

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN  
SCRIPT AND IMAGE  
WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO THE WORK OF  
CELESTE VAN DER MERWE,  
WILLEM BOSHOFF AND BARBARA KRUGER**

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A thesis submitted to the Department of Fine Art and Jewellery Design, Durban  
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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

**Master of Technology in Fine Art**

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## **DECLARATION**

I, Celeste van der Merwe, declare that except for the quotations indicated in the text, this research is my own original work and has not been submitted for any degree or examination at this or any other University.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 2011

## **DEDICATION**

I am greatly indebted to my family without whom this thesis would not have been written and without whom the exhibition would not have materialised.

To my husband for providing a safe writing and art-making space and for believing in me.

To my brothers, Neville and Kingsley, for accompanying me on the journey to bring restoration to families.

To my dearest children who have been a constant source of encouragement and inspiration.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I owe my deepest gratitude to my supervisors Mr John Roome and Prof. Joan Conolly who directed me wisely, skilfully and lovingly. Their sacrificial dedication facilitated in my growth as an artist and writer.

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# **PREAMBLE**

## **PRINCESS RED'S FAMILY AFFAIR**

### **Celeste van der Merwe and Joan Connolly**

Once upon a not-so-long-ago time there lived a little family of King Handsome-and-Successful, Queen Beautiful-and-Elegant, a Princess and a Prince on a Pin-Prick Spot on Planet Earth. It was a Pin-Prick Spot on the Planet far away from another Pin-Prick Spot on the Planet where they had Grown Up. They all Loved the Adventure of their Life Together, even though the Queen missed that other Pin-Prick Spot on the Planet that they had Left Behind. Sometimes things were so Strange and Different that they felt as if they had Left the Planet Altogether. This made the Queen Very Sad.

Together the King and the Queen built a Picture-Perfect Family that they neatly framed in the Castle-of-Love. In time, the King, the Queen and the Princess and the Prince crossed Many Hurdles and tucked their Skeletons away where no one could See them. So when the neighbours drove past the house they only smelled the Perfumes of Success and Happiness. For a season, there was Happiness and Light in the Castle-of-Love, and it helped the Queen's Sadness a little. But not for long!

The Queen started feeling Restless, and the King wanted to Make More Money so they built a Little-Mall-All-of-Their-Own, and surrounded it with the Moat-of-Faith-in-Each-Other. And that helped the Sadness a Little More.

Every winter, the Queen bought her beautiful young Princess and Prince brand new, blood-red and sky-blue trend-setting coats and so the Princess came to be called "Princess Red" and the Prince, "Prince Blue". Buying those lovely coloured coats the colours of Love and the Sky helped relieve the Queen's Sadness a little more.

The King was often Away doing Successful things. The King was An Achiever. He Worked Hard climbing, providing and surviving in the dog-eat-dog world. Although the Queen managed the Mall she felt Lonely because the King was always Talking on his Phone or Away on Important Business. The Queen loved her Castle and her Mall but the Sadness was always there, even though she knew that she was Safe inside her Castle-of-Love inside the Moat-of-Faith-in-Each-Other. The King was quite Oblivious of Her Sadness and on another Success Trip.

So one day, even though the Queen and the King had agreed that the Little-Mall-All-of-Their-Own and Castle-of-Love inside the Moat-of-Faith-in-Each-Other, was their Secret Space, the

Queen invited a New-Found-Friend INSIDE the Little-Mall-All-of-Their-Own inside the Castle-of-Love inside the Moat-of-Faith-in-Each-Other. For a little while the Sadness went away for the Queen. But not for long! So the Queen invited the New-Found-Friend back again, and this time the Sadness Came Back Quicker than the first time, so the next time she invited Two New-Found-Friends INSIDE the Little-Mall-All-of-Their-Own inside the Castle-of-Love inside the Moat-of-Faith-in-Each-Other.

Very soon the number of New-Found-Friends that were visiting inside the Little-Mall-All-of-Their-Own inside the Castle-of-Love inside the Moat-of-Faith-in-Each-Other had grown Very Large indeed. And the Sadness kept coming back Stronger and Stronger and Faster and Faster. At school, Princess Red and Prince Blue were Teased and Humiliated. The Shame-Filled Princess and Prince braved Heckles, Jeers and Catcalls at school and at sport.

One sunny day, the Queen said "Princess Red and Prince Blue, I am so busy with the Little Mall, that I need your help. Here is a List of Errands that need doing." And so she sent the Princess and the Prince out on a mission to do chores in the Wide-Wide-World. There were Ferocious Wolves in the world and they were ready to devour young Princesses and Princes like Red and Blue. Naive and Scared, their insides Trembled like Jelly. They had heard of the Lurking Danger. Howling loudly some Ferocious Wolves circled the city. Others Hid in Ambush, Secretly Setting Traps, waiting for Princess Red and Prince Blue. Their teeth were Drawn Daggers as they scavenged for Live Bones.

In the meantime, the Queen wrapped herself in a trench coat of Black-Cloud Darkness. She and her New-Found-Friends began redecorating. The Castle of Love was quickly transformed into a House-of-Horrors. She danced with the New-Found-Friends in the bedroom, the car and the bar. She Had A Ball. Joints, Puffs and Booze made their way into her life. The Queen became a Wanton Woman. She built a Fire-in-her-Lap and invited her New-Found-Friends to enjoy The Heat. And, strangely, the Queen agreed that the House-of-Horrors and New-Found-Friends was Much Better and that her Sadness had Gone for Ever....

All this time, Princess Red and Prince Blue were getting Busier and Braver with every Adventure in the Wide-Wide-World. And then Suddenly One Day, it was not a Happy Adventure Any More. One minute they were going about their Adventures as usual when all of a sudden a Jingly-Harlequin-Wolf pounced on Princess Red and Would Not Let Her Go!

Prince Blue hid in a bush. He saw that Princess Red was caught tight in Jingly-Harlequin's jaws, and that he was hurting Princess Red very much! She screamed and fought and wriggled but she could not break free. Prince Blue could see that the Jingly-Harlequin-Wolf

was Much, Much too Strong and Cruel and Bad for them, so he ran back to the Castle-of-Love as fast as he could - to tell the Queen. But when he got there, the Queen was not there. So they called the King, to tell him What Had Happened, but he was on a Success Trip.

And then Some Magic Happened. Woodcutter-Lion came and rescued Princess Red from Jingly-Harlequin-Wolf with the help of his Friends-Dressed-in-White! Red was very badly hurt, so she had to go to the House-of-People-in-White for her hurts and harms.

The King returned and comforted Princess Red and Prince Blue - and went to look for the Queen. But when he got to the Castle-of-Love, he could not find the Queen. Instead he found that the Castle-of-Love was changed so much that Love was Nowhere To Be Found. The Little Mall was filled with Ugly Things that the King and Queen had never collected and the Castle-of-Love was Cracked and Broken, and the Moat-of-Faith-in-Each-Other was filled with Hate and Horror, the King was Deeply Troubled. He looked and looked for the Queen, but when he found her she was as Changed as the Little Mall, the Castle and the Moat.

The King and the Queen Fought Fiercely. The King Ranted and Raved and Shouted and Bullied. The Queen Used her Tongue to Fire Poison-Tipped Arrows, not caring who she hit. Together with her New-Found-Friends, the Queen reduced the King to a Whine and a Whimper. He Doubled in Pain. The World Watched.

Just in the Nick-of-Time, the Super-Hero Lion, Woodcutter-Lion, came to the Rescue. He took the King to be Restored at the House-of-People-in-White. Woodcutter-Lion sent the Queen to a Twilight Zone, far, far away where she was set on a New Path with a New Beginning. Sadly her Queen-Heart yearned for the Princess and the Prince, to find that All Communications had been Cut.

Woodcutter-Lion fixed his eyes on the King as he tried to piece his life together again. Woodcutter-Lion watched the King wade through the Hate and the Horror that filled the Castle-of-Love. Woodcutter-Lion Watched and Supported as the King Scrubbed, Cleaned and Sanitised with Soap and Tears. The King Cooked and Cleaned, Worked and Shopped, and Took the Princess and the Prince to School. The King was so Busy that he was not always Aware of Woodcutter-Lion's Help. But Woodcutter-Lion was there as the King Consolated, Comforted and Cried with the Princess Red and the Prince Blue.

Princess Red and the Prince Blue had Quicksand Under Them and Swamp Water Over Them. They were Hoarse from Calling for Help and Bleary-Eyed from Searching for Help.

Woodcutter-Lion Came to their Rescue. With Strong Hands and Arms, Woodcutter-Lion pulled them from the Grip of the Bullies and Tied the Wolves in Knots.

Life continued for the King, the Princess and the Prince. World-wide, Interest Rates Rose, Jobs Froze and Money was Tight. Then the King Fell in Love, and after a Long While Princess Red and Prince Blue put on their Coats the Colour of Love and the Sky again. And when they did, they remembered how Brave they had been on their Adventures, and this helped the King to Smile again. And once they all started Smiling again, they sold the Little-Mall-All-of-Their-Own, refilled the Castle with Love, and the Moat with Faith in the Woodcutter-Lion. And then, they All Lived Happily.

## ABSTRACT

Title: The Relationship Between Script and Image with Specific Reference to the Work of Celeste Van Der Merwe, Willem Boshoff and Barbara Kruger

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Promoters: Mr. John Roome and Prof. Joan Conolly

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The crux of my thesis is the study of the relationship of script and image in the work of contemporary arts. I chose to focus on three selected artists, i.e. myself, Celeste van der Merwe, a local South African male artist named Willem Boshoff and an international female artist, Barbara Kruger.

My intention was to write a readable self-study thesis that would be both informative and educational while simultaneously appealing to the heart of the reader. In order to realise this intention, I focussed on how the above-mentioned artists used script and image to address social issues prevalent in society today.

I also made social statements through the medium of my art based on the familiar allegory, *Little Red Riding Hood*. My aim has been to address the breakdown of the family structure by focussing on the suffering of teenagers as a result of dysfunctional family structures and behaviours.

I explored the powerful and provocative manner in which Barbara Kruger effectively wields the combination of script and image in her work. Boshoff on the other hand is a South African linguist who incorporates script in a variety of disciplines such as installations, visual poetry, concrete poetry, sculpture. In my own art I deconstructed and transformed materials and found that the process of breaking down and rebuilding reflected the breakdown and restoration in/of the lives of children.

By consciously investigating my practice as a creative artist using script and image I have gained a better understanding of myself and I believe I am now able to improve my practise. Through this self-study research I have grown in self-discovery and self-actualization as an artist and have developed as a researcher.

Finally, I concluded that the relationship between script and image is open-ended, not conclusive and differs in each work of art.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>TITLE PAGE</b>	i
<b>DECLARATION</b>	iii
<b>DEDICATION</b>	iv
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	v
<b>PREAMBLE</b>	vi
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	x
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	xi
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	xiii
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	1
BACKGROUND	1
PROBLEM STATEMENT, RESEARCH QUESTIONS, FOCUS AND AIMS	2
SCOPE AND DELIMITATION OF THE DISSERTATION	3
INTRODUCTION TO THE ARTISTS	3
THE JOURNEY: A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE DISSERTATION	4
METHODOLOGY	6
<b>CHAPTER 1: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCRIPT AND IMAGE</b>	10
BACKGROUND	10
DEFINITIONS OF THE WORDS “SCRIPT” AND “IMAGE”	11
THE HISTORY OF SCRIPT AND IMAGE	14
THE DYNAMICS OF SCRIPT AND IMAGE	16
CONCLUSION	19
<b>CHAPTER 2: CONTEXT OF THE ART OF CELESTE VAN DER MERWE</b>	24
BACKGROUND	24
MY JOURNEY TO USING SCRIPT AND IMAGE IN ART	24
• BLOOD RIBBONS	24
MATERIALS, MEDIA, TECHNIQUE AND FORMAT	25
METAPHORS AND SYMBOLS	29
CONCLUSION	31
<b>CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTS USED IN THE ART OF CELESTE VAN DER MERWE</b>	37
BACKGROUND	37
FAIRYTALES, FOLKTALES AND ALLEGORIES	37

THE ALLEGORY OF LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD	38
USING ART TO MAKE A SOCIAL DIFFERENCE	41
CONCLUSION	45
<b>CHAPTER 4: SCRIPT AND IMAGE IN THE ART OF WILLEM BOSHOF</b>	49
BACKGROUND	49
THE SYMBOLIC USE OF SCRIPT AND IMAGE	51
KYKAFRIKAANS: GETIKTE KWASHALE	54
CONCLUSION	57
<b>CHAPTER 5: SCRIPT AND IMAGE IN THE ART OF BARBARA KRUGER</b>	62
BACKGROUND	62
THE CONTEXT OF SCRIPT AND IMAGE IN THE ART OF BARBARA KRUGER	63
THE USE OF SCRIPT AND IMAGE IN THE ART OF BARBARA KRUGER	67
YOU ARE NOT YOURSELF	68
CONCLUSION	69
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	73
MORAL ISSUES ADDRESSED IN ART	74
RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES	75
IDEAS FOR FUTURE PROJECTS	74
CLOSE	76
IDEAS FOR FUTURE PROJECTS	76
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	77
<b>APPENDICES</b>	98
APPENDIX 1: ARTIST'S STATEMENT	98
APPENDIX 2: LITTLE RED CAP: GRIMM'S ALLEGORY	100
APPENDIX 3: TITLES OF LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD IN DIFFERENT LANGUAGES	104
APPENDIX 4: ELECTRONIC INTERVIEW WITH NALEDI HLEFANE FOR THE CONDUIT	106
APPENDIX 5: WILLEM BOSHOF	108
APPENDIX 6: BARBARA KRUGER	111
APPENDIX 7: DVD	115

# LIST OF FIGURES

## INTRODUCTION

FIGURE	I.I	Celeste van der Merwe.	9
FIGURE	I.II	Willem Boshoff.	9
FIGURE	I.III	Barbara Kruger.	9

## CHAPTER ONE

FIGURE	1.1	John Medina. <i>Alphabet</i> .	20
FIGURE	1.2	Ben Vautier. <i>art est un mot écrit</i> .	20
FIGURE	1.3	Joseph Kosuth, <i>One and Three Chairs</i> .	20
FIGURE	1.4	Woman displaying elaborate scarification.	20
FIGURE	1.5	Early pictographic tablet as used by the Sumerians.	21
FIGURE	1.6	Syllabogram. Cuneiform writing.	21
FIGURE	1.7	An example of a logogram and pictogram.	21
FIGURE	1.8	Phosphenes.	21
FIGURE	1.9	Artful scribbles. Pre-literate children's writing.	21
FIGURE	1.10	Egyptian hieroglyphic consonantal alphabet.	22
FIGURE	1.11	Greek Alphabetic Script.	22
FIGURE	1.12	Pablo Picasso. <i>Still-life with Chair Caning</i> .	22
FIGURE	1.13	Marcel Duchamp. <i>L.H.O.O.Q.</i>	22
FIGURE	1.14	Fanozi (Chickenman) Mkhize.	23
FIGURE	1.15	Fanozi (Chickenman) Mkhize, <i>Gone Fishing</i> .	23
FIGURE	1.16	Cy Twombly. <i>Criticism</i> .	23

## CHAPTER TWO

FIGURE	2.1	Celeste van der Merwe. <i>Self-portrait (detail)</i> .	32
FIGURE	2.2	Celeste van der Merwe. <i>Red Series</i> .	32
FIGURE	2.3	Celeste van der Merwe. <i>Redemption Series</i> .	33
FIGURE	2.4	Celeste van der Merwe. <i>Red's Family Affair – The Story</i> .	33
FIGURE	2.5	Celeste van der Merwe. <i>Hooded Cloak</i> .	34
FIGURE	2.6	Celeste van der Merwe. <i>Little Red Riding Hood. Animation Movie</i> .	34
FIGURE	2.7	Celeste van der Merwe. <i>Price of a Secret</i> .	34
FIGURE	2.8	Celeste van der Merwe. <i>Cut</i> .	34
FIGURE	2.9	Celeste van der Merwe. <i>Married by the Bible, Divorced by the Law</i> .	34
FIGURE	2.10	Celeste van der Merwe. <i>Familiar Lines</i> .	34
FIGURE	2.11	Celeste van der Merwe. <i>Child's Picture Book</i> .	35

FIGURE	2.12	Celeste van der Merwe. <i>The Freedom Flight</i> .	35
FIGURE	2.13	Celeste van der Merwe. <i>Little Red Riding Hood. Animation Movie</i> .	36
FIGURE	2.14	Joseph Beuys. <i>Felt Suit</i> .	36
FIGURE	2.15	Celeste van der Merwe. <i>Set-up</i> .	36

### CHAPTER THREE

FIGURE	3.1	Celeste van der Merwe. <i>Snarl</i> .	46
FIGURE	3.2	Celeste van der Merwe. <i>She loves me, she loves me not</i> .	46
FIGURE	3.3	Celeste van der Merwe. <i>Cover page of Child's Picture Book</i> .	46
FIGURE	3.4	Celeste van der Merwe. <i>Cape</i> .	46
FIGURE	3.5	Celeste van der Merwe. <i>YOUR CHILD?</i>	46
FIGURE	3.6	Celeste van der Merwe. <i>Kill me not my Family (cropped)</i>	46
FIGURE	3.7	Celeste van der Merwe. <i>Cape (detail)</i> .	47
FIGURE	3.8	Celeste van der Merwe. <i>I Fell and You put me down</i> .	47
FIGURE	3.9	Celeste van der Merwe. CPB. <i>I Fell and You Walked Away</i> .	47
FIGURE	3.10	Celeste van der Merwe. <i>Bloodlines</i> .	47
FIGURE	3.11	Celeste van der Merwe. <i>Devoured</i> .	47
FIGURE	3.12	Celeste van der Merwe. CPB. <i>Words</i> .	47
FIGURE	3.13	Celeste van der Merwe. <i>Respect</i> .	47
FIGURE	3.14	Celeste van der Merwe. <i>Madonna-mother and daughters</i> .	48
FIGURE	3.15	Celeste van der Merwe. <i>Oleander</i> .	48
FIGURE	3.16	Celeste van der Merwe. Cropped section of <i>Cape</i> .	48
FIGURE	3.17	Celeste van der Merwe. Cropped section of <i>Cape</i> .	48
FIGURE	3.18	Celeste van der Merwe. Cropped section of <i>Cape</i> .	48

### CHAPTER FOUR

FIGURE	4.1	Interview of Celeste van der Merwe with Willem Boshoff.	58
FIGURE	4.2	Willem Boshoff. <i>Bangboek</i> .	59
FIGURE	4.3	John Baldessari. <i>I will not make any more boring art</i> .	59
FIGURE	4.4	Willem Boshoff. <i>SDROW FO NWODKAERB?</i>	59
FIGURE	4.5	Willem Boshoff. <i>Getikte Kwashale</i> .	59
FIGURE	4.6	Willem Boshoff. <i>Serial Killer</i> .	59
FIGURE	4.7	Willem Boshoff. <i>Blind Alphabet</i> .	60
FIGURE	4.8	Willem Boshoff. Part of <i>Blind Alphabet C</i> .	60
FIGURE	4.9	Willem Boshoff. <i>Blind Alphabet</i> . Detail.	60
FIGURE	4.10	Willem Boshoff. <i>Blind Alphabet</i> . Close-up.	60
FIGURE	4.11	Willem Boshoff. <i>Blind Alphabet</i> . <i>Coecervate</i> .	60
FIGURE	4.12	Interview of Celeste van der Merwe with Willem Boshoff.	60
FIGURE	4.13	Willem Boshoff. <i>NOTHING IS ALWAYS RIGHT</i> .	61

FIGURE 4.14	Willem Boshoff. <i>Acheiropoietos 4</i>	61
FIGURE 4.15	Willem Boshoff. <i>Nice Guys</i> .	61
FIGURE 4.16	Interview of Celeste van der Merwe with Willem Boshoff.	61

## CHAPTER FIVE

FIGURE 5.1	Vintage war propaganda posters.	70
FIGURE 5.2	Vintage war propaganda posters.	70
FIGURE 5.3	Guestblogger. <i>YOU MAKE ART SO THAT YOU CAN BITCH AT PEOPLE.</i>	70
FIGURE 5.4	Barbara Kruger. <i>Untitled (Love is something you fall into).</i>	70
FIGURE 5.5	Barbara Kruger. <i>Untitled (Your gaze hits the side of my face).</i>	70
FIGURE 5.6	Barbara Kruger. <i>Pro-life for the unborn, pro death for the born.</i>	70
FIGURE 5.7	Barbara Kruger. <i>You invest in the divinity of the masterpiece.</i>	71
FIGURE 5.8	Barbara Kruger. <i>Your life is a perpetual insomnia.</i>	71
FIGURE 5.9	Barbara Kruger. <i>Untitled, Not stupid enough.</i>	71
FIGURE 5.10	Barbara Kruger. <i>You are not yourself.</i>	71
FIGURE 5.11	Barbara Kruger. <i>We don't need another hero.</i>	71
FIGURE 5.12	Barbara Kruger. <i>Untitled (A picture is worth a thousand words).</i>	71
FIGURE 5.13	Barbara Kruger. <i>You think you can escape commodification.</i>	71
FIGURE 5.14	Barbara Kruger. <i>Face it (Green).</i>	72
FIGURE 5.15	Barbara Kruger. <i>Face it (Cyan).</i>	72
FIGURE 5.16	Barbara Kruger. <i>Buy me, I'll change your life.</i>	72
FIGURE 5.17	Barbara Kruger. <i>I shop therefore I am.</i>	72
FIGURE 5.18	Barbara Kruger. <i>When I hear the word culture I take out my checkbook.</i>	72
FIGURE 5.19	Celeste van der Merwe. <i>When you lied I cried.</i>	72
FIGURE 5.20	Celeste van der Merwe. <i>Played Intense.</i>	72

**INTRODUCTION TO DISSERTATION ENTITLED:  
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCRIPT AND IMAGE WITH SPECIFIC  
REFERENCE TO THE WORK OF CELESTE VAN DER MERWE, WILLEM  
BOSHOF AND BARBARA KRUGER.**

“All journeys have secret destinations  
of which the traveller is unaware”  
Martin Buber

**BACKGROUND**

In 2008, as an educator at a private school located on the South Coast of South Africa, I aspired to complete a Master's Degree in Fine Arts for three central academic reasons. Firstly, I anticipated improving my practice as a fine artist; secondly, I aspired to be more familiar with the latest movements in the art world and thirdly, I intended to apply the increased knowledge and improved skills to improve my practice as a teacher. In addition, I felt a need to escape from the daily routine and the insularity of my life on the South Coast, to broaden my horizons and to stretch my mental limits.

My intention was to write a readable academic dissertation that would not only be informative and educational but would also appeal to the heart of the reader. In my study I have addressed a social issue prevalent in society today, viz. that of dysfunctional family structures which impact on the rights of children.

In keeping with my interest in the rites of passage of adolescents, my practical work has been based on *Little Red Riding Hood* as told by the Brothers Grimm. It is my ongoing intention to make art undergirded by this fairy tale, which addresses underlying societal matters, and particularly the rights of children. I have discussed modern day versions of *Little Red Riding Hood*, written my own version, and addressed the issues in my fine art. I believe that this social message is applicable to society today.

I have set out to make both a cognitive and emotive impact by stimulating the senses of the viewer. By using various textures, colours and symbols I have conveyed the cruelty of life, and hope to move the viewer to act against abusive and /or neglectful parenting. I have endeavoured to take the viewer on a journey of seeing, perceiving, thinking, reacting and lastly acting.

## PROBLEM STATEMENT, RESEARCH QUESTIONS, FOCUS AND AIMS

I have been passionate about using script and image in art for a very long time. I am ardently convinced that employing both script and image in my art enriches my work and I am aware that many other contemporary artists do this as well.

