A preliminary investigation into the roles of interactive engagement in the visual arts

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i

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Abstract

This study investigates contemporary occurrences within the South African art and social sphere as a symptom of societal and technological manipulation. By examining the occurrences surrounding the #rhodesmustfall campaign (2015) as well as the reactions to Brett Murray's work, *The Spear* (2015), the way in which ideologically based worldviews separate communities, impede dialogue, hinder the uninhibited formation of identity, create intolerance for freedom of speech and erupt in assertion violence is determined.

The approaches of Brett Murray, Wim Botha, Willem Boshoff, Tracy Rose, Zanele Muholi and the #rhodesmustfall campaign are examined to determine how interactive aesthetic engagement within the visual arts can serve to restore people's ability to communicate, tolerate and understand one another. The stimulation of dialogue and experience through interactive aesthetic engagement as a way to foster and enhance tacit knowledge in the appreciation of visual art are the primary concerns addressed in this practice-based research study.

In this regard, this study draws from Cora Marshall's (2010) research design, which includes aesthetico-action research, hermeneutical phenomenology and thematic analysis. The transformation of established standards of meaning via aesthetic engagement forms a fundamental part of the chosen methodology as well as the topic of the research. The oscillation between the written and practical components of this study is conducted with the ultimate aim of an audience understanding and eliciting an interactive aesthetic engagement with a body of work.

Contents   **Page**

Chapter 4

List of figures   **Page**

List of abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
APK	Auckland Park Kingsway Campus
BC	Before Christ
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
CCTV	Closed-circuit television
DA	Democratic Alliance
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
KKNK	Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees
MMC	Mighty Men's Conference
NAZI	National Socialist German Workers' Party
NP	National Party
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress
RMF	Rhodes Must Fall
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SACP	South African Communist Party
UCT	University of Cape Town
UJ	University of Johannesburg's
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Glossary of terms

Aesthetic engagement	The four components can be defined as follows: artists, viewers, worldviews and artworks.
Culture	Culture refers to the way a certain group of people live, their customs, mannerisms, ways of thinking and outlooks. Culture is often the foundation on which people base their thoughts about their life with others. Culture is often learned in an implicit manner through the way people perceive and navigate the world (Ratele, 2014:31).
Epistemology	Epistemology is concerned with the methodical study of justified beliefs and knowledge. It questions the nature and origin of knowledge.The pursuit of knowledge is examined in terms of how people deliberate and make justifications (Klinke, 2014:2).
Exegesis	Exegesis refers to the written part of the visual arts research. The praxis and exegesis need to be conducted and developed in tandem (Marshall, 2010:79).
Praxis	Praxis, in the context of this study, refers to the reflexive production of artworks. A reflexive studio practice requires the artist to work in cycles of action – reflection – action (Marshall, 2010:78).
Reflexivity	Reflexive thought is a vital process of research in the visual arts, since it blends experience and interaction. Reflexivity involves the amalgamation of critical reflections and actions that can uncover the assumptions, biases and perspectives that originate from the foundations of an individual's visual arts practice (Marshall, 2010:78).
Tradition	Traditions include beliefs and practices handed down through generations. Tradition can be seen as the vehicle through which culture is passed on. When members of a group engage with tradition, the past and the present are brought together. It is a

way in which people can engage. It is a form of social thought and action. Tradition involves self-reflexive individuals wanting to act in a way which shows a consideration of the past as well as the future (Ratele, 2014:31).

In the context of this study, the research stance adopted is that a tradition is viewed as a repetitive action which need not always be bound by logic. This undertaking can be illustrated through the following analogy: while preparing to cook a leg of lamb, a man follows his mother's recipe instructing that one cut off and discard the lowest part of the leg of lamb. While doing so, he ponders the reason behind this seemingly wasteful action. His mother also seems unable to explain, noting only that this is how her mother has always prepared the meat. Upon asking his grandmother, he learns that she had discarded this part of the meat only because her oven pan had been too small to fit the whole leg of lamb.

Visual epistemology	An image has the potential to be an epistemic medium. Images have the potential to represent more than just what is visible on the surface. Epistemic images can contribute to the development and communication of ideas; as such, they contribute to the creation of knowledge leading to a higher understanding of the world (Klinke, 2014:1-2).

1. Introduction

Society is constructed and subjected to norms and values which are propagated as "appropriate" via the media (technology and popular media). The subtle manner in which this process is rendered does not make people feel coerced into applying the appropriate thoughts and behaviours in their everyday lives. Within these parameters people adopt certain belief systems which are packaged with "ready-made" outlooks. In so doing an individual unwittingly sacrifices independent thinking for a sense of belonging and acceptance within a constructed society. The manner in which ideologies are disseminated via technology and popular media can be assumed to be the main catalysts for ideological manipulation, which also contributes to society's vulnerability towards ideological reconstruction. This organisation of society's dependence on technology and popular media has resonance in South Africa.

People are subjected to societal manipulation on a daily basis, which is capable of exerting a large level of control over their behaviour (Van Peursen, 1974:111). The control referred to often inhibits critical dialogue; as a result individuals, become isolated their self-image and identity are controlled or completely impeded as individuals. In his seminal text *Experience as art, aesthetics in everyday life* Kupfer (1983:50) states that, people are unable to express themselves in any other way than with assertion violence due to the lack of proper aesthetic interaction. Assertion violence is the realisation of the lack of self-esteem and voice resulting in frustration and inherent rage without an immediate outlet. People become aware of the lack of control they have over their own lives, and they experience feelings of frustration and rage.

This study, being a preliminary investigation, has identified recent events within South African society as areas which echo the sentiments of Van Peursen and Kupfer, contextualising public responses to media overload within the visual arts.

Reference is made to responses relating to the #rhodesmustfall campaign (2015) and the media frenzy over the exhibition of *The Spear*, a painting by the artist, Brett Murray, at the Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg (2012). These examples, together with *Commune: suspension of disbelief* (2001) and *Commune: onomatopoeia* (2003) by Wim Botha, are deemed appropriate for discussion, as they respond to issues of censorship and freedom of speech within a public space. Moreover, the *Blind Alphabet* by Willem Boshoff will be discussed, since they showcase the role interactive aesthetic engagement can play in addressing the pre-established beliefs, which possibly divides South African society. An exploration of these contemporary works of art will demonstrate the capacity of the visual

1

arts to showcase and address the effects of ideological manipulation and lack of individual thought inherent within South African society. It will further endorse the roles of aesthetic engagement that these works and events have evoked to showcase the relevance of this study.

1.1.   Context of the study

In response to my research study, my literature review concentrated on the role of media as the main distributers and contributors of information. This included readings on technology as a mechanism of media dissemination and how technology affects communication to communities as well as processes of media manipulation within social constructs. Further readings on the South African context in respect of the visual arts and the impact of media on public response to the visual arts supported the research engagement.

1.1.1 Dissemination of mass media and technology

Research indicates that there are various forms of manipulation which affect people in either a visible or invisible way. This study considers only two of these factors, namely external and internal factors. McLuhan (2003:28-30) expands on these factors which impact society by referring to dictators and charismatic leaders as examples of external threats. The most prominent being Hitler and his National Socialist German Workers' Party (NAZI) and Stalin's Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Similar impacts on society were experienced in South Africa notably under the various leaders of South Africa's apartheid driven National Party (NP) who have made use of media to censor information and disseminate propaganda to strengthen the ideological indoctrination of their people.

Cubitt, Mariátequi and Nadarajan (2009:217-218) explain that exposure to manipulated information can exert a significant influence on people. Since the media hold control over information and dialogue, information can be manipulated before it is made available to the public. Information can be altered by manipulative leaders, since they are afforded a high level of control over the institutionalised media. Lewis (2005:46) argues that this manipulation of information not only exerts control over the public's ability to communicate, but it also affects their perception of 'truth' and self-understanding. The media can be regarded as a method of one-way communication, since the individual or user's role is limited to the mere reception of information (Cubitt et al., 2009:221; Kupfer, 1983:49). Since people are viewed by the media as objects and not as subjects, Lewis (2005:47) argues that they become nothing more than consumers, manipulated by forces outside their own control.

Schweidson (2005:21) has found that technology's influence not only contributes to the creation of a mass culture but also has the capacity to transform a society into an uncritical mass. This mass persuasion to conform in effect commoditises individuals, and compromises the freedom of speech and individual opinion inherent in a democratic society. Such strategies inhibit awareness of the self. Consequently, people are left vulnerable to manipulation and often frustrated to the extent where they perform acts of violence and destruction that are contrary to their once traditional values. In such situations a tendency towards unfounded violence can erupt. History has documented that within political settings, charismatic leaders have been known to equate violence with virtue (Schweidson, 2005:25; Wienclaw, 2009:4).

In addition to using the media as the gate-keepers of information, charismatic leaders have various other manipulative strategies at their disposal such as reproductive imagination which seduces society, and impedes the creativity and intuition of the individual (Czobor-Lupp, 2007:1-2). Oppressive entities will also distribute propaganda that uses the deeply rooted ideologies of a society to generate mass agreement on issues relevant to the oppressor's objectives. The impeding of dialogue, self-understanding, perception of truth and a fear of social alienation prevent people from taking a stance against the distorted dogmatic arguments of their oppressors.

Guriev and Treisman (2015:1-2) explain that dictators no longer seek to obtain power through only isolation and mass killing but through the use of mass media communication as well. The South African apartheid government's stance on the use of television broadcasting was a fear that introducing uncensored access to television could be disastrous for the government's propagation of a separatist policy (Nixon, 1993:132-133). The current stance within a democratic era registers a similar fear of television broadcasting if unchecked, becomes detrimental to its ruling. As a result, the state sees the need to control the content disseminated through which the government could voice its idea for the preservation of 'the South African way of life'. The apartheid regime's use of censorship, according to Merrett (2001:50-51), has played a pivotal role in the white minority's ability to exert control over the South African society as a whole. Censorship allows for the suppression of knowledge, impeding of ideas and the elimination of information that stands contrary to prescribed ways of thinking.

Internal oppressive entities are not as easily identifiable as external threats. Van Peursen (1974:216) posits that power is not held by specific individuals but rather by an interchange of factions, mental outlooks and interests that create a remote, illusive power. McLuhan

3

(2003:30-31) concludes that individuals unwittingly base their lives upon these threats and are often unaware of the influence and message being forced upon them by the medium of technology itself. Exposure to this medium changes an individual's perception but also impedes his or her ability to communicate and articulate personal thoughts. This passive and insentient acceptance of technology as an inseparable and undeniable part of society causes a constructed regression in communication. Kupfer (1983:49) argues that technology not only renders the individual passive and alienated but also enables the magnitude of media's manipulation.

This passiveness and alienation occur when technology primarily becomes a monological communication method (Cubitt et al., 2009:227). This occurs because people are addressed separately in the isolation of their homes. The lack of dialogue in mass communication further worsens the alienation of individuals, and alters the way in which they view themselves and their environment (McLuhan & Powers, 1992:6). Kupfer (1983:191) argues that the absence of dialogue and proper aesthetic experience induces a lack of self-expression and a struggle with social interaction of individual thought and opinion.

These factors impact on the visual arts. As a result of this perception, it would seem that the media can have control over cultural development (Codoban, 2009:443). Miles (1985:9) is of the opinion that the viewer's interaction with media images is based on instant gratification[1]. Fisher (2005:415-416) identifies troubling aspects associated with mass images. In order to appeal to large audiences such images often lack sensitivity and content that stimulates active interpretation, and as such, cognitive development. Based on a one-way communication strategy, these images are produced according to pre-established formulas which have already been proven to appease people. McLuhan and Powers (1992:20) argue that such images not only impede the imagination, but also obstruct viewers' critical thought, resulting in an inability to envision their place in society. As such, the individual, as Van Peursen (1974:111) argues, becomes indistinguishable from the rest of society which leads to a loss of identity. This impairment of identity and imagination leaves the individual unable to feel actualised, and leads to assertion violence (Kupfer, 1983:50).

Rosenthal (1971:395-396) is of the opinion that "empirical" statements disseminated by the media often serve as an unchallenged basis for persuasive motivation. Ambiguous[2] and

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[1] The viewer is for instance lured into making a connection with media images based on sentimentality and as a result no dialogue or proper aesthetic interaction is facilitated by these media images. Without dialogue between the viewer and the artwork, ideologies can be inserted and promoted amongst viewers (Olivier, 2003:110).
[2] Rosenthal (1971:395-396) demonstrates that ambiguous empirical statements are obscure in terms of interpretation by indicating how a statement such as "A majority of Americans favo[u]r a lower voting age" does

4

specific[3] empirical statements persuade people in different ways, creating a false sense of credibility. This audience has to use its own frame of reference to interpret vague statements where specific information has purposefully been left out (for example, to strengthen an argument). Statements of this nature are most effective with an audience that shares similar ideological views. Using strategies, such as placing more emphasis on preferred aspects and meanings (thereby steering clear of the less desired aspects), the media can also guide the way in which images are interpreted by prompting the viewer to make predetermined interpretations about the meaning of an image.

1.1.2 Manipulation and aesthetic engagement

The discussions on manipulative strategies have direct impact on the visual arts in South Africa. To cite the #rhodesmustfall campaign: it considered the validity of the monument of Cecil John Rhodes on the Cape Town University campus within a democratic context. It snowballed into other institutes of higher learning considering the viability and legitimacy of colonial sculptural monuments on their campuses as well. This dynamic engagement of what should constitute and be visible South African history and legacy images today have also entered into the public sphere with unforeseen consequences.

The decision of image creation is also a contested space. This refers to the erection of elephants as a public monument by the artist Andries Botha in the city of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. Van Wyk (2012:1) explains that Botha has been commissioned by the Durban City Council to erect these statues. He was later ordered to stop work on the project when an African National Congress (ANC) member complained that the work resembled the logo of the opposition party, the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). In terms of political history, both the ANC and the IFP have contested governance over the province of KwaZulu-Natal. The artist's works have since been abandoned and left unprotected, falling victim to theft and vandalism. Botha's thematic rendering of man's relationship with nature and bringing awareness to the conservation of elephants has been misconstrued and diverted into a political narrative.

Marschall (2010:90) is of the opinion that public art in most South African towns and cities across the country consisted of works that had originated from the pre-democracy eras, while the erection of new monuments had a distinct "African–centred stance". After much

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not disclose, the exact amount of people, the new and preferred voting age, whether the opinions taken into account are limited to certain age groups, registered voters, or whether the statement refers to only the citizens or all the inhabitants of America.

[3] A specific empirical statement does not require the receiver to search for additional knowledge, does not collide with the pre-existing knowledge of the receiver and is mostly believed, as it is stated by the speaker as a fact (Rosenthal, 1971:397).

deliberation via mass media communication, which included public and private stand points, the difficulties associated with fostering a truly multi-cultural society became apparent; people felt disillusioned and disappointed with the rainbow nation ideology and have clung to apartheid ideologies.

Cairns (2014:16) explains that South Africa's journey through its new democracy has been characterised by an ongoing sense of distrust, conflict and fear. Adding to the public's frustration is the government's tendency to respond to constructive criticism with anger and over-sensitivity. As a result, the public's attempts to express their concerns have been silenced. The public's confidence in the current systems of power to facilitate a meaningful change is at an all-time low.

The frustration felt by South Africans may be witnessed in the occurrences of xenophobic attacks. Matsinhe (2011:297) explains that one facet of the attacks on foreign nationals may be that they serve as convenient scapegoats. Foreign nationals make easy targets upon which unemployment, crime and various other social ills can be blamed. Matsinhe (2011:306-308) further identifies the slow response of the police force and general denial of xenophobia from government officials as contributing factors to the spread of violence. The denial of xenophobic violence seems especially reckless in a society where black foreign nationals are referred to as *Makwerekwere* (a slang term for *foreigner*, which contains a negative connection and is often interpreted as an enemy of the nation). The publicity received by the xenophobic attacks and the state's inability to calm people have led to the media serving as mediators for the spread of mob violence encased within collective actions viewed as assertion violence through acts of xenophobia.

A poignant example which highlighted the occurrence of assertion violence within South African society might be found in the various reactions prompted by Brett Murray's work, *The Spear* (2012). In keeping with ideological manipulation exasperated by the media, the work caused a public and government uproar, and was vandalised only hours after it had received widespread and mostly negative attention form the media. Murray's work carried a strong resemblance to Victor Ivanov's poster *Lenin lived, Lenin is alive, Lenin will live* (1967). In response to this poster, Murray's *The Spear* depicted the South African president, Jacob Zuma, in a socialist activist pose; however, with exposed genitals.

The painting was immediately defaced by two men for two different reasons. Louis Mabokela claimed that his action was a way to restore dignity as it was "covering" the president, Jacob Zuma. The other vandal, Barend la Grange, defended his actions by explaining that he

feared that the painting would cause a racial divide ending in violence (Nuttal, 2013:423-425). A key aspect of assertion violence is the moment when individuals such as Mabokela and La Grange realised their inability to control their circumstances and to feel the need to assert themselves within their environments.

The reception of *The Spear* brings into question the freedom of expression and the tolerance of art in the South African society. Part of this study is to raise similar issues but to develop strategies in which artworks can enrich people's self-understanding by questioning their pre-established beliefs. In this sense, the reception of Murray's work may inevitably prompt ideologically based reactions without fostering a dialogue between the work and its viewer.

Graham (2000:186-187) explains that art alludes to various realities accepted within society. He emphasises the difference between passive interpretation confined to mere empathetic identification with the worldview represented in the artwork, and active interpretation (whereby sensitive viewers realise that their preconceived worldviews are being questioned by the implied meanings of the artwork. These various interpretations result in a fragmented reception of artworks.

1.2.1 Problem statement, aims and objectives

When a society becomes segmented, based on a specific ideology using mass communication, individuality and freedom of expression are threatened. Technology has played a significant role in ideological manipulation which has led to insurmountable divides within communities. People experience a loss of identity and lack of self-control when they are assimilated into an uncritical mass. This research suggests that the making and interpretation of art be examined to foster engaging aesthetic experiences when reading artworks and understanding the environment and context of the artwork.

Present day South African society remains submissive, twenty one years into its democracy. This submissive stance impedes a real exchange in dialogue in respect of what a democracy expects from its citizens. The aim of this study is to elicit a preliminary investigation into the roles of interactive aesthetic engagement in the visual arts within the South African context. This will be supported by Cora Marshall's model of studio practice and theoretical explanations.

The research objectives will be guided by the following questions:
- How does the culture of inheritance with regard to pre-established beliefs and ways of doing, affect worldviews?

7

- What role do present day ideologically based worldviews play in the construction of the South African society?

- How do the various segments of the South African society assimilate such worldviews into their identity?

- How does the dissemination of mass media and technology impact communities with regard to fostering the productive coexistence of a truly multi-cultural society?

- What role can the visual arts play in fostering a constructive dialogue?

1.2.2 Research design

This is a qualitative study and the application of information from relevant books, academic journals, artists' statements in art museums, art gallery archives, videos, films, reviews on relevant art exhibitions and scholarly reports on trends of manipulation in contemporary society will be applied. The assumed one-way communication and resultant alienation of groups of people favoured by the media will be explored in order to establish a connection between ideological indoctrination, submissive behaviour and loss of identity.

This practice-based research concerned with the transformation and translation of perception. In the practice-based research model proposed by Julia Marshall (2007:25) she explains that such an approach is concerned with the re-interpretation of existing information in order to transform perceptions. The use of visual images makes practice-based research befitting for the transformation of existing meaning. As such, this research will rely on the creation of artworks to transform perceptions to create insight into the context of the artwork.

A research design adapted from the double helix process by Cora Marshall (2010) will be utilised as a basis in the structuring and completion of this research project. This research design can be described as an interplay between praxis (studio production of artworks) and exegesis (theoretical explanations); thus, complementing each other. The studio component entails aesthetico-action research, while the theory is approached from a hermeneutic phenomenological position together with thematic analysis.

In realising this research, an interactive aesthetic or collaborative artistic engagement supported by Marshall's research design (2010) and Dirk van den Berg's (1994) relational model of aesthetic interaction will be considered. The research will be guided by aesthetico-action research, hermeneutic phenomenology, and thematic analysis in order to facilitate the gathering, organisation, and interpretation of artworks (Marshall, 2010:85). Praxis in terms of this research involves constant movement between action and reflection (Marshall,

2010:78). Aesthetico-action requires the artist to constantly observe, reflect, plan, act and reflect in a cyclical process. This facilitates learning from experience (Marshall, 2010:80-81).

