knowledge of art and craft skills and could in turn carry these skills over to their daughters. In this way the traditional skills of needlework, embroidery, quilting, knitting, mosaics and ceramics were kept alive and could be implemented after the war to empower themselves.

Afrikaner women in the concentration camps drew on the craft knowledge of generations of women before them to practice their craft in the concentration camps. The craft knowledge of the Dutch, French and British Settlers interacted amongst various descendents of these settlers. There was also a definite cross pollination of knowledge of craft between the settlers and the indigenous craft practiced by the Nguni and Koisian tribes. Clay, colourful beads, embroidery and crocheting is continuously fusing and cross pollinating in contemporary South African art and craft.

CHAPTER 2

In this chapter I will examine the influence of the Industrial Revolution and the disillusionment of Morris and Ruskin with the artificial artworks spewed out of factories as well as the birth of the Art and Craft movement in Britain. I will give a short summary of the Bauhaus ideals. I postulate that Emily Hobhouse was familiar with the philosophies of Ruskin and Moore. I shall put forward my argument that these philosophies influenced Emily Hobhouse during and after the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902).

In the pre-industrial world craft fulfilled a utilitarian purpose, which was obliterated by the Industrial Revolution. The term industrial Revolution was first voiced in Great Britain during the mid 19th century to describe the major changes in the modes of producing goods. This process started during the mid 18th century when machines complimented or substituted human labour.

According to Elbe Coetsee, author of *Craft in South Africa*:

The Industrial Revolution, that began in the early 19th century caused a revolution in the production time, the available materials and the manner (hand versus machine) in which products are produced, as well as an obviously uniform perfection of the object. Such uniformity leads to anonymity and an alienation between the maker and the observer or user (2002:8).

Here Coetsee voices the same protest as Morris and Ruskin when they stated that the soul is taken out of a product when it is produced by a machine.

The Arts and Craft movement championed the values of handicrafts in Great Britain during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. John Ruskin, an influential art critic, became the strongest force in shaping the ideals of the Arts and Craft Movement. Ruskin's main critique against mass production was that factory work takes the soul out of creative work and it is also degrading for the worker or artisan. Ruskin proclaimed that beauty is a manifestation of the pride and joy a craftsman takes in his creation.

William Morris, a designer and craftsman, founded the firm of Morris, Marshall And Co. Here Morris implemented the ideals of Ruskin. His firm specialised in

handcrafted goods such as fabrics, furniture and stained glass. It is ironical that Morris, being a communist, did not realise that only the rich could afford his wares, as handcrafted goods were much more expensive than mass produced goods. In 'Art, Wealth and Riches' Morris wrote:

I want handicraftsmen proper, those who make the wares, to be in such a position that they may be able to refuse to make foolish and useless wares, or to make cheap and nasty wares, or to make cheap and nasty wares, which is the mainstay of competitive commerce, and are indeed slave- wares, made by and for slaves. And in order that workmen may be in this position, I want division of labour restricted within reasonable limits, and men taught to think over their work and take pleasure in it (National Archives. Learning Curve. William Morris).

Although Morris was criticised for standing in the way of progress because his ideals were in direct conflict with those of mass production, his ideology influenced the founding of a number of organisations in 1880. According to Chilvers the Art Workers Guild (1884), the Home Arts and Industries Association (1884) and the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society (1888) were founded under the umbrella of the Arts and Crafts Movement in Great Britain.

Chilvers explains the broader ideals, although these organisations differed in their specific aims. The Home Arts and Industries leaned towards socialism and encouraged craft classes for the poor. The Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society held regular exhibitions of their members' work, while the Arts and Workers Guild gave their members a platform for intellectual growth and stimuli. The followers of the Arts and Craft movement prided themselves on the honesty of their work, their craftsmanship and the materials they used.

The Anglo-Boer War broke out in 1899, twenty years after the commencement of the Arts and Crafts Movement in Britain. Although there is no literature available to suggest that Emily Hobhouse was familiar with the theories on craft by Ruskin and Morris it stands to reason that she must have known about them as she was educated at home in the rectory of her father's parish. During those times it was expected of girls to read, do elementary mathematics, just enough to keep the household going. When reading her "*Boer War Letters*" the reader can have no doubt that Hobhouse was well educated and well read. The reason upper class women

were educated was that they could be more entertaining wives in a patriarchal society. Florence Nightingale sums it up perfectly:

the Anglican church told me to go back and do crochet in my mothers drawing room or if I was tired of that to marry and look good at the head of my husband's table (van Reenen. 1973:19).

Into these prevailing ideas and religious philosophy Emily Hobhouse stepped onto the South African stage. This British woman growing up in a rectory was accustomed to seeing her parents care for the congregation. Her sense of compassion for humanity was affronted by the suffering of women and children in the Anglo-Boer War concentration camps and she actively harassed the British government to improve the conditions in these camps. There are but a hand full of women who's work has been acknowledged in the making of history. Emily Hobhouse was one of these few. Withers argues that:

the few women that have participated in the making of history and have survived the subsequent process of history writing are conventionally perceived as exceptional people, whose achievements are isolated and fragmented, rather than part of an ongoing continuum (Garrard and Broude. 1982:455).



Figure 2.1: Photograph of Emily Hobhouse at the Women's War Memorial Museum in Bloemfontein

Hobhouse survived the writing of history, but the historians neglected to mention the nameless women who supported her and contributed to the War Fund. She is seen as exceptional, i.e. the exception to the rule, but it must be noted that Hobhouse represented an example of feminist thought that was emerging all over the western world.

In this context Hobhouse set off to South Africa to aid the women in the camps, but her main task commenced after the war when families returned to their farms and found everything, homesteads, livestock, and plantations burned down to the ground because of Lord Kitchener's 'Scorched Earth' policy. This 'Scorched Earth policy' led to great poverty and hunger amongst the Afrikaner people who survived the Anglo-Boer War and concentration camps.

Hobhouse realised that the women and young girls needed to be empowered to help themselves and their families out of the bounds of poverty. To accomplish the empowerment of a nation emerging from a war she researched the skills and the potential of the Boer women. Hobhouse writes in her "*Boer-War Letters*:

I had leisure to study the question of suitable house or cottage industries for the girls on your farms. I knew they had skill with the needle and I had detected here and there a latent sense of art. This tranquil existence combined with brilliant skies all helped me to suggest lace-making and particularly needlepoint as a most suitable occupation (van Reenen.1984:323).

She was so impressed with the Boer Women's skills of sewing and crocheting that she thought they could use their time both productively and profitably making lace. With the war funds available to her she invested in lace making and weaving equipment Johanna Roodt, a 19 year old survivor of the concentration camps, accompanied her to Europe to learn the skill of lace making. Back in South Africa accompanied by Lucia Strace, Hobhouse opened her first lace school in Koppies in the Orange Free State with Johanna Roodt as the first principal.

Kriel writes in *Lacemaking of South Africa* that it was in Koppies in the Orange Freestate that Hobhouse designed the first truly South African lace pattern. This pattern was named the 'Wag-n-Bietjie' pattern after the Wag-n-Bietjie thorn bush. The 'Wag-n-Bietjie' (Wait-a-Bit) is an indigenous acacia tree of South Africa. (Kriel, M. n.d.)



Figure 2.2: Example of a lace collar executed in the Wag-‘n- Bietjie lace pattern at the Women’s War Memorial Museum in Bloemfontein.

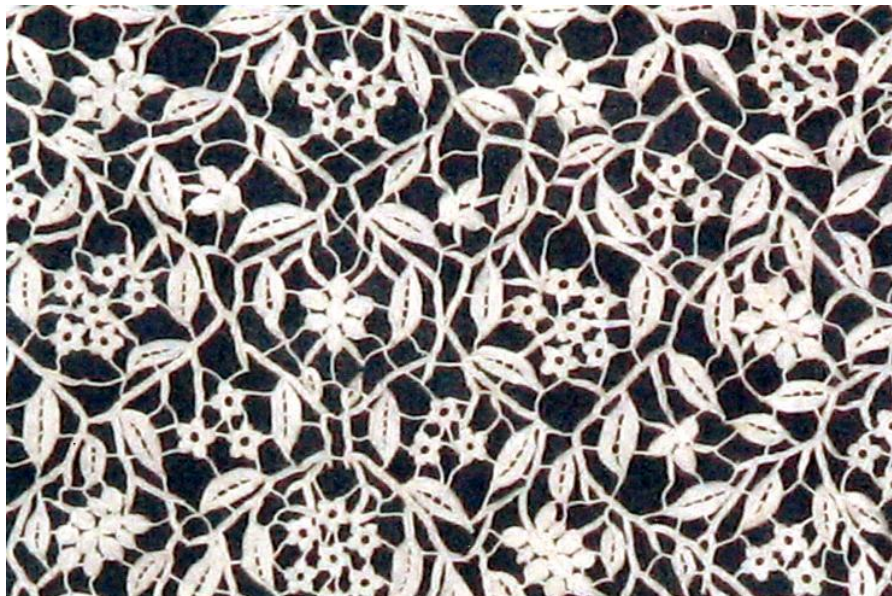


Figure 2.3: Detail of ‘Wag-n-Bietjie Pattern designed by Emily Hobhouse.



Figure 2.4: Handbag made at Koppies Lace School by Johanna Osborne at the Women’s War Memorial Museum, Bloemfontein.

The Lace enterprise was abandoned in 1938 due to financial difficulties, as hand crafted lace became a luxury that few in post-war South Africa could afford.



Figure 2.5: Example of lace samples Emily Hobhouse brought from England to show the Afrikaner women and girls she taught. Emily Hobhouse Collection Women's Agricultural Association Museum, Stellenbosch. (Tel. No. 021 8865064)



Figure 2.6: Example of lace making equipment at the Women's War Memorial Museum, Bloemfontein



Figure 2.7: Spinning Wheels imported by Hobhouse from England for her weaving schools. Women's War Memorial, Bloemfontein

Van Reenen describes the beginning of the Weaving schools in South Africa. In March 1905 the first weaving school opened its doors in Phillipolus, this weaving school soon blossomed into a successful venture. Merino wool was obtained from the farmers of the surrounding areas. Thereafter this wool was washed, carded, spun and died before it was ready to be woven into cloth for suits, blankets and socks. Soon some of the work concerning the weaving was outsourced to needy families. This created a much needed income for the poverty stricken.

The dies for the wool were not readily available but were readily obtained from the flora of the surrounding district. The Afrikaner families lived very close to the land and had an impressive knowledge of the fauna and flora of their countryside. This knowledge was used by Hobhouse to obtain the dies she needed for her wool. Walnuts supplied a deep brown die, peach leaves, when boiled, gave a lovely yellow colour and besembos (broombush) gave a wonderful pink colour (van Reenen, 1973: 94).

According to Hobhouse she not only taught skills, but saw these schools as a place of broader education. Religion played a major role and she used the Bible to educate not only the girls, but the servants as well. As soon as a girl became proficient in weaving, Hobhouse promoted the girl to a teaching post. Three years later in 1908 Hobhouse handed over ten weaving schools in the Orange Free State and ten more in the Transvaal to the South African government as ongoing concerns.

These hand produced wares fell out of favour as mass-production was implemented. But humanity is fickle and in the late 20th and early 21st century consumers

developed a new appreciation for hand crafted wares. Throughout the world there is an awakening to well made handcrafted wares, even though these wares are not perfect, but where the hand of the artist is visible:

People desire the individuality of fine workmanship and may even admire handmade imperfection, be it in ceramics, woodcarvings, baskets or embroidered and beaded fabrics (Coetsee: 2002: 9).

Traditional feminine craft has been incorporated in major artworks in Post-Modern society. Artists are turning to traditional craft to deliver social commentary on a variety of issues, including the patriarchally conceived Feminine Ideal. Pretorius notes that there is a continuous interchanging of ideas between high art and craft. Artist often returned to the simplified motives of folk-art used in craft. P. de Keyser states:

Wanneer stilkunst door gekunsteldheid en bloedarmoede werd aangetast, onderging ze vaak een gezondheidskuur en verjongingskuur door de fris, opborrelende waters van de folkskunst. (Pretorius, 1992: 15)
(When art becomes anaemic through artificiality, style and mannerisms, a youth and health cure is procured through the fresh, bubbling waters of folk-art.)⁵

⁵ My own translation.

CHAPTER 3

This chapter explores the origin and influence of the South African Women's Federation and the South African Agricultural Association after the Anglo-Boer War. One hundred years later women again took up the needle to empower themselves, as seen with the Keiskamma Art Project. I will use the Afrikaner women's struggle after the Anglo-Boer War and the Keiskamma Art Project⁶ to prove that women use feminine skills to empower themselves and in the process document their own histories.

In her book *Suid Afrikaanse Vroue Federasie 1904-2004*, (a centenary publication) Mrs. C/M. Bothma wrote the following:

.... het ek opnuut onder die indruk gekom van die reuse taak wat in 1904 deur n groep begeesterde vroue aangepak is (2004:ix). (...I once again became impressed with the gigantic task a group of women set themselves in 1904.)⁷

The gigantic task referred to above was not only the founding of a Women's Federation under the leadership of Georgina Margaret Solomon, a Scots woman and a friend of Emily Hobhouse, but also the implementation thereof. After the Anglo-Boer War in 1902, Margaret Solomon was touched by the utter devastation and poverty in the old Republics. Solomon turned to the well-off ladies of Stellenbosch where the South-African Women's Federation was founded.

At that stage there was already a movement afoot in the Cape Province to establish a Women's Christian Movement, and on that basis Mrs. Solomon decided to move her federation to the Transvaal. She immediately took off on a tour through the devastated countryside to inspect the extent of the devastation caused by Kitcheners "Scorched Earth" policy. There she found women and children pulling the plough as all their animals had been killed off by the British army. She remarked: *"I walked over parts of the land these women had cultivated, realising that I traversed sacred soil"* (Ibid).