I have delighted in debating the script-image issue and intended that this dissertation answer several questions like: Why do artists feel the need to include written letters and words in their art? Why do artists write words in an illegible manner in their art? How and when did artists begin to include script in their art? How does script add value to art? Are there artists who feel that depicting an image is not sufficient? I have gone further and discussed various ways in which script and image relate to each other in art.

In other words, this dissertation questions whether visual art is an elitist subculture that exclusively addresses both scribally literate and visually literate connoisseurs. I have questioned whether there is a schism between high and low culture in the art world which caters predominantly for high levels of literate competency and have sought to determine whether and how script in art feeds society's appetite for both information and art. I have asked whether the use of script enhances art. Most of the practical work I have submitted in partial fulfilment of the Master's degree includes both script and image. I agree with Buzan who says that presenting art in a "creative, multi-faceted way including a range of written words", compounds the artist's message (2006:17).

Furthermore I have asked myself pertinent questions pertaining to the efficacy of my practical art, such as: how I express my concerns about children's experiences in dysfunctional families? How can I use my art to express my concerns about children's experiences in dysfunctional families? How can I use my art form of script image to draw attention to the abuse of children's rights in dysfunctional families? And finally: How is the art form of script image used to highlight social and societal anomalies?

The focus of this dissertation was to investigate the relationship between script and image in art. In this dissertation I have aimed to introduce you, the reader to the work of attention-worthy artists who incorporate script and image in different ways in their work as I put the spotlight on my own art and that of the South African artist, Willem Boshoff and the American artist, Barbara Kruger.

## SCOPE AND DELIMITATION OF THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation was limited in length due to it being written in partial fulfilment of a Master's degree. I thus restrained the scope of the dissertation in order to focus on the addressing of social issues in my art as my primary intention was to inspire change and encourage social justice. For this reason I excluded the study of semiotics as well as a discourse concerning poststructuralist and deconstructivist theories. I restricted my practical art as well as my research to the realm of Fine Art thus excluding craft and design. Fine Art includes art made for aesthetic purposes and art made to convey a social message whereas craft and design are intended to be functional. I also limited the thesis to the study of the work of only three artists as I wanted to be focused and succinct in addressing the title.

## INTRODUCTION TO ARTISTS

When I set the boundaries of the dissertation, I decided to narrow it down to three artists, myself and two others. I selected fine artists who incorporate image and script in their work and chose the South African artist, Willem Boshoff as well as the American artist, Barbara Kruger. One is male and one female and all three of us belong to one generation. I was born in 1957, Boshoff in 1951 and Kruger in 1945.

The first artist I have studied in this dissertation is myself, Celeste van der Merwe (Figure 1.1). I was born in Bloemfontein which is in the centre of South Africa. I studied fine art at the University of the Free State where I specialised in sculpture. I have been practicing art and teaching art intermittently ever since I graduated in 1978.

There have been times when I have struggled to communicate my ideas solely through the use of image, and began to paint and engrave words into my art. Thus my interest in using script and image in fine art was born. Through the medium of self-study I have shared my experiences, expressed my views concerning certain social issues, explained my art, improved my practise and informed the reader. Self-study is also a journey of self-discovery, which is a powerful space to identify room for improvement.

The second artist I have visited, and juxtaposed my own work with, is the renowned South African artist, Willem Boshoff. (Figure 1.2). Currently Boshoff lives in Kensington, Johannesburg. He is a pioneering South African linguist and specialises in a variety of disciplines such as

installations, visual poetry, concrete poetry, sculpture. He is a specialist in using wood, stone, *objet trouve*, mixed media and various graphic media.

Several books, papers, theses and articles have been written about Boshoff. Most detail both his use of written words and images but do not expound on the relationship between script and image. In this dissertation I have analysed the dynamic tension between written script and image in Boshoff's work.

Barbara Kruger (Figure 1.3) is a prominent and internationally renowned American fine artist who was born in New Jersey in 1945. Kruger appears to be a self-confident woman who fearlessly confronts, publicly, controversial issues in the realms of feminism, classicism and consumerism. Her work is trademarked by black letters on a red band that is superimposed over an image. Kruger's art appears in a variety of unexpected formats including shopping bags, billboards, and the walls of train stations. Some interesting titles of her work are, *I shop therefore I am* (1987) and *Your body is a battleground* (1989).

I chose to research Kruger in this dissertation because she tirelessly combines images and script in her work. This study has explored the powerful and provocative manner in which Kruger wields the combination of script and image in the work. In this study, I have presented an evaluation of the power of Kruger's combination of image and script in addressing societal issues.

## **THE JOURNEY: A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS OF THE DISSERTATION**

After exploring script and image, I wrote about my own art, then that of Willem Boshoff and I concluded my journey by visiting Barbara Kruger.

I began Chapter 1 with a critical investigation into the words 'text' and 'image' and I explained why I find it imperative to use the word 'script' rather than 'text' for the focus of the study. I included a brief synoptic overview of the development of scribal alphabet writing and how script joins image in art. Thereafter I looked at how script and image are interpreted by the brain in different ways and appeal to different senses. I explored the various functions of script in art by examining the diverse roles of script, such as, letters that form tactile sculptures, enhance texture and act as alphabetic symbolic references.

My aim with Chapter 2 was to investigate the context of my art. As part of the analysis I endeavoured to explain the meaning of symbols and metaphors that reoccur in my work. The chapter was written in the form of a self-study beginning with the path I took as a creative child and ending with the *Red's Family Affair Exhibition* of 2011.

I wrote about the development of my unusual technique and the variety of materials I used in the creative process. As I explained my progression as an artist using script and image I investigated the relationship between script and image in my art.

Chapter 3 is devoted to the allegorical underpinning of my art. I wrote about fairy tales, folktales and allegories and how they made a deep impact on me as a child. I referred to artists who based their art on allegory and explain why I decided to base my practical art work on the allegory called Little Red Riding Hood. I lingered there and looked closely at the cautionary tale and how it addresses problematic social issues prevalent in society nowadays. I compared the fairytale scenario of the mother who sends her child into the woods knowing that there is lurking danger while the father is absent to dysfunctional families commonly found today.

I purposefully looked at how I can make a transformative social difference using my art as allegory. My intent was to see a marked change for the better in the behavioural patterns of parents resulting in transformation in the lives of suffering children. In the context of this study I see transformation as the possibility for an advance in conduct as a result of revelation and emotional healing. I looked closely at various Little Red Riding Hoods in society around us, for example, Little Red Riding Hoods – both girls and boys - who have been, and are being, exposed to diverse forms of abuse, and their adultification and parentification. By identifying with the plight of children suffering at the hands of society I created art that is heartfelt and authentic.

The eccentric South African artist, Willem Boshoff is preoccupied with text, which makes his work ideally suited for this study. My main objective with Chapter 4 was to investigate the relationship between script and image in his art. In the analysis of Boshoff, I have written about his Afrikanerdom, the social issues he addresses as well as his loving, yet derisive approach, to the viewers of his work. I have investigated how Boshoff incorporates script and image in carefully selected works. In this chapter, I also have taken a brief look at the similarities and differences between my art and that of Willem Boshoff as well as between Willem Boshoff's art and Barbara Kruger's art.

Chapter 5 is dedicated to the fusion of script and image in the work of the American fine artist, Barbara Kruger. I found that studying her use of punchy slogans has proved to be fascinating and insightful. I was curious to find out more about the woman behind her art and the socio-political issues she fights for so passionately. I was, and am, intrigued by the power of Kruger's simple blood-red font that she layers over monochrome works of art. I have spent some time visiting some of her works comprehensively where I have examined the images and script she uses. This chapter also includes a summative look at the variations and similarities between the artworks of Van der Merwe, Boshoff and Kruger.

I conclude the dissertation by reflecting on all that I have learned during the journey and looking at the way forward.

## METHODOLOGY

The all-encompassing research methodology I used in this dissertation is qualitative research. Within the qualitative research paradigm my dissertation is fundamentally a self-study informed by a few basic ways of collecting data and reporting on the data.

Using a number of self-study methodologies I shared experiences of how I created art and stories underpinning my art. My self-study has been informed by living theories methodology, visual methodology, narratology and auto-ethnography. They are integrated, frequently co-occur and the boundaries between them are often blurred. Kathleen Pithouse implied in notes on *Methodologies for Exploring Lived Experience* that narrative inquiry, auto-ethnography and self-study "of *lived/personal experience*" can apply to education and "other fields in the arts, humanities, and social sciences". (2010:1).

Throughout the three years of working on the practical and theoretical components of this course I repeatedly asked myself the seven questions posed by Robert Brown on self-study<sup>1</sup>. (Brown,1994). Jack Whitehead's research framework encourages researchers and practitioners to focus on the outcomes and not the inputs of the work. (2003). He suggests that academics

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<sup>1</sup> Browns' questions as adapted from Browns, R. 1994. *The 'Big Picture' about Managing Writing*.

1. What did I do?
2. Why did I do it?
3. What happened?
4. What does this tell me about my practice?
5. What does this tell me about my theory?
6. What is the key benefit to the readers?
7. What remains unresolved?

ask themselves a series of questions as they advance. They are to begin by asking themselves what central question they will pose. Thereafter follows a cycle of questions ending with the self-study researcher facing the problem of what remains unresolved in the study. Personally I found that these questions provided basic guidelines for my studies and the constant introspection stretched me beyond limitations I had become comfortable with.

As I was the subject of the self-study research, I reflected on my role by recording the process of my work in a reflective research journal which informed the dissertation and the art. Ross Mooney best describes what I aimed to achieve through this journal and research in an essay addressing the “inner drama” of research: “Research is a personal venture which, quite aside from its social benefits, is worth doing for its direct contribution to one’s own self-realization. It can be taken as a way of meeting life with the maximum of stops open to get out of experience its most poignant significance, its most full-throated song.” (Mooney, 1975: 105).

As I based my exhibition on an allegory I touched on narratology and how narrative structures our perception of the world around us. According to Qualitative Literacy and Media Interaction Research “Qualitative-empirical research’s methodology employs approaches of narratological sequence analysis which interpret and/or analyze the oral narratives given by individuals.” (2006).

Story telling is central to personal development as stories can be vehicles through which morals, worldly wisdom and social realities are taught. According to Pradl, the “words ‘narrative’ and ‘story’ can both be traced back to an original meaning of ‘to know.’ It is through the story that people quite literally come to know -- that is, to construct and maintain their knowledge of the world.” He goes on to write that “from the study of reading comprehension to the building of models of artificial intelligence, the more we understand the nature of narrative, the more we understand ourselves” (Pradl: 1984).

Writing about various qualitative research approaches, Jack Whitehead said “A living theory methodology explains how the enquiry was carried out in the generation of a living theory” (2009:107) and “one can draw insights from each of these approaches without choosing between them in the development of one’s own living theory methodology.” (2009:1).

Mary Lynn Hamilton, defined the following methodologies as follows: “narrative (a look at a story of self), auto-ethnography (a look at self within a larger context), and self-study (a look at self in action, usually within educational contexts)”. (Hamilton, Smith and Worthington, 2008:17). My

personal understanding of visual methodology is that it is the interpretation and contextual analysis of a work of art.

I agree with Lincoln and Denzin that through auto-ethnography (concurrently with other methodologies) “those people whose lives have been under-represented or not represented at all are given a voice which enables them to reduce their marginalization” (Lincoln and Denzin, 2000). Using visual methodology, I reflected, interpreted and analysed my art and that of Willem Boshoff and Barbara Kruger. I explained my style and technique and expounded on similarities and differences between my art and that of selected artists.

I have done direct hands-on exploration by incorporating script and image in my art with the intent of gaining a fresh perspective on both practical and theoretical levels. I agree with Mills when he encourages researchers to rehabilitate and become unpretentious craftsmen. He urges everyone to be his or her own methodologist and allow theory and method to become part of the practice of a craft (Mills, 1959). I examined several approaches to using script and image in selected works of art. These individual pieces have been analyzed and interpreted in order to demonstrate an understanding of the individual and incorporate the roles of script and image. I have also investigated the role of the viewer in interpreting script and image in a work of art.

Throughout the dissertation I reflected on my role as a researcher and artist and became the subject of a self study research. The theoretical research for this dissertation and the practical component of the Master’s are interdependent and interwoven. They co-refer and the dissertation evidences the connection between the two components.

I used visual methodology for the analysis of practical work. The images I used in my practical art were carefully selected to portray significant symbols and metaphors in the Little Red Riding Hood allegory. Some works were based on photographs of children relevant to my topic. During the research for the thesis I reflected on the images and found that intuitively I had created more symbolic and metaphorical images in my art. I arrived at new concepts and ideas by analysing images after creating them. With the result the art making process was an image based methodology. In turn the research was led by the art making process. I attempted to reach open-ended conclusions that are viable. I went to great lengths to include both interpretations as well as analyses of the art of selected artists.

## INTRODUCTION : FIGURES



FIGURE I.I. Celeste van der Merwe, b. 1957.



FIGURE I.II. Willem Boshoff, b. 1951.



FIGURE I.III. Barbara Kruger, b. 1945.

*The Relationship Between Script and Image with Specific Reference to the Work of Celeste van der Merwe, Willem Boshoff and Barbara Kruger.*

## CHAPTER ONE: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCRIPT AND IMAGE

### BACKGROUND

The subject of my dissertation concerns the relationship between script and image. Initially, I wanted to use the word text instead of script in the title of this dissertation. However I found researching the words “script” and “image” somewhat like excavating an archaeological site where there were treasures everywhere and some were hidden. Several of the meanings were familiar and others were either ultra modern or ancient. In this chapter, I explored the advantages, disadvantages and dynamics of the relationship between script and image to determine, in some measure, how they co-exist independently, co-dependently or interdependently.

After researching the word ‘text’ it became clear to me that ‘script’ would be better suited in the context of this dissertation. I argue that ‘text’ comprises both ‘image’ and ‘script’.

I found it necessary to understand the development of the word ‘text’ to fully appreciate the various types of text, e.g. pictograms and alphabetic script found in the work of selected artists. Most contemporary dictionaries define ‘text’ as a form of written or printed work. For example a workbook containing text, a body of printed or written matter, the printed score of a musical composition, a passage of Scripture, words set to music or matter that is treated as data for processing by computerized equipment. (See the Merrriam-Webster Dictionary<sup>i</sup>). It is thus apparent that ‘text’ is not necessarily scribal which is confirmed by Harper in Etymology online in saying that according to an ancient metaphor

thought is a thread, and the raconteur is a spinner of yarns -- but the true storyteller, the poet, is a weaver. The scribes made this old and audible abstraction into a new and visible fact. After long practice, their work took on such an even, flexible texture that they called the written page a *textus*, which means cloth. (2010).

‘Text’ is not limited to written scribal alphabet as we can see in a pod cast by Charles Hodson on Podictionary (2007). He says that

Originally **text** didn’t mean the words on the page, but the style in which a work was put together; how the arguments were woven. You see, **text** derives from the same Indo-European source as **textile**. **Textus** was the thread ideas of woven into a fabric of argument.

In *KykAfrikaans* (2003a) Willem Boshoff gives an excellent summary of the etymology of the word “text”. He writes:

The word ‘text’ derives from Latin *texere* – ‘to weave’, as on a loom. Words like ‘textile’, ‘texture’, and ultimately ‘text’, also come from this source. The ‘text’ of all our writing was first so-called because it looks like a bit of weaving. (2003:7).

Weaving is a textile craft where yarns are interlaced to form a texture or an image. I therefore conclude that ‘text’ includes both ‘image’ and ‘script’.

## **DEFINITIONS OF THE WORDS “SCRIPT” AND “IMAGE”**

Humans speak in streams of sound. When we write down the stream of sound, we distinguish ‘words’ in scribal alphabetic writing. The word is a specifically literate concept. Words are vessels with which people communicate in scribal alphabetic writing. Through the process of writing down one’s thoughts by means of engraving, sewing or the conventional pen on paper method, our heard but unseen thoughts become visible in script. Different textual elements construct the art work. Letters are the textual elements which construct scribal alphabetic writing. Line, shape and colour together with letters you are constructing a new kind of text.

The word ‘script’ originated from the Latin word ‘scriptum’ in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century. Now-a-days the word ‘script’ can refer to a doctor’s prescription, the written text of a screenplay or “a type of schema, or implicit mental representation that describes an expected sequence of events.” (Hoad, 1996: no page number<sup>ii</sup>). Apple Inc. use the term ‘script’ to refer to programs written in a AppleScript language and a ‘scriptzone’ is a place where one can visit literary consultants for screen play analyses.

The various meanings of the word ‘script’ are broad and different. Not only does the meaning of the word shift in time, but it has gained new meanings, and to understand some of the connotations one has to be aware of the contextual specialization. Henning says that “Words are slowly changing in meaning even now, though the changes happen at the speed of continental drift rather than with the sudden jolt of earthquakes” (1995, Vol 1, Issue 4: 2). Some of the semantic changes in the word ‘script’ have taken centuries and others have appeared with the speed of lightning.

I chose to use the word ‘script’ as opposed to “text” in this dissertation as it refers to the actual mark making and sketching of letters. Writing, painting, and scratching are close to each other.

The Gothic word *meljan* 'to write' corresponds to Old High German *malon*, *malen*, 'to paint', and it is further linked with Lithuanian *melys* which means 'blue dye'. The German *schreiben* and the Latin *scriber* mean 'to write' and both come from the basic meaning to scratch or to score. They have an etymological connection with the Greek *skariphdomai* 'to scratch, to score'. The Russian word *pisat* 'to write' is cognate with the Latin word *pingere* 'to paint' (Jenson, 1970). Script is a tool that can be used with great effectiveness in visual art. On the other hand image is at home in the milieu of visual art and is simple to define and understand.

The etymology of the word "image" is Middle English and "short for imagene, from Latin imagin-, imago; perhaps akin to Latin imitari to imitate" (Meriam-Webster Online dictionary, 2009). According to Your Dictionary.com Unabridged an image is a likeness, reproduction or imitation of the form of a person or thing. An image is visible but not necessarily tangible as an artist can create the illusion of a three-dimensional object on a two-dimensional surface. An image can be created in the mind or imagination of the viewer as a result of descriptive writing communicated through script. An image can be a symbol which includes written, embroidered or painted script (2009). An artist can communicate through using both script and image.

I have been careful not to elevate scribal literacy to a level superior to that of writing by way of pictograms or scribbles. Marcel Jousse said that "writing was, at least in origin, no more than the stabilisation of oral language" (Pratt, 2006: no page number<sup>iii</sup>). I agree with Jane Maehr who argues that children must be encouraged to 'write' without worrying about the mechanics of writing. In an article about emergent literacy Maehr wrote that children in certain preschool "classrooms, centers, and homes often write and read in unconventional forms (scribblings, drawings, letter-like marks) in order to relate their thoughts and experiences" (1991: no page number<sup>iv</sup>).

John Medina argues that writing is inefficient and less capable than images. He made a spray painted alphabet comprised of contrasting tone and a soft texture as can be seen in Figure 1.1. Referring to his illustration he says that

The brain sees words as lots of tiny pictures. Data clearly show that a word is unreadable unless the brain can separately identify simple features in the letters. Instead of words, we see complex little art-museum masterpieces, with hundreds of features embedded in hundreds of letters. Like an art junkie, we linger at each feature, rigorously and independently verifying it before moving to the next. The finding has broad implications for reading efficiency. Reading creates a bottleneck. My text chokes you, not because my text is not enough like pictures but because my text is too much like pictures. To our cortex, unnervingly, there is no such thing as words. (2009: no page number<sup>v</sup>).

He reasons that the brain does not interpret text as words but as a series of single alphabetic codes. Contrary to Medina, I believe that each medium has its own physical properties and purpose.

If one looks at the visual pathway that script follows in the brain the reader may better understand the processing of script and image. The brain rather than the eye is the true organ of visual perception. According to Sebastian Wren (2001: no page number<sup>vi</sup>). The human occipital cortex is very active when it reads script. It processes all of the visual information encountered - the words, letters, and features of the letters. He explains the cellular processes of the brain as follows:

The frontal lobe of your neocortex is engaged in processing the meaning of the text you're reading - the meanings of the words, the sentences, and the big picture, and it is working to relate what you are reading with what you already know. Surprisingly, your temporal lobe (particularly on the left side of your brain if you're right handed) is also active right now, processing all of the 'sounds' associated with reading - even though you're reading silently to yourself, the areas of the brain that process speech sounds are active just like they would be if you were listening to somebody speak. Your brain is very structured in the way it processes information. Complex tasks such as reading a passage of text are broken down into easier tasks, and the easier tasks are distributed to the areas of the brain that specialize in those tasks.

Wren goes on to say that at the gross level the brain seems to be analyzing script at three major levels – “the visual features of the words and letters, the phonological representation of those words, and the meanings of the words and sentences. There are other parts of our brains that are also quite active when we are reading (e.g. parts of the cerebellum controlling automatic eye movements, parts of the reticular formation responsible for attention, etc.), but the most significant activity is that associated with these three areas of processing” (2001<sup>vii</sup>).

In his study on the *Eye, Brain, and Vision*, Hubel says that because the convergence of fibres occurs at every stage, “receptive fields tend to become larger: the farther along the path we go, the more fuzzy this representation-by-mapping of the outside world becomes” (1995:14<sup>viii</sup>). Processing script is like watching a deck of cards unfolding on a table where parameters become indistinct and difficult to define. Reading and viewing script and image in art thus occupies both hemispheres of the brain.

There is a certain dynamic in a work of art that incorporates both script and image as they are interpreted by the brain in different ways and appeal to different senses. Cognition takes place on a higher level when the artist stimulates more than only the auditory and visual perceptual

senses. The artwork reaches “different neurons in the brain. Sensory inputs converge and the impact on the viewer increases exponentially” (Stein and Meredith, 1993: No page number<sup>ix</sup>). Both script and image enter the sight gate. Cohen says that the “cognitive psychologist will acknowledge that the act of seeing entails split-second operations of categorization and organization which are in themselves reflexive, unconscious judgements of sorts.” (Cohen, 2009:4).

Script becomes image when it can “engender a referential illusion and can generate figurative meaning”. (Greimas and Courtés, 1979:148). In art, script is sometimes legible and sometimes obscured and difficult to decipher.

## THE HISTORY OF SCRIPT AND IMAGE

In the following paragraphs I give a brief outline of the history of the use of script in visual art revealing a close relationship between script and image.

Initially written human communication was executed in media very different to the pen or print on paper that we are accustomed to today. There are many examples of ‘writing’ in the form of tally sticks, cairns, knotted cords and African beads, inter alia.

As people strove to convey messages and record facts, script was developed. According to J.T. Hooker (Chadwick, Cook, Davies, Healey, Hooker, Walker, 1990:6) there are four main methods of communicating and recording written information: pictograms, word-signs, syllabic signs, and lastly the alphabet. I believe that writing and script are two related concepts. Most fixed representation can be conceived as writing, which can be image, but script is strictly alphabetical.

Scarification (using knives, pieces of glass or stones to scarify the skin) is decorative, functional and narrative and is particularly interesting as it is a two-dimensional mark made on a three-dimensional body but is not script as it is not encoded in the alphabet. (Figure 1.4).

Logographic scribes scratched signs into damp clay with a sharp stick making incised low reliefs. A logogram is a word-sign that represents a word or phrase and is not scribal-script. An example of logogrammatic writing would be a circle indicating the word “sun”. (Figure 1.7). (Ancient Egypt Online. Nd.)

Syllabogram is script that indicates syllabic signs usually consisting of one or two sounds, i.e. a consonant followed by a vowel, such as de or do. (Figure 1.6). Syllabic scribes went further than drawing images to drawing ideas. (Coulmas, 1999).

In China pictogrammic writing was developed and practiced as a form of art in its own right. Writing was first inscribed on oracle bones, bronze vessels and later painted on handmade paper with a brush and ink. Chinese writing differs from other languages in that one Chinese symbol represents a syllable or a unit consisting of uninterrupted sound that can be used to make up a word. Alphabets in most other languages consist of standardised sets of letters. The reason why other languages developed a more descriptive writing system was because one symbol could have several meanings. There was a need to include elements of sound-language in writing (Norman, 2008).