The concern of the practice is twofold. The works will be constructed with the aim of creating aesthetic engagement while talking to some of the prominent issues faced in contemporary South African society. In a culture where people are often unwilling to consider alternative points of view, the artworks must be structured in such a way that they actively encourage participation. By oscillating between the understandings gained from practical and theoretical reflexiveness, the practice part of this research will allow for the transformation of established meaning. The works are extended to an audience with the intention of provoking debate, social awareness and the acceptability of images. The idea of the power of the image versus the power of the viewer is a major consideration in the making of my work, as this will elicit an aesthetic engagement. During the creation of the works, the reactions that the works can elicit will be considered.

1.3 Literature review

The creation and interpretation of images as a part of visual epistemology is a pivotal part of research in the visual arts. Where thoughts are traditionally expressed by means of the written word, artists communicate their ideas through visual mediums. The creation and interpretation of images necessitate the involvement of both visual perception and cognitive processes. Engaging with images requires people to make use of their experience so that they may provide feedback and make predictions. Creation and interpretation are not a one-way process and should rather be regarded as critical aspects of cognitive capability.

A mental image is formed when the individual's perception and cognition are integrated. To see and understand an image involves thinking, and in turn, thinking involves visual imagery (including mental images). For art to adhere to the principles of visual epistemology, it must have the potential to convey knowledge and understanding (Klinke, 2014:3-6). The visual arts have always performed a vital function in highlighting and addressing societal problems. However, the current tempestuous socio-political conditions necessitate an investigation into the role of interactive aesthetic engagement in contemporary South African.

1.3.1 The impediment of dialogue

To begin to address the incessant nature of cultural divides within South Africa, the nature of new technologies and the way this facilitates manipulation and hinders critical dialogue will be investigated through available literature. In line with the research question of this study concerning the dissemination of mass media and technology, mass communication, as a

predominately monological way of communication, lacks the ability to truly engage people in dialogue. The mass media and what Edmond (2013:1440-1441) refers to as "centralised technologies" consist of radio, television, film and print media, such forms of media are easily controlled or owned by those who want to exercise control over a society. Making use of centralised channels not only allows for the dissemination of propaganda but also sets a limit on the information made available to the public.

In addition to being subjected to the control of the mass media, people can also be manipulated by exploiting their need for shared experiences. In order to gain shared experiences, individuals tend to coordinate their actions with others. In this way the ideologies disseminated by the mass media become shared information. In this regard, individuals are unwilling to act in a way contrary to what is perceived as appropriate. The influence of the mass media is in essence extended to how it influences people's interaction with one another.

Having optimism regarding the role technological advancements in communication such as Twitter and Facebook have played in the facilitation of overthrowing autocratic regimes may also be naive (Edmond, 2013:1422). Social media have simply replaced older technological advancements such as newspapers, radio and television as media that have the potential to bring about change in a more immediate and expanded manner. Despite being instrumental in the uprisings and toppling of autocratic regimes (such as those in Egypt in 2011), some regimes have become sensitive to communication technology and have found ways to counter online organisation and dissent (Edmond, 2013:1441-1442).

In the pre-democracy era, the South African media were split along ideological lines with regard to the mass media. Due to censorship and in some areas a continued support of apartheid policies the press did not advocate for an inclusive society. The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) was owned by the government. Moreover, the big publishing houses were owned by companies who benefitted from the apartheid system. As such, they enforced strict restrictive measures. The sparse amount of anti-apartheid media was banned and some staff were jailed. Moreover, big companies were reluctant to advertise in such publications. As such, anti-apartheid newspapers could only be run due to funding of foreigners (Lloyd, 2013:12-13).

With the dawn of democracy and the signing of a new constitution, freedom of speech and expression were guaranteed, which impacted the ownership and content of media. Twentyone years into a new democracy, trends are once again threatening freedom of

10

expression. It can be seen in proposed legislation such as the Media Appeals Tribunal as well as the Protection of State Information Bill. These pieces of legislation effectively suppress the flow of information, particularly information relating to what constitutes misconduct in media information reporting (Jordaan, 2013:25).

The impediment of dialogue between the various South African communities can be witnessed in the way people isolate themselves from *the other* by justifying their post-apartheid segregation as a "fear of crime". South Africans' fear of what is different or other is contained in perceptions regarding who or what is to blame for the country's rampant crime rate. Such divides, arguably caused by ignorance and ideologically based belief systems are hidden underneath more socially and politically correct discourses. This feeds into the fear that *they* want to invade and present a threat to *our* "socio-spatial purity". The complexities of the *us* versus *them* in the new South Africa moves beyond race. Instead of using the right to space to justify racial divide, it is being used to justify segregation based on a socio spatial system (Lemanski, 2004:108-109).

South African society at present is extremely violent which may be the result of mistrust amongst different communities of people. Technology has been used to address these factors to some degree as reflected in the anti-abuse campaigns hosted. These campaigns were supported by the "Hands Off Our Women" and "Real men don't rape women and children ... we want our women, our wives, sisters and daughters to walk freely in our streets", 2003 Men's March led by Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane (Moffett, 2006:143-144).

The residue of apartheid's culture of instilling fear, submissive behaviour and distrust within communities reinforces a divisive society which is still prevalent in contemporary South Africa. The poor state of education and other social services are indicative of a society which is both compliant as well as seething with frustration and anger. The statements by President Zuma's continuous renouncement of "clever blacks" asserting that "they become the most eloquent in criticising themselves about their own traditions and everything" does not allow for criticism (Pillay, 2014:1).

People's vulnerability to ideological manipulation can be explained by Arnheim's conceptions of order. With regard to the need for the creation and perception of order, Arnheim (2001:1-4) explains that order is inbred by evolution and crucial to human understanding. Order is the manner in which people are able to assimilate information together and draw associations from this new information. However, order is not always directly observable. Individuals often

rely on an impression of an underlying order. Should this not be available, people will become disillusioned.

Disillusionment can quickly dissolve into disorder. The appropriation of entropy becomes imperative as order needs to be instilled within eminent chaos. Historically, the art world has responded to the world's increase in entropy in various ways. Approaches ranged from the simplification in Malevich's Suprematist art to Hogarth's deliberate creation of disorder in his social criticism. The entropy principle is not concerned with order as a factor which is independent from the purpose of a structure (Arnheim, 2001:7-13).

In this regard, the autocratic system of North Korea insures that all aspects of its society are controlled according to the specifications prescribed by its dictator. The purpose of the regime is to enforce order to such a degree that independent thought and action are all but illuminated. Superficially this society is well ordered, but this system fails to meet even the basic human rights whereas a society that respects individuality is tolerant towards self-expression and offers people the space to disagree and influence its structure. The processes involved in self-expression may appear to be disordered, however in a democratic society it is this ability to disagree with and rectify the status quo, which represents an order suited to the function of a system. For Arnheim (2001:4) it is this ability to reveal the disaccord in an existing system that is vital, since the perception of the underlying order may be misleading.

The way in which the media indoctrinate people by making use of imagery-based one-way communication can be exploited within the visual arts. Marshall's (2007:26) explanation that images have the power to shape the contemporary world's collective consciousness is apparent in this practice-based research to foster dialogue in a worryingly visual arts illiterate South African society. Any contemporary environment is dominated by images and has fostered a social reliance on images to make the world comprehensible. The inseparability of vision and context can be exploited creatively to foster a re-evaluation of perspectives and experiences shaped by culture.

1.3.2 Aesthetic engagement, dialogue and understanding

With regard to the research question surrounding the role of the visual arts and fostering of constructive dialogues, understanding brought forth by the aesthetic engagement with artworks can address the complex cultural and language barriers that separate South African society. Arnheim's (1969) reasoning of "perception preceding conception", then visual thinking becomes a step toward language. Visual thinking allows people to take in

12

patterns in one perceptual act whereas language is distanced from perception and needs to be sequential. The way in which the visual arts can embody ideas in materials and blend presence with ideas enables works of art to allude to a host of unsaid interconnected ideas. Moreover, this also provides the work with the potential to speak to each viewer in a direct and personal way (Marshall, 2007:27).

With regard to how an active interpretation carries with it the potential to expose ideological points of view, Graham (2005:53-55) explains that self-knowledge is dependent on both knowledge and understanding and can be expanded through participation in the aesthetic experience inherent in the visual arts. When viewers consider the world in such a way, the work of art may be able to help them view the world anew. The artwork as such acts as a lens that can bring previously unnoticed realities into focus.

When people become aware of the things they have failed to notice before they re-evaluate their experiences of their environments. Imagination is of paramount importance, not only in experience but also in how people gain self-knowledge. It is in such a way that the work of art can challenge ideological points of view. For people to be able to understand their environment and others in it, they need their imagination to read the various cues and clues in order to enrich their understanding and subsequent self-knowledge (Graham, 2005:68-70).

The object of the aesthetic experience in a visual artwork is divided into two separate, yet interdependent categories: the material and intentional object of the aesthetic experience. The artwork has an independent existence and represents the material object of aesthetic experience. The 'mental image' formed when interacting with the material object (artwork) constitutes the intentional object of aesthetic experience. The aesthetic object is dependent on the interaction between the material and intentional and may be regarded as the ideal intended outcome of the aesthetic experience (Ridling, 2001:751).

Artworks can transform thought on a sociocultural level if they offer viewers the opportunity to find and construct meaning. This can be achieved by eliciting an active interpretation; as such, dialogue between the viewers and the work. The artwork is, however, subject to the contexts in which it is created and interpreted. This contextual dependency includes the perceptive range of viewers who become co-creators of meaning. As such, the interactive nature of practice-based research becomes a social endeavour. The artist learns through the personal process of research characterised by exploration and representation. Viewers learn through interpretation and continue the research when they connect the insights and

understandings gained through the aesthetic experience to their own experience. The social and communicative nature of participation in and learning through artworks culminating in the creation of new realities are the cornerstones of practice-based research. The transformative nature of the imaginative insight shared by artists can change perception. The social impact of art approached in such a way is "a powerful cultural agency of human insight" (Marshall, 2007:35-37).

Contemporary artist Yoko Ono introduces this re-evaluation of ideologically fostered prejudge with her *Play it by trust* series. This series consists of all white functional chess sets, resulting in participants eventually loosing track of which pieces belongs to whom. Participants are forced to recognise the similarities between opponents, not only in the game, but also in real-life situations. They are forced to re-evaluate conflict and intolerance often instigated by oppressive entities (Ames, 2009:20-21).

Likewise, the work of American artist Wafaa Bilal re-appropriates the politically charged war-games *Quest for Bush.* In Bilal's version the protagonist resembles the artist himself, fighting against armies resembling the former American president George W. Bush. Bilal wanted to create dialogue and draw attention to the confusion experienced by Iraqi's living in America regarding to where they place their allegiance. This highly controversial work was however misinterpreted as promoting violence. Ames (2009:21-22) attributes this misinterpretation to a lack of viewer sensitivity.

Moreover, Tan, Wilson and Olver (2009:4) explain that Gadamer sees the interaction between reader and text as collaboration, since interpretation necessitates a constant dialogue. Despite a person's tacit knowledge being inseparable from his or her present experience, considering a new question can cause a displacement of tacit knowledge. As such old convictions and beliefs can be displaced by the impact of an exposure to a new experience. In this way people's understanding can be expanded by exposure to experience, be it lived or through the aesthetic experience.

In his introduction to the seminal text, *Philosophical hermeneutics* by Hans-Georg Gadamer, Linge (1976:xviii-xxi) explains that exposure to new experiences may expand experience. He indicates that Gadamer's aim was to bring attention to the fact that multiple attempts at interpretation may need to be made in order to reach a critical understanding. The hermeneutical conversation between interpreter and work takes the form of a dialogue, since it involves equality and reciprocity.

Both the work and interpreters engage in a conversation, and a true dialogical (and hermeneutical) conversation begins when people open themselves up to truly consider the work's point of view. When a work's challenging viewpoints are confronted, people's ideological beliefs are brought to light. Due to the nature of interactive aesthetic engagement prejudges are not only revealed but may also be corrected. Instead of people absolving themselves from their own ideological beliefs, they may become aware of the limits of their previously unnoticed questionable ideologies and unfounded assumptions (O'Kane, 2005:341; Linge, 1976:xviii-xxi).

Such interaction is seen as a prerequisite for genuine understanding, since the critical self-consciousness gained during the aesthetic experience opens people up to consider new possibilities with regard to how they view the world. The role of questioning in the aesthetic interaction is pivotal to aesthetic engagement. It is not enough to merely find and answer the question posed by a work. Individuals need to continue the line of questioning stimulated by the work, and find its relevance in not only their current situation but also within themselves (O'Kane, 2005:340; Linge, 1976:xvi).

Imagination is a necessary condition if people are to discern the question posed by a work, identify the questionable elements of the subject matter and construct their own questions, which are capable of interrogating the subject matter further. However, if a true understanding is to be reached the questioning cannot be one-sided. People need to be open to a dialogue consisting of a reciprocal interrogation. In this regard, the work must provoke people to risk entering into a dialogue with it (Linge, 1976:xxii).

It is the imaginative stance people take to interrogate the work, which makes it possible for the work to question people in return. In the context of this research, understanding hermeneutics and its relation to the aesthetic experience is vital to explore the artwork's potential to reveal the hidden aspects of the world and challenge tacit knowledge. The artwork's capacity elicit engagement by challenging pre-established beliefs is situated within the aesthetic experience (Davey, 2005:136).

The aesthetic experience involves an interpretive or hermeneutic approach which brings meaning to what viewers see. In return, the hermeneutic experience involves an aesthetic element through which interpretation gains significance. Interpretation gains such significance by people being able to apply what they have interpreted. The aesthetic experience plays an important part in how people share and realise meaning (Davey, 2005:136).

Davey (2005:137) explains that the ability of artworks to incite argument points to the fact that artworks 'work'. This capacity of an artwork often lies in the way in which it stimulates a confrontation between the world of the work and the viewer's worldview. The creation of a friction or a confrontation between these two worlds allows a setting-into-place of the different ideologies held by the two worlds.

The work has the potential to call forth (prompt, incite and ignite) the disclosure or the views of the artist, world and the views of the viewers (informed by their tacit knowledge). When viewers engage with an artwork, the work can no longer be regarded as just an object, since it takes the form of an event. In terms of the aesthetic experience, the artwork should be thought of as an event instead of an object, since it manifests itself in each interpretive encounter a viewer has with it (Davey, 2005:137).

When an artwork is regarded as an event (during the aesthetic interaction) it has capacity to position the views expressed in the work next to that of the viewer. It allows both the work and the viewers to reveal greater parts of themselves. In this sense, the viewer is not consumed by the artwork but rather positioned in a way in which the viewer's perspective affords. It is the interactive engagement with a work which allows the gap between the viewer's perspective and the perspective portrayed in the work to appear (Davey, 2005:136; Lopez & Willis, 2004:728-730).

Similar to participating in a conversation, aesthetic engagement depends on dialogue. It is the participation in a work's subject matter, through dialogue with the artwork, which may lead to places we would not have anticipated prior to the engagement. By linking itself to its subject matter, the artwork enables viewers to do the same. That is to say, viewers are now able to take up a position that is relative to their views of the particular subject matter. This draws the spectators into a dialogical encounter with their own tacit knowledge. Such dialogue is able to change the way in which people understand not only the artwork but also themselves. The potential of artworks to elicit unpredictable and revelatory responses is due to the eventual nature of interactive aesthetic engagement (Davey, 2005:136; Lopez & Willis, 2004:729-730).

In order to illustrate the importance of hermeneutics in the aesthetic experience, Davey (2005:142-144) elaborates on Gadamer's attempts to integrate aesthetics into hermeneutics. In addition to hermeneutics' emphasis on people's capacity to understand and explain, their ability to apply should also be considered. When an individual attempts to understand an event, situation, artwork or text he or she implicitly translates it into a situation with which he

or she is familiar. In this regard, understanding is the application of something ubiquitous to a particular situation, and consequently allows people to consider a subject critically.

The ability to concretise something can only fully happen when a work is interpreted and the subject matter is fully considered in terms of the interpreter's own frame of reference. In order to understand the work and themselves, people need to understand both what the work reveals as well as the relevance this proposal holds for their own lives. Thus, understanding shares the eventual nature of aesthetic engagement. Moreover, Gadamer regarded understanding as being part of the event of meaning. In this sense, true insights arise when people apply themselves to what a work proposes, as they are afforded the opportunity to see their own horizon through the perspective of the work. In this regard, Davey places the aesthetic experience as phenomenological event where artworks have the capacity to speak to viewers (Davey, 2005:142-144).

1.4 Methodology

This study is framed within the position of visual culture and is guided by aesthetico-action research, hermeneutic phenomenology, and thematic analysis in order to facilitate the gathering, organisation and interpretation of artworks (Marshall, 2010:85). The practice based approach to the studio work involves constant movement between action and reflection. Aesthetico-action requires the artist to constantly observe, reflect, plan, act, observe and reflect in a cyclical process. This facilitates learning from experience (Marshall, 2010:80-81). In realising this research, an interactive aesthetic or collaborative artistic engagement supported by Marshall's research design (2010) and Dirk van den Berg's (1994) relational model of aesthetic interaction was considered.

1.4.1 Practice-based research

A practice-based approach involves a shift in the tendency to regard art-making as primarily self-expression shifts to a concern with knowledge construction. This approach allows the artist to construct meaning through reflective practice. Artists are able to do so by shaping their findings in the form of visual images, translate their ideas into images and use these images to construct further thought and images.

The knowledge generated from a practice-based approach is indicative of an interactive approach, since the re-construing of existing information allows for the transformation of perception. When people's perceptions are transformed they are able to generate new insights. In this regard, both the creation and interpretation of artworks have the potential to foster understanding through a re-evaluation of perceptions and experiences. Gaining new

17

insights into one's perceptions represents the generation of new knowledge (Marshall, 2007:25-26).

