

**BUSHMAN IMAGERY AND ITS IMPACT ON THE
VISUAL CONSTRUCTS OF PIPPA SKOTNES**

by

LIESBETH HENDRIKA GROENEWALD

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DECLARATION

I declare that BUSHMAN IMAGERY AND ITS IMPACT ON THE VISUAL CONSTRUCTS OF PIPPA SKOTNES is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Signed:

(Mrs. L.H. Groenewald)

Date:

SUMMARY

Title:

Bushman imagery and its impact on the visual constructs of Pippa Skotnes.

Summary:

This dissertation explores the impact of Bushman images, and the writings of Lucy Lloyd and Wilhelm Bleek (working with the Breakwater Bushmen) on three art works of Pippa Skotnes. They are *The Return III* (1988), *For //Kunn* (1993) and *Heaven's Things* (1999). It is argued that Bushman imagery, being the result of shamanic trance activities is characterised by imagery, which mammals universally share. The use of the same imagery by the Surrealists in the twentieth century arises not from an intimate interaction with the spirit realm/dream world but from the European longing for an altered reality. Skotnes appropriates Bushman imagery in her prints, narrating the tragic fate of the Bushman. She laments the loss of the transcendental relationship between Man and the Universe. The exploitation, adoption and marketing of Bushman imagery by the tourist industry marks the distinction between her respectful treatment and the materialism of South Africans.

LIST OF KEY TERMS:

Adoption; advertising; appropriation; Battiss (Walter); Bleek (Wilhelm); Bushman; Bushman imagery; Bushman myth and mythology; Bushman shamans; Bushman trance stages; colonial; *For //Kunn*; *Heaven's Things*; Kolman's Kop; Lloyd (Lucy); *Miscast*; museum exhibits; primitive; Skotnes (Pippa); *The Return III*; surrealist; tourism.

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PREFACE

The prints of Pippa Skotnes (born 1957), viewed at the Carnegie Gallery in Newcastle, in 1994, were a personally illuminating experience. The publication of *Contested images. Diversity in southern African rock art research*, edited by Thomas Dowson and David Lewis-Williams, in which Skotnes published her article entitled, *The visual as a site of meaning. San parietal painting and the experience of Modern art*, similarly provided me with an understanding of what I had been looking at in the Natal Drakensberg for many years.

This dissertation examines three key works of Skotnes from 1989 to 1999 in which she responded not only to the research published by Patricia Vinnicombe (1976), but also to that of David Lewis-Williams (1981). Vinnicombe and Lewis-Williams stand out as the first researchers to contextualise the Bushman paintings in their “historical, social, economic and ideological contexts” (Skotnes 1994: 316). But the question Skotnes asks is about “the creative traditions and the *formal* context of the paintings” (Skotnes 1994: 316). The nature of this dissertation is a close analysis from an art historical point of view of the chosen works of Skotnes.

I would like to acknowledge the help and assistance of the staff at the UNISA and Pietermaritzburg (KwaZulu Natal University) University libraries. My thanks to fellow students for insightful critiques at the forums held at UNISA. Special thanks to Dr Bernadette van Haute, her colleagues and my supervisor, Ms Ania Krajewska.

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is an attempt to situate three particular works of the South African artist/archaeologist Pippa Skotnes (1988 to 1999), namely *The Return III* (1988), *For //Kunn* (1993) and *Heaven's Things* (1999) in the context of southern African Bushman beliefs, imagery and the modes in which their art and culture have been appropriated.¹ The significance of the site of Bushman artworks is one of the keys to understanding that work and to understanding what Skotnes has been saying about the works. Her paper *The visual as a site of meaning. San parietal painting and the experience of Modern Art* published in 1994 is a resume of her ideas on the topic. Because she is both artist and a professional archaeologist, each discipline informs the other in her work.