There is an interesting correlation between mark-making in primordial caves all over the world, e.g. concentric circles, spirals, chevrons and rows of vertical lines. Similar images, shapes and patterns are found in phosphenes (Figure 1.8) which are images produced whilst in states of delirium tremens, drug intoxication, nervous disorders, dreams and fevers (Carr, 1995) and pre-literate writing.

Lev Vygotsky says that it is easy to see that written signs made by children are entirely first-order symbols or images at this point, directly denoting objects or actions, and that they have yet to reach second-order symbolism, which involves the creation of written signs for the spoken symbols of words (1997: 47). Artful scribbles (Figure 1.9.) shows that writing can be a forerunner of script. However I believe that children begin by creating make-believe writing then learn to write their names and begin scribal alphabetic writing when taught.

There was a strong relationship between image and script in hieroglyphics as they are both pictorial (made up of pictures) and iconic (have the characteristics of a visual representation of an object or subject). Hieroglyphics such as the engravings on the Karnak Temple in Luxor, were not only informative but formed a part of the art work. According to the writings of Davis (Chadwick, Cook, Davies, Healey, Hooker, Walker, 1990:17) aesthetics played a large part in the harmonious arrangement and graphic transpositions of sign combinations in Egyptian inscriptions. (Figure 1.10).

There was a need for a more specific writing to clarify ambiguous multi-consonant signs and in c800 BC the Greeks devised an alphabet (Figure 1.11). The alphabet or code of letters as we know it today relates to figurative images but each letter becomes an image in its own right.

## THE DYNAMICS OF SCRIPT AND IMAGE

Throughout the centuries people have asked the question: what is the purpose of art? Art has served a multitude of purposes, such as, religious, social and aesthetic. *'L'art pour l'art'* is the philosophy that true art does not serve didactic, moral or utilitarian functions but exists in its own right. However, in the fine arts arena of the twenty first century art there is an increasing tendency to convey a message or fight for an issue, such as, marginalised groups, environmental issues and social struggles. According to Rankin (2001: no page number<sup>x</sup>), "art curators, critics and historians, as much as artists themselves, gradually marginalised artists whose agendas did not seem to match the political aspirations of the 'struggle', whether they were categorised according to neutered 'township art' model amongst black artists or the conventions of self-referential modernism amongst whites".

It is valid to question whether art is, or should be, a commodity used to spread a message to change society. I believe that script and image are my tools of communication.

When both image and script are analyzed and decoded, interpreting a work of art becomes a multi-dimensional cognitive and emotive process. Picasso (1881-1973) was one of the first modern artists to add script to his art. He combined word fragments in synthetic Cubism, for example he added the word "Jou", which says nothing in itself, but which is a fragment of various words with multiple meanings - 'jour' (day); 'journal' (newspaper); 'jou-jou' (child's play toy). (Figure 1.12). Taking multiple fragments, he built up a new synthesis that is pluralistic rather than one-dimensional. He used 'collage' to keep us questioning reality (and art's reality) by continually shifting our frame of reference. He thus keeps us 'reading' passages between reality and abstraction rather than pushing Cubism all the way in one direction to non-objectivity" (Kenifelder, 1998: No page number<sup>xi</sup>).

The Dadaist, Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) subverted the Renaissance iconic image by writing and painting on the famous Mona Lisa. He added script to the visual image when he defaced the painting, *L.H.O.O.Q.* (Figure 1.13).

Where both script and image are used in art, the viewer becomes involved in the multi-faceted interplay between them. When script is woven and integrated into paintings it adds dimension, substance and layering to the work of art. Integrated script and image attracts and captivates the viewer. Nonsensical words are sometimes added to fascinate, mock and befuddle art viewers and critics. Oftentimes the art viewing public consists of a select group from the upper end of society who consider themselves to be 'cultured'. On the other hand, informative script can enlighten viewers as we have seen in the work of the conceptual artist, Joseph Kosuth.

Peter Suchin wrote that "a number of things are usually implied when the expression "visual language" is used, including that art is a universally-legible means of communicating emotions, themselves supposedly readable across all cultural and social boundaries" (Suchin, 1998). I believe that art is only universally legible where viewers are from like-minded nations and classes.

In the Western world, literacy is seen as empowering people and making a society more efficient. According to World Watch Institute: "Education is a powerful tool against poverty: it is linked to higher income levels" (Herro, 2007: No page number<sup>xii</sup>). In the context of visual art, script is often used to inform the viewer. However, there are exceptions as in the work of Twombly where script and scribbles are used interchangeably and his art is not always legible or meant to be read, e.g. Twombly uses naive scribbles in *Literariness* (2007) which is described as "illusive" and "unfathomable" (Guardian, 2008: No page number<sup>xiii</sup>). Interestingly, Twombly was a cryptographer in the army. His random, half-written words and wavering strokes create a unique appearance which Nigro calls "a hybrid of painting and poetry emanating from bodily surges of expression" (2008<sup>xiv</sup>). Twombly uses the same frenetic movement in drawing images and writing script in his art, e.g. *Criticism*, 1955 (Figure 1.16). Script and image fuse making it difficult to distinguish between the two and to decipher what the script says. Twombly deliberately confounds the literate viewer.

On the other hand, we have the scribally illiterate artist whose art is appreciated by scribally literate viewers. Fanozi Johannes (Chickenman) Mkhize (1959-1995) transcribes words written out by others without noting the spaces between the words. One of his pieces declares "NODRUNK ENBUMS"; another asks, pertinently, "BUTISI TART?" (SAinfo reporter, 2008). It is debatable whether the elitist and scribally literate art viewing public perceive the incorrect spelling of the script in a patronising manner or are intrigued with the work of art in its own right (Figure 1.15). Misspelling words especially by misplacing or excluding the spaces between the

words is a characteristic of a first generation literate. We speak in streams of sound, without spaces between 'words' which makes sense of the script in Chickenman Mkhize's "*NODRUNK ENBUMS*" and "*BUTISI TART?*".

I thus conclude that the use of script in art today marginalises and excludes or partially excludes the scribally illiterate viewer. In the 2001 General Population Census, 32% of South Africans were graded as functionally illiterate and the percentage was increasing annually (Aitchison and Harley, 2004:3). Faced with such statistics we have to address the issue of literacy when it comes to script and art. Koloane makes a key point when he writes that "It is important to note that very few black African artists have access to tertiary-level education and that the reading ethic that is common among white artists is almost non-existent among their counterparts in the townships. This situation is no doubt changing with the new social order - but only slowly". (Herreman, 1999:190).

Adding script to image in art possibly creates a postmodernist "superabundance of disconnected images and styles" (Chilvers, 1999: 490). *One and Three Chairs* (1965) by Joseph Kosuth comprises of an installation of a large framed dictionary definition of a chair, a photograph of a chair and an actual chair. The script and image focus on the same object from different angles. The dictionary definition addresses the interests of a specific section of society and we see that in the information age in which we live, many conceptual artists feel the need to communicate more information than the visual image alone depicts.

According to Chilvers, postmodernism favours "depthless" works and "greet[s] the absurd or meaningless confusion of contemporary existence with a certain numbed or flippant indifference (1999). It is true that there are shallow and nonsensical works that have become famous, such as, *L'art est inutile. Rentrez chez vous*" (*Art is Useless, Go Home and Art est un mot écrit* (Figure 1.2) by Ben Vautier. Combining script and image lines up with postmodernism, which Jencks says is fundamentally an eclectic mixture (1986). It could be that by adding dictionary definitions to art, artists attempt to assume a position of power or superiority.

My exhibition includes both script and image and is called *Red's Family Affair* (2011). It is based on the Little Red Riding Hood story. Each piece is made up of image and script and without interpretation the illiterate viewer is unable to fully access the meaning of the work. I would like the viewer to look at my art, pause to meditate on it, wrestle a little with interpreting its contents. An illiterate viewer may have limited access to the script that I use in my art in the sense of a literal reading, but the visual impact, texture, colour and context within the exhibition will still facilitate access, albeit on another level.

## CONCLUSION

This dissertation is about the relationship between script and image in Fine Art. I have carefully defined the words 'script' and 'text' and use the word 'script' to refer to writing using alphabetic letters. I use the word 'text' to refer to any communication which is comprised of a weaving of elements and 'text' refers to both script and image.

Interestingly, script and image are processed by different areas in the brain; script is generally processed in the left hemisphere while visual images are processed by the right hemisphere. As I researched a brief history of the origins of script and image I looked at pictograms, syllabic signs, and lastly the alphabet. Some of these forms of communication can be categorised as script whilst others are image. I also found it interesting to see the correlation between the mark-making in pre-historic caves all over the world with phosphores and pre-literate writing.

I took a brief look at selected artists who combined script and image in their art. I incorporate both script and image in my own art and study the work of Willem Boshoff and Barbara Kruger as they both rely on script and image to address issues in society.

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<sup>i</sup> <http://www.merriam-webster.com/netdict/text%20tale>.

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1O27-script.html>.

<sup>iii</sup> <http://www.semioticon.com/seo/J/jousse.html#>.

<sup>iv</sup> <http://www.ericdigests.org/pre-9218/encouraging.htm>

<sup>v</sup> <http://brainrules.blogspot.com/2009/12/worth-thousand-words.html>

<sup>vi</sup> <http://www.sedl.org/reading/topics/brainreading.htm>

<sup>vii</sup> *ibid*

<sup>viii</sup> <http://hubel.med.harvard.edu/b14.htm>

<sup>ix</sup> <http://books.google.co.za/books?id=uCV9QgAACAAJ&dq=merging+of+the+senses+stein&hl>

<sup>x</sup> <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=4925>

<sup>xi</sup> [http://simplycharly.com/picasso/karen\\_kleinfelder\\_interview.htm](http://simplycharly.com/picasso/karen_kleinfelder_interview.htm) .

<sup>xii</sup> <http://www.worldwatch.org/node/5478>

<sup>xiii</sup> <http://slowpainting.wordpress.com/2008/06/16/cy-twombly-at-tate-modern>

<sup>xiv</sup> *ibid*

## CHAPTER ONE: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCRIPT AND IMAGE FIGURES



FIGURE 1.1. John Medina. *Alphabet*. 2009.



FIGURE 1.2. Ben Vautier. *art est un mot écrit*, (art is a written word). No Date.



FIGURE 1.3. Joseph Kosuth, *One and Three Chairs*. 1965. Installation.

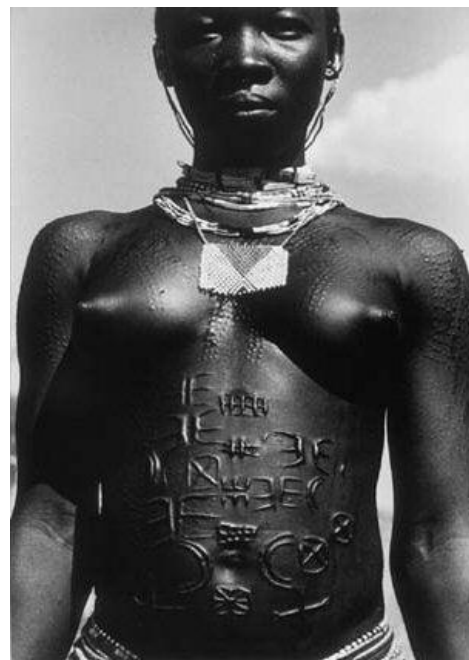


FIGURE 1.4. Young Nuba Woman displaying elaborate scarification depicting the passages of life.

*The Relationship Between Script and Image with Specific Reference to the Work of Celeste van der Merwe, Willem Boshoff and Barbara Kruger.*



FIGURE 1.5. Early pictographic tablet as used by the Sumerians. c. 3400 BC.

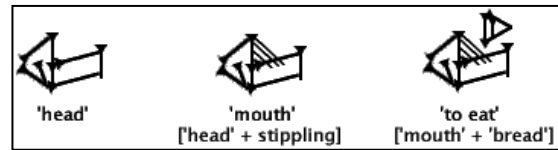


FIGURE 1.6. Syllabogram. Cuneiform writing, (Lawrence, L. 1996-2007).

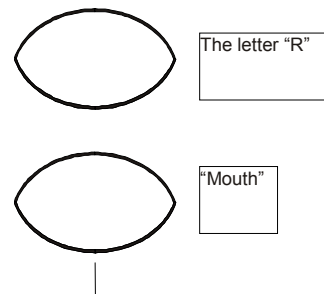


FIGURE 1.7. An example of a logogram (word "mouth") and a pictogram (letter "R").

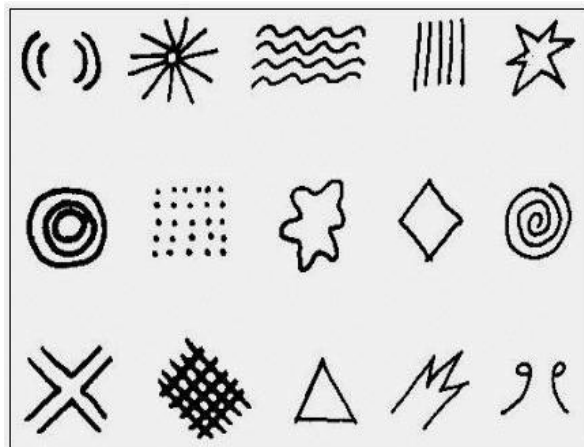


Figure 1

FIGURE 1. 8. Phosphenes. 1995.



FIGURE 1. 9. Artful scribbles. Pre-literate children's writing. 2002.



FIGURE 1.10. Egyptian hieroglyphic consonantal alphabet.



FIGURE 1.11. Greek Alphabet Script.



FIGURE 1.12. Pablo Picasso. *Still-life with Chair Caning*. 1912.



FIGURE 1. 13. Marcel Duchamp. *L.H.O.O.Q.* 1919.

*The Relationship Between Script and Image with Specific Reference to the Work of Celeste van der Merwe, Willem Boshoff and Barbara Kruger.*



FIGURE 1.14. Fanozi (Chickenman) Mkhize, 1959 -1995.



FIGURE 1.15. Chickenman Mkhize, *Gone Fishing*. N.d. Metal, wire and paint.

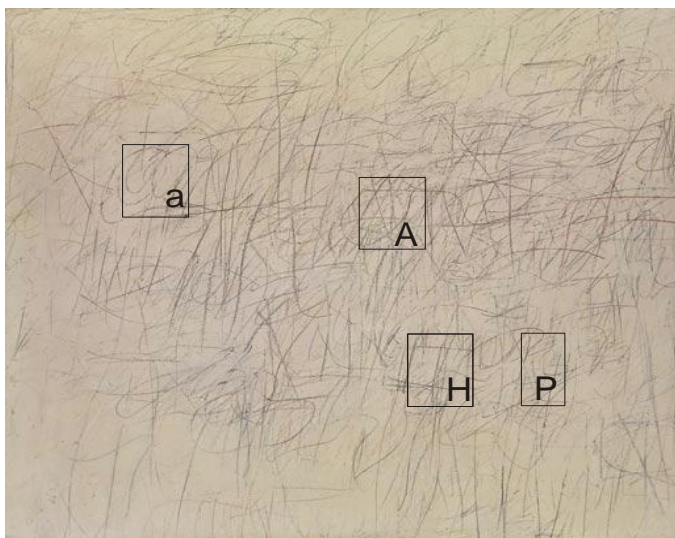


FIGURE 1.16. Cy Twombly. *Criticism*. 1955.

*The Relationship Between Script and Image with Specific Reference to the Work of Celeste van der Merwe, Willem Boshoff and Barbara Kruger.*

## CHAPTER TWO: CONTEXT OF THE ART OF CELESTE VAN DER MERWE

### BACKGROUND

This chapter is a self-study of my art in which I discuss the route I travelled in incorporating script and image in a work of art. I will discuss the symbolic and metaphoric significance of visual motifs in my art and their connection to script and image. I aim to expound on the techniques that I use to deconstruct and reconstruct materials in order to create works of art. Furthermore, I place my art within the context of my creative growth as a developing artist.

### MY JOURNEY TO USING SCRIPT AND IMAGE IN ART

Creating this body of work took me on a path of self-discovery on many levels. Firstly, I looked at my art in the context of my creative growth as a developing artist. I recalled childhood memories, such as when I crocheted a knee blanket for my granny. I remembered the great sense of achievement when I sewed it together and how proud I was of the imperfect gift. I reflected on the art needlework classes I took as a young woman and how the hardanger embroidery had a therapeutic effect on me. I also recall painting a gouache landscape and how the art teacher encouraged me.

As a Fine Arts student at the University of the Free State I specialised in sculpture and enjoyed the physicality of chiselling wood and moulding wax. About ten years later I felt a need to update my art skills and enrolled for the fourth Fine Arts year for non-degree purposes through University of South Africa. For this project I sewed, pasted and painted on the inside of a dome shaped canvas. One could walk into the dome and listen to recorded sounds. In this piece I was already combining script and image. The poem *Bloodribbons* (1994), was interwoven in the image of an egg (Figure 2.1).

### BLOOD RIBBONS

blood ribbons floating back into the past  
time spans before memories  
oupa's, grannies are metamorphosed into rectangles  
flattened into albums and frames  
joining antiques and ornaments  
caloused hearts label them sentimental memories:

inseparable roots  
thick lines of blood fax genes and curses from  
generation to generation to generation to generation  
die appel val nie ver van die boom af nie  
impacted and jailed by their ways  
atoning blood axes through prison bars  
hidden treasures of blessings greedily grabbed out of letters

man a phantom wind blowing to and fro  
amidst millions of other winds  
bustling round about in vain  
destined to become part of a  
forgotten genealogy  
but a breath  
heaping up wealth  
not knowing who will get it  
the span of his years as fleeting as grass  
peak time flourishes like a flower of the field  
the wind blows over it and it is gone  
and its place remembers it no more  
eternity set in his heart

Celeste van der Merwe, 1994

## **MATERIALS, MEDIA, TECHNIQUE AND FORMAT**

I use a wide range of media and techniques in rendering script and image in my art. The unifying factor is the technique of sewing on handmade paper. I use different materials for various reasons and find that using a large variety of media and techniques advance creativity in my art.

I do not practice a pristine type of art but enjoy tearing, gluing, sewing and experimenting on my work. For example, my artwork called *Played Intense* (2010) (Figure 5.20) is made up of a photograph of a portrait torn from a popular glossy magazine. I slashed a hole in the mouth and glued the words “played” and “intense” on it. The zipper forms a three dimensional bubble and is left half way open. My intention is to alarm the viewer and to create an awareness of adults “playing” with minors.

I admit that not all viewers would interpret the message in the art in the way I intend. The red stitching around the girl's black cape transforms the cape into a halo. The connection between this work and the art of Barbara Kruger is evident in the cropped portrait of the beautiful girl and the shocking slogan.

I select different media for each work of art depending on the effect I would like to render, each material being different in its own regard. The vast variety of media I have used in the art for the *Red's Family Affair* exhibition (2011) include fabric, henna, food dye, shoe polish, bees wax, lemon juice, etc. Where I deem necessary I use found objects, such as, panel pins, needles, buttons, lettering, etc.

Most of my art is made on two types of paper. Firstly, I use a handmade paper that has a course felt side and a fine wire side. "With mouldmade and machine made papers the wire side is more porous than the felt side, has more grain, shorter fibres and less sizing. This two-sided quality of paper offers me, the artist a choice of textures on which to work." (Faran, n.d.). It looks natural and the deckled edges add to the texture. Secondly, I use a 200gm not-pressed Modigliani watercolour paper. The purchased mouldmade paper is more appropriate to sew on than handmade paper as it does not come apart when pierced by needles and fed through a sewing machine. This particular paper is suited to fine stitching that is often required when I am doing the details of images and the lettering of script. The texture is suited to the style of my art.

There were a few logistical situations that determined the presentation of my work for the *Red's Family Affair* exhibition (2011). I overcame the challenge of transporting a large body of work in a limited space, and up and down stairs, by breaking it up into smaller components with a fixed format.

I created four series and limited them to two basic formats. *Red's Family Affair - The Story* (2009, 2010) (Figure 2.4), *The Redemptive Series* (2009, 2010) (Figure 2.3) and *Child's Picture Book* (2009) (Figure 2.11) as well as *Hooded Cloak* (2008-2011) (Figure 2.5). The first four series all measure 310 X 520mm, some are displayed in landscape and others in portrait layout. *Red Series* (2010) (Figure 2.2) measures 390 X 500mm and all the pieces are displayed in portrait format. Figures 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 show the uniform presentation of the work. As the art is displayed on eye level to the viewer, the script and images are accessible, particularly in Figure 2.4 where the viewer is expected to read the words.

I juxtaposed the rigid formats with an organically shaped, larger than life-size three-dimensional cape, *The Hooded Cloak* (2008–2011) (Figure 2.5) that measures 1920 X 750mm. To create an alternative point of interest I used another method of conveying my message in a short video called *Little Red Riding Hood, Animation Movie*, (2011) (Figure 2.6).

At the onset of my studies, my paintings were tight and forced. John Roome, my supervisor recommended I experiment with techniques and materials that are difficult to control. In response, I painted with henna which is unpredictable, e.g. *Price of a secret* (2009) (Figure 2.7). Henna powders change colour as they dry and as I didn't know what to expect from the different colours, there was an element of chance in the process. The lack of control of the intensity of the tones caused me to loosen up as an artist. There is a parallel between the henna paintings and Little Red Riding Hood's life: both are unpredictable and the circumstances influence the end result. The script in *Price of a Secret* consists of words cut from a magazine making the message anonymous. Another example of the use of an unpredictable medium is *Cut* (2009) (Figure 2.8) in which I spray-painted around a pair of scissors with lemon juice and exposed the resulting image to heat.

I love travelling and was excited to discover that there are at least forty seven recorded translations of the "Little Red Riding Hood" allegory such as, Arabic: بئذلا وىلىل, meaning 'Layla and the Wolf', Bulgarian: Червената шапчица meaning 'The (Little) Red Hat' and Japanese: 赤頭巾 (Akazukin), meaning 'Red Hood'. (See Appendix Three for a list of names and meanings). I embroidered these titles on strips of Modigliani paper, with the intent of assembling the strips to make a cape. I highlighted certain letters and pasted relating images alongside them and was constantly mindful of conveying a social message.

This was a time consuming process. As I pierced the words into the paper, the script became textured and the visual became tactile. I identify with the Jewellery Designer, Marlene De Beer when she wrote in her Master's thesis about using words in her ceramics: "I also felt that 'weaving' with words created a texture that consisted of many threads " and multiple possible meanings and memories dating back many years." (De Beer, 2006: 109). I used a variety of embroidery stitches such as, blanket stitch, chain stitch and daisy stitch. I enjoyed sewing dotted lines as they reminded me of the path Little Red Riding Hood took, the marking in the middle of a tar road. I derived great pleasure from the feminine art of embroidery and identified with Little Red Riding Hood's mother as I constructed the hooded cloak.

As my practice developed, I began sewing images on handmade paper with a sewing machine. I found the speed of the machine racing up and down and the sound of the motor exhilarating. My work was no longer constrained because of the newfound method. I took this freedom further and left the threads dangling from the ends of the sewed lines creating lines that are in constant flux.

The source materials in my art vary from old sewing patterns, old booklets to current trendy magazines. Children's letters and drawings inspire me greatly. They are authentic and real and I have imitated some of these in my art. I select relevant images from magazines that complement the dominant red colour in my art and tear them out by hand. The torn edges blend in with the handmade paper and create a more natural look. The stitched words that I use in the cape have hard edges and these torn images soften and break the formal look.