Figure 1
Marshall's (2010:84) double helix process

Figure 2
Van den Berg's (1994:6) relational model of aesthetic interaction

18
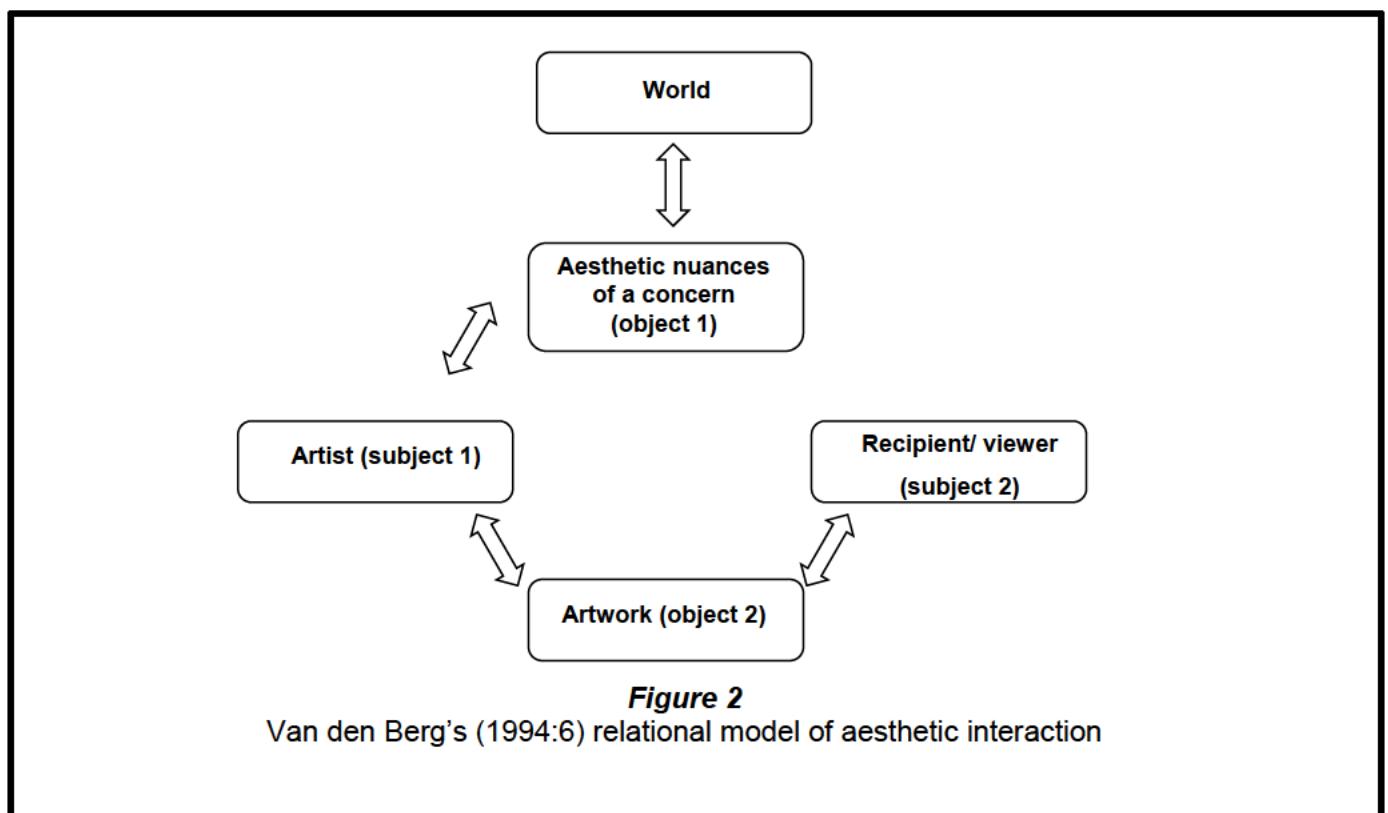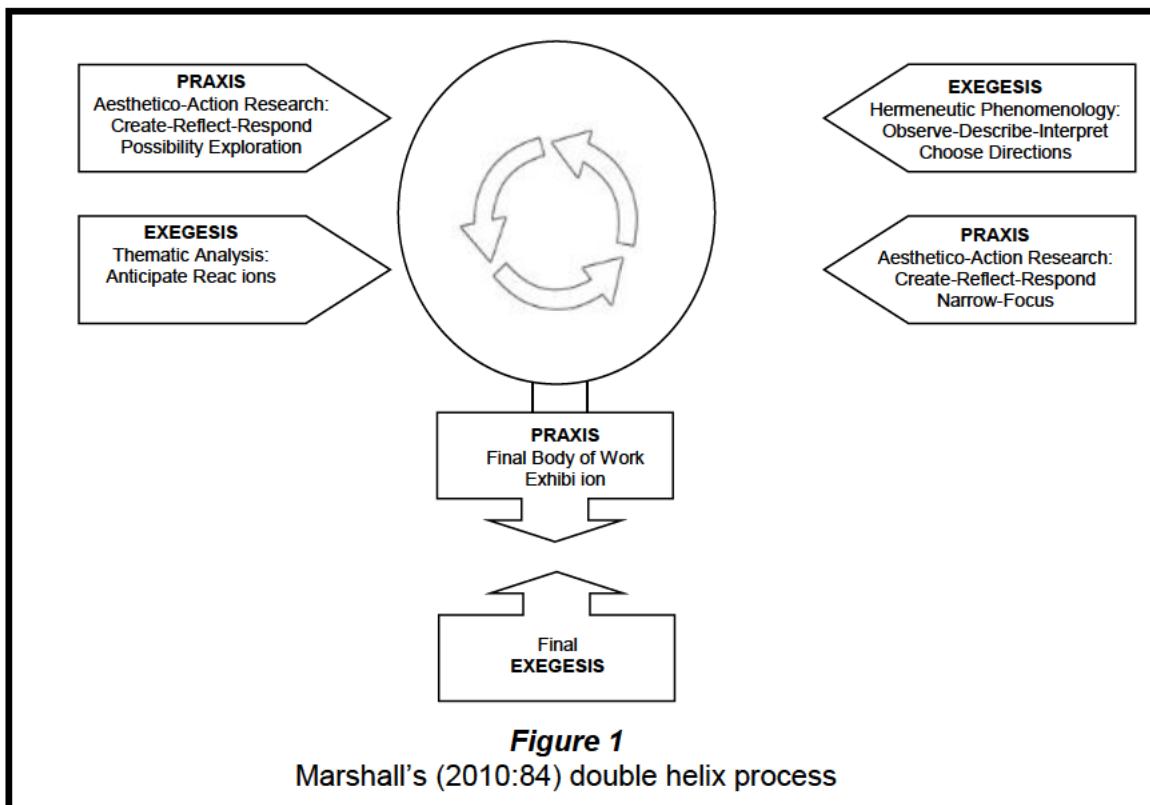
The use of hermeneutics in practice-based research underscores this approach's focus on the re-evaluation of existing knowledge. Additionally, both these approaches value the artwork's capacity to configure and convey complex ideas through multiple layers of meaning. This multiplicity of meaning is in keeping with the diversity created and required by different cultural contexts.

Moreover, this approach is consistent with the postmodern concern with context and meaning as well as Arnheim's (2001) concern regarding the relation between form and content. By regarding vision as a cognitive modality, practice-based research acknowledges the capacity of the visual arts to create and transfer knowledge. By recognising practice-based research as a type of research in its own right, artworks can become a primary modality and language can be used as a complementary tool (Marshall, 2007:26-27).

A practice-based approach geared towards the re-evaluation of established meaning to create new insights, necessitates the inclusion of imagination. Imagination as part of integrative thinking moves beyond viewers "connecting the dots" in a rational way. The use of imagination in conjunction with rational thought allows people to create new insights through a conceptual leap. Such imaginative rationality occurs when individuals construct an artwork's depiction of reality through metaphors. Through the use of metaphors artwork are able to create a coherent and embodied representation of seemingly random and confusing information. The artist's role as researcher is to question, analyse, hypothesise and give form to their thoughts in the form of artworks. The use of metaphor in art is important, since metaphors are able to exhibit complex meanings into seemingly simple forms (Marshall, 2007:26-27).

1.4.2 Aesthetico-action research

Figure 3
Marshall's (2010:80) aesthetico-action research cycle

19
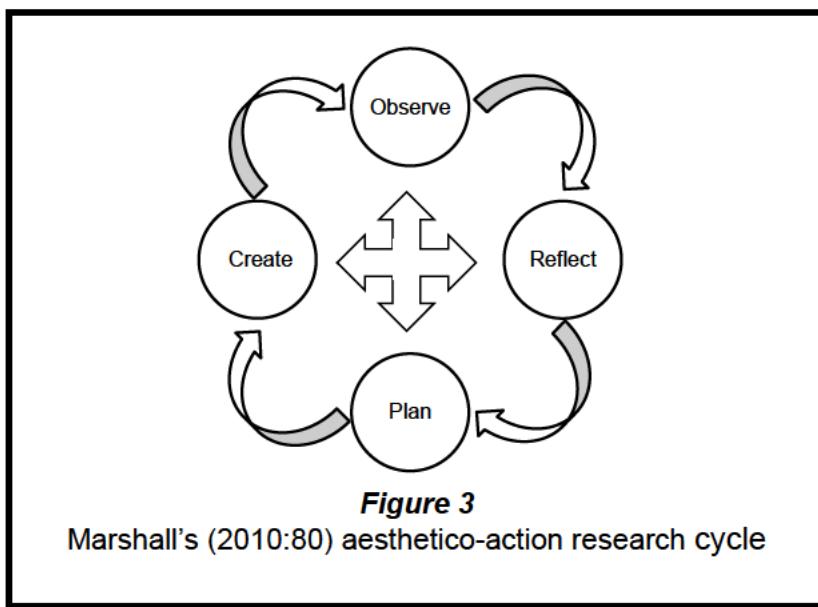
Action research concerns itself with building knowledge or understanding through experience as well as the application of such knowledge. With action research, individuals adopt a cyclical process where they continually plan, create, observe and reflect (figure 3). This process is reflexive in the sense that it involves reflection in and on practice. Reflection in practice entails artists continually learning and developing while they engage in practise. They simultaneously create and learn through (both familiar and unfamiliar) experience by building and applying their learning experience. With reflection on practice artists take a step back from their practise to gain perspective. This reflection may be regarded as perception after the fact. Reflection on practice allows artists with the space to critically evaluate their practice, and decide what to keep and what to alter. Artists can observe, reflect, plan and create while reflecting in or on their practice (Marshall, 2010:81).

For Millward (2013:123-124) making art is reflexive in nature, since it involves artists who oscillate between practice and intellectual engagement. The problems which arise from the creation process are explored and interrogated through reflexive engagement within and between the making and intellectualising processes. The constant reflexive movement between praxis and exegesis is a key part of practice-led research. Knowledge can be transferred through the exploration of problems and ideas as the creation process may take the form of embedding knowledge within an artwork. When viewers draw on their own experience during the interpretation process they oscillate between such embedded knowledge and their tacit knowledge. Indeterminacies in the interpretation of artworks are created between the content of the work and tacit knowledge of its viewers.

Davey (2005:135) has referred to such indeterminacies as a productive friction. Indeterminacies occur in the virtual space between an artwork's material (practical) and conceptual (theoretical) dimensions. This friction both causes and places the aesthetic experience. The aesthetic experience occurs in this space due to its hermeneutical nature. In this regard, the friction can be considered productive since it can elucidate the functions performed by artworks such as their ability to elicit participation and allude to a new sense of awareness. This new perception that occurs during *poiesis* and *aesthesis* can be likened to Marshall's (2010:81) view of *aesthetico* or in other words 'to perceive'.

1.4.3 Hermeneutical phenomenology

Heidegger regarded a person's pre-understanding and the influence it had on his or her interpretative abilities as an inescapable part of his or her existence. Moreover, Heidegger viewed an individual's existence in the world as being made possible through interpretation. Phenomenology and reason, for Heidegger, meant that "to let that which shows itself be

seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself" (Tan, Wilson & Olver, 2009:4). This focus on description, interpretation and unveiling ties in with the concerns of hermeneutics. In this sense, tacit knowledge influences and is also influenced by interpretation. Interpretive activities may serve to enlighten and change pre-established knowledge.

Phenomenology is concerned with revealing meaning and discovering knowledge. It is through the consideration of texts and what meanings they may reveal that phenomenology aims to expand understanding of everyday life. Moreover, phenomenology holds that meaning is created through engagement with and interpretation of the world. This research made use of interpretive hermeneutic phenomenology. Interpretive hermeneutics has emerged from Heidegger's suggestion that the focus of phenomenology should be placed on the exploration of the lived experience of a person in the world. This hermeneutical approach to phenomenology searches for the meanings imbedded in what people experience and not in what they consciously know (Lopez & Willis, 2004:728-729; Flood, 2010:9).

Artists' and viewers' environments and contexts influence their perception of reality and as such, emphasis is placed on the role that interpretation plays in human existence. Through reflection, hermeneutical phenomenology examines the experience of occurrences to understand the meaning of that particular experience. Where phenomenology is focused on the discovery and interpretation of experience to discover meaning, hermeneutics aims to interpret information to achieve a sense of understanding regarding the meaning (Lopez & Willis, 2004:731; Flood, 2010:9).

Lopez and Willis, (2004:729) explain that a hermeneutical phenomenologist regards the world in terms of the narratives of participants. The aim of hermeneutics is to unveil the things normally hidden within the human experience and the meanings embedded in common life practices. In his editor's introduction to *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, Linge (1976:xii) explains that hermeneutics is concerned with bridging the indeterminacies between what is alien or unfamiliar and what is familiar or understood. In bridging such gaps, what is familiar to the individual plays a vital part in their understanding of what is alien.

For Gadamer, a person's past experience (tacit knowledge) serves not as a hindrance to, but as a condition for understanding. In this regard, Linge (1976:xvi) explains that, as such, understanding should be regarded as a productive process rather than a reproductive one. It is productive since interpretation and understanding cannot merely be a reconstruction of an authors' or artists' original intention. People use their past experience to deal with what is

21

placed in front of them. The inseparability of people's tacit knowledge from their interpretive activities means that viewers and artworks cannot exist as separate and autonomous entities.

1.4.4 Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis concerns the identification and contextualisation of themes, ideas and concepts in the evaluation artworks and events. Thematic analysis allows for the researcher to move away from inflexible convergent processes towards a more spontaneous and open ended reflection. This approach allows for the discovery of links during any stage and in any order of Marshall's double helix process. Thematic analysis is applicable to both studio practice and research explanations. This type of analyses helps researchers and artists to observe the work's (or body of work's) overall concern, identify themes or concepts by means of a search for the bigger patterns or categories, group thematic categories and concepts, and arrange the thematic clusters to establish a connection between them (Marshall, 2010:84-85).

Making use of aesthetico-action research, hermeneutical phenomenology and thematic analysis allows the theoretical part of my research to examine visual artists who have responded to society's ideological based world-views. In addition to facilitating the gathering, organisation and interpretation of artworks, this methodology allows for the ways in which people respond to works of art to be investigated as well. The practice based approach to this study facilitates learning from theoretic as well as practice based experience. In this sense, an understanding of how interactive aesthetic engagement with works of visual art can foster dialogue and the coexistence of a truly multi-cultural society can be realised.

Chapter 1

Interactive aesthetic engagement: South African visual artists

This chapter focuses on how the transformation of established visual meaning may reveal and challenge manipulative coercion. Since artists and viewers share and are often familiar with traditional or conventional contexts, artists may have insight into the challenges presented to viewers by their shared environment. By contrasting their current context with that of the past, viewers may be encouraged to investigate the purposeful transformation of conventional meaning and resultant indeterminacies in the artwork. The first section aims to show how, through the use of imagination, viewers may overcome indeterminacies and as a result, discover how they have been manipulated by established worldviews. Subsequently, the second part of this chapter examines how art has the power to disclose unseen realities of people's environments in such a way that understanding, like established visual meaning, can be transformed.

Manipulation or coercion does not exist in a vacuum. The research position adopted is that a person's tacit knowledge cannot be demarcated or measured, since it is in essence a conglomeration of all their experiences, cultural values, religious beliefs, educational background, socio-economical position, pre-established beliefs and assumptions. Essentially this entails everything people know and believe, whether their convictions are well founded or not. Due to these various factors every individual's perception of the world will tend to be different. The changeable and subjective nature of a person's tacit knowledge makes ideological coercion possible. Ideological beliefs are often well hidden and resistant to modification. Since what people believe is not necessary dependent on logic or reason, they may be blinded by their own convictions.

For example, people may know that religious texts should not always be taken literally. They may even apply their interpretative abilities when it comes to stories such as Jonah and the whale. However, they may at the same time subscribe to the ideology of patriarchy. This indeterminacy in their beliefs may render them unwilling to consider the premise that the Bible's reference to God in a masculine form may be a metaphor as well. When asked to explain such conflicting beliefs, they may be unable to explain the indeterminacy. Such indeterminacy can be regarded as a gap between perception and cognition.

Gaps or indeterminacies in viewers' tacit knowledge may, to a great extent, be due to a passive acceptance of predetermined value systems. Scruton (2002:263-264) explains that people's tendency to conform to the moral, social and religious roles that have been

23

concocted for them by others (and rarely understood by themselves) often results in their alienation. In this regard, Scruton comments as follows on people's tendency to conform:

> [t]hey are undifferentiated, passive, awaiting agency. Our sense of the gap between subject and object translates itself into a feeling of nausea at the dissolution of things. The world becomes slime. In reaction I may run away from the future, hide myself in some predetermined role, contorting myself to fit a costume that is already made for me, so leaping across the chasm that divides me from objects only in order to become an object myself.

In an attempt to envision their place in society, people tend to lose their identity in the sense that they are manipulated into a submissive adherence to prescribed roles without ever questioning these roles. When they assume these roles that others have created for them, they lose the very sense of identity for which they strive. As a result, individuals become complacent to such an extent that they are either unable or unwilling to question or challenge the possible ideologically based 'facts' provided to them, or merely conform to manipulation and lose the ability to make their own choices.

2.1 Thematisation

The generation of art-making is relevant to the time period and is often recognised as a form of visual journalism. This, in essence, generates concentrated information in a visual format which is often layered. Contemporary art-making takes cognisance of both the audience and the content of the work. However, the tacit knowledge or cognitive stock of an audience is not an individually measurable quantity which pre-empts the notion that the full meaning of an artwork is not accessed by all viewers. Artists often adapt widely recognised themes and viewers are able to relate, recognise and incorporate the significance of such appropriations into their own lives.

Tacit knowledge is vulnerable; thus artists can bring attention to the incompatibility of different levels of knowledge held within a viewer's tacit knowledge. This is visible in the implied meanings of the artwork. An example to be cited is Wim Botha's *Commune: suspension of disbelief* (2001). This work exposes viewers to a larger than life size figure carved from Bibles which is suspended from the ceiling. The figure enacts the crucified Christ image with the red Bible covers creating the illusion of stigmata (Van der Watt, 2005:122-123).

Viewers are able to recognise the elements typically associated with Christianity such as the crucifixion pose, stigmata as well as the Bibles. Bibles are commonly found in hospitals, hotel rooms and distributed at schools, which has made its presence recognisable and

accepted. However, through the choice of medium and environment of the artwork, it departs from what would traditionally be associated with religious artworks. This deviation from tradition represents a repositioning and re-contextualising of the artwork as image and its implied meanings.

Artists (and viewers alike) are inevitably limited by their perceptive and cognitive range. When artists represent a particular subject it will inevitably include not only their pictorial style but also their subjective disposition towards that subject. They are not only influenced by their environments and cultural circumstances but also by the reception of their work and their own response to the work of others (Baxandall, 1985:72-73). By means of *aesthesis* artists may also envisage how viewers will respond to certain topics and representations. When a medium is organised to create a work, it implicitly includes the artist's visual commentary about what is represented. Instead of creating a facsimile objective representation, the artist repositions subject matter visual commentary (Dilworth, 2002:269-270).

Sensevy (2011:45-46) encapsulates Baxandall's (1985) concepts relating to the role of intentionality in the creation and interpretation of artworks. Artists often interpret social challenges as content in their artwork. It is important to note that, since artists cannot be separated from their environments, they are themselves vulnerable to manipulation. They may knowingly or unwittingly also create ideologically laden works. Due to socio-political circumstances, artists may face restrictions regarding the content of their work. Artists may feel the need to self-sensor and create works with superficial content or work that offers little more than visual interest. Moreover, artists may eventually become complacent through the visible and invisible sources of manipulation to the extent that they lose the sensitivity to recognise the current, relevant and troubling issues within society.

In the case of *Commune: suspension of disbelief*, Botha lures viewers into speculating about the reason behind his choice and integration of medium, subject matter and context. As such, the implied meanings in the artwork are experienced by viewers when they realise a discrepancy between what they know and what they perceive in the artwork. Artists intentionally create implied meanings in a work, since this stimulates and guides viewer participation (Wollheim, 1987:18).

The artist's intentions are not always visible in the artwork. Summers (1986:310-311) equates intention with aim, which serves to alter the way the artist's intention is understood. This sentiment is echoed by Davies (2013:138-139) who posits that the artist holding control

over the intentions that guide creation, the artwork should not be approached with the aim of reconstructing the artist's intent. In order to avoid treating the artist as the autonomous creator of meaning, people must be careful to not focus on the 'intended' meanings to such an extent that they limit the possible interpretations of the work.

Should artists merely provide viewers with their intent, the interpretation of the artwork will be inhibited. If a viewer is aware of the artist's intentions, there would be no room left for interpretation and as a result, the effect of the work will be curbed. The experience that viewers could have had, would have been much more striking and intense if they had come to the realisation of implied meanings in the artwork by themselves. In this regard, artists have to consider whether viewers are able to make the imaginative leap and grasp the work's implied meanings. This is important to determine whether viewers' backgrounds, cultures, contexts and dispositions will enable them to grasp possible implied meanings of the work by themselves.

The way in which an artist's intentional and initially unintentional acts interact, relate, create and inform one another, means that intentions continually change and morph. This process is known as thematisation (Wollheim, 1987:20). Thematisation involves the organisation and conversion of material into medium. An expressive or communicative use of a medium expresses the artist's interpretation of a subject matter. The artist transforms previously unintentional elements (for example line, texture, form and orientation) into features of the work or as guides for future creative activity in order to endow the surface of the artwork with meaning or content (Dilworth, 2002:262-263).

Instead of attempting to trace an artist's intentions, viewers should concern themselves with the thematization, which is inherently present in the work. Wollheim (1987:22-23) argues that artists must make the content of the artwork accessible to viewers (provided that they are adequately informed and sensitive) through observation of the artwork. In this regard, the artist can make the content (embedded in the artwork) available to viewers through their interaction with the work.

As such in certain cases, it is precisely what has been omitted from the work that has been thematised. This notion is inherent in the work *Commune: suspension of disbelief* in relation to the elements found in tradition depictions of the crucifixion. In order to elicit viewer participation, Botha chose to remove the cross, the hill of Golgotha, Mary, the disciples, the Roman soldiers as well as the sinners who were crucified with Him.

Van der Watt (2005:126-127) remarks on the way he altered a popular art-historical representation of Christ. Christ as image, who plays a pivotal role in the Bible, is now rendered in the medium of Bibles. The title itself testifies to the way he thematised the crucifixion. Instead of referring directly to the crucifixion, the title shows his use of irony to suggest the power of religion.