⁶The Keiskamma project is a community project by women for the empowerment of women.

⁷ My own translation.

Two weeks after the founding of the Women's Federation it was decided that the poverty stricken Afrikaners must be empowered to help themselves. On 7th May, 1905 the first work school opened its doors in Pretoria. Here girls were versed in the skills of needlework, embroidery, as well as general sewing to clothe themselves.

Spinning and weaving schools were established in 1906, with the help of Hobhouse, at Langlaagte, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Belfast and Middelburg. 1905 saw the opening of a spinning and weaving school in Pietersburg under the guidance of Johanna Brand, a survivor of the Irene Concentration camp. The Johannesburg branch established a basket weaving school in 1905 to complement the other skills that were taught.

According to the minutes in the archives of the South-African Woman's Federation in Pretoria, the Johannesburg branch reported in 1906 that the most important work accomplished during that year was the articles made by the spinning and weaving schools of Hobhouse. The articles they listed are: "Tapijten, gordijnen, kombaarsen, tjalies, mans-en vrouwen kleregoed" (Ibid) (carpets, curtains, blankets, shawls, men-and women's clothing)⁸

The satellite businesses that were established were very successful. Some twenty people would wash the wool, another group would card and die the wool or cotton and yet another group would spin the threads. The products would then be sold to the weavers and they in turn would sell the finished articles. During the 1930's many needle work classes were established where women could come together for informal education by way of talks.

The creed of the South African Women's Federation embraces the concept of the *Volksmoeder*, which follows the concept of the Feminine Ideal. The term *Volksmoeder* was never spelled out to the Afrikaner women, yet every Afrikaans girl grew up with the knowledge of what was expected of her. The *Volksmoeder* ideal was firmly established by Afrikaner culture and the aspiring *Volksmoeder* had to accept and participate in the patriarchal system. Her household, husband and the nurturing of her children well as her work for the church and her neighbour, as spelled out in the Ten Commandments, was her priority. Van der Watt postulates in the article *The Gendered Construction of Afrikaner Identity in the Voortrekker Tapestries* that:

⁸ My own translation.

Gaining control over the Afrikaner women has been revealed to be an important hidden agenda underlying the *volksmoeder* discourse...the icon of the *volksmoeder* is paradoxical. On the one hand, it recognises the power of (white) motherhood; on the other hand, it is a retrospective iconography of gender containment, containing women's mutinous powers within an iconography of domestic service. ... Praising the Afrikaner woman as Vrou en Moeder proved to be a cunning way of suppressing her without being too obvious about it- she is contained in the domestic sphere (1992).

After the Anglo-Boer War the *Volksmoeder* had to be intensely supportive and protective of the cultural goods of the Afrikaner and the political dispensation. The reason for that was that they were no longer an autonomous nation, but were ruled by the British crown and their culture and language was under threat:

The image of strong defiant and active Afrikaner (Voortrekker) women taking part in the trek of 1838, was sidelined after the (Anglo-Boer) war in the face of a more useful image of silent, suffering, defenceless, and passive women who patiently endured the anguish of concentration camps during the war - all for the sake of their 'volk' (Ibid).

Throughout the years this organisation held craft workshops and competitions to better the standard of craft practised by their members.

Over the years the *Volksmoeder* concept disappeared, but because of the Afrikaner's religious upbringing and practises the *Volksmoeder* ideal is still adhered to and supported by the patriarchal system. Never the less, the great task of educating and empowering women after the Anglo-Boer War was undertaken and successfully implemented by women. This is indeed more proof that women can help themselves through empowerment.

The history of the Suid Afrikaanse Vroue Landbou Unie, or South African Women's Agricultural Association was found in the first minutes that were taken when this organisation was formed on 15th October, 1929, in Franchhoek under the auspice of Mrs. Josie Ackermann. The aim and objective of this association was purely to empower the wives of the farmers.

The aims were spelled out at the first meeting: to help the women to help themselves. They endeavoured to produce articles and products that were cheap

and useful as money and materials were scarce. Thus the first article women learned to make was an apron from flour bags. Recycling became the method of the *plattelandse*⁹ women to make ends meet. Mrs. Ferguson, as Chief of the Home Economics Division, travelled by train through the country to reach the women in the countryside, to help them with various projects. She operated from the Department of Agriculture in Pretoria.

The next aim was to educate women in the countryside on all divisions of agriculture, house and home craft, child rearing, education, culture and recreation, welfare and civic duty. The S.A.W.A.A. also helped women to establish markets where their produce and articles could be sold.

In addition to the previously stated aims, the association also endeavoured to better the laws concerning women and children, as well as establishing a competent educational system in the countryside which could cater for the farmers' children (Minutes of First Congress. 1929. S.A.W.A.A. Archives).

In 1940 the Association held a symposium dealing with art needlework. This symposium led to intensive study of the many types of traditional embroidery. This in turn led to the advancement of traditional hand crafts and enthusiastic competitions were held as part of the yearly agricultural shows in the different provinces. The South African Women's Agricultural Association formed small branches all over South Africa and Namibia where women could come together to exchange news and receive informal education. The distances travelled were great in the countryside and the women could only come together once a month. This gathering coincided with the monthly Holy Communion service of the church and such business as the farmer had to do in the nearest town. These get-togethers under the leadership of the S.A.W.A.A. became known as the home university.

The competitions and exhibitions of the women's handcraft celebrated and created a platform for the women to exhibit their creations. This was mostly the only form of artistic activity many women could afford and practice. Although Patricia Mainardi refers in her essay *Quilts: The great American Art* to American women, the same holds true for South African women living in the *platteland* or rural areas:

⁹ Women that live on farms, or in rural areas

....have put their creativity instead into the needlework arts, which existed in fantastic variety wherever there are women, and which in fact are a universal female art, transcending race, class and national borders. Needle work is the one art in which women controlled the education of their daughters, the production of the art and were also the audience and critics (Broude and Garrard, 1992: 331).

Without being aware of the fact both the S.A.W.F. and the S.A.W.A.A. were documenting and developing women's art and craft by keeping minutes of every meeting. In later years museums were established by these organisations to protect the legacy of past women for posterity. This in effect was a documentation of women's history.

Within the walls of these museums and on the yellow pages of hundred year old minutes of meetings, the history of women's art has been kept alive. The centenary book of the S.A.W.F. was written and published with their own funds. These cultural movements not only taught women to make art and craft but to improve their work by placing a value on it. This was accomplished by holding exhibitions and competitions where women could participate without fear of male criticism. There is a loud silence in literature concerning all the facets of Afrikaner women's history outside these movements. This proves once again that only half of the Afrikaner's achievements have been documented; the male half.

Figures 3.1-3.5. Examples of traditional needle craft executed by members of the South African Women's Agricultural Association at the S.A.W.A.A. Museum in Stellenbosch.



Figure3.1: Crochet table cloth in white crochet cotton by Mrs. H. Coetzee



Figure 3.2: Tapestry embroidered handbag and purse by Mrs. H. van Wyk



Figure 3.3: Embroidered Tablecloth in white cotton fabric and white embroidery cotton by Mrs. A. Heyns.

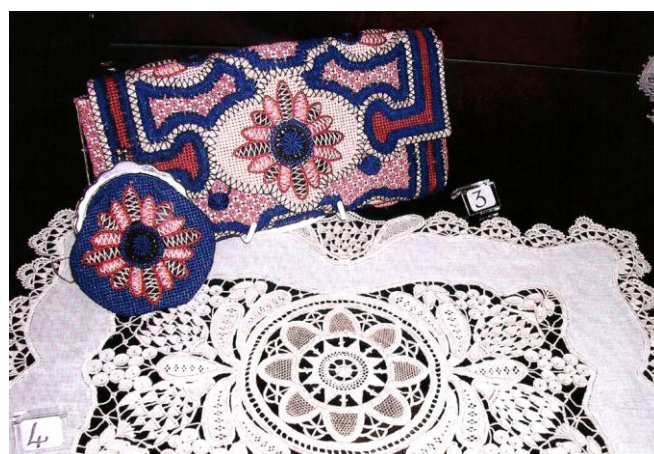


Figure 3.4: Embroidered handbag, purse and cloth by Mrs A.Heyns



Figure 3.5: Crochet and tapestry tablecloth executed in coloured and white embroidery cotton and white crochet cotton.

Throughout the last four hundred years the women of South Africa turned to needlecraft for various reasons. The male concept of the Feminine Ideal that was such an inherent part of femininity was expressed in women's needle craft. To clothe their children, to beautify their homes and to prove their piety, women stitched. Many altar cloths were embroidered by Afrikaner women for the three main Afrikaans churches, mirroring the embroidered altar cloths produced for the cathedrals by the pious women of Europe during the Renaissance.

During the Anglo-Boer War women in the concentration camps used needle craft and their knowledge of other craft to survive in the camps. After the war women turned to various forms of craft and domestic practices as an income to subsidise their husbands' income in order to survive the depression after the Scorched Earth Policy of Lord Kitchener. Women banded together to help themselves.

In South Africa this tradition of turning to traditional home crafts, and in particular to needlecraft, continue. Women are again banding together to empower themselves by taking up the needle. The Keiskamma Art Project is not only an example of women empowering themselves by creating beautiful needle work, but an excellent example of the process of fusion of diverse cultural craft that creates new art, whilst documenting women's history. The Keiskamma Project has embraced the traditional needlecraft taught to Khoi children and to Xhosa women in the rural areas where strife, conflict, suppression and Aids have impoverished rural villages. These villages consist mostly of women and children as husbands leave to seek employment in the cities. Carol Hofmeyer and Jackie Downs together with volunteers Jan Chalmers and Jackie Jezewski run this project.

According to the booklet of the The Keiskamma Art Project the Keiskamma Altarpiece was inspired by the Issenheim Altarpiece. The Issenheim Altarpiece was designed and executed by German painter Mathias Grunewald. The women artists of the Keiskamma Art Project turned to embroidery to depict the ravishes and tragedy of Aids in the Keiskamma Altarpiece. This piece is called *UMAF'EVUKA, NJE NGENYANGA*:

which is a Xhosa proverb referring to a tenacious person who refuses to accept defeat despite repeated hardships (Counihan, 2005).



Figure 3.6: The final panel of the Keskamma Altarpiece

The women of the Keiskamma Art Project adapted the symbolism and execution of their altar pieces to their culture and craft practices.

Just as women inspired the poverty stricken Afrikaner women after the Anglo –Boer War to empower themselves, women have again come forward to empower poverty stricken women after another war; the struggle for freedom from the Apartheid regime. This is once more an example of how women are claiming their rightful place in history by documenting their own stories, in a medium they are comfortable with. It is only recently that any form of needlecraft has been admitted into the realm of art, and is acknowledged as a separate art form by fellow artists.

The black women of South Africa in particular were politically marginalized by the Apartheid policy, which not only depersonalised them but wilfully kept education away from them. The Afrikaner women and the women of the Keiskamma Art Project turned to the skills they knew and mastered. These women all survived a struggle

and all were impoverished, but they channelled their skills into a positive direction in order to empower themselves.

CHAPTER 4

This chapter will investigate the reasons for the demise of women's craft, the founding of the Suffragettes, the emergence of Post-Modern thought and the application of needle craft into Post-Modern Art.

Over time various factors have contributed to the demise of women's craft. I will discuss the following:

- The categorizing of certain arts as craft. In other words the art/craft divide.
- The rejection of certain craft by women on the basis that it was perceived by men as part of the Feminine Ideal, and as such of less importance than the art of their male counterparts. .
- The high cost of handcrafted articles, mass production and industrialization.
- The fact that a new generation sees traditional craft as outdated.

The divide between art and craft emerged during the Renaissance.

Art historians continue to look to fifteenth-century Florence for the sources of the new ideals of genius and individuality that distinguish the modern world from that of the Middle Ages. It is here that we find the origins of modern capitalism and the privatization of the family, as well as the beginning of the redefinition of painting and sculpture as liberal arts rather than crafts (Chadwick, 2002: 67).

According to Parker the gender categories, male/female, form an important connection in the hierarchy of the arts and crafts. The feminine ideal came to the fore at the same time as the art/craft divide during the Renaissance. It was at this time that embroidery was categorized as a craft practised by the 'second sex.' (a phrase coined by Simone de Beauvoir in her book *The Second Sex*. 1949). Art education was divided into two units; craft-based workshops and art academies. Parker stated:

The art/craft hierarchy suggests that art made with thread and art made with paint are intrinsically unequal. The former is artistically less significant (1984: 5).

Painting and embroidery cannot be compared, but as embroidery uses iconography and serves a social function it should be perceived as a different but equal art form. Various perceptions led to embroidery being intimately linked to the fairer sex. To embroider was seen as a manifestation of femininity, and the Feminine Ideal. Parker laments:

When women paint, their work is categorised as homogeneously feminine- but it is acknowledged as art. When women embroider, it is seen not as art, but entirely as the expression of femininity. And, crucially, it is categorised as craft (1984:4/5).

Due to patriarchal bias, embroidery was connected to the 'uncompleted sex' (Parker, 1984:5) and working class women. Therefore embroidery was classified as craft during the 18th century.

In earlier times, particularly in the Western world craft was regarded as essentially functional, while art was 'contemplated' and therefore considered to be superior to craft (Coetsee, 2002: 8).

'Art' was perceived as more important because most artists were male and that was how they earned their living. Contrary to that, the '*art*' the women practised at home was for their pleasure and not for sale. This perception that male orientated art was more important, was a manifestation of the patriarchal system. As women were marginalized in the practice of art, art was firmly in male hands. The churches being patriarchal bastions strengthened this perception, to such an extent, that the education system installed was based on the male/female divide. Parker stated in '*The Subversive Stitch*':

The sexual division that assigns women to sewing is inscribed by our social institution, fostered by school curricula which still direct boys to carpentry and girls to needlework (1984:1).