I felt liberated and unconstrained as I tore and deconstructed the images. Reconstructing and recompiling the images was similar to a building process. At one of the 'crit.' sessions Tony Starkey, Head of the Department of Fine Arts and Jewellery at DUT advised me: "sometimes you have to tear down in order to build." (2008). In addition the frayed and torn edges of the paper added texture to the work. *Veiled* (2009) (Figure 2.10) is a prime example of an image that I fragmented and then reconstructed by pasting it onto Modigliani paper and then onto handmade paper. I completed the face using henna and stitching it together by hand and machine. I intentionally included a disproportionately large left eye that glanced upwards, avoiding the viewer. The script on *Veiled* matches the image and reads "why are your eyes veiled" and "don't look".

Some of my art is made up of script only, for example the series, *Red's Family Affair, the Story* (Figure 2.4). I sewed, painted, drew and collaged the script, varying the techniques to match the connotation of the words. In order to illustrate some of the techniques used, I focus here on one of the pieces of the *Red's Family Affair* series in particular which reads, "MARRIED by the Bible, DIVORCED by the LAW." (Figure 2.9). I cut the word "MARRIED" out of antique-looking floral paper indicative of a romantic wedding. The word "Bible" is hand stitched with white embroidery cotton on black paper in a calligraphic Harrington font, which reminds me of church traditions. Each letter is made up of several strands representing unity. The word "DIVORCED" consists of a long red strip of paper cut into shapes that divide the paper to read the word "DIVORCED". Each letter is separated or divorced from the other resulting in a connection between the style of the fonts and the meaning of the word "DIVORCED".

I wrote the word “LAW” with layers of dripping cold glue on roughly torn red paper letters. The cold glue runs like dripping blood and is reminiscent of the font of a horror movie. My intention is that the word sparks a negative emotion equivalent to that of a child who hears that his or her parents are separating.

I was dependent on adding script to my art to explain my ideas. However, as my work advanced I became less reliant on words, for example, *Set-up* (2010) (Figure 2.15). In *Set-up* a children’s slide made of a food grater symbolises the painful journey parents create for their children when they are abusive.

As my work progressed I felt comfortable, confident and had fun. Although the themes were often intense I mostly enjoyed the process.

Then I was faced with the challenge of regularly transporting my art 200 kilometres from home and then lugging it up and down stairs. The solution was to use light handmade paper, a relatively small format and to mount the work on lightweight high density styrofoam for presentation. By limiting the art to a fixed format the presentation was neat and conducive to reading script and seeing detail.

## **METAPHORS AND SYMBOLS**

I enrich visual images and script in my art with metaphors and symbols. The metaphors often reoccur in diverse forms in different works of art. For example, the eagle in *The Freedom Flight* (2010) (Figure 2.12) is made of handmade paper that is pieced together whilst the eagle in *Little Red Riding Hood Animation Movie* (2010) (Figure 2.13) is a digital drawing. Both eagles are metaphoric of a young teenage girl being set free and soaring into a spiritual realm.

In the context of my art, I intend the blood-red embroidery thread to be metaphoric of blood lines and generations. Generational attributes highlight the irony that parents who are expected to nurture and protect are often the ones who ‘send children to the wolves’. In *Madonna-mother and Daughters* (2009) (Figure 3.14), I depict a mother and her two daughters with a red thread hanging from an elliptical-shaped negative space. Threads embroider the names of Little Red Riding Hood like a baby is woven together in its mother’s womb.

Nails, needles and pins frequently occur in my art. I wedged nails into the one side of the wolf's face in *Snarl* (2009) (Figure 3.1). Hard, sharp nails are contrasted with the soft handmade paper and are metaphoric of harshness and cruelty. It is not uncommon to use nails, needles or pins as metaphors. Windling writes that

Indeed, in some parts of Europe, prostitutes once wore needles on their sleeves to advertise their profession. The versions of *The Grandmothers Tale* where the girl chooses to take the Path of Needles might well imply that the heroine is trying to grow up a bit too quickly (Windling, 2004: no page number<sup>1</sup>).

The cape or *Hooded Cloak* (2008-2011) (Figure 2.5) is metaphoric of protection. Generally a cape suggests warmth and security. In a sense parents are the capes of children to protect them from the storms of life and keep them safe. In *Hooded Cloak* I altered the familiar soft and warm attributes of capes to hard paper and tough messages that address societal issues. A renowned example of a garment symbolic of protection, insulation and spiritual warmth is the *Felt Suit* (1970) (2.14) by Joseph Beuys (b. 1921) that he viewed as having therapeutic healing power.

In "Hoodwinked" (2005), a computer-animated film based on Little Red Riding Hood, Red flutters her eyelashes as a secret signal or attempting to enchant knowing that she is protected by the hood. I often make a halo or hood-like shape over teenagers' heads in my art.

Red is the theme colour of my art for the *Red's Family Affair* exhibition. It is a bold colour that protrudes from a work of art and screams at the viewer. Red stimulates the senses and captivates the viewer. Red speaks of the passion and ravages of love and war. Used in different contexts red can swing from signifying love to hate, and never takes a neutral indifferent position. Red moves speedily from the cognitive and rational to the emotive. Alert signals such as hospital signs, stop signs and danger signals are red. Extroverts use red, and teachers mark with red. It is an intense colour that is filled with energy. Red roses are romantic. Communion wine speaks of sacrificial blood and forgiveness. A red face speaks of rage, shame, drunkenness, high fever, and exertion. Red is a warm colour that speaks of comfort. It is an energising colour, the colour for courage, strength and pioneering spirit. X-rated underwear is red. According to Johnson, red stimulates a faster heartbeat and breathing. (2007).

Red is the colour of covenantal blood and healing blood. I would like my art to bring healing to those broken hearted. Red is the colour of revolution and I revolt against the wrongs in society. Red is the colour of roses and in some cases I strive to make aesthetically pleasing art. Lastly, red is the colour of fire and I would like my art to reflect passion. In the context of this thesis I find it interesting that the word “red” comes from the Old English word “read”. (Online Etymology Dictionary). In order to understand this study one has to be able to read on many levels. One has to read script, images and the human heart.

In order to appeal to the viewer on a level deeper than the rational, I subtract from the literal and work in an expressive manner. I would like the subject matter and the innate spiritual emotion contained in the work to be inseparable. Lumbley writes, “The best in art is an affirmation of a greater awareness. It must share the painter's impression of the vitality of the subject and be an expression of emotional reaction. I do not mean that technique is unimportant, but that technique must be subservient to the need to convey emotional feeling.” (2005: No page number<sup>ii</sup>). I agree with Sheldon who says that the real greatness of art consists in the quality and force of emotion. (1981:32).

## CONCLUSION

Initially the prospect of writing about myself and my art was overwhelming, but writing about my art has been rewarding and insightful. I gained a clearer sense of my intentions, style and technique as I did the self-study. I looked at my innate desire to be creative and at the little successes on my creative path that led up to the point of presenting the *Red's Family Affair* (2011) exhibition. Chance played a strong role in my art as I experimented with a variety of unpredictable techniques. Significant metaphors underpin the theme behind Little Red Riding Hood. Although I was stretched and challenged I had a great deal of fun making the art for *Red's Family Affair* (2011) exhibition.

In my most of my art script and image relate to express one message. However, there are cases such as *Red's Family Affair, the Story* (2009) where I found using script to be sufficient and some of my works are made up of script alone. Few of my works of art are completely void of script and my work advanced I became comfortable with using image alone.

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<sup>i</sup> <http://www.endicott-studio.com/rdrm/rrPathNeedles.html>

<sup>ii</sup> [http://james.lumley.com/monograph\\_2.html](http://james.lumley.com/monograph_2.html).

## CHAPTER TWO: CONTEXT OF THE ART OF CELESTE VAN DER MERWE FIGURES



FIGURE 2.1. Celeste van der Merwe. *SELF-PORTRAIT (detail)*. 1994.



FIGURE 2.2. Celeste van der Merwe. *Red Series*. 2009, 2010.

*The Relationship Between Script and Image with Specific Reference to the Work of Celeste van der Merwe, Willem Boshoff and Barbara Kruger.*



FIGURE 2.3. Celeste van der Merwe. *Redemptive Series*. 2009, 2010.



FIGURE 2.4. Celeste van der Merwe. *Red's Family Affair - The Story*. 2009, 2010.

*The Relationship Between Script and Image with Specific Reference to the Work of Celeste van der Merwe, Willem Boshoff and Barbara Kruger.*



FIGURE 2.5. Celeste van der Merwe. *Hooded Cloak*. 2003-2011.

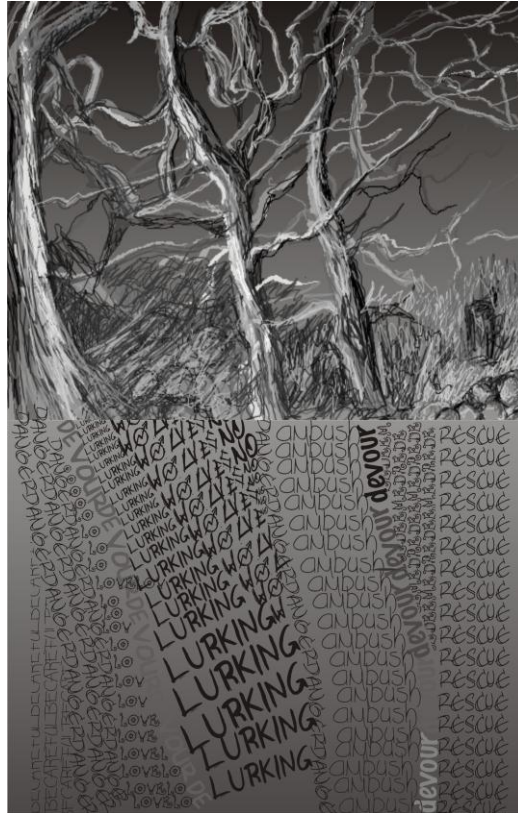


FIGURE 2.6. Celeste van der Merwe. *Little Red Riding Hood, Animation movie*. 2010, 2011.



FIGURE 2.7. Celeste van der Merwe. *Price of a Secret*. 2009.



FIGURE 2.8. Celeste van der Merwe. *Cut*. 2009.

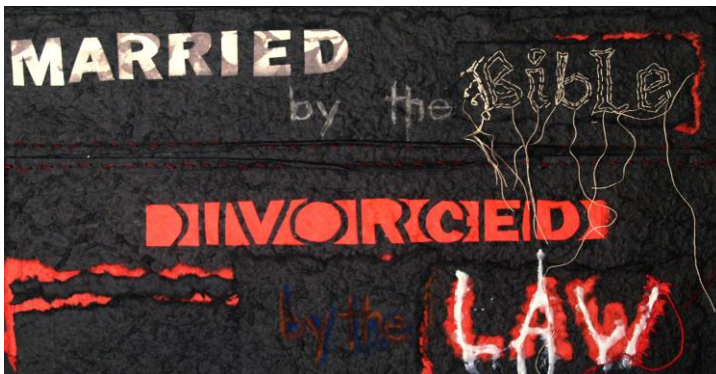


FIGURE 2.9. Celeste van der Merwe. *Red's Family Affair - The Story (Married by the Bible, divorced by the Law)*. 2009.



FIGURE 2.10. Celeste van der Merwe. *Veiled*. 2009.



FIGURE 2.11. Celeste van der Merwe. *Child's Picture Book*. 2009.



FIGURE 2.12. Celeste van der Merwe. *The Freedom Flight*. 2010.

*The Relationship Between Script and Image with Specific Reference to the Work of Celeste van der Merwe, Willem Boshoff and Barbara Kruger.*



**FIGURE 2.13.** Celeste van der Merwe. *Little Red Riding Hood, Animation movie.* 2011.



**FIGURE 1.15.** Celeste van der Merwe. *Set-up.* 2010.



**FIGURE 2.14.** Joseph Beuys. *Felt Suit.* 1970.

## CHAPTER THREE: CONCEPT OF THE ART OF CELESTE VAN DER MERWE

Little Red Riding Hood was my first love;  
I felt that if I could have married her,  
I should have known perfect bliss.  
Charles Dickens. (Esel. 2008).

### BACKGROUND

In this chapter I investigated the conceptual contents of my art and thereafter I went on to explore the relationship between the images and script in my art and their cultural and intellectual milieu.

I have researched fairytales, folktales and allegories and explained why I chose to base my art on Little Red Riding Hood, an allegory recorded by Jacob (1785-1863) and Wilhelm Grimm's (1786-1859) (Appendix 2). I focus on the influence of dysfunctional parenting in Little Red Riding Hood and analyse the character traits, interactions and motives of the characters. I intend to influence viewers and readers through my art and allegory.

### FAIRYTALES, FOLKTALES AND ALLEGORIES

According to the Cyber English Dictionary an ...

Allegory is a form of extended metaphor, in which objects, persons, and actions in a narrative, are equated with the meanings that lie outside the narrative itself. The underlying meaning has moral, social, religious, or political significance, and characters are often personifications of abstract ideas as charity, greed, or envy. Thus an allegory is a story with two meanings, a literal meaning and a symbolic meaning. (2010).

David Emery defines folklore as "traditional beliefs, practices, customs, stories, jokes, songs (etc.) of a people, handed down orally or behaviourally from individual to individual" (2010: no page number<sup>1</sup>). In essence fairy tales are a sub-genre of folk tales and are different in that they involve supernatural creatures. Folklores were originally stories told by parents to children with the intention of conveying moral lessons in an indirect manner. The Grimm brother's tales were passed on in an oralate form from one generation to another. They put these stories into writing and since then there have being countless variations of the story.

National Geographic says that Grimm's allegories are fairy tales that "bewitch" young readers (1999). According to Meriam-Webster's Online Dictionary a fairy tale is "a story (as for children) involving fantastic forces and beings (as fairies, wizards, and goblins) —called also fairy story." (2010). Often in a fairytale, improbable events lead to a happy ending.

In an era when epic high fantasy novels are being filmed, cartoon lovers are no longer only children. As allegory and fairy tales are a classic theme in fine art, it seems appropriate for me to use the genre. In *Trivial Pursuit? Women Deconstructing the Grimmean Model in the Kaffeeterkreis Tales* Jarvis writes:

Postmodern literary fairy tales for adults have also stimulated new ways of thinking about fairy tales and psychology. Peter Straub's revision of 'The Juniper Tree' (1990), for example, links fairy-tale violence with child abuse in a way that confirms Miller's theory. Other writers like Margaret Atwood, Angela Carter, and Robert Coover have understood the socio-historical dynamics of the fairy tale and produced fairy-tale adaptations that complicate, undercut, and frustrate conventional psychoanalytic readings—especially as they relate to the psychology of identity, socialization, gender, and sexuality. (1996:108).

Fairy tales and allegories act as windows into the sub-conscious and are able to cut to the essence of the human psyche. They are able to address anxieties and conflicts on a sub-conscious level that are otherwise rejected or repressed into the subconscious. Bruno Bettelheim argued that fairy tales are an "important tool for children learning to navigate reality and survive in a world ruled by adults" (Hughes, n.d.: 1).

## THE ALLEGORY OF LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD

I chose Little Red Riding Hood because it is such a memorable childhood narrative and creates a familiar environment. Little Red Riding Hood has been told in approximately fifty languages making it an international fairy tale that has global relevance. I aim to address the child, the adult, and the child-within-the-adult. Through my art I would like to prod the viewer-reader towards receptive insight and so doing bring about change.

Little Red Riding Hood is a cautionary tale dealing with the perils of disobedience (Windling<sup>ii</sup>, 2004). The allegory is not bound to a specific culture or gender and has universal appeal. Jarvis explains that one of the truisms in fairy-tale research addresses the "process of maturity or the rights/rites along the way" (1996:108). The adolescent child who is the main subject of my paintings is a model for the socialization at the gateway to adulthood and the story represents a life-cycle continuum. Therefore it is significant to include an overview of the characters, plot and underpinning morals of the Little Red Riding Hood allegory.

Ammerman and Hersen study the psychological maltreatment of children including neglect and the abuse of children in their book, *Children at risk: an evaluation of factors contributing to child abuse and neglect* (1996). This study not only discusses physical abuse but also the emotional abuse of dysfunctional parenting. In a chapter called “*Cut It Down and You Will Find Something At The Roots*”, Trina Schart Hyman writes that to her “tiny mind” *Little Red Riding Hood* was the “Word, the Light: a whole way of approaching most things in life”. She tells of her obsession with the tale and that the fine and “wavering line between story and real life became invisible to her” (1996:293.).

In most of the versions of Little Red Riding Hood, the mother appears at the introduction of the story and is not seen again. I see her reduction to a minor introductory role as significant. Little Red Riding Hood’s mother sews a red cape, signifying nurturing and protection, to safeguard her daughter from the elements and potential dangers. Concerned and compassionate, the mother bakes biscuits and packs a basket for her ailing mother who lives in the woods and she sends her young daughter on a possibly dangerous mission to deliver the goods. The father, on the other hand, is conspicuously absent throughout the allegory. The mother as single parent is not only a modern-day phenomenon.

Although much is hidden from my understanding of the allegory, a number of disturbing questions come to mind when I reflect on the mother’s behaviour. I question why the mother seems to be parenting Little Red Riding Hood alone and why she leaves the sick grandmother alone in a cottage in the woods. I also question the mother’s reason and intention for sending a young girl into the woods knowing that there are wolves?

Little Red Riding Hood had a good relationship with the granny and was the one chosen to go on the errand to take the basket of treats to her. It is not unusual for children to be attached to grandmothers and live with them. In *The Fundamentals of Feminist Gerontology*, Dianne Garner speaks of five central roles of the grandmother in a family. Firstly, she says that grandmothers support the “younger generations and seek to foster the well-being of the youth.” Secondly, she writes of the grandmother’s role as an “educator and wisdom keeper” who passes on traditions and information to youth. Thirdly, Garner mentions the leadership role of the older woman. Fourthly, she notes that the grandmother is often seen as the “artist where through expressive materials the women bring honour to the family”. Finally Garner speaks of the role of the “dependent elder” who is frail and is cared for by the family. In Little Red Riding Hood, the defenceless, frail and ill granny becomes the victim (1999: 21).

The wolf in Little Red Riding Hood represents danger, evil and the adversary. Children are often inherently scared of large animals. In a *Fear Survey Schedule for Children—Revised (FSSC–R)*, Field found that animal phobia is one of the “prominent clusters of childhood fears” and is a normative fear found in children (2001: 126). In Little Red Riding Hood, the wolf is not honest about his intentions. He pretends to be charming but is a deceiving and conniving character that goes as far as disguising himself in the victim’s clothes and blatantly lying to get his own way.

In Angela Carter’s story “*The Company of Wolves*” based on Little Red Riding Hood she equates the wolf with the devil (1981). Carter’s wolf is the hunter and the sexually innocent young virgin is the hunted. The wolf is disguised as a fine young man and only after getting to know the young lady he “strips off his trousers and she can see how hairy his legs are” (1981:223). The young girl wears a knitted red shawl and “is an unbroken egg; a sealed vessel; she has inside her a magic space the entrance to which is shut tight with a plug of membrane” (1981:415). She becomes responsive and seductive and ends up sleeping between the wolf’s paws on the grandmother’s bed.

The woodcutter represents a powerful, superhuman redemptive figure. He foreshadows a modern day superhero. Sayin and Özşen define a superhero “as the costume-dressed personality who has lost connection with his/her family during childhood, who possesses both human and superhuman characteristics, who behaves according to his/her view of justice, who differs from others in terms of extraordinary capabilities, who conceals his/her heroic identity, who provides the continuity of order, and who uses science as a means of magic” (2003:7). The woodcutter enters the story as a redemptive figure at the point of crisis and supernaturally delivers Little Red Riding Hood and her grandmother, unscathed, from the belly of the wolf. He is easy to hero-worship as he shows compassion and justice. In superhero fashion he is someone outside the family and is defined by his trade/costume. By cutting the victims from the enemy’s bowels he displays phenomenal power.

I imagine the young girl named Little Red Riding Hood could be between the ages of eight and seventeen. In the allegory, she veers from the path to look at the flowers in the forest and finds herself in the wolf’s company. Little Red Riding Hood is a typical young girl who forgets her mother’s instructions to stay on the path and not talk to strangers. She is easily distracted by her surroundings, disobeys and falls prey to the dangers of her environment.

In the preamble I include my preferred a version of the allegory called '*Princess Red's Family Affair*.' My art is based on my "lived experience" (Whitehead, 2008) of Little Red Riding Hood situations in both my personal and professional life. I have called my personal story and series of artworks, '*Red's Family Affair*', and thereafter refer to children in my professional ambit who are victims of adult emotional abuse as REDs. I include imaginary characters such as the queen as well as allegorical characters, such as the wolf, who personifies evil. The written fairy tale, *Princess Red's Family Affair*, consists exclusively of script. As the artist I have materialised some of the images in my art and I have added script to give explanation, add texture and enhance my artwork, and thus create what I like to call 'script-image'.

Although my story is founded on Grimm's folklore it is contemporary in its revelation of present day dystopic civilization and addresses a particular view of contemporary society. Little Red Riding Hood has proven to be a timeless classic as there are countless contemporary variations of the children's story as well as films, comics and short stories based on it.

I maintain the anonymity of children and parents who have influenced my work. Some images in my art are inspired by drawings that the children made, e.g. the flower in the piece, *She loves me, she loves me not, she loves me...* (Figure 3.2). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005, 642). "wounded story tellers empower others to tell their stories. *Testimonios*, as emergency narratives, can mobilize a nation against social injustice, repression, and violence." As part of my art, I created a series called *Child's Picture Book* (Figure 3.3), which consists of a twenty-piece narrative. It is my artist's version of a story written and drawn by a pre-teenage youngster responding to family trauma. This series is deeply heartfelt and I hope that this piece will draw the viewer into the child's world.

## USING ART TO MAKE A SOCIAL DIFFERENCE

I believe my art can influence society, so I make art that can 'make a difference'. I would like my art to be more than a technical process or a "material artefact" with formal and aesthetic qualities (Arns, 2003: no page number<sup>iii</sup>). In this section I explain reasons for employing script-images to address aberrant parenting situations that I experience as grim fairy-tales unfolding like nightmares around me every day.

When I read of instances of sexual behaviours in South Africa creating a threatening and unsafe environment for children, I found it imperative to address it in my art. The photomontage of cookies in the cropped section of the *Cape* (Figure 3.17) illustrates the idiom of being caught

with the 'hand in the cookie jar' or doing something tempting or wrong. Everyday perpetrators have their hands in the cookie jar as "Nearly 60 children are raped every day in South Africa and while experts agree to disagree as to the causes, or whether the pervasive belief in the so-called 'Virgin Cure' prevents/cures HIV/Aids is possibly responsible for this deeply disturbing phenomenon." (Earl-Taylor, M, 2002).

My everyday reality is that I am a white South African woman in my mid fifties. I am happily married, have three children and three grandchildren. I live and teach in a sector of South African society, which is historically privileged with relatively easy access to employment locally. Since 1994, access to remunerative employment has become less accessible, and I have observed the tensions that have arisen out of people learning to adjust to the lack of easily accessible employment with adequate remuneration.

In this context and in my role as an educator, I am increasingly aware of dysfunctional family relationships that impact negatively on learners. Some of my learners display profound disinterest in their school work; some are disruptive, insolent and disrespectful in class, and some neglect to purchase basic required art materials. However, it is their casual conversation about their personal and family lives that disturbs me most. Underage learners speak nonchalantly about drinking and socialising, and about their parents' dating lives. I am of the opinion that a great deal of learners' misbehaviour can be attributed to stress-filled home environments.

My associations with familial dysfunctionality, are reflected in my art work. There are instances of parents behaving so dysfunctionally that their children say "If this was video recorded and played back to mom, she would not recognise herself." Some write notes to express their distress: "she loves me, she loves me not, she loves me...", "Kill me not my family" (Figure 3.6) and "I fell and you walked away." (Figures 3.8 and 3.9).