Figure 4
Wim Botha. *Commune: suspension of disbelief*. 2001. Carved Bibles, Biblical Text and Surveillance Equipment.
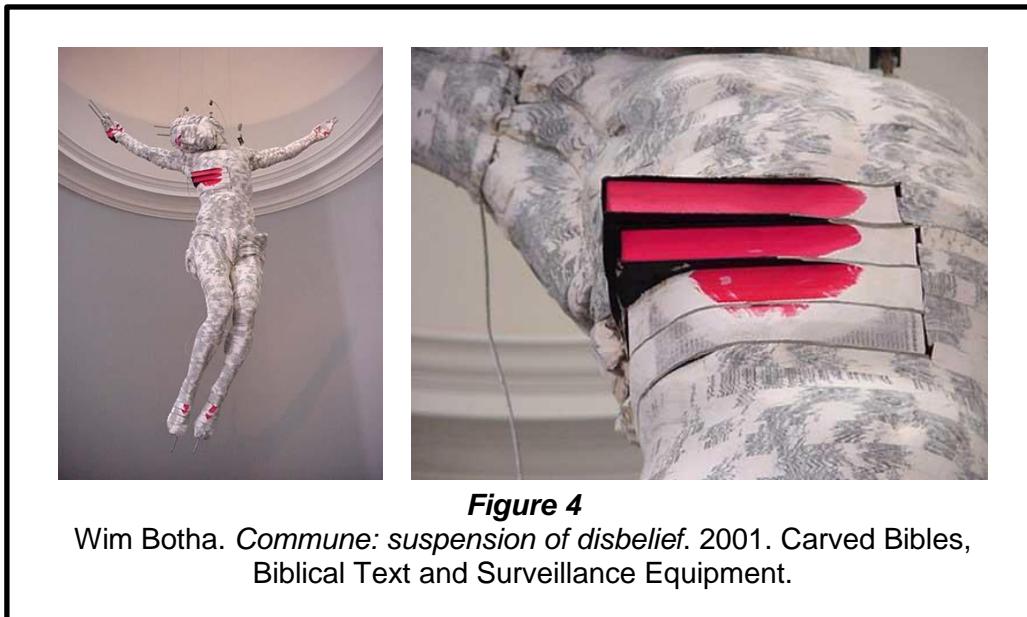
Instead of being surrounded by grief-stricken devotees, Christ is depicted as alone. The addition of the CCTV cameras creates a situation where the death of Christ has become a spectacle instead of the hallowed representation of the ultimate sacrifice. Botha draws parallels between the crucifixion and popular culture's hunger for violence and victimhood to be broadcast. In such a way Botha implicates the viewers and society as a whole in the consumption of Christ's suffering (Van der Watt, 2005:126-128). The way Botha simplified the crucifixion by removing the overfamiliar through deletion, transformed the established visual meaning as a way to create new meaning.

Tanner (2010:234-236) reiterates Baxandall's (1972) view on the institutionalisation of art. Traditions and conventions that form part of an artist's and viewer's worldview and interactive engagement may contribute to contexts that can become widely recognised throughout generations. During the 15th century Italian Renaissance artists worked in a world that demanded certain works (mostly religious works such as Madonnas and altarpieces). There were also specific expectations about how these works were to be executed. Artists and viewers shared the same educational and socio-cultural world, determined by the cultural schemes that were driven by the institutions such as the church. It

27

was prescribed that these artworks were to advance devotion and piety. Viewers were in turn fuelled by these works and their responsiveness and engagement increased institutional power.

This illustrates the historical manipulative power that images hold. Such use of images is similar to the way the media today use images to propagate "accepted" values and beliefs. People have become so use to and familiar with the manipulative image, since they experience them daily. By exploiting viewers' familiarity with and expectations regarding not only historical but also contemporary standards of visual representation, artists can induce a restructure of established meaning through active participation.

Artists have to use the previously established standards of meaning (that is well-known or widely recognisable to their viewers) as a foundation when creating the artwork in order to ensure that viewers are able to connect with the work (Gilmour, 1986:83-84).

The majority of South Africans may not have been able to recognise Murray's thematisation of Victor Ivanov's poster *Lenin lived, Lenin is alive, Lenin will live* (1967). However, the use of the President Jacob Zuma's likeness as well as the title (which hinted at the ANC's military wing "The Spear of the Nation" or *Umkhonto we Sizwe*) could be recognised by most South Africans. Moreover, the display of genitalia is a widely recognisable reference to the controversies surrounding the president's sexuality (Freedberg, 2012:37).

Figure 5
Brett Murray. *The Spear*. 2011. Acrylic on canvas. 185 x 140cm.

Interpretation involves both the context in which the interpretation occurs and the context (or the tacit knowledge) which influences the viewer. Artists can deliberately defamiliarise

28

established dogmas, ideologies, myths, traditions and other pre-established beliefs (whether authentic or not). This defamiliarisation can be achieved by adjusting, violating, destroying or scandalising such ideological beliefs. Defamiliarisation challenges pre-established beliefs and provide viewers with an original experience. The viewer must first partake in this experience and only then can interpretation commence. Interpretation is the viewer's response to the experience and a way of understanding why the artist chose to defamiliarise a particular aspect (Iser, 1984:390-393).

Van der Watt (2005:126-128) explains that Botha's *Commune: suspension of disbelief* was exhibited at the Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees (KKNK). Exhibiting in this context, Botha was able to make use of the religious sentiments often attributed to this audience and their eagerness to regard this work as a glorification of their Christian faith.

In this regard, artists need to encourage an embodied experience of the artwork. Embodiment[4] enables people to not only understand but also extract meaning from their environment and experiences. In this regard, it is important to note that meaning is relational. Changes in time and context influence and alter meaning. When individuals are presented with a situation, their experiences (past, present and expectations about future experiences) and how the situation relates to other situations will influence interpretation. Meaning is, as such, inseparable not only from an embodied experience of the world but also the artwork (Johnson, 2007:89-93).

In a South African context, artists need to be especially sensitive to the different cultural backgrounds and visual literacy of viewers[5]. Since people cannot be separated from the environment they inhabit and, as such, the visible world cannot be observed independently or from a distance. People's environment plays a pivotal part in their perspective and understanding. Artists are not exempt from this inseparability. Just like they cannot be separated from the physical creation of artworks, they are undeniably bound to the people and cultural structures that form part of the visible world. Artists are inevitably included in the visible world as well as the worlds they create (Gilmour, 1986:89-91).

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[4] Johnson (2007:93-95) based his view of embodiment on Merleau-Ponty's (1962) theories. Merleau-Ponty regards gestures as an enactment of meaning. Such gestures are mostly as simple, spontaneous and subconscious as individuals moving their hands in the same direction, while they vocally provide one another with driving directions. For Merleau-Ponty the meaning embodied in such gestures is comparable to meaning embodied in the artwork.

[5] As part of the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Index for 2015-2016, South Africa was ranked 138th (out of 140 countries) in terms of the overall quality of education (Mzekandaba, 2015). Moreover, according to the 2011 census, in addition to the official languages "Khoi, Nama and San languages, sign language, Arabic, German, Greek, Gujarati, Hebrew, Hindi, Portuguese, Sanskrit, Tamil, Telegu and Urdu" are also spoken in South Africa. As far as home languages go, English despite its status as a lingua franca, ranks fifth together with Setswana.

Iser (1984:388-389) agrees with Wollheim's (1984) argument that there is an indeterminacy between cognition and perception. In contrast with Wollheim who relies on tacit knowledge to bridge this gap and retrieve a set of pre-determined meanings, Iser argues that the viewer undertakes a creative leap of the imagination. The indeterminacy occurs between cognition and perception, and not only requires, but also stimulates and guides viewers to bridge the gap.

2.2 The power of the image and the viewer

In a society already rife with anxiety relating to economic and political discontent, clashing cultural beliefs and ecological deterioration the influences exerted on the average South African individual is significantly exacerbated by globalisation made possible via the continuous technological developments. As such, there is an increasing need to foster people's ability to be sensitive to the various needs of an ever expanding society. Due to the world constantly changing, knowledge and understanding cannot simply be taught. There is a need to instil in people the capacity to actively engage in their environments through embodied reasoning (Kim, 2009:62).

In this regard, aesthetic engagement's pedagogic ability can serve to aid the individual in navigating his or her increasingly complex environments. By engaging with the different perspectives represented in the artwork, a tolerant and inclusive society may be fostered. This requires that the 'artist to audience' relation be reconsidered and regarded as a partnership between the artist and his or her community (Kester, 2009:1). In an environment where technology can connect the world, yet communities remain fragmented; the role of aesthetic engagement needs to be re-examined. Focus needs to be placed on how art, as part of a democratic society, cannot only address contemporary issues but also help people actively engage with such concerns (Desai & Chalmers, 2007:6).

In line with Ridling's (2001) concept of the intentional object of the aesthetic experience, Bundy (2002:1-2) explains that aesthetic engagement stimulates a heightened awareness that enables people to experience a heightened sense of self. Additionally, with aesthetic engagement people must supplement their sense of heightened awareness with the ability to make connections. In this regard, engagement with artworks offers people the opportunity to become aware of themselves and their environments as well as the relationship between the two.

This view is echoed by Cupchik (2011:8) who explains that aesthetic engagement involves the interpretation of artworks by involving both a person's tacit and aesthetic knowledge.

However, he stresses that the principle of emotional elaboration needs to be incorporated. In this regard, he accounts for the inseparability of cognition and emotion. By considering the role emotion plays in aesthetic engagement, one can take into account Garrison's (1997) assertion that "what we seek to possess soon comes to possess us in thought, feelings, and action" (Kim, 2009:66).

This idea is reinforced by the idea of the work, or the intentional object of the aesthetic experience, not being bound to the work. It exists in the space where people's tacit knowledge converges with the associations they make upon engaging with the world of the work. Their real-world contexts merge with the fictitious context presented in the work. As such, the aesthetic engagement has the potential to lead to significant learning (Bundy, 2002:1-2).

Artists should be regarded as active contributors to knowledge and understanding. The fresh perspective cultivated through aesthetic engagement with the work of art can be cultivated actively. Looking back to the writings of Nietzsche, artists are regarded as exploring appearance to alter our vision by exposing the beauty and complexity of the world. In so doing, artists are able to disclose the realities in the world in a way which not only enhances their own self-understanding, but the self-understanding of those who encounter their artworks (Gilmour, 1986:173-175).

Moreover, by considering the impact that one's actions can have on others may foster self-understanding. By allowing people's real-life experiences into aesthetic engagement, the aesthetic experience speaks to their emotional life experiences as well. When viewers search for connections between the world of the work and their own lives, they actively and critically incorporate the realisations made during engagement with the artwork into their own lives. It is in such a way that people can adopt a fresh perspective on life (Bundy, 2002:1-2).

The ability to constantly renew the way in which one views the world is necessitated by the complexity of an ever changing world. The capacity of aesthetic engagement to bring about significant learning negates the tendency to hold on to the one-sided outlooks promoted by ideological beliefs. The imaginative reasoning fostered by aesthetic engagement allows people to consider in an empathetic way the influence their actions may have on others (Kim, 2009:63).

Disclosure is one of the central objectives of art. One way in which artists can contribute to understanding is to deny viewers the opportunity to regard their pre-established beliefs as

31

absolute descriptions of reality. Artists are able to do so through the revelation of viewers' perspectives as oversimplifications. In such a way imagination uncovers and brings attention to the aspects of realities people would have overlooked. This function of artists is especially relevant, since people tend to limit their understanding of what they perceive as real to the things with which they are familiar. As such, they may fail to notice the other, albeit unfamiliar, facets of the world (Gilmour, 1986:22-23).

If artists want to encourage aesthetic engagement, artworks must be structured in a way which fosters the ways in which viewers can connect with the work at a metaphoric level. The potential of aesthetic engagement to foster a heightened awareness occurs when people become mindful about how the events or situations depicted in the work relate to their environments. In such a way, they may be able to gain a new perspective on their social circumstances (Bundy, 2002:1-2).

It is important to ensure that people can relate to the artwork. Aesthetic engagement can lead to powerful realisations if the experience is personally relevant. In such a way, viewers are absorbed into the work to such a degree that they become embodied. They imagine that they are part of the work. They are able to carry the experience over to their own life experiences. This immersion into multi-layered implied meanings of the work stimulates reflection and can result in personal growth (Cupchik, 2011:8).

When aesthetic engagement leads to such reflections, people in essence re-cognise things they already knew. Yet, aesthetic engagement can only do so if the artwork negates their ability to answer the questions raised with the sets of pre-established values prescribed by their society. The role of aesthetic engagement to raise questions within viewers and facilitate a new outlook on their worlds lies in the capacity of the artwork to leave them with more questions than it provides answers. By facilitating such an aesthetic engagement, artworks cannot only challenge pre-established held beliefs but also facilitate the emergence of new knowledge (Bundy, 2002:1-2).

Aesthetic engagement with art can shape understanding by exposing people to alternative ways in which they can reflect on their lived situations. It is able to shed light on the different ways in which society operates by "un-framing" important concerns. By inciting people to imagine other ways of "being and knowing", engagement with the artwork can cause them to question from where their beliefs and actions stem. Such engagement stems from a collaboration of artist and viewer through the artwork (Desai & Chalmers, 2007:7).

Engagement with the interpretation and creation of art constitutes a search for empathetic understanding. Artworks are made and received with the expectation of communication. In order to fulfil such expectations, they need to offer people the opportunity to connect to the world of the work, which drives a dialogical connection to oneself. Aesthetic engagement strengthens the development of people's skills such as their sensitivities and sensibilities (Bresler, 2006:53-54).

Bresler's (2006:54) conception of art developing ways of doing and, as such, ways of becoming, can be traced back to Heidegger's theory that "[a]rt … is the becoming and happening of truth". In this regard, a vital role of the artwork is to expose or reveal previously unnoticed realities or aspects about the work. The depiction of universally recognisable characteristics in the artwork may facilitate the identification of commonalities between the world of the work and experiences in everyday life. The identification of certain commonalities between contrary or previously unnoticed realities may illicit both viewers and artists to re-evaluate their tacit knowledge (Gilmour, 1986:10-12).

Heidegger's conception of 'truth' involves truth as the development of self-understanding gained through the aesthetic engagement during the participation in the creation of the implied meanings of artworks. The contribution of the artwork to people's ethical understanding can be understood by regarding ethics in terms of Socratic terms. In this sense, ethics refers to the practical outcomes of self-understanding (Gilmour, 1986:174-177).

What enables aesthetic engagement to transform established beliefs is its ability to foster "free choice, systemic detachment and playful engagement". Choice that is free of the prescribed ways of thinking is enabled when people suspend their disbelief when engaging with the work. Engaging with the artwork in a playful way creates a systemic detachment, which allows for engagement with the work temporarily removed from everyday concerns. Viewers are, however, still able to incorporate a sense of self into interpretation. In this regard, people are able to separate themselves from the cultural, political, and social groups to which they belong (Bundy, 2002:2-3).

Schier (1991:151-153) examines the potential the capacity artworks have to encourage engagement through the establishment of moral co-operative relationships. Morally co-operative relationships may be established if artworks are approached in a manner where the views and perspectives of others are considered without blind acceptance. This may be achieved through an embodied experience of dissimilar or conflicting perspectives while

engaging in the participation in the creation of the implied meanings of the artwork. Interaction with the work in such a way is reliant on the use of a moral imagination.

Schier (1991:154-155) explains that the importance of the use of moral imagination (in the creation of and interaction with the artwork) lies in the guidance it is capable of providing with regard to the establishment of a balance between tacit knowledge and the consideration of other, sometimes contradictory perspectives. In this regard, the moral imagination hinders the abandonment or complete disregard of one perspective in favour of the other. As such, a consideration and evaluation of both perspectives may be brought about.

The play of the imagination can be transferred from the aesthetic ideal to the practical ends of everyday life through dramatic rehearsal as an imaginative endeavour. Dramatic rehearsal requires a dynamic and flexible imagination able to conceive of an array of potential combinations of actions. It allows people to integrate various diverse perspectives. By taking on an aesthetic form during dramatic rehearsal, people experience the freedom of choice and action. Freedom, as a feature of the aesthetic experience, manifests in people whose considerations are aesthetically formed. Freedom in this regard entails people's readiness and willingness to not only respond to new situations, but also their ability to adapt to changes within situations. As such, freedom translates to a flexibility which frees people from their rigid routines and set beliefs. Coordinating opposing customs and perspectives provides people with more freedom in the future (Kupfer, 1983:159-160; Kim, 2009:63-64).

When engaging in the aesthetic experience, people are able to foster a sense of self-acceptance. They are temporarily freed from censoring their reactions. They experience a sense of self-responsibility where they have to accept responsibility for only themselves. The potential that aesthetic engagement has to alter people's pre-established beliefs lies in the way in which viewers are persuaded to experience alternate realities. This inherently involves them considering other points of view for a period while withholding judgement (Bundy, 2002:2).

Instead of getting lost in the enormous amount of information disseminated on a daily basis to a mass audience, the aesthetic engagement with artworks allows people to focus on a distilled view of the world. The inability to connect and relate to the magnitude of concerns of contemporary society is negated by the ability of the artwork to focus on the particular. Aesthetic engagement facilitates the way in which a person notices, perceives and makes connections by the focus placed on the individual. In this way, engagement with the work of

34

art allows an individual to foster a dialogue with the work, and as such, go beyond their pre-established beliefs and pre-packaged responses (Bresler, 2006:57).

This can be observed in the reactions elicited by Kevin Carter's *The vulture and the little girl* (1993). The famine in Sudan, which encompassed the suffering of many, was only really cognised when people were confronted by a photo of an individual. This image allowed people to notice the effect the famine had on a person. They could connect to the suffering of the girl, where the suffering of a nation seemed too vast a concept to identify with. The work managed to put a face to the human suffering.

The impact of aesthetic engagement is strengthened by the capacity of the artwork to communicate in such an intimate way that an individual feel as if the work is telling him or her something in particular. The work can be compelling to such an extent that it tasks viewers to not only understand what is said but also what is told to them in particular. This ability to talk with, rather than at viewers, enables artworks to elicit the need to understand what they communicate. This process of inquiry is guided by the anticipation of meaning as well as the capacity of the artwork to confront viewers through the disclosure of concealed elements. Since an encounter with the work is an encounter with oneself, an interaction with a work which confronts viewers translates into a confrontation of the self. Moreover, the aesthetic experience gained from engaging with a work of art is an experience all the same, and viewers will integrate it into their own worldviews and self-understanding (Gadamer, 1964:98-101).

In this regard, if interactive aesthetic engagement with the work of art can stimulate self-understanding, people may start to become aware of where their world-views have thus far been influenced by unfounded ideologies. Moreover, if people start to understand themselves in relation to others with whom they share their environment they may be better enabled to contribute to the formation of a truly multi-cultural South African society. In this regard, the following chapter will investigate the ability of the work of art to shed light on the challenges faced in South Africa with regard to how we as a society view and understand each other.

Chapter 2

South African visual culture

In this chapter, contemporary South African challenges will be examined in terms of aesthetic engagements, which have arisen, demanding the attention of society in reading these challenges. The #rhodesmustfall campaign will be investigated in order to explore issues of colonialism and apartheid, which have been exposed in the form of a student uprising. Power relationships inherent in the work of Willem Boshoff, Tracey Rose and Zanele Muholi will be discussed in terms of its capacity to negate the exclusion of the other. The phenomenon of culture jamming as a way to provide a voice to inferred ideologies within society will be considered.

The symbols to rule and rules to system progression serve to orientate society, make the environment comprehensible and stipulate the 'proper' ways to act. In this respect, symbols are simultaneously responsible for the creation of established rules that dictate behaviour as well as for the provision of the opportunities needed to transform the systems based upon them. If society is to evolve, it is of paramount importance to restructure and re-interpret its existing systems (Van Peursen, 1974:143-155). One such symbol in need of restructuring, the Rhodes monument, has recently been called into question.

The recent engagements into the relevance of historical monuments in South Africa have unlocked discourses pertinent to a democratic South African history. The #rhodesmustfall campaign at the University of Cape Town (UCT) has been a telling moment and window into a false sense of order imposed on South Africa. The call was for the removal of the Rhodes monument. Cecil John Rhodes (1853-1902) was British-born, an imperialist, politician, mining magnate and businessman in South Africa. On 9 April 2015, student protests succeeded in having his statue removed from the UCT campus.

The iconoclastic actions of the students may have been influenced by an abundance of iconoclastic imagery readily provided by the media. The influences may range from the fall of the Soviet Union and the subsequent toppling of statues of autocratic leaders to signify liberation to the more worrying destruction of priceless artefacts to purge religious minorities as seen in Syria (Kros, 2015:152).

Alternatively, by engaging with the statue aesthetically, students' sensitivity was re-awakened, which led them to see what they had previously overlooked. Through dramatic rehearsal and the use of the moral imagination, students were able to not only understand what the monument encompassed but also to vocalise the alternative they had envisioned

(Kim, 2009:71). Their responses could be seen in terms of Arnheim's (2001) concept of order. They stressed the importance of modifying the education system to suit the new complexities and functions of a democratic society.