She adds that embroidery signifies not only the home, but the womenfolk in that home, therefore embroidery practised by women at home is perceived as an expression of femininity: "*When women embroider it is seen not as art but entirely as an expression of femininity*" (Ibid. 1984: 5).

According to Honour and Fleming the divide between art and craft reached its apex during the 16th century when

painters and sculptors assumed a status superior to that of potters, furniture makers, metalworkers, embroiderers, weavers and other practitioners of so-called decorative arts (2002:15).

As mentioned previously, painting and sculpture were acknowledged as Fine Art, predominantly practised by men for money, as opposed to women who embroidered for pleasure, in the private sphere of their homes. Honour and Fleming explains that craft and art carried the same weight until the word '*masterpiece*', which was traditionally given to any article of an outstanding "*demonstration of skill*", was appropriated and used exclusively by male art critics to describe paintings and sculpture (2002: 15).

Between the 17th and 19th centuries women of the lower classes were employed as embroiderers for the higher classes. The fact that lower class women were employed as embroiderers strengthened male bias concerning embroidery. This male bias concerning women and embroidery caused women "*who wanted to be taken seriously*" (Parker, 1984: 6) to reject embroidery. Adeline Sargeant, proclaimed: "*I have done some elaborate embroidery in my time but now I never use the needle for amusement, only for necessity* (Ibid, 1984:6). With the rejection of this occupation, women distanced themselves both from the Feminine Ideal as perceived by the patriarchal ideology, and the supposed moralistic ethos that accompanied the Feminine Ideal.

Embroidery for the church in the drawing room combined domesticity and piety, making it a highly acceptable activity for ladies (Ibid, 1984:21).

The awakening of women who campaigned for political, social and economic equality between men and women is known as the Women's Movement. The mobilization of women started in the late 18th century. The Women's Movement investigated and covered a range of ideologies and theories. The Feminine Ideal as a patriarchal vehicle to keep women subservient caused a strong backlash as women of all walks of life mobilised into a strong body of voices demanding equality. According to de Gay: *This meant equal standing as citizens in public life, and to some extent, equal status within the home* (2003).

The French Revolution's creed of liberty, freedom and equality inspired women. The Women's Movement also campaigned for equal political, social and economic rights

between men and women. Two of the most important demands were better education for women and the right to vote. During the suffrage campaign women used embroidery, the tool of the Feminine Ideal, as a tool against oppression:

Banners were an established feature of political demonstrations in Britain, but whereas trade union banners were largely produced by a professional banner-making firm, the women employed their considerable personal skills previously reserved for portieres and draperies (Parker, 1984: 193).

In their struggle for equal rights the women of the Suffrage Movement turned to needlecraft to make banners to carry on their marches as these were '*an established feature of political demonstrations in Britain*'. (Parker, 1984: Figure 99) One such banner can be viewed at the London Museum. This banner was executed with embroidery and appliqué on a cotton background. The women of the Women's Tax Resistance League used an image of a woman in Roman drapery, carrying a flag and shield on their banner together with the words NO VOTE NO TAX.



Figure 4.1: Suffrage banner, Museum of London, London. C1911. Applique and embroidery (Parker, R. 1984 n. p.).

Members of the Women's Movement gained information through better education to dispute the system of patriarchy and the concept of the Feminine Ideal. Before this, in traditional patriarchal societies women's education was limited to learning domestic skills. According to John Mill:

The masters of women wanted more than simple obedience and they turned the whole force of education to effect their purpose. ...And, this great means of influence over the minds of women having been acquired, an instinct of selfishness made men avail themselves of it to the utmost as a means of holding women in subjection, by representing to them meekness, submissiveness, and resignation of all individual will into the hands of a man, as an essential part of sexual attractiveness (2002).

Due to the poor education of women in general they were caught in the vice of marriage because it offered financial support as well as protection. Women who became more knowledgeable realised that craft practices were perceived by their male counterparts as an inferior occupation. Another factor is that many of the women from the lower classes had to work to support themselves and their children. In an effort to be seen as intelligent, women refused to participate in the concept of the Feminine Ideal. Thus women gave up their needlecraft as a pastime. The lower class women who had to work were mercilessly exploited and earned a pittance. With the advent of the Industrial Revolution many women lost their work as machinery could do the work faster and better.

The Industrial Revolution proved to be a double edged sword. Women could earn better wages in the factories and become more independent. However, their income was legally controlled by their husbands. Van Lysebeth states:

In every patriarchal society, woman has been subservient to man, and sexually repressed. If she were free to express herself fully, she would undoubtedly disrupt the established order (n.d. n.p.).

The emancipation of women brought about more financial freedom, but also more responsibility and competition in the workplace. This resulted in the fact that women who worked all day and had a home and children to care for, did not have the time to pursue any craft.

During the 1960's the class system had disappeared to a greater extent and education for women was of a higher standard. As inflation rose more women were forced into the work place. The Feminine Ideal was starting to unravel as women became more empowered through education. With the industrialisation period in factories mass production was introduced and the women who relied on handwork became redundant.

Contrary to mass production, craft production is the process of manufacturing products by hand. This was the common method of producing wares before the arrival of the Industrial Revolution and mass production. Craft women could not compete with mass production and as in the case of Morris, only the affluent could afford hand crafted wares. As with any commodity the scarcer it becomes the more expensive it becomes. Women who relied on craft practices as an income found that the expense of handcrafted wares narrowed their market and ceased practising craft as a method of income.

Previously women had to rely on their craft skills to generate an income but today education for women and men is on a par in most first world countries, as well as in some of the developing countries. Young girls can now pursue any career they desire. Women are invading traditional male careers and earning better salaries. A large group of women comprises the workforce in many countries, but by working away from home many mothers ceased to teach their young daughters traditional crafts. The only exposure South African girls had to these crafts was at school in the pre-1994 school curriculum. The school curriculum has been adapted to incorporate Outcomes Based Education and in the process of change, needlework as a subject disappeared. Furthermore as soon as young girls leave home to pursue tertiary education they loose interest in traditional craft. Parker observed that:

knitting, embroidery and crochet seemed like the kinds of suburban things I left behind. But above all embroidery represented the feminine, the emotional, the family, considered at odds with intellectual life (1984: 214).

As has been noted, needle craft was perceived by a new generation of women to be old fashioned. Young women had no desire to participate in the needlecrafts of previous generations. However handcrafted wares retain their appeal as unique objects. Post-Modern artists realised the potential of incorporating craft into the execution of formal conceptual art, thereby enhancing it.

The first artist to elevate embroidery from craft to formal art was Judy Chicago, with her groundbreaking work *The Dinner Party* 1979. Which becomes the metaphor for the historical denying of women's history and the rebellion of women against the patriarchal order. According to Parker there is no suggestion that embroidery rather than painting is

women's proper art form. The piece simply states that women have and still employ stitchery, illustrating the varied history of women and the art (1984: 210).

In the late 1970's a backlash developed against Modernism and its grand theories. This new movement was labelled Post-Modernism i.e. that which comes after Modernism. Parmisani states that:

Economics, philosophy, politics, sociology, architecture, design, information, advertising, and art reacted against the ideals of the modern, overthrowing them and in doing so turned everyday life itself into post-modern (2000:88).

Post-Modernist thinking challenged 'the absolutes.' Through the new wave of thinking the existing theories and ideologies were reconsidered and eventually collapsed. A new direction of thought investigated:

1. stylistic and linguistic multiplicity, 2. actuality as the oblivion of the past and the instant in which past, present and future unite, 3. the appearance of ornament and decoration, 4, complexity, multiplicity, contradiction, temporariness, and nomadism (Ibid, 2000: 89).

Post-Modernism was willing to absorb a variety of styles mixing these with different historical styles and in the process a new eclecticism was forged. For instance, classical Greek sculpture was incorporated into a very modern architectural design.

Within this new structure, Feminist Theory found a launch pad from where it could deliver critique on the existing Feminine Ideal that feeds off the patriarchal structure. Within the freedom of Post-Modernism, Feminist Theory could celebrate a new freedom and identity for women, without the labels attached to them by their male counterparts.

A new artistic language developed, and women used this new language in the Post Modern context to their benefit. Women were able to create their own language through the very medium that was seen as unimportant. Lerner explains:

It is only through the discovery and acknowledgement of their roots, their past, their history, that women, like all other groups, become enabled to project an alternate future (1986:243).

According to Lerner when historical conditions are favourable women develop a feminist consciousness. Historically this consciousness develops in stages:

1) The awareness of a wrong; 2) the development of a sense of sisterhood; 3) the autonomous definition by women of their goals and strategies for changing their condition; 4) and the development of an alternate vision of the future (1993:274).

When applying Lerner's criteria above to the Suffrage movement which took place many years prior to the Post-Modern era, we find an excellent example of the historical awakening of women who became aware of a wrong, and with this knowledge developed a sisterhood. These women created the Suffrage movement as a 'sisterhood' to fight that wrong and change their conditions for a better future. In order to fight you need weapons and the women of the Suffrage movement turned to traditional women's craft as a medium to voice their needs.

Handkerchiefs and banners, executed in the very medium of women's oppression, embroidery, became the symbol of women's rebellion. Then, as now, women turned to traditional craft to voice their concerns and needs. The eclecticism of the Post-Modern has indeed given women the freedom to express themselves in traditional craft that had been perceived as a lesser important form of aesthetics.

In the year 2009 women are again using diverse materials, methods and styles to make themselves heard, and in doing so women are rewriting their own histories. Lerner explains:

They [women] are no longer solely concerned with creating reference lists of women they and their daughters might seek to emulate. They are now concerned with collecting the raw materials for Women's History and with recording and preserving the records of their own achievements in

educational and reform institutions, in churches, in women's clubs and in specific communities (1993:268).

Women's crafts both as a reference to piety and as a method of subsidising household incomes have disappeared. Mothers have no time in this new age to pass knowledge on to their daughters. The daughters perceive needlecraft as outdated and in conflict with their academic pursuits. Raw materials to produce art or craft have become so expensive that very few can afford them. Furthermore the 'lifestyle' image promoted by mass producers of household goods, demands constant change. In this process no value is placed on any article thus the article painstakingly executed becomes as worthless to a new generation as a poster on their walls.

Chicago introduced the art world to the new concept of blending and fusing high art and craft in a new Post-Modern context. This gave women artists a platform to raise awareness of injustices against women. Artists such as Billy Zangewa, Sue Pam-Grant, Antionette Murdoch, Gina Waldman and Nirmi Zigler turned their talents and skills to handcraft to promote their particular ideologies. I will discuss the work of these artists in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5

A discussion of the work of Billy Zangewa, Sue Pam-Grant, Gina Walddman, Antionette Murdoch and Nirmi Ziegler.

Judy Chicago broke away from traditional art with *The Dinner Party* 1976, a new dialogue has commenced between art and craft. Craft was forcefully taken into the realm of formal, traditional high art. The gap between craft and art started decreasing as more and more artists became aware of the possibilities of this special phenomenon. Women artists such as Billy Zangewa, Sue Pam-Grant, Gina Waldman, Antionette Murdoch and Nirmi Ziegler use traditional craft, in combination with conceptual art, to deliver commentary on various social issues from patriarchy to environmental problems. Each of these artists has her own unique use of material, form and subject. The factors that link the above mentioned artists are their womanhood, the use of craft to execute their artworks and the passion they have for sharing their issues with the viewer. These artists also share the use of traditional feminine materials, although each has their own preference. In the words of Parker:

In their hands, embroidery was [is] employed not to transform the place and function of art, but to change ideas about women and femininity (1984:197).

Billy Zangewa, is a young artist who hails from Blantyre, Malawi. She studied Fine Art at Rhodes University, Grahamstown. Zangewa has always been fascinated and interested in fashion and was taught embroidery as a young girl at school in Blantyre. The glamour, glitz and colours of fashion have always held special appeal for Zangewa. At Rhodes University she found it difficult to integrate her flamboyant style within a sphere where she was compelled to produce work of a “*masculine or asexual*” nature (Austen, 2006:20). Zangewa felt that her talent and style was inhibited in a “*sexist academic environment*” (Ibid) and rebelled against the pressure to execute landscapes, still lifes and portraits.

Zangewa was encouraged by a friend to experiment with fabric. These colourful silk fabrics opened new vistas for Zangewa. She found that she could fuse her previously learned skill of embroidery with her new skills learned at university to produce unique and vibrant works of art.

During 2004 Zangewa entered the Young Artists Absa L'Atelier competition and was awarded the Gerard Sekoto award for her handcrafted handbags that were a fusion of fashion design and art.

Subsequently Zangewa has matured as an artist and has become more proficient with the medium of her choice. Her brightly coloured silks and silk embroidery cottons reflect the city of Johannesburg and all the many facets of city life, including relationships, geometric shapes, the sun reflecting from the skyscrapers and the constant hustle and bustle of this great world city. Zangewa is inclined to tell stories about her life as a young woman. She projects her inner feelings into her work.

'Through the Lens' was the first tapestry made of silk swaps and embroidery about love and romance that Zangewa produced. This tapestry was executed at a time when Zangewa personally experienced a relationship that turned out badly for her. Here she made use of her daily diary and transcribed text or single words to drive away the pain. Zangewa is a firm believer in emotional honesty and faces the daily problems of women with an unwavering frankness.

These silk tapestries are executed by painstakingly placing layer upon layer of silk to build up her images.