*All of our dogs hide under the bed.  
 Our parrot keeps screeching.  
 Why does he treat us like this?  
 Like objects he can treat anyhow.*

Red No 2, Grade 11 student.

and relate that

*My mother discussed committing suicide with me as though it was a family decision.*

Red No 1, a Grade 10 student.

I have a natural affection for my learners and speak to them in the way I speak to my own children, often using terms of endearment. Mischievous and spirited children fascinate me and I am sensitive to their moods and problems. I strive to help children along a process of transformation and healing, which I believe is made possible by love. The love I have in mind is a combination of the Greek words “*storge*” which is the love that a mother has for a child, “*phileo*” meaning brotherly or sisterly love and “*agape*” love which is unconditional and does not require reciprocation. (Myers, Nd).

I based *Kill me not my family* (Figure 3.6) on a drawing by a thirteen year old teenager. The child used script-image to express her anguished cry. The combination of script and image could easily be interpreted as letter writing but the child never gave the drawing to the parent. It is possible that the child intended to express the trauma she was experiencing in a work of art.

Child abuse, physical or emotional trauma to a child for which no reasonable explanation is found (Siegal, 2009:262), is becoming increasingly prevalent in the media. One of the main reasons why parents abuse their children is because of a learned behaviour they acquired from their own parents. This tendency to pass down deviant patterns through generations is a cycle of family violence (Lemert, 1972:48). Parents are unable to separate childhood traumas from the relationships with their own children. To express this understanding, I have left strings, wool and cotton dangling freely in most of the artwork. These ‘danglings’ speak of generational bloodlines that flow organically from one generation to another. (See *Bloodlines*, Figure 3.10). Two crocheted squares represent parents and the squares below are the children. Strings descend downwards and there are gaps in the collaged squares that represent damage done. Squares with needles represent males and openings represent females.

*Devoured?* (Figure 3.11) depicts the lips of a wanton woman who devours little cut-out paper images. The figures tumble upside-down and out of control into her mouth where the lips devour the paper dolls. Below her mouth are a row of four cut-out figures representing her husband and children. Fire engine red and stark black are contrasted strongly to emphasise the tragic disaster that befalls victims of the lips. Like Barbara Kruger, I intend to project my message to the viewer aggressively.

I have created a mini-series named simply “Child’s Picture Book” and abbreviated as “CPB” which is an authentic and heartfelt rendering of the trauma that I have seen some children experience when their parents have divorced. Individual artworks in the series such as *CPB*,

*Words*, (Figure 3.12) and *I fell down and you walked away*, (Figure 3.9) are based on a picture book that an eleven year old child wrote/drew after being abandoned by his mother during a family split. In the narrative the child illustrates how in the beginning his mother held him and later put him down. He went on to draw/write that when he fell she turned her back on him and walked away. The child compiled this book in an ingeniously creative way by drawing a self-portrait on the cover page with the title “*Heart Broken*” above and “*Start at the End*” below. The book thus reads from the last page depicting his commencement as a tiny baby on his mother’s lap with the words “*When I was born and you were holding me*” above and “*Words*” with arrows pointing towards the image on either side.

The script shows how clearly the child understands the impact of words. Subsequent pages show the progressive swelling of the boy’s heart and emotions until he is smothered under the weight of a colossal heart shape that eventually splits down the centre. My artwork is based on the exact size and contents of the child’s original book using my unique mixed media technique. During the process of creating these pieces, I experienced emotions of sadness, compassion and anger at the plight of the mother and son.

I have become aware by listening to the stories that children tell me of how the change in family structure and parental relationships is affecting them. I hear from teenagers how they often counsel and advise parents on a number of issues such as how they should divorce and date. In the course of my work as a teacher, I often come across children who are ‘parenting their parents’, and I am astounded at the role reversal. Role reversal is also termed “parentification (which) refers to a dynamic in which parents turn to children for emotional support” (Rank, 2009:172). The parent’s expectations of the child exceed the child’s capacities. This is inappropriate and the child nurtures the parent, which according to Rank is a “key predictor of child maltreatment” (2009:172). The children end up being “pseudomature” and have unfulfilled emotional needs (Rank, 2009:172).

My artwork titled *Respect Me* (Figure 3.13) portrays the image of a profile of mother with script in a speech bubble saying: “Respect me.” In the upper right hand corner is a hand pointing in an accusatory, commanding gesture. I based the artwork on the behaviour of a mother who engaged in intimate relationships with boys slightly older than her children, and later threatened not to speak to her children again if they didn’t respect her. Teenagers whose parents’ behaviour is self-contradictory find it difficult to honour and value their parents.

*Madonna-mother and daughters* (Figure 3.14.) is a pen and bleach drawing of a mother with the facade of a Madonna partying with her daughters. The daughters are nude but shy while the mother pretends to be virtuous. In this artwork, I address the issue of children who are being prematurely elevated to adult roles as their parents befriend them as peers. Rank (2009) terms the child-as-peer relationship, “adultification” and says that this “ultimately interferes with the child’s individuation and social development outside the home”. The bloodlines are knotting and the roles of the different generations are becoming blurred. *Oleander* (Figure 3.15.) is based on the movie *White Oleander* and represents a mother who slowly poisons her daughter, reminiscent of an Oleander plant that is beautiful while being highly lethal.

I observe that very frequently young children and teenagers are bewildered, voiceless and powerless. As a socially aware and responsible artist, I would like to use my artistic talent as a gift to make a statement for distressed teenagers (Whitehead, 2008).

## CONCLUSION

Initially, I had an intuitive desire to use the children’s story of Little Red Riding Hood as a vehicle to address the issue of parenting in a body of art work for a Master’s degree. The more I analysed the allegory, the more it corresponded with my social message.

In this chapter, I have addressed the notion of the fairytale, the folktale and allegory, and made specific reference to the tale of Little Red Riding Hood. As Little Red Riding Hood appears in almost fifty languages, I believe it is universally significant.

I have considered issues that contemporary children face in some sectors of our society and explained my art work in terms of the Little Red Riding Hood tale. Examples of script and image – the script-image – depict my own experience of instances of abuse and neglect that teenagers encounter.

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<sup>i</sup> <http://urbanlegends.about.com/od/glossary/g/folklore.htm>

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.endicott-studio.com/rdrm/rrPathNeedles.html>

<sup>iii</sup> [http://www.mediaartnet.org/themes/overview\\_of\\_media\\_art/society/1/](http://www.mediaartnet.org/themes/overview_of_media_art/society/1/)

## CHAPTER THREE: CONCEPT OF THE ART OF CELESTE VAN DER MERWE FIGURES



FIGURE 3.1. Celeste van der Merwe *Snarl*. 2009. Mixed media.



FIGURE 3.2. Celeste van der Merwe. *She loves me, she loves me not*. 2009. Mixed media.



FIGURE 3.3. Celeste van der Merwe. Cover page of *Child's Picture Book*. 2009. Mixed Media.



FIGURE 3.4. Celeste van der Merwe. *Cape*. 2010. Mixed media.



FIGURE 3.5. Celeste van der Merwe. *YOUR CHILD?* Cropped section of *Cape*. 2010.



FIGURE 3.6. Celeste van der Merwe *Kill me not my Family*. 2009. Mixed media.



FIGURE 3.7. Celeste van der Merwe. *Cape* (detail). 2010. Mixed Media.



FIGURE 3.8. Celeste van der Merwe. Reference material for *Child's Picture Book. I Fell and You put me down.* 2006.



FIGURE 3.9. Celeste van der Merwe. *CPB. I Fell and You Walked Away.* 2009. Mixed media.



FIGURE 3.10. Celeste van der Merwe. *Bloodlines.* 2009. Mixed Media.



FIGURE 3.11. Celeste van der Merwe. *Devoured.* 2009. Mixed media.



FIGURE 3.12. Celeste van der Merwe. *CPB. Words.* 2009. Mixed Media.



FIGURE 3.13. Celeste van der Merwe. *Respect me.* 2009. Mixed media.

*The Relationship Between Script and Image with Specific Reference to the Work of Celeste van der Merwe, Willem Boshoff and Barbara Kruger.*



FIGURE 3.14. Celeste van der Merwe. *Madonna-mother and daughters*. 2009. Mixed media.



FIGURE 3.15. Celeste van der Merwe. *Oleander*. 2009. Mixed media.

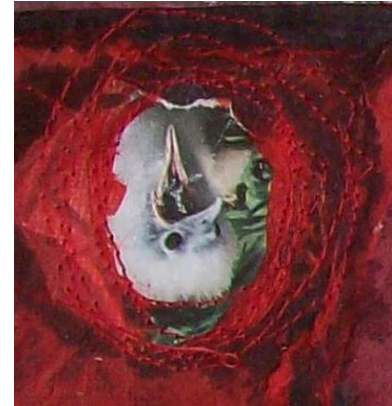


FIGURE 3.16. Celeste van der Merwe. Cropped section of *Cape*. 2010. Mixed media.

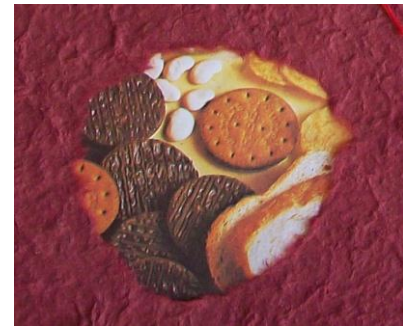


FIGURE 3.17. Celeste van der Merwe. Cropped section of *Cape*. 2010. Mixed media.



FIGURE 3.18. Celeste van der Merwe. Cropped section of *Cape*. 2010. Mixed media

*The Relationship Between Script and Image with Specific Reference to the Work of Celeste van der Merwe, Willem Boshoff and Barbara Kruger.*

## CHAPTER FOUR: SCRIPT AND IMAGE IN THE ART OF WILLEM BOSHOFF

### BACKGROUND

When I lived in Bloemfontein, South Africa, (1957-2003) I spent much time enjoying Willem Boshoff's *Blind Alphabet* at the Oliewenhuis Art Gallery and was delighted when the Independent Examinations Board invited him to be the guest speaker at a conference I attended for Grade 12 art educators a few years ago. Boshoff proved to be a highly intellectual, humble and fascinating artist and speaker. Studying his work and meeting him in person has enriched me and made my Masters course more enjoyable. His work also confirmed my choice of script-image as a topic for this thesis.

It has been a humbling experience to be exposed to the work of a man of such great stature. At first, I was unsure of how such a prolific and famous artist would respond to a request for an interview about the use of script and image in his art. His response was warm and accommodating:

*Hi Celeste - It is a great honour that you venture to pick my brains on language and art. I have indeed done a great deal of work and research in that very loose field. If there is any way I can help and share some of this I would be glad to. Good luck with your project.*  
(Boshoff, 24 March 2008).

Boshoff named his "extraordinary dictionary of rhetoric and communication" "*Beyond the Epiglottis*" (2000) where formal reference books like dictionaries generally have more academic and formal names. Willem Boshoff, the artist, is ideal for my study as he has "explored the interplay of art and language in the forms of concrete poetry, dictionaries, sculptures and installations" since the 1970's. (Stevenson, 2007: no page number<sup>i</sup>). I was intrigued to discover that I am only one of several people studying his art for academic purposes.

In this chapter, I study Boshoff's use of script and image in his art, and pay special attention to analysing and contextualising a selection of his works of art. An important reason I identify with Boshoff is that he is passionate about a variety of social issues. His artwork is value-led and he maintains a resonance between theory and practice.

The more I study Willem Boshoff's art the more I am aware of his spirituality. During his career he has made much art based on the Bible, such as, *Tree of Knowledge – Letters to God*, (1996-1997). As a young man Boshoff had a powerful religious call and became a lay preacher. However he went on to question his Calvinistic upbringing.

Today Boshoff is a self-proclaimed druid and is involved in spiritual performance art. Not only does Boshoff strive to transform the world but has been on a long journey of self-realisation to transform himself. Boshoff reasons,

It is only through seeing that one can know: Druids like artists must see in order to know. It is through art that one learns first to look and then to see. It is important to recognise that it is only once you can see that you can know. And it is by truly seeing that you can think intuitively. I have found the words for this knowing, Gnosis or Gnostic.

(Marvelousartmusings, 2010: no page number<sup>ii</sup>).

The interconnectedness between theory, practical art and spirituality in Boshoff's art is in line with that of Joan Walton who wrote in her doctoral thesis: "My experience of synchronicity provides evidence of a principle of interconnection and integration between psyche and matter, inner and outer, theory and action, science and spirituality." (2008:5). In his conceptual artwork, *Big Druid*, (2009), Boshoff combines his spiritual and physical lives into a work of art. When doing performance art at the Basil Art Fair in Miami Beach in 2004, he slept, meditated and wrote druidic dictionaries while residing in a custom-made cubicle.

His art is generally neat, precise and measured. Boshoff very often creates predetermined constraints such as a formal format. Within the rules, Boshoff often allows himself controlled free reign. In *War and Peace* (2004) he juxtaposes formal lettering with defacing graffiti. At other times Boshoff allows for little informality and his art is strictly rigid and contained, for example, *Israel Killer* (2004).

Sometimes the textures in Boshoff's art are rich and varied. *Nothing is Obvious* (2004) is made of free-flowing textures caused by casting cement, glue and sand. The words "NOTHING IS OBVIOUS" are embossed, adding a three-dimensional effect and transforming an otherwise two-dimensional piece into a sculptural relief. He often repeats a specific format in a series, and changes the contents of each piece. Like I did, Boshoff based some of his art on allegories, e.g., *Bread-and-Pebble Road Map* (2004) based on the allegory of Hansel and Gretel.

My art is similar to that of Boshoff in that I often select a format and repeat it. For example, the *Redemptive Series* (2010) are precisely the same size. These artworks are all mounted on black and red hand-made paper. The individual pieces are made by sewing with a sewing machine, collaging, painting and drawing. By using handmade paper and threads I add a rich texture to my art. The technique is of itself free and uncontrolled.

As far as medium of expression is concerned, both Boshoff and I use script and image in our art. At times the script in our art is illegible and veiled and at times clear and direct. In *Vlegskrif* (Woven Writing) (1980) Boshoff layers script making it illegible. In *Serial Killer* (2004) the script is clear but the sequence of the letters can be changed rendering a different meaning to the artwork, for example “Serial” can be changed to “Israel”.

### THE SYMBOLIC USE OF SCRIPT AND IMAGE, AND SCRIPT-IMAGE IN THE ART OF WILLEM BOSHOFF

Boshoff is an avid reader, writer and collector of dictionaries whose art consists of language in various forms such as concrete poetry, dictionaries, sculptures and installations. He uses script to play games with the viewer and to give expression to his keen sense of humour. Boshoff’s art is technically perfect and he is a highly disciplined artist who underpins his work with deep philosophical meaning.

To some extent, in South Africa, the Afrikaans accent can be a social discriminator, because there is a history of contention between Afrikaners and English-speaking people in the country. One of the early origins of the Anglo Boer War was the condescension of the British towards the Afrikaners. The British looked down on the Afrikaners and stereotyped them as boorish, crude and uncultured. Giliomee calls this discrimination a culturally chauvinistic distaste (2003<sup>xvi</sup>). Currently, Afrikaners are still commonly mocked by stage comedians like Wackhead Simpson. (YouTube, 2007). Afrikaans-accented English continues to be derided.

As a young teacher at Park Town Boys High, in Johannesburg, Boshoff spoke English with a heavy Afrikaans accent. His English-speaking colleagues looked down on him because of his accent and he experienced this as a “kind of bullying” (Snyman, 2008:45). As a result Boshoff resolved to “outwit his jingoistic colleagues” by acquiring a knowledge of English that would far surpass their own by working his way through dictionaries. (Snyman, 2008:45). He was “constantly laying traps and pulling off verbal stunts.” (Boshoff, Nd, Blind Alphabet). In reaction to the contempt and ridicule, Boshoff began writing dictionaries.

Boshoff's early preoccupation with language did not end with English. His hunger for obscure pieces of knowledge, for new words in almost forgotten languages, is insatiable. He reworks this information and presents it to the world in tangible form as art. Obsession with language informs Boshoff's art and imbues it with life-giving energy.

Boshoff's art is permeated with a strong moral message, which he often camouflages in language that is foreign or difficult to understand. He addresses ideologies and contemporary South African society with sophisticated secret language, codes and taxonomies, for example the artwork, *The Book That Is Afraid* or *Bangboek*<sup>1</sup> (1979) (Figure 4.2) which is a protest against South Africa's once compulsory military service. He is passionate about a wide variety of topics such as South African Politics, Religion, Philosophy, Metaphysics and Semiotics. He says that "Today I use language and text in my conceptual artworks as tools of social reconciliation, to upend those entitled to exclusive privileges." (2003b: 1).

As a school boy, Boshoff pinned crib notes on his teachers' backs. Such behaviour typifies the mischief in the man. Boshoff has an enquiring mind and has always been bold and fearless in expressing his opinion. In an interview with P.J.,<sup>2</sup> Boshoff said:

There is a bit of a rebellious streak, deep down in my subconscious and . . . from time to time, I still find myself calling the speedcops and giving them hell because I don't like the way they're setting up roadblocks. (1998: 1).

In significant ways, he has lived out his often controversial values: Boshoff was a pacifist in the South African army, and studied art when it was not regarded as the 'right thing' for an Afrikaner boy to do.

This eccentric Afrikaner is a giant in the art world and carries a strong presence. In the winter of 2008, my daughter and I were privileged to listen to Willem Boshoff talking passionately about his art for many delightful hours. I had to concentrate hard to try to keep up with the way that his mind works! When I said that it was time to leave, Boshoff was quite surprised, and reluctant to let us go. "Don't you want to sleep over?" he asked. I so enjoyed the pleasure he derived from sharing his art with us.

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<sup>1</sup> A play on the Afrikaans word 'bangbroek' meaning 'coward'.

<sup>2</sup> P.J. does interviews with various artists and publishes them on the internet using only his initials, P.J. The website is known as onepeople and the article is available at [www.onepeople.com/archive/html/bosinterv.html](http://www.onepeople.com/archive/html/bosinterv.html).

As far as viewer participation is concerned Boshoff's art is dependent on the vast amount of writing and explanation that surrounds it. He revels in explicating his work. There is no-one better to explain the complexities of his work than Boshoff himself.

Boshoff's writing could comfortably fit the genre of Self-Study and Auto-ethnography. He uses the living "I" comfortably, understands the theory of being, has insight into how he constructs his understanding of reality and is clear about the methodology he follows. (McNiff, 2002: 22).

According to Stephan Erasmus "there have been very few substantial texts on the artist that go beyond mirroring Boshoff's statements on his own work." (2007: 1).

It is my opinion that in order to fully understand Boshoff's art, the viewer would have to have knowledge of his personal history and the culture and socio-political situation of South Africa. I researched the meaning of the script in some of Boshoff's art and found that despite intensive study I may never be able to fully understand the script and image in his art as it is concealed and camouflaged.

I question Boshoff's motives as I feel as if he plays a cat and mouse mind game with me as the viewer by bullying me or shutting me out. Boshoff entices the viewer by the element of mystery while simultaneously distancing the viewer by using script that is inaccessible as it is difficult to understand. A prime example of this is the *Blind Alphabet* where both the sighted and blind are left puzzled. I think that the viewer can be compared to the fool who laughs at a joke that he didn't catch. It seems to me that Boshoff intends that the viewer is unable to decipher his work.

As I first walked into Boshoff's homely office-cum-library I was confronted with a work of art made up entirely of script that reads: "WORDS HAVE NO MEANING". This statement alludes to one of the oldest philosophical dilemmas, that of words or script being ineffectual abstractions of reality (Nonplussed 2004:1). *Words have no Meaning* (2005) (Figure 4.3.) by Boshoff reminds me of the renowned painting by Rene Magritte, *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* (1968). The painting is a combination of an image of a pipe with the paradoxical statement below that reads "this is not a pipe" written in French. The pipe in the image cannot be smoked and is thus no more than an illusion of a pipe. *Words have no Meaning* is a humorous comment about advertising and art that summarises the world view and art of Willem Boshoff.

In 1971 John Baldessari made an entire work of art by repeating the sentence: I will not make any more boring art. (Figure 4.3). He wrote one line in an untidy handwriting and copied that line

repeatedly. In the case of Baldessari, script has become image, and so script has qualified itself as a valid work of art. Boshoff purposefully uses script as a tool in his art.

Willem Boshoff camouflages tools with words in *SDROW FO NWODKAERB?* (Figure 4.4). The text reading SDROW FO NWODKAERB is “breakdown of words” written backwards. The tools in this work are old tools covered and trapped in words. Similarly, people are ensnared by the tools and words.

An example of a work of art where the script or printed letters dominate is *Serial Killer* (2004) (Figure 4.6) by Willem Boshoff. He placed these letters on cubes resembling the building blocks that children use. Boshoff’s keen mind turned the anagram into the words: “Israel Killer”.

Boshoff produced a photographic series of trees, which he entitled *Acheiropoietai* meaning ‘images not made by hand.’ (Stevenson, 2007: no page number<sup>iii</sup>). (Figure 4.14). In this series Boshoff relies only on image and excludes the use of script. Boshoff writes: “I am awestruck by trees and, to a large extent, dependent on them, not only for their great wooden material, but also for ideas.”” (Stevenson, 2007: no page number<sup>iv</sup>).

Boshoff is obsessed with language and uses it in the form of script in most of his art. Although Boshoff is Afrikaans-speaking, he has an insatiable hunger for English words, especially those less well-known, with which he unsettles English readers (Vladislavic, 2005:72).

## KYKAFRIKAANS, GETIKTE KWASHALE

During my interview with Willem Boshoff in 2008, he focused on *KykAfrikaans* (1977-1980) as a seminal body of work forming the foundation of script and image in his art. *KykAfrikaans* is a concrete poem consisting of “brushstrokes” of written words printed on perfectly shaped<sup>3</sup> paper. *KykAfrikaans* is made up of eighty-four visual typewritten poems, written in Afrikaans, considered the language of white South African nationalism. A minority of people speak Afrikaans<sup>4</sup> as lingua franca and Boshoff wittingly creates a language barrier. Vladislavic comments that more than twenty years after it was written it “was without precedent and has found no imitators.” (2005: 72).

<sup>3</sup> The format of the paper was rectangular (790 x 540mm) like the Golden Section which is believed to be the perfect shape according to the Ancient Greeks.

<sup>4</sup> According to a census held by Statistics South Africa in 2001, 5 983 420 South Africans speak Afrikaans making up 13.35 %.

I chose to focus on a single page in *KykAfrikaans* titled *Getikte Kwashale* (1979) (Figure 4.5) which means 'Typed Brushstrokes'. As a viewer I am tempted to simply appreciate the texture created by the overlapping layers of script on the page and overlook the perplexing meaning hidden in the script of this mysterious and obscure sheet of art. However, the script is manipulated to create visual fields whilst simultaneously considering the narrative. I realise that I must never forget that Boshoff "possesses the instincts of the collector, the playfulness of the prankster, and the attention to detail of the scientist." (Krut Publishers, 2010: no page number<sup>v</sup>). Boshoff's intentions are never straightforward and a lazy viewer will miss the message behind his art.

In *Getikte Kwashale* bands of eight-letter words are printed across the paper as if someone has printed them on the page using a roller. Single words such as "VAKANSIE" (HOLIDAY) appear repeatedly in rectangular shaped strokes. A number of individual eight-letter words are used in a similar manner: BETROKKE (INVOLVED), HELDINNE (HEROINES), BEROEMDE (FAMOUS), BESONDER (SPECIAL), BESLUITTE (DECISIONS), MOLSHOOP (MOLE HILL), DAAGLIKS (DAILY), OORVLOED (ABUNDANCE), SPANNING (TENSION) and SEKERLIK (SURELY). It is done in such a way that the legibility of the words is partially concealed. The script is metamorphosed into densely interwoven textured patterns, revealing and concealing, highlighting and distorting words and parts of words. The script is woven into a text that presents an image of a woven 'blanket'. The readability of the words is disrupted by the layering with the result that I found reading/viewing *Getikte Kwashale* a perplexing exercise. As I looked, I could see a partial collapse of the narrative meaning as each of the optical units become increasingly less decipherable. Boshoff deconstructs the meaning of the script by reducing the letters to form typed brushstrokes.