The culmination of the UCT students' actions led to the removal of the statue and for a (albeit brief) time shed light on the enduring pain and exclusion within South African politics. They brought attention to the complex relationships between the past embodied by a monument and the people who presently occupy the space. Monuments have the capacity to project the ideologies held by those they portray and repress people. In return, the monuments become associated with hate and fear. Often monuments demand respect and in so doing dominate people (Kros, 2015:151-154).

If people engage in the debate surrounding the controversy they may be able to consider the perspectives of the students. Instead of deeming the students ungrateful iconoclasts, they can move past the initial sense of disgust felt when witnessing a statue being vandalised. This experience of revulsion can occur without the individual having any knowledge of who or what the statue represents.

When considered in such a way, the students' attempt to restructure a system where form has lost touch with the functions required by its society may be connected to Kros's (2015:150-151) discussions on "archives and counter-archives". The way in which a society constructs its archives entails more than a mere unresponsive institutional documentation of its history. It has a direct bearing on how understanding is shaped, knowledge is created and authority is established. As such, the selective manipulation of an archive has the potential to enhance and implement state power by not only altering how history is remembered but also limiting current discourses. In order to negate the manipulative power of what is archived, a sense of disobedience is required.

For the student leaders the monument became a symbol of the way in which institutional colonialism still persisted at UCT. In this sense, the archival theory might be used to better understand the students' grievances. The Rhodes monument, as is often the case, was made to serve the needs of a clear-cut political agenda. Testifying to the insidious manipulative powers of an archive, students had to pass this monument daily. They were made aware by writings passed on by dissident intellectuals that not only did this monument embrace contrived historical narrative but also that it still held power over them in the present (Kros, 2015:151-152).

Moreover, engaging with narratives of the past, students intuitively felt the oppressive qualities of the statue. As Kim (2009:72-73) explains, it is by means of embodied reasoning and questioning that people can obtain the understanding, which is not explicitly taught to them. Their personal experience and observation of significant events were used in their identification of the oppressive power.

Revealing the disaccord in an existing system is vital since the perception of the underlying order may be misleading. In this regard, the #rhodesmustfall campaign moves from mere iconoclasm, to an act of disobedience with the potential to call attention to the need for change.

By voicing the exclusion still experienced by many South Africans, the UCT students had, to some extent, managed to claim ownership of the space they inhabited. The hatred felt at the prolonged subjugation was channelled into the physical violence towards an inanimate object (Kros, 2015:155). The controversial nature of how they went about expressing their frustration fit into the scope of assertion violence. Students realised their inability to exert control over their environments. They were subjected to the restrictions placed on them and their role in society through institutional culture, and they were unable to express their frustration and rage in a productive way. The event captured by the media as a spectacle, prescribed roles for the students of which they may not have been aware.

The various opinions and emotions long suppressed brought forth and have shown the youth of South Africa that they do have the capacity to induce change by introducing a different sense of order and history. Although their actions can induce a restructure that is truly representative of an inclusive society, care needs to be taken in how this process is induced.

The aesthetic engagement enacted with the #rhodesmustfall campaign allowed people to consider what is moral. Moral in this regard refers to people's ability to not only choose their own values but also take responsibility for their choices (Kim, 2009:65). It allows them to the ability to gain an understanding of themselves and others, notice the limitations of the current systems and explore imaginatively how various actions may impact the outcomes they wish to achieve (Kim, 2009:69-70).

By engaging in a dialogue with works of art people allow themselves to be influenced by the work. The work of art has the ability to communicate in such a distinctive manner that it is made available to all viewers. An experience with the work will always occur in the viewer's

present. The intimacy experienced during the interaction with an artwork has a mysterious ability to undermine the familiar (Gadamer, 1964:104).

The power of art to undermine the familiar while facilitating an intensified encounter with the world and ourselves creates an opportunity for us to foster a change within ourselves. The way in which the artwork elicits dialogue encourages people to consider a variety of and often foreign perspectives on familiar matters. They may start developing an aesthetic morality where each situation, both in and outside the aesthetic experience, is considered anew without relying on fixed responses endorsed by their ideologically informed worldviews (Gilmour, 1986:182-183).

After interaction with an artwork, people can regard their environments anew. The understanding of reality and truth needs to be clarified. Society (the South African society in particular) consists of multiple cultures that embody a diverse array of perspectives on reality. In this regard, Gilmour (1986:157) explains that truth, with regard to art, concerns the artist's responsibility to disclose a reality. This disclosure is done while acknowledging its contextual dependency and does not attempt to represent one objective truth.

The aim of the artist, according to Heidegger's conception of 'truth', involves truth as the development of self-understanding gained through the participation in the implied meanings of the artwork. What is more, the contemporaneous, conceptual inexhaustibility and overdetermination of meaning may result in multiple interpretations and multiple ways in which self-understanding can be expanded.

Willem Boshoff's approach to art and society speaks directly to some of the central tenants of this research. His works often speak of inclusion and the incorporation of the multiple perspectives of the South African environment. Interaction with his work may bring forth previously unnoticed realities of human nature to build their identities based upon the exclusion and alienation of *the other*.

His installations often focus on inclusivity and testify to his "world-centric" approach. As part of a world-centric approach, Boshoff moves away from the cultural confines of dogmatic ethnocentric art towards cultural pluralism. His work is representative of the capacity of the artwork to communicate ideas about social responsibility. He is in strong opposition not only to ethnocentrism but also approaches that seek to establish universal truths and values. Central to the use of a world-centric approach is Boshoff's concern that, in the past, the

39

world has relied on 'universal values', to such an extent that it became a way to justify colonialism's forceful indoctrination (Staden-Garbett, 2009:114-115).

For him, ethnocentricity and the thoughts surrounding the establishment of a homogenous world with universal principles was, and still is, used to justify the imposition of uniformity through nationalism and fundamentalism. In this regard, if not kept in check, ethnocentrism may be skewed to justify exclusion and oppression. This can be observed when patriotism becomes distorted through ideological based misbeliefs about heritage and shared hatred for those who do not fit a predetermined mould (Staden-Garbett, 2009:115).

The hatred and vilification of *the other* has been an ongoing concern in the South African society. From colonisation, the injustices of apartheid, the suppression of women and LGBT communities to recent outbreaks of xenophobia and flaring racial and socio-economic tensions, the inability to fully accept and embrace what is different has been almost ever-present.

Boshoff's aim to use the artwork as a vehicle that can induce a dialogue between the different segments of the South Africa society can be observed in his *Circles of Knowledge* (2000). In stark contrast to the exclusionary nature of monuments of the past (such as the Rhodes statue) the work served as homage to the multicultural and multilingual South Africa. The work consists of keywords and their explanations engraved on eleven granite stones. All of South Africa's eleven official languages are featured in the work. Instead of translating the same text eleven times, Boshoff forces the reader to engage with the people they may normally regard as *the other*. If viewers want to interpret and understand the text, they must use the expertise of other cultures that are able to read and translate the text. People are invited into a dynamic interaction, not only with the work but also with their fellow viewers (Cabano-Dempsey, 2014:86).

The aim is to find shared experiences and shared commonalities to identify people as part of the planet and not just a local culture. By focusing on transcendence, he is able to show that the artwork can include cultural heritage while still being applicable to the formation of greater perspectives (Staden-Garbett, 2009:118-119).

Figure 6
Willem Boshoff. *Circles of Knowledge.* 2000. Granite. Johannesburg.

Instead of subjugating people, this work invites them to become part of the space. The stones are arranged in a way reminiscent of an ancient stone circle. The work serves as impromptu seats, placed in the courtyard of the University of Johannesburg's (UJ) Auckland Park Kingsway Campus (APK), It serves as an informal meeting place (Cabano-Dempsey, 2014:86).

In addition to Boshoff's focus on inclusion, his works often testify to his strong opposition of manipulative beliefs. He aims to enable viewers to question and think independently from discursive hegemony (Staden-Garbett, 2009:114-115).

Boshoff's fascination with language is especially relevant to a South African context, where language plays a pivotal role in the separation created between *us* and *them*. The inability to understand the language of a colleague, client or service provider often excludes people from interacting with one another. Not being proficient in a language leaves people open to being judged as unintelligent or obstinate. Certain languages have been personified to such an extent, that when spoken, they bring forth memories of the past. Afrikaans, as a language used to dominate, carries with it the sentiments of a brutal past. English is often regarded as a language of compromise and as such, is fast becoming the corporate language of South Africa. It is seen as the language that needs to be mastered if one is to advance in society (Spierenburg & Wels, 2006:68-69).

Despite the usefulness of a common language, English often serves as a second or third language. People are still being judged by their accent. In this regard, Willem Boshoff (2012) explains that he has become aware of popular misconceptions about the relation between

41

being proficient in English and being intellectually gifted. He has discovered that many of his friends and colleagues have preconceived ideas about him and his intellect due to his Afrikaans heritage. As a result, many of Boshoff's works aim to bring to bear that a person's exterior does not necessarily have a bearing on his or her intellect. He regards this disruption of pre-established ideas as a fundamental step towards fostering a society that has respect for others. Some of his works use the conventional perceptions surrounding art and art galleries to enhance the conceptual validity of his works.

With his installation, *Blind Alphabet* (1991), Boshoff empowers people who are within an environment where sight and visual literacy usually reign supreme. He has created sculptures that illustrate complex dictionary terms that have to do with form and texture. These objects are obscured as they are placed in mesh boxes with a braille description on each box lid. The sighted individuals, indoctrinated by the 'do not touch' signs in museums or galleries may find themselves unable to open the boxes. Being restricted and placed at a disadvantage brings to the sighted visitor the sense of disappointment ordinarily experienced by blind people (Boshoff, 2012).

Figure 7
Willem Boshoff. *Blind Alphabet.* 1991. Wood, steel and aluminium.
36 wooden forms from the letter B. MTN Art Collection.

In *Blind Alphabet* he challenges ideas about intellect and appearance by having blind people serve as the experts in an environment, which is traditionally unwelcoming to them. The sighted visitors now found themselves to be among the excluded and alienated. The blind person, who feels the familiar braille text, is able to read the explanation about the work and feels free to open the box and touch the object. Witnessing the experience of the blind serves to confuse sighted people, prompting them to ask for the blind person's help (Boshoff, 2012).

42

Participation in society itself is encouraged by the role reversal, which requires the blind to share their ability to read braille. The text is written in an academic language and can be cumbersome. In such a way, the intelligence of the blind is not undermined. The terms are not only difficult to read but also difficult to explain. As a result, this work can foster conversations between people who may ordinarily find it hard to communicate (Boshoff, 2012). Boshoff's defamiliarisation of what is typically expected of galleries and museums may lead to sighted viewers experiencing the loss of a community they have seldom, if ever, relied upon.

Boshoff considers the context (in this case, the art gallery) in conjunction with the interpretative abilities of viewers. Not only does he exploit the pre-established ideas about interacting with art, but he also brings attention to the act of reading. People may assume that reading material is widely available and accessible to the public (Van Aswegen, 2012:54-55). Society relies on sight and reading to such an extent that being illiterate or unable to read via sight restrains people's access to the rest of society considerably.

What makes this exclusion worse is the lack of access to braille in South Africa. The adversities faced by a community often regarded as *the other* becomes worse. In schools for the visually impaired there is a shortage of books in braille and large print. Inadequate service provision such as failed tender processes left 17 of 22 of these schools without books. Only 150 of the more than 600 textbooks required for the curricula incorporated into the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) document have been adapted to braille (Khumalo & Hodgson, 2015).

By defamiliarising what can normally be expected from interacting with a work of art, the *Blind Alphabet* brings the privilege normally experienced by sighted people into focus. They can still see but not understand what they are seeing. They experience the braille as texture and can only assume that the information it contains may be legible. They now occupy the space of an illiterate person. They have to rely on pictures for the narrative while the writing is pushed into the background. It is now the sighted visitor who feels overwhelmed by the sea of containers withholding information from them. This inability to access information also serves as a commentary to the institutional shortcomings of the art gallery space (Van Aswegen, 2012:54-55).

Wim Botha also makes use of the multiple languages spoken in South Africa. By using Bibles in the *Commune: suspension of disbelief* (2001), which consists of all eleven official languages, he is able to show how a foreign religion can infiltrate a whole society. His highly

43

recognisable rendering of Christ fits into the realm of what is deeded culturally acceptable. This image of the crucifixion, no longer aimed at the representation of a religious 'truth', shows how religion can be used as a tool to skew the truth in order to manipulate society. A parallel can be drawn between his choice of medium and the manifestation of Christ. His use of Bibles points to the fact that the only tangible manifestation of the Christian faith is through the written word (Von Veh, 2014:54-55).

The presence of the CCTV cameras may be a metaphorical comparison between the omnipresence of God, and the political and social constraints imposed by a culture where people's lives are increasingly surveyed. The amalgamation of religion and state brings attention to how both these elements can command society. Botha casts the certainty usually associated with the written word into doubt in order to foster a culture of people becoming aware of their passive acceptance of dogma. This work also shows the importance of people questioning and reassessing the things they were taught to be true if they are to restructure their environments in a productive way (Von Veh, 2014:55).

In order to imbue artworks with the capacity to elicit change in an environment, the phenomenon of 'culture jamming' has often been used to politicise people. Harzman (2015:17) explains that originally culture jamming was concerned with the distortion and transformation of popular consumer icons to transform their meaning and to provoke consumer awareness. Its usability can be expanded to allowing people to bring attention to the flaws of the governance of a current system. Culture jamming may be used as a tool to inspire resistance, civil disobedience, and bring about political and social progress.

Culture jamming takes the stance that the media influence the choices to such an extent that the world is subject to a mediated culture. The role of the media activists is to impede the propagandist activities of the advertising community to disrupt their cultural domination (Chung & Kirby, 2009:35).

Culture jamming encompasses a wide array of activities aimed at providing the excluded and voiceless with a platform to not only regard established ideals anew, but also to articulate their concerns. Harzman (2015:20) explains that art and culture jamming both rely on the transformation of established meaning in terms of the cultural references that a society shares. Moreover, practices in both art and culture jamming can serve as a way to resist the status quo. As such, it is no longer limited to an anti-consumerist movement. Culture jamming is regarded as a strategy to challenge what an artefact represents. The iconoclasm of the Rhodes statue and Botha's use of the Christ figure become vivid examples of culture

44

jamming. Harzman (2015:21) refers to such disillusionment as a distortion. By purposefully distorting the control exerted by a notorious element or state over others, critical awareness can be raised.

When artists expose an unnoticed reality of the world creatively through an unfamiliar situation or comparison, they are able to induce viewers to consider a new perspective. Barbara Kruger who is renowned for her assemblage works such as *I Shop; Therefore, I am* (1987) and *Your Body is a Battleground* (1989), is a practising artist using culture jamming as content and medium. Her use of elements and techniques of the media addresses multiple issues, including consumption and gender (Chung & Kirby, 2009:35).

The use of thematisation and parody to transform established meaning becomes an important way to guide engagement with the work of art to negate people's complacency and tendency to practise selective exposure. Contemporary artists who make use of thematisation have to ensure that viewers have the tacit knowledge to recognise the original artwork being referenced. If not, they will not be able to detect the significance of the *detournements* made by the artist. As such, artists need to reflect on previous artworks and determine how they can "trans-contextualize" the original to create layers of associative meaning. They need to consider how the layers of meaning relate to one another and with the original work (Von Veh, 2012:22).

One way in which artists can engage viewers with the contemporary South African women's plight can be through the use of Christian iconography. This religion and the symbols associated with it has infiltrated countless cultures over centuries through crusades and missionary work. As such, the imagery associated with the faith should be widely recognised and be capable of eliciting a range of emotional responses (Von Veh, 2012:22).

The ability of culture and religion to indoctrinate society is explored by South African artist Tracey Rose in her work *Lucie's Fur Version 1:1:1* (2003). She disrupts the religious patriarchal structures by transforming biblical stories and retelling them from a feminist perspective. In her work, Lucie takes the place of Eve as the first hominid. The fur or pubic hair refers to the role Eve (and by extension Lucie) played as the mother of the human race. In this regard Rose diverges from the biblical narrative as she casts Lucie as the 'progenitor' of humankind. In *Adam and Yves, BC* (2003), Adam is moved from his original role as forefather and depicted as involved in a homosexual relationship. The men are portrayed as hiding from God. In Rose's version of the origin of humankind, women are no longer the

45

cause of original sin or the reason why people were expelled from the Garden of Eden (Von Veh, 2012:28).

The cultural, religious and political powers that be have long regulated the appropriate behaviour of a society. By creating divides based on gender, race and sexuality, and constructing a society's identity based on the exclusion of others, have insured the power of many oppressive leaders. Governing sexuality in particular enables the control over women's behaviour. This type of control started with the story of Adam and Eve (Von Veh, 2012:28). Eve as the temptress, punished for her insolence via excruciating child birth and assigning her the role of a submissive being with the sole purpose of honouring her husband and her God.

Figure 8
Tracey Rose. *Lucie's Fur Version 1:1:1 - Adam & Yves.* 2003. Photographic colour print. 82 x 82 cm.

To ensure the total suppression and obedience of a society, the church and state jointly removed the ability of women and people from other cultures to lead or participate in economic, religious and political activities. The use of moral implications to justify the exclusion from fiscal domains ensured (and still do) the alienation of large parts of society. Rose's *Adam and* Yves*, BC* (2003) addresses the exclusionary nature informed by Christian-based control. Both figures are black and gay, and as such, they would have not only been excluded form socio-political environments but also from pictorial conventions. She also manages to address the cultural barriers enforced by traditional African societies (Von Veh, 2012:29).

Viewers need to make a leap of the imagination to distinguish between the visible differences and similarities of concepts suggested by the artwork. In doing so, they are able to make connections beyond the literal representation contained in the work. Viewer cognition is enhanced through connecting seemingly unrelated forms or realms of experience (Marshall, 2007:29).

The aesthetic experience develops viewers' ability to respond to everyday situations with sensitivity. Kupfer (1983:76-77) emphasises the important similarities between aesthetic and moral consideration in order to be able to anticipate and ethically evaluate consequences and reactions. Participation in the aesthetic experience may provide the guidance necessary to illicit an abandonment of egocentric points of view to make moral consideration possible. The situations encountered in the world of the work offer opportunities for morals to manifest. The shift in perspective (due to the participation in the aesthetic experience) towards questioning and moral evaluation of aspects of the world is detached from self-centred concerns and it may be beneficial to the way in which people participate in their environments.

The ability to establish cooperative relations while retaining an individual identity is further enhanced by the freedom encountered during the aesthetic experience. The freedom of the aesthetic experience is due to indeterminacies and open-endedness involved in the participation in the creation of the work's implied meanings. The aesthetic experience is open-ended in the sense that there are multiple ways in which a moral and aesthetic unification may manifest.

The need for artworks with such a capacity becomes clear when considering the intolerance and the need to convert people who do not fit the pre-established values of a culture. Such biases are echoed in the speeches of some of the most influential men in South Africa. In 2014 Democratic Alliance (DA) leader Mmusi Maimane categorised homosexuals and Muslims as sinners in need of salvation: "So, you know what I am most grateful of, is that in my friendship circles there are Muslims, there are gay people, because I believe that is what God has called us to do. I take the verse that Jesus says, 'I didn't come for the well but I came for the sick'. I take that quite seriously" (Hawker, 2015:1).

In 2006, President Zuma referred to same sex-marriage as being a disgrace to God and to be essentially un-African: "When I was growing up, unqingili (a gay person) would not have stood in front of me. I would knock him out." In a later attempt to justify his opinion he

47

explained that: "the communal upbringing of children in the past was able to assist parents to notice children with a different social orientation" (Hawker, 2015:1).

The Afrikaner and English cultures of South Africa are by no means exempt from such exclusionary attitudes. During an interview with Jooste (2008), Buchan explained that, "I cannot ever agree that homosexuality is right, I cannot bless it. I love them though, but they need help. We have prayed for them and God has changed their hearts."

Von Veh (2012:29) explains that *Adam and Yves, BC* brings much needed attention to people's attitudes, which remain resistant towards homosexuality despite the laws governing the country. The continued characterisation of homosexuality as 'un-African' testifies that homosexuality is seen as a European import. Additionally, this line of thought can be identified in the Afrikaner as seen in the former NP leader Marthinus van Schalkwyk's objection to being implicated in sex with men for money. In his denial of the allegations he responded that he is a real Boer, and as such, he is not gay (Müller, 1998).

The tumultuous nature of addressing sexuality in South Africa can be seen in the reception of the artworks exhibited at *The Innovative Women* exhibition in 2010. The exhibition (which ironically received a R300 000 government grant) saw former Arts and Culture minister, Lulu Xingwana, walking out and neglecting her duty as opening speaker. Later she denied reports that she walked out because she found the works offensive, pornographic, immoral and against nation-building. The exhibition included the works of Zanele Muholi and Nandipha Mntambo, showing women in intimate poses (Mnguni, 2010).