Her works are made from fabric, sewn painstakingly on to a base in a way that allows her to build a picture and suggest the illusionism of painting or photography, but which lets the texture of the various fabrics disrupt easy consumption. Zangewa's choice of materials resonates with her abiding interest in fashion. Many of her images also take fashion and glamour as their subjects, Yet she avoids placing an all too predictable feminist slant on the phenomenon of fashion, choosing instead to use it as a formal base from which her gentle satire and social observations flow (Smith, n.d.1).

The journey to the finished product is slow and well planned. She uses photographic images, taken by herself on her frequent trips through the city of Johannesburg. These images are then drawn out in pencil and lastly executed in watercolour. Only when she is finished with this preparatory work does she execute her work in fabric.

Certain works that require accuracy of portraiture will have more detailed colour planes, in which the originals are broken up into flat facets of separate colour to allow for effective translation into fabric (ibid).

Zangewa uses the embroidery skills she acquired as a young girl to execute her art. This craft skill, considered in a Post-Modern context, adds meaning to her work and reinforces and subverts the concept of the elitism of Post-Modern art making. Zangewa made a vow to herself that she will execute her work in a positively feminine way. Thus the material she uses is unashamedly feminine. The message she gives is feminine, as is the method of execution. This young artist's work is young, fresh, colourful and trendy. At this stage of her maturity as an artist, she brings a spontaneous youthful enthusiasm to her tapestries and deals with issues concerning young adults, but at the same time she tackles issues of concern for all women. Despite the apparently light-hearted way in which she presents her work there is an underlying depth and meaning.

Her work *'Infinite Possibilities'* 2005 (Figure 5.1) is executed on a black cotton fabric base, with colourful silk fabric portraits and embroidery in cotton thread. All the images are of men. These men present the possibilities of a romance or a fling. As any young woman would do, she sums them up and weighs the possibilities of engaging on an emotional and physical level with them. In each image the viewer can read the way in which she has eliminated these possibilities. '*Conceited, Reliable, Smooth, Dodgy, Smart, Romantic, Kind, Primal, Mature, Intense*' are some of the descriptions embroidered on this work. '*Dodgy, Smooth and Intense*' are words normally used by young people when describing a possible suitor. By the same token, personality traits such as '*Kindness, Mature*' are "grown-up" words.

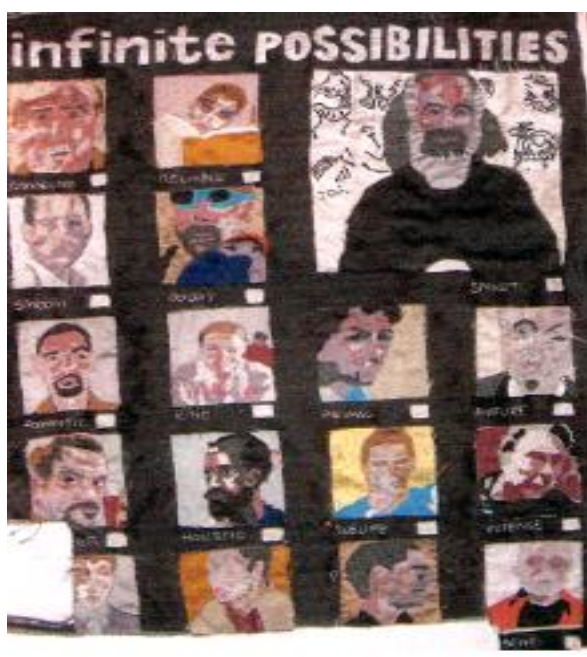


Figure 5.1: Zangewa, B. *Infinite Possibilities*. 2005. SilkTapestry 72x50 cm.



Figure 5.2: Zangewa, B. *Unsung Heroes*. 2004. Silk and embroidery cotton. 72x50cm

It is interesting to find this duality in one work. It reminds one of a girl on the threshold of womanhood. In the same way that a young girl is indecisive about the outfit she wants to wear on a date, Zangewa places herself and the viewer in that moment of indecision; “Do I choose the popular or do I choose the traits of maturity and a possible long term involvement?” The images are placed in a way that reminds the viewer of a photo album, but instead of names with each photo, the specific personality traits are given. The edges of the silk are frayed and the bottom end of the cloth is uneven. This has become her trademark. The first silk tapestry she executed was produced from an uneven piece of silk. Thereafter she usually acquired the pieces of silk from the ‘left over’ bins, which came off the last ends of the roll of fabric. Subsequently she has used this defect in the fabric to her advantage and as stated, this uneven bottom line of the tapestry has become a Billy Zangewa trademark.

The title of her work ‘*Unsung Heroes*’ 2005 (Figure 5.2) is a contradiction in the sense that the title of this work and the text seem at odds with each other. Heroes are not jealous and needy nor do they display any negativity. This is exactly what Zangewa does so well. She draws the viewer into a dialogue with her work. Many

questions arise. Are these indeed portraits of heroes or is she using the word hero as a question? Could someone with these traits be a hero? In contrast to '*Infinite Possibilities*' this work is more subdued and monochromatic. The lack of jewel-like colours combined with the negative text makes this work intriguing and different from previous works. Her use of silk embroidery thread, appliqué and silk fabric takes traditional feminine needlecraft to a Post-Modern level.

As an artist working in a Post-Modern genre Sue Pam-Grant has proved herself as a successful performing artist, actress, director, playwright, and visual artist. Her work captures, explores and celebrates her experiences, memories and deepest secrets. Pam-Grant confesses to being '*obsessed with what I call domestic detail*' (Moolman, 2006: 054). As a mother and wife caught in the domestic zone she investigates and explores the small detail of everyday life and how women as mothers and wives find their lives regulated and centred by these very small details and domestic acts. In an interview Pam-Grant explains

This is who I am- a wife, a mother- and it is these roles along with their complex natures that I choose to explore and investigate in my search for artistic truth and expression (Moolman, 2006: 054).

In her book *The Subversive Stitch*, Parker agrees that the experience of a woman is conveyed by her place in society and "what a picture conveys often relates to the needs of a woman's class as much as to her experience as a woman at that time" (1984:12).

Considering the phrase: "as a woman at that time", it is noteworthy that from 1830-1840 the private household became the focus of many artists in Europe. According to Chadwick this movement towards the domestic arena coincided with the rise of Protestantism and that

The spread of humanism and the educational and domestic ideology of the Protestant Reformation increased literacy among women (Parker, 2002: 117).

Two hundred years later there is a new awareness of Human Rights in the contemporary Western World and again the surge is towards the domestic arena. The discourse and debate in South Africa is especially relevant concerning Human Rights as the people of South Africa have liberated themselves from an inhumane and unfair political order. Women have become equal to men before the constitution,

but because of a deeply ingrained patriarchal dispensation, especially amongst the Afrikaners, Moslems, Hindus and black South Africans, most women are still second class citizens. Abuse and rape is on the increase as women become more and more 'equal' to their partners. According to sociologists this phenomenon is born out of a feeling by males that they are losing their superiority. The issues concerning women are still hotly debated in South Africa in a post-Apartheid era. Thus we find that the awareness of the liberation of women has again focused on the domestic sphere, the environment in which women find themselves every day. Pam-Grant as a woman at this point in time concerns herself and investigates the domestic arena of today.

Pam-Grant uses the domestic sphere to explore the identity of women, and how this identity is circumscribed by a woman's involvement in domestic issues. Chadwick remarks that *'to paint everyday life is to paint the activities of women and children'* (2002: 117). This everyday life and experience is the essence of the space that Pam-Grant inhabits in her multi media work; her memories as a mother and wife within the domestic arena.

According to Moolman Pam-Grant describes herself as a *'domestic rescuer, an archaeologist, I save and document all the domestic detail and they tell us their stories'* (2006:055). During this interview Moolman specifically asked Pam-Grant about the use of pattern paper in her work. Pam-Grant responded that they are like our memories:

pattern like, presenting themselves over and over again in fragmented pieces, fragile moments that appear and disappear - I suppose they are our 'tissue ghosts' (Ibid. 2006:055).

Pam-Grant explained to Moolman that these paper patterns inspired an exploration into the possibilities of using tissue pattern paper in her work. Her first solo exhibition *SIMPLICITY MISS PETITE SIZE 8MP 2005*, was a journey of large photographic collages using pattern tissue paper on canvas. These pattern collages recalled her involvement with her daughter, but also highlights the universal mother/daughter relationships and commitments. She plays on the bond and interaction between the tissue paper and the maker of the garment, which in turn points to the mother/child bond. As a mother I know that in some relationships with your children, especially throughout their teenage years, this bonding can be as fragile as a piece of tissue paper. Pam-Grant admits that she is constantly on an excavation dig in second hand shops for old patterns and pattern pieces which she uses in an inventive way to build

a new story around her new archaeological find. Thus a new story is born from an old source. This goes hand in hand with her love of archaeology, and in this way she can stitch together her precious memories (Moolman, 2006: 055).

Pam-Grant continued to explain her relationship with tissue to Moolman. In the work '*Cut Away Here*' (Figure 6.3) and *Flower of Imperfection* (Figure 5.4) tissue paper becomes the metaphor for her fragility during her journey with breast cancer and her subsequent mastectomy.

I have an intimate and visceral relationship with tissue since my diagnosis with breast cancer: good tissue, bad tissue and scar tissue (2006:0540).

Pam –Grant explains that the bad cancerous tissue was cut away, then the good tissue was stitched together and these lines formed scar tissue. The cutting lines on the pattern tissue, reminds the viewer of the lines on her body left by the surgical procedure. The stitching lines on the tissue pattern points to the way her body was sutured together after the procedure and the tears in the pattern tissue become the metaphor for scar-tissue, and the fragility of human life (Ibid, 2006; 055).



Figure 5.3: Pam-Grant, S. *Cut Away Here*. Tissue paper, thread.

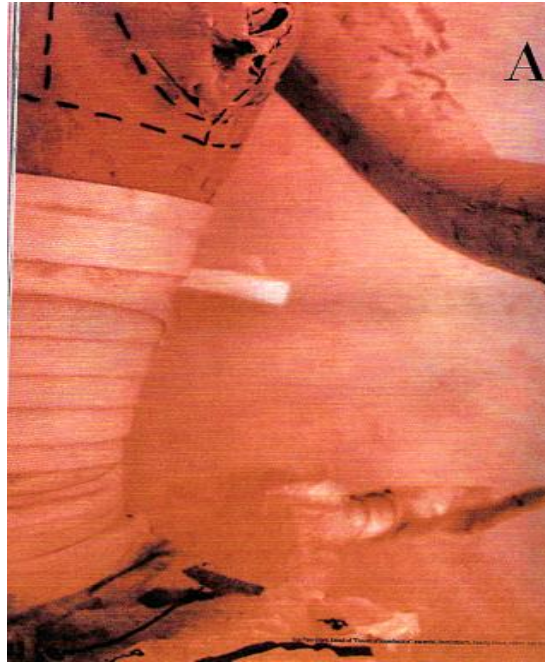


Figure 5.4: Pam-Grant, S *Flower of imperfection* (Detail), found objects, sewing tissue.

In the Post-Modern context of reinventing, Pam-Grant is a master. According to her, she is on a permanent treasure hunt finding new ways to work with the issue of identity. Some of her work contains numbers, sometimes her own identity number and sometimes the birth dates of her loved ones. She also makes use of important dates that recall certain memories of events in history to make her artworks. The work, *The Brave Boy* carries the date of Youth Day '16061976' which, for the informed viewer, recalls the Soweto youth rebellion that led to the death of Hector Pieterse. On this tragic day, 16th June 1976, the scholars of Soweto rebelled against the Apartheid System and more so against the fact that Afrikaans was made a mandatory subject for all black pupils.

In her quest to document her memories and explore the human obsession with nostalgia, Pam-Grant makes use of any domestic article she can lay her hands on. Pam-Grant started her career as an actress, during this time she became aware of the use of props on a stage, stage craft and backdrops. Her experience on stage and as a play-write made her aware of the use of 'props'.

She realised that the eye of the beholder perceives what it is meant to perceive thus by using her creativity she transforms everyday articles found in every home and used by house wives everyday into artworks, such as a colander that becomes the face of a child. Here the colander becomes the metaphor of a mother feeding and caring for her child. The pink swimming caps stuffed with tissue patterns become a

basket full of melons and refer to her daughter and the hours she spent on extra-mural activities. Thus she, herself, becomes involved in her memories. Pam-Grant states that she is constantly exploring how:

Memories are embedded fragments of childhood and past that we attempt to stitch and thread together to create our own history, our own identity (Moolman. 2006:056).

Her modus operandi in creating her work is to nail a canvas to the floor on which she then starts layering with found objects. These objects can be anything from a toy chair, a pair of shoes, cake, tins buckets, prams and calico. After playing around with these found objects, she starts to

wrap, bind, fold, cover, snip, tear, stick, bandage, patch, reinforce, glue, pull, knot, tie, line, mark, erase and mark again, soldering the cracks and joining assemblages that juggle fragility and resilience in a balancing act, of life's precarious performance (Pam-Grant 14/6/ 2007).

The work of Pam-Grant is mature yet poignant and speaks of personal pain, of the battle with cancer and the ultimate victory. Although her work is extremely personal, within this woman's life lie many stories concerning womanhood. I read her obsessive seeking to capture and hold on to memories as a deep embedded fear, not only for herself personally, but for all women concerned with dying and leaving unsaid words to loved ones. The fear of breast cancer is a fear every woman carries within her soul. The fear of death, the unknown, is universal. The fear of leaving young children without any memories of their biological mother is a very real fear, because if we do not leave anything behind, or capture memories, it would seem as if we never existed, and passed through this world, unremembered by anyone. Her seeking of identity lies at the heart of being a woman. Women perceive their breasts as a part of womanhood, the breasts of women feed their children, and are a part of their femininity. I can relate to this fear not only as a woman, a mother and grandmother but as the daughter of a woman who has fought and overcome breast cancer twice. Many women exist through their husband's, parent's or children's identity. 'The wife of' or 'the mother of', 'the daughter of Mr.' denotes a specific place and job description for many women. This is particularly true of most Afrikaner women. As an Afrikaner woman growing up in a strict patriarchal order I can relate to Pam-Grant's search for identity.