Skotnes, a teacher at the Michaelis School of Fine Art at the University of Cape Town and the curator of the Katrine Harriet Print Cabinet, is a practicing artist with a master's degree in

¹ The chief mythological figure of the southern Bushman is /Kaggen the creator who caused 'all things to appear', and who made the sun, moon, stars, wind, mountains and animals with his left hand (Lewis-Williams 1981:123). /Kaggen, was also spelt *Qhang*, '*Kaang*, *T'ang*, *Cagn* or *Ctaggen*, according to different orthographies used to denote the initial click sound (Vinnicombe 1976:166). Wilhelm Bleek translated this character's name as *Mantis*. As a classical scholar he probably translated this Bushman character's name as the Greek word 'mantis', which means *prophet*, but in the tales of the Bushman /Kaggen is sometimes an insect, the praying mantis (*mantis religiosa*). It is evident from published mythology that the Bushman did not necessarily conceive of /Kaggen in the form of a mantis alone. /Kaggen is principally human in form, but could change himself from human to animal to bird at will. In Bushman mythology /Kaggen is often seen as a trickster, in almost all the tales collected by the Bleek family and others (Marshall 1999:243). /Kaggen's most important creation is the large antelope: of which the eland and the hartebeest are his favoured animals. In all versions of /Xam creation myths the point is repeatedly made that /Kaggen loves the eland very dearly, but he allowed it to be hunted under special conditions –addressing and maintaining the equilibrium between man and nature (Lewis-Williams 1981:124). /Kaggen is never seen with the eyes, only known with the heart.

archaeology. Being a co-founder with Malcolm Payne of the Axeage Private Press, it became possible for her to further her interest in the production of hand-made books which often include her research interests into the Bushman, their parietal painting and the Bleek and Lloyd archives of /Xam oral traditions. She was born in Johannesburg in 1957 and currently resides and works in Cape Town.

The terms “San”, “Bushman” and “Khoisan” are much contested. Scholars (Katz 1982:14, Bennun 2004:30, de Villiers 2006:79) have not settled on any of the terms absolutely for political and social reasons. The term *Bushman*, a translation of the Dutch *Boschjesman*, came to be applied in the seventeenth century to all groups, but later came to be associated with old racist views. The word *San*, used by the Nama Khoikhoi people for all Bushman groups, is preferred by many anthropologists and is often used in academic journals and books. Although San often remains the politically correct term of choice in South Africa, some authors² now suggest that it was the word used by the Nama Khoikhoi people about any impoverished, cattle-less people.³ In most texts consulted it is recognised that there is no single word used by all Bushmen to designate themselves, for each group had/has its own word. Therefore there is now a tendency to use the term preferred by any specific group, as for instance, *#Khomani* of the southern Kalahari (de Villiers 2006:79), the *Zu’hoasi* of northern Namibia and Botswana (or *!Kung* by anthropologists, Katz 1982:14), or the */Xam-ka!ei* of the Cape (known by Bleek as the */Xam*, now extinct, Bennun 2004:30).⁴ The only reference to be found by Bushmen on a preferred term for

² Authors such as David Lewis-Williams (1981, 2002), Laurie Levine (2005), Neil Bennun (2004), John Parkington (2002) and Thomas Dowson (1992, 1996) make this suggestion.

³ *Khoikhoi* was the word used by the Nama which meant ‘men of men’ or ‘real people’ (Levine 2005:229); whereas *San*, *Sonqua* or *Soaqua* originally meaning ‘aborigine’ and came to acquire the negative connotation of ‘people different to ourselves’ and thus inferior, thieves and then servants (Levine 2005:239). Today there is a tendency when referring to the two groups together to use the word *Khoisan*.

⁴ In pronouncing Bushman names the / stands for a dental click (the tip of the tongue is pressed against the back of the upper front teeth and quickly withdrawn); ≠ is an alveolar click (the tip of the tongue is pressed against the

themselves appears in the book *Kalahari Rainsong* (Bregin & Kruiper 2004:54) in which Belinda Kruiper (married to a Bushman, David) says,

... [b]ecause of their difference, the Bushmen have always been regarded as less than human. They would rather live in the bush with nothing than in a house like 'decent' people. That is why they prefer the name 'Bushman' for themselves, rather than 'San'. San is a label imposed by others, a derogatory term that originates from a Khoi word meaning 'robber' or 'low-class person'. 'What is a San?' David used to joke. 'I'm a Bushman!'

