

**Modelling an innovative approach to intermediality
within Visual Art practice in South Africa**

VOLUME II

by

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APPENDIX 2: CONTEXTUALISING UNISA’S PRACTICE-LED RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS WITH SELECTED INTERNATIONAL EXAMPLES

This section summarises relevant information from James Elkins’s 2014 publication of international cases of practice-led doctoral studies. I also include examples of the physical format of documents viewed at the University of Leeds.

2.1. Elkins

According to Elkins (2014:6), the registration periods vary from two years full time to six years part time, whilst supervision always involves at least one studio practice expert, another either theorist or practitioner and an external supervisor (outside of the country). Regarding length, Elkins (2014:6) provides the following ranges: from a minimum of 60 pages (15 000 words, Leeds), 120 pages (30 000 words, New Castle UK), a maximum of 200 pages (50 000 words, Leeds), the norm of 260 pages (60 000 words, Slade UK) and a “common maximum” of 400 pages (100 000 words). Elkins (2014:7) indicates that there are also institutions such as ANU Canberra that do not require a thesis, but an exegesis of 28 000 words.

At the time the outline from UNISA,¹ South Africa, indicates the practice-led research curriculum (DPCHS04) comprises the following at the time:

1. An illustrated catalogue with an approximately 25-page introductory essay.
2. A press release.
3. An approximately 120-page written thesis in which the exhibition is also fully documented.
4. A digital presentation of the exhibition.

In such research, the practical component must be exhibited as well as documented in the written thesis. The exhibition must comply with departmental requirements and standards regarding artistic merit, professionalism and cataloguing.

Elkins (2014:7) indicates that most institutions do not guide the weighting between practical and theory, as it is problematic to quantify practical. The only figure he provides is of Queensland, where practical is indicated as a flexible range between a 40 and 75 percentage in relation to the theory. I find this an ethical stance, as an artwork is not

¹ The proposed outline was prepared and initiated by art historian Frederik Potgieter, the Chair of the Department Art History, Visual Arts and Musicology at the time (2010).

measured in size or amount of work: its quality does not depend on quantity. I would propose a flexible range of a 40-60 percentage for a standard weighting.

The argument regarding the kind of theoretical research to be undertaken varies between institutions. At Unisa the thesis is reduced in length (in comparison to a traditional art history thesis) and centred from and on the practice, yet it is still defined as a research component, rather than an exegesis. Thus the exchange between theory and practice is intertwined, where the strengths are supporting one another.

In comparing curricula, Elkins (2014:9, 10) emphasises the need for differences across the world, based on his experience of travelling to a vast number of institutions to gather data regarding curricula. Of the six models that Elkins (2014:10, 11) formulates, I align with the *UK model* (also referred to as the “academic model”), developed since the 1970s. This model has many overlaps with the *Continental model*, which entails a set of strategies for reconceptualisation of art, although the *Continental model* distances itself from the science model of hypothesis, experiment and falsification. The *UK model* is closer to the scientific model of research than the *Continental model*.

I subscribe to the UK model for my personal and institutional practice methodology at UNISA overlap principals of science research and art research. Methodological issues are “actually conceptual ones” (Unger 1983:9), and therefore I propose that the conceptual approach of my project proves to substantiate this stance.

2.2. Examples of physical formats of practice-led research doctoral formats documented at the University of Leeds

I am indebted to the University of Leeds for my understanding of practice-led research. During my research visit there, I had the privilege of handling the physical format of various completed doctorates, in particular the work of Trina Hyunjin Byun (2010),² Hayley Newman (2001)³ and Milos Rankovic (2005).⁴ This first-hand analysis of the successful outcome of practice-led research by Leeds University doctoral graduates gave me insight into the manner in which the *evidence* of art processes and exhibitions as research can be compiled into box formats. This format reflects the prescribed conventions of colour and text of the University (the outside of the box), while the variety of documentation included in the box offers scope for creativity and differentiation. The contents included the following: exhibition catalogues, invitations to exhibitions, posters, DVDs, various volumes that present academic substantiation – including formal text (typed, reminiscent of the conventional thesis), artists' notes, colour in typed text as code to the classification of the artist's thoughts, photographic evidence of the creative process and tapes, amongst others. The images below illustrate some of the formats.



Fig 2.2.1: Trina Hyunjin Byun, details of layout of PhD (2010).

² Byun, TH. 2010. *Simultaneity in time-based interactive multimedia: a practical and theoretical study*. PhD. Leeds: University of Leeds.

³ Newman, H. 2001. *Locating performance: textual identity and the performative*. PhD. Leeds: University of Leeds.

⁴ Rankovic Milos. 2005. *Theory and practice of handmade distributed representation*. PhD. Leeds: University of Leeds.

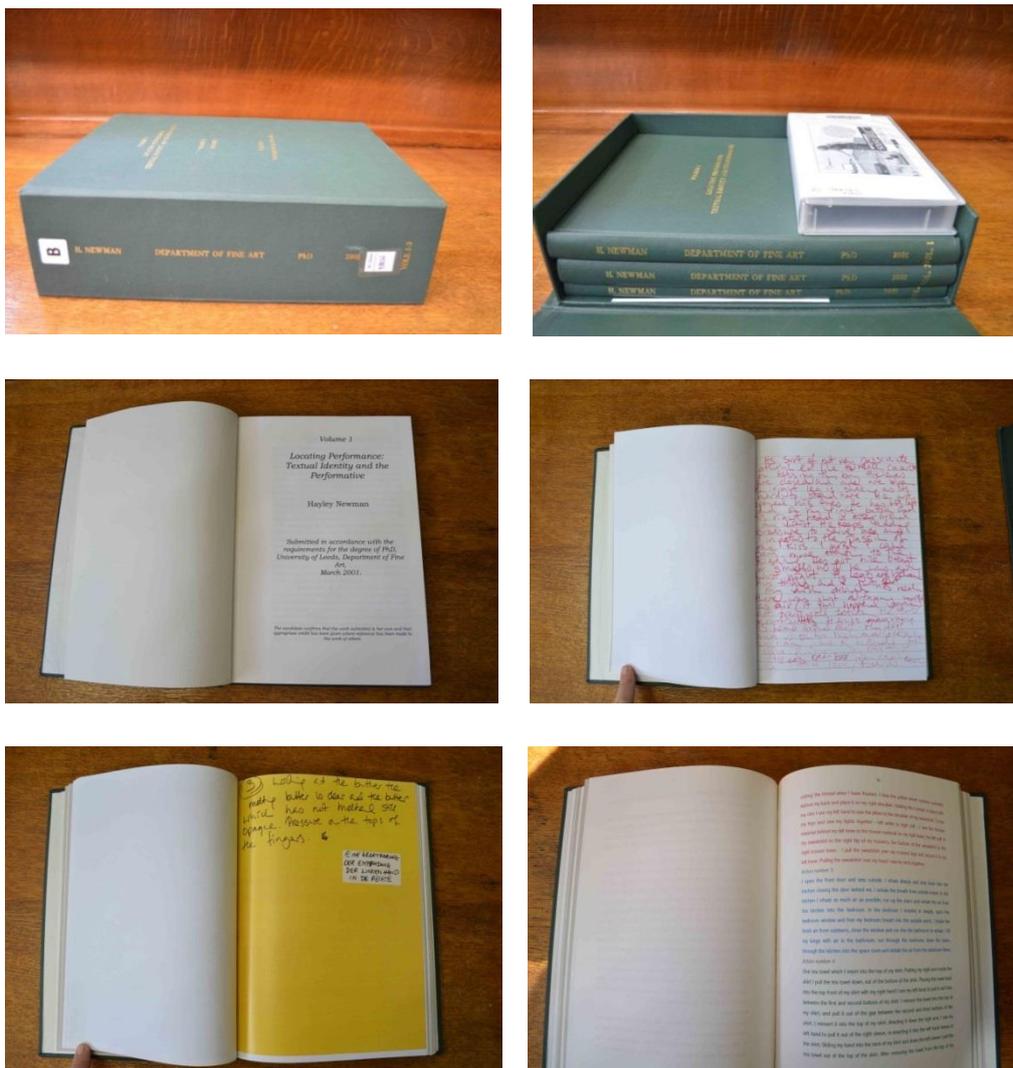


Fig 2.2.2: Hayley Newman, Details of layout of PhD (2001).

Whilst the content cannot be engaged with in these images, the reader can see some indications of the nature of the two examples, primarily that the evidence is presented of thinking that takes place through the art making process and that various formats of evidence are included. Artist's hand-written notes, evidence of the presentation of practical work in the form of invitations, proposals, reports, artists statements, DVDs, video tapes and catalogues form a central component. The written theses are reflective of the creative processes and present the material as evidence of problems that are solved via practical application. Furthermore, practical work is always created entwined with conceptualisation.

APPENDIX 3: EVIDENCE OF CURATION: PROPOSAL TO THE UNISA ART GALLERY

Proposal to UNISA Art Gallery for an exhibition, curated by Gwen Miller

Title: *Dialogues in intermedia practice* or *Transcoding tradition*

(I will finalize the exhibition title this week)

Dates: 3-31 September 2011, Installation 29 August –2 September 2011

Second presentation (first presentation was discussed with Bongani Mkhonza in a formal meeting in 2010): 2011/02/08

Dear Bongani and the Gallery Committee,

RE: DLITT ET PHIL EXHIBITION PROPOSAL DETAILS

As has been discussed and approved in principle, I propose to hold my Dlitt et Phil exhibition at the UNISA Art Gallery. I propose a curated exhibition in which I will invite approximately 11 artists, (I will be the 12th artist), to each contribute several works that reflect a process or dialogue between traditional and new media (either film, internet art, interactive digital art, digital games, animation art, or digital mediation). Each artist will posit differences, deconstruct clear polarities and reconstruct a more complex 'middle ground', which will be practically applied. This exhibition is not aiming at *ontology* of the new/traditional media dialogue, but the research is aiming at opening multiple possibilities for consideration and critique of contemporary art that is a montage reflecting a multiple society. In research that is practice-led, this exhibition aims to offer an opportunity for the artist, or creative practice researcher, to participate in an engaged reflection or "a playing out of thinking" (Stephan Mulhall) to reveal infiltration of influences. Bourriaud, who writes extensively on relational aesthetics, has identified a "formal nomadism" in the concept *transcoding* where art is "postproducing" social realities. In the planned exhibition I hope that this interplay of the arts will become a visualization of disjunction or a dialogical practice in relation with technology.

1. The study will preference two dimensional work - it will include work with a painterly sensibility, three-dimensional installation, printed or textile qualities or works that have materiality fore-fronted – sculpture will not be included. The position of the "traditional" artwork as remediated by digital negotiation (at some stage or another) is the subject for scrutiny.
2. In order to capture the development of the dialogue between the digital and traditional modes of thinking at this moment in time, one will contribute preserving the particular thinking within the process: the specific attitudes and shortcomings, differences and similarities. Interviews and documentation of artists' processes in their studios are part of the exhibition. Apart from digital recordings, interviews will be transcribed to be available as text documents as well.
3. The curated exhibition plan to have a full colour catalogue with DVD with an in-depth introductory essay, which will be my responsibility. I will work with the gallery to produce a press release, the design of the invitation and poster. I will need assistance from the gallery/UNISA press with arrangements of the layout and printing process of the catalogue and invitation.
4. The call to artists also include a proposed space for them in the four exhibition "rooms", which will correspond with chapters in the theses: The proposed conversation, as indicated above, will also extend between the different artists within the particular spaces, which will be practically applied. Art works will be interpreted in the relation they set up with one another. I will borrow existing work from collections and ask artists to create some new works. Each artist should have a space to present data/project some of the processes that took place in the studio to reveal methodologies and concepts.

5. List of proposed artists (subject to artists accepting & details to be completed)

1	Space, time and presence	Frikkie Eksteen: (borrow <i>The Ambassadors /Terminal Host</i> , exhibited at ABSA& Dystopia) Kudzanai Chiurai (borrow <i>The black president</i> from UNISA) Marcus Neustetter (borrow: <i>Hillbrow/Dakar/Hillbrow</i>)
2	Bodily object and digital unbodiliness	Colleen Alborough: (borrow <i>Balance</i> , exhibited at Standard Bank) Nathaniel Stern (borrow <i>Oak Tree</i> , exhibited at Art On Paper) Ryan Arenson (borrow painting in UNISA art collection)
3	Narrative strategies	Lawrence Lemaona: (Borrow <i>The discussion and Players of colour</i> , exhibited in Dystopia) Collaborative Celia de Villiers and Intuthuko: (Borrow <i>Journey to Freedom narratives</i> , mural and DVD, exhibited on international exhibition series "Weavings at war" in US)
4	Theatrical strategies and visual systems of order	Matthew Hindley (borrow from collaborative work <i>Mashups</i>) Minette Vari (borrow drawings from <i>Parrallax</i> and Vari's video from UNISA art collection) Fabian Wargau (borrow student work in Unisa art Gallery) Gwen Miller (borrow <i>Urban Night</i> from UNISA Collection)

6. I would require assistance from the art gallery to liaise with collectors to lend the selected works from collections other than UNISA's own collection (the identification process is in progress).
7. Budget (I use as reference the UNISA art Gallery framework as set out in 2010 gallery budget according to **high prestige and academic contribution "Type 1"**)

"Type 1. Cutting edge exhibition that involves costs such as traveling, transport, research, outside consultation fees, artists fees, prize money, catalogue writing and production, posters and invites and a prestigious opening. Aim for one research article to result. " (Document drafted by Prof Potgieter, 2010)

Exhibition type (mark with a cross)

1 X	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12		

See Budget on next page.

I am prepared to make adjustments, yet want to bring the urgency of the request under the gallery committee's attention: I cannot put out a call to artists before I have clarity, in writing, on the gallery's position. My call to artists needs to go out as soon as possible (in the next two weeks), most artists have their year planned. In order to put together the catalogue and write the introductory essay, I need to have the artists' works by June. I am also applying to Prof Dzvimbos office for the costs of my D that do not involve the gallery

I appreciate the consideration.

Details of the planning and tasks will be worked out with the curators in a meeting.

Kind regards,
Gwen Miller

APPENDIX 4: CALL TO PARTICIPATE, COMMUNICATION WITH ARTISTS

4.1: CALL TO ARTISTS: SEPTEMBER 2010

CALL TO ARTISTS:



Dear Artist,

Please would you consider participating in an exhibition provisionally titled: **TRANSCODE: dialogues around intermedia practice**. It will take place during September 2011 in the new **Unisa Art Gallery**, Pretoria. I invite you to create new work within a conceptual and methodological framework that you will find quite flexible.

- **CURATORIAL STATEMENT:**

This exhibition was conceived during the practice-led research I am currently undertaking for my DLitt et Phil degree.

As a curator and visual researcher, my wish is to bring together, in an innovative context, new and previously exhibited works by South African artists who are recoding traditional processes.

My goal is to construct an environment for artworks related to the dialogue of intermedia practice: that is, existing work, and new work that the artist will create to function specifically within this theoretical framework.

I call on you, as part of a small group of artists, to contribute works that reflect a dialogue between traditional art (painting, drawing, printmaking, installation) and new media art (internet art, interactive digital art, digital games, film, animation, digital mediation). Each artist will have the chance to explore assumed differences within this unfolding dialogue, and then creatively reconstruct a 'middle ground'.

The purpose of this exhibition is to examine the digital/analogue media discourse, but not to arrive at a definitive summation. Rather it intends to open up multiple possibilities for reflection on, and subsequently a critique of, the idea of hybrid contemporary art as a montage to mirror society.

The artist, or creative practice researcher, will be given an opportunity to participate in "a playing out of thinking" (Stephan Mulhall), so as to reveal infiltration of influences. Nicolas Bourriaud, who writes extensively on relational aesthetics, has identified a "formal nomadism" in the concept of *transcoding*, where culture can be shared and people can become contaminated with each other's worlds - leading to crossbred and novel visual dialogues.

Another objective of this exhibition will be to document the way that each artist mediates aspects of traditional art alongside the persistent presence of digital technology, both in the processes of art making and in the broader social context.

The exhibition and the processes leading to this event will be taken up in a full **colour catalogue**, which will form pivotal points for the analyses at the core of my thesis. I have selected works from 13 creative practice researchers, including one collaborative project and myself, in consideration for this exhibition. The outcomes of this exhibition will be presented at **conferences and published in journals**. Images of the exhibited works will be systematically documented for research purposes.

- **RESEARCH PREMISE AND LOGISTICS:**

My aim is that the show will have four divisions, or exhibition 'rooms'. These will be presented in corresponding sections in the Catalogue's Introduction, as well as in the Thesis Chapters. They are as follows:

1. **Space, time and presence:**

Artists: Frikkie Eksteen, Marcus Neustetter Carolyn Parton

The timeless preservation of traditional art practices are seemingly opposed to the temporal and immersive strategies embraced by digital practices; as well as to the physical involvement integral to interactive art. This section looks at the way that the metaphorical and physical space) of the traditional 2-dimensional arts can be interrupted by digital intervention, bringing a sense of immediacy and presence to the work. This kind of digital *rupture* can lead to artists adopting iconoclastic strategies: that is, "deconstructing" existing images in order to reconstruct new meanings.

2. **Bodiliness and disembodiedness:**

Artists: Colleen Alborough, Nathaniel Stern, Robin Rhode and Churchill Madikida

In response to the accepted absence of materiality (disembodiedness) in digital art as contrasted with the sense of the authentic moment (bodiliness) of traditional art material, the intermedia dialogues in this section will consider paradoxical approaches. Here, the digital strategies that evoke embodiment, and the conceptual applications of approaches of videos or animations in traditional visualisations, will question simplistic divisions.

3. **Narrative strategies:**

Artists: Lawrence Lemaona, Collaborative - Celia de Villiers and Intuthuko Sewing group.

In essence, a storyline is the unfolding of a linear narrative, as opposed to the singular frames in a traditional artwork. In this section, there is an exploration of the intermedia dialogue between digital applications - such as Photoshop, animation software, and video - and traditional processes - in this case textile art dealing with everyday events, and public media. The creative engagement between the hybridisation of storylines and cultural patterning could recode textile art, which will be considered then as revitalised through digital processes.

4. **Theatrical strategies and visual systems of order**

Artists: Minette Vári, Matthew Hindley, Fabian Wargau and Gwen Miller.

In this section, the processes of video art, photography and digitalisation that influence traditional art reveal a renewed form of visual management. By taking images out of context to adapt into a new situation, the collage and montage approaches of film and video are underscored, emphasising masquerade and artificial staging. Personalised mechanisms and dramatic accentuation create image systems that may be seen as an individualised archive; and a sense of place may become re-ordered, or rewired, as remediated space in the memories of the artist and the viewer.

- **EXHIBITION REQUIREMENTS: outline of the requirements from the artists**

3.1 I have made a tentative selection of your existing works in other collections, and will finalise the arrangements once your interest in participation has been confirmed. The Unisa Art Gallery and I will liaise with the collectors to facilitate loans.