Waldman, as an artist researches and investigates the domestic environment. She approaches her work from another angle. Whereas Pam –Grant's work is serious Waldman puts a lighter slant on her work. Waldman explained to Moolman that: *'Art can be cheeky. Not all art has to be serious all of the time'* (2006:058).

Gina Waldman is a fulltime artist residing in Johannesburg. She completed her Masters degree in Fine Art at the university of the Witwatersrand, and wrote her thesis on the concept of kitsch. Kitsch has been defined as:

Artistic vulgarity: sentimentality, tasteless, or ostentation in any of the arts
vulgar objects: collectively, decorative items that are regarded as tasteless, sentimental or ostentatious in style (Microsoft Encarta Thesaurus: 2002)

Waldman is fascinated by kitsch, excess, consumerism, taste and decorating. She describes herself as a

mixed media artist who recycles and reinvents banal, domestic materials. Beauty is intrinsic to my work and in my work I strive to re-invent (Moolman, 2006: 0580).

In reply to a question from Moolman on why she makes use of tapestries, beads, glitter, silk roses, brooches, cloths, to name but a few, Waldman stated that she is constantly exploring the divide between art and craft, design and art and to accomplish the tension and dialogue between these disciplines, she makes use of a variety of media. As can be noted all the materials Waldman uses are perceived as traditionally feminine and associated with the domestic sphere previously inhabited almost exclusively by women (2006:0580).

Gina Waldman is an expert in exploring, exploiting and executing her work through the medium of craft. Waldman admitted to Moolman that she finds it interesting to explore the banal habit of decorating toilets and graveyards. Waldman is of the opinion that there is a universal need to decorate. Pretorius shares this opinion;

Weens die mens se ingebore skoonheidsdrang het hy die voorwerpe wat hy gemaak het, versier. Dit is 'n merkwaardige verskynsel dat die drang na versiering orals ter wereld en selfs in die moeilikste omstandighede denkbaar, steeds voorgekom het (Pretorius, 1992:13). (Because of man's

inherent urge to beautify he decorated the articles he made. It is a remarkable phenomenon that the urge to beautify or decorate, even in the most difficult circumstances possible occurs.)¹⁰

This excessive need is evident in all cultures and nations. In her quest to understand this phenomenon Waldman found that beneath the opulence and beauty there is damage and decay. It is an endeavour by humanity to hide that which is unpleasant. The toilet is the most private of places, and the graveyard, the most of unhappy places. Not one of the occupants of these particular spaces is interested in the décor of those particular places wherein they find themselves, yet they are decorated.

Ruth Sacks, an artist, describes Waldmans work '*swops i and ii*' as a work consisting of:

deep black frames and set behind glass are concentrated layers of chaotic colours and shapes. Swops I and ii use flat, mass produced images of generic flowers manically arranged and assembled with pins to create a unique, almost organic whole. (Sacks, 2004:1)

Sacks also explains Waldman's work *Artifice*, where Waldman creates another excessive surface of fake and real butterflies that vie for attention in this jumble of colour and flowers. The real butterflies pinned onto this work are already decaying and disappearing (2004:1). The message is simple; real, organic articles die, and decay, while fake representation will be everlasting. Consumerism and advertisements thrive on this need of humanity to own and to enhance their environment.

Waldman's tongue in cheek attitude is evident in her use of scraps of wallpaper on which she executes pen sketches. These wallpaper sketches serves as a '*critique on the traditional landscape genre*' (Sacks, 006:2). Landscape paintings are bought by people to match their curtains and couches. Matching paintings and furniture comprise many people's idea of a well decorated domestic environment. In other words, these paintings are reduced to nothing more than wallpaper; the only function they serve is as pretty pictures covering the wall. Although these works are playful and kitsch, there is a deeper significance that points to the obsessive and banal urge by consumers to decorate; encouraged by advertisements, consumerism and mass-production.

¹⁰ My own translation.

Apart from delivering commentary on the kitsch landscape painting tradition Waldman comments on the patriarchal obsession with owning land found amongst all nations. Land issues are as old as humanity, and will be there for as long as humans inhabit the earth. In my opinion the commentary Waldman delivers on land issues is a direct link to her past when the Jews were persecuted and she had to flee Tripoli, Libya, in 1967. Land issues are closely linked to the Biblical history of her religion. According to the Old Testament the Jews were carried off to strange lands throughout their history. During the Second World War Jewish people were deported from Germany and Poland and interned in concentration camps where they were killed, buried in mass graves or cremated. Therefore within the playful and kitsch many layers are found and profound issues are addressed. .

Within these opulent, feminine visual paradigms Waldman celebrates her femininity and her place within the domestic space. She explores the beauty of tapestries in her work *Threads* and *Threads 111* (Figure 5.5 and 5.6) which reminds her of the occupation by people to buy and execute a '*painting by numbers*' as she explained to Moolman. These homemade paintings are framed and proudly exhibited in the home as works of art. She connects tapestries to the domestic arena, where the front is beautiful, whereas the back bears the proof of the labour of the person that executed that tapestry; all knots and threads. These tapestries tie in with her exploration of labour and domestic activities, as well as the statement that she is striving to beautify the damaged (Moolman, 2006:059). I read the statement of beautifying the damaged in the context of her work as life, or that the domestic arena is not always what it seems to be from the outside. One often finds a laborious and tangled web of hurt and deceit behind the appearance of beauty.

Waldman's fixation with the domestic sphere and decoration can be read as a subconscious need to revisit her past. When she fled Tripoli, Libya, at the age of 19 in 1967, she was just another displaced person; a Jewish refugee fleeing persecution. She eventually found herself in Johannesburg, South Africa, where she resettled and established a home and safe domestic arena for herself. It is human nature to compensate for that which we have lost.



Figure 5.5: Waldman, G. *Threads* (installation). Tapestries, fabric, wool and hair.



Figure 5.6: Waldman, G. *Threads III (iv)*. Oil on canvas and threads.

Murdoch, in contrast to Waldman, who investigates the domestic arena from the knowledge and perspective of the Jewish culture, investigates and explores themes around the Afrikaans culture. She investigates naming rituals, which are of great importance to the Afrikaner, identity and excessive emotions. Her work is executed in a diverse range of materials most of which she finds in her specific domestic domain. These materials can include anything from tablecloths to oven-gloves. When bathing her children she started pondering the connotations concerning bathing and bathmats. Bathmats '*relate to safety and security, both physically and symbolically*' (2006: 056)

Murdoch's work is driven by her emotions as a woman and artist. According to Murdoch in an interview with Moolman she stated that she perceives herself as an expressionist. Expressing her emotions in her work is a form of therapy for her. Although she is not an active feminist, women's issues are extremely important to her. She finds herself in a position where she as a single working mother must divide her time between her art and the domesticity of being a parent. As an Afrikaner, subjected to a Christian, Calvinist upbringing, she felt pressurised to fit into the expected roles of wife, mother, and homemaker from the Afrikaner viewpoint. Thus she had to comply with the Feminine Ideal. As she matured she could discard the bonds of Calvinist guilt and move away from the expected selfless role of Volksmoeder, the Afrikaner's answer to the concept of the Feminine Ideal, to becoming a more independent individual. Only once she became free from Calvinist guilt and as her identity evolved, did her artwork mature. (2006:056)

As a mature Afrikaner woman I can identify with her obsession to free herself from the bonds of her Calvinist and patriarchal upbringing. It was and still is an important facet of Afrikaner girls upbringing to aspire to be moulded into the Volksmoeder ideal.

Murdoch describes her work as '*emotional and confessional*' (Moolman. 2006: 056). Within the parameters of her domestic sphere she delves into her own life as a metaphor for the universal woman and works from an autobiographical point of view. She makes use of her own past and her present state as an Afrikaner and single parent to tackle women's issues. In other words she writes her own autobiography through her work. (Ibid. 2006:057) In this way she is not only documenting her own history, but the history of a large portion of Afrikaner women.

Murdoch makes use of text in her work. She is inspired by Tracy Emin and the way in which Emin uses text in her art to relay her thoughts. Murdoch has a witty and acidic humour that she brings to her work. She often makes use of Afrikaans idioms, clichés and sayings. Murdoch explains:

I take notorious sentences and appropriate them for myself. For example "I do believe in fairies" (Moolman, 2006: 056).

Murdoch has the knack of capturing the meaning and deeper, underlying issue she is working with in a few words. The titles of her work provide the clue to the deeper, underlying meaning in her work, for example in the work '*Soetsappig*' (Soppy). (Figure 5.7) This work was executed in coloured wax.

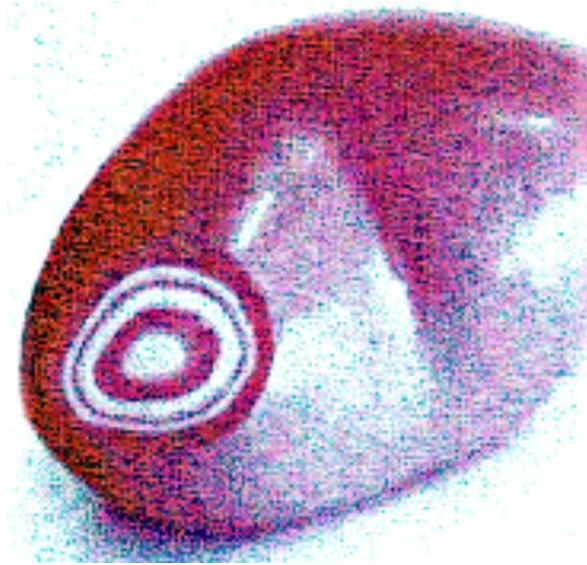


Figure 5.7: Murdoch, A. *Soetsappig*. Coloured wax.



Figure 5.8: Murdoch, A. *As hy weer kom*. Measuring tape and wire.



Figure 5.9: Murdoch, A. *Lang Bene Kou* Mannequin legs, fabric, embroidery cotton.



Figure 5.10: Murdoch, A. *Tuisteskepper*. Plastic tablecloths, sponge.

Soetsappig has nothing to do with sweets, but is an Afrikaans word used to describe excessive sweetness, usually hypocritical, when talking to or about someone. Just as useless as a wax sweet so useless are the sweet words of a hypocrite.

The title '*As hy weer kom*' (Figure 5.8.) (If he comes again) refers not only to if 'he', boyfriend or husband, comes again, but also to her Protestant upbringing, as '*As Hy Weer Kom*' is the name of a hymn sung in the Afrikaans churches, referring to the second coming of Christ. This work executed with measuring tape and wire in the form of a heart refers to the ever present diets women undergo to please the male gaze as well as to the pure of heart awaiting the second coming of Christ and the expected piety and the purity of Afrikaner women.

The Afrikaner has a way of speaking in euphemisms, for instance an Afrikaner will say that someone has 'looked too deep into the bottle', instead of just saying 'he is drunk', and '*Lang bene kou*' (Figure 5.9) (Chewing long bones, difficult task/ time) is an excellent example of this habit. This title is also a shining example of Murdoch's

sharp wit and humour. In one sentence she captures a typically Afrikaner idiosyncrasy. '*Lang Bene Kou*' is a multi media work where she made use of a number of mannequin legs that she had covered in men's handkerchiefs. Here she used embroidery to execute the word 'loop' (walk) on the handkerchiefs. The legs of the mannequins have been rendered completely useless by separating them from the bodies. Even if the legs were attached to a body they would be useless because they are and remain hard plastic articles. Here Murdoch makes the statement that even if a person had the means (legs) to do something, it does not guarantee success. The piece is placed on the ground to underpin the uselessness of the legs.

The historical '*Tuisteskepper*' (Figure 5.10) (Homemaker) refers to the snobbism of Afrikaner women who saw the Volksmoeder ideal as a higher calling, doing good deeds while servants brought up their children. A caption such as this and the materials used to produce it, are perceived as tools and materials of femininity. Here Murdoch has made use of plastic tablecloths, an article found in every home where there are children. This installation is placed on the floor, here she cut out house shaped pieces and built it up to create three dimensional forms. It has the fun look of a safe colourful children's play environment. Yet here I read some cynicism, that although the home sphere should be safe and beautiful, it definitely is not always the case. Many children get abused by the very people that should create a safe environment for them.

Antionette Murdoch drives the knife into the very hypocritical heart of some Afrikaners. There are no holy cows for this witty artist. She uses the idiomatic language of her culture and the idiosyncrasies of the Afrikaner to deliver her commentary on every aspect of being a woman in a patriarchal order.

In contrast to the above artists Ziegler investigate and delivers commentary on the issues of conservation and exploitation of nature. Nirmi Ziegler, received her Masters Degree in Art History and Comparative Literature at the University of Stuttgart in Germany. Today Ziegler resides in Durban, South Africa. In an interview which I conducted with Ziegler during August 2008 she stated that she is inspired by and drawn to nature, therefore the lush vegetation and environment of Natal is conducive to her work. Ziegler makes use of plant material to execute her artworks. She firmly believes that if humanity does not care for our environment by keeping it healthy, there will soon be no life on our planet.

Ziegler's art is dictated by her environment. When Ziegler took her first steps as an artist working with environmental issues she mirrored nature in her work as she perceived nature as the greatest artist of all in itself. Nature is complete, but the interference of humanity renders it incomplete.

Ziegler found that, as an artist creating her own paper from the lush vegetation of Durban and the surrounding area, the environment stimulates her to continuously experiment with new plant material. Friends and acquaintances alike bring all the plant material she needs to her doorstep. She does not have to disfigure or cut down plants to make her art. If she had to cut down plants her message of preservation would be a contradiction in terms. Ziegler believes in the philosophy of keeping her 'carbon footprint' as small as possible concerning the environment.