The displeasure of Xingwana at seeing the female figure represented in a lesbian context is telling of the duality of how women are regarded in the South African society. The traditional depiction of the heterosexual female nude has become so commonplace in society to such an extent that it not regarded as strange or offensive. Women are depicted in paintings made by men for the enjoyment of men. Other than fulfilling the role of object for the male gaze or subservient wife and mother, women have been systematically erased from the human archive. Their absence from history has engrained the present with privileged masculinity (Thomas, 2010:423).

Muholi's work testifies to the need to incorporate the black lesbian community into society's archive, and for them to be regarded as integral and equal members of the community. Focus is placed on specifically the often excluded and marginalised women from township communities. Her work takes a disruptive and political stance in opposition to what is

48

deemed 'appropriate' for both art and women. Her work is especially relevant in an environment where corrective and curative rape is seen as a valid method to rehabilitate lesbians and restore their womanhood (Thomas, 2010:423-424).

Xingwana responded to being labelled homophobic by explaining that: "Contrary to media reports, I was not even aware as to whether the 'bodies' in the images were of men or women or both for that matter". This response sheds a further light on the stance of gender identity in South Africa. Muholi's works call into question the need to make distinctions between men and women. It challenges the pre-established beliefs about how sexuality determines appearance. In such a way, Muholi is able to show how art has the capacity to disrupt "conventions that govern our gaze" (Thomas, 2010:425).

Figure 9
Zanele Muholi. *Being*. 2007. From the series *Being*. Edition of 8. 91.4 × 64.8 cm.

Muholi's work has the capacity to address the dominant gender ideologies still prevalent in South Africa. The debates stirred up by her work showed the importance of aesthetics as part of visual activism. The ideology that homosexuality is un-African is challenged by her work and as such, serves as a counter-archive. By bringing attention to the continued exclusion and stigmatisation of the African lesbian communities she not only aims to extend understanding through her work but also to stimulate dialogue (Tyali, 2014:151).

If the arts are to address and engage people with regard to the issues faced in contemporary South African society, artists need to take note of people's tendency to avoid discussions that may contradict their beliefs. Xingwana's avoidance of Muholi's work indicates that Festinger's (1985) cognitive dissonance theory is still relevant today. This theory holds that

49

cognitive dissonance occurs when an individual is subjected to information that conflicts with his or her dedication to and solidarity with the ideologies propagated by society. The viewer resolves the conflict by either blindly accepting or disparaging the new information. The resulting tension and discomfort lead to viewers who may fall into the habit of selective exposure. Viewers might altogether avoid information that contradicts their tacit knowledge. This resistance varies amongst viewers and is context dependant (Nam, Jost & Van Bavel, 2013:2). As a way to negate viewers' tendency towards selective exposure and their incessant need for order, consistency-building can be exploited in the visual arts. As such, the next chapter will look to the creation of works that can encourage dialogue through interactive aesthetic engagement and layering of meaning, whilst reflecting on the strategies used by the Wim Botha, Willem Boshoff, Tracy Rose and Zanele Muholi.

Chapter 3

Practical application of research

In order to understand how aesthetic engagement can be elicited through interaction with artworks, the often unnoticed processes involved in the creation and interpretation of artworks are dissected to establish a theoretical framework. The first part of this chapter will investigate the relationship between cognition and the identification of patterns of consistency in the information to which people are exposed.

In addition, the manner in which artworks can activate and frustrate viewers' expectations will be investigated as a stimulus towards individuals' self-questioning and re-evaluation of their tacit knowledge. In this regard, the role of indeterminacies created by the layered implied meanings of artworks play to stimulate participation will be investigated. The relation between indeterminacies in the work and the gaps in viewers' tacit knowledge (the space between indeterminacies and their possible resolution) will be examined as a way in which engagement with the issues present in viewers' everyday lives can be stimulated.

4.1 Framework for creation and interpretation

The way in which viewers participate in the aesthetic experience can be divided into three phases. When first approaching a work, people attempt to piece together the various parts of a work in order to form an overall impression of the work. The first phase of the aesthetic experience is characterised by immediate sensory enjoyment or non-enjoyment. It is only once they are satiated with this initial enjoyment of the work's physical characteristics that they start to notice the artwork's implied meanings. This new awareness is the moment that stimulates a shift away from mere enjoyment of the aesthetic experience to criticism and reasoning (Ridling, 2001:759).

With regard to the oscillation of readers' attention, Iser (1989:8-10) explains that readers are deliberately and systematically exposed to different points of view or a "wandering viewpoint". Artworks may induce a wandering viewpoint by activating an oscillation between what is implicit and explicit.

When looking at Wim Botha's *Commune: onomatopoeia* (2003) viewers are presented with a simulated room. They see a bucket placed underneath a floating ball-and-claw feet wooden table and a sideboard in the style of the table. Above the sideboard is an oval etching of a coat of arms. The 'room' also contains stained glass windows and a faux ceiling fixture. At first glance the work may seem like a reconstruction of a mid-20th century Afrikaner middleclass room (Van der Watt, 2005:127-128).

Figure 10
Wim Botha. *Commune: onomatopoeia*. 2003. Installation.

As they move through the installation they connect the various schematised views (in this case, the furniture) in order to form a harmonious *gestalt* (room). Initially, viewers may experience a strange familiarity, even nostalgia. Making use of their tacit knowledge, viewers need to fill in the gaps in the implied meanings of the work. They need to establish where they have seen this type of furniture before, and what significance the stained glass windows, usually found in a church, have in relation to the room.

In order to overcome the indeterminacies in the implied meanings of the artwork, viewers have to engage in a creative search. This creative search is the second phase in the aesthetic experience and is a necessary condition for the formation of the intentional aesthetic object (Ingarden, 1961:289-294). In this way, the gaps in the implied meanings of the artwork may be overcome as a result of the convergence of the world of the work and the viewers' imagination. This convergence may be likened to how readers connect the different parts of a text through the wandering viewpoint in Iser's (1972) virtual dimension of the text or how viewers connect schematised views of an artwork in Gadamer's (1987) mental image in order to form the intentional aesthetic object.

During the aesthetic experience with *Commune: onomatopoeia*, viewers are encouraged to consider their cultural allegiances. The consideration is that they themselves have constructed their identity at the exclusion of others. The work serves as an indication that exclusion and inclusion are not bound to one particular culture, time or place.

52

The viewer's ability to recognise gaps and formulate appropriate questions emphasises the importance of stimulating an interplay between their knowledge and ignorance of the content meaning within an artwork. In this regard, both *Commune: onomatopoeia* and *Commune: suspension of disbelief* can elicit initial reactions that indicate the presence of ideological beliefs. The ability *Commune: suspension of disbelief* has to induce horror at the carving of Bibles can later be re-evaluated into how viewers themselves have become complicit in the desecration of religion while the *Commune: onomatopoeia* has the ability to use the emotion generated by the exclusion and alienation of one culture to incriminate the human race as a whole.

4.2 Discussion of my artworks

In the discussion of my artworks, it is important to note that the creation and interpretation of the works are approached from the continuous oscillation between creation and interpretation. As an artist, I attempt to envision how the works will be interpreted, but due to the overdetermination of meaning and the wide range of viewers' individual tacit knowledge this discussion will inevitably fall short, foreseeing all the possible interactions the works may stimulate. The central theme which informed the works is rooted in the concern that the construction of identity is under the control of the various restrictions placed upon people, not only through the cultural, social, religious and political views they foster, but also via the stereotypical classifications people impose upon one another.

The theoretical component of this research, as well as lived experiences fostered an interest in the way in which people are often judged on the alliances they 'ought' to have. A significant influence which gave rise to the issues I address in my artworks is based on people's inclusion or exclusion of *the other*, based purely on their ideologically based perceptions.

Informing not only the practical aspects but also the direction of the theoretical component is that people often engage with me as a young, married Afrikaner woman. They equate Afrikaner with Christian and as such, a submissive wife. People equate Afrikaner with a person who has either been directly responsible for the atrocities of apartheid or as someone who resents all other cultures based upon the loss of dominance and the perceived destruction of the Afrikaner culture. Moreover, as a woman, my role in society is often limited to the production of children. Such assumptions are not just imposed upon me by strangers but also by acquaintances, colleagues, students, line managers, friends and family.

53

When disappointing such expectations, I am further labelled as confused, strange or as a traitor to the Afrikaner plight, a modern-day Judas comparable to the Boer War's *hensoppers* or *joiners*. Growing up in a conservative household, the power of ideological manipulation became clear when questioning the logic behind pre-established beliefs was met with the dogmatic recital of nonsensical prepackaged arguments.

A continued inquiry into the irreconcilable beliefs was often met with frustration and aggression. The result was that from a young age, I understood that my family truly believed that Jesus was an Afrikaner. I could feel, even though it remained unsaid, that people who do not look and act like me were bad people with bad intentions. By the looks of disapproval I knew that people who dressed provocatively were silently judged as having loose moral values. Sex and discussions on sexuality was taboo, and was to be treated as a shameful act, to be kept secret between husband and wife. This created an environment where I not only had to sidestep conversations about prominent issues, but also witness the destructive effect that the pent-up frustration created due to ideological manipulation on a first-hand basis.

The theoretical component not only fostered an understanding of such manipulation but also allowed me to identify and interrogate the ideologies that exert an influence over daily life. The back and forth movement between studio practice and theoretical research served as an exposure to multiple perspectives on societal manipulation. Moreover, research into how the creation of artworks cannot only construct meaning, but also enable people to consider different alternatives to pre-established beliefs allowed for the creation of works that can foster engagement both inside and outside of the art world.

4.2.1 Legion

Legion was the first and an exploratory work, which served as a mechanism to come to grips with the illusive forces that seem to exert control over almost every aspect of daily life. It was constructed by building and animating the scenes in *Autodesk 3ds Max*. Images, textures and film were imported as bitmaps to manipulate the material of all the elements in the animation. The *physical camera* feature was used to render the scene and *Adobe After Effects* was used for post-production.
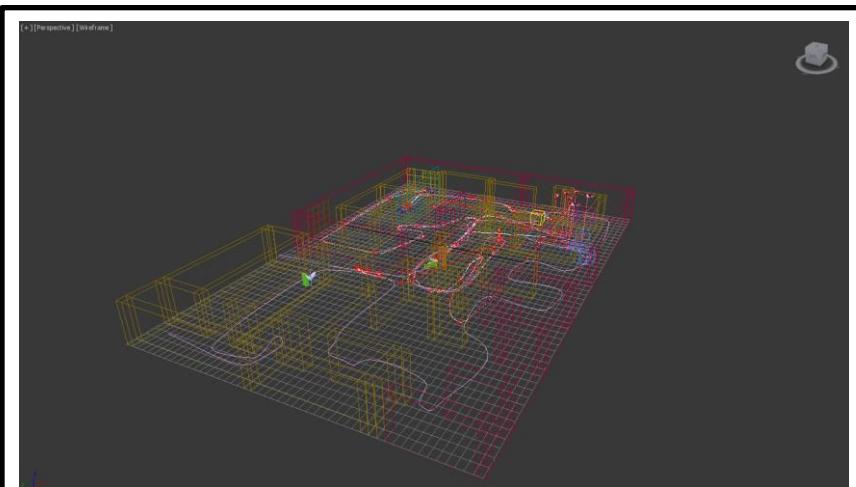
Figure 11
Perspective view of wireframe of *Legion*
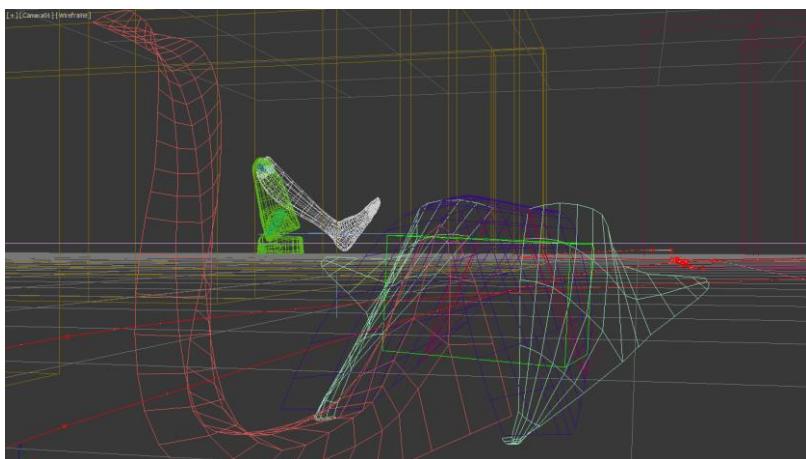
Figure 12
Camera view of wireframe of *Legion*

In developing the concept, I drew on people's inability to control the overwhelming decay of the South African environment and the fierce backlash received for expressing an opinion or questioning the status quo which leads to a rise in assertion violence. The assertion violence expressed by South Africans manifest itself in various ways including road range, mob justice, xenophobic attacks, domestic abuse, as well as the destruction of public and private property. What all these acts have in common is that, in the end, they have no productive outcome. Not only do individuals not gain the power to facilitate change in their environments, but their actions are once again labelled as stemming from their race, culture, religion and gender.

This 98 second animation follows multiple origami mice as they navigate through a maze. The original concept of mice traditionally placed in a maze as part of an experiment to observe their capabilities of finding some sort of foodstuff is thematised. The use of mice

may also bring with it associations of popular nursery rhymes and songs such as *Three Blind Mice* and *Die dapper muis* (brave mouse).

The idea of *Legion* started with observation and reflection of how people, including myself, are often reduced to a set of numbers or branded within statistics. You are classified by your allocated number on your identity document, student or staff card, account and/or medical aid (or lack thereof) and tax document. These numbers define people and their places within a bigger system. In searching for a metaphor which can embody the numbered existence of a mass culture, I initially considered making use of rats. However, I questioned the viability of the rat as a metaphor for the voiceless masses. The idea of a rat race carried with it mostly negative associations and would have made an empathetic identification with the characters difficult.

In accordance with Marshall's research design (2010), a storyboard was constructed to develop the idea of the animation by planning, creating, observing and reflecting. The thought of a lab rat was reworked and a lab mouse seemed a better option. The mouse carries with it multiple associations that would aid in the artwork's ability to encourage people to connect with the characters of the work. Mice can be regarded as simultaneously beneficial and destructive. They are household pests capable of spreading disease and destroying property, but they can also serve as pets or useful lab animals. The power of mice as a whole, in contrast to the vulnerability of a mouse as an individual, allowed me to give form to my thoughts via this artwork.

In assigning a lab rat as my character, I associated this rodent with the idea that lab mice are used for research purposes to benefit society as a whole, I reflected on how the rights of the individual are often sacrificed for the greater good of others. By reflecting on the characteristics of mice and their ability to reproduce at exponential speed, I hypothesised that mice can be used to comment on how people are addressed as a homogeneous mass. As such, various ways in which the mice could be represented were tested.

I considered using film or 3D modelling to obtain a life-like representation. This, however, presented a problem with people's ability to engage with a work since the work may verge on the macabre rather than a seemingly light-hearted animation. The use of cartoon-like characters was also considered and subsequently rejected, since such representation would have been too meek for the gravity of the problem I wanted to address. As a result, my final decision was the use of origami mice, folded from the seemingly endless documentation of everyday existence, in this case, newspapers.

56

In keeping with the theme of mass manipulation, the title *Legion* carries with it multiple possible associations. From the definition of "legion" referring to a countless amount of something to the biblical reference where Jesus encountered a possessed man, asked for the name of the entity, which replied (to paraphrase): "My name is legion, for we are many." In popular culture, *we are legion* refers to the *Anonymous* hacktivist group who exposes the people, companies and institutions who (according to them) have done the world some kind of wrong.

The use of animation as a medium allowed for engagement with the schematised views of the work to be controlled by providing guidance through the scenes and only allowing certain parts of the animation to be visible at any given time. The work starts with a projection playing on a wall of the maze depicting hands folding and giving shape to three mice, reminiscent of the way a society shapes the individuals within it. Four mice made of newspaper are dropped into the maze by an invisible source.

The animation places viewers as the fifth mouse that has been in the maze from the start. They engage with the work through an embodied experience: they become one of the characters. Although you are not able to see their particular mouse, the camera angle and movement mimics its changing speed and shaking. Moreover, the movement of the camera creates the effect that the viewer's mouse is constantly looking around. By occupying the space in such a way, viewers are denied an overall view of the situation and they become just as short-sighted as the rest of the mice.

This is done to mimic the way in which people become engrained in their environment to such an extent that they short-sightedly believe that the problems they face are unique to their country. The movements of the mice become a metaphor for the difficulties of navigating through contemporary South African society with a freedom to construct an identity and actively live in a way which is true to oneself. People who stray from the preconceived idea of who they should be, often become the collateral damage created when ideologies clash.

The difficulty of constructing an identity free of cultural and societal pressures is exacerbated by the unaddressed ills of apartheid; people are beaten down by a crashing economy; governmental embezzlement, incompetence and corruption; an increase in violent crimes; and the country's failing infrastructure. Being afraid or unable to communicate in one's environment often leads to people becoming despondent and naively looking for an escape.

The realisation that societal manipulation is a global occurrence and that there is no easy escape, as can be seen in the vast number of expatriates returning to South Africa.

Figure 13
Screenshot from *Legion*

The way in which sound could add or subtract from the layered implied meanings was tested extensively. Multiple sound options were considered. Foley alone would not have been able to support the rhythm of the animation. Choosing an obscure sound track may have reduced people's ability to connect and engage with the work. Nursery rhymes, violent or sombre music did not contribute to the value of the work.

The soundtrack eventually chosen for the animation was found in part due to the element of chance. After the purposeful search for sound that would complement the work had delivered artificial results, I decided to test random music and sounds without relying on preconceived ideas about what genre of music would contribute to the work. Harry Belafonte's rendition of *Day O* (*Banana Boat Song*), as adapted for the 1988 movie *Beetlejuice,* as well as Nina Simone's *I Put a Spell on You* were two of these tests that seemed viable.

Day O is selected due to its recognisability as well as its representation of the long lineage of hard and often menial labour forced upon people by colonial trade. Belafonte was a prominent figure in both the Civil Rights Movement of America and the fight to end apartheid in South Africa (Eldridge & Belafonte, 2002:110).

The mice are constantly switching between running and cautiously observing, but like the source that dropped them into the maze, viewers are unable to see if they are running from

58

or towards something. Throughout the animation, five mice are systematically destroyed. The discrepancy between the number of mice dropped into the maze at the start of the animation and the number of mice already fallen may bring about an uncertainty with regard to the number of mice in the maze. This expectation is further enforced by the newspaper headline "like meat in a butcher shop", which is the only visible text on the newspaper mice.

Figure 14
Screenshot from *Legion*

The ways in which the mice perished was also considered. Out of all the real-world methods available, mousetraps were chosen due to their recognisability. Originally, the aim with the prosthesis was to show how an essentially inanimate object, made with the intention of helping people but now devoid of human intervention, can serve as a tool of destruction.

By considering the hermeneutic outlook on participation, the planning and creation of this work was influenced by the fact that it should allow for the re-evaluation of existing knowledge. As such, the connection between the origami newspaper mice running through a maze, being destroyed by mousetraps, prostheses and their own haste is left indeterminate so that the work may reside within multiple layers of meaning.

In this regard, to link with our society where everyone seems replaceable, the seemingly light hearted destruction of the mice by discarded conveniences such as the prosthetic leg, may hit home. The reason behind the destruction remains embedded, actively encouraging people to speculate as to the cause behind the destruction.

To add to the layered nature of the implied meanings, the floor of the maze contains painted footsteps often used to direct the flow of people in public areas. Initially, the mice follow the

59

direction of the feet only to face continued peril. I aimed to create the expectation that the blind and unquestioning adherence to a system may be the cause of the mice's downfall. This expectation is reinforced when one of the footsteps appears to penetrate a wall. When the footsteps guide a mouse into jumping over a wall, it falls on its side and expires.