Discussing *KykAfrikaans*, Paton reasons that by establishing Afrikaans as the "*lingua franca*" of this entire body of work, linguistic barriers are set up. These barriers map the difficulty one has deciphering, in most of the works, word from words, beginnings from endings and the untying of close bonds set up by the opticality of the elements of the work. (2000: 10).

The poem, *Getikte Kwashale*, is made up of disjointed and unrelated words reminiscent of Dada poems by Kurt Schwitters (1887-1948). Boshoff intends that the viewer reads and deciphers the

partially legible and perplexing poems whereas Schwitters spontaneously wrote random unrelated words with no intention of creating a logical message.

In 1921 Schwitters created a sound poem *Ursonate* enjoying the patterns that the written words create and the sounds they make. The poem is visually depicted in an electronic format. The letters move around creating dramatic poetic imagery.

Here is a section of the poem, *URSONATE* de Kurt Schwitters (Stoyanova, 2008: no page number<sup>vi</sup>):

Fümms bö wö tää zää Uu,  
pögiff,  
kwii Ee.

Ooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo,

dll rrrrr beeeee bö  
dll rrrrr beeeee bö fümms bö, (A)  
rrrr beeeee bö fümms bö wö,  
beeeee bö fümms bö wö tää,  
bö fümms bö wö tää zää,  
fümms bö wö tää zää Uu:

*Getikte Kwashale* is metaphoric of painting a wall. The script forms a slow rhythmic movement similar to that of a paint roller leaving its mark on a wall. In my opinion the action represented by the strokes of printed ink could denote the transformation of South Africa. The strokes possibly embody a passage or a journey and the wall symbolizes the nation. Painting over a white wall or page speaks of beautification or covering up old flaws and cracks. Stephan Erasmus interprets the artwork as “politicians covering up a mess” (2007: 49).

It takes deductive reasoning and imagination to link the written words communicated in *Getikte Kwashale* together. These words possibly constitute a poem that expresses aspects of an experience that Boshoff had. I find that the meaning of *Getikte Kwashale* is open-ended, ambiguous and concealed and the title does not indicate Boshoff’s intention. I conclude that *Getikte Kwashale* has a philosophical meaning and that Willem Boshoff holds the key to the interpretation. During my interview with Boshoff he said, “I am telling you things that are not in books.... I use diacritical marks... that category of poem that is quiet but you can hear it if you listen with your other ear.” (June, 2008). Clearly the artist intends us to read and view the piece in question with our ‘other’ ears and ‘other’ eyes!

The image of *Getikte Kwashale* reminds me of a minimalist abstract painting by Mark Rothko (1903-1970). Rothko uses fields of colour whereas Boshoff layers with fields of script. I find the overall image created by the script in *Getikte Kwashale* optical and aesthetically pleasing. The black typewriter font and the white paper are juxtaposed while the varying number of superimposed letters resulting in a density that determines the tonal qualities of this art. The letters are optical units that form a controlled overall pattern. The image qualifies as a work of art even if the script is not comprehensible and he manipulates script to become art.

I agree with Paton that “Boshoff’s intention seems to have been the construction of a text-based visuality, operating as a continual interplay between looking and reading.” (2000: 2). Script and image exist in a perfectly harmonious and inseparable relationship in *Getikte Kwashale*. Densely overlaid script replaces traditional conventions of written text as Boshoff’s work of art is accessible as a conceptual unit rather than individual alphabetic letters.

## CONCLUSION

Boshoff’s practical art, theory and spirituality are interconnected. He is passionate about social and political issues that he addresses in the script in his art in a bold and fearless manner. There is a similarity between my art and that of Willem Boshoff in that we both rely on incorporating script in our art. The script in our work varies between being legible and concealed. Both of Boshoff and I often make series consisting of several works restricted to a single format and filled with free flowing contents.

Boshoff is not only a pioneer in the field of fine arts in South Africa but remains at the cutting edge of contemporary worldwide art trends. Boshoff proved relevant and challenging as a key artist in this thesis. Sue Williamson aptly describes him as the “umfundisi for whom knowledge is powerful but always elusive.” (Artthrob, 2001 Issue 48). His eccentricity, intelligence and love for language made him and his art a pleasure to study.

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<sup>i</sup> <http://www.michaelstevenson.com/contemporary/exhibitions/boshoff/index2007.htm>.

<sup>ii</sup> <http://marvellousartmusings.wordpress.com/>

<sup>iii</sup> <http://www.michaelstevenson.com/contemporary/exhibitions/boshoff/index2007.htm>

<sup>iv</sup> *ibid*

<sup>v</sup> <http://www.davidkrutpublishing.com/category/bookstore/taxi-art-books-and-supplements>

<sup>vi</sup> <http://www.ubu.com/historical/schwitters/ursonate.html>

## CHAPTER FOUR : SCRIPT AND IMAGE IN THE ART OF WILLEM BOSHOF

### FIGURES



FIGURE 4.1. Interview of Celeste van der Merwe with Willem Boshoff.

*The Relationship Between Script and Image with Specific Reference to the Work of Celeste van der Merwe, Willem Boshoff and Barbara Kruger.*

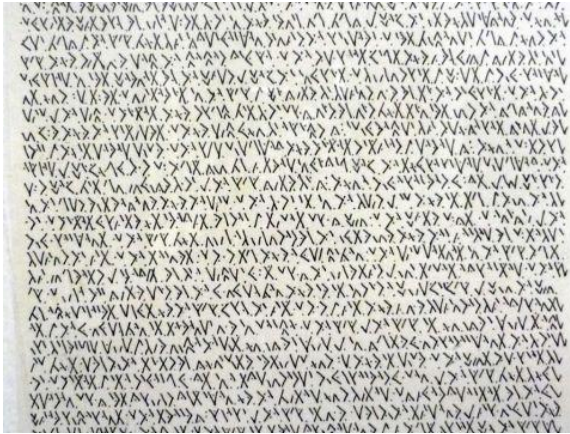


FIGURE 4.2. Willem Boshoff. *Bangboek*, 1979. Printing ink on paper.

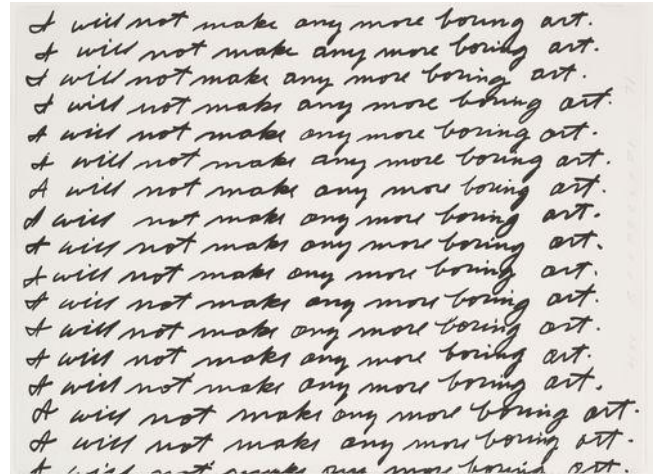


FIGURE 4.3. John Baldessari. *I will not make any more boring art*. 1971. Lithograph.



FIGURE 4.4. Willem Boshoff. *SDROW FO NWODKAERB?* 2004. Old tools, paper and ink.

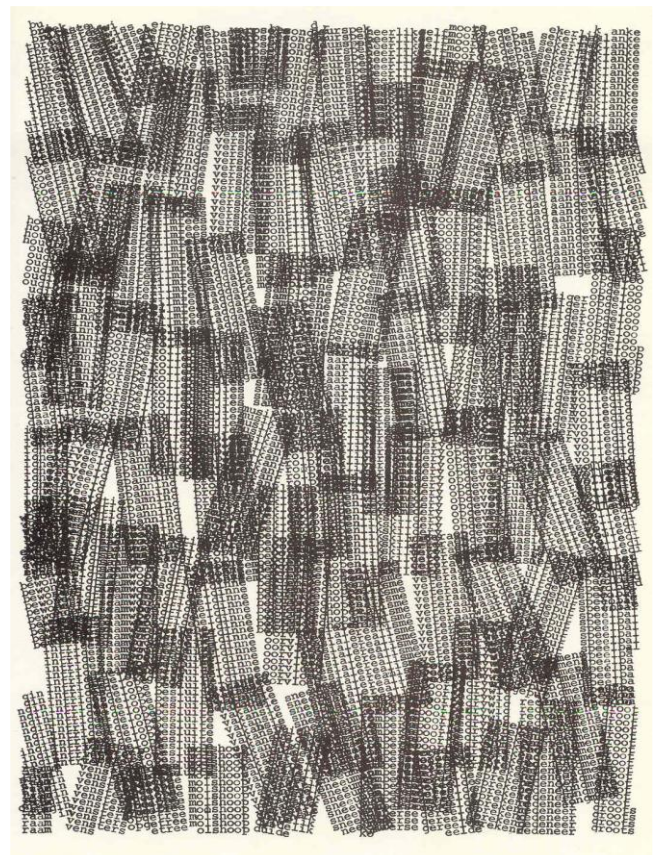


FIGURE 4.5. Willem Boshoff. *KykAfrikaans. Getikte Kwashale*. 1979.

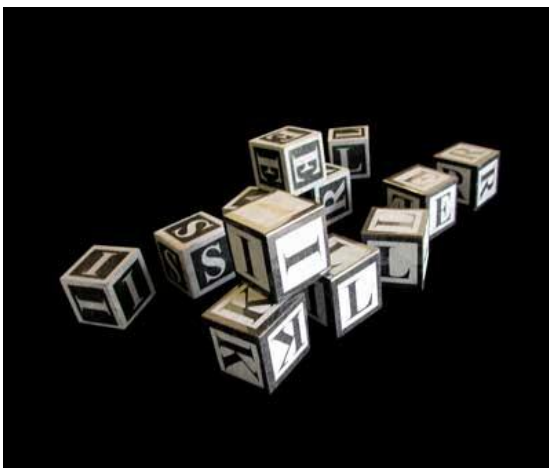


FIGURE 4.6. Willem Boshoff. *Serial Killer*. 2004.

*The Relationship Between Script and Image with Specific Reference to the Work of Celeste van der Merwe, Willem Boshoff and Barbara Kruger.*



FIGURE 4.7. Willem Boshoff  
*Blind Alphabet*, 1991-95  
Wood, steel, aluminium.



FIGURE 4.8. Willem Boshoff  
holding a part of *Blind Alphabet C*.



FIGURE 4.9. Willem  
Boshoff. *Blind Alphabet*.  
2003. Detail showing  
Braille.



FIGURE 4.10. Willem  
Boshoff. *Blind Alphabet*.  
Close-up showing wooden  
case with metal grid. 2003.



FIGURE 4.11. Willem Boshoff.  
*Blind Alphabet*. 2003. Detail  
showing Coacervate.



FIGURE 4.12. Interview of Celeste van der Merwe with Willem Boshoff.

*The Relationship Between Script and Image with Specific Reference to the Work of Celeste van der Merwe, Willem Boshoff and Barbara Kruger.*



**FIGURE 4.13.** Willem Boshoff. *NOTHING IS ALWAYS RIGHT*. 2004. 960mm X 960mm - framed Sand, Masonite, wood, glue.



**FIGURE 4.14.** Willem Boshoff. *Acheiropoiotos 4*. 2007. Lambda Print.



**FIGURE 4.15.** Willem Boshoff. *NICE GUYS*. 2007. 52 Neckties, engraved silver plates, metal clips, cloth, softboard, wood 2315mm (w) 1215 (h).



**FIGURE 4.16.** Willem Boshoff. Willem Boshoff during Interview with Celeste van der Merwe.

## CHAPTER FIVE: SCRIPT AND IMAGE IN THE ART OF BARBARA KRUGER

### BACKGROUND

Barbara Kruger's art is a superb example of the fusion of script and image in fine art. She uses poster-like art as an instrument to liberate society from moral deceptions. "I just say I'm an artist who works with pictures and words, says Kruger." (BrainyQuote, 2010). The process of analysing her art has been an invaluable stimulus to me and has informed my practice. Kruger's technical proficiency, social comments and prolific work ethic has challenged me. The way she uses slogans in her work reaffirmed my passion to address societal issues in my art.

Kruger uses reworked photographs that are derived from television, film, newspapers and magazines that are reconstructed to have new meaning. She overlays these images with script made up of pithy and sharp slogans that are the trademark of her art. Kruger's work reminds me of posters in the Vintage War Propaganda Magazine where images were overlaid with written slogans like, "*Loaded? Don't take chances with pick-ups. Loose Women may also be Loaded with Disease*" (Figure 5.1) and "*He volunteered for the Submarine Service*" (2009). (Figure 5.2). Kruger created her own original pastiche art using similar phrases such as; "*Untitled / You are seduced by the sex appeal of the inorganic*" (1982) and "*Untitled / You construct intricate rituals which allow you to touch the skin of other men*" (1981). A hallmark of Kruger's art is that it is exclusively crafted and has the faultless finish of a graphic placard.

Kruger combines script and image to "articulate and undermine the power-based relations established in such media images." (MOMA PS1, 2009). She fights for issues that are not only relevant to society but are close to her heart. According to Dr. Byler fighting for your rights is an "acceptable form of violence or aggression" in society today. (2009). Art serves as a platform for Kruger to have the last say, as she engages in a melodramatic confrontation with the public.

Barbara Kruger's art is testimony to the power of a lone female artist who tackles issues in society head-on by combining script and image in art. In a way, her work reconstitutes the meaning of art as she stands as a visual presenter with one foot in the graphic design world and the other in the fine art world. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Willem Boshoff is equally brave in dealing with social issues and also has a leaning towards a graphic style in much of his art.

Kruger was born in New Jersey in 1945. She now lives in New York and Los Angeles, which could seem as if she is living a high profile celebrity life style. This appears to be in contradiction to statements she makes in her art against materialism and high living. Kruger is a prolific writer of books and is a film and television media critic. She lectures at the San Francisco Art Institute and produces an inexhaustible amount of art.

Initially Kruger studied fine arts at Syracuse University but only stayed for a year. She felt out of place “like a Martian.” (Novel guide, 1996: no page number<sup>i</sup>). She was from a middle-class neighbourhood in Newark, New Jersey and found it difficult to relate to her more privileged class mates. She transferred to the Parsons School of Design in New York and began studying photography. After qualifying Kruger worked as a designer and photo editor for twelve years. She was a senior designer for famous magazines like *Mademoiselle* and *House and Garden*. Interestingly, Kruger designed book covers for political writings.

I am fascinated by Barbara Kruger’s work and her strong opinions, and am intensely curious to find out about the woman behind the art. However, she intentionally keeps her private life secret. Anna Cerniglia writes “Barbara Kruger’s personal information is hard to find. Though her work is bold and straightforward, she has refused to be overly expressive about herself as an artist. Her biographies are brief, but her work is observed and talked about quite intricately.” (2006: no page number<sup>ii</sup>). By keeping her personal life veiled, she has protected her art from being viewed through the perspective of the details of her private life. I understand that her private life is inconsequential and not pertinent to the meaning of her art: unnecessary details could trivialise her and the viewer could be distracted and make assumptions. All of the above notwithstanding, there is a great deal of self-disclosure in Kruger’s art. According to John A. Walker: “she adopts a pose rather than a position.” (2001: no page number<sup>iii</sup>).

## THE CONTEXT OF SCRIPT AND IMAGE IN THE ART OF BARBARA KRUGER

Kruger depicts “socialscapes” through the eyes of a woman. (Relyea, 2000). Kruger’s themes are significantly shaped by her world-view and the stereotyping of mankind. *It’s a Small World But Not If You Have to Clean It* (1990) and *All Violence is an Illustration of a Pathetic Stereotype* (1991) are two titles that illustrate her opinion of global cultural, social and political concerns. Popular culture is both a subject and a tool in her work.

*Untitled, Not stupid enough* (1997) (Figure 5.9) is framed by four short catchphrases: “*not good enough, not thin enough, not nothing enough, not ironic enough.*” In the centre a band of emblazoned white-on-red script that reads, “Not stupid enough,” overlays the face of Marilyn Monroe, the female icon. Kruger juxtaposes the aesthetically attractive face of the laughing supermodel-actress with words that seer like a hot branding iron. This work is typical of Kruger’s artistic skills and her existentialist philosophy.<sup>1</sup>

It is evident in the script overlaying Kruger’s work that she is highly motivated and deeply committed to address various causes such as, feminism, woman’s rights, healthcare, housing, as well as questioning stereotypes and conservative ideologies. I can identify with Kruger in this regard as my own work is intended to address parenting in society today. I use metaphoric and symbolic images to convey messages and script to address concerns. My art is not only reflective and introspective but is also intended to be transformative, i.e. to bring about positive social change. Kruger, on the other hand, bounces from topic to topic covering a broad spectrum. In Relyea’s opinion Kruger’s “enterprise has diversified, so have her messages grown more chameleon.” (2000). My art is a focussed response to the depraved condition prevalent in the lives of parents of school children and intends to trigger feelings of reflection and introspection in these parent-viewers.

Kruger’s work is loaded with emotion and her choice of words seems to emanate from a spirited soul, for example, *Your life is a perpetual insomnia* (1983) (Figure 5.8). Some titles like *We will undo you* (1982) possibly reflect anger. At times Kruger’s script appears militant and at other times interrogative. By using pronouns like ‘I’, ‘me’, ‘you’ and ‘they’, Kruger engages and confronts viewers. A vibrant life-circulating energy flows between herself and the viewer. Kruger’s work is alive and the script shouts out loud.

There is an element of dialogue in Kruger’s short rhetorical phrases. The viewer is left with a weighted response but is distanced from the artist. An anonymous artist once pasted a work of art on a website in response to Kruger’s art. He entitles his work *YOU MAKE ART SO THAT YOU CAN BITCH AT PEOPLE* (Alex Ducka, 2010) (Figure 5.3). In this technological age viewers respond in the media and the debate becomes public.

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<sup>1</sup> An existentialist philosopher emphasizes freedom of choice and personal responsibility but who regards human existence in a hostile universe as unexplainable. (WordWeb, 2010)

Kruger's art is displayed in an array of forms. Pasted up on huge billboards, covering umbrellas, printed on T-shirts and coffee mugs, her art is often displayed outside the pristine white gallery space. The billboards are enormous and the cropped close-up portraits are 'in your face'. Kruger's work infiltrates what were "formerly considered to be safe zones of complacency." (Foljambe, 2010: no page number<sup>iv</sup>). Her art is unsigned making it anonymous to the general public and recognisable to the informed art-aware public. The reason why Kruger displays her art in the public domain is as a result of her desire to draw people "into the space of the work. And a lot of people are like me in that they have relatively short attention spans. So I shoot for the window of opportunity." (BrainyQuote, 2010: no page number<sup>v</sup>).

Kruger follows tried and tested advertising to market her expressions. Catchy slogans, beautiful women and children are laid out in the format of commercial posters. *We don't need another hero* (1985) (Figure 5.11) portrays two adorable children. The boy boasts of his big muscles while the girl admires them! *Untitled (Love is something you fall into)* (1990) (Figure 5.4) depicts the profile of a beautiful woman with billowing hair reminiscent of a shampoo advertisement. The script forms a ribbon along the left hand side of the image. Kruger persuades the viewer in the way that commercial advertisements market their products. Firstly, she grabs the consumer's attention and then sells her ideas. Kruger uses a popular medium and a technique that is familiar to viewers making her art accessible to the man in the street. Her work causes the viewer to pause, look and think.

A great number of the titles of Kruger's work explicitly state her anti-materialist point of view. She has been quoted as saying "...I'm living my life, not buying a lifestyle." (BrainyQuote, 2010: no page number<sup>vi</sup>). Her art abounds with scathing statements/titles like *A rich man's jokes are always funny* (2009); reality checks like, *You can't drag your money into the grave with you* (1990) and comments on consumerism such as, *Buy me, I'll change your Life* (1984) (Figure 5.16). I agree with Kruger's stand against the commodification of art. I believe that making art should be created either for art's sake or as a vessel to address an issue in society.

Kruger dematerialises art as an elitist product by printing it on an array of objects. She reduces fine art to a placard or coffee mug decoration. By exhibiting fine art in the street she subverts the idea of the art museum being the prime location of the art of the crème de la crème. At the same time Kruger counteracts the museum as being the determiner of art and art prices. The title: *You invest in the divinity of the masterpiece* (1982) (Figure 5.7) speaks of exorbitantly high prices for art. She objects that art has become a form of investment.

William Baumal wrote in a book fittingly titled *Unnatural Value: or Art Investment as Floating Crap Game*, that the prices of works of art can “float more or less aimlessly and their unpredictable oscillations are apt to be exacerbated by the activities of those who treat such art objects as ‘investments.’” (1986: 10).

Kruger’s art proved popular to sell in the graphic-hungry 1980s, and it was easily adapted to postcards, T-shirts, and posters. Many critics grumbled that her work made more sense as advertisement or poster than as expensive gallery pieces. ‘These were objects,’ she responded. ‘I wasn’t going to stick them to the walls with pushpins. That’s what frames are about: how to commodify them. It was the most effective packaging device.’ (Novel guide, 1966: no page number)<sup>vii</sup>.

*Untitled (When I hear the word culture I take out my checkbook)* (1985) (Figure 5.18) criticizes the financial connotations of a work of art yet Foljambe argues that when art “is bought and sold as a luxury commodity in the same way as a Ferrari or a diamond ring, its relationship to the society which it criticizes becomes problematic” (2010: no page number)<sup>viii</sup>.

Kruger is famous for the way in which she integrates script and image in works of art. She uses script to convey messages that cannot be ignored and evoke a response from all who see her work. Her statements are confrontational and political. In her own words: “I work with pictures and words because they have the ability to determine who we are and who we aren’t” - Barbara Kruger. (BrainyQuote, 2010: no page number)<sup>ix</sup>.

Kruger is an informed and intelligent artist who makes highly skilled art. According to Rider the “fact that many of her words and images are appropriated from other places also helps nail down the purpose/truthfulness of the images” (1999). Her art leaves me hovering between the fascination of the image and the indictment of the script.

There is a congruency between my art and that of Barbara Kruger. My work also has a strong moral and societal message and like Kruger I have a particular love for portraits. Meditating on Kruger’s work has contributed to my own vision and values. It has awakened a desire to be more direct in addressing issues which are controversial or concealed. Both Kruger and I often depict portraits, use a limited palette and combine script and image in our art.

## THE USE OF SCRIPT AND IMAGE IN THE ART OF BARBARA KRUGER

Kruger is cognisant of the power of images to communicate and made a work of art named *Untitled (A Picture is Worth More than a Thousand Words)* (1992) (Figure 5.12). She has a gift to convey serious messages through images. Kruger assimilates images taken from the deluge of mass media in popular contemporary society in her art and by reworking images Kruger deconstructs the original meaning and creates new meanings.

Kruger intentionally camouflages her art as mundane signage. Some of her images are beguiling while they have a piercing message and are intended to entrap the viewer like *Love is something you fall into*, (1990). Others are deceptive in their aesthetic beauty such as *No Progress in Pleasure (Your gaze hits the side of my face)* (1982) (Figure 5.5). Finally there are images that disgust the viewer like the image of the one-eyed monster in *You think you can escape commodification. You can't* (1994) (Figure 5.13).

The slogans in Kruger's art are pithy and sharp and brand her art. She conveys messages that are cryptic and make an immediate impact. Her use of truisms and mock quotations confront and sometimes puzzle viewers. Kruger's catchphrases penetrate the viewer's mind and often disturb the viewer's psyche. Kruger's goal is to liberate the public. I find that I am often shocked by her statements and sometimes become aware of another angle regarding issues.