Papermaking and experimenting ceaselessly to find the right fibre for the paper she uses as a canvas, is a very labour intensive activity. Ziegler started off using the fibre in palm leaves and fronds to create textured paper, on which she executes her work. During her continuous investigation into various fibre materials, she uses that which is available. Ziegler has a propensity to use indigenous plant material, she also uses invasive plant material such as sisal leaves. Towards the end of 2007 she started experimenting with pineapple leaves, hibiscus and gum tree bark. These plant materials have now been added to her list of plants that give an excellent fibre when cooked.

Her modus operandi is extremely time consuming, labour intensive and challenging. She cleans the raw materials and then cooks them to get rid of the soft tissue in order to extract the fibre in each plant. These are cooled and used in the paper she produces. Cooking and cleaning have traditionally been female activities, and are integral ingredients of the Feminine Ideal. Ziegler has taken the traditional feminine activities and reuses these activities in an inventive way to make her art. Through these very activities she places herself within the feminine arena without falling into the trap of delivering obvious feminine commentary or preaching. By choosing such a labour intensive method of producing her art she places herself in opposition to the Feminine Ideal where women were perceived as weak with a propensity to be infirm.

Lately she has started incorporating the fibre as a decorative medium in a conceptual way in her work. She finds the challenge of marrying the craft and the conceptual elements in her work exhilarating. There is always a duality in the finished product, dark and light, spiral and geometric, playful and serious. This refers to the duality in

life. What happens before life and after death, without the soothing comfort of religious beliefs? She feels that nature reflects the true reality of the circle of life. Nature supplies the answer to the mystery of life and death.

Ziegler also finds inspiration in ancient Byzantine art as well as in the mosaics of Ravenna in Italy. Depending on how you view a mosaic, it could either be realistic or abstract. This duality in the art of mosaic inspired Ziegler to explore the duality in life and the duality in the human condition.

This concept of duality is illustrated in her work '*In-and Outside*' 2008. (Figure 5.11). This work consists of hand crafted paper, Ivy leaves and plaits made with palm leave fibre. Duality is found in the caption 'in and out,' the paper 'canvas' is circular and the Ivy leaves used to establish the point of in and out of the plaits. This work has an organic and erratic shape. The fibre she obtained from palm fronds has been plaited. These plaits can be read in various ways. The plaits can be a border either holding something in, or holding something out. They can also refer to youth and maturity, because as a child in Germany her hair had to be plaited for school. Many adults also wear their hair in a plait that is turned around their heads. Furthermore I read her plaits not only as a reference to her youth but also as a symbol of her acquired status of a person living and belonging to the African continent. Plaits are an integral part of many indigenous hairstyles found on this continent. Thus the plaits contain a reference to both continents.



Figure 5.11: Ziegler, N. *In-and Outside* . 2008. 34 cm diameter.



Figure 5.12: Ziegler,N. *Celebrate*. 2008. 64cm diameter.

Ziegler ponders the role of the individual in society, and each individual's idea of reality. To support this philosophy she writes her own poetry, and uses the poetry in her work. Because Ziegler enjoys the aesthetics of embroidery, she executes her poetry in this medium. Ziegler puts paid to the concept that a highly intelligent and creative woman can not also enjoy working with her hands. By this duality of mind and hand, Ziegler negates the male invention of the Feminine Ideal, where women were expected to enjoy handwork, cooking and caring, and according to the patriarchal system where intelligence is perceived as a male prerogative. She is constantly aware of the dialogue, tension and fusion of craft and concept.

Ziegler shares her philosophy of everlasting versus decay with Gina Waldman. Where Waldman relishes the decay, and tries to beautify around this decay, Ziegler has found that natural products can be made to last through human intervention. Once the soft tissue of the plant material has been cooked away, the fibrous material is strong and lasting, and as such can withstand the erosion of time.

Ziegler grew up in a home surrounded by artistic parents and peers who stimulated creativity through play. Ziegler learned the traditional feminine crafts at school and now employs them in her art works. Both Zangewa and Ziegler are examples of the many artists, and women making use of previously acquired skills.

In response to a question on how she feels about the fact that she uses craft to execute her commentary, she answered that as a woman she is using the skills that she is comfortable with. Art is a homogenous field and it is not the method of executing a work that is so important, but the concept of the art work in a Post-Modern context. The first priority of any Post-Modern work is relevance. Is the message relevant to the time? Is it thought provoking and on the cutting –edge of new art? These are the questions that must be answered. Within this paradigm the artist must make a conscious choice of methodology. In her case the choice she made was a conscious choice; to make use of her previously acquired needle craft skills. As a woman Ziegler also refers to and celebrates Mother Nature, the caregiver and healer.

I found Ziegler's work fresh and in character with contemporary thought concerning environmental issues. At first glance the work may appear as decorative, but with closer scrutiny and contemplation the deeper underlying philosophy of her work is revealed. An example of this is 'Celebrate' 2008. (Figure 5.12). Again Ziegler has used the round organic form of handmade paper and executed the work in a playful and decorative way. The round organic form and the knowledge of the material used, recalls the yearly circles you find on an ancient tree stump when it is cut down. The more circles there are, the older the tree. Here she played with kitsch by combining man-made fibre fabric flowers and organic material. This is reminiscent of Waldman who uses the concept of kitsch to execute her work. In her multi media work Waldman combines man made articles such as pins, ties and plastic flowers. In contrast, Ziegler uses plant fibre and fabric. In this process she keeps the material she works with organic. The duality is evident in this work; man-made versus natural, earthy colours, versus dyed red fabric, organic form, versus geometric fabric cut-outs. The question posed here is: Which of the materials will be beneficial to the environment?.

In her own words Ziegler describes her approach to her work as; 'deeply aware' (2008). Her philosophy of reality stripped of all sentiment and comfortable belief systems is relevant in Post-Modern thought. Ziegler is not intimidated by the notion that she is considered a 'woman artist'. According to her, society is at fault for labelling or excluding persons on the basis of gender and forcing humanity into specific roles. She describes herself as a strong *person*, emotionally and physically and therefore it is of no consequence whether she is seen as an artist or a 'woman artist'. O'Keefe responded to a book on women artists: *A silly topic...Write about*

women. Or write about artists. I don't see how they're connected (Broude and Garrard, 1992:438).

The philosophy and concept of Post-Modernism has not yet been defined in precise terms, yet the practise thereof is a

rejection of grand theories to explain social phenomena. Iconoclasm is the order of the day. Scepticism replaces certainty. New ideas and fresh conceptualisations, new discourses such as feminist, post-colonial, gay and green discourse have been found necessary to help explain the contemporary condition. Diverse perspectives are welcomed and difference is celebrated. (Burke, n.d. 8)

The artists Billy Zangewa, Sue Pam-Grant, Antionette Murdoch, Gina Waldman and Nirmi Ziegler all celebrate their diverse perspectives and their differences although there is a constant correlation between them regarding their modus operandi in executing their work. When considering these five artists I discovered that they all make use of traditional needlecraft skills previously acquired, be it at school, from their mothers or from missionaries. The exception is Ziegler who has added other traditional feminine skills to her repertoire, such as cooking, carding, weaving and plaiting of the plant fibre.

These women artists have taken up the needle as a potent weapon against various iniquitous practices, be it women's issues, cancer, kitsch, racism, patriarchal issues or environmental issues. The tangential point is the use of traditional feminine needlecraft. These artists have followed in the footsteps of the Suffragettes and are using the needle to fight their wars. They have shifted the paradigm of women/needlecraft into a Post-Modern arena. They reinvented the use of traditional women's needlecraft by taking it out of the home arena and placing it in the public arena such as museums and galleries. Furthermore needle craft has found a new function, it is no more employed to produce pretty home wares, but to carry powerful messages. The same method and stitches that served the Afrikaner women of South Africa in the Anglo-Boer War concentration camps, are the stitches employed to carry the messages of Sue Pam-Grant, Billy Zangewa, Antionette Murdoch, Gina Waldman and Nirmi Ziegler .

The tacking stitches of Sue Pam-Grant are reminiscent of a young girl sewing her sampler. The bold tapestries of Waldman take the viewer back to the Victorian salon

where the women of the household were sewing their tapestries with their heads bowed piously over their work. The embroidered poems of Ziegler and the fragility of her work bring about an awareness of the fragility of nature. The idiosyncrasies and idiomatic speech of the Afrikaner is employed by Murdoch in her work. She drives the needle directly into the conceited and hypocritical heart of many Afrikaners. Her wit and satire takes on the patriarchal order still in use in many Afrikaner families. Zangewa's colourful embroideries on her vibrant silk tapestries recall the colourful and calm African sunsets, violent thunderstorms and pastoral rolling hills. These elements are also found in relationships; moments of calm, storm, darkness and light.

According to Burke

The struggle against racism, class structures, sexism, and other forms of oppression needs to move away from simply a language of critique to a language of transformation and hope. (n.d. 9)

These artists are creating a sense of awareness of the issues of choice they consider important. Yet they are not only critiquing but are creating a message of hope. Each of these artists has managed to reinvent traditional stitch craft which was also practised in the Anglo-Boer War concentration camps 1899-1902. The same stitches are now telling a new story.

CHAPTER 6

This Chapter deals with my own work within the Afrikaner context. Although the Afrikaner family unit is moving away from a patriarchal structure, and many young males are embracing the equality of gender, the cold truth is that patriarchy is still practiced in some form in the Afrikaans establishment. Although Afrikaner women, in particular, are as guilty of perpetuating this structure as Afrikaner males it is a universal problem. According to Lerner “*patriarchy can only function with the co-operation of women*” (1986:217).

Most Afrikaners belong to one of the three main Afrikaans churches. The doctrines of these churches remain based on patriarchal bias of the Old Testament, where theologies were constructed that women are to be subservient to men.

The patriarchal system within the Afrikaner context operates on the basis that the white male is supreme, and the female is given a well-circumscribed position within that society. The women who submit to this circumscribed ideal of womanhood receive some status, honour and respectability. Within this Feminine Ideal women were firmly relegated to the domestic sphere. This sphere was perceived as less important and therefore not worth recording. Thus it is noted that over the ages the written history of the species has privileged the accomplishments of the male.

Keeping early written history in mind, it must be noted that the Dutch, French Huguenots, and 1820 British settlers were followers of Calvin, Luther and John Knox, the fathers of the protestant movement and strict adherents to the literal interpretation of the Bible. In keeping with traditional patriarchal beliefs, the patriarchal family units collectively led to a patriarchal society, and the various societies formed a patriarchal nation. Patriarchy manifests itself in many forms. In South Africa the ideology of the supreme white male manifested in a patriarchal political system, Apartheid.

Four hundred years of patriarchy, supported by the Afrikaans churches, can not be undone in one generation. Patriarchy is reinforced by prevailing religious beliefs and family structures within the Afrikaner cultural society. John Mill argues that there are specific structures that maintain the status quo; ‘*the masters of all slaves rely for maintaining obedience, on fear; either fear of themselves or religious fears*’ (1993-2002:n.p.).

Religion has silenced women. According to the Bible, Paul stated that a woman is not to speak in church or in public. This ideology was and perpetuated by the Afrikaans churches. It was expected of Afrikaner women to be obedient and excel at motherhood. Mill argues:

All the moralities tell them that it is the duty of women, and all the current sentimentalities that it is their nature, to live for others; to make complete abnegation of themselves, and to have no life but in their affections (1993-2002 n.p.).

In 2007, a reverend of the Dutch Reformed Church stated, in my presence, that women *must* be obedient in all ways to the man, because it is written so in the Bible. In July 2009 the Reformed Church debated whether women are allowed to be elders and reverends of this particular Afrikaans church. The synod of the Reformed churches decided that no women will be allowed to be part of the clergy of this church. This decision was based on the fact that the Bible states that women are not allowed to educate, and only allowed to be nurturers. This is an example of how patriarchy is substantiated by the clergy to keep Afrikaner women in a subservient position. The modern version is much the same; now Afrikaner women, instead of embroidering altar cloths for the church, raise funds for the church, nursery school and school. They are still living the Volksmoeder ideal, doing their good works for the less fortunate.

I place my work into these historical and prevailing perceptions. My work must be evaluated against my personal circumstances; my age, my culture, historical background and religious structure within which I operate. As an artist I document issues concerning Afrikaner women. I do not believe that I am a woman artist, delivering comment on women's issues. I agree with O'Keeffe who said; '*I have always been very annoyed at being referred to as a "woman artist" rather than an artist*' (Broude and Garrard, 1982:442).

I use craft in an attempt to redress the imbalance in documentation of Afrikaner women's history and at the same time deliver social commentary on the exclusion of some of the history of Afrikaner women. Throughout Afrikaner history craft played an important role. The Voortrekker Tapestries are an example of this. These 15 tapestries depicting the Great Trek were executed by 8 women and designed by the artist W.H. Coetzer. It is of importance to note that these tapestries were commissioned by the women of the 'Vrou- en Moederbeweging', (ATKV). More proof

of women claiming a place in a historical moment. A second example is the craft used to empower women after the war, here again women were the leaders in this concept of empowerment through educating women to help themselves. Emily Hobhouse reminds the reader in her Boer War Letters, edited by van Reenen, that Afrikaner women must not be forgotten, as they contributed to the war effort by stoically suffering the indignation of the camps. She adds; *liberty is the equal right and heritage of every child of man, without distinction of race, colour or sex* (van Reenen, 1984:407).