In the opposite direction indicated by the footsteps, one comes across the two mice crushed earlier by a prosthetic arm. Another mouse passes them by, hesitates with regard to what direction to take. Its indecision leads to it eventually falling prey to a mousetrap. Moving past this mouse, one is once again confronted by another mousetrap around a corner. While looking at the second trap, another mouse runs straight into it. The expectation that by opposing the direction of the footsteps the mice may be safe is not guaranteed.
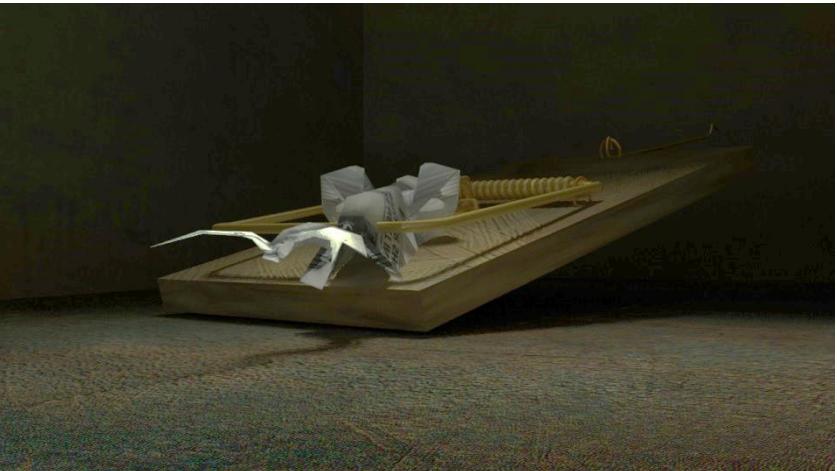
Figure 15
Screenshot from *Legion*

Transforming and challenging perceptions may lead people to engage with the work, to generate new insights. By exploiting people's need for consistency-building, the work creates a feeling of angst by reinforcing their expectations that the mice will meet an untimely end. The prosthetic leg, which was initially behind the arm (responsible for crushing the first two mice) and later appeared briefly hidden in the shadows of the maze, is now abruptly missing from its original position. The animation ends with the viewer seeing the opening in the maze (which is briefly shown before) and the aforementioned prosthetic leg.
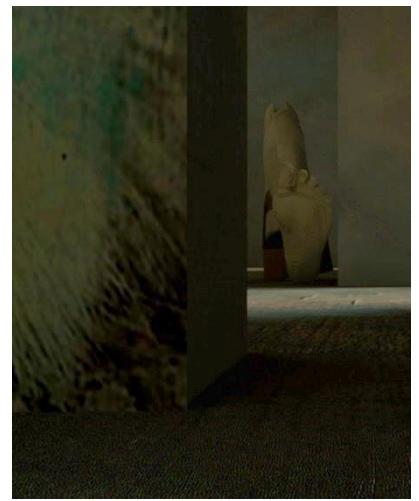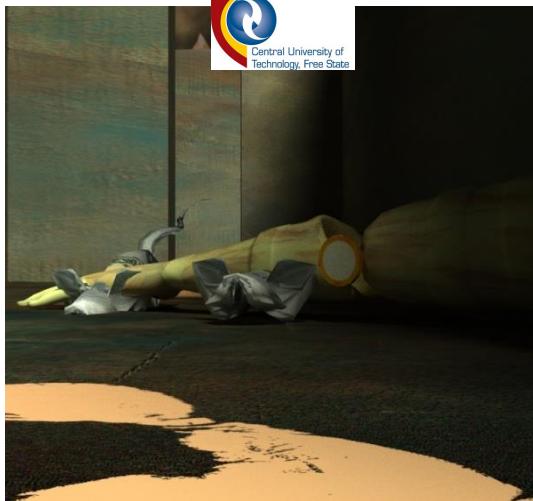
Figure 16
Screenshots from *Legion*

The animation purposefully denies people a well-defined ending. The need to impose order with anticipated outcomes is frustrating. In a society reliant on the instant accesses to vast amounts of information, and the ability to search for and recite answers mechanically are often relied on so much that true understanding and imaginative participation are sacrificed. The work denies such tendencies by refusing an anticipated ending.

The relation between context, form and content, as discussed with hermeneutic interpretation and Arnheim's (2001) discussions on order and entropy, comes into play with *Legion*'s capacity to create and transfer knowledge.

4.2.2 *Altarpiece*
This work takes the form of a multimedia installation. There are two parts to this installation. The first being that of the paintings within the altarpiece, and the second being ceramic meerkats. The frame of the altarpiece was constructed by a local woodworking company. Teak wood was chosen due to its versatility and it is indigenous to South Africa. Oil paint was used in conjunction with serigraphy. The basic shape of a sitting and standing meerkat was modelled and moulded by hand. From these two moulds, all the meerkats were shaped and adjusted to create individual meerkats. A white curtain hangs behind the altarpiece and flows onto the ground, binding the meerkats. This also picks up on the white curtain depicted in the work creating a setting within a setting.

As part of the reflexivity of practice-based research, I oscillated between my practice and my writing about my practice. The knowledge gained by exploring thematisation and culture jamming provided an avenue through which religious and cultural indoctrination (tacit knowledge) could be explored and addressed. When planning the concept behind

61

Altarpiece, I moved between the knowledge embedded in religious artworks and my own pre-established beliefs surrounding both the Afrikaner culture and Christianity. The space provided between reflection on and reflection in practice allowed for an interrogation of the ideologies that exerted such a strong influence over this particular segment of society that a questioning of Christian Afrikaner values almost seemed taboo.

As such, the aim of the second work emerged in response to representing the indeterminacies that occur when an ideology is questioned. In response to Davey's (2010) and Marshall's (2010) view on practice-led research, their views allowed me to use the reflective nature of the creative process.

The overall idea of the work evolved to speak to the power religion carries over society. The theoretical part of the research shed light on how a society is shaped by the patriarchal notions of life that have been imposed on people regardless of their adherence to a specific faith. The use of Christianity in this work stems from people's tendency to equate the Afrikaner with Christian. History records Christianity as an independent power of international Western heritage, which permeates the arts so as to use it as a tool to extend itself. This dominating influence of Christianity remains an inescapable subject matter content.

We have become part of a society that has been segmented into submissive, uncritical masses. This work looks specifically at some of the Afrikaner community's inability to consider another point of view.

In this regard, the work has also been influenced by the tendency of some to justify the exclusion of others by misusing religious and cultural dogma to justify such a standpoint. This work stems from Angus Buchan's dogma as one of the influences, preaching via his Mighty Men's Conferences (MMC), Buchan aims to "restore the eroded and damaged masculinity of men". Protecting masculinity only becomes a troubling concept when it is confused with restoring masculism. In the context of this research, masculism can be regarded as an ideology, which promotes the superior position of men and is used to justify the subjugation of women. Buchan urges men to turn back to the past, since their masculinity has been 'lost' (Nadar, 2009:19-21).

As part of the thematisation process adopted, this work exploits the stereotypical connotations of meaning that viewers bring to an altarpiece. This work was initially created as a singular panel, and inserted into the top frame of an antique wooden display cabinet.

62

Upon reflection on action, the theme of religious art was lost, and the work was redesigned so that the religious aspect of this work would be recognisable. The form and format of the redesigned work were chosen so that it strongly resembles that of an altarpiece.

Figure 17
Hubert and Jan van Eyck. *The Ghent Altarpiece* (wings closed). 1432. Oil on wood. 350 x 223 cm.
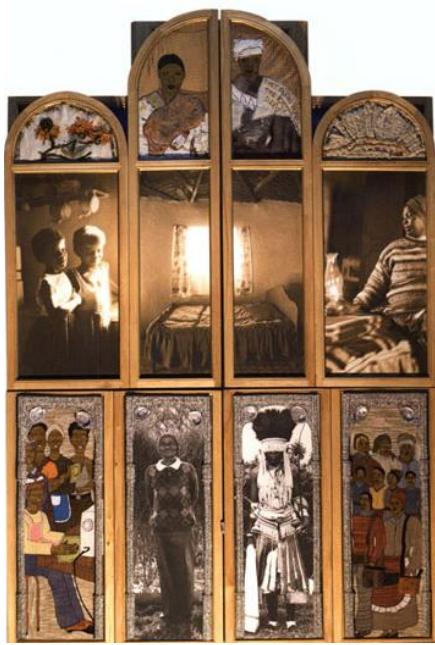
Figure 18
Keiskamma Art Project. *Creation Altarpiece* (wings closed). 2007. Mixed media. 3800 x 2600 cm.

Religious imagery such as altarpieces carry with them a long lineage of religious indoctrination, historically created to induce piety, especially amongst the illiterate. This work has been influenced specifically by Hubert and Jan van Eyck's *Ghent Altarpiece* (1432). This work has been thematised before, as can be seen in the Keiskamma Art Project's *Creation Altarpiece* (2007).

As such, the work gained the potential to initially incite and affirm the illusions held in people's tacit knowledge about the function of a religious altarpiece. When one looks at what an altarpiece commonly infers, thoughts of sacred imagery in a church context arise. Devoting, sacrifice and salvation are also commonly associated with depictions of Adam and Eve's expulsion from the Garden of Eden, Cain and Abel, the Annunciation, the Crucifixion and references to the Trinity (Son, Father and Holy Ghost). An expectation to see such depictions are created out of a viewer's tacit knowledge.

63

This size of this particular *Altarpiece* (1 500 x 1 760cm (closed) and 3 000 x 1 760cm (open)) is in keeping with the large format of traditional altarpieces. The form was designed by researching the patterns and motifs often contained within Renaissance devotional imagery and architecture. The arches and intricate shaping, moulding and scrollwork corresponds to the ornate and rich decoration found in traditional churches and cathedrals. This work, however, is not represented in the familiar church context. The content also deviates from the familiar Christian iconography that viewers may anticipate. As such, it encourages viewers to re-evaluate their expectations regarding the relation between the format (altarpiece) and content (imagery from the Voortrekker and Afrikaner past) being viewed.

Prior to viewers engaging with the work, they already foster certain expectations and pre-established beliefs about the work itself by being confronted with a familiar sight and object. Informed by their tacit knowledge, viewers have certain expectations regarding the extent of the aesthetic experience, what is expected of them during the interaction, as well as what they expect to gain from the experience. These expectations are based on an "ideal self-image" that viewers create and feel the need to maintain. Such preconceived ideas about themselves are informed by society's ideologies with regard to the "proper" ways to approach and interact with artworks and imagery. When taking the context and situation portrayed in the work into consideration and bringing it in line with their pre-established beliefs, viewers can make certain conjectures with regard to the motives or purposes behind the work's creation. They make such assumptions in order to shape their interaction with the work and to determine the work's implied meanings (Pelowski & Akiba, 2011:84-87).

Figure 19
Altarpiece (closed)

Figure 20
Altarpiece (open)

The work is created to stimulate movement between explicit and implicit elements, to foster a movement between anticipation and retrospection in order to gain an overall impression of the work. This makes the occupation of the wandering viewpoint necessary to connect the various schematized views presented in the work of art. When this work is first approached, the explicit (immediately observable) elements will be noticed first: the altarpiece's outer view has two panels (divided into three arches), a predella and an installation of multiple free standing meerkats facing the altar.

The Voortrekker monument is placed in a landscape just beyond an "ossewalaer" or wagon fort. Inside the fort is a ram and brooding ewe. The predella depicts a mielie field with young plants. Initially the combination of recognisable elements from the Voortrekker past in the format of an altarpiece should lead to the anticipation that the work will pay homage to the Afrikaner culture and Christian faith.

This expectation is challenged in the preliminary emotional response of the aesthetic experience. The work deliberately incorporates multiple points of view. The implicit elements in the outer panels, however, negate expectations that the purpose of the work is to pay homage to Afrikaner culture. In this way, the layering of implicit and explicit elements serve the purpose of creating indicating indeterminacies in the implied meanings of the artwork. The indeterminacies are only noticed once viewers become satiated with the overall impression of the work.

Leaving indeterminacies in the implied meanings of the artwork promotes engagement with the aesthetic experience. Noticing gaps stimulates the speculation or testing of possible ways in which the indeterminacies can be overcome. In so doing, interpretation requires the use of tacit knowledge. The use of tacit knowledge signals the move into a second phase of the aesthetic experience. Encouraging the incorporation of tacit knowledge in the creation and interpretation of this work, was explored in part due to Heidegger's outlook that phenomenology and as such interpretation necessitates tacit knowledge since this is part of how people interpret the events of their everyday lives. The reciprocal influence that tacit knowledge and interpretation holds over each other can be exploited so that interpretive activities serve to enlighten and change pre-established knowledge.

As such some of the elements in the altarpiece are left implicit. The landscape looks ominous, and the fort seems forlorn and incomplete. Traditionally, these wagons were organised in a circular shape to offer protection to the people and the livestock, which would congregate in the middle. There is no sign of inhabitants; the wagons are made out of iron

67

and are as such immobile. This questions purpose of the wagon fort in this context. Moreover, the ewe is half sheered and exposed while the ram seems unaware of his ewe and lamb. This alludes to the fact that the livestock, and by extension, the Afrikaner family, instead of being protected, is left vulnerable in a structure that has been stripped of its function. Within the bottom panel is a 'dolos and kakebeenwa', a traditional toy for Voortrekker children. Such toys were often made out of animal bones, and resembled a wagon and the oxen pulling it, yet there are no children present.

The installation of meerkats acting as audience to the altar further confronts and encourages engagement with the artwork. Meerkats depend on their social nature for survival. They belong to a group called a "gang" or "mob" and are fiercely aggressive towards other mobs of meerkats. They take turns to act as a sentry and are so protective of their pups that they have been known to kill venomous snakes. As such, it is relatively easy to personify the meerkat. The meerkats represented in the installation take on different postures. They range from sitting (or standing) up straight to slouching and lying down. Despite two of the meerkats being heavily pregnant, there is a noticeable absence of pups. The meerkats, solemnly watching the artwork, creates the impression that they have noticed something the viewers are not yet privy to and draws further attention to themselves as an audience as well as the artwork being viewed.

The hierarchical society of meerkats as such differs from the system enforced by Afrikaner Christendom in that they live in a matriarchal society. A meerkat mob will maintain a strict social hierarchy with the alpha female selecting her alpha male. The alpha couple as a collective influences the duties and reproductive rights of the mob. Moreover, the alpha female, will often kill the pups borne to rival beta females. The subordinate females are forced to care for the alpha female's offspring or be exiled from the mob (Young & Clutton-Brock, 2006:386-387). This acceptable submissive stance of the meerkats is likened to the current South African situation.

Upon retrospection, unpacking the significance and meaning of the discovered implicit elements, viewers are forced to re-evaluate their earlier speculation that the purpose of this work is to pay homage. Opening up to the inner panels, the altarpiece stimulates the retrospective function of viewers further, since they now have to process new information. The inner view of the work depicts a sturdy Afrikaner bull losing its balance heading towards a wooden box meant to ship Afrikaner monuments.

Figure 21
Altarpiece's meerkats (detail)

These explicit elements may link to the controversies and unhappiness surrounding land reform and the removal or destruction of pre-democracy era monuments. The right panel wing contains a statue of an isolated Voortrekker woman and children replicated from the Voortrekker Monument *Woman and Children* statue. Despite being removed from her pedestal, she seems unscathed.

This work was the last commission accepted by renowned South African sculptor Anton van Wouw. It stands at the base of the Monument, and was made with the aim of paying homage to Voortrekker women and the role they played in the Great Trek. As an art piece, this work contains historical significance, since it was the first bronze public sculpture to be cast in one piece in South Africa (Pretorius, 2003).

Currently the Voortrekker Monument serves as a location to where statues and portraits of people from South Africa's past, deemed inappropriate in the democratic society, can be relocated. In a storeroom at the Monument, the former presidents Verwoerd, Malan and De Klerk now occupy a space that faces the Union Buildings. Except for occasionally being loaned to Orania, this has now become the permanent home of the figures that embody South Africa's oppressive past (Mahlangu, 2015).

The Boer soldier represented in the *Altarpiece* on top of the spiral staircase, is adapted from the two Boer citizens that flank the Paul Kruger Monument in Church Square (Pretoria). These two statues were vandalized with green paint in support of the RMF campaign (Mahlangu 2015). In the painting, the statue is not vandalised but seems to project a sense of hopelessness. The theme of seemingly hopelessness and forlorn statues is continued in the left panel wing, which contains the vandalized statue of Cecil John Rhodes (Cape Town) and the toppled soldier from the horse memorial (Port Elizabeth).

69

The Rhodes statue, unveiled in 1934 and removed on 9 April 2015, is made of bronze and depicts Rhodes sitting on a bench was sculpted by Scottish immigrant Marion Walgate (Lillie 2015: 15). The Horse Memorial which was recognised as part of a heritage site was vandalised in April 2015. This particular statue, which paid homage to no particular culture, was unveiled in 1905 to pay tribute to the horses that were killed during the Second Boer War (Spies, 2015).

This work differs from the other statues adapted for the altarpiece since it may have been unjustly targeted. This becomes evident when reading the inscription on its base: "The greatness of a nation consists not so much upon the number of its people or the extent of its territory as in the extent and justice of its compassion. Erected by public subscription in recognition of the services of the gallant animals which perished in the Anglo Boer War 1899-1902" (Spies, 2015).

The vandalised Rhodes figure and toppled soldier from the Horse Memorial are denied a masculine representation of the Afrikaner male within the altarpiece. Statues and memorials (the only human representation of them) are vandalised and degraded. The Afrikaner bull is actively being castrated by the cruel process of elastration. This practice is still used to castrate smaller livestock such as sheep or in the illegal docking of dog tails. The bull is also dependent on castors on wooden legs for mobility. Behind the bull is a boerboel with a pacifier, sitting underneath a spiral staircase, which goes nowhere. The disheartened Boer soldier on top of the staircase is accompanied by a shameful unidentified male nude statue, which descends the stairs.

The only seemingly intact embodiment of masculinity, is the ram on the outer panels. Yet, the religious justification of the patriarchal ideology regarding the man as the provider and leader seems to be in conflict with the representation of the ram, which seems unaware of the exposed nature of the ewe and lamb. The inner panels are also devoid of human presence.

The notion of entropy, both in the structure of the work as well as the outdated ideology of patriarchy that is still prevalent in contemporary South African faith-based communities presents a discrepancy between order and function. The spear is not aimed at the bull; it rather pierces a bag with an orange blue and white fish. The bag is leaking water, and one of the fish is already floating belly up. The abolition of apartheid and the implementation of democracy are often perceived as a personal attack on the Afrikaner nation, more specifically on the Afrikaner male. The inclusion of such elements signals a need to adjust

70

expectations from the misperception that the danger facing the Afrikaner is an external factor. The possibility that the danger comes from within may act as a way to disrupt the consistency-building thus far encouraged by the work. This realisation may be induced by the vulture hidden behind a portable privacy curtain rack.

Additionally, the newspaper encapsulating the inner panels is a repetition of the iconic South African poet Ingrid Jonker's poems *Jy't my gekierang* and *Die kind* in both the original Afrikaans and English translations. The fact that *Jy't my gekierang* is about deception may allude to the fact that people have been manipulated into aligning themselves with the outdated views of puritan Afrikaner ideals. In her time, Jonker was a vocal opponent of apartheid, and wrote poetry which reflected her stance, as can be observed in *Die kind*. Viewers may be compelled to entertain and investigate the possibility that the inclusion of these poems is not out of misplaced allegiance with all things Afrikaner; hence the inclusion of the English translation.

The misalliance with cultural ions can also be seen in the Afrikaner community's repulsion by the #rhodesmustfall campaign. Rhodes aligned himself with Britain, and as an enemy during the Boer war, it is ironic that the Afrikaner nation would not only mourn the removal of a representative of a former enemy's statue, but also see it as an attack on their culture. The viewers are forced to investigate and evaluate the aesthetic experience, particularly their reactions towards the work, thus becoming co-creators of meaning.

4.2.3   *Isicelo sesehlukaniso* (*the application for divorce*)

This work consists out of a triptych in arched frames reminiscent of Renaissance *Madonna and Child* religious imagery. Made with a mixed media approach (oil and encaustic painting, serigraphy and collage), initially the aim of this work was to comment on the distortion and twisting of tradition in contemporary South African society.

As part of the search to understand how an individual's environment and context influence his or her perception of reality, and by extension aesthetic engagement, I reflected on the implicit benefits and pitfalls of a multi-cultural society. In keeping with hermeneutical phenomenology's concern that reflection is necessary if one is to understand the meaning of a particular experience, I examined my own ignorance and misperceptions of unfamiliar cultures.

Isicelo sesehlukaniso is a Zulu term for the application for divorce. This work originated from a personal interest in the tradition of paying and returning lobola. In this regard a

phenomenological approach is taken to discover and interpret the lived experiences I have had with other cultural practices. Looking at the importance of cattle to traditional lobola practices led me to question, if cattle could not serve as a bridge between multiple cultures?

This work is as such approached with hermeneutic phenomenology's focus on narrative as a way in which the things which are normally implicit in experience can be revealed. As such the meanings embedded in common life practices and perspectives on cattle as an almost universally valued animal is approached with the aim of not only discovering meaning, but also in keeping with hermeneutics, to interpret information in order to understand meaning. Revealing a commonality between cultures that often seem far removed may provide a platform to understand what is unfamiliar by starting from the familiar.

With regard to marriage practices, what is familiar to me is the concept of trousseau. I have myself collected kitchenware in my own trousseau chest. The aim behind trousseau was for a woman to collect the things she will need when she is married. I was also vaguely familiar with the concept of a dowry.

A dowry in traditional Western terms referred to the payment given to a groom from the bride's family. As far as lobola is concerned, my initial understanding was limited to interpreting lobola as a type of reversed dowry. In this sense I always thought of it as a tradition practiced by multiple South African cultures which involved the bride's family receiving payment from the groom's family. The interest to use the phenomena of lobola, and the subsequent discovery of my ignorance inspired a search to question and understand the practice.

Lobola started as a way in which family bonds could be strengthened. Traditionally, cattle were used to symbolise both the spiritual and social connection between families. This custom has, however, evolved to now encompass the "payment of lobola". As such, lobola is often regarded as no more than a transaction where men buy their wives (Kotzé, 2013:19).

Despite the various ways in which lobola can be approached it has always played an important role in societal control and social identity. Traditionally the involvement of the families in the marriage negotiations was compulsory. It was thought of as providing marital, and as such, social security. More importantly, it also provided older generations with the power to survey and control the younger generations. Lobola, always negotiated and paid on the groom's land, reinforced the inequality of women. The payment of lobola became integral to a person's identity. It is through marriage that people gained the status of 'adult' and with

72

the marriage they were expected to assume the sexual identity and other cultural characteristics prescribed by their culture (Kotzé, 2013:19; Ansell, 2001:703-704).

The way in which the concept of lobola has been adjusted often opens up the possibility for abuse. It can be misused to treat women like property by considering lobola as a payment for their labour. When a tradition rich in meaning is misused in such a way, women are bought and like the property they represent, they are owned by their husbands (Kotzé, 2013:19-20; Ansell, 2001:702).

The price of ilobolo, as it is known by Zulu people, averages out at about 11 cows or R85 800,00 (Nkabinde, 2015). This makes leaving a marriage very difficult, since when a couple divorces, the bride's family may be required to pay back the lobola. The only thing the woman may take with her is her personal possessions. Moreover, the woman is not free after the transaction; she is returned to the house of her parents (Kotzé, 2013:22; Ansell, 2001:706).

Dissolving a customary marriage is governed by many cultural nuances that do not feature in ending a civil marriage. Since marriage is regarded as a bond between families and not just husband and wife, the communal nature of a union needs to be considered. Such marriages traditionally impacted the welfare of a large group of people issues surrounding survival and procreation played an important role in a union (Nkosi, 2013).

Except for turning to the court to gain a court ordered decree of divorce, the dissolution of a customary marriage was contingent on the husband's death or the wife returning to her father's home. She could do so only with a valid reason (such as ill treatment) but the husband was still granted the opportunity to fetch her if he pays a fine. If he refuses to do so, the marriage is dissolved. The families would decide whether lobola would be kept or returned in part or in, full based on the behaviours of the couple. If a wife refused to return to her husband when he fetched her or if she was guilty of behaviour that led him to reject her, her family would be liable for returning the lobola (Nkosi, 2013).

Deeply rooted traditions such as lobola often come with pre-established beliefs held by those who are either in or outside the culture. Skewing the tradition and cultural significance of lobola even further is popular culture's fascination it. This can be seen in the numerous lobola calculator apps available. Such apps rate a woman's worth based on her education, ability to cook, height, weight, sexual and marital history, familial wealth and the lightness of her skin.

The work depicts an expansive landscape with rolling hills and a forest fire in the background. The foreground shows three boys driving cattle into the landscape which, in conjunction with the title, refers to a woman having to pay back the lobola. Sending the children refers to the traditional denial of African women's parental rights.

In a multi-cultural society, a symbol such as cattle take on more than one meaning. In keeping with hermeneutic phenomenology tacit knowledge serves as a condition for understanding. The significance that cattle carry in my own culture, the subjugation of women, the difficulties in obtaining a divorce and the subsequent shame and custody battles already in my frame of reference allowed me to connect to and gain an insight into another culture.

The cattle depicted in the work started as a way to raise associations with regard to the reverence held for the Nguni cattle as a measure of wealth, method of payment, clothing and substance. The unique colour and patterns of Nguni cattle have been extensively documented and are sought after. The cattle on the left are predominantly white, reminiscent of the Zulu king Cetshwayo kaMpande's (1872-1879) love for and legendary herd of *Inyonikayiphumuli* (white cattle). However due to my tacit knowledge, I knew that this regard for cattle is not unique to the Zulu nation.

The cattle may also be associated with a South African interpretation of the biblical narrative where Joseph interpreted the dreams of a pharaoh. The pharaoh dreamed of seven fat cattle coming up from the bank of a river. They were followed by seven lean cattle, which ate the fat cattle. In a second dream, the pharaoh saw a single stalk bear seven good ears of wheat. Subsequently seven thin ears appeared, swallowing the good ears. Unable to find one magician or wise man who could interpret his dreams, the pharaoh was informed that Joseph, a jailed Hebrew man, had the ability to interpret dreams and predict the future.

Joseph predicted that the seven good cattle and ears represented seven years of plenty, and the seven lean cattle and the seven empty ears indicated seven years of famine that would negate the plenitude before it. Joseph was subsequently employed to prepare for the famine while the years of plenty progressed.

As part of thematic analysis the identification and contextualisation of cattle, with its relation to marriage, divorce, biblical narrative, substance, wealth, religious significance in terms of contemporary South African events allows for an open ended reflection. By making use of

74

thematic analysis to discover links between both the studio practice and the theoretical component of the research as represented in Marshall's (2010) double helix process enabled me to identify these concepts through a search for the bigger concerns and commonalities faced by society as a whole.

As such the biblical narrative of the preparation for famine can be connected to South Africa's current water shortage that, to a large extent, has been blamed on a failure to maintain the country's infrastructure. In accordance with the biblical references the children are driving seven lean cattle through a dry and cracked river bed, surrounded by wheat fields. In the wheat fields are gleaners who (both historically and in biblical narratives) were usually poor and desolate women, granted permission by land owners to collect the scattered grain left after the harvest. The gleaners do not only carry historic and biblical significance but they also refer back to the threatened food supply and sharp increase in food prices resulting from the water shortage. In the wheat field to the right are hidden the healthy or fat Nguni cattle. In contrast to the lean cows, these consist of multiple colours.

Figure 22
Isicelo sesehlukaniso

The landscape is divided by rows of flagpoles; each row carries a different colour. The mountains are collaged with maps showing how South Africa has been divided throughout its history, documenting the journey from being colonised, becoming a union and later a republic. In this way, the much contested issue of land ownership is referenced. In keeping with the theme of land disputes, the left side of the work features the "Witkruismonument" (White Crosses Monument).

This monument started as a memorial to the people who have died in farm murders since the 2 February 1990. This date is significant, since former president F.W. de Klerk agreed to deliberations regarding a new constitutional dispensation for the Republic of South Africa. The rationale behind this monument was that, since the parties that were active in the struggle such as the ANC, Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and South African Communist Party (SACP) agreed to halt terrorist activities temporarily, there was no official need for armed and violent attacks on farms. The monument was started on 16 June 2004 when approximately 300 members of the community planted thousands of white metal crosses on a hill near Polokwane. The crosses were planted in this specific location to raise awareness about the unacknowledged and systematic murder of the farming community (Willemse, 2013).

According to the driving force behind this effort, Dr Neels Roelofse and his wife Rina, the crosses represent all the people of the farming community irrespective of race, gender or stature. Since the conception of the monument, the Afrikaner community began to draw comparisons between Britain's Scorched Earth policy and farm murders. As a result, the monument draws crowds of people each year on 16 June to mourn what they call 'Scorched Earth Day' (Willemse, 2013).

As such the original message of inclusivity has been lost. The significance of denying Youth Day, which is officially celebrated on the 16 June every year, negates the remembrance of the Soweto uprising, actively erasing the sacrifice of numerous youths who were murdered because they protested against Afrikaans being the mandated instruction medium of the country. The religious nature and the later assigned Afrikaner-centric nature of this monument links to the biblical references of the seven plentiful and lean years, as well as the arched format of triptych. It also links to the criticism raised in *Altarpiece* (work 2) of using religion and culture to justify the exclusion of others.

In *Isicelo sesehlukaniso* the original inscription of the white crosses monument has been thematised from "plaasmoorde" (farm murders) to "moorde" (murders). The black nanny that

77

stands behind the lean cattle holds a white infant. In this lies the suggested power of the South African community to address the shortcomings of the systems that govern them. The oppressive and demeaning apartheid legacy of exploiting black labour may have inevitably built the bridge through which a truly inclusive multi-cultural society can be fostered.

In a large number of white households, children were effectively raised by black nannies. The development of a motherly bond between the children and nanny may have a residual impact of love and respect. It seems plausible that some of the children who were cared for by someone of a different culture may be unable to reconcile the love they hold for an individual with the hatred spewed by a separatist society. Moreover, the children herding the cattle are not of the same race. Yet they walk together with a shared purpose.

The path of the river bed follows the direction of a figure setting a controlled burn. Controlled or prescribed burns simulate the natural occurrence of fire in nature. By making use of controlled burns, the seeds of certain plants can be stimulated to germinate, and uncontainable wildfires can be prevented. Despite its role in fire prevention a controlled burn always has the potential to burn out of control.

The burn leads the viewer's eye up into a settlement into the mountains. In front of the settlement, which in this case is a suggestion of the highly controversial Nkandla, is a row of white flags. White flags historically carry with it associations of surrender. As such, this work takes on the character of a society's children or descendants uniting in spite of historical divides and hatred.

The work does, however, carry a sombre undertone, in paying back the lobola; the children are in essence driving the seven lean years via a controlled burn. This refers back to Arnheim's principle of entropy where a system may sometimes need to be broken in order for it to obtain an order that is suited to its function.

The reflexive nature of practice based research has allowed me to examine my relationship to my environment and vice versa. As such I was able to foster a sense of self-understanding of not only how I have been manipulated but also how this applies to the broader South African society. The creation and interpretation of artworks induced a continuous process of reflection which fosters a consideration of the other whether it refers to the components of interactive aesthetic engagement (as seen in Dirk van den Berg's relational model of aesthetic interaction) or segments of the South African society.

78

5. Conclusion

This study has embraced the impacts of an audience on the visual texts of artists, Brett Murray, Wim Botha, Willem Boshoff, Tracy Rose, Zanele Muholi and the #rhodesmustfall campaign in an effort to showcase interactive aesthetic engagement within the visual arts. It is believed that such processes can serve to restore people's ability to communicate, tolerate and understand one another. The ways in which people interact with each other, react to occurrences in their environments, and engage with works of art are dependent on their perspective on reality. Since perception is influenced by tacit knowledge, perception is bound by reason and knowledge generation. Viewers cannot engage with artworks in a way which is independent of their tacit knowledge, artists need to consider that viewers will perceive works in relation to their own boundaries of understanding (Fleming, 2013:406).

The content presented in this research recounts the effects of mass communication whereby people choose from numerous media providers that vary from public, private, mainstream and alternative which report on the issues they value, in a way they understand it. In this way, mass communication earns the respect of specific groups of people who avoid discussions with people who hold different sets of values. As such, instead of becoming a forum for discourse, technology has led to creating insurmountable divides within communities in the manner in which it responds to communities of people.

The tension created of clashing ideologies can be seen in the reactions to *The Spear*. Although interpretation is limited, engagement with the work by the broader public resulted in various reactions. The work is found to be either offensive, humorous or disrespectful use of an inappropriate colonial stereotype regarding black bodies or a publicity stunt. Yet, it is the more extreme reactions the work elicited that managed to raise questions about the stance of freedom of expression and the intolerance thereof in South Africa, twenty one years into its democracy.

Freedom of expression encompasses people's freedom to search, obtain and convey any information in any format. It is regarded as a human right and it ensures that people can attain "truth for its own sake". The obtainment of the truth encompasses access to innumerable sources and their varied content to allow for a free flow of ideas (Ali, 2015:77).

The exhibition of *the Spear* is representative of an exhibition in freedom of expression. It did not take into account the incitement of hate or the need for censorship. De Vos (2013) argued that in accordance with freedom of expression, Murray had the right to criticise a

79

black leader even if he did so in a distasteful way. In return, people had the right to express their opinions about this work. This right to express an opinion also extends to the ANC, which had the right to express their dismay about Murray's work.

The problem experienced with freedom of expression and as such Murray's work stems from the feelings of powerlessness and subsequent intolerance of a South African society of opinions which differ. De Vos (2013) explains that South Africans often take on 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend' approach. They support those who criticise the things they themselves disagree with. However, when that same person criticises something they support, rather than question the point of view, they question the person. Such personal attacks could be witnessed in the more radical reactions to *The Spear* which called for the artist to be jailed, assaulted or killed.

The responses from both audiences and government officials to artworks which contest the presentation of 'pretty pictures' realise the fact that there is a debunking of a social reality inherent within a constructed society. The artworks referred to in this study creates a social awareness and consciousness relating to persons, systems and attitudes.

This intolerance of a different opinion expressed by these artists researched and myself realises shows people's inability to contest visual dialogue. The call to take down and censor the work as well as the subsequent destruction of artworks testifies to a lack of individual confidence in confronting situations pushed to the peripheral boundaries of their lives.

Images become scapegoats in addressing personal fears when confronted by visual texts which challenge ideas of morality and cultural values. These factors of non-conforming to what society expects results in an image being vested with power in as much as the viewer has power. This thread of power is invested in my personal assembly of works as it contests a specific space and place within an Afrikaner community and society at large.

The function of a democracy is to provide a space that, at least in theory, allows everyone to participate in a debate. Such debates can be revolutionary and disordered, but moves past discourse when a person's right to criticise another is impeded (De Vos, 2013).

The submissive and segmented South African society needs a real exchange in dialogue to overcome the injustice emanating from the past and the manipulation they face on a daily basis. In this regard, strategies need to be investigated that may serve as a basis for inducing not only the critical questioning but also the transformation of prejudice. Works of

80

art, instead of relying solely on the expression of a controversial opinion should attempt to facilitate interactive aesthetic engagement which speaks to the divides of the community by inducing a productive discourse.

A true dialogue during the aesthetic experience can only be fostered if the aesthetic interaction allows for the inclusion of the artist, the artwork, viewer and the worldviews of the participants as postulated by van den Berg's (1994) relational model of aesthetic interaction.

It is crucial that the need to foster dialogue through the purposeful creation and interpretation of art with the aim of helping people understand not only the context of the artwork, but also the contexts of the people with whom they share their environments. When works are created with the aim of facilitating aesthetic engagement that has the power to create social awareness and consciousness relating to persons, systems and attitudes the transformation of established meaning needs to be considered.

As discussed, with regard to the work of Wim Botha and Tracy Rose, art can make use of thematisation to bring to light the unequal power relations caused by centuries of indoctrination with the aim of eliciting social change. By transforming established standards of meaning complacent viewing can be disturbed. By reusing the old and as such changing context, takes some of the meaning from the old work but also infuses the parody with new meaning. This layering provides an artwork with a conceptual richness by placing viewers at a critical distance (Von Veh, 2012:22).

In this regard, if a work of art is to foster change, it must offer the opportunity for the average person to become a co-creator of meaning and as such gain an understanding of the self and the other out of the aesthetic experience. Participation in the aesthetic experience should compel viewers to interact with the world of the work, where their decisions (informed by their tacit knowledge) can no longer be regarded as isolated. In this regard, they need to be given the opportunity to choose how they co-create meaning but also be stimulated into considering the effect their choices may have not only on the work's implied meanings but also in their way of seeing the world.

The artwork's capacity to bring about such self-understanding stems from the removal of distance between itself and its viewers during the aesthetic interaction. As such an artwork has the capacity to speak directly to viewers in such an intimate way that an encounter with the work becomes an encounter with oneself. The experience of an artwork always occurs in the present and as such the work carries with it the potential to reveal a truth. The

expression of truth cannot be limited to what the artist has intended to portray due to the contemporaneous and conceptual inexhaustibility of the aesthetic experience (Gadamer, 1964:95-96).

By inducing a reflexive thought within viewers interaction with works of art induces a state where their tacit knowledge and the experiences gained through aesthetic engagement is combined. By looking at the creation and interpretation of from a visual epistemological point of view, what an artwork represents and communicates should move beyond what can be observed on its surface. When artworks are approached in such a way they have the potential to foster an understanding, of the self as well as the layered meaning within an artwork.

As seen in the work of Boshoff, artworks have the potential to induce empathetic identification through embodiment. When people attempt to understand and critically evaluate the frustration they feel at being excluded from what the *Blind Alphabet* communicates, they are able to identify the frustration of blind people. They experience through the work of art, a small part of the challenges faced by the other on a daily basis.

Through aesthetic engagement with artworks, people develop their capacity to understand without having to agree with what is represented in the work. This generates tolerance of images such as *The Spear*. By considering the views represented in the work, people can critically evaluate the merits and shortcomings of the image. As such people are able to express themselves in a way which is open to discourse. If they can develop a capacity to foster a dialogue about the image without having to condone what it represents, they may develop the ability to be understanding of, and contribute to an inclusive truly democratic society.

82

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7. List of figures

Figure 1

Marshall's double helix process, 2010. Marshall, C. (2010). A research design for studio-based research in art. *Teaching Artist Journal,* 8(2): 77-87.

Figure 2

Van den Berg's relational model of aesthetic interaction, 1994. Van Den Berg, D.J. (1994). *Struktuur, genesis, enrigting van kuns: Grepe van 'n kunswetenskaplike metodologie.* Verslag van 'n projek in die RGN-ondersoek navorsingsmetodologie.

Figure 3

Marshall's aesthetico-action research cycle 2010. Marshall, C. (2010). A research design for studio-based research in art. *Teaching Artist Journal,* 8(2): 77-87.

Figure 4

Wim Botha. *Commune: suspension of disbelief*. 2001. Carved Bibles, Biblical Text and Surveillance Equipment. Available from: http://artthrob.co.za/03apr/artbio.html

Figure 5

Brett Murray. *The Spear*. 2011. Acrylic on canvas. 185 x 140cm. Available from: http://www.brettmurray.co.za/work/hail-to-the-thief-exhibition/

Figure 6

Willem Boshoff. *Circles of Knowledge.* 2000. Granite. Johannesburg. Available from: http://www.willemboshoff.com/documents/artworks/kring_van_kennis.htm

Figure 7

Willem Boshoff. *Blind Alphabet.* 1991. Wood, steel and aluminium. 36 wooden forms from the letter B. MTN Art Collection. Available from: http://www.willemboshoff.com/documents/artworks/blind_alphabet.htm

Figure 8

Tracey Rose. *Lucie's Fur Version 1:1:1 - Adam & Yves.* 2013. Photographic colour print. 82 x 82 cm. Available from: http://collection.fraclorraine.org/collection/show/860?lang=en

Figure 9

Zanele Muholi. *Being*. 2007. From the series *Being*. Edition of 8. 91.4 × 64.8 cm. Available from: http://www.yanceyrichardson.com/artists/zanele-muholi/index.html?page=6&work_id=2261

Figure 10
Wim Botha. *Commune: onomatopoeia*. 2003. Installation. Available from: http://artthrob.co.za/03apr/artbio.html

Figure 11
J.P. Cronje. Perspective view of wireframe from *Legion*. Animation. (Own Image).

Figure 12
J.P. Cronje. Camera view of wireframe from *Legion*. Animation. (Own Image).

Figure 13
J.P. Cronje. Screenshot from *Legion.* Animation. (Own Image).

Figure 14
J.P. Cronje. Screenshot from *Legion.* Animation. (Own Image).

Figure 15
J.P. Cronje. Screenshot from *Legion.* Animation. (Own Image).

Figure 16
J.P. Cronje. Screenshot from *Legion.* Animation. (Own Image).

Figure 17
Hubert and Jan van Eyck. *The Ghent Altarpiece* (wings closed). 1432. Oil on wood. 350 x 223 cm. Available from: http://www.wga.hu/support/viewer/z.html

Figure 18
Keiskamma Art Project. *Creation Altarpiece* (wings closed)*.* 2007. Mixed media. 3800 x 2600cm. Available from: http://callisto.ggsrv.com/imgsrv/FastFetch/UBER1/ZI-0438-2011-AUT00-IDSI-76-1

Figure 19
J.P. Cronje. Altarpiece (closed). Installation. (Own Image)*.*

94

Figure 20

J.P. Cronje. Altarpiece (open). Installation. (Own Image).

Figure 21

J.P. Cronje. *Altarpiece*'s meerkats (detail). Installation. (Own Image).

Figure 22

J.P. Cronje. *Isicelo sesehlukaniso*. Mixed media. (Own Image).