Kruger says that "Direct address has been a consistent tactic in my work, regardless of the medium that I'm working in." (BrainyQuote, 2010: no page number<sup>x</sup>). In fact I think she has a special gift for crossing the border between making art and campaigning for issues. For example, the script in one of her pieces reads: *Pro-life for the unborn, pro-death for the born.* (2000/2004) (Figure 5.6).

Kruger uses script as a tool to critique, dissect, analyse and comment. It is never purely decorative. Her use of script indicates that her art is not made for self-gratification or as a medium for solitary intercession. I admire the way that Kruger makes art to shout or scream at the masses. Kruger has been quoted as saying, "I'd always been a news junkie, always read lots of newspapers and watched the Sunday morning news shows on TV and felt strongly about issues of power, control, sexuality and race." (BrainyQuote, 2010: no page number<sup>xi</sup>).

## YOU ARE NOT YOURSELF

*You are not yourself* (1984) (Figure 5.10) brings back my memories of entering the hall of mirrors at a chamber of horrors as a child. Portions of a cracked face are repeated and others are missing. I feel disturbed and saddened by the image. It is a Humpty Dumpty scenario that can never be put together again.

Barbara Kruger merges script and image In *You are not yourself* (1984). Ransom-note-letters make up the words “You are not yourself” that are superimposed over an image of a fragmented photomontage of a woman portrayed in a cracked glass.

A bullet mark on the glass forms the focal point of the work of art. The fractured glass almost remains intact but the cracks fragment the image of the face into segmented rays. The front-view of the face has been deconstructed and the brokenness of the image is accentuated. Although the face is directed at the viewer the eyes are down-turned and avoid the viewer. The bullet mark becomes the eye of the image. On the left of the image a hand attempts to restore the face by fitting a part in.

Black, white and hues of a pinkish grey lend an ominous and eerie feel to the image. Strong tonal contrasts add a dramatic quality. The area of contact is snow-white whilst the background is pitch-black. The white highlights on the lower lip and left eye look like wet tears. A fine red border holds the fragmented image together. The image looks like an advertisement for a contemporary crime and investigation show.

The woman in the photograph looks like an olde-worlde woman from vintage war propaganda posters. She reminds me of a famous American pin-up queen like Mae West from the 2<sup>nd</sup> world War or Marilyn Monroe who became famous in the 1950s. Kruger has reused a familiar looking photograph that she has splintered and reconstructed to form an original work of art. According to Rider the “fact that many of her words and images are appropriated from other places also helps nail down the purpose/truthfulness of the images” (1999: no page number<sup>xii</sup>). According to Art History Archive, Kruger uses American print-media sources that are “mostly from mid-century American print-media sources, with words collaged directly over them.” (2010: no page number<sup>xiii</sup>). The script is sectioned into ransom note letters. There is orderliness to the way Kruger has arranged the letters. They are scattered in a controlled yet random way indicating chance. They are clearly legible and easy to read. Kruger uses the four word micro-narratives to confront the viewer.

Kruger addresses the viewer as “you.” The viewer becomes the accused and the victim. The implicated viewer is confounded as there isn’t “any clear notion of who is speaking.” (Art History Archive, 2010). When I first pondered *You are Not Yourself* I thought briefly of who I am and of my search for an identity as a teen, young adult and even as a middle-aged woman. Next my thoughts went to the roles I fulfil in life and once again I realised that I am not what I do, but who I am. Lastly, I focused on the portrait itself and thought: “you are not yourself as you have been cut up.”

I believe that low self-esteem is a rampant problem in society today. Media places a disproportionate focus on appearance and especially that of women. This work of art questions self-identity of women. The statement “You are not yourself” is a strong allegation and it requires a response from the viewer. A defensive observer could distance themselves from the image and script and assume that the caption refers only to the woman in the artwork itself in which case Kruger is not reaching the viewer.

## CONCLUSION

Using script and image, Kruger moves from topic to topic and comments on a wide range of relevant social and political issues. Kruger fearlessly addresses controversial topics such as, woman’s rights, housing, healthcare, questions conservative ideologies and she challenges stereotypes. Kruger engages and confronts viewers by using pronouns like ‘I’, ‘me’, ‘you’ and ‘they’. There is a pulsating life-circulating energy that flows between herself and the viewer.

Barbara Kruger’s art is of an excellent standard and faultless technical quality. Barbara Kruger is a prolific artist who has informed my practice and has inspired me greatly.

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<sup>i</sup> [http://www.novelguide.com/a/discover/adec\\_0001\\_0009\\_0/adec\\_0001\\_0009\\_0\\_02961.html](http://www.novelguide.com/a/discover/adec_0001_0009_0/adec_0001_0009_0_02961.html)

<sup>ii</sup> <http://siberart.com/teaching/downloads/Student%20Presentations/Spring%2006/BarbaraKruger.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> <http://www.artdesigncafe.com/Barbara-Kruger>

<sup>iv</sup> [20thcenturyart.suite101.com/article.cfm/the-art-of-barbara-kruger](http://20thcenturyart.suite101.com/article.cfm/the-art-of-barbara-kruger)

<sup>v</sup> [http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/b/barbara\\_kruger.html](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/b/barbara_kruger.html)

<sup>vi</sup> *ibid*

<sup>vii</sup> [http://www.novelguide.com/a/discover/adec\\_0001\\_0009\\_0/adec\\_0001\\_0009\\_0\\_02961.html](http://www.novelguide.com/a/discover/adec_0001_0009_0/adec_0001_0009_0_02961.html)

<sup>viii</sup> [20thcenturyart.suite101.com/article.cfm/the-art-of-barbara-kruger](http://20thcenturyart.suite101.com/article.cfm/the-art-of-barbara-kruger)

<sup>ix</sup> [http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/b/barbara\\_kruger.html](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/b/barbara_kruger.html)

<sup>x</sup> [http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/b/barbara\\_kruger.html](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/b/barbara_kruger.html)

<sup>xi</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>xii</sup> [http://www.wdog.com/rider/writings/real\\_kruger.htm](http://www.wdog.com/rider/writings/real_kruger.htm)

<sup>xiii</sup> <http://www.arthistoryarchive.com/arthistory/feminist/Barbara-Kruger.html>.

## CHAPTER FIVE : SCRIPT AND IMAGE IN THE ART OF BARBARA KRUGER FIGURES

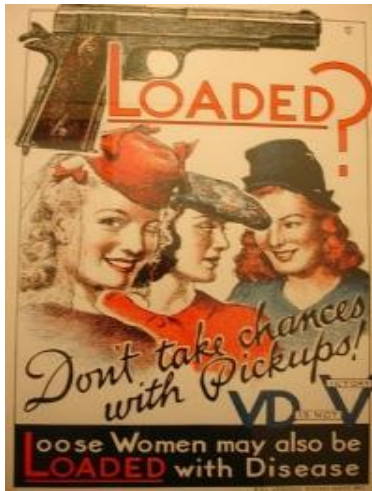


FIGURE 5.1. Vintage war propaganda posters.



FIGURE 5.2. Vintage war propaganda posters.



FIGURE 5.3. Guestblogger. YOU MAKE ART SO THAT YOU CAN BITCH AT PEOPLE. 2009.



FIGURE 5.4. Barbara Kruger. Untitled (Love is something you fall into). 1990.



FIGURE 5.5. Barbara Kruger. Untitled (Your gaze hits the side of my face). 1982.

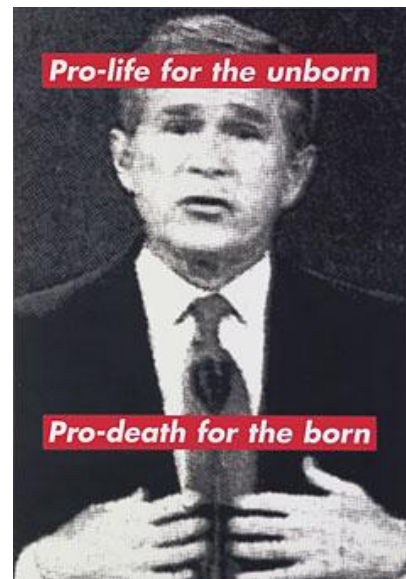


FIGURE 5.6. Barbara Kruger. Pro-life for the unborn, pro-death for the born. 2000/2004.

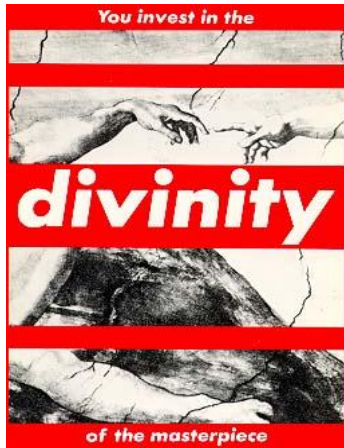


FIGURE 5.7. Barbara Kruger. *You invest in the divinity of the masterpiece*. 1982.

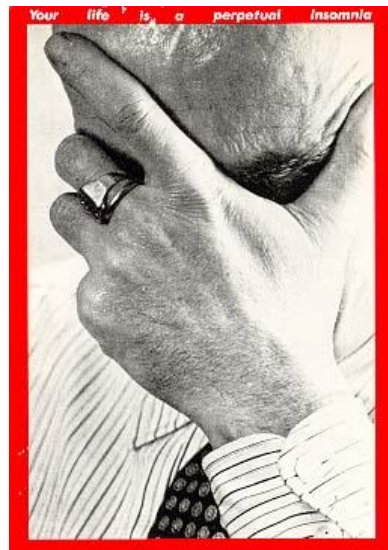


FIGURE 5.8. Barbara Kruger. *Your life is a perpetual insomnia*. 1983.

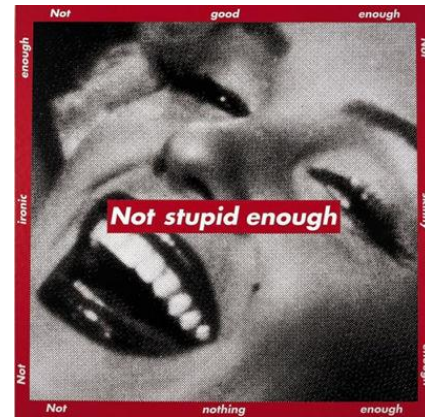


FIGURE 5.9. Barbara Kruger. *Untitled, Not stupid enough* 1997.

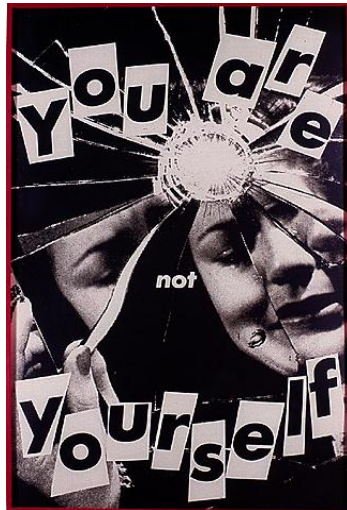


FIGURE 5.10. Barbara Kruger. *You are not yourself*. 1984.



FIGURE 5.11. Barbara Kruger. *We don't need another hero*. 1985.



FIGURE 5.12. Barbara Kruger. *Untitled (A Picture is Worth More than a Thousand Words)*. 1992.



FIGURE 5.13. Barbara Kruger. *You think you can escape commodification. You can't*. 1994.

*The Relationship Between Script and Image with Specific Reference to the Work of Celeste van der Merwe, Willem Boshoff and Barbara Kruger.*



FIGURE 5.14. Barbara Kruger. *Face It (Green)*. 2007.



FIGURE 5.15. Barbara Kruger. *Face It (Cyan)*. 2007.



FIGURE 5.16. Barbara Kruger. *Buy me, I'll change your Life*. 1984.

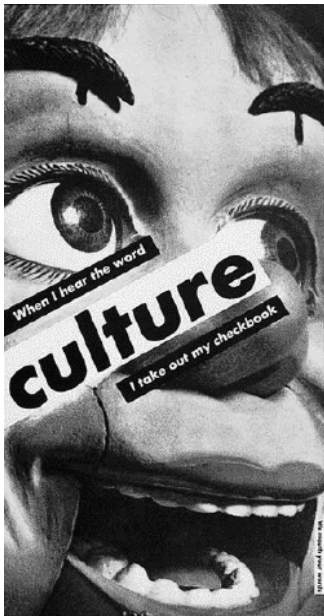


FIGURE 5.18. Barbara Kruger. *When I hear the word culture I take out my checkbook*. 1985.



FIGURE 5.17. Barbara Kruger. *I shop therefore I am*. 1987.

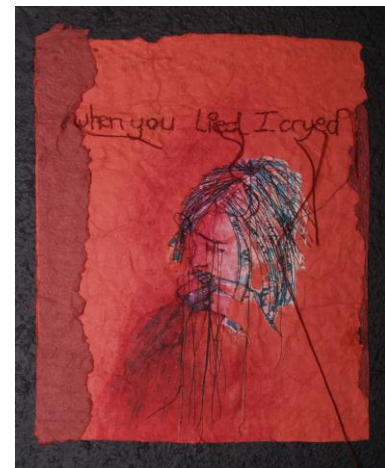


FIGURE 5.19. Celeste van der Merwe. *When you lied I cried*. 2009.



FIGURE 5.20. Celeste van der Merwe. *Played Intense*. 2010.

*The Relationship Between Script and Image with Specific Reference to the Work of Celeste van der Merwe, Willem Boshoff and Barbara Kruger.*

## CONCLUSION TO THESIS ENTITLED:

### THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCRIPT AND IMAGE WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO THE WORK OF CELESTE VAN DER MERWE, WILLEM BOSHOF AND BARBARA KRUGER.

Writing this thesis has been a life transforming experience and I achieved the goals I set out to attain three years ago. Along the journey I gained knowledge and gathered skills. I learned not only about the relationship between script and image, but about myself, my intentions, and the story behind my art. At the onset of my studies my practical art work was inclined to be stiff, constrained and controlled. I improved my practice by experimenting with a vast number of unpredictable and unconventional media such as henna and lemon juice. By drawing with tools that were hard to control such as a sewing machine, I gained liberty and my art became unique and free. Being exposed to professional educators and artists along with a vast amount of reading familiarized me with the latest movements in art world. Increased academic knowledge along with improved art practice has further equipped me as an educator and I have gained research skills as well as confidence.

For three years I travelled to Durban every second week to meet with academic practitioners and students at a peer study group. The discourses were dynamic and fluid. Together with this group of trusted friends we did self-study, discussed values, addressed issues and evaluated each other's art. I felt nurtured, encouraged, motivated and informed and my horizons were broadened.

The focus of this thesis was to investigate the relationship between script and image in art. I put the spotlight on my own art and that of the South African artist, Willem Boshoff and the American artist, Barbara Kruger. Initially I wanted to title the dissertation "text and image" instead of "script and image". However I found that the word "text" is applicable to both image and script. There was no clear and simple quantified conclusion as to the relationship and association between script and image. I found that no two cases were identical but attempted to recognise the similarities and to identify the differences in the relationship by analysing specific artworks. In addition I sought to increase my understanding of the role of script and image by actively creating script and image in my art.

I concluded that there are indications of a schism between high culture and low culture in the art world. The art of Willem Boshoff can be more fully comprehended by highly intellectual, informed and educated members of the public. On the other hand his art contains clues that make it broadly accessible. Although Barbara Kruger displays her art in the public arena she incorporates subtle nuances only clear to well-read and knowledgeable viewers. I thus conclude that the use of script in art today partially excludes the scribally illiterate viewer. However it also true that the audience who view Kruger's art are city dwellers where scribal literacy has become the norm.

I determined that script in art often appeals to the intellect and in certain cases script in art indeed feeds society's appetite for both information and art. On the contrary there are artists who do not intend text to be read but use it as a form of texture or layering.

Interestingly, artists used script and image in their art for diverse reasons, from subverting traditional art, mocking or shocking the viewer, to attempting to liberate the viewer. All three of the artists I studied use script and image to address social issues, thus using script and image to add value to society. In the work of the art of all three artists the use of script enhances art. Adding script to image strengthens the potential of a work of art to convey a message.

I express my concerns about children's experiences in dysfunctional families by taking true stories that children tell me and depicting them in my art. I express these concerns on an emotional, subjective and spiritual level rather than in a literal or illustrative way. By exposing the hidden, unspoken secrets that children confide in me I draw attention to their rights and question the behaviour of parents. The art form of script image highlights social and societal anomalies by using metaphoric and symbolic images combined with mysterious, questioning or direct words.

## **MORAL ISSUES ADDRESSED IN ART**

I used Little Red Riding Hood as the allegorical underpinning of my art. I established that by basing my art on an allegory I could convey a social message on a sub-conscious level as it appealed to the heart of the viewer. I found that although Little Red Riding Hood is founded on Grimm's folklore it is contemporary in its revelation of present day dystopic civilization and addresses a particular view of contemporary society.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

My dissertation took the form of a self-study within the qualitative research paradigm. It was informed by a few basic ways of collecting data and reporting on the data. I integrated methodologies such as living theories methodology, visual methodology, narratology and auto-ethnography. I found that the methodologies could not be strictly categorised as they frequently co-occurred and the boundaries between them are often blurred.

Through doing self-study I have found that stepping back and analysing my practical art has deepened and clarified my insight into what I did and why I did it. I was able to see how my art was positioned within a social context and the possible impact that it could make on society. According to Kathleen Pithouse, Claudia Mitchell and Sandra Weber some researchers believe that self-study involves using “methods that facilitate a stepping back, a reading of our situated selves as if it were a text to be critically interrogated and interpreted within the broader social, political, and historical contexts that shape our thoughts and actions and constitute our world.” (2009:45).

Pithouse, Mitchell and Weber say that LaBoskey describes

“four aspects that she considers *integral* to the process of self-study: (1) self-study is improvement-aimed and it looks for, and requires evidence of, reframed thinking and transformed practice of the researcher; (2) self-study involves ‘interactions with our colleagues near and far, with our students, with the educational literature, and with our own previous work ... to confirm or challenge our developing understandings’ (2004,259); (3) ‘self-study employs multiple, primarily qualitative methods, some that are commonly used in general educational research, and some that are innovative...and (4) self-study is undertaken with an intention to go public, to ‘formalize our work and make it available to our professional community for deliberation, further testing, and judgment’” (2009:45).

LaBoskey’s definition of self-study is applicable to my Masters studies as I did self-study in order to improve my practice and my practice was transformed. Throughout the course I interacted with peers who challenged my practice and suggested solutions or alternative ideas. I used multiple research methodologies and finally held a public exhibition.

## **CLOSE**

Doing this Master's course has far exceeded all expectations. As a fine artist I have become confident and have developed an innovative and unique style. These studies have been helpful in improving my practice as an artist and an educator. I have developed deeper identification and more compassion in interacting and collaborating with students. I have been empowered by writing this thesis and presenting the Red's Family Affair (2011) exhibition.

Overall I came to the conclusion that there was no clear and simple result as to the relationship between script and image in the work of Celeste van der Merwe, Willem Boshoff and Barbara Kruger. Script and image are fluid in their relationship and in each work of art the relationship differs.

## **IDEAS FOR FUTURE PROJECTS**



I see potential in further exploring the restorative and transformative potential of using script and image in art. Roughly scribbled notes written by hurting children are especially poignant and inspiring. Unfortunately, many of the children who expressed themselves through drawing and writing while young tend to transition to writing only as they get older. The drawings tend to disappear. I would like to encourage those teenagers and adults to renew the childhood practice of expressing themselves through images as well as script. There is scope for studying the value of script and image in such notes.

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## APPENDIX ONE: ARTIST'S STATEMENT

My ultimate aim with this exhibition is to create an environment of empathy where you, the viewer can identify with the pain teenagers suffer as a result of dysfunctional family lives. My art is germinated in identification with teenagers who ask questions like "When did I become the parent in this relationship?" or make statements like "My mother discussed suicide with me as though it was a family decision." The primary goal of my art is to address social issues as well as facilitate the beginning of healing both in teenagers and between teenagers and parents.

I based the artwork in this exhibition on Little Red Riding Hood, an allegory by the Grimm Brothers. I believe that allegories act as windows into the sub-conscious and are able to cut to the essence of the human psyche. In Little Red Riding Hood the young girl's mother sends her on a mission amongst prowling wolves while the father is absent. This scenario represents a global phenomenon. Little Red Riding Hood has been translated into more than 47 languages. International names of Little Red Riding Hood have been embroidered on the **Cape** and scroll across the screen in the movie called **RED, the movie clip**.

I wrote my own allegory called **Red's Family Affair** and depicted phrases from it in **The Story Series**. Many of the images in my art are based on drawings made by suffering young people, for example, **Child's Picture Book** was inspired by a journal of a pre-teen. Being based on true stories my art is heartfelt, authentic and passionate.

The dominant colour of my art is red which is bold and intense. It signifies love, pain, covenant and redemption. The entire exhibition consists of a limited palette resulting in uniformity and continuity. As a woman I derive pleasure from sewing, crocheting and embroidery and enjoy the fine flowing threads that hang from my art.

The majority of my artworks are made up of a combination of image and script. The theme of my Master's thesis is "The relationship between image and script in the work of Celeste van der Merwe, Willem Boshoff and Barbara Kruger." The script is not always intended to be legible and is often in an unknown language or veiled with marks, strokes or lines.

This body of work reads like a catalogue of hurts suffered by teenagers juxtaposed with a **Redemptive Series** and a mixed media painting called **Redemption** depicting deliverance from dark circumstances, hope for a better future and restoration.

*The Relationship Between Script and Image with Specific Reference to the Work of Celeste van der Merwe, Willem Boshoff and Barbara Kruger.*

Doing this Master's course I learned the truth of Edward de Bono's statement that "Creativity involves breaking out of established patterns in order to look at things in a different way." (2002). I was challenged to push the boundaries of my art and to discover a unique technique that allowed me to have fun while making art. Instead of being constrained and inhibited, I tear, crumple and sew on handmade paper. Next, I dollop glue on the paper and build layers. I enjoy the freedom of using mixed media and use anything I think is suited to the work, ranging from henna to beeswax or shoe polish. My work is tactile and includes a great variety of textures. By deconstructing and transforming materials I experience a new found freedom and am able to flow intuitively. This process of deconstruction and rebuilding is a reflection of the breakdown and restoration in Red's life.

## **APPENDIX TWO: ARTIST'S STATEMENT**

### **LITTLE RED CAP      GRIMM'S ALLEGORY**

Once upon a time there was a dear little girl who was loved by everyone who looked at her, but most of all by her grandmother, and there was nothing that she would not have given to the child. Once she gave her a little cap of red velvet, which suited her so well that she would never wear anything else; so she was always called Little Red-Cap.

One day her mother said to her, "Come, Little Red-Cap, here is a piece of cake and a bottle of wine; take them to your grandmother; she is ill and weak, and they will do her good. Set out before it gets hot, and when you are going, walk nicely and quietly and do not run off the path, or you may fall and break the bottle, and then your grandmother will get nothing; and when you go into her room, don't forget to say, 'Good-morning,' and don't peep into every corner before you do it."

"I will take great care," said Little Red-Cap to her mother, and gave her hand on it.

The grandmother lived out in the wood, half a league from the village, and just as Little Red-Cap entered the wood, a wolf met her. Red-Cap did not know what a wicked creature he was, and was not at all afraid of him.

"Good-day, Little Red-Cap," said he.

"Thank you kindly, wolf."

"Whither away so early, Little Red-Cap?"

"To my grandmother's."

"What have you got in your apron?"

"Cake and wine; yesterday was baking-day, so poor sick grandmother is to have something good, to make her stronger."

"Where does your grandmother live, Little Red-Cap?"

"A good quarter of a league farther on in the wood; her house stands under the three large oak-trees, the nut-trees are just below; you surely must know it," replied Little Red-Cap.

The wolf thought to himself, "What a tender young creature! what a nice plump mouthful—she will be better to eat than the old woman. I must act craftily, so as to catch both." So he walked for a short time by the side of Little Red-Cap, and then he said, "See Little Red-Cap, how pretty the flowers are about here—why do you not look around? I believe, too, that you do not hear how sweetly the little birds are singing; you walk gravely along as if you were going to school, while everything else out here in the wood is very merry."

Little Red-Cap raised her eyes, and when she saw the sunbeams dancing here and there through the trees, and pretty flowers growing everywhere, she thought, "Suppose I take grandmother a fresh nosegay; that would please her, too. It is so early in the day that I shall still get there in good time;" and so she ran from the path into the wood to look for flowers. And whenever she had picked one, she fancied that she saw a still prettier one farther on, and ran after it, and so got deeper and deeper into the wood.

Meanwhile the wolf ran straight to the grandmother's house and knocked at the door.

"Who is there?"

"Little Red-Cap," replied the wolf. "She is bringing cake and wine; open the door."

"Lift the latch," called out the grandmother, "I am too weak, and cannot get up."

The wolf lifted the latch, the door flew open, and without saying a word he went straight to the grandmother's bed, and devoured her. Then he put on her clothes, dressed himself in her cap, laid himself in bed and drew the curtains.

Little Red-Cap, however, had been running about picking flowers, and when she had gathered so many that she could carry no more, she remembered her grandmother and set out on the way to her.

She was surprised to find the cottage-door standing open, and when she went into the room, she had such a strange feeling that she said to herself, "Oh dear! how uneasy I feel to-day, and at other times I like being with grandmother so much." She called out, "Good morning," but

received no answer; so she went to the bed and drew back the curtains. There lay her grandmother with her cap pulled far over her face, and looking very strange.

"Oh! grandmother," she said, "what big ears you have."

"The better to hear you with, my child," was the reply.

"But, grandmother, what big eyes you have!" she said.

"The better to see you with, my dear."

"But, grandmother, what large hands you have!"

"The better to hug you with."

"Oh! but, grandmother, what a terrible big mouth you have!"

"The better to eat you with!"

And scarcely had the wolf said this, than with one bound he was out of bed and swallowed up Red-Cap.

When the wolf had appeased his appetite, he lay down again in the bed, fell asleep and began to snore very loud. The huntsman was just passing the house, and thought to himself, "How the old woman is snoring! I must just see if she wants anything." So he went into the room, and when he came to the bed, he saw that the wolf was lying in it. "Do I find thee here, thou old sinner!" said he. "I have long sought thee!" Then just as he was going to fire at him, it occurred to him that the wolf might have devoured the grandmother, and that she might still be saved, so he did not fire, but took a pair of scissors, and began to cut open the stomach of the sleeping wolf. When he had made two snips, he saw the little Red-Cap shining, and then he made two snips more, and the little girl sprang out, crying, "Ah, how frightened I have been! How dark it was inside the wolf;" and after that the aged grandmother came out alive also, but scarcely able to breathe. Red-Cap, however, quickly fetched great stones with which they filled the wolf's body, and when he awoke, he wanted to run away, but the stones were so heavy that he fell down at once, and fell dead.

Then all three were delighted. The huntsman drew off the wolf's skin and went home with it; the grandmother ate the cake and drank the wine which Red-Cap had brought, and revived, but

*The Relationship Between Script and Image with Specific Reference to the Work of Celeste van der Merwe, Willem Boshoff and Barbara Kruger.*

Red-Cap thought to herself, "As long as I live, I will never by myself leave the path, to run into the wood, when my mother has forbidden me to do so."

It is also related that once when Red-Cap was again taking cakes to the old grandmother, another wolf spoke to her, and tried to entice her from the path. Red-Cap was, however, on her guard, and went straight forward on her way, and told her grandmother that she had met the wolf, and that he had said "good-morning" to her, but with such a wicked look in his eyes, that if they had not been on the public road she was certain he would have eaten her up. "Well," said the grandmother, "we will shut the door, that he may not come in." Soon afterwards the wolf knocked, and cried, "Open the door, grandmother. I am little Red-Cap, and am fetching you some cakes." But they did not speak, or open the door, so the gray-beard stole twice or thrice round the house, and at last jumped on the roof, intending to wait until Red-Cap went home in the evening, and then to steal after her and devour her in the darkness. But the grandmother saw what was in his thoughts. In front of the house was a great stone trough, so she said to the child, "Take the pail, Red-Cap; I made some sausages yesterday, so carry the water in which I boiled them to the trough." Red-Cap carried until the great trough was quite full. Then the smell of the sausages reached the wolf, and he sniffed and peeped down, and at last stretched out his neck so far that he could no longer keep his footing and began to slip, and slipped down from the roof straight into the great trough, and was drowned. But Red-Cap went joyfully home, and never did anything to harm anyone. (Brother's Grimm, 1999).

### APPENDIX THREE: TITLES OF LITTLE RED RIDING NOOD IN DIFFERENT LANGUAGES

1. Afrikaans: Rooikappie, meaning Little Red Cap
2. Albanian: Kesulkuqja, meaning 'Red Cap'
3. Arabic: ليلى والذئب, meaning 'Layla and the Wolf'
4. Armenian: Կարմիր գլխարկը ("Karmir glkharky")
5. Basque: Txano Gorritxo
6. Bulgarian: Червената шапчица (Chervenata shapchitsa), meaning 'The (Little) Red Hat'
7. Catalan: La Caputxeta Vermella
8. Czech: Červená karkulka
9. Chinese: 小红帽, meaning 'Little Red Hat'
10. Croatian and Bosnian: Crvenkapica, meaning 'Little Red Hat'
11. Danish: Den lille Rødhætte, meaning 'the Little Redhood'
12. Dutch: Roodkapje, meaning 'Little Red Cap'
13. Estonian: Punamütsike, meaning 'Little Red Hat'
14. Finnish: Punahilkka, meaning 'Red Hood'
15. French: Le Petit Chaperon rouge, meaning 'the Little Red Hood'
16. Galician: Carapuchiña Vermella
17. Georgian: წითელკუდა (tsitel quda), meaning 'Little Red Hat'
18. German: Rotkäppchen, meaning 'Little Red Cap'
19. Greek: Κοκκινσκουφίτσα (Kokkinoskoufitsa), meaning 'Little Red Cap'
20. Hebrew: כיפה אדומה (Kippah Addumah), meaning 'Red Cap'
21. Hindi: Nanhi Lal Chunni, meaning 'Little Red Cape'
22. Hungarian: Piroska, meaning 'Little Red' also a proper feminine first name
23. Icelandic: Rauðhetta, meaning 'Red Hood'
24. Indonesian: Gadis Berkerudung Merah, meaning 'Red Hooded Girl'

25. Italian: Cappuccetto Rosso, meaning 'Little Red Hood'
26. Japanese: 赤頭巾 (Akazukin), meaning 'Red Hood'
27. Korean: 빨간 모자 (Ppalgan moja), meaning 'Red Hat'
28. Kurdish: مەكروس و الك ملەك چەگە ژێك
29. Latin: Lacernella Rubra, meaning 'Little Red Hood'
30. Latvian: Sarkangalvīte, meaning 'Little Red Head'
31. Lithuanian: Raudonkepuraite, meaning 'Little Red Cap'
32. Norwegian: Rødhette, meaning 'Red Hood'
33. Persian: یزمرق لنش, meaning 'Red-caped'
34. Polish: Czerwony kapturek
35. Portuguese: Capuchinho Vermelho, meaning 'Little Red Hood'.
36. Portuguese (Brazilian): Chapeuzinho Vermelho, meaning 'Little Red Hat'.
37. Romanian: Scufița Roșie meaning 'Little Red Cap'
38. Russian: Красная шапочка (Krasnaya shapochka), meaning 'Little Red Hat'
39. Serbian and Macedonian: Црвенкапа (Crvenkapa), meaning 'Red Hat'
40. Slovak: Červená čiapočka
41. Slovenian: Rdeča kapica, meaning 'Red (little) Cap'
42. Spanish: Caperucita Roja, meaning 'Little Red Hood'
43. Swedish: Rödluvan, meaning 'The Red Hood'
44. Thai: หนูน้อยหมวกแดง, meaning 'little girl with red cap'
45. Turkish: Kırmızı Başlıklı Kız, meaning 'girl with red cap'
46. Vietnamese: Cô bé quàng khăn đỏ
47. Welsh: Hugan Fach Goch. (Wikipedia, 2009).

## APPENDIX FOUR: ELECTRONIC INTERVIEW WITH NALEDI HLEFANE FOR THE CONDUIT

1) In this collection you aimed to explore the relationship between script and image. Please enlighten me about the sort of relationship that exists between the two.

*Script and image coexist in my work. Script is not reduced to an explanatory role where the words explain the image but script and image synchronise and are in harmony with each other. I have a series called STORY NO 4: RED ON A MISSION which exists only of script and where script plays a narrative role.*

2) What inspired the theme for this collection, where you address problems faced by teenagers from dysfunctional families?

*My heart breaks for teenagers who suffer for reasons beyond their control.*

3) How did you do the necessary research for the theme? Give details on procedure.

*The information for my work on teenagers comes my way naturally. I am surrounded by teenagers all day and by listening to them chat I hear their concerns and their pain.*

4) What problems have you found to be prevalent in these teens?

*Often roles are reversed and children become the parents in the relationship. Due to high divorce rates children are often forced into an adult role while they are still teenagers.*

5) Why was it important to combine the breakdown and restoration process in the collection?

*The breakdown or dystopia of the family is depressing and leaves me despondent and heavy hearted and I would like to show that there is light at the end of the tunnel.*

6) What do you think is the best form of restoration for teens coming from these backgrounds?

*There is no easy answer to this question. I think that the pressures of society often cause the breakdown of families. I also think that parents should be made aware of their responsibility to their children and how their lives affect their dependants.*

*The Relationship Between Script and Image with Specific Reference to the Work of Celeste van der Merwe, Willem Boshoff and Barbara Kruger.*

7) Did the theme affect the choice of the materials, colours and textures used in the collection?

*In retrospect I can see the connection between the theme and the technique I use. I tear up handmade paper and reconstruct it to form a work of art. In the same way society tears up teenagers and I would like to see them restored or reconstructed.*

8) You say being a Master's student challenged a growth in your work. Explain this growth. Is growth important or perhaps expected for someone who has reached your academic level?

*I was challenged by the lecturers to release the control I had on my work because it was tight. I began to draw with a sewing machine. During this Master's course I realised the importance of having fun while making art.*

9) Please explain the "Red's family affair" concept.

*I based my art on Grimm's allegory called Red Riding Hood. Red's mother caringly makes a beautiful red cape for Red and lovingly bakes biscuits for the granny who is ill. The mother then sends Red out into the woods where she knows there are vicious wolves prowling around ready to devour Red. The father is absent! In the end we have the redemptive figure, the woodcutter, who comes to the rescue.*

10) How would you describe your style?

*My work is loose, free and textured.*

According to the Johari Window (a four-quadrant behavioural model) self study increases the open and free quadrant known as the arena. I find myself confronted with a multitude of questions, such as: Is my art an honest reflection of my personality? Do I like my art? How much of the theme and contents am I prepared to share with educators and public? Am I prepared to be vulnerable and allow criticism? Am I prepared to expose my motives? Will exposure harm the delicate fragility of my art? As I expose myself in the self study I build an arena from which to transact and communicate with the viewer/reader.

## APPENDIX FIVE: TWO ART WORKS BY WILLEM BOSHOF

### BLIND ALPHABET

Boshoff is an avid reader, writer and collector of dictionaries. The Boshoff dictionary that intrigues me most is *The Dictionary of Perplexing Words* which has 18 000 entries. It includes strange “words like ‘pognology’, the study of beards, and ‘bruxism’, the tendency to grind teeth”. (Williamson, 2001). Boshoff says of himself “I have become a bit of a linguistic terrorist and perhaps, as I did at school, I am still upstaging those in a position of power.” (Boshoff, 2003:2).

*Blind Alphabet ABC* (1990 ongoing) is a three-dimensional, mixed media dictionary comprising of sculptures that symbolize, illustrate or define single words designed to be understood through touch. The sculptures are presented in mesh boxes and thus partially hidden from clear view making them accessible only to the blind. See Figure 4.7.

*Alphabet C* (1998) (Figure 4.8) consists of three hundred and thirty eight sculptural units explaining words that have fallen from common usage ranging from Cocculiferous to Cymbiform (Figure 4.9). The Etymological Dictionary of Modern English defines the etymology of Cocculiferous as follows:

**-coccal, -coccle**, etc., derive from Gr *kokkos*, grain, seed, pip; *-coccal*, -ic, -old, adj answering to *-coccus*, end-element of *coccus*, as in *streptococcus* (cf *strepto-*); *coccid(o-*, *coccido-*, c/ff of *coccidium* (s *coccid-*), a SciL dim of *kokkos*, as in *Coccidiodes*, *Coccidiomorpha*, *coccidology*. Exx of *cocc(o)-*: *coccobacillus*, *cocolith*, *cocosphere*. SciL, *cocus* has a SciL, dim: *cocculus*, with c/f *cocculi-*, as in *cocculiferous*. (1977, 2003).

Braille script on the wire mesh box defines the meaning of the words. The boxes are placed in rows consisting of approximately eight columns with corridors in between. Blind people encounter single individual pieces, read the Braille script and feel the carved wooden image. On the other hand sighted people see the overall concept, don't read the Braille, and move through the work at a faster pace.

Boshoff plays games with both sighted and blind people in this project. He uses script to include generally marginalised or disadvantaged blind people and to exclude those who are accustomed to art and galleries. Blind people can't read the “Do not touch” signs on the walls of the gallery and go ahead and feel the sculptural images in the boxes. The sighted are excluded

*The Relationship Between Script and Image with Specific Reference to the Work of Celeste van der Merwe, Willem Boshoff and Barbara Kruger.*

and disadvantaged because they read the signs, but do not necessarily touch. Writing about *Blind Alphabet* on his website Boshoff says that he reverses expectations and blind people function as “gifted experts instructing disenfranchised sighted people.” (N.d.). He goes as far as using blind guides to lead the sighted. According to Erasmus, Boshoff “explores seeing (knowing) and blindness (not knowing).” (2003: 45).

So I have done a lot of things to confuse, but not in order to condemn. I believe that you can sometimes make more sense to people in obscurity than . . . by being patronising, which is why I have done the 'Blind Alphabet' project. I wanted to use some difficult text so that eventually some sense could come out of it. That people start PLAYING with the text, I think that the text is meant to be played with, not meant to enslave.

(Boshoff in interview with PJ 1998:5)

Also on the website Boshoff admits to using “obscure terms to prepare a morphological dictionary.”(N.d.). *He discloses that he often uses script that is inaccessible and beyond difficult to the point of being “hellish” and “impossible”* (Katja, A, G. 2004).

Blind alphabet C was purchased by an organisation called Art-sense that campaigns to promote art to people who use senses other than sight to appreciate art. Visitors are invited to discover the long lost meaning of words such as ‘caboshed’, ‘coacervate’, ‘cassidiform’ (helmet shaped) and ‘cetacian’ (whale like). The terms are obscure and some are obsolete as well. Boshoff does not accommodate the visually impaired by using familiar written words. His mind game continues.

The sculptures are tactile and made of warm coloured wood which is starkly juxtaposed with the hard man-made mesh that encases them. Both script and image require the viewer/feeler to touch the work in order to appreciate it. The understanding of this piece is not limited to cognitive understanding but has to be touched, felt by skin!

## **SERIAL KILLER**

An example of a work of art where the script or printed letters dominate is *Serial Killer* (2004) (Figure 4.6) by Willem Boshoff. Boshoff placed these letters on cubes resembling the building blocks that children use. Boshoff’s keen mind turned the anagram into the words: “Israel Killer”. He found the inspiration for this work “in a newspaper headline – a story about someone who had turned into a serial killer and needed psychological supervision. This play on words seemed

needlessly offensive at first. But, two days later, the targeted killings of Hamas leaders started. On 22 March 2004 the aged Sheik Ahmed Yassin was killed in his wheel-chair by missiles shot from a helicopter. Since then, day-to-day news coverage adds question upon question: Who is the victim, who is the bully? Who stole whose toys? Who picked up the first stone?" (Boshoff and Gentric, 2004). Needless to say, this work owes its meaning to the twelve dominant letters.

In art, Boshoff works with the "idea of knowledge in a package: how we keep knowledge, package it, store it - through books, the computer, oral tradition; how we process it and manipulate it through art and how we can share it, or publish it" (Williamson, 2001). Boshoff's preoccupation with script first infiltrated and later dominated some of his art.

There is a strong correlation between the art of Willem Boshoff and that of Barbara Kruger, whose work I will discuss in Chapter 5. Both artists are disciplined in the professional way they present their work and both have a graphic approach to art. According to Leslie Claire graphic design is a "form of communication in which visual information" is used to "convey a specific and persuasive message to a large audience." (2010). Claire goes on to say that graphic design is "normally used for commercial purposes." I would like to think that although art is a viable career for Kruger or Boshoff, money is not their primary objective. *Serial Killer* (2004) (Figure 4.6) is a prime example of art by Boshoff that has a graphic inclination to it. In this way Boshoff communicates a socio-political humanitarian statement to a large audience.

**APPENDIX SIX:  
TWO ART WORKS BY BARBARA KRUGER****UNTITLED, NOT STUPID ENOUGH**

*Untitled, not stupid enough* (1997) (Figure 5.9) is a print of the cropped face of a woman laughing exuberantly with her head thrown back, eyes closed and mouth wide open. The woman is Marilyn Monroe (1926 – 1962), the box-office draw-card nicknamed 'The Blonde Bombshell'. Surrounding the square shaped image, Kruger placed the words "Not good enough, Not skinny enough, Not ironic enough" and "Not nothing enough." Directly in the middle covering a strip of the face is the text, "Not stupid enough."

Having dyed her brunette hair, platinum blonde, Marilyn Monroe, the actress fitted the stereotype that blonde women rely on their beauty rather than their intelligence in their search for happiness and success. To confirm this image, Monroe played the role of the dumb yet witty blonde in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, while Jane Russell starred as a wise intelligent and serious brunette. (1953).

Ironically, in contrast with the dumb blonde act, Monroe was well read and continuously improving herself. "She owned 200 books (including Tolstoy, Whitman, Milton), listened to Beethoven records, studied acting at the Actors' lab in Hollywood, and took literature courses at UCLA downtown." (Stephan, 2010). She preferred to associate with intelligent men and said, "I've always been attracted to older men, because younger men don't have any brains, and all they do is try to make a pass, and it isn't even me they think about. They are horny just because I'm a movie star." (Summers, 1985: 69).

On the other hand, Monroe always remained childlike, shy and insecure; she constantly needed affirmation and love. At twenty-two years of age Monroe was deeply in love with a man ten years her senior named Fred Karger and was worried about being an interloper in his marriage. When he said 'I love you' to her, she experienced it as better than a thousand critics calling her a great star. (Summers, 1985). Marilyn wanted to marry him. When Marilyn wept he would tell her 'You cry too easily. That's because your mind isn't developed. Compared to your figure, it's embryonic'. (Summers, 1985,77).

When she was told that she was a young woman who gives off sex vibrations, she retorted that she wanted “to be an artist, not an erotic freak”. She didn’t “want to be sold as a celluloid aphrodisiac”. (Summers, 1985:95). This notwithstanding, ironically and in “living contradiction” (Whitehead, 2008), she used the weapon of her sexuality when she chose.

Although Monroe was a legendary pop icon, she never felt adequate. At the age of thirty six she died a mysterious death presumably of a drug overdose. The thirty films, blonde hair, wispy breathless voice and voluptuous figure were not enough to make her happy and satisfied. Sadly Monroe’s great yearning to have children was never fulfilled. Kruger made a thought-provoking statement when she said that Monroe was “Not good enough, Not skinny enough, Not ironic enough, Not nothing enough” and “Not stupid enough?”

### **I SHOP THEREFORE I AM**

*I shop therefore I am (I)* (1987) (Figure 5.17) is a more light-hearted work of art but has a serious underpinning. This work is a play on Rene’ Descartes’ famous philosophical statement “I think, therefore I am.” Descartes reasons that the existence of mankind is defined by the very act of thinking. Interestingly, in the same way that the 17<sup>th</sup> century was the Age of Reason, today is the Consumer Age. The slogan reminds of the scripture in the Bible where Jehovah refers to himself as “I am that I am.” (Exodus 3:14).

Kruger infers that the actuality of shopping guarantees the very existence of the individual. Shopping is a conscious activity. When used as a form of self-medication, it can lead to an addiction. The constituted self exists with the purpose of shopping.

Interestingly, the commercial world is not available to most people. In 2001 approximately 57% of individuals in South Africa were living below the poverty income line<sup>1</sup>. (Schwabe, 2004). Black South Africans have a philosophy called “Ubuntu” which Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu defines as follows, “We believe that a person is a person through another person, that my humanity is caught up, bound up, inextricably, with yours.” (2000). Thus by going the extra mile for others we humanize them and thus humanize ourselves. By so doing the value is being removed from materialism and consumerism and people are regaining importance. Human values are based on behavioural conduct known as “Hlonipha - which derives from the root - hloniph- meaning ‘respect’.” (Zungu, nd). There is great wealth in the sense of ‘being through others’ and in ‘being with respect to others and all things’.

In contrast to many people on planet earth, the elitist art-appreciating public doesn't grow their food in a vegetable patch. They shop! It has been said that shopping is America's favourite pastime. Kruger challenges the notion that the sole purpose of man in this day and age is to shop.

*I shop therefore I am (I)* is a humorous caption loaded with meaning and it conjures up several questions. "Am I of value because I shop?" "Is my value related to my financial status?" "Could I survive without shopping?" "Is it wealth that creates the artificial distinction between people, and gives or takes worth?" The viewer is at once both fascinated and indicted. The script refutes a belief system that is ingrained in society yet few people acknowledge adhering to it. It is my opinion that one's real nature exists prior to reasoning and shopping. There is a power in simply being. As a young woman I experienced the pleasure of 'self-medicating through shopping'. These days it is called 'commercial therapy'.

Once again this artwork consists of a black and white photographic image overlaid with white-on-red script. The image of the hand is relentlessly cropped and a great deal is either hidden or cut off. *I shop therefore I am*, is an enormous hundred square foot work of art (111" x 113"). It is dominating and imposing. Ironically, Kruger had this artwork reduced and printed on shopping bags. Shopping bags have a commercial message of their own. They are no longer simply retail shopping carry bags but have become loaded with meaning. Certain labelled shopping bags have snob value while other no name brand bags litter the streets. Kruger deliberately printed a valuable artwork on a mass produced and single-use banal surface. I admire Kruger's boldness to put her art on shopping bags and I agree that art should not be seen as excessively precious. The image in *I shop therefore I am (I)* acts as a frame around a card that reads "I shop therefore I am." The card is indicative of a credit card which is a small item with the power to cause infinite problems when abused.

Curiously, in this case Kruger has written the script in the first person. In my opinion the reader personalizes it either by identifying with it or becomes first person in the mouth and mind of the reader as he/she reads the script: *I shop therefore I am*.

Kruger's work has led me to reflect on my own attitude to shopping. As I have grown older shopping has held less satisfaction and I was more aware of the cost of shopping as well as the emptiness of accumulating possessions. I must admit that I do admire a Top Billing designer home and do find the life style of some affluent housewives quite appealing. On the other hand I value the life style of a missionary who has sacrificed all to serve his/her fellow man. I adhere to a value of being important for who I am and respecting others for who they are. Yet I admit that there are times when I experience a living contradiction within myself and measure myself and others by my/their possessions and status in society.

## **APPENDIX SEVEN: DVD**

Digital copy of Celeste van der Merwe's "Red's Family Affair Exhibition" (2011) and Thesis.