Traditionally women's work is smaller in scale than men's work, and the quantity of women's work is less than that of their male counterpart. The reason given is that women are responsible for nurturing children and keeping house therefore are caught in the domestic environment and only left-over time can be used for themselves. In the scale and output of my work I challenge this assumption. I am a wife, mother and grandmother. I also help my husband on the farm in the hydroponics tunnels. Despite all my activities and responsibilities I have decided that the large scale of my work, as well as the output of my work, will not be compromised by the fact that I am a woman. Furthermore I believe that what I am saying is of importance to every Afrikaner woman.

My body of work consists of an installation¹¹, video installation, photography and embroidered altar cloth. Each work tells a different story, but must be read as a unit within one overriding theme.

The 1st installation consists of a bell-tent (figure 6.1), a visual paradigm of Afrikaner history, surrounded by a wire fence, the symbol of imprisonment. Placed in the corner is a heap of smoke-fired and raku ceramic pomegranates.(Figure 6.2) In the tent, a table surrounds the centre pole, which is covered with a tablecloth, and on the table are tea cosies of various sizes. There will be a soundtrack of an English tea party, as the British high command was celebrating the birthday of Queen Victoria whilst women and children were dying of the hunger in the camps.

The function of a tent is to protect the person or persons on the inside. However, during war, the tents become the prisons of displaced people, the symbols of death, destruction, hunger and disease. This is a universal phenomenon. These conditions numb the occupants emotionally. Survival becomes a bitter struggle. My bell tent is

¹¹ An installation is a work of art consisting of various elements, constructed in a gallery or other appropriate space for a specific reason or exhibition

constructed according to the traditional bell tent used during the Anglo-Boer War. The tent consists of twelve panels that form the roof. Embroidered in ecru coloured cotton on four of these panels are phrases and sentences from a camp diary, written by Tant Miem Fischer during her time of internment in a camp. This woman used her diary to chronicle everyday life in the concentration camp. She also used the diary to pour out her innermost yearnings and private thoughts. The text on these panels gives the viewer an insight into the lives of women in the concentration camps. Kelly argues that text becomes part of the image;

Now for me, it is important to use writing to evoke a sense of listening to, rather than looking at. The other thing is that I actually feel I'm treating the text as image, that is, giving it the same consideration that you would the painted mark (Nairne, 1987: 151).



Figure 6.1: Alkema, J. *BellTent*. 2009. Installation. 3m(h) x4.8m(diameter).

The next four panels consist of line embroideries of various 'kappies' or bonnets worn by the women. They had 'kappies' to wear on the farms while working around the homestead. They also had Sunday best 'kappies' which were beautifully embroidered. These fibre drawings are executed in a large scale, hereby giving them importance. Celestine Pretorius claims that the 'kappie' developed into the pinnacle of folk art in South Africa. My 'kappies' are executed in ecru colour cotton on these canvas panels of the tent.



Figure 6.2: Alkema, J. *Pomegranates (360 pieces)* 2009. Raku.

The last four panels consist of a variety of articles of importance to the women at the turn of the century, namely a 'lappieskombers' or quilt, an apron, a christening robe, and a series of unfinished tapestries. These panels have also been embroidered in ecru colour cotton. The images on the quilt are images that had symbolic importance to the women at that time. The unfinished tapestry is symbolic of life interrupted.

The walls of the tent are covered by a mass of statements from women of all cultural groups on what it feels like to be a woman in South Africa today. These statements will be attached to the walls of the tent by safety pins. This is to remind us that the function of motherhood remains in our hands. We can perpetuate the patriarchal bias, or educate our children to think of themselves as equal partners in future. Mill argues;

That the principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes- the legal subordination of one sex to the other- is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and that it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on one side, nor disability on the other (1993-2002: n.p.).

The tablecloth covering the round table in the centre of the tent, has a border of embroidery known as 'gaatjies werk'. This embroidery was executed with a porcupine quill, exactly as it was done 100 years ago. The rest of the table cloth bears the names of the various camps during the war. Again ecru coloured cotton was used.

The tea cosies carry images of camp scenes on one side and camp statistics on the other side. These cosies are a play on the fact that the oppressor makes the rules. The menu in the camps consisted of 1 tin of bully beef, 3 potatoes and 1 length of wood to be shared amongst two women for a week. It is a universal phenomenon that the victors in any war tend to be abusive. Never are such atrocities committed as in times of war.



Figure 6.3: Alkema, J. *Table Cloth and Tea Cosies*. 2009. Embroidery.

The symbolism I place on white, is that white is generally perceived to be a colour of innocence, purity and privacy. The diary is privy only to the author thereof; the bonnets are private property, made with pride to fulfil a personal need. The same principle applies to the quilt, the apron, the christening dress and the tapestries.

Women, children and the elderly displaced in any war are the victims of war, whether that war is justified or not. These displaced persons are not only placed in tents, but are usually encamped behind wire fences 'for their own protection'. Thus the displaced become prisoners of their situation. My wire fence (figure 6.4) consists of four panels, 6x1.5 meters, encamping the tent. Into these panels I have placed smaller panels of traditional female craft. Thus the fence and the crafted pieces become one entity. The 1st panel contains a smaller panel of knitting executed in wire. In the 2nd panel I placed crocheted doilies made with wire. The 3rd panel contains the weaving and the 4th panel the lace. Both the weaving and lace were also constructed with wire.



Figure 6.4: Alkema, J. *Wire Fence*. 2009. *Embroidered wire*. 6 x 1.5 m.

The wire fence, being a symbol of imprisonment, becomes the metaphor for the imprisonment of the Feminine Ideal, the woman biding her time with trivialities such as embroidery, crocheting, weaving and lace making. These domestic activities play on the sensitivity of women as perceived from a male perspective. According to Chadwick

The well ordered household, a condition for an orderly, society consisted of the family, their servants and belongings. Within the home, the primary emblem of the domestic virtue that ensured the smooth running of society was the image of a woman engaged in needlework, sewing, embroidery or lacemaking (Chadwick, 1996:120).



Figure 6.5: Alkema, J. *Wire Fence. 2009. Embroidered wire. 6 x 1.5 m (Detail).*



Figure 6.6: Alkema, J. *Wire Fence. 2009. Embroidered wire. 6 x 1.5 m (Detail).*



Figure 6.7: Alkema, J. *Wire Fence*. 2009. *Embroidered wire*. 6 x 1.5 m (Detail).

To have accomplished the feat of working with wire, using traditional feminine tools, was extremely difficult. This process mirrored the hardship and suffering of women in the camps. This hardship also points to the suffering of all the women who worked to accomplished more equality for women. The use of wire in craft work has become contemporary, and the symbolism points to the contemporary women still labouring under a patriarchal system. The integration of the fence and craft is a meeting and of mass-production, industrialisation and hand crafted wares.

Many women under tremendous stress become obsessively busy. According to the Rev. Luckhoff, a minister in the camps, women in the concentration camps became obsessed with death and the activities related to the rituals of dying. I found this observation of the Rev. Luckhoff very true in my case, as my behaviour became more obsessive each day as I nursed my dying father. My heartache was manifested in movement. I could not do anything to help my dying father but I could 'do'. During the hours I spent at his bedside I knitted wire, and the repetitive action of knitting not only calmed me but also gave me the feeling that at least I am in control of something.

Staging this scene and revisiting my helplessness will be cathartic for me in getting closure in losing a beloved parent, while simultaneously demonstrating some women's obsessive behaviour during stressful times. This obsessive behaviour and heartache found life in an installation consisting of a heap of knitted wire and a video of myself knitting furiously. I will become the subject of my own emotions. Nairn states

When women use their own bodies in their artworks, they are using themselves, a significant psychological factor converts these bodies and faces from object to subject (1997:



Figure 6.8: Alkema, J. *Installation.2009*. Knitted Wire and Video.



Figure 6.9: Alkema, J. *Installation*. 2009. Knitted Wire and Video (Detail).

When Nelson Mandela and the other veterans of the struggle for freedom walked away from Robben Island, each man contributed a stone from the quarries where they worked to form a heap of stones. This heap of stones, on Robben Island has been declared a national monument symbolizing freedom from oppression. My heap of 360 ceramic pomegranates, symbolize death, life and freedom (figure 6.10). It is my monument to all the women that died throughout the ages fighting for freedom. In mythology Demeter spends six months of the year weeping, while Persephone has to

live in Hades, because she has eaten six pomegranate pips. After her sojourn in Hades, Persephone can live with her mother again for six months. That is when spring and summer bring new life. Thus the pomegranates become the symbol of death and life. These ceramic pomegranates also give the illusion of many discarded skulls, they remind the viewer of photographs of excavations of mass graves where bones and skulls are placed on a heap and become dehumanised. The number 360 is also symbolic of a perfect circle which is 360 degrees, it has no beginning and no end. This is a symbol of life and death, a perfect circle, always life after death and death after life.



Figure 6.10: Alkema, J. *Pomegranates* 2009. Raku. (Detail).



Figure 6.11: Alkema, J. *Hands*. 2009. Photography and Embroidery.

The series of photographs concentrate on the hands of women of all ages and all cultures (Figure 6.9). Some of these hands are busy doing traditional women's work, while other hands are busy with areas of work traditionally reserved for males. This is a symbolic invasion by women into all areas of the work place and the breaking away from the Feminine Ideal and the 'Volksmoeder' image. These photographs demonstrate the freedom women are gaining for themselves. I perceive the present time in South Africa as a bridging period and therefore am documenting this surge by women to become equal partners with men.



Figure 6.12: Alkema, J. *Hands*. 2009. Photography and Embroidery. (Detail).

Emily Hobhouse said; *Throughout the world the woman's day approaches; her era dawns* (van Reenen, 1884: 407).

The last work *Herkoms en Toekoms*(figure 6.11) is a playful documentation of my own place in Afrikaner history as a woman. The advertisement for L'loreal coined the phrase “because I’m worth it” This work is based on my experience as a daughter, woman, mother and grandmother. Lerner states :

It is my assumption that all human beings develop ideas based, at least in part, on their own experience. Women, because of educational deprivation and the absence of a usable past tended to rely more heavily on their own experience in developing their ideas than did men (1993:119).

This work will be in the format of an altar cloth inspired by the Issenheim Altar piece, executed by German artist Mathias Grunewald. This same altar piece inspired the women of the Keiskamma Art Project to tell their stories. I found the Keiskamma Altarpiece deeply touching and is using the concept to tell my own story, as a woman and more so as an Afrikaner woman. The elements I am using are all pieces and memories that have been selected for their sentimental value to me on my journey through life.

Again I am making use of embroidery and text to document certain highlights and issues of my life; thus becoming the universal woman writing her own history.



Figure 6.13: Alkema, J. *Herkoms en Toekoms* 2009. Embroidered Cloth.



Figure 6.14: Alkema, J. *Herkoms en Toekoms* 2009. Embroidered Cloth. (Detail).

This work is a celebration of ordinary women, living ordinary lives. In my first year of study (2001) we were taken to an exhibition of various artists at the Durban Art Gallery, here I saw an installation by Nkosinathi Khanyile with the caption “Wathimta Bafazi Wathinti’ Mbokodo”, translated it means ‘Hit the woman, hit the rock’. On my journey of discovery during the last years, this Zulu idiom has often been in my mind. Women are indeed rocks. The frailest of women will show immense strength under stressful situations. During the Anglo-Boer War the women kept the men inspired and hopeful to keep fighting for freedom. The women in the camps kept their families fed, clothed, nursed and educated them to the best of their abilities. The same phenomenon emerged nearly 100 years later when the black women of South Africa kept their children fed, clothed and educated as best they could when their husbands and sons fought in the struggle. These women worked for a pittance, but kept their families going in support of their men.

The Reverent A.D. Luckhoff, reverent in the Bethulie concentration camp explains this phenomenon:

A woman is a wonderful network of cross-wires, and when these wires get unstrung or entangled, the result is most distressing. In presence of such, one feels hopelessly lost, and all one can do is to – walk away. And

yet, for downright, dogged perseverance- for silent, struggling endurance- for quiet, patient suffering- commend me to a woman. What would become of Man without Woman! (2006:14-15).

The Sunday best handkerchief is a reference to my religious upbringing and religious beliefs that I adhere to. This hanky belonged to my mother. The Xhosa cloth embroidered with messages from me and my daughters to Antonia Mabunga, a Xhosa lady, is a celebration of love and friendship that bridged age, culture, language and race. This work is unashamedly sentimental in its content, but is it not emotions that differentiate us from all other life forms on this planet? There are family recipes I hold dear, as they were given to me by my grandmother. There is also a reference to friendship, our constant support system. A piece of my wedding dress embroidered with 22 pansy shells is a private thank you to my husband for 22 years of love and support. The pansy shell is a symbol of our marriage, as he gave me a golden pansy shell charm on our honeymoon. A piece of the green overall I use on the farm, when I work in the hydroponics tunnels, embroidered with a wind pump on it, becomes a reference to the area where I live. An old torn tea tray cloth embroidered with a coffee pot, which belonged to my mother when I was a child, embodies the tearing away from the patriarchal structure. Tray cloths become metaphors for serving but also for celebration. There are images I remember from childhood for instance the old farm gates I had to open on our yearly journey to my grandparents. I was paid a penny by my father for each gate I opened. On this altar cloth you will find my favourite flowers, trees, and places. There are references to my female bloodline, my daughters and grandchildren. In other words everything I hold dear is contained within this work.

We are now 14 years into the new democracy and thus far have not seen a monument to these ordinary women, neither those that fought in the struggle alongside the men, nor those who stayed behind on whose shoulders generations of children were brought up fatherless. Within these ordinary lives women achieve small victories, but victories all the same. "*Herkoms en Toekoms*" is a story of such a 'very ordinary woman', me, living my 'very ordinary life'. Here I have used memories of my life to document my own history within the greater history of the Afrikaner from which I stem.