The images which Skotnes refers to and transforms in her works are found in images on rocks and shallow caves throughout southern Africa in engravings, paintings and pictographs. Skotnes tries in her three works under discussion to bring together the aesthetic world and the world of museum exhibits in such a way that the viewer is confronted with his/her own assumptions about culture, art, knowledge, loss and spirituality. The artist transforms the imagery she understands to underlie the Bushman images and amplifies it with current archaeological knowledge and assumptions to compel attention to losses which continue into the twenty first century of cultures profoundly different from our western contemporary global one.

BACKGROUND

The original Bushman imagery reflects a cosmological belief that there is both a vertical and a horizontal axis in the cosmos; this predates scientific thinking and belongs to a hunter-gatherer mindset. That cosmology reveals intersecting worlds at many levels. Spirit beings inhabit the worlds. Without an understanding of the significance of that cosmology as a conceptual

alveolar ridge, then released sharply); ! is an alveolar-palatal click (the tip of the tongue is pressed against the upper palate and released sharply inwards); and // is a lateral click (the tongue is pressed against the alveolar ridge and the front palate and while keeping the tongue in this position, the sides of the tongue are quickly lowered, causing a lateral implosion of air) (de Villiers 2006:79).

foundation, the response to the Bushman imagery must be shallow and disrespectful as was the case in the centuries prior to the late twentieth. The twentieth and twenty-first centuries bring a new kind of disrespect - that of commodification and commercialization. This is not the case with Skotnes who interprets the images from the scientific vantage point of an archaeologist and from the imaginative view of the artist. What she mediates for the viewer is the fact that every single element of the Bushman life encompassing the land, the life on the earth of the people and the animals, the spirit realm and everything belonging to ritual and belief is expressed through the cosmology. The cosmology is contained in a body of mythological narratives. The mythology is not loosely pasted onto lives that are pursued in conformity with our ideas of what is *primitive* as opposed to the *civilized*, for instance. The mythology is a lived expression of the ideas about how their cosmos is ordered and functioned. The mythological stories are currently and were presumably previously used, it is true, in many different ways, as for instance to teach, to entertain, to recollect, to reinforce. But crucially, the mythology informs the images from the shelters and rocks which Skotnes has used and reinterpreted. *Her* imagery is multi-layered with narrative of a kind different from myth. She is making a cultural narrative. The original images are not narrative in the sense that mythical stories are recounted. They are narrative in that they record the journeys of the shamans. For the shamans rooted in the Bushman cosmology the experience of travelling in the spirit realm is real. The experiences recorded in the images are real for them.

The capacity of the shaman to navigate the different levels with precision is a feature of an antique cosmological thinking as is the reported physical sense of it. The physicality of the experience for the shamans and their community is made manifest by the recording of the images on the retina (transposed onto the surface of the rock later and there for all to see and as a

resource of *potency*). The experience of real pain in going into a trance is widely recorded. Another reminder for the shamans that it is a 'real' experience is the fact that before they go into the deepest trance, they perform healing of those in the community requiring it. A further 'proof' of the reality of the experience is the harnessing of 'potency' in natural and manmade objects. But perhaps the most telling 'proof' is the fact that it is witnessed mutually and serves to reinforce the version of reality which the cosmology describes. Extraordinarily from an industrial society's point of view with its elaborate hegemony, anyone in the Bushman community could go into trance, with the exception of young women of childbearing age, on whom there was a taboo.

From the western perspective the embodiment of the spiritual experiences in the shamanic trance, as the shamans themselves feel it and their community witness it, is an example simply of an *altered state of mind* – not necessarily a spiritual experience. For the shamans however in terms of their cosmology it is both a transcendental activity as they go beyond the horizontal axis and travel the vertical axis of the world, and it is a real engagement with spiritual beings.

The /Xam Bushmen, and all the others, had a sophisticated understanding of the 'value of land' and a conception of 'the spiritual' and these two ideas penetrated each other utterly. Thus they did not distinguish between the material and the spiritual. The settlers, by seizing land, assaulted the Bushman's way of making sense of their world – a spiritual violence and a physical one (Bennun 2004:124-5).

The loss of that spirituality, as transcendent awe, terror, wonder, reverence, gratitude and sociality is what Skotnes mourns and refers to as she tracks the tragic fate of the Bushman on the brink of extinction.

AIM OF DISSERTATION

The aim of the dissertation is to reflect on the loss of the Bushman culture as mediated by the works of Skotnes in the context of massive appropriation of Bushman imagery. In the political atmosphere of contemporary South Africa, her portrayal of the historical genocide of the Bushmen is pertinent in a continent in which xenophobia and genocide are everyday realities.

METHODOLOGY

The method used in the dissertation is a close examination and subsequent discussion of the works of art chosen to exemplify an idiosyncratic perspective about a genocide in Africa. Skotnes's approach to the production of the art works discussed in this study does not have a parallel in South Africa. The point of view adopted for the discussion is one that takes into consideration the dual viewpoints of the artist, as archaeologist and museologist and that of a political commentator on genocide and the loss of diversification in a culture of global monotony. Skotnes resists easy definitions as she takes up the cudgels against cultural loss. A wide reading in the critical works on Bushman art has informed the understanding of Skotnes' intentions. Between the earliest publications in the nineteenth century on hunter-gatherer sympathetic magic as an explanation of the mysterious paintings on rocks and cave walls around the world, to modern discoveries about the history of consciousness and trances, the body of literature is enormous. The limits of this study have been to stay within the last thirty years of rock art research, exemplified by the work of David Lewis-Williams and his colleagues of the Rock Art Research centre at the University of the Witwatersrand. This together with a reading of ethnographic works by Megan Bisele and colleagues, Jeanette Deacon and Steven Mithen has enabled a perspective on the Bushman cosmology, beliefs and ideas.

In order to understand the appropriation of Bushman images in the tourist trade the work of Buntman (1996) and Saayman (2001) has been informative, as have been Welchman, Arvidsson and Goh.

By comparing the advertising world's appropriation of Bushman imagery and that of an archaeologist/artist's, the conclusion to be drawn is not that of Jeursen (1995:128) that only a 'recuperation' would be a suitable way of ridding us of the stereotypical view of the Bushman. Indeed, Skotnes's large scale mourning of the loss of a culture is more appropriate in a postcolonial setting. Before recuperation of what has been lost has to come an appropriate apprehension of the loss.

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

In the first chapter there is an examination of appropriation or the adoption or the taking over of ideas of elements of 'art' of other cultures. 'Appropriation' has come to stand for the relocation, annexation or theft of cultural properties – whether objects, ideas or notations – associated with the rise of European colonialism and global capital. It is underwritten by the formation of disciplines such as anthropology, museology and allied epistemologies of description, collecting, comparison and evaluation. The consumption of cultural difference becomes a practice that has ranged across art, music, narrations, symbolic systems, materials and lands. However, all cultures 'steal' from one another, whether from positions of dominance or subordination (Welchman 2001:1).

In the second chapter there is a discussion of the use of Bushman icons in the tourist industry and marketing. Over the years since South Africa's independence, the adoption of certain elements of

Bushman iconography (causing erroneous stereotyping) has shifted in some cases to the depiction of actual untampered Bushman paintings and engravings.

The modern Bushman artist has adopted modern Western art materials (canvas and paint) but still produces recognisable Bushman 'art'. This art as well as 'handicrafts' produced by the Bushman for a tourist market often become one of the ways left to them to make a living in a society that is market and commodity driven.

In the third chapter a discussion about Skotnes' work especially in terms of the Bushman pictographs is presented by undertaking a detailed analysis of three of her works: *The Return III* (1988), *For //Kunn* (1993) and pages out of *Heaven's Things* (1999). *The Return III* (1988) combines Western Kolmanskop architecture and figures drawn from Bushman paintings to form a surrealistically rendered landscape. Whereas, in *For //Kunn* (1993) because of her arrangement of Bushman artefacts and imagery, the coloured print becomes an illustration for a museum display. In contrast, *Heaven's Things* (1999) evokes an iconology of a Bushman watercolour painting on paper, where the inclusion of shadows, which render it three-dimensional, is in contradiction to Bushman pictorial representation on rock surfaces. Special attention is given to her compositional adoption of Bushman iconography. In the last two examples chosen, Skotnes was additionally influenced by the 1870s' recordings of Lucy Lloyd's myths, oral literature, folklore and the personal histories of six surviving /Xam Bushmen. These records are one of the few comprehensive accounts on the Bushman that had no political, cultural or religious agenda. As Skotnes has degrees in both Archaeology and Fine Art, it is assumed that both these disciplines have informed her art as well as her interest in Bushman archaeological museum exhibits.

CHAPTER ONE

Western adoption of *primitive art*

1.1 INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Europeans still engaged in moving away from Renaissance naturalism, classicism and other seductively engaging ways of representation to the new Impressionistic non-mimetic representations, started to look at what was then termed ‘primitive’ art in a way which was different to their first impressions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹ During the centuries preceding the twentieth, a frequent appropriation of primitive art was to view it as so distinctly other as to be incomprehensible. This is revealed from another perspective when one considers European representations of the ‘indigeni’ replete with classical gesture and stance (Huigen 1996:48-49).² This resulted in a study of African art of the past, not from a mystical and metaphysical viewpoint, but from an artistic and socio-economic one. What was not appreciated was that African art was directed by rules of unanimity, supported by ceremonies, feasts and dances, which included the use of traditional ‘art pieces’ - a collective participation which contributed to the stability of those people’s social structure (Maguin & Soullillon 1996:7). To Europeans, African art was only seen as having a freer sense of plastic inventiveness and a greater emphasis on pictorial structure (Flam & Deutch

¹ It was then generally believed that Africans remained in a mental state similar to that of white children. This is associated with the view that women had limited mental powers (Flam & Deutch 2003:7).

² The study of the *ars apodemica*, the art of travelling, with its fixed categories which had to be filled in by travellers, all from an entirely unenquiring standpoint, is another of the examples of the fixed, stereotypical way classical culture still had a grip on the imagination of the west, despite its voyages of discovery and meetings with indigenous people (Huigen 1996; 30-31).

2003:3). African art works or tribal objects, which were not considered art at all by the affluent European middle class, came to be valued purely for their otherworldliness. 'Primitive art'³ or artifacts came to be associated with the idea of Otherness, and with attitudes not only towards race but relations between cultures: a dialogue between white people and people of colour. Appropriation now became like a reversible mirror which could alternately show what was felt to be desirable or what was lacking in societies regarding it. European artists, however, came to see and then recognise the conceptual complexity and aesthetic subtlety in the best of tribal art.

1.2 AFRICAN ART IN MUSEUMS

African pieces became collectables for travelers, colonialists, and scholars. Many of these collected 'primitive' pieces came to be housed in ethnographic museums now established in Europe's main cities (Flam & Deutch 2003:300). Items housed in these museums were curiosities or 'bizarres', not aesthetic pieces. This meant that artists could view them in museum settings, and then start to collect (and many of them did) pieces of 'primitive art'. These pieces were 'primitive' in as much as they were not the realistic classic occidental art, or art of the Greek and Roman tradition (the only 'civilised' art!). Jack Flam (2003:119) notes that after the First World War the formal vocabulary of 'primitive art' came to be absorbed into modernist art. With the rise of Surrealism, greater emphasis was given to the chthonic qualities of primitive art. Numerous artists were also influenced by the reality of African 'magical rites', and the mythological importance of the pieces. But modern European artists to a greater or lesser extent adopted African art forms and motifs from the point of view of the perceived exoticism of these artefacts.

³ *Primitive art* as a word was a modernistic name attached to any art of non-westerners.

1.3 THE 'PRIMITIVE' AND SURREALISM IN EUROPE

The adoption of 'primitive art' motifs and themes served as a revolutionary tool against established 'art' in art-salons after the First World War. Utopian parallels were drawn between the ways 'primitive man' in contact with awe-inspiring nature sought refuge in nature. In a society wracked by the horrors of war through technology and slaughter on the massive scale, members of European society now felt the need for a distancing from a civilisation that had become uncomfortably alien to them (Flam & Deutch 2003:11).

While modern European art often adopted African art forms and motifs, but made no attempt at interpretation or critical appreciation, a slow change came about. The African artistic representation of the essential and timeless, and the combination of the naïve and sophisticated, subtlety and strength, could at first only be echoed by Westerners. Ethnography started off firmly euro-centered. This was a direct result of the prevailing Western mind-set as evidenced by the ethnographic reports sent to Europe during the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as Europe explored Africa for its own gain. There was no assimilation of the cultural perspective of any 'primitive art'.

However, gradually a new aesthetic in European art, developed with the massive socio-cultural changes in Europe and the result was a closer study of African aesthetics by all types of academics and others. Anthropologists started trying to understand the relationships between art objects and culture, religion, philosophy and social administration (Flam & Deutch 2003:301).

Meanwhile the Surrealists were becoming more important in Europe. Especially as a response to

the First World War, seen as an irrational and meaningless conflict, many felt it was time to introduce a new attitude to reality. The rise of psychoanalysis, through the unlocking of the images of the human soul, led the way to perceiving a new reality behind reality (Jaffe 1980:287-291). Surrealism originated in Paris as an art movement among a broad-based intellectual interest group (Martin 2000:6).⁴ According to the artist Andre Breton's manifesto it would be a means to the total liberation of the mind and of everything that resembled it. To achieve this the Surrealists would embrace psychoanalytical investigations and Marxist political ideology.⁵ Breton in his 1924 *Manifesto of Surrealism* therefore effected a new and modern interpretation of the 'divine' in which the secular and sacred were intermingled (Rabinovitch 2002:35). Here the weird, the uncanny, the epiphany, and fate are connected in the state of mind of the surreal, with its awareness of power, magic and the marvellous. At first, in order to release the power of the subconscious, surrealist artists adopted a process of automatic drawing. To do this they drew in semidarkness and created images out of everyday rubbish. Another means of achieving this became the drawing of the first thought images that came to mind, ignoring the censorship of the conscious ego. In addition, some artists such as Andre Masson and Jean Miro even went so far as to adopt severe conditions under which to paint. These included long periods without sleep, food and even painting under the influence of drugs. All these conditions they rightly thought would induce a different state of consciousness which would allow an insight into the unconscious mind. After 1930 surrealist artists increasingly turned to the analysis of dreams to access the inner workings of the unconscious. These dream paintings, notably by Max Ernst, Salvador Dali

⁴ Many of Surrealism's first supporters came from the anarchic Dada movement. The word *Surrealism* was originally coined by Guillaume Apollinaire, as he described the 1917 ballet *Parade* by Jean Cocteau, he claimed that this was a performance revealing a truth beyond the real: or the sur-real.

⁵ They were interested in the therapeutic techniques of Freudian psychologists which often included hypnosis to unlock and alleviate the suffering of mentally scarred victims of war (Martin 2000:7). These psychologists were luminaries like Freud, Jung and Jacques Lacan. By the 1930's, Breton and other Surrealists, however, struggled to reconcile the spiritual and emotional elements of Freudianism with the strictly material concerns of Marxism (Martin 1999:13).

and Rene Magritte, were based directly on dreams experienced or those which alluded to the condition of dreaming. The dream paintings were planned and executed in a realistic and detailed manner using recognisable objects: their hyper real techniques gave these paintings a hallucinatory quality through the use of weird juxtapositions and metamorphoses.

Edmund Swinglehurst, the critic, voiced an opinion that Surrealism as a “new art would express the hidden desires and wishes of all the people with the innocence of childhood” (1995:intro). Maybe Surrealists did allow Westerners to look at the world afresh, however many Surrealists were products of an elite intellectual culture. This meant that their work was often cryptic because of the inclusion of a whole repertoire of Freudian motifs.⁶ Tim Martin (2000:6), the author of numerous magazine-, journal articles and books on contemporary art, saw Surrealism as “conjur[ing] up ideas of the weird and the wonderful, of disjointedness and disorientation, of the inexplicable and the unfamiliar ... images more in tune with the world of dreams and nightmares than with everyday life.” This statement might be viewed as an attempt to lessen the Western emphasis on rationality, and the reintroduction and sanctification of forbidden and previously frowned on inward directed states which were viewed as irrational, abhorrent and pathological. Celia Rabinovitch (2002: xv & xvi), the artist and writer, sees Surrealism as the *terra intermedia* between the phenomenology of the sacred and the parallel history of art and religion, because, “[m]ore recently, Western approaches such as self-psychology, phenomenology, semiotics, or deconstruction have proposed new concepts that attempt to interpret the nature of human experience and communication ... a new perspective [employed by her] that sees individual works of art as the embodiment of perception”. To her, surrealism has much in common with

⁶ Dali especially in much of his earlier work included sexually taboo Freudian motifs. Dali was to call this type of painting ‘concrete irrationality’ or ‘paranoia’. What he meant in using this term ‘paranoia’ was that there was a confusion between the real and the imagined, where inner obsessions distort the perception of the real world – or the irrational world of dreams.

alternative religious traditions, including occultism, theosophy and Buddhism – all of which pursue a new state of mind that finds magic and the uncanny in common events. This attitude is supposed to oppose the rationalism embraced by the West and distilled into the works of the philosopher Descartes. Surrealism has a complexity that can be interpreted, in the history of ideas, as engaging in utopian politics, occultism, alternative religions and archaic images. But at the same time it allows for the event of a perceived sacred power in the ordinary occurrence, object or mood (Rabinovitch 2002:xvii). One of the most striking features of surreal art is its disturbing power. This is occasioned when matter becomes metaphor, the ordinary object, extraordinary and images evoke uncertainty rather than specific ideas. Surrealism became an antidote to the inflexibility of reason, or what Rabinovitch (2002:15) sees “[a]s a category of religio-aesthetic emotion”.⁷

1.4 THE COLONIES AND THE BUSHMEN

Art in the colonies, where artists were in close contact with ‘primitive art’ works, cannot be said to have followed the same path as happened on mainland Europe. Surrealism was not widely appreciated in the colonies. Throughout southern Africa, colonising populations established themselves and became settlers on indigenous people’s lands. Here the indigenous Bushman population was supplanted, not merely exploited, because Bushmen were considered to be unreliable labourers. This piecemeal appropriation of Bushman land led to whole Bushman tribes being eliminated, leaving behind only their ‘art’ on rock walls. But small groups which

⁷ At the beginning of the twentieth century there was an enormous interest in the writings of theosophists (such as those of Madame Helena Blavatsky), the séance table and related pseudo-sciences. The most significant aspect of this ‘society’ was the insistence on the scientific exploration and reification of subjective para-psychological experiences – a non-rational focusing on the inquiry on qualitative states of mind such as aesthetic or mystical states. This had the result that there was a delving into forbidden domains of supernaturalism, sexuality, psychics, psychoanalysis, the art of children, the origin of man and even art history (Rabinovitch 2002:98).

resided in remote and undesirable locations survived. These were marginalised Bushman groups that still managed to maintain their own culture in a limited way. This might in no small measure be because these Bushman had their spiritual attachments to the land (Thomas 1987:10).

Settler colonial history represents native people as stereotypes because of the racist beliefs of that time. White settlers experienced an emerging preoccupation with a national identity. Any national identity formed frequently adopts both the natural environment and the indigenous culture as reference points. The attempt by a colonising culture to define itself as 'native' is part of an exercise in appropriation. A paradoxical situation emerges in which indigenous people are ignored, whilst elements of their culture are affirmed and displayed; the colonists did exactly this and it draws attention to the real natives who were then excluded (Thomas 1987:12). Primitivism in settler cultures is both more and less than primitivism found in Western Modern art. Settler primitivism usually becomes an effort to affirm a local relationship with a particular 'primitive' culture, which then results in settler 'fine' art displays that have a stronger indigenous presence (Thomas 1987:13). Settler inclusion of the aesthetics of indigenous cultures in their art often lacks the subversive aspirations of European Surrealism and Avant-garde painters, because cultural expressions which draw on native imagery are more often supportive of white nationalism than of an interest in indigenous art.

1.4.1 South Africa: Pierneef and Battiss

Some Southern African artists influenced by new European modernist art movements started adopting African icons into their art. Very few, but prominent among them were Jacob Pierneef (1886–1957) and Walter Battiss (1906-1982), were to make use of Bushman pictorial

expressions and motifs. Pierneef mainly copied Bushman paintings, becoming better known for developing a southern African cubistic landscape style.⁸ Battiss' first encounter with Bushman paintings happened in 1933. From 1938 onwards, his adoption of Bushman 'primitive art' becomes one of the foundations on which his future painting was based (Schoonraad 1976:11). Being a 'native' settler, however, Battiss (1960:11-2) came to the conclusion that,

[w]e should accept the dual position of the South African artist. At one moment he is a European with Greek statues and Roman poets inhabiting the shades of his intellectual landscape; at another moment he is a white man, surrounded by forests of African witchcraft, girdled by unending savannas where roam elephants and giraffe. The inner classic world of his education is one of familiar security – it is a world of civilised men with predictable situations, predictable ethics and predictable solutions. Its pleasures include Literature, Music, Science, Art and Sport. It is a world that opens up the mysteries of matter, space and speed and an academic art that lends itself to landscapes, portraits and the human figure. BUT on the outside, hugging him like a rough uncomfortable goatskin, is Unusual Africa: insecure, illogical, black and red in colour; volcanoes, lakes, tropical diseases, locusts, draughts. Floods, flames, man in conflict, violence. And it so happens that the modern man holding his Virgil is thrown from his European chariot on the African thorns. This desperately uncomfortable position is one the artist faces. He has to ask himself what he is and what he should do.

Battiss, as a twentieth century artist living in South Africa was affected by Africa's perceived alienness. When viewing Battiss' art, it seems that he first apprehends the underlying esoteric value of Bushman art in a European way (Fig. 1 & 2). Later he incorporated Bushman motifs and icons as a decorative background element in many of his paintings (Fig. 3). Battiss' earlier paintings display a modernistic philosophical outlook: one where materials of perception were seen as important contributors to knowledge.

⁸ Pierneef made hundreds of copies of Bushman drawings mostly done by others such as Stow. In 1922 he completed a frieze for Ficksburg High School hall using Bushman motifs. A newspaper of that time (*Die Burger* 1925), commenting on Pierneef's use of Bushman art, felt that South Africa's decorative art should develop in the same direction; Schoonraad (1969:129) came to the conclusion that Pierneef's 'geometric art principles' were influenced by Bushman motifs.



Fig. 1: Walter Battiss, *Buck* (1949). Limo on paper, 11x16.8cm. (Schoonraad 1976:Fig.8).

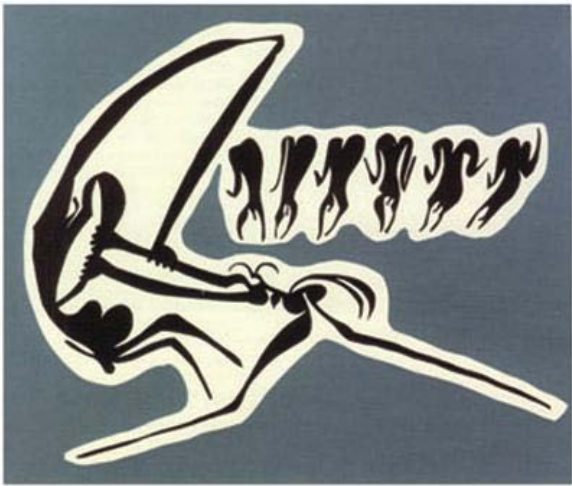


Fig. 2: Walter Battiss, *Mantis Dance* (1967). Screenprint on paper, 43x52cm. (Schoonraad 1976:Fig.20).



Fig. 3: Walter Battiss, *Symbols of life* (1966). Oil on canvas, no dimensions given (Caman 2005:112).

Perhaps Battiss' work can be explained according to the idea that anything observed, implicitly contains its opposite. Battiss experienced Bushman 'art' as a European-African and he presents viewers with what he perceived as its foreignness. His later paintings and screen prints used an alternative method of presenting art but also a post-modern mindset which recognises that differences are underwritten by no unitary agency or origin.⁹ Adopting that standpoint, he moved away from believing that presentation presupposes representation. He worked on the assumption that because the intentions behind the Bushman 'art' were not available (or perhaps relevant to understanding) there were other considerations he had to deal with. Battiss' 'desperately uncomfortable position' as an artist was resolved by presenting himself surrounded but singular (Fig. 4 and 5), in a state of alienation and separateness in all things African (Fig.6). This led to his creation of the mystical *Fook Island*: perhaps an attempt to find and preserve what he saw as his own unique 'native' identity.



Fig. 4: Walter Battiss, *Figure in three movements* (1966). Oil on wood and canvas, 41x51cm. (Schoonraad 1976:Fig.30).

⁹ Battiss was the first artist to make screen-printing acceptable as an art form in Southern Africa. He was also considered to be the first South African artist to use Bushman 'primitive art' as a direct reference (Schoonraad 1976:11).