Here is the initial layout:

Proposed existing works (in progress)
Frikkie Eksteen: <i>The Ambassadors/Terminal Host</i> , ABSA collection and exhibited in <i>Dystopia</i> . Marcus Neustetter: <i>Pull III</i> , <i>Stavanger</i> series, exhibited at AoP. Carolyn Parton: <i>24.925kg landscape</i> Unisa Art Collection, paint residue installations.
Colleen Alborough: <i>Balance</i> , video and selected prints, exhibited at Standard Bank. Nathaniel Stern: <i>The Oak Tree</i> , (collaboration with Jessica Meuninck-Ganger) exhibited at AoP. Churchill Madikida: <i>Blood on my hands</i> , Unisa Art Collection. Robin Rhode: <i>Unplugged</i> , private collection.
Lawrence Lemaoana: <i>The discussion</i> and <i>Players of colour</i> , exhibited in <i>Dystopia</i> . <i>Dancers on the wall</i> , printed fabric as wallpaper, exhibited at The Johannesburg Art Fair. Collaborative Celia de Villiers and Intuthuko: <i>Journey to Freedom narratives</i> , mural and DVD, exhibited on international exhibition series <i>Weavings at war</i> in the US.
Minette Vári: <i>A Long walk home</i> , UNISA Collection and a drawing from <i>Parallax</i> . Matthew Hindley: early Vector-based paintings and <i>Ship of fools</i> . Fabian Wargau: <i>VME 006</i> , installation and projections, Unisa Art Collection. Gwen Miller: <i>Urban night</i> , Unisa Art Collection, <i>Continuum system</i> .

3.2 In addition to the existing work(s), I invite you to make **one or two new works or an installation**. Since you have been working already within the theoretical framework of this exhibition, you will be able to extend your creative and conceptual interests. New work can, but does not have to, relate to existing work; and a new direction will be welcome, as long as it relates to my Premise (point 2). The research you undertake will depend, of course, on your individual process, yet around the end of March I will forward a list of sources and data for your own interest and information.

3.3 Over the period leading up to the exhibition and soon afterwards I will **interview you as a participating artist** so as to build up **research data** to analyze the relationship between your making and thinking processes and your concepts. I will forward questions before the interview for your consideration, to make our discussion as productive as possible.

3.4 Apart from these interviews (at most two per artist), I would require you **to capture or plot a number of significant steps** throughout your creative journey so as to make visible aspects of the dialogue between processes. If you have data available on the 'existing' works, this would be very valuable; yet the my proposal for you to create new work offers you an ideal opportunity for capturing data while you are in process.

On a practical level, the space provided for you in the Unisa Art Gallery will allow your completed artwork to be exhibited alongside **evidence of your visual thinking**. Examples are:

- diagrams
- proof prints and documented incomplete stages of your work
- morphing captures
- charts of mapping
- photographs
- screen captures of Photoshop stages
- video extracts
- or any other traces of process.

The applicability and particulars will be negotiated with individual artists during our meetings, as I expect strategies to differ from artist to artist.

3.5 Once you have accepted the invitation to participate, please inform me of the **potential equipment** that you might need (see attached confirmation form) so that the Gallery can begin the acquisition process from our on-campus facilities. Although we will do our best to provide equipment, it must be booked timeously, and it is not guaranteed that all equipment can be provided.

3.6 DATES & PROCESS:

Confirmation from artists	22 March 2011 <i>NB</i>
A call for <i>extended information</i> : in response to documentation I will forward you	end March 2011
Interviews	In process: most interviews completed by mid-May 2011
Artist statements on existing works in for editing	15 April 2011
Artist statements on new works in for editing	3 May 2011
Catalogue high-res images and information need to be ready: details will follow after confirmation	3 June 2011
All artworks to be delivered to the gallery. Installation of works to begin.	26 August 2011 29 August 2011
Lights will be done	1 & 2 September 2011
Opening	3 September 2011
Close	30 September 2011
Remove work	3 October 2011

3.8 ACCEPTANCE FORM (Appendix A)

Please find attached a **form of acceptance and permission for copyright** of images for the exhibition catalogue and thesis. As soon as I receive this form I will set up a meeting with you to discuss details. Should you be out of the country, I will set up a meeting on *Skype*. I have study leave until beginning May and will fit into your schedule. During further study leave in 2012, I will “write up” the exhibition in my theses.

I thank you in advance for considering participation in this exciting project and I am looking forward to working with you.

Kind regards,
Gwen Miller

Cell: 083 560 5179

APPENDIX A 21 May 2011
 ARTIST'S CONFIRMATION TO PARTICIPATE IN

<p>TRANSCODE <i>dialogues around intermedia practice</i></p>	<p>UNISA ART GALLERY 7-30 September 2011</p> <p>Kgorong building, Main Campus, Preller and Ridge Street, Pretoria Tel: 012 441 5683 e-mail ukun1@unisa.ac.za</p>
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Dear Artist,

The few artists that have not done this yet - please sign **permission for copyright** of images for the exhibition catalogue and thesis. Please complete pages 2 & 3.

Kind regards, Gwen Miller

NOTE: Altered DATES:

Confirmation from artists: <i>most in – to follow up with outstanding copyright forms</i>	March - May 2011
Interviews in process: several interviews done up to mid May 2011.	Interviews continue up to and during exhibition.
Artist's statements on existing works in for editing: individually discussed	Mid-July 2011
Artist statements on new works in for editing: Details of works in progress – process capturing for the purpose of promotion. Invites, posters & online promotion to be designed.	1 Aug 2011
Catalogue high-res images and information need to be ready: details will follow – 300dpi/title/ date/ medium/ price	28 Aug 2011
All artworks to be delivered to the gallery:	28 Aug 2011
Installation of works:	30 Aug, 1, 2, 3 & 5 Sept 2011
Lights will be done	5 & 6 September 2011
Opening	7 September 2011
Close	30 September 2011
Remove work	1/3 October 2011

AGREEMENT AND COPY RIGHT

TRANSCODE: dialogues around intermedia practice

(Working title)

Please submit the requested information sheets (pages 2 & 3) before end of May 2011 to Gwen Miller milleg@unisa.ac.za or s-gmiller@telkomsa.net

Additionally, please scan this page and e-mail the .jpg file

NAME OF ARTIST
	<p>Signed:</p> <p>At</p> <p>Thisday of2011.</p> <p>I hereby give permission for my artwork(s) submitted and the works that will be loaned from collections, to be reproduced in the catalogue and other marketing material of Gwen Miller's Dlitt et Phil Exhibition and thesis.</p> <p>I accept to abide by the dates and conditions of the exhibition as set out in this document.</p>

COMMISSION

An artist operating under contract with a commercial gallery may sell their exhibited work through their gallery. Unisa Art Gallery does not charge any commission. The cooperation of the artists' commercial galleries will be acknowledged in the catalogue.

PERSONAL INFORMATION:

Please attach images in 300dpi at approximately A4 size at required dates.

* NOTE: THESE ARE *ESTIMATES* ONLY, seen as provisional data: last changes can be made in August 2011.

NAME OF ARTIST	
CONTACT DETAILS	Cell: Landline: E-mail: Postal Address: Physical Address:
DATE AND PLACE OF BIRTH	
EQUIPMENT REQUIRED*	
TITLE OF NEW ARTWORK(s)*	
DATE OF ARTWORK*	
MEDIUM/MEDIA*	
DIMENSIONS*	
ARTIST'S PRICE OF WORK* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • including sales tax • for insurance purposes 	
SHORT BIO (NOT MORE THAN 200 WORDS)	
PLEASE ADD: LISTING OF WORKS IN PERMANENT COLLECTIONS	

4.2: FOLLOW-UP LETTER TO ARTISTS: MAY 2011

21 May 2011 follow-up letter: CALL TO ARTISTS

TRANSCODE

dialogues around intermedia practice

UNISA ART GALLERY

7-30 September 2011

Dear Artist,

Just a quick update on the progress and some date changes.

The exhibition aims to reflect the artwork as *embodied thinking* - as 'object' of presence that can never be fully 'translated' by words. Furthermore, that the artwork is not autonomous, yet richly supplemented by its context. This is a perception that is upheld by a practice-led research approach. You will recall from my first letter that I requested you to document your progress – please be consistent to capture your thinking and making – be it notes/ data/ flow grams/ mind maps/ photographs/ screen grabs/ documentation of progress or construction. Please capture, in your own individualistic manner, the way you plot the visual unfolding of your work.

I initially planned to release the catalogue at the *opening*, but have reconsidered: firstly because I am more convinced than ever before about the presentation of data (mentioned above) within the show - these bodies of evidence, although gathered before the exhibition, will only be structured/put together to form a unit during the installation. I will only *then* have the sufficient understanding of what it comprises. Secondly, the catalogue has to be a thorough and accurate documentation of the *full exhibition*. Therefore the catalogue will be finalised during the time that the show is on, to be published and distributed afterwards.

Confirmation from artists: <i>most have been returned to me – I have to follow up with outstanding copyright forms</i>	March 2011
Interviews in process: several interviews done up to mid May 2011	Interviews continue up to and during exhibition.
Artist's statements on existing works in for editing: individually discussed – look at Annex A for details	Mid-July 2011
Artist statements on new works in for editing: Details of works in progress – for the purpose of promotion Invites, posters & online promotion to be designed	1 Aug 2011
Catalogue high-res images and information need to be ready: Update information of works on Annex A for new works	28 Aug 2011
All artworks to be delivered to the UNISA Art gallery: Installation of works:	28 Aug 2011 30 Aug, 1, 2, 3 & 5 Sept 2011
Lights will be done	5 & 6 September 2011
Opening	7 September 2011
Close	30 September 2011
Remove work	1/3 October 2011

- **NOTE: Altered DATES:**

- **UNISA SUPPORT:**

We have funding for the catalogue, which will ensure good quality printing and binding. I have also been informed that UNISA will be spending additional time on promoting the exhibition as it is the first of its kind at UNISA, being a part of a Doctoral degree with a practice-led research methodology. The promotion will be done on the university's twitter, Facebook and web. Furthermore, Human Sciences confirmed that they are providing a designer for the invites, posters and catalogues.

I have reserved 15 data projectors, 7 DVD players with speaker sets and 10 laptops, presenting each artist with the option of utilising one data projector and either a DVD player or a laptop, with some extras. We might need far more equipment than what UNISA can offer and in that case I need to search for *sponsorship*. Thus it is URGENT that you contact me via e-mail to discuss specific technical requirements.

- **ARTISTS:**

The following artists have confirmed that they will make new works for the exhibition:

Colleen Alborough, Frikkie Eksteen, Carolyn Parton, Marcus Neustetter, Churchill Madikida, Nathaniel Stern, Lawrence Lemaona, Collaborative: Celia de Villiers and Intuthuko Sewing group. I will also contribute new work.

The following existing works from collections or previous exhibitions are being considered (to be finalised):

- Frikkie Eksteen: *The Ambassadors*, ABSA collection. *Terminal Host* triptych.
- Marcus Neustetter: *Pull III*, *Stavanger* series, exhibited at AoP.
- Carolyn Parton: Digital prints, workbooks, *24.925kg landscape* Unisa Art Collection, one or two paint residue installations from Art B gallery.
- Churchill Madikida: *Blood on my hands*, Unisa Art Collection.
- Robin Rhode: *Unplugged*, private collection
- Sello Mahlangu: digital interactive drawing
- Colleen Alborough: *Balance*: video, selected prints, Standard Bank exhibition.
- Nathaniel Stern: *The Great Oak*, (collaboration with Jessica Meuninck-Ganger) exhibited at AoP, prints from Mandy Conidaris & UNISA collection, *Stuttering* installation.
- Lawrence Lemaona: *Last line of defense. Things fall apart/ Dancers on the wall*, printed fabric as wallpaper, exhibited at The Johannesburg Art Fair.
- Collaborative Celia de Villiers and Intuthuko: *Journey to Freedom narratives*, mural and DVD, exhibited on international exhibition series *Weavings of war* in the US.
- Minette Vári: *A Long walk home*, UNISA Collection.
- Fabian Wargau: *Dripping Actuality*, installation and projections, Unisa Art Collection.
- Gwen Miller: *Continuum system*, exhibited in *Dystopia*.

I have been in conversation with artists about your personal choices of older works and will continue the process of dialogue. Older works set up a trace for your continued interest and help articulate the focus of this exhibition and research. **Please spend some time to consider whether you agree with my choices in order for me to present you at best and let me know whether you have alternative suggestions.

IN CONCLUSION

I will be in Europe from 21 June to 18 July for research and travel.

A short reminder about the theme: We are producing cutting edge art works that reflect a *dialogue* between traditional art (painting/ drawing/ printmaking/ installation/ traditional video) and new media art (internet art/ interactive digital art/ digital games/ film/ animation/ digital mediation).

Issues concerning concept that will be analysed revealing *unexpected overlaps* and *new ways of thinking about the presumed dualism between traditional and digital art*:

- Space (boundaries / liminal /collapse/ implode/ rapture/ categories/ grey areas/ immersion/ presence/ bodily /“formal nomadism”)
Time (speed up/ slow down/ compress/ fragment/ immediacy/ presence/ spatio-temporality)
- Embodiment (presence/ absence/ intangible/ disembodied/ substance/ groundedness/ ‘thingness’/ language/ bodily intelligibility/ imprinting/ contaminated/ raw/ relational aesthetics/ the object’s discursive abilities/ encode)
- Narration (linear/ fluid/ unfolding/ fragmented/ montage/ archive/ authority/ neo-colonial/ performative body)
Agency (restricted/ static/ to have choices/ viewer involvement/ multimediacy/ hypermediacy)
- Visual systems of order (theatrical strategies/ hierarchy/ management/ protocol/ order /agency/ data analyses/ packing/ disorder/ algorithm/ remediate/ synthetic systems/)

I also attach the ground plan of the gallery for your information.

Lastly, please sign **permission for copyright** of images for the exhibition catalogue and thesis, for the few artists that have not done this yet. I cannot do the catalogue without your permission *in writing*.

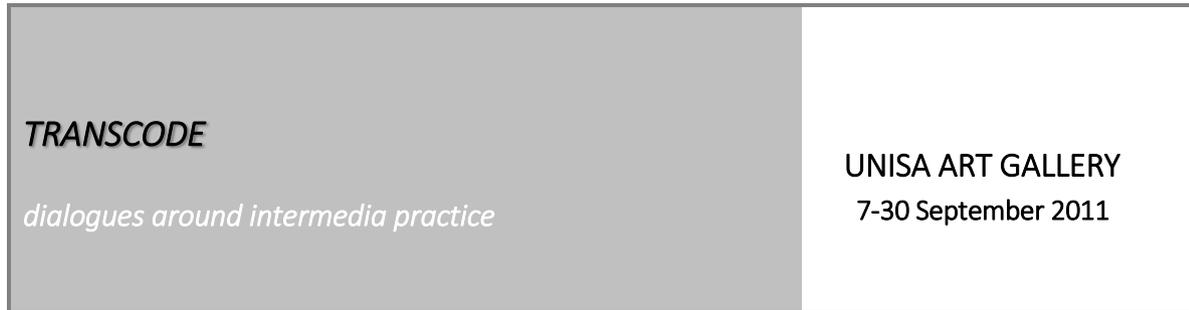
I’m truly looking forward to seeing the works!

Kind regards,
Gwen Miller

Cell: 083 560 5179
W: 012 429 6398

4.3: CLOSING ARRANGMENTS, LETTER TO ARTISTS: OCTOBER 2011

3 October 2011: closing arrangements



Dear Artist,

TRANSCODE has come to a successful closure on 30 September.

All works have been taken down with some last arrangements still to be taken care of - a few works to be fetched by artists.

Some feedback:

- Invitations (digital, hardcopy and press) and the poster were designed in close working with Adelle van Zyl and Frikkie Eksteen. I did additional advertising of the exhibition through Taryn and Les Cohn (additional to the ordinary mailing list of the gallery) and received extensive responses (they reported the most ever received). I sent out press releases and the exhibition was on various blogs and web sites: @JOBURG Art/technology Johannesburg: <http://www.atjoburg.net/?p=1339>, Kagablog, Artslink.co.za, Peck School of the Arts News, Milwaukee Michigan and www.unisa.ac.za/gallery. Additionally Facebook event pages - personally and the gallery. Thanks to all who contributed to spread the word.
- I was invited to do an article about a single artist. I published an article on the work of Carolyn Parton, in Die Beeld, p10, 6 Sept 2011: "Weggooi-verf word argeologiese fonds". The article also announced the exhibition in general.
- A full-colour 16 page exhibition pamphlet was designed and printed – with short introduction and artists statements. This serves as the starting point for the extended catalogue, which is already progressing.
- Apart from the curation of 11 other artists work I created 5 new works, which were exhibited along two earlier works of my own. One of my new works existed out of 8 individual panels. I also created a process box to present evidence of my thinking and making processes.

- The exhibition was installed from 31 August to 6 September and opened on 7 September. The well-attended event was officiated by: Welcome - address by Prof Majanja and opening address by Prof Frikkie Potgieter.
- I presented two formal walkabouts to general public (two hours each): the second was documented on video. I presented two specifically educational walkabouts: One educational walkabout was given to new academics of UNISA as requested by Prof David van Wyk. Another educational walkabout was held for the postgraduate students of dept Art History, Visual Arts and Musicology with the particular focus of discussing the relationship between theory and practical in postgraduate work in the visual arts. Numerous informal walkabouts with particular UNISA staff members from specifically dept. English, Education and Theology led to dialogues enriching both directions. Dept. Arts and Culture sent a Deputy Director, with whom I also had extensive academic talks. Daily visitors attended the show in a steady stream.
- I assisted Karunithie Rivonia Naidu of *Link Magazine* with editing of an article, which she compiled around TRANSCODE: "State of the Art"
- I gave an interview to Professor Stephen Marcus Finn, who wrote an article entitled "The Dialectic Of Dialogue" for publication in *deArte*.
- Examination of the exhibition took place on 22 September: 3 examiners questioned me on preparation leading to the exhibition, conceptual underpinning, uniqueness of contribution and contextual relevance. Satisfaction was expressed with this first stage of the development of this new format of DLitt et Phil.
- I contributed to the discussions during the symposium held by Prof Hay, University of Leeds, which run concurrently to the exhibition on 23 September. It was attended by academics from several Universities in Gauteng.
- The exhibition received an extensive review by renowned art critic Johan Myburg in *Die Beeld*.
- The exhibition was extensively documented as preparation for the catalogue.
- The exhibition has been taken down.
- Layout of the final catalogue is in process.

- I am in the process of writing a second draft for the catalogue introduction.
- UNISA Art Gallery Acquisition committee confirmed the buying of works from Lawrence, Celia & Intuthuko, Colleen, Frikkie, Nathaniel and myself. I am not on the acquisition committee and am therefore not part of the final negotiation process – I am though very pleased with the large number of works they undertook to purchase – in itself this has been a sign of a high quality show – it is seldom that so many works are bought from one show. I want to warn all that UNISA takes very long with payments and must indicate to you that patience will be required!

All targets of the planning were achieved.

I want to thank you for your participation, without which this show could not have been the success it was. The variation in the show was as important as the unity of underlying concept – it was the balance of these two factors that created the interest and dynamism that was experienced and expressed by all visitors.

We still have a road to walk together as I will be asking you to extend you artists' statements for the 'big' catalogue and might ask you for feedback and/or interviews.

Kind regards,
Gwen Miller

Cell: 083 560 5179

APPENDIX 5: INTERVIEWS WITH FREDERIK EKSTEEN

Brooklyn, September 2011

GM: Thank you for being available to do this interview. Let's chat about your art in relation to the theme of the upcoming exhibition, about the dialogue between the traditional media and computer imaging. I want to go back to your Master's exhibition. In that year you had two exhibitions: first, your master's show, which was called *Specimens*, and then shortly afterwards, a group exhibition entitled *Killing time*. One thing that is interesting about the title, *Killing Time*, is the fact that it could be a reaction against technology, "a kind of down-shifting of pace and time". Can you tell me something about the work that you did for your Master's show? What started with that exhibition was your interest in technology vs bodily interfaces, correct?

FE: I think what is important about that show is that I really wanted people to get involved with what is inhibited and not revealed in a painting, and that is why many of the paintings were x-rayed to show something that is inconspicuously part of what you see with your naked eye. A lot of that was informed by some of the theory that I was reading at that stage. My Master's thesis questioned the modernist idea of metaphor in painting, where the artist's gesture or physical, bodily involvement in creating a picture is valued in its own right. This bodily presence is not necessarily as obvious in a realist or a more polished kind of painting, and so the X-rays were to some extent about revealing what you cannot see behind the polish of a very refined image. I think the paintings were very much traditional in terms of technique and so on.

GM: This seems to be an ongoing preoccupation in the work that you did in the last three or four years because you were also talking about hidden phases in your series that based on the university principals.

FE: I think that idea was also aimed at taking painting slightly beyond its metaphorical confines – to include other media as a way of not necessarily enhancing painting – but as a way of showing something through technology that can't otherwise be seen.

GM: In most of your exhibitions you seem to be interested in questioning something; questioning the perception of what a painting should be. You mentioned in a press release that you want to go beyond likeness in portraits.

FE: I think an approach of interrogating the medium is very conspicuous in a lot of things that I have done. Ever since my Master's exhibition, and even before that, most of the paintings were about painting in general, but also very specific paintings and excavating something from them. And not necessarily just in a metaphorical sense. Sometimes it was a physical digging, by using things like X-rays to get inside of the paintings and drawings. In the work I made for *Grime*, I grew mushrooms over a selection of paintings and drawings. This approach connects with some modernist ideas about how painting should concern itself with its own means and mechanisms and things like that, but it does not really play into a preoccupation with form because many of these artworks are so obviously indebted to illusionism. It is more of a conceptual engagement with what is unique about painting and developing that metaphorically in relation to specific imagery and subject matter. In other words, I don't work with paint because it is somehow intrinsically meaningful or a self-validating statement in its own right. I don't show the medium as just the medium.

GM: When I think of your approach in terms of pictorial space, it seems like a conceptual archaeology of digging into the physical topography of a painting. Here I'm reminded of your mushroom paintings. In those paintings, the mushrooms are eating away at both the illusion of depicted space and the physical space which the picture occupies. By acknowledging the actuality of the object – as a substrate that the mushrooms draw nourishment from – the painting itself is framed as a space: real space as opposed to pictorial space.

FE: I think the main difference between a modernist emphasis on materiality and what I try to do is that the approach is still very much connected to, and dependent on, what is depicted in the paintings and the drawings. So it is not necessarily just about highlighting the physical nature of the object, but also about how what is pictured relates to the physicality of an object infected by a contaminant: the mushrooms growing over its surface and eating away at its insides. So, I would say it is more of a conceptual take on a modernist idea. I personally don't really subscribe to just talking about art with art. What I do is very much concerned with identity. Portraiture is something that has always been part of my larger body of work and I think that is a connecting thread that runs through everything.

GM: What I find interesting is that the mushrooms created images that became monstrous. These pictures were destroyed twice over. Not only do the mushrooms distort and interfere with the imagery, but also with ideas about painting that we may have. I can see a link between this kind of monstrous destruction and your later works where you use morphing as a way of achieving a correspondingly grotesque transformation. There seems to be a similar sense of destruction at stake, which presents its own critique of commonly held views. So,

the mushrooms destroyed something in your earlier paintings, but later on you use technology to unsettle established preconceptions, as in your series of *Director's Cut*.

FE: Yes, *Director's Cut* does involve a destructive aesthetic of sorts. It is an approach I have become more interested in: destroying something as a way of retaining something unexpected about it. So, the method is not completely destructive. It is always a very controlled kind of destruction. With realist painting, you don't have the same opportunity to use chance as an element in your work to complement, supplement or push it in a different kind of direction. I have been consciously thinking about working with chance elements to somehow just disrupt the plan, to push in a new direction and introduce new things, to force yourself to make different kinds of decisions. I don't think this destruction is necessarily always technological, but the element of destruction is definitely in the work and I think people could interpret that as a comment on traditional art forms. But at the same time, I think it also highlights their preciousness in a way, the fact that it is something that really consciously needs to be preserved in order to get some kind of value from it.

What is really interesting about static images is that they don't really give you the whole story. I mean, an interpretation is never fixed or fully explained. I think that is what makes it so much more interesting than some narrative art forms. Unlike with film, for example, you have the immense open-endedness that surrounds the image. For me, I think, that is part of the poetry of just working with a fragment of something, and not showing the entire story.

GM: I see the contrast between the singular moment and the moment that plays out in time meeting up in this series. But both occupy a grey area that is neither completely still or in motion. I would like to focus on the way you create your morphs and how you have used them in this painting series, looking specifically at a sense of time unfolding or becoming unfixed. Am I right in assuming that creating a kind of non-fixity is what your morphs enabled you to do?

FE: Well, I think it un-fixes identities, and that is probably the most important thing for me. To relate that to time, the series that I worked with was a historical series, so in that sense I think it is about messing with time and the continuity of that series over time and playing around with it, because I have also created a few paintings where I compacted all 11 portraits into a single moment. In these, the narrative is even further reduced, but you do see the traces of some kind of compound identity – that it is not just a singular entity. Technology makes it possible to take the historical narrative and to squash it into a single portrait. But as for the process itself, I mean, painting takes a long time. And the morphing also doesn't

happen instantaneously, because you do play around with various options and a lot of rejects are generated along the way. You do not necessarily end up with the image that you want, and sometimes you don't want the most perfectly seamless morph; sometimes you want it to be slightly strange and skewed and not quite a real person, if I can put it that way.

The relationship between the very labour-intensive painting process and what happens on the computer is a strange one, because it is not the same kind of work. But it is also not completely different, because there is a lot of tweaking on a computer which I think can be compared to the layering of colour, marks and brush strokes in painting to achieve a certain kind of effect. My approach is not an immediate and direct kind of painting where the colour that you put down is the one that will remain there. That colour will be modified by additional colours that are layered over that. So I think there are similarities, but the one thing about the digital which I find very interesting is that it is so indiscriminating; you can compute things with incredible accuracy and even if you try to paint that same image in a very accurate manner, it is just not possible.

GM: One of the debates in media theory is digital media's attempt at conveying immediacy and presence. For me it has to do with the sense of movement as seen in video and animation and conveying an experience of time. That kind of immediacy is not clear in painting because you just have a singular slither that you as the viewer perceive. Now when I look at how you have used morphing in painting, I interpret that as an attempt to introduce a sense of movement over time, even in a painting that is now compacted and reduced to single image.

FE: This is an example of one of the initial composite portraits that I have created for *Director's Cut*, from two vice-chancellors. In order to get to a second generation of in-between characters, I literally combined two adjacent portraits.

What you see here is basically the geniality of characters that I have created from the 11 Vice-Chancellors' portraits in Pretoria University's collection. The initial idea was to just get the adjacent portraits to combine and you end up with a whole geniality, or a second generation of in-between stages, and once I got to that stage, I combined adjacent portraits once again and ended up with fewer portraits. Then you end up with a final composite, which is over there (points to screen). Okay, then I did some back crosses to earlier generation portraits, in other words it is the same as when you would be breeding dogs or cattle or something and you want to introduce more of the traits from a specific parent, because there might be something in that character that can produce an interesting portrait. So I also did

that and ended up with these portraits over here, which were the final portraits crossed back to this third generation, and the reasoning behind that is also because this is in a sense an *aesthetic* and not just a conceptual exercise.

I also wanted to end up with portraits that are interesting; that I think will also make good paintings, so in a way the process has painting in mind, if I can put it that way. While I do the morphs, I also think about what I would like to paint, what would be challenging to paint, what is paintable as well. The one thing that is very important for me about this – the relationship to the painting – is that I think that some criticism that people might have of this body of work, is why don't I just use the digital images and print them out and it becomes a series? Why repaint them? For me what is important is the kind of attention that is required in painting and the craft it represents, because this kind of portraiture used to be something that only the very rich could afford. Being commissioned to do that kind of portrait also implied a lot of interesting things for me; for example, that spending so much time with a person in their presence if you had to paint the portrait from the model implies also getting to know that person. Now obviously that does not apply in this case, because I don't actually know the people that I have generated, but if you spend so much time on it, you do get a sense of familiarity with the image, so it is almost as if you can achieve a likeness, and that might sound quite strange. It is not so much about capturing a likeness, but rather [about] inventing it. I believe the technical involvement in painting in the way I approach it doesn't really amount to simply copying it. Textural qualities are very important to me in something like 'edge' features, for example. The three-dimensionality of some aspects is also enhanced. These things are selectively manipulated to give this personage a more believable presence, even though it does not exist. I think in a way that relates to the idea of time, because it is just simply so painstaking, but I think it also relates to creating a kind of new time.

GM: There is also the notion of dimension, for one draws differently, one sees differently if you think of digital art. It is either flatness or purity ... there is a certain simplicity in the morph and the digital image that one perceives to be clean or technological. When you work with painting, it has built-in flaws and it speaks of the imperfections of a living body, which are distinct from the qualities of a technological prototype. So, I think if one considers dichotomies and comparisons and grey areas, this kind of image could occupy a space somewhere in-between. Is this person given life through your selective manipulation of the image on the computer or by building in more flaws that are an inevitable part of a painting process where you layer and glaze it to try to give it dimension? I think there is a constant play between these aspects ... the morphing obviously produced an in-between creature

that is hypothetically grown from particular cells, but this creation is given a more flawed, embodied and perhaps human existence in paint.

FE: They are bred from a specific kind of stock, because all the images come from the original series and are just variants of those portraits. It also connects in a very funny way to likeness, because there used to be a very distinct notion of likeness. The Enlightenment mind-body split implied that you could not just picture somebody's appearance and capture their likeness, because their likeness is in their spirit. In other words, capturing someone's likeness in portraiture always meant that there should be some kind of deviation from straightforward appearances. But once Darwinian theories became known, it also became common knowledge that identity is very much part of your genetic makeup. In other words, your physical appearance and your spirit are part of the same thing. So I think ideas about likeness have also changed so much over the years and if you think about evolution, it also implies a certain kind of technology, and references to genetics and selective breeding are also very much part of this work. It is about generating new images from existing images.

GM: By re-contextualising found images, there is a whole new thing that has been said about them. In a way, the fact that you work with found images (co-incidentally you created some of those found images), but they are still an existing context in the University. These found moments have come to completely unexpected images, and in particular as it goes even further in a series – [they] bring in quite a bit of surprises to you.

FE: Definitely, it surprises me because you really do not know what you are going to get. Something that is also very important for me at this stage is to get away from the recognisability of the stock from which these images came, so these portraits are in a sense *freed up* from just paying homage to a personality, because ... I mean if you think about the original portraits, it is generally considered a very conservative art. I have always found [myself] uncomfortable with having painted these images and doing contemporary art at the same time or alongside it. How did they fit into the bigger picture?

GM: Apart from technically discovering completely new things through the techniques and media you employ, I think there is a new social context as well. You seem to be critiquing high points that mark out careers and their impact on institutions. I remember reading something like that long ago in one of your write-ups. It really is about understanding and creating these in-between moments where things aren't so clear.

FE: Well it draws your attention to those moments. It can't possibly explain it and give a full record of it, but it is really about making you aware of what you don't see, as opposed to what is just shown to you, which is eleven different faces that are supposed to stand for a hundred years of history.

GM: That series is a reminder of the impossibility of understanding clearly and investigating a place where there is no explanation. It reminds us that we do not have the ability to understand fully.

FE: I think if you push that project to its logical conclusion, you will also end up at a dead end, and I think there is a more important relationship between medium and idea to consider, which I think is much more consciously approached today than it was 50 years ago. I think that is really where the subtlety and communication of art comes in – it is in knowing that it is about the saying of something, but it is not just about the message and it is not just about the medium. It is about how the two relate to each other.

GM: What is quite interesting here is the lineage of thinking that goes back to the Dutch settlement of South Africa and its relationship to these university leaders. There is a direct relationship to positions of power and the origin of power in colonial critique. Your work appears very critical of that genealogy in that you present them as quite monstrous. One can conclude that this is a critique because your series is not an assembly of the noble and the enlightened, which is generally presented as the icons of a university. Your figures are presented as deviants, delineations of something that is not as pure.

FE: Although I think that is definitely something that you can read into the work, it is also not something I am completely comfortable with, simply because I don't really feel that it is my personal right to pronounce judgement on some of these people. But granted, people in power are very often corrupt. For me the main focus is on working with what you can get from faces extracted from a very limited kind of database – where it can take you, what kind of associations they will produce. Something that is also very important for me is the notion of imagination in contemporary art.

This is something completely new. (Points to screen) What I am doing here is wrapping some of the morphs around 3D objects to enable me to rotate some of these faces to show them from different angles and so on. I just want to show you one of the final pieces that I made.

GM: What is interesting are the multiple processes. Wrapping the morph around a 3D object is similar to what happens in the painting, because you were talking earlier about how your painting aims to achieve depth and three-dimensionality through layering and now you are taking a step back to your digital source material to enhance these same aspects. This approach seems to hint at a dialogue between what has happened in the painting process and feeding that back into the digital.

FE: Well, this is very much more spatial, because what I mentioned about giving some kind of presence or *creating a likeness*, as opposed to capturing one, is perhaps enhanced through this process. I can show these portraits from different angles. This is how the images wrap around this 3D mould. What is also interesting is that this software is a trial version of *Faceshop*, and it comes with only two kinds of wireframe facial templates; the one is called William and the other one is called Victoria. So you have the male and female option that you can choose from. I can now take these very specific and idiosyncratic characters I have created and wrap them around something that is completely generic. This is contradictory, because even though they still look very different, they have been reinserted into a mould of sorts. So in a way this also relates to the idea of hierarchies and proto-types. But what is also quite appealing for me about this is that you can also work with the wireframe, which shows you how that image would exist just as a 3D polygon-based model. What I have also been thinking about is that with 3D animation or modelling you would first create a mesh like this one and then you would eventually skin it with some kind of texture to give it a degree of realism, but I am considering working with printouts of the wireframes and then skinning them with paint as the painting component of the project. The contrast between a perfect computer generated “sketch” and a more imperfect hand-painted skin applied over it is something that I am really excited about.

GM: What is also interesting is that this digital ‘armature’ looks very crisp and clean. Earlier I spoke about the fact that the paint feels messy, like dirt, which can be linked to the idea of our flesh being imperfect. So what you are saying about the paint marks being an imperfect skin for a 3D model relates back to a particular dialogue between the digital and painting once again.

FE: I think in a very direct way, yes, because in some of the paintings that I have made up to this point there is something that reminds of digital processing. Some of the effects have a ‘digital look’ about them, but the painting could not quite match up to that because I personally feel that some of it is quite *unpaintable*. So, you have to find a shorthand way of matching it, but it never has that same kind of subtlety. If you look at all the faint details that

you see in a digital composite like that, you inevitably have to leave some of it out or exaggerate some aspects of it. Even though I think my paintings might look very realistic or photographic in a way, they are in many ways very different from what you see there. The paint has to say its own thing, in a much more immediate way than in some of the other paintings that I have done previously. That is why I am also experimenting with different kinds of liquid effects and pouring paint over images, obscuring things; the intention was also to make the environment within [which] they exist much more ambiguous, but before this, I wanted to say something [about] their origins. This whole sequence is to some extent also *not just about the single image* that I have produced; it is very much part of a picture where *one image succeeds another* and it is about the possibilities that you can uncover within the sequence which I don't think you can by any other means without using digital tools. The idea is also to take it away from its origins – the recognisable, the Rembrandt paintings and the vice-chancellor portraits – and to make them into something that appeals more to the imagination. Some of these images do remind of hallucinations, the unpredictable, even the animal at times. For me it is also about opening up the meaning of portraiture and questioning the meaning of a human face as opposed to it being just a copy of somebody's likeness. So, this is very much about getting away from likeness and creating a place for these faces where they can exist for their own sake, but also to trigger the viewer's imagination in a very different way from how a regular portrait would.

GM: Painters search for and utilise technologies to shift existing boundaries, often to make their painting more immediate. In other words, to make their work speak about our own time. In many of these works, one could say that the images are less immediate because they are less understandable, if one takes immediate to mean easy to grasp. On the other hand, the fact that they engage with a digital environment somehow brings the work into the present as well. Do you think there is validity in this approach; based on your own perspective and use of digital technology? Do you think it could possibly bring a sense of immediacy?

FE: If you think about computer technology and its role in creating the kind of illusions that we see in contemporary science fiction films and so on, they are obviously getting much more immersive and in that sense probably more immediate. I think perhaps my paintings also try to talk to, or relate to, those images. Technology has the potential to create an image that impacts more strongly, and in my ... work I also consider the tensions and affinities between popular culture and what happens in a fine art context – not that the two are necessarily that separate from each other. I think digital technology is absolutely everywhere and it will infiltrate what artists are doing, even if they work with traditional means. It is fairly obvious in my work that that relationship is to some extent exploited.

GM: In your case, it really does revitalise the image that one is accustomed to: what an oil painting or a portrait is assumed to look like. So there is that sense of revitalisation that happens through a more immediate presence but also, paradoxically, a reaction against it. While there is an element of scientific logic in the work, you also seem to want to complicate it, to make it strange and hard to swallow. I think that is a specific niche that exists in the visual arts where the intention is to confuse in order to get people to think. We take things to a place of discomfort, to get people to reconsider and possibly take responsibility, or ... you know, you do not have to be that didactic, but just shift awareness away from complacency. Therefore, for me your work occupies both of those areas: a kind of revitalisation as well as shift away from complacent reception.

FE: I think a lot of contemporary cinema uses the means available in our time to create images and unexpected positions that just were not previously possible. I cannot see why that cannot feed into painting as well, such as working from a digital reference. I have experimented with the idea of creating effects that are so complex, that have so much detail, that it becomes almost impossible to paint. Your repainting of something like that really comes down to finding ways of *re-coding information* in a manner that somehow matches up to it, yet is also more of an analogue, something more *gestural*.

GM: Getting back to the idea of *destroying* images – what you are working with when you are creating that painterly impossibility is also a further subversion of your own processes. The same processes that you set up are immediately subverted to lay down new boundaries. In this way, you destroy your methodology to push yourself towards new ways of painting.

FE: I think it is a way of not getting bored and hopefully, not repeating yourself, and finding out exactly what this relationship is between working with a computer and painting and how the two speak to each other. Also, where they *stop* speaking to each other, because if you interpret your reference as a script that you have to subscribe to, what happens if the script is so complicated that you can't actually perform it? For me this introduces another creation process; it is not just about *executing* the image. The complications of this procedure are also very much concerned with the limitations of what you are working with and how you are consistently trying to get beyond it.

GM: What you are talking about as well is a process aimed at keeping things dynamic and fresh for yourself. The dynamism of this system is meant to keep your own attention, your interest in it, but within that, you also manage to retain the viewer's interest and involvement.

FE: What I think is interesting is looking back at where this project started and where it seems to be going. I mean, I had two commissioned portraits of my own in the original portrait series that I started to work with, so this was about taking my own art and *combining it with other people's* art and producing something from that, and that produced its *own geniality of ideas* and characters, but the stuff that I am doing now can be fed back into this, so it is almost as *if there is no real end to the creation process*, because the last step that you were involved in can become the first step of something new. I don't think a single piece will give you the entire picture of what is involved, because it is about a continuously evolving process and I just can't imagine the end point. If I could not use the computer, I would not have done it.

GM: Also, when you talk about using other people's portraits and using other tools, it is like a conversation between different things. Your process seems to be a dialogue with other paintings, with other techniques, with other tools that [were] made by other people. It was re-incorporated and destroyed in your own process, yet in painting your visual dialogue is every time resolved, because you decide to stop the process at some point in the fixity of an oil painting. Not that it becomes completely fixed, it is still in that murky grey area of the in-between, but it is more fixed, an intermittent stop that interrupts the digital processes that continue to push it into new territories.

FE: The point that I would really like to get to is to re-introduce uniquely painterly traces or qualities into the digital process to make the conversation more obvious. It seems too easy to paint from digital source material as an aim in itself. What would be the point of just repainting the likeness of a digital image and putting that back into the system? So, in a few paintings I am very conscious about the painting going beyond the reference and making its own unique statement. And I am excited about re-introducing and reacting to this *painterly mistake* with the computer. If you think about this body of work as something that develops over time, it is a very funny kind of time, because there are periods when I only work at the computer and others where I only work at painting, and it very rarely happens that I do both at the same time. So, it is almost like an intermittent shifting from one system to another. So there is very much a dialogue.

GM: And in your work, the paintings don't happen only on the screen. They are returned to the canvas. So there is a constant shift – the screen itself never becomes part of the painting. There are painters who have projected onto paintings and have introduced movement into the painted image but you keep the two separate.

FE: They meet again at some point; for periods, they stay separate. What is also funny about the computational aspect is that one would assume it to be quick; my computer is not quick enough to achieve the effects I want instantly and some of the morphs take a lot of time to process. I wait in quite a lot of anticipation; it is exciting, it is almost like printmaking – if you are doing etching, for example, there is always a surprise when you see the final thing, because you have that reversal of the image and you are not sure if you have applied your ink in the correct way. Perhaps computational stuff is easier to control, but I think there is also a degree of surrender involved.

GM: One of the things that I would also like to talk about is the layering of systems. The methodology of painting is in itself a system that you have to negotiate with, but there is also another system to the specific dialogue between media that is important in the work. And above that there is an engagement with, and reference to, social systems.

FE: Organising systems?

GM: Yes, organising systems and how they are engaged with. Sometimes it is only in looking back that one realises as an artist how you have commented on systems of order in society or institutions.

FE: The obvious one that I can think of right now is *Director's Cut*, with the transitional steps inserted into the portrait series which I made for the University of Pretoria's centenary celebrations. That was the first artwork I made after resigning from my lecture post at UNISA and I was stuck for subject matter. I [hadn't] made art for quite a while ... this opportunity came along, and I just couldn't get my mind around starting with something completely new. I was also very much aware, after leaving an institutional environment, of the limits and the advantages of hierarchies in academia. The very exacting demands and politics of the academic workplace were what probably got me interested in the project. Also being involved in the politics of being commissioned by Pretoria University to paint two former vice-chancellors. So it all sort of came together; it was about my newfound freedom viewed against the context from where I came. So that for me is the most obvious one, and then of course, you also work within the technical constraints of a computer programme, which is a

system in its own right, and then there is the system of pictorial illusion which for me is very important. I am absolutely fascinated by theories of evolution, which entail another kind of system. I think it is very much neglected in the humanities, because it might offend politically correct sensibilities. The art world is of course also a specific kind of system within which you have to position yourself as an artist. So, systems are everywhere.

GM: But also, you are very interested in orchids and plants and the way they grow. Perhaps the idea of growing is another system to consider. You are not only growing artworks, you also grow plants, and I think the one interest does influence the other.

FE: Definitely. What is fascinating about orchids is that Darwin devoted an entire book just to the pollination strategies of orchids and how they have adapted to a very specific niche within the natural world to survive. I think there is a definite parallel with what I am doing here. Four years ago, I started reading extensively about evolutionary theory. Also in relation to cultural studies, because even in our thinking there are things called memes that propagate themselves in an almost biological fashion. The influence of these theories perhaps suggested a different way of thinking about culture, because cultural studies in general seemed to be very much caught up within a very specific way of talking and a very specific theoretical structure.

GM: In your own work, you reconstruct things imperfectly, but it is a reconstruction of your own way of dealing with a tangled, destroyed image that is caught up in an ongoing reconfiguration. There is an almost endless process of construction apparent if we look at your archive, so what is quite interesting is [that] although you are selective about specific outcomes, you are also involved in a seemingly infinite process of image generation.

Brooklyn, October 2013

GM: Faure-Walker described the labour of painting as “agricultural” in its slowness in comparison to new media. Do you experience this to be true in the works you produced for *TRANSCODE*?

FE: Painting feels more like work – it is physical. Whilst digital art can be equally painstaking and laboured, it is just not as dirty! I can spend weeks on the digital component but it is only when I start with a painting that it feels like I am actually working. The works are furthermore the offspring of an original series of portraits. A family resemblance between the characters is fairly obvious and is the by-product of the genealogy they are part of. My art is a kind of breeding system, which can be seen as agricultural. The portraits are essentially the result of a breeding programme between portraits of men, which is of course not possible in real agriculture.

GM: I know you had to learn new software to achieve your aims and spent time finding the appropriate applications. How was your process influenced by speed or time?

FE: Processing time on the computer is wasted time – you wait...The painting, in contrast, goes quicker if there is an image to work with on the canvas already – one can compare it to working with projection, I suppose. Apart from oil paint I used *Winmorph*, *Anamorph Me*, *Faceshop*, *Photoshop* and *3DS Max*. It is a process where I paint or start with someone else’s painting, digitise the painted image, manipulate it on the computer and then paint it again. There are several intermittent steps that alternate and I do not always follow the same pattern. The bodies in my recent works are based on a standard 3DS Max model, which I have multiplied, altered and posed as required (the figure was not created by me). I will not pretend that I am a 3DS Max expert – I use that which enables me to do what I want to do, but I do not use the full capability of the programme. The time before an exhibition is a kind of ‘emergency time’ where emergency thinking takes place: it is one of the most creative times in one’s making. If you have too much time, you rationalise too much – rationalising can kill a work.

I could very easily copy the images created on the computer in paint, but that is no longer satisfying to me. Sometimes I will randomly destroy an image to get beyond copying by making sweeping painterly gestures over a part of the composition – to bring energy back into the paint and to create an obstacle I can respond to. But I also use computer software to ‘surprise’ myself in a similar way – in Photoshop, for example, I will experiment with

compounding layer styles. When three layers are compounded new, possibilities come to the fore. It also becomes a compounding of time. Layering is also agricultural – so my use of Photoshop could perhaps also be described as agricultural.

GM: I need to understand your processes in terms of the intermittent switching from painting to digital art. How different was the processes of *The Ambassadors* to that of *Cephalophore*?

FE: Very different... *The Ambassadors* felt like a direct copy of my reference material, and I was very critical of it. To make its translation into paint more meaningful, I experimented with matt versus glossy paint applications. To stop myself from being prescribed to by my reference material, I did not follow the same process in *Cephalophore* – the anamorphic distortions of the portraits in *The Ambassadors* seemed to be more about the trick of the illusion and I wanted the reference to challenge me from a painterly perspective.

The process behind *The Ambassadors* started with paintings that were digitised, manipulated on the computer, and then returned to painting. To create the anamorphic perspectives that have to be viewed from various angles, I used a simple software application called AnamorphMe, which enabled me, like Holbein's distortion of the skull, to disrupt the illusion of pictorial depth in the painting. Holbein's ambassadors are shown standing in a convincing 3-D space, but the abstract shape of the anamorphic skull flattens the entire thing. The anamorphic space of the skull therefore denies conventional picture space. The oddity of the skull, which only becomes recognisable when viewed on its own terms, disrupts one's blindness to convention. It makes one aware of the artistic conventions that we accept, and somehow suggests that what and how we see cannot be taken for granted. Seeing can be a form of conditioning. The morphing of the original paintings has made its way into *Terminal Host, 1918-2008* and *Cephalophore*. Morphing is a two-dimensional process and when these are again stretched or mapped over 3-D wireframe heads, the translation from 2-D to 3-D makes the characters more versatile. It gives the figures a new existence and I can approach them from multiple viewpoints. In some of my most recent work, such as *Cephalophore*, I have painted over printed 3-D wireframe models to make painting visible in an entirely different manner.

GM: Is the *crux* of your art the disruption of conventions?

FE: Yes, I am trying to find new approaches to portraiture that disrupt standard conventions. My work has been very much concerned with **how** we see people in paintings. In *The*

Ambassadors, for example, an entirely new set of spaces is created because the viewer has to view every face from another angle.

GM: The difference between painting and digital art can be understood in terms of the characteristics Manovich has identified in new media. For example, one of the characteristics of the digital is that it is modular, whilst we know that in painting every brush stroke is slightly different – it carries the *fault* of the human body. This can be read in your work. For example, in *Cephalophore*: the bodies seem cloned, repeated as units, yet the paint application varies substantially.

FE: Yes, brush strokes cannot be identical; I like the idea that it is the fault of the body, and I think in terms of discourses on painting, it is a meaningful flaw. When I painted over the meshes in *Cephalophore*, I considered the brush stroke size to fit into specific polygons - therefore the brush strokes also often became modular. Yet the contrast between the brush stroke and the regularity of the mesh is very much apparent. Each brush stroke is different - causing some areas to move forward and others to recede due to the characteristics of the stroke. In contrast, in the digital armature, the lines in the meshes are all equally important.

GM: There is therefore a distinct dialogue, which we know was one of the core zones of conceptual overlap with *TRANSCODE*? Tell me a bit more about the conversation between your painting and use of digitisation.

FE: In my work I see the computational component as being at the service of painting. When I work digitally, most decisions are made with the idea of a painterly translation in mind, and it feels like the real work only starts when I begin to paint. I am quite biased towards digital works. It asks for a different kind of involvement from me as a viewer than a handmade thing. I often think of the futility of attempting illusion in art – it desperately wants to be real but can never be. *Trompe l'oeil* is a desperate art form that seeks out the magical aspect of illusion. The figures in *Cephalophore* share something of this illusion. The likenesses of the vice-chancellors from which their faces were originally derived have become very much diluted. They appear alien – the morphs they are based on underwent a strange anti-aging effect when they were stretched over the wireframe/mesh heads. The meshes that sculpt their heads have names, like “William 1” or “William 2” or “The Beast”. They are standard head shapes that can be adjusted to the anatomy of a 2-D image. These customisable meshes are remodelled to fit the morphs. *Terminal Host, 1918-2008* had more characteristics of “The Beast” than of “William 1” – and he is the severed head in *Cephalophore*.

GM: The fact that *Cephalophore* and *Terminal Host* contain the same head can be seen to be a metaphorical story if interpreted in a political sense!

FE: Yes, yes. This is a breeding project. A bizarre kind of agriculture. The portraits are the offspring of multiple crosses and back crosses. For me, portraiture is an imaginary act or project. These figures are a cast in some kind of narrative – even in the way I combine them in groups to create spatial compositions where they interact. There is a very distinct spatial composition in the groups' interactions. My group portraits are now no longer based on historical templates (which I used before), because I am trying to get away from a specific tradition, but *Cephalophore* still refers to a classical form in how the figures are compositionally staged.

GM: I look at dialogue as either agreement or fissure. Fissure means you can still have a conversation, but you need not agree.

FE: I can see a compatible analogy in my work. Tension is created between the body and the computer. It is as if the one wants to complete the other but they never quite find one another. One can see it in a very literal way – a figure can be half mesh, half painting: the two complete the same subject but they do so in very different ways. In *Cephalophore*, painting 'completes' the work but **also denies** the digital skeleton underneath. Painting creates an ambiguous space – the three-dimensionality of the figures is accentuated but then again denied. I see the mesh as more 2-D than 3-D because its definition is more linear whilst paint is more planar. The planar solidity of form is more 3-D in my opinion. I consciously thought of paint as something that gives the figures flesh. The paint gives form yet disintegrates – it reminds me of figures being peeled. The meshes are also hollow empty shells. Painting is perhaps shown as a futile attempt at imbuing them with life.

GM: What was the specific realisation and concept behind the *Stock Characters* you made for *TRANSCODE*?

FE: Specific substance. That which differentiates painting from printing. I used thick impasto gels in the painting, layered onto the print to highlight the contrast and comparison between the two. Reticulation, as in the previous *Stock Characters*, equated the mesh. In the last two, included on *TRANSCODE*, the aim was not to equate, but rather to show paint as paint, substance and texture. It also resulted in my reworking the face of *Terminal Host*, (after *The Flatterer* and *The Coward*). There is also a larger time frame that one needs to take into

consideration – this series of works represents several years' effort and there is a pronounced difference between making one work and an ongoing body of work. There are weird coincidences that happen over years, which are not always considered. For example, the same figure might reappear and be exhibited next to an earlier version of it – the result is a strange kind of conversation between them because of the family resemblance that comes through in all of the work.

GM: Another difference between painting and digital objects is timelessness vs. temporality – what are your thoughts in relation to the works on *TRANSCODE*?

FE: I see the need for novelty as paramount in digital art and online culture – however, it is not capable of holding your attention for a long time, as there seems to be a particular life span that we have come to associate with a digital image. That is where I respond to painting because it is not part of that system. Painting stands outside of it.

GM: So you interpret temporality also as the time a work of art can hold someone's attention? Can you see a relationship between time and space in your works?

FE: I deliberately confuse pictorial space to create an ambiguous tension, as can be seen in the hand next to the left edge of *Cephalophore*. I would also like my work to speak about dimensional space, which is something different from the 2-D to 3-D space translation. Materials belonging to the space of the computer and materials belonging to a lived world. A computer is also part of the lived world, but is only a relatively recent part of it. There is a difference – it is like the space of simulation versus the space of the real.

APPENDIX 6: INTERVIEW WITH COLLEEN ALBOROUGH

Standard Bank Art Gallery, Johannesburg, August 2010

GM: Can you give me some background on the ideas behind your work?

CA: The title for the exhibition is “Balance” and it stems from having a look at the relationship between real and imagined fears. It also stems from my relationship with Johannesburg as a city, moving to my studio at Arts on Main, moving out of the suburbs and coming not quite into the city, but to the edge of the city at Arts on Main. One of the ideas that I came across is a play by Edward Albee called “A delicate balance”; and it is about suburban dysfunction. There is a great quote where the protagonists Harry and Edna arrive at their friends and they are escaping from this unnamed terror. They ask their friends to stay there for an indefinite amount of time and right the way through the play this unnamed terror is almost a character that is never described, but they continually talk about how frightened they are and that they felt that they were lost in the dark but there was nothing – but they were so frightened. The statement, “but there was nothing yet we were so frightened” was very significant for me in terms of a state of mind that I feel many times that I live with in Johannesburg. And I say specifically Johannesburg, because I have a different state of mind when I go to Cape Town or Durban. It doesn’t feel as hectic as Johannesburg does. The impetus for it was exploring the extent to which my fears were real and which were imagined and then this movement ... my movements through the city and how that movement would trigger certain fears if I was going to places that I was unfamiliar with. So that was the oppressing idea of the notion of fear.

In my printmaking I was creating these little characters, and I started off mind mapping my ideas. In the last three years in my practice I have been using printmaking as a way to storyboard my ideas for my animations. I just started cutting out little figures and various heads and I liked that idea of just creating these many personas and different bodies. I then started to play on the plates. This particular series that I have done here is with dry point on old litho plates, and the backgrounds that the characters are sitting on are the litho plate scratch marks. The characters are cut out of acetate, and that is where monoprint comes in, because I hand wipe, both the dry point lithoplates but also the acetate characters.

Whenever I storyboarded something, I have a vague idea that there is this character in this quite isolated landscape that it is walking in with all these little heads and different legs. Then once I start working on the plate, I just play and move the positions of the characters around

until I get a composition that I really like. Then I will print it. I think this middle one was quite a definite idea that I wanted to do and then the next one was that one, and then once I got to that one, I realised... well, this little guy can be carrying all these heads ... and then from there I thought... well, what if he is trying on different heads?... and by the time I got to this one, I was so excited because there was this real process of animating on the plate. I called it trial and error, because it was playing on the plate, moving little figures off and trying the next ones and shifting them around, so it became this whole little world for me that I was engaged in while I was looking at the plate. It was a really tangible exploration, moving from the workbook and doing little sketches, to a physical play. I've been really trying to push that in my own practice – that there is more of this sense of play and spontaneity. These individual little parts of the bodies give me a lot of freedom in that.

GM: Tell me something about **the processes**, maybe going through the process of doing a print like this. What are the requirements, spatial requirements? The specific nature of what this particular studio set-up offers you, because there are also relationships between monoprint, etching, collagraph and animation. Exactly how do you go about in that process?

CA: If you handle the edges of the paper and you've got ink hands, then your print is messed up. So a lot of what I love about the printmaking process is that you have to have so much **concentration** and, as it is in any form of creative processes, you do go into the other world of making. It is a combination between the creative and **being logistically prepared**, and I find that if I am chatting too much if somebody else is in the studio, I will make mistakes. For me one of the things that is so amazing about creativity is that you completely surrender to that moment of making and you are completely present in that – everything else empties out in your mind and for me there is such a freedom in that as well. Anyway, so you would need thinners and turps and etching ink and various things, cotton waste – that is where the cotton waste features in the video installation – you would use to clean your plates with thinners and the turps and rub the excess ink off when you are cleaning up your plates. And then the ink, you need big rollers to roll up the ink and a proper glass surface, so a fully prepared studio. You need to know that everything is there, because you can't be in the midst of having rolled everything up and prepare it to ink and then you need something and then your hands are filthy! I think also what is interesting about this is that there is a particular *order* that you have to work in. So while I am doing it, I always write down step by step what I have to do.

GM: The balance between intuitive process of making decisions, of changing ideas and a prescribed process and methodology within printing, is what you have to work with. Is there

a place where the one side of the brain just takes over and the other one must be switched off? Is it a tension for you or is it something that enhances each other?

CA: It is something that is fabulous for me because I love printmaking from the point that you need to be such a perfectionist and that control freak side of me loves that side of printmaking, but then there is that other side, where within those rules that you find a way to debunk it, and bring in the sense of chance. That is why I enjoy working with mono prints and with dry points, because there is that element that I have no idea what the image is going to look like and then in that, once I have done all the sort of logistical sort of preparations of preparing my paper and getting the ink ready and having inked up my plates, then when I start playing with the figures, that's when that creativity, that spontaneity, that playfulness comes in. There is simultaneity that is happening all the time, well, that I try to enhance and work with. So on the one hand you are being very controlled and on the other hand when you are laying down materials on the plate. I specifically choose materials like cotton waste and the threads and the gauze bandage and wool from particular felting wool, specifically *because I cannot control it*. So even in that moment I have extreme frustration because I can't control it, and then I have to surrender to the process.

GM: I am very interested in the order and the process that you follow and the needs of the medium. How do you use the process in relation to the meaning of your narrative?

CA: The thing that excites me so much about mono prints is obviously the immediacy of the medium, but particularly with the black and white mono prints, and the relationship between a series. So this first image that I pull is a very stark black and white image, and there is quite a lot of heavy embossing, depending on the amount of fabric that I place. Conceptually, what I love about the embossing is this imprint it makes and then metaphorically what that impression means. As we move through life so many things make imprints and impressions on us. That influence us and we have to carry with us, so that is a very strategic part of the process, where I'm using the fabric that I enjoy. The next stage, which is what I am really interested in, are the ghosts that are left behind on the plate. So when I first started with mono prints, these first images were almost like test prints, but I was disregarding them because I was so interested conceptually and physically in the ghosts and what that means. Ghosts haunting us and having this role in imagined fears in our minds, but then also the traces that are left behind on the plate and how traces have an influence on our lives. So in this particular one there was a lot of fabric, cotton waste, that I peeled off and then it leaves these very dark marks behind because it holds the ink on the plate and at the same time in this first process that cotton waste is inked up because it is in contact with the ink, then I peel

it off and then I flip some of the cotton waste around where it has been inked up. And I place it back onto the plate, so that I know in my next print I am going to get some detail within the areas, so some of the black coming through where the cotton waste was inked up from the first process and then here I will then peel off the dry point, the little acetate figures. As I peeled the images off, there was a beautiful mark – I think it is decalcomania – that was left behind, and it started to create these patterns, but almost in quite strategic points of the figure's body, which was again that happy accident that happens, [a] completely unexpected thing that happens in the process. Very interesting, well important for me in the process, is then that it leaves a trace of where the figure was and then I place the figure kind of in the next movement, almost like a stop frame animation, showing the sequences of the stop framing animation and I run it through again and again as it lifts off, it will lift off the ghost print, so there is less cotton waste on the plate because there is already so much image left from the first mono prints. Then in this process, because I was placing more cotton waste onto the plates, it was protecting the ink again and so I got a second ghost, which was fabulous. I saw that a lot of the acetate figures were retaining that decalcomania pattern and had a lot of ink on them, so I started flipping them and using them in different parts of the image as well. What I love so much about the third print, is that there is that real sense of animation that is happening, that you get three movements of where your figures were within the image, so it becomes really like the storyboard of this little figure. This series is called "Unravel" and it is that sense of kind of fabric unravelling, but that moment when the fear gets overwhelming and you feel like going to unravel, with this sense of chaos.

GM: I actually see parallels, because you talk about your perception of the city being this threatened place. Then as you move on, things somehow become greyer. I can see the comparison also with your idea.

CA: Within shades of grey there is an ambiguity, but a freedom was well. That things are changing and altering and you can shift, whereas, – and that is what I love about the etching process is that working with the sense of light, the notion of light and dark, you are working with blacks and whites, but also the more metaphorical notion of the light and darkness of life and how we always are juggling with that, and if I am just looking at that balance, the scale, with the filtered waste and the unfiltered waste which has threads of black in it as well, – it is in our minds as well, there are whole sections of dark areas that we haven't explored, but they have still had such an influence on our lives as well, and then I think socially as well that is relevant still – the kind of negotiations we are making in South Africa between the many different races and cultures of our country.

GM: And the ghost images is a second thing that is carrying over strongly – to speak about the traces and the traces of our fear impacts on us and it leaves that imprint. You consciously manipulate this as part of your process.

C: I think so much about the past, if it remains unresolved, it haunts us, and those traces of things that we have abstracted into moments in our lives that may be not even the reality of that moment but the way we have interpreted them and then carry these traces with us – it has an influence – I really look closely, and I think one of the things in the concentrated moments of making with whatever issue I am dealing with or that I know, let's say in the particular one this is about unwrapping, then my focus while I am making will also be having a lot of those moments when I feel like I am unravelling and completely falling apart. Then I think, let's just normalise it, and move on.

GM: I would like to look at your image of the figure lying in the periphery of the city as well and then move towards the video and its relationship with the printing media. It is really quite a privilege to have this conversation to speak about your creative processes.

CA: For me too, it is an absolutely great opportunity to talk about it, because I think all these thoughts swim around in your head so much and to actually have a conversation where somebody is saying I am hearing this and this, the same and different interpretations.

GM: This particular work, about the figure that is at the periphery of the city – the one thing that we should revisit, is to also speak about chaos and speak about periphery. I would like to know more about your decision as to why you use gauze as an entire landscape, and even the figure feels like it is captured in this gauze?

CA: I wanted to do a sequence of works where the city was in the background. Arts on Main isn't quite in the city, it is just on the edge. I started feeling really very nervous because of exploring these places, these less familiar places, and so that is why I had the city in the background, because it is consciously what I was doing. I was having a feeling in certain places where I went to, an extreme fear and almost panic attacks of not knowing where I was; and I thought ... I don't want to be living in a situation where my world, my areas of movement are limited more and more by a self-imposed limitation because I was too scared to go to places. So I set myself this task of kind of pushing further and further, going to discover new places, and seeing that again shifting from that sort of black and white hardened view of these are unfamiliar places and to go into those places and feel safe and get to know those places. And now this side of the city and the east and the south is more

familiar to me and I feel exhilarated by that kind of knowing. I am much calmer, and am working my way through that sense of fear. So in this series, it started off with this figure moving through a lot of movement and density of this landscape and chaos. Then in my animation I made this figure, this death figure, that I didn't really know, and I had no idea what it meant at the time, but I knew I had to have it there. It transpired that a lot of this also has links to family relationships. I've had an uncle who has been very ill for a couple of years and this work is quite a bit about him. It ended up that three weeks before the exhibition he actually died. And this work is particularly about him and his presence in my life and the influence that he has had. There is quite a sub-theme, a more private theme that deals with the sense of loss, but I think loss on a social level as well. That sense of fear that we have moving through the country and with the loss that as a nation we have gone through.

GM: Loss is an unfamiliar thing; that is probably why we fear it as well. For me this work is also about chaos that surrounds this figure, but apart from the darkness that surrounds it, the figure feels nested, it feels quite protected, quite cosy. The bandages, which obviously have their own significance, also become the grid of this other under-current, which also sits under the city. So it's like there is this other force under the city and gauze is just such a material that is utilised for healing purposes.

CA: Absolutely, and in my previous work I used specifically the gauze for that notion of healing but also for how a grid holds you together. The grid represents for me structures in our lives. Psychological structures – a netting, or your own fabric, that holds you together, but there is this flexibility as it moves. It is such a delicate fabric, but I think psychologically we are delicate, but there is strength in the way that it has been woven together.

GM: There is that physical intactness.

CA: Yes, it is almost a contradiction, but actually it is such a strong powerful material and also for that representation of the city as a grid, so on many levels my choice of materials is very significant. What I have discovered in print making is that you get even finer types of grid with a scrim that you use, so in these I used a combination of the bandage and then the scrim to give that contrast of the linear qualities.

GM: To me there is a second relationship with the bandage – how this work of yours reflects bodyliness, because it is about the threat to the body. So I think the bandage has such a close relationship with our bodies and death. All of that ties into a sense of bodyliness that I read as one of the sub-themes as well of this work.

CA: Absolutely, well I think the bodyliness or tactility is something that I pursue in the mediums that I chose to work with in terms of the haptic touch, where it is very much in the haptic that your whole body, all your senses, are activated and read the situation to then give you an understanding or give you that knowledge. South Africa is such a visceral experience, because you will go into a certain area and I can literally feel a bodily reaction of sensing / trying to figure out the unknown.

GM: The next thing I would like to talk about is your video. How do you deal with all of this now in a medium that is not bodily, that exists as a digital medium? Light which travels through air? How are your processes translated into animation?

CA: I always feel that there is a clinical aspect to a lot of digital work, so what I try and do is search for tactility, and try and bring the medium of tangible reality into a stop frame animation. That is why I love stop frame animation, because you can work with actual objects and get that sense that it is more tactile than, perhaps, 3D made animation. Then the other thing about stop frame animation is that you physically have to move a little character, take an image, move a character, and take an image. Traces of your physical movement from real life are actually embedded in the making. It is a magical thing when you take these individual frames or images and seam them together, which then becomes the animation. It is quite an unforgiving medium, because it records your mistakes as well. But that is where the charm of the stop-frame animation comes in as well. So what I try and search for when I am making an animation is that it feels tangible, and that is where the fabric comes in – using a lot of fabric and the gauze. So all these little characters are printed and I have inked them up and then printed them onto proper Fabriano so that they have that same quality as my prints, and then I use a lot of the materials. Like in the background, there is the black gauze, and on the hills actual pieces of gauze, used in the series that we were just looking at that the figure's lying on. After I have printed them, I peel them off and the gauze has turned black, so it enabled me to cover the cotton waste and get that sense of spatial depth. The buildings in the background are also printed from another series of works that I did. I wanted to get the sense of a dislocated city, so it is not very structured and I play with scale. They are all buildings from Johannesburg and in and around Arts on Main and particularly the Carlton Centre. That is the area where my studio is where I moved around. Cotton waste also becomes this character as tangible manifestation of the sense of anxiety and chaos – this little character is struggling and finding its way through this thread.

GM: The camera is looking at constructed reality, which I am seeing on the screen. So the screen is a mediator in between a story somewhere else, but in this installation you've taken this landscape further. So, what would be the reason for your placing a whole installation around the screen?

CA: I primarily work with creating an animation or a narrative and then build an environment that houses the animation, so it becomes this whole other world. So I wanted to create the space that you walk into as a viewer and you leave the world behind, so that you can have that haptic experience of being inside the work. The notion of haptic that I respond to is by Guillian Bruno, where she says that haptic vision is a visuality, where movement is integral. So as we move through a space, every one of our senses is activated and reads that space. Then our understanding is an accumulative understanding of that knowledge. She looks at video installation and cinema, particularly, because they are these little worlds – contained worlds – within themselves and how they can transport the viewer. She says that haptic vision creates this emotion through physical movement, journey and the space, which transports you into an internal journey. So I am very interested in that idea of cinema and that it is architecturally and acoustically designed so that when you enter this world, you really are carried away with the film. In my video installations I want the viewer to have a physical relationship with the work and it was a challenging space to work with, but I think one that ended up working quite well in terms of that there is this chaos that is contained and then this chaos that is coming spilling out, where the animation plays itself out.

GM: One of the things that we haven't spoken about is the sound and the role that the sound plays. The physical object – the print and your installation – has an immediate physical truthfulness. A video can be fake, it is edited, but the object is there, it is real, but I think what the physical object never or very seldom has is the sound element. Just tell me more about how your sound is constructed, and how that relates to your physical processes.

CA: I wanted to have the idea of that sense of confusion and being in a headless state, coming through in the sound as well. I worked with Joao Orrechia, a musician, and I showed him the video and explained my concept of working with a sense of trying to find a balance and I also explained how I like to show my working processes in the final product. He came to my studio with contact microphones and attached them to the press and so that clack, clack you've heard is the printing press, which I love, which brings a relationship back to the prints, and then my camera that I was shooting with the animation, the zooming in and zooming out. He recorded that and this *kr kr* is the CPU. So all of the sounds are from the studio. He also has microphones that pick up electric signals and magnetic fields and so it is

picking up sounds and things that we can't see, but that maybe we can feel on a bodily level. Then we put a contact microphone on his throat and he hummed some parts, so it is great because there are also traces of Joao in this work, which I like.

GM: There is once again a wonderful link between the sound aspect; that is, the space we navigate is also unseen, and your artwork as digital artwork of an unseen sub-terrain. It is something that can't be captured with a still; there is a multiplicity to this.

CA: One of the comments you were making about video installation is that when the animation is on, it exists and it activates a space but when it is off, all that would be here is just the strange room full of this cotton waste. So what I have noticed so much about video installation is when you try and photograph it or capture it on video it never really translates into the work. Whenever I take down an installation I am always sad because it then disappears. I am not sad about taking down my prints, because I can take them out and I can look at them and I put them up on my wall, but I can't recreate this because it has been, it has existed for these six weeks and then it disappears. So wherever the work manifests itself again, it will be in a different space and then it will have a whole different language and meaning that will come from the film.

GM: So there are actually three different kinds of space understanding – the spatiality that you have in your traditional media where the work exists and even if you put them away they are still physically hanging in another hall. Then the temporality of this installation, which is very physical, you can feel it, you can sense it with your body, but after this it is forever undone. Then the digital, which is a third kind of spatial experience in which the artwork is forever stored in bits and pieces.

CA: Yes. So I think my search always in making an artwork is to create this environment where the viewer can have this experience, because that experience is what you carry with you. I always hope to somehow create this world that the viewer can escape from their normal life and be transported.

GM: I think if one talks about that disappearance, there is a narrative, because it is something that is here now, and then in a little bit of time it will not be there, so there is a time sequence in that narrative. I'd like to take that narrative issue back to your etching – your printing that happened after this and we can just look at how this issue of the narrative has influenced your graphical print.

CA: Absolutely.

GM: Okay, so we're chatting next door about that process and the conversation between the animation and the prints that were done in between. Let's discuss how the thinking process and the video came to grow due to that process from the digital back to the print room.

CA: I think in relation to that question, this series optimises it the most. This particular work I did after the animation, but this was already a little thumbnail in my story board that I knew I was going to do, but I think the wonderful thing is that working towards a solo exhibition is in the pursuit of getting to the deadline and the intensity that happens – you go into a creative zone. Sheer terror and that pressure help you to become less self-conscious, and less precious about it. But the other thing is that when you are working in a cross medium, and into that movement through the process of making the stop-frame animation and through the possibilities that you start seeing, you make all these discoveries. This is where I started animating these figures more, so that I could actually start bringing that sense of movement in, especially with the falling figure in the mono print process. You can really start tracing the movement from the first one to the second one, to the third one. The cut-outs of the legs and the body parts that were embedded inside the fabric in the space of my animation gave me further ideas – to embed the objects inside the wool and to get even a greater spatial illusion within my works. There is already a development from that state of heads to these mono prints where some of these images are starting to get a greater sense of depth.

GM: There is an incredible movement in depth behind *the process* in those works. The depth that you had in the 3D theatre and with video has somehow become transferred into this, and so there is a sense of a new spatial illusion generated.

CA: This is a first animation that I have done in three-dimensional space; the others have been flat little cut-outs. So, a whole lot of technical issues came with it, in terms of depth of the field and your focus on your camera. I was also working with gravity, and I had to consider how I am going to get these little figures to stand up. So the focus, about 0.5 m deep, was a challenge, and I think that awareness of the depth of field then translated into the two-dimensional, but I think it is also that I have been so aware of the need to push the medium to allude to a deeper space. I can't see a work in isolation, because it exists within this narrative and the relationship of all these prints exists in the relationship of the video and vice versa in my head. I just can't separate these.

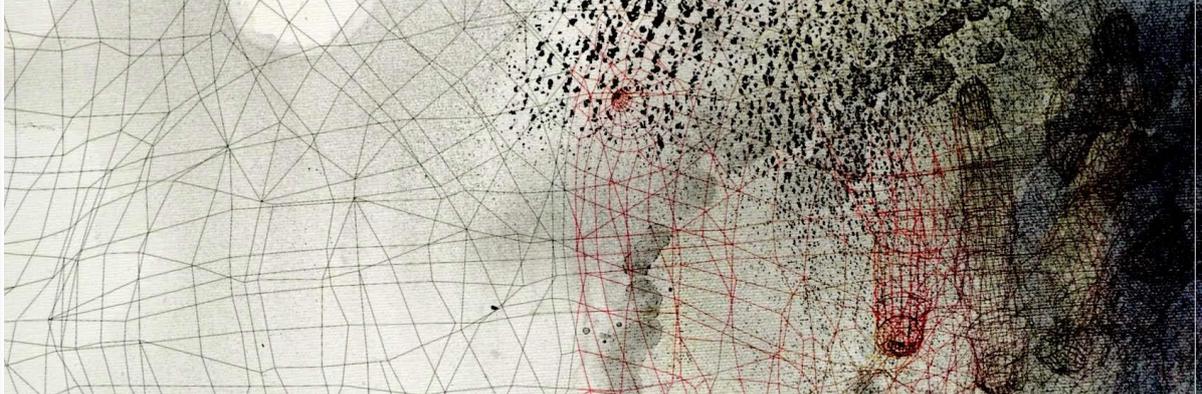
GM: I think it is such a contingent process, how the work moved back and forth, feeding one another through the different media and actions. Thanks, it was fabulous talking about your processes and there are several layers that I have picked up today that I will take further into the ongoing dialogue.

APPENDIX 7: MARKETING, INVITATION AND POSTER AND PRESS RELEASE

7.1: INVITATION POSTED

TRANSCODE // DIALOGUES AROUND INTERMEDIA PRACTICE

COLLEEN ALBOROUGH / CELIA DE VILLIERS & INTUTHUKO SEWING GROUP / FRIKKIE EKSTEEN / LAWRENCE LEMAOANA / CHURCHILL MADIKIDA / SELLO MAHLANGU / GWEN MILLER / MARCUS NEUSTETTER / CAROLYN PARTON / NATHANIEL STERN / MINNETTE VÁRI / FABIAN WARGAU



You are cordially invited to the exhibition

TRANSCODE // DIALOGUES AROUND INTERMEDIA PRACTICE

Curated by Gwen Miller

This exhibition is presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a practice-led DLitt et Phil degree in Art History. The exhibition is hosted by the UNISA Art Gallery and the Department of Art History, Visual Arts and Musicology.

Opening 7 September 2011 // 18h00 for 18h30

Welcoming address // Prof Mabel Majanja

Opening speaker // Prof Frikkie Potgieter

Exhibition closes 30 September 2011

UNISA Art Gallery
Kgorong Building, Main Campus
Preller Street, Pretoria, 0003
Tel: (012) 441 5683
ukun1@unisa.ac.za
www.unisa.ac.za/gallery
Gallery Hours: Tue-Fri 10:00 - 16:00



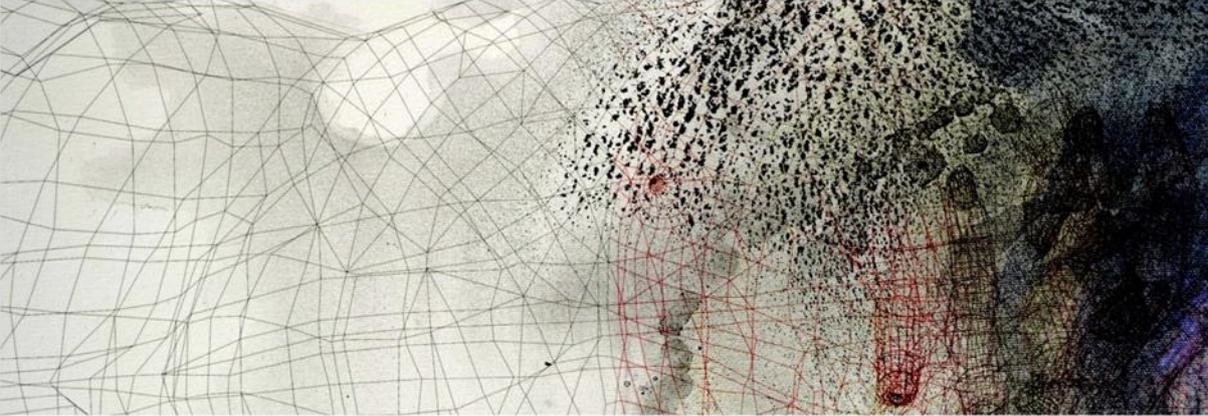
Image: Frikkie Eksteen, detail from The Faultfinder (2011)

UNISA | 
university
of south africa
ART GALLERY

7.2: POSTER

TRANSCODE // DIALOGUES AROUND INTERMEDIA PRACTICE

COLLEEN ALBOROUGH / CELIA DE VILLIERS & INTUTHUKO SEWING GROUP / FRIKKE EKSTEEN / LAWRENCE LEMAOANA / CHURCHILL MADIKIDA / SELLO MAHLANGU / GWEN MILLER / MARCUS NEUSTETTER / CAROLYN PARTON / NATHANIEL STERN / MINNETTE VARI / FABIAN WARGAU



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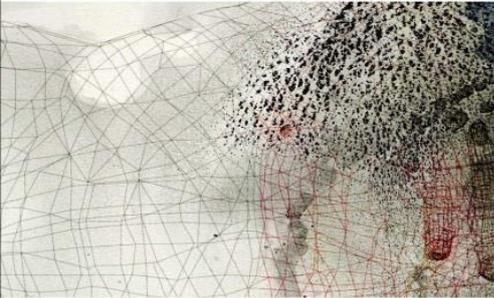
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7.3: ADVERTISEMENT IN ART TIMES:

TRANSCODE // DIALOGUES AROUND INTERMEDIA PRACTICE

COLLEEN ALBOROUGH / CELIA DE VILLIERS & INTUTHUKO SEWING GROUP / FRIKKE EKSTEEN / LAWRENCE LEMAOANA / CHURCHILL MADIKIDA / SELLO MAHLANGU / GWEN MILLER / MARCUS NEUSTETTER / CAROLYN PARTON / NATHANIEL STERN / MINNETTE VARI / FABIAN WARGAU



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Gallery Hours: 10:00 - 16:00 Tuesday - Friday





7.4: PRESS RELEASE

<http://www.atjoburg.net/?p=1339>

September 1st, 2011 by christo

TRANSCODE is an exhibition that frames the theoretical gap between digital and analogue media. It focuses on intermedia art practices that articulate differences between hands-on and digital media. This curatorial focus also approaches the concept of mediation as a dialogue between supposedly conflicting positions, materials and traditions.

Artists who work in traditional media, but whose creative processes are increasingly influenced by digital technology, were invited to participate in the exhibition. Their re-coding of traditional processes reveals formal and conceptual parallels contained by presence and embodiment. Within these processes the artists explore assumed differences within unfolding dialogues while reconstructing 'grey areas'; places where slippage and intervention may avoid rigid classification. The creative convergence of the individual expressions within *TRANSCODE* makes these liminal spaces visible.

The concept of *transcoding* implies not only a sharing of cultures, but also the potential for a cross-contamination between different disciplines. In software jargon, the term *transcode* refers to a process that enables the conversion of data from one encoding to another, permitting the export and interchange of dissimilar formats. Similarly, *TRANSCODE* enables metaphoric transformation. Within the context of this exhibition, *transcoding* also points to the significant, yet often inconspicuous manner in which we adjust our lives in a world of ubiquitous technologies.

TRANSCODE exposes how artistic mediation processes can carry meaning across apparent boundaries to produce unexpected overlaps – a complex creative detour that offers an alternative way of imagining the presumed dualism between traditional and digital art.

Posted in [africa art](#), [announcements](#), [digital art](#), [exhibition](#), [south africa](#), [stimulus](#) | [2 Comments »](#)

UNISA ART GALLERY

TRANSCODE: dialogues around intermedia practice

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Curated by Gwen Miller



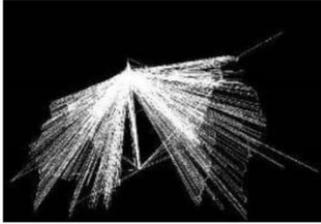
Lawrence Lemaona, Last Line of Defense (detail)



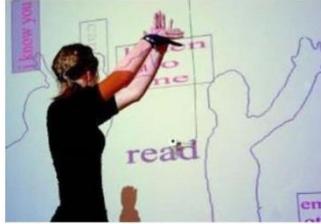
Celia de Villiers & Intuthuko, Synchronic Journey (detail)



Frikkie Eksteen, The Complaisant Man (detail)



Marcus Neustetter, Space Drawing I Man Ray (detail)



Nathaniel Stern, Stutter



Churchill Madikida, Blood on my Hands



Carolyn Parton, 24.925kg landscape (detail)



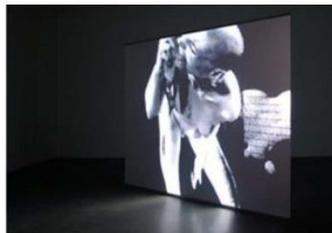
Colleen Alborough, Fear and Trembling



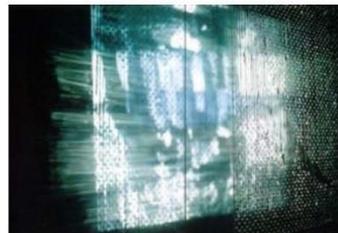
Sello Mahlangu, Xenophobia Mars Legacy (detail)



Gwen Miller, Continuum (detail)



Minnette Vári, Oracle



Fabian Wargau, Dripping Actuality

7.5: PRESS RELEASE: BEELD NEWSPAPER

BEELD, Kuns en Vermaak
06 Sep 2011, p.10



Carolyn Parton se *24 925 kg Landscape*, (2010), verfoorblyfsels.

Weggooi-verf word argeologiese vonds

Gwen Miller

skryf oor
Carolyn Parton.



Oprifsel, afbreeksels en kunstenaars se weggooi-verfbuise – dit is die inspirasie vir Carolyn Parton se skilderwerk.

Die gestapelde en gelaagde materie, die prosesse van afskilfering en vertering word metaforiese spreekbuise vir die verbruikers-kultuur se geestestoestand. Die installasie van Parton wat deel uitmaak van die uitstalling *Trans-code: Dialogues About Intermedia Practice* in Unisa se nuwe kunsgalery, is 'n ryk, tasbare, fisieke ervaring. Soos die ander werke wat in die uitstalling in die Unisa-galery vertoon word, kan Parton se installasie ook beskou word as 'n gesprek wat verskeie lae van die kontemporêre lewe aanraak.

Parton se installasie bestaan primêr uit verf – maar nie verf soos ons gewoon is daaraan op skilderdoek nie. Haar verf is gestapel, aanmekaar gelas en val in waterval-formasie na die vloer. Die installasie sluit ook vroeë werke, 'n werkjoernaal en fragmente in wat haar ontwikkeling en denkprosesse ontbloot. Hierdie segment van Parton se installasie verbeeld die rol wat digitale Photoshop-sagteware speel as deel van haar werkwyse.

Die oorspronklike inspirasie vloei voort vanuit die belangstelling in die oprifsel wat op die strande van die Kaapse kus uitspoel (Parton woon in Noordhoek). Hierin vind Parton die oorblyfsels van 'n kultuur wat deur die wind en water geprosesseer is, gereed vir hersirkulasie. In sommige werke is die mens gefragmenteer en soos 'n goed geïntegreerde argief word tyd en plek verbroekel met die mens as een van die flertse drywende rommel. Die mens as deel van die drifsel, in verweefde werke, bied 'n melankoliese weerklank. Parton praat self ook van die digitale beelde wat ons daaglik moet hanteer – ongewenste advertensies en masas e-pos. Digitale illusie en verf se tasbare lyflikheid vorm 'n ryk visuele ervaring.

Die hangende installasie *Time Will Tell*, wat volgens Parton bestaan uit 46 kg verf, is dominant in die groep werke en oorweldigend in die besef dat hier slegs verf is wat driedimensioneel die omgewing skep. Ewe imposant is die werk *24 925 kg Landscape*, wat soos die titel aandui, die kyker herinner dat dit nie die beeld van die landskap is wat op ons 'n indruk moet maak nie, maar die stukke verf wat diep in die raamwerk saamgepak lê. Parton beïndruk met die wyse waarop die ruwe materiaal met vakmanskap gemanipuleer word om atmosferiese drama te skep. Die herwinning van weggooi-verfbuise van ander kunstenaars (onder andere Marlene Dumas en Tracy Payne) word soos 'n nuwe argeologiese vonds wat Parton met groot sorg stapel om nuwe wêreld te suggereer. Nuwe wêreld wat op 'n vreemde manier tog bekend voorkom.

■ Die uitstalling begin môre om 18:00 en duur tot 30 September.

Gwen Miller is 'n dosent in visuele kunste aan Unisa en 'n praktiserende kunstenaar. Sy is besig met haar doktorsgraad in kunsgeeskiedenis.

Haar werke in gemengde media se konseptuele fokus is op die impak van stelsels op die mens en die dialoog tussen nuwe en tradisionele media. "Die alomteenwoordige ervaring van tegnologie verander ons bewussyn van ruimte, tyd en die dinamika van ons verhoudings," sê sy. "Die gebruik van laboratoriumtoerusting roep die band tussen tegnologie en die stadsmens op en ondersoek die spanning tussen suiwerheid en defek."

Miller se digitale werke skep 'n fiktiewe wêreld wat herinner aan 'n industriële stadskap. Haar werk is opgeneem in verskeie permanente versamelings soos dié van Telkom, Sasol, Unisa en die Noordwes-Universiteit.

Miller se werk is ook te sien in *Transcode: Dialogues Around Intermedia Practice*, 'n uitstalling waarvan sy ook die kurator is.

7.6: PRACTICE PRESENTED ON EXHIBITIONS OTHER THAN *TRANSCODE* DURING THE PERIOD OF DOING RESEARCH FOR DLITT ET PHIL

- 2015, Sept-current: *transcode*, curator and participant. *OutoftheCUBE*
- 2015, May **Terra**, Bloemfontein.
- 2015, June **RESPONSE**, Staff exhibition, Unisa Art Gallery, Pretoria.
- 2014, Sept **Art and Fashion**, curated by Lucy Anastasias. Cool Capital event, St Lorient, Pretoria
- 2014, July **Innibos**, Nelspruit. + **From Innibos to Pretoria**, Association of Arts Gallery, Pretoria
- 2013 **Dialogues 2013**, Orangerie Exhibition Çenter of the French Senate15 Rue de Vaugirard, Paris.
- 2012, Oct **Eros & Thanatos: Between death and desire**, curated by Celia de Villiers and Hester Viles, 20/10 – 10/11, St Lorient Fashion & Art Gallery, Pretoria.
- 2012, Aug **Larroque Art festival**, Midi-Pyrenees, France.
- 2012, Jun-Jul **Staff-stuff**, curated by Lawrence Lemaona. UNISA Art Gallery, Pretoria.
- 2012, Jun-Jul **Terra Periscolosa**. Curated by Elfriede Dreyer. Fried Contemporary Art Gallery, Pretoria.
- 2012, May **Recent Acquisitions Art Exhibition**, UNISA Art Gallery, Pretoria
- 2011, Nov **The EAST AFRICA ART BIENNALE – EASTAFAB 2011**, Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania.
- 2010 Co-curator **Land: Diversity and Unity**, Hyderabad, India
- 2010, Sept **Artists to save the earth**. Curated by Stephen Finn. Long Street Gallery, Pretoria.
- 2009 **Dystopia**, curated by Elfriede Dreyer and Jacob Lebeko
- 2008 Unisa Art Gallery, Pretoria, 23 May 23 – 30 June, 2009
- 2009 Museum Africa, Johannesburg, 8 October – 15 November, 2009
- 2010 Oliewenhuis Art Museum, Mangaung:10 June 10 – 8 August, 2010
- 2008 The Centenary exhibition of the University of Pretoria:
A century in the service of knowledge: Visuality/Commentary
curated by Elfriede Dreyer and Jeanne v Eeden, Pretoria.
- 2008 **International Film Festival: Journey to Freedom Narratives**, Middlebury College, USA, Athens, Sydney

APPENDIX 8: PRESS REVIEWS

8.1: REVIEW BY JOHAN MYBURG, FOR WEEKLY NEWSPAPER *BEELD*. SEPTEMBER

2011



Cephalophore (2011, olie en inkt jet-druk op doek, 123 x 295 cm), een van Frikkie Eksteen se werke in die uitstalling *Transcode, Dialogues around Intermedia Practice*.

Kuns in gesprek oor gesprek tussen media

Transcode: Dialogues around Intermedia Practice
Unisa-galery, Pretoria
Johan Myburg

In haar *Transcode* bring die kurator Gwen Miller die werk byeen van 12 Suid-Afrikaanse kunstenaars: Colleen Alborough, Celia de Villiers en die Intuthukonaaldwergroep, Frikkie Eksteen, Lawrence Lemaona, Churchill Madikida, Sello Mahlangu, Gwen Miller, Marcus Neustetter, Carolyn Parton, Nathaniel Stern, Minnette Vári en Fabian Wargau.

Dis van meet af aan duidelik die uitstalling is deel van 'n gro-

ter projek: Miller se navorsing in die rigting van haar praktykgeleide doktorsgraadstudie aan Unisa.

Benewens aspekte soos taal, teken en betekenis kom die dialektiese wisselwerking tussen praktiese teorie en teoretiese praktyk derhalwe ter sprake.

Maar vir die besoeker aan die galery wat nie noodwendig op 'n akademiese vlak met die uitstalling wil omgaan nie, bied die versameling werke nietemin verrassende ontdekkings.

Miller het nie net bestaande werke van die kunstenaars gekies wat die "tema" vergestalt nie, maar die afgelope jaar met die kunstenaars saamgewerk.

Die gevolg is dat nuwe werke, sommige juis met die oog op die uitstalling, tot stand gekom het (as 'n vorm van deelnemende aksie-navorsing).

Die gemene deler is die gesprek binne intermedia wat tot stand kom tussen "tradisionele" kunspraktyk en digitale kuns.

Dié gesprek loop soos 'n goue draad deur die uitstalling. In die sin van binnegesprekke waarin 'n kunstenaar byvoorbeeld met sy of haar eie werk in 'n ander "taal" of "woordeskaf" omgaan; in gesprekke tussen kunstenaars; maar ook die deelname aan 'n groter gesprek, wat in Bakhtin se mond heteroglossia sou kon heet.

Om die gesprek(ke) te vergemaklik word die werke in vier ruimtes vertoon: die eerste met 'n meer narratiewe benadering (Lemaona, De Villiers); daarnaas werke wat ruimtelikheid en teenwoordigheid verken (Eksteen, Neustetter, Parton); die derde met lyflikheid as kern (Stern, Madikida, Alborough); en die vierde fokus op stelsels en sistemiese denke (Mahlangu, Vári, Miller en Wargau).

En van die verrassings in die uitstalling is *Oracle Remastered* (2011), die inkerke op papier van Vári. Geskoei op die video-werk *Oracle* (1999) kom Vári met oënskynlik ongekompliseerde (en onbeweëlike) tekeninge

vorendag wat hoegenaamd nie minder impak het nie as die stuwing van die videowerk. Dis juis dié vertaling van idees wat Miller so knap vergestalt.

Eksteen se *Cephalophore*, 'n werk waarin 'n gemartelde heilige se kop sentraal geparadeer word, verenig skildertegniek en digitale drukwerk naas mekaar op dieselfde doek.

Wat verras, is die gemak waarmee Eksteen dié versoening bewerkstellig, maar terselfdertyd die ontwrigtende uitwerking wat skilder en digitale druk op mekaar het.

In dié spanning lê die voortgaande gesprek.

■ Tot 30 September

8.2: KARUSHNI NAIDU: CODING MEANING ACROSS APPARENT BOUNDARIES, IN FOCUS, UNISA NEWS LETTER. OCTOBER 2011

CODING MEANING ACROSS APPARENT BOUNDARIES

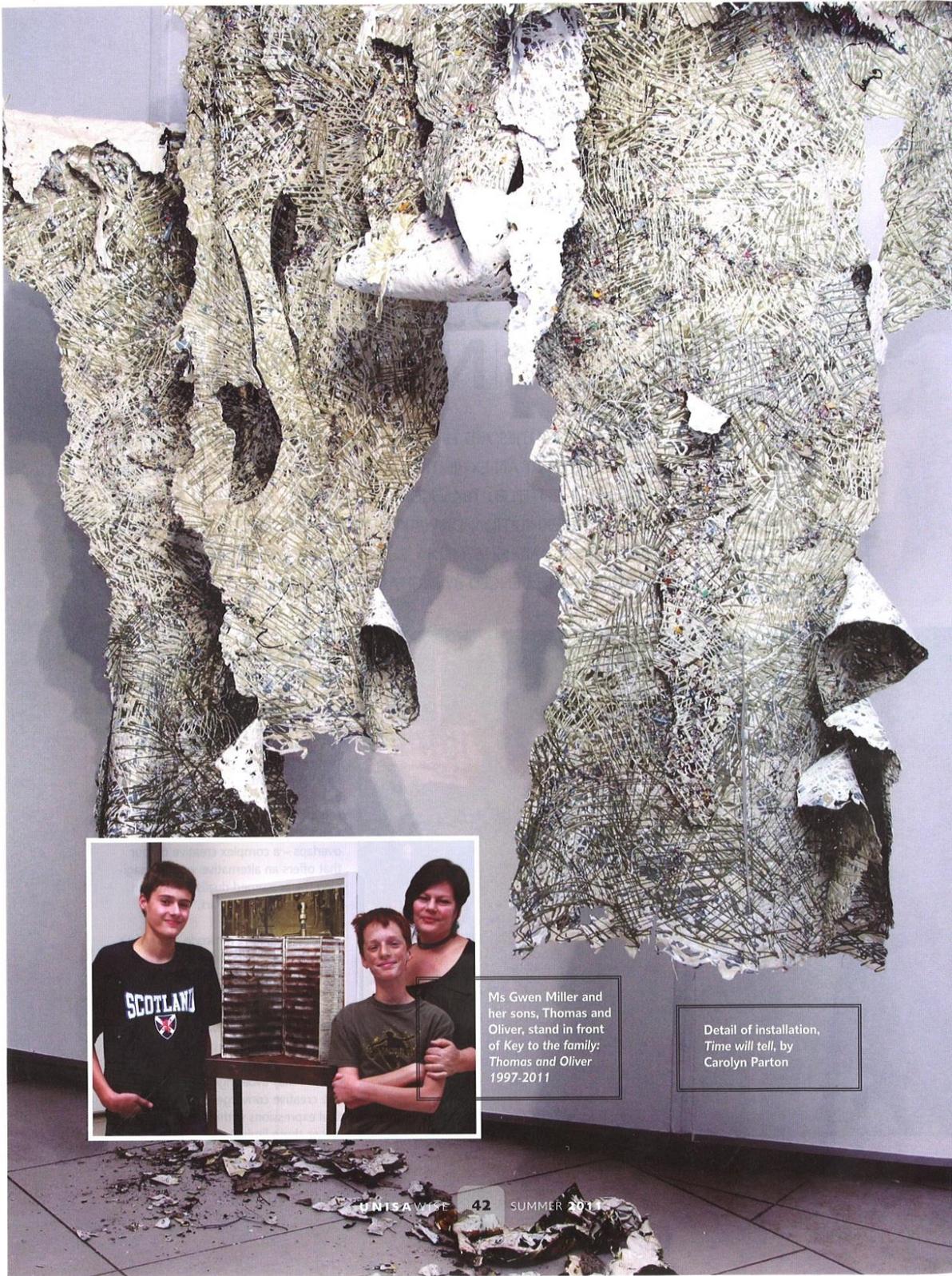
LIKE MANY SPECIALITIES, ART HAS BEEN INFLUENCED BY TECHNOLOGY AND THIS WAS VISIBLE AT AN EXHIBITION HOSTED BY THE UNISA ART GALLERY IN SEPTEMBER. ENTITLED *TRANSCODE // DIALOGUES AROUND INTERMEDIA PRACTICE*, THE EXHIBITION DISPLAYED WORKS BY ARTISTS WHO WORK IN TRADITIONAL AND NEW MEDIA, BUT WHOSE CREATIVE PROCESSES ARE INCREASINGLY INFLUENCED BY DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY.

Detail of a collaboration by Gwen Miller and Fabian Wargau, entitled *System dialogue*



Unisa Visual Arts Lecturer, Ms Gwen Miller, who curated the exhibition and displayed her work as part of research for her practice-led DLitt et Phil in Art History, said *Transcode* frames the theoretical gap between digital and analogue media and focuses on intermedia art practices that articulate the differences between hands-on and digital media. "*Transcode* exposes how artistic mediation processes can carry meaning across apparent boundaries to produce unexpected overlaps – a complex creative detour that offers an alternative way of imagining the presumed dualism between traditional and digital art."

She said through *Transcode*, the artist's re-coding of traditional processes reveals formal and conceptual parallels contained by presence and embodiment. "Within these processes the artists explore assumed differences within unfolding dialogues while reconstructing grey areas – places where slippage and intervention may avoid rigid classification. The creative convergence of the individual expressions within *transcode* makes these liminal spaces visible."



Ms Gwen Miller and her sons, Thomas and Oliver, stand in front of *Key to the family: Thomas and Oliver* 1997-2011

Detail of installation, *Time will tell*, by Carolyn Parton

Ms Mary Sibanda and Mr Lawrence Lemaona, with *All in line* by Lemaona



Ms Celia de Villiers (left) and the women responsible for *Syncrian journey*: back, Ms Lindiwe Maseko, Ms Tshidi Leputla, Mr Lesego Makua, Ms Irene Ntombela, Ms Susan Haycock, and Ms Nomsa Sithole; and front, Ms Alzina Matsosa and Ms Evelyn Thwala.



Miller said that the concept of transcoding implies not only a sharing of cultures, but also the potential for a cross-contamination between different disciplines. "Within the context of this exhibition, transcoding also points to the significant, yet often inconspicuous manner in which we adjust our lives in a world of ubiquitous technologies ... This omnipresence is experienced when one walks through the space of the exhibition, with a multitude of projections, interactive works, and an online web site being presented."

In terms of her doctorate, Miller clarified that the practice-led methodology accepts that the practical component is

the core of the academic research and that it is evaluated *in situ*. The exhibition as a physical experience is also assessed by the examiners as this is a curated exhibition. "This implies that I conceptualised the exhibition to be a research project and invited other artists to make new art, thinking with me through their art and researching the concept from their different ideological interest angles ... My own artworks also formed an important part of the visual research."

The final "document" that will be evaluated will contain visual archival material, a full catalogue, DVDs, and a thesis presented in a boxed format. Miller noted that the thesis is not only shorter than a

doctoral thesis but is also written with the processes of visual research dominant in the perspective of writing. "The perspective acknowledges that the artwork translates meaning and knowledge of the world in a unique and specific way that is not directly translatable in any text and has to be present as research in its physical form."

Exhibiting artists included Colleen Alborough, Celia de Villiers and the Intuthuko sewing group, Frikkie Eksteen, Lawrence Lemaona, Churchill Madikida, Sello Mahlangu, Marcus Neustetter, Carolyn Parton, Nathaniel Stern, Minnette Vári, and Fabian Wargu.

8.3: STEPHEN MARCUS FINN: THE DIALECTIC OF DIALOGUE. REVIEW IN DEARTE 2012

Views and (Re)Views

The dialectic of dialogue

Stephen Marcus Finn*

* Stephen Marcus Finn is Professor Emeritus in the Department of English at the University of Pretoria.

TRANSCODE // Dialogues around Intermedia Practice, 7–30 September 2011, Unisa Art Gallery, Pretoria.

The word 'stutter' was first used in English in the sixteenth century, about the time the German Hans Holbein was court painter to Henry VIII. Significantly, the word is related to the German one meaning 'to strike against' with an implication of repetition, which in turn implies a dialogue, be it with oneself or with others. It is this notion that permeates Gwen Miller's superbly curated exhibition at Unisa, *TRANSCODE // Dialogues around Intermedia Practice* and emblematised by Nathaniel Stern's remarkable interactive digital installation, *Stuttering*. Viewers become both performers and artists, act and are acted upon, as they form a dialogue with a blank screen which cannot be art without their interaction with it. As they move, words appear in different places on the canvas, reminding us that we all give our own meaning to any work.

Across from it in the gallery Colleen Alborough's video installation, *Fear and Trembling*, continues the discourse. It mixes the traditional with the cutting edge. Amongst caverns of cotton, cardboard figures pop up seemingly at random. Above, a film of this depicts a stylised man, frantically trying on different heads in a desperate attempt to find the right one, like a mechanised golem frantically seeking meaning in its conversation with a world it does not understand. Its attempt here is similar to the oracularity of Minette Vári's ink on paper works and also to her video *Oracle Remembered*, in which a figure is represented eating itself and regurgitating its unpalatable self.

Vári's figure is as insubstantial as Marcus Neustetter's video, *Space Drawing I*, with its echoes of Man Ray's Rayographs and with constellations formed line by line, until a figure appears from what could well be a mess. In Carolyn Parton's *Jump and Dive*, the individual emerges from the morass of society. This theme continues in Churchill Madikida's video *Stampede*, where an individual buffalo is subsumed in the group as they go on the rampage.



1 Nathaniel Stern, *Stuttering* (2003). Video installation, dimensions variable. Unisa Art Collection. Reproduced with permission of the artist.



2 Colleen Alborough, *Fear and Trembling* (2010–2011). Video installation, dimensions variable. Unisa Art Collection. Photograph by Rupert de Beer.



3 Carolyn Parton, *Dive* (2004–2011). Archival print on cotton paper, paint residue ink, 116 x 85 cm. Artist's collection. Reproduced with permission of the artist.

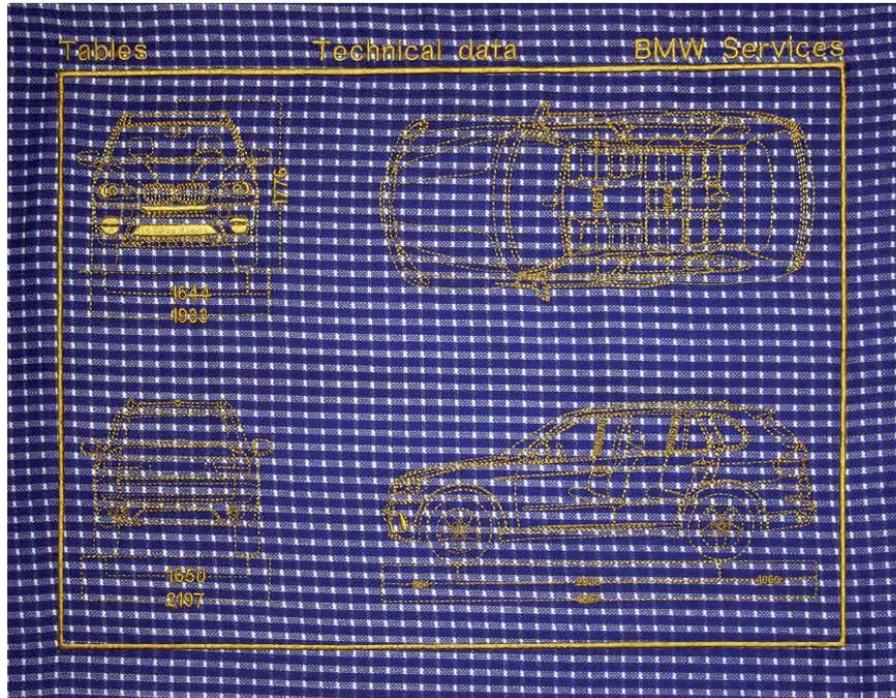


4 Celia de Villiers and Intuthuko, Detail of *Synchronic Journey* (2011). Quilt inspired by animation, 220 x 220 cm. Unisa Art Collection. Photograph by Izelle Jacobs.

The reciprocal effect of the individual and community is also found in Celia de Villiers and the Intuthuko Sewing Group's hand-embroidered quilts and concomitant animation, reminding us of the permeation of society by politics – a facet also recurring in the mechanised embroidery of Lawrence Lemaona. Included here are diagrams of the inside of a BMW, taking the viewer into a façade and revealing that there might just be nothing there. His folded jackets which cover nothing do the same, and make us question reality and the face shown to the outside world. This is a world as hidden as Sello Mahlangu's *Xeno-World*, a digital interactive drawing in which a shantytown is depicted floating in the ether. The viewer is able to zoom in on the individuals living there; however these 'individuals' are mere shadows caught in a miasmic labyrinth of awkward communication.

This theme also carries thought in the work of Fabian Wargau and Gwen Miller. Wargau presents a mixed media and video installation work with enamel pigment on porcelain tiles. The iconography of the maze can be more easily organised, visually speaking, through the viewer's interaction with the work, as he or she attempts to make sense of the world. Gwen Miller also applies this idea. In her impressive installation she divines family portraits in laboratory apparatus and hair, remembering not faces but feelings as she – like so many of the other artists in their works here – reveals a desperate attempt to retain memory.

A dialogue is set up in works by Frikkie Eksteen, suggesting a visual and conceptual play with the work of other artists on the show. *Cephalophore*, the oil and inkjet print on canvas, consists of twelve figures (including a fleshless skull) represented in various stages of decomposition and decay. Their rapidly dissolving fleshy coverings suggest that beneath all is nothing – an inevitable emptiness recalling a similar theme in work by Alborough, Lemaona, Neustetter and Vári.



5 Lawrence Lemaana, Detail of *Your Success, Beautifully Reflected I, II, III* (2011). Textile and embroidery, 113 x 57.5 cm each. Unisa Art Collection. Photograph by Izelle Jacobs.



6 Fabian Wargau, Floor detail as part of a larger installation which includes a projection - *VME 006 Series* (2007). Enamel on porcelain tile, 60 x 60 cm each. Unisa Art Collection. Photograph by Izelle Jacobs.



7 Gwen Miller, *Residual System: Family Portrait* (2011). Laboratory glass, hand-blown glass, perspex, rusted iron plate, light fittings, 157.5 x 107 x 30 cm. Artist's collection. Photograph by Izelle Jacobs.

Terminal Host, by Frikkie Eksteen, can be read as a composite of University of Pretoria rectors, appearing like a Frankenstein or another golem and gazing across at *The Ambassadors*, a work impossible to fathom straight on with its exquisitely rendered ghoulish figures, but from the side easily seen as another composite of twelve rectors. Therefore, it can be viewed in a way similar to Holbein's *The Ambassadors* (1533), with its skull in the centre acting as a memento mori, striking our eyes as we understand its fluency in what appears at first as an artistic stutter.

In so many of the works in this exhibition, the viewer is led to engage mindfully through constructive dialogue and it is this theme that forms the central focus of the show which took place between 7 and 30 September 2011 at the Unisa Art Gallery. The exhibition, which forms part of the first practice-led doctorate research project at the Department of Art History, Visual Arts and Musicology at the University of South Africa, included work by Colleen Alborough, Celia de Villiers and the Intuthuko Sewing Group, Frikkie Eksteen, Lawrence Lemaona, Churchill Madikida, Sello Mahlangu, Gwen Miller, Marcus Neustetter, Carolyn Parton, Nathaniel Stern, Minnette Vári and Fabian Wargau.



8 Frikkie Eksteen, *Cephalophore* (2011). Oil and inkjet print on canvas, 123 x 295 cm. Unisa Art Collection. Photograph by Izelle Jacobs.

8.4: RORY DU PLESSIS: *STAFF-STUFF*. REVIEW IN DE ARTE 2012

Unisa 'Staff/Stuff' Art Exhibition

Rory du Plessis*

* Rory du Plessis is a lecturer in visual culture studies in the Department of Visual Arts, University of Pretoria.

'Staff/Stuff'. 19 June – 6 July 2012, Unisa Art Gallery, Pretoria.

The Unisa 'Staff/Stuff' Art Exhibition took place from 19 June to 6 July 2012 at the new premises of the Unisa Art Gallery in the Kgorong building. The exhibition commendably showcased the fine artists associated with Unisa's Department of Art History, Visual Arts and Musicology. The artists included, amongst others, Lisa Allen, Celia de Villiers, Frikkie Eksteen, Lawrence Lemaona, Nathani Lüneburg, Gwen Miller, Bongani Mkhonza, Justice Mokoena, Frikkie Potgieter, Karin Preller, Robyn Sassen and Cate Terblanche. The inclusion of such a large number of artists was equally matched by the number of works displayed by each artist. The sheer immensity of the artworks, which almost all exuded a high calibre of conceptually innovative skill, was a fundamental feature of the exhibition. This distinctive feature was further accentuated by Kgorong being well suited to the display of large exhibitions – its design can accommodate various sizes and mediums of artworks, without compromising on the specific requirements of each. To mention every single artwork would run the risk of only providing a catalogue entry

of each. Therefore a number of works are singled out for inclusion in this review.

Gwen Miller (2012) underscores that the 21st century is marked by scientific advances and mechanisms that provide us with prosperity, power and protection, for the purpose of creating a faultless world. In our unrelenting strive for such an existence, she states, the very same mechanisms that promise utopian hopes have inadvertently led us to a world fraught with the fear of chemical leaks, disaster and death on a scale of apocalyptic proportions (Miller 2012). Radiation exposure and contamination after the Fukushima catastrophe have led to world-wide panic over the safety of nuclear energy, while South Africa faces the reality of acid-mine drainage and ecosystem pollution. Such realities and fears are embodied in Miller's series of works titled *Spill 1, 2 & 3* (2011–2012) (1). In this series she deliberates on the hazards of waste and exposure to contamination by depicting stains, pollution or smog. Miller's use of pipes and stains is in contrast to our highly technologised cities' promulgations of their inhabitants being immersed in a matrix of connections and wireless zones of seamless WiFi hotspots for global access and connectivity via the Internet. Such representations evade the raw backbones of the city – its wires, pipes and the 'circuitry' of waste water, sewerage and electricity – all of which hold the ubiquitous intimations of toxic threat. Thus, representations of the



1 Gwen Miller, *Spill 1, 2 & 3* (2011–2012). Mixed media: Ultrachrome inks on canvases, oils, alkyd and varnish, dimensions variable. Reproduced with the permission of the artist.

technologically interfaced metropolis (Gandy 2005:38) come at the expense of signifying the tangible, physical reality of the city – its underbelly of entwined piping and conduits. In this regard, Miller's portrayal of pipes as oozing, inorganic orifices provides a critical reflection of the trope of the technologised city as a luminous metropolis of screens, interfaces and simulacra. In this way she provides a counter-narrative to the trope, and figures it rather as a 'flawed system through which contamination and degeneration develop' (Miller 2012).

Miller's artwork also outlines a fundamental myopia in our contemporary existence – a blind-spot that is best articulated by Luce Irigaray (1993:187) who states that 'the developments in technology subject us to such harsh ordeals that we are threatened with physical and mental annihilation. We have neither the time nor the leisure to think, however much spare time we are given, and we are endlessly negligent, forgetful, distracted.' By presenting her artwork over three canvases the viewer does not have the comfort of disregarding or overlooking the prowling perils of present-day existence, but is instead barraged out of inattentiveness. As such, Miller's artwork allows the viewer to 'be a little forewarned and able to make some objective decisions, however small' (Irigaray 1993:186) regarding mankind's existence in technologised cities.

Miller's *Key to the Family* (2011) (2) is a hinged container with drawers containing chronologically taken samples of hair collected from her twin boys over a period of 13 years (1998–2011). For Miller (2012), this artwork acts as an archive of memory. Her use of hair as a medium for memory is akin to a Victorian practice: Victorian mothers kept locks of their children's hair in scrapbooks and albums as well as in jewellery and parlour decorations (Miller 2008:164). Apart from memory, the artwork is also a metaphor for nostalgia.

For Miller (2012), the work represents a recollection of a mother's tender grooming of her children. Yet this is not just a simple act of reminiscence, but one which oscillates towards a sense of loss. This movement in the direction of bereavement commences at the very moment when the hair is cut. Such cut locks of hair can, under the right conditions, last for thousands of years, whereas the body cannot. Thus, the locks are a form of *memento mori* as they remind one of the anticipated absence of the body (Holm 2004:140).

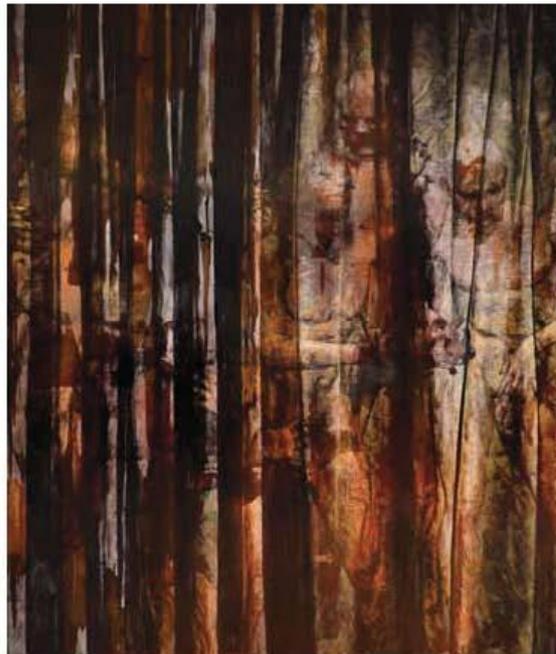
Miller's use of hair as an interchangeable and fluctuating symbol for memory and loss is exemplarily executed, but further readings based on the physical properties of hair are also implied. Hair, through chemical or microscopic analysis, can offer an account of an individual's state of health and also records the presence of exposure to any toxic substances. In this regard, hair holds a history of an individual's nourishment and environmental context. Owing to the fact that the hair in the artwork comes from children, their sustenance and sheltered



2 Gwen Miller, *Key to the Family* (2011). Hardboard and wood case. Perspex, paper, hair and paint. 152 x 48 x 23.5 cm. Unisa Art Collection. Reproduced with the permission of the artist.

environment are primarily dependent on the mother. Accordingly, the artwork can be regarded as an homage to the nourishment, care and devotion mothers offer their children. In other words, the rearing of children is reliant on the nurturing and nourishment they receive from their mothers, and that record is evident in the hair. Thus, hair can be seen as a testament to the intimate bond between selfless mother and dependent child. Overall, Miller presents a considerable collection of works that are defined by a profound exploration and personal expression of her specific lines of inquiry.

Frikkie Eksteen's *Deleted Scene* (2012) (3) is a tableau of seemingly identical men in various states of concealment behind the bands of horizontal blinds. The bands move from a dense concentration on the left-hand-side to a relatively sparse concentration on the right-hand-side, where the bands appear more as clear-cut vectors. Through the use of bands the viewer does not figure as a voyeur but rather as an observer, standing before a line-



3 Frikkie Eksteen, *Deleted Scene* (2012). Oil, spray paint and inkjet print on canvas, 210 x 154 cm. Reproduced with the permission of the artist.

up of suspects. This role actively encourages the viewer to search for any distinctive facial features in the male figures, in order to determine whether the men are all, indeed, identical. The viewer finds that the male figures are displayed in an array of poses, but that the poses are all struck by the same subject. In this regard, the painting bears traces reminiscent of the photographs of Eadweard Muybridge, which capture the movement and repetition of a moving body over chronologically sequenced images. For Eksteen (2012), though, the interest lies not in capturing movement but in creating and representing an ambiguous subject for portraiture. Through computer imaging and morphing, Eksteen develops reference material, or, more aptly, a genealogy of numerous characters for his paintings. The intention here is to subvert the conventions of portrait painting being associated with the likeness and idiosyncrasies of actual people (Eksteen 2012).

Eksteen's (2012) work can also be discussed in relation to a questioning of a number of other myths and traditions associated with portraiture painting, namely its relationship to power and the stylistic signature of the artist. However, further readings are opened up by the exhibition being held in the wake of the furor surrounding Brett Murray's *The Spear* (2012). In the section that follows, this author is of the opinion that Eksteen's inclusion of several penises in his painting can be read in a subversive manner that destabilises any phallic connotations of the penis.

Commenting on the mass hysteria, throngs of protest and cacophony of public debate following Murray's stylistic representation of a penis on a Leninesque-looking Jacob Zuma, Kendell Geers (2012) asks: 'What is it about the penis that strikes fear into the hearts of men? What is it about the dick ... that makes presidents weep and a nation scream? Every man has one, flaccid or not, and yet the mere mention of the proverbial python sends a grown man's blood racing to his head.'

One possible reason for the penis inciting terror and filling viewers with trepidation is that it may run the risk of no longer being equated with the phallus. This is not just an idle threat but completely warranted, as the penis lacks the proportions and properties of the phallus. Although the penis is incommensurable with the phallus, the 'dominant fiction' – the representational system through which society figures consensus – is based on the conflation of the penis with the phallus (Silverman 1992:30, 41). In maintaining this fiction, patriarchy upholds phallic privileges being consigned to men alone. In order to sustain the dominant fiction, to preserve the phallic identification of hegemonic masculinity, representations of the penis are enveloped in taboos and iconoclasm. In such acts of banning, masculinity remains entrenched in the phallic properties of power, strength and control. In cognisance of this line of reasoning, not only is the representation of the penis subversive by breaking taboos, but its very representation has the potential to challenge phallic privilege by displaying the disjuncture between the penis and phallus (Mathes 2000; Nixon 2000).

From the above discussion, Eksteen's representations of the penis can be argued to represent an attempt to dislodge it from phallic qualities, and as such offers it as a counter-patriarchal object (Nixon 2000). This reading is based on a number of formalist elements in Eksteen's painting. First, the painting consists only of a single individual in a number of poses. What has not been depicted is a background or setting to stage the male nudity. Settings and props are necessary for the depiction of male nudes, as the penis alone cannot exemplify the phallus. This means that in representations of male nudity it is the predominance of prosthetic devices, rather than the penis, that embodies the phallus (Jones 2002:192; Segal 1990:89; Walters 1978:297). By providing neither a suitable stage nor prosthetic devices, the male nudes in Eksteen's painting are removed from pre-authorised meanings and conventional significations which clothe the penis as a phallus. Second, the horizontal blinds and vectors serve to fragment the penis from the body. This leads the viewer to perceive the penis as segregated from its anatomical context, which can be seen as an attempt to deliberately separate the penis from



4 Nathani Lüneburg, *Dreaming of home* (2008). Stop-frame animation, full colour, 1920 x 1080 HD format, 3 minutes. Reproduced with the permission of the artist.

the being – an anatomical sign that reinforces an impermeable border between sexualities, genders and bodies; and as a cultural marker that ensures male rights and privilege (Stephens 2004:89–90). Furthermore, the rendering of the *penis-as-fragment* subverts the phallic ideals of coherence and unity, and thus prevents the penis from being read as a phallic symbol (Nixon 2000).

Without the props and prosthesis and by fragmenting the penis from the body, the penis is severed from phallic connotations that serve to block it from being merely a penis. In this way, Eksteen challenges conventional tropes governing the representations of the penis that ensure phallic readings. In sum, Eksteen presents the penis as an organ rather than a symbol that is embedded and assigned meaning associated with virility; an organ rather than a motif of anxiety and insecurity; and an organ that is inconsequential to phallic identification.

In the video artwork, *Dreaming of home* (2008) (4), Nathani Lüneburg depicts a sleeping woman while a number of hybrid creatures, reminiscent of surrealist imaginings, lurk and ominously loiter on top of her. For Lüneburg (2012) the artwork portrays how her memory fails to represent the actual truth following an experience of personal trauma. Such traumatic memories are depicted in the artwork as hybrid creatures. These creatures may be surreal in representation, but they bear a striking resemblance to the look and position of a devious incubus mounting a woman in slumber. An incubus resting on a female is notably recorded in Henry Fuseli's oil painting *The Nightmare* (1781) and in its later (1802) rendition. In the Fuseli paintings, the incubus causes the sleeping women to have nightmares. In this respect, it is possible to argue that the incubus-like figures in Lüneburg's work serve as a suitable motif for indicating how traumatic memories distort reality and cause anxiety, stress and nervousness. However, a notable distinction between Lüneburg and Fuseli's work is that Fuseli indicates the effect the nightmare has on the woman – her body is physically responsive to the stimuli originating in the dream world. In contrast to Fuseli's depiction of the women as receptive to the influence of the incubus, the female figure in Lüneburg's artwork remains primarily unmoved and unchanged. This can be interpreted as Lüneburg attempting to stand

firm and defend herself against the effects of the trauma. Overall, the video artwork shows an awareness of the subject of memory, dreaming and trauma in art history, while providing a uniquely subjective meditation on her own personal exploration of the subject.

T(his) Shirt (2011) by Justice Mokoena is a monumental monoprint of a t-shirt that is meticulously and intricately rendered to reveal every crease, fold, stitch and seam. Mokoena (2012) describes the work as exploring his grief following the death of his father. In this regard, Mokoena's rendering of the t-shirt can be seen as part of the material and visual culture of death and mourning. Not only is the t-shirt's monumental scale connotative of memorials, but its highly detailed depiction lends the artwork a weightiness which is indicative of tombstones. Mokoena's grief is, however, not solely related to the death of his father, but also his absence while Mokoena was growing up. Mokoena (2012) therefore describes the artwork as a metaphor for grief arising from both death and absence. This is notable in that it allows the artwork to move from a private grieving (Mokoena mourning the death of his father) to the viewer sharing in Mokoena's lament over absent fathers. In South Africa, most men are seen to be jarringly uninterested in their children (Morrell and Richter 2006:2). This claim is made explicit in the fact that many men reject their role as fathers by denying paternity or outright abandoning their children (Morrell & Richter? 2006:14). 'Absent fathers' are not unique to South Africa – it is a worldwide phenomenon. Susan Faludi (2000:375, 484) charts the absence or vanishing of fathers in the West as occurring in the wake of World War II, and notes that it has resulted in several generations of men anguishing over paternal abandonment. In such a zeitgeist of spectral fatherhood (Faludi 2000:597), Mokoena's work reads as a memorial for the aching sadness and grief of men who grew up fatherless. Mokoena effectively encodes the grief of his father's death while also decoding the collective injustice felt by countless men with missing and/or absent fathers.

In several works, namely *Chris and tennis partner, 1950s* (1999) (5) and *Jack, Pieter and Chris, Kruger Park, 1950s* (2008) (6), Karin Preller produced paintings that appear to be based on personal photographs. In her works she not only duplicates the subjects in



- 5 Karin Preller, *Chris and tennis partner, 1950s* (1999). Oil on canvas, 103 x 105 cm. Reproduced with the permission of the artist.
6 Karin Preller, *Jack, Pieter and Chris, Kruger Park, 1950s* (2008). Oil on canvas, 83 x 108 cm. Reproduced with the permission of the artist.

the photographs, but also the formal qualities of photographic representations: blurred imagery, cropped compositions and a smooth surface (Neihaus 2012:6). By reproducing the formal qualities of photographs she is able to examine Walter Benjamin's earlier conception of the aura. In its first formation, Benjamin (1980:209) defines aura as 'a strange web of time and space: the unique appearance of a distance, however close at hand'. Benjamin in this sense articulates how photographs are interpreted through times and spaces other than those recorded in the images. In this way, the viewer superimposes his/her own context onto the image, thereby undermining its claims to an essential truth or universal meaning (McInnes 2008:18). This is clearly evident in the viewer's reaction to the paintings. Those who view Preller's paintings do not respond by asking for further information or enquiring after the identities of the subjects recorded. Rather, the elements in the image that strike or wound us, their very *punctum*, are their indistinctness from our very own photo albums. If we had merely seen the original photographs we would not necessarily have responded by recognising the aura. Instead, we would run the risk of being positioned as voyeurs, while the work would risk being categorised as spectacle. However, by reproducing the photograph as a painting, Preller introduces into the images the introspection, slow contemplation and temporality associated with paintings. As a result, the viewer is able to reflect on how Preller's images are strikingly similar to his/her

very own photographs, and s/he is encouraged to interpret the images according to personal experiences, context and subjectivity.

Collateral damage (2012) by Bongani Mkhonza is a near identical copy of the old R10 note. However, the viewer is jolted out of any complacency by the glaringly obvious dehorned rhino on the front of the note. What appears in the absence of the horn is an acid-red seeping wound that bears connotations of blood. Yet, the wound is also the same colour as the marker-pen inscription that reads '\$16 304' bracketed around the now-missing horn. This may be read as a literal rendering of the term 'blood money' – the large sum of money hired poachers are paid for the illegal dehorning of rhinos. However, the work also offers deeper levels of meaning through its very title and the replacement of the wording 'South African Reserve Bank' with 'Chinese Reserve Bank'. These markers may refer to rhinos as the unintended victims of South Africa's ailing economy and the government's attempts to resuscitate it through bilateral agreements. South Africa has joined the association of emerging economies known as BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa). Although BRICS aims to encourage commercial, political and cultural cooperation between its member states, questions have surfaced of late regarding South Africa's lack of agency by conforming to Chinese interests. In this sense, Mkhonza positions China as key role player in interrogating the sharp rise in incidents of rhino poaching: Have rhinos

fallen victim to the rising Chinese middle-class which now has sufficient disposable income to remedy impotence? Will the South African government clamp down on the illegal trading of rhino horn if it means jeopardising trade relations? Mkhonza succinctly queries our loss of rhinos as stemming from the rise of potent super-powers such as China, while questioning the value of our 'currency' to defend our human rights and our wildlife.

'Staff/Stuff' fascinated the viewers with its array and quality of works, as well as the advanced conceptual and specialist skills of the artists. The impeccable articulation of complex ideas pertaining to the nature of art, current affairs and the interrogation of personal memories and experiences, is synonymous with the exhibition.

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APPENDIX 9: CREDITS FOR THE *JOURNEY* COLLABORATIVE

9.1: *JOURNEY TO FREEDOM* narratives

Journey to Freedom multimedia project was directed by Gwenneth Miller, with Wendy Ross as project advisor. The project was creative collaboration between the Department of Art History, Visual Arts and Musicology of the UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA (UNISA), visual artists, the Melodia UNISA Chorale and the Intuthuko and Boitumelo sewing groups. Intuthuko sewing group facilitator artists: Celia de Villiers and Sonja Barac. Boitumelo sewing group facilitator artist: Erica Lúttich. Choir performance coordinators: Puleng Segalo and Thembela Vokwana.

This project was part of the larger UNISA-Mississippi Project coordinated by the then Executive Dean of Social Sciences, now Principal and Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Prof Mandla Makhanya. The multimedia work consists of 2 large embroidered panels and a DVD with animations. In 2004 the animations was projected above the performing UNISA Melodia Chorale in a celebration of 10 years of democracy. Gcina Mhlope was the narrator at the concerts. The administrative coordinator in 2004 was George King. A DVD with documentary film and animations (2007) was compiled by Greg Miller, directed by Gwenneth Miller. Scriptwriter and assistant editor: Kai Lossgott. Narrator: Gcina Mhlope. Video material filmed by UNISA's Sound and Video division, with additional footage, Greg Miller.

Embroiderers:

Intuthuko: Celia de Villiers, Sonja Barac, Pinky Lubisi, Thembisile Mabizela, Zanele Mabuza, Angie Namaru, Lindo Mnguni, Julie Mokoena, Salaminah Motlounge, Angelina Mucavele, Thabitha Nare, Nomsa Ndala, Maria Nkabinde, Cynthia Radebe, Sannah Sasebola, Rosinah Teffo, Lizzy Tsotetsi, Dorothy Xaba.

Boitumelo: Erica Lúttich, Emmah Mphahlele, Lilian Mary Mawela, Ameliah M. Makhari, Martinah P. Mashabela, Naledzani R. Matshinge, Gloria Melula, Elisa D. Mahoma, Linda Mkhungo, Florah Raseala, Tshidi Leputla.

Quilter: Susan Sittig.

Digital artists:

Frederik Eksteen: *Steal Away*, technical advisor

Sarah Fraser: *Land Act, Vukani Mawethu*, technical assistant

Kai Lossgott: *Bawo Thixo Somandla*, title credits

Greg Miller: *Nkosi Sikelel* (both versions), *When the Saints go Marching in*, *Hymn to Freedom*, compilation of the final DVD, technical advisor

Gwenneth Miller: *We shall overcome, Bawo Thixo Somandla, Hymn to Freedom*, conceptual director

Reboile Motswasele: *Bawo Thixo Somandla, Toyi-toyi Songs*, translations and contextual interpretation of lyrics

Katty Vandenberghe: *Toyi-toyi Songs, Medley of two religious songs, Halala Bahumagadi*, (the women's march), technical advisor

Nicole Vinokur: *We shall overcome, Vukani Mawethu*, technical assistant

UNISA Melodia Chorale, conducted by Thembela Vokwana and Puleng Segalo, and consisted of:

Soprano: Sophy Leriba, Lethabo Mbungi, Zelda Mokhutle, Lerato Malatse, Stephina Masango, Bongwiwe Mdluli, Tsholofelo Matlhasedi, Elizabeth Napo, Dumazile Ndlovu, Zamangwane Ngozi, Whitey Ntsoane, Nomzamo Qotho and Hope Shibambo.

Alto: Margaret Buys, Sylvia Choko, Nthabiseng Maboe, Franscinah Motsepe, Virginia Mophuting, Nyameka Ndaba, Millicent Mpholo, Sonto Nkomo, Puleng Segalo, Sindi Tsotetsi, Adelaide Skhosana and Sibongile Zwane.

Tenor: Elvis Aphané, Mighty Gwabeni, Serengwane Lethuba, Wanda Mamba, Meshack Mosotho, Megga Mbethe, Tebogo Moiloa, Collins Mohlala, Junior Makhubedu, Phatudi Malope, Thabo Mailula, Solomon Khoza, Tshepo Semenya, Alex Mahlobogoane and Thembela Vokwana.

Bass: Kgaugelo Bhoya, Benjamin Disoloane, Christopher Maimela, Solomon Nkwe, Mlungisi Thusi, Shole Shole, James Sithole, Lebogang Thakadu, Thepudi Marokane, Themba Mashiya-Tshabalala, Abram Ramokgaba, Tshifhiwa Netshiukwi, Titus Sebesho, Itumeleng Namu, Gontse Mabusela and Sam Masiya.

Abbreviated credits for use in reference in texts:

JOURNEY TO FREEDOM narratives

Multimedia project coordinator: Gwenneth Miller, advisor Wendy Ross. Choir performance coordinators: Puleng Segalo and Thembela Vokwana. .A creative collaboration between the Department of Art History, Visual Arts and Musicology of the UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA (UNISA), visual artists, the Melodia UNISA Chorale and the Boitumelo and Intuthuko sewing groups.

9.2: *Synchronic Journey*

Artist and project director: Celia de Villiers, A collaborative DLitt et Phil project commissioned and curated by Gwenneth Miller. Facilitator: Susan Haycock. Quilter: Susan Sittig

Intuthuko:

EMBROIDERERS: Angie Mamura, Alzina Matsosa, Celia de Villiers, Clarence Nkosi, Evelyn Thwala, Angel Mandlanzi, Irene Ntombela, Lebo Nkashe, Lindiwe Maseko, Mabatho Madonsela, Martha Mabena, Mantwa Mutsi, Nombeko Mashele, Nomsa Ndala, Nomsa Sithole, Rhoda Mpuqa, Sanna Sasabola, Selina Maitse, Selina Songo, Thembi Mabizela, Thobile Mahlangu, Tshidi Leputla, Maria Moela, Rose Skhosana, Rosina Teffo

DRAWINGS: Lesego Makua