Within this altar piece I have relived the journey of research I undertook to find information for this dissertation. The towns I have visited, the museums where I have done research and the miles and miles I travelled in this search. The roads become

the veins pulsating with life giving blood, and connecting my life, not only with art but with the continent and country of my birth and life. It also explains my belief that everything and everyone is connected.



Figure 6.14: Alkema, J. *Herkoms en Toekoms* 2009. Embroidered Cloth. (Detail).

CONCLUSION

The aim of this project was to establish whether the Afrikaner women practised any form of craft during their time of interment in the Anglo-Boer War concentration camps. During the course of this research it was necessary to delve into the past history of South Africa to find out where the knowledge of specific craft originated. In turn this research led to the question of how artists in the Post-Modern era appropriate the craft practised a hundred years ago in their work.

The issue that runs like a golden thread through all the research that I undertook was the lack of information concerning the documentation of Afrikaner women's history in its entirety. This paucity of information made research difficult as so little documentation of the craft practises of Afrikaner women in the concentration camps exists in literature. The museums offered little as curators were unsure as to whether certain articles labelled as such were indeed made in the concentration camps during the period 1899-1901.

The only alternative was to do primary research. I made appointments with various experts in this field, but this also proved to be a cull de sac, as their field of expertise lay in the battles and male orientated activities. Therefore I contacted various magazines as well as two radio stations. This brought about a flood of interest and information. During my research I have come across artefacts that prove beyond a doubt that Afrikaner women had the skills of needle craft, embroidery, crochet, knitting, quilting as well as the ability to work with ceramic clay, wire and tin. The artefacts discussed in this dissertation have all been authenticated by direct descendents and museums as articles produced in the camps. During the aftermath of the Anglo-Boer War new skills such as weaving and lace making were added to existing skills, due to the establishment of craft schools by Emily Hobhouse.

Thus we find that without a doubt that Afrikaner women did practise craft during their time of interment and documented that part of their history privately in dairies. I found the same trend in the research of the South African Women's Federation and the South African Women's Agricultural Association. Here I found invaluable proof of the Afrikaner women's expertise in craft practises. More so I found that not only was the history of women documented by these movements, but the process is still active.

Lerner stated that

Human beings have always used history in order to find their direction towards the future: to repeat the past or to depart from it. Lacking knowledge of their own history, women thinkers did not have the self knowledge from which to project a desired future (1993:281).

Women of South Africa are again using history to find new directions in uplifting previously disadvantaged women. The Keiskamma Art Project is an example of women following Emily Hobhouse's example. This project uses craft to empower women. In the Keiskamma Altar piece the history of women living with the scourge of HIV Aids is documented, thus the history of this group of women is captured in a visual document. Here again the medium used to execute these visual documentations are traditional feminine skills that had traversed continents, time and wars.

During the last 400 years the women of South Africa have been subjected to the patriarchal order. Lerner postulates

The denial to women of their history has reinforced their acceptance of the ideology of patriarchy and has undermined the individual woman's sense of self-worth. Men's version of history, legitimized as the 'universal truth', has presented women as marginal to civilization and as the victim of historical process (1986: 223).

Today many women have liberated themselves and in the process are passing this liberation on to their offspring. The sad truth is that many women from diverse cultural groups, of which the Afrikaner is only one of many, are still bending the knee.

Many historical gaps are being filled by women doing research concerning women in all fields. According to Lerner

The androcentric fallacy, which is built into all mental constructs of Western civilization, cannot be rectified by simply "adding women". What it demands for rectification is a radical restructuring of thought and analysis which once and for all accepts the fact that humanity consists in equal parts of men and women and that the experiences, thoughts, and insights of both sexes must be represented in every generalization that is made about human beings (1986; 220)

Amongst these pioneers are women artists employing traditional feminine craft to document, enlighten and create a consciousness about the wrongs against women. The artists Zangewa, Pam-Grant, Murdoch, Waldman and Ziegler, to name but a few, are pro-actively using the same craft brought from Europe by the Dutch, the French Huguenots and 1820 British Settlers and used by the Voortrekkers and the women in the concentration camps. These artists are placing their work in the public arena to create a consciousness concerning women and the wrongs against women and in the process they are giving us a "*female perspective an alternative to androcentric thought*". (Ibid, 1986: 224). In this process they are subverting the patriarchal order, drawing attention to land issues and the environment. The concept of using craft as used by the Suffragettes, is indeed speaking a new language of hope, not only for the women of South Africa, but for women all over the world.

This research has led to more questions than answers. Why have the craft practises of the English and black women during the Anglo-Boer War in the concentration camps not been researched and documented? This is an integral part of the history of South Africa, but more so, it is the history of the women of South Africa. Why is there no monument to the black mothers of South Africa who fought alongside their men during the struggle for freedom? Why is there no monument or documentation of the single mothers that, despite hardships, during this struggle brought up their children as single parents? When these issues are addressed many similarities will be found, but also many diverse practises of craft. Especially the blending of traditional white and black craft practices.

A new consciousness is being created amongst women as tertiary education for women has improved and women can now make educated choices. The road to a complete partnership amongst women and men is long and hard but women have proved their inherent strength and are fighting a war without bloodshed with traditional feminine weapons; the needle and thread. In conclusion in the words of Gerda Lerner:

The system of patriarchy is a historic construct; it has a beginning; it will have an end. Its time has nearly run its course--- it no longer serves the needs of men or women and in its inextricable linkage to militarism, hierarchy, and racism it threatens the very existence of life on earth.

REFERENCES

- Austin, B. 24/3/2006. *Interview with Billy Zanzewa*. [online] Available from: <http://www.alarmpress.com/news.php?option=readmore&id=300> [Accessed 2007/04/29]
- Bosman, D.B., van der Merwe, I.W. et al. 1972 *Tweetalige Woordeboek*. Elsiesrivier: Nasionale Handelsdrukkery BPK.
- Bothma, D.M. 2004. *Suid- Afrikaanse Vroue Federasie 1904-2004 Eeufees Gedenkboek*. Kilnerpark. Brent Uitgewers.
- Brink, E. N.d. *Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the volksmoeder* [online] Available from: <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/library-ecourses/online%20books/women-gender> [Accessed 2008/02/19]
- Broude N. and Garrard, M.D. (Ed). 1982. *Feminism and Art History. Questioning the Litany*. New York: Harper and Collins.
- Broude, N. and Garrard, M.D. (Ed) 1992. *Feminism and Art History. The Expanding Discourse*. New York: Harper and Collins.
- Burke, B. 2000. *Post-Modernism and Post-Modernity*. [online] Available from: <http://www.infed.org/biblio/b-postmd.htm> [Accessed 2007/09/12]
- Chadwick, N. 1996. *Women, Art and History*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Chilvers, I. N.d. *Arts and Crafts Movement*. Redmond Microsoft Corporation.
- Coetsee, E. 2002. *Craft in South Africa*. Cape Town: Struik Publishers.
- Coetzee, M.A. 1984. *Tant Miem Fisher se Kampdagboek*. Kaapstad: Tafelberg Uitgewers.
- Copperthwaite, S. N.d. *Untying the knot*. [online] Available from: <http://www.artthrob.co.za/03june/reviews/artspace.html> [Accessed 2008/02/29]
- Counihan, G. (Ed) *Keiskamma Art Project*. 2005. Cape Town: Formeset Printers.

- De Beer, D. 12/06/2007. *Searching for new portraits in old stories*. [online] Available From: <http://www.tonight.co.za/index.php?sectionId=356&fArticleId=3879839> [Accessed 2007/09/12.]
- Giliomee, H. & Mbenga, B. 2007. *New History of South Africa*. Cape Town:Tafelberg Uitgewers.
- Grobbelaar, P. 1987. *Readers Digest Afrikaans-Engels Woordeboek, English-Afrikaans Dictionary*. Cape Town:Tafelberg Uitgewers.
- Honour, H. and Fleming, J. 2002. *A World History of Art*. London: Laurence King Publishing Ltd.
- Johnston, L. June 2007. *A Human Soup Of Vulnerability*. [Online] Available from: <http://www.chico.mweb.co.za/art/2007/2007june/070601-human.html> [Accessed 2007/09/12]
- Johnston, L. 11/05/2007. *Material Girl*. [online] <http://www.chico.mweb.co.za/art/2007/2007may/070511-billie.hotmail> [Accessed 2007/09/12]
- Jordaan, J. 2007/10/31.(0833900910@webmail.co.za) Re. Handwerk Boere- oorlog. Email to Alkema J. (joan@weskuskrail.co.za)
- Kriel, M. *History of Lacemaking in South Africa*. [online] Available from: <http://lacefairy.com/International/SouthAfrica.html> [Accessed 2006/08/15]
- Lerner, G. 1986. *The Creation of Patriarchy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lerner, G. 1993. *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Luckhoff, A.D.L. 2006. *Women's Endurance*. Pretoria: Protea Book House.
- Lynn-Williams, S. *Folk-Art*. London: Flame Publishers.
- Muller, C.F.J. (Ed) 1972. *500 Jaar van Suid- Afrikaanse Geskiedenis*. Elsie'srivier, Kaap: Nasionale Handels Drukkery.
- Mill, J.S. 1993. *The Subjection of Women*. Redmond. Microsoft Corporation
- Moolman, G. 2006. *Pots and Pans*. Contempo. June/July: 052-059

- Pam-Grant, S. 14/06/2007. *Virtual Gallery of the Artist*. [online] Available from: <http://www.artabus.com/pamgrant/> [Accessed 2007/09/12]
- Parker, R. 1984. *The Subversive Stitch, Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine*. London: Woman's Press
- Parmesani, L. *Art of the Twentieth Century Movements, Theories, Schools and Tendencies*. Turin: Marconi.
- Pretorius, J.C. 1992. *Die Geskiedenis van Volkskuns in Suid Afrika*. Vlaeberg: Vlaeberg Uitgewers.
- Pretorius, F.J. (Red). 2002. *Verskroeide Aarde*. Kaapstad: Human en Rousseau.
- Sacks, R. N.d. *Excessive Surfaces: Gina Waldman at Bell-Roberts*. [online] Available from: <http://www.artthrob.co.za/04oct/reviews/bellroberts.html> [Accessed 2008/02/29]
- South African Women's Agricultural Association. 1929. *Minutes of First Congress*. S.A.W.A.A. Archives. Stellenbosch.
- Smith, M. N.d. *Billie Zangewa*. [online] Available from: <http://www.artthrob.co.za/07jun/artbio.html> [Accessed 2007/09/12]
- Trigiani, K. August 1998. *Masculinity-Femininity: Society's Difference Divident*. [online] Available from: <http://web2.airmail.net/ktrig246/outofcave/mf.html> [Accessed 2007/11/24]
- Van der Watt, L. 1992. *The gendered construction of Afrikaner identity in Voortrekker tapestries*. [online] Available from: <http://www.uwc.ac.za/arts/english/interaction/95lvdw.htm> [Accessed 2008/01/29]
- Van Lysebeth, A. N.d. *Tantra and the Feminine Ideal*. [online] Available from: <http://www.yogamag.net/archives/1981/10oct/femid.shtml> [Accessed 2007/11/24]
- Weiss, S. and Wesley, K. N.d. *Postmodernism and its Critics*. [online] Available from: <http://www.as.ua.edu/ant/Faculty/murphy/436/pomo/htm> [Accessed 2004/12/03]

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Becker, C.E. 1996. *Leading Women How Church Women Can Avoid Leadership Traps and Negotiate the Gender Maze*. Ontario. Abington Press.

Ely, B. N.d. *The Ancient History of Installation Art*. [online] Available from: file:///C:/Documents and settings/Joan/Local Settings/Temporary Internet Files/OLK1. Accessed 2007/08/23.

Electronic Media.

N.a. N.D. *Crafts* Microsoft Encarta. 2003. Redmond: Microsoft Corporation

N.a. N. d. *Embroidery*. Microsoft Encarta. 2003. Redmond: Microsoft Corporation.

N.a. N. d. *Excerpt from Introductory Lecture on Aesthetics*. Microsoft Encarta 2003. Redmond: Microsoft Corporation.

N.a. N. D. *Historiography (art)*. Microsoft Encarta 2003. Redmond: Microsoft Corporation.

N.a. N.d. *Folk art*. Microsoft Encarta. 2003. Redmond: Microsoft Corporation.

N.a. N. d. *Glasgow School*. Microsoft Encarta. 2003. Redmond: Microsoft Corporation.

N. a. N.d. *Lace*. Microsoft Encarta. 2003. Redmond: Microsoft Corporation.

Modern Art and Architecture

De Gay, J. Feminism. N.d. *Feminism*. Microsoft Encarta. 2003. Redmond: Microsoft Corporation

Howells, C. n.d. *Post Modernism (Literature)* Microsoft Encarta. 2003. Redmond Microsoft Corporation.

N.a. N.d. *Women's Movement*. Microsoft Encarta. 2003. Redmond Microsoft Corporation.

N.a. N.d. *Women, Employment of*. Microsoft Encarta. 2003. Redmond Microsoft Corporation.

Hassan, S.M. 1997. *Gendered Visions. The Art of Contemporary Africana Women Artists.*

Van der Watt, L. De arte 55 'Savagery and civilisation': race as signifier of difference in Afrikaner nationalist art-April 1997. [online] Available from: <http://www.unisa.ac.za/default.asp?Cmd=ViewContent&ContentID=7253> [Accessed 2008/02/07]

Sarah. *What is the Feminine Ideal?* [online] Available from: <http://savannahnow.com/node/146606> [Accessed 2007/11/24]

Stein, P. and Newfield, D. *Shifting the Gaze in South African Classrooms: New Pedagogies, New Publics, New Democracies.* [on line] Available from: <http://www.readingonline.org/international/steiin/index.html> [Accessed 2008/02/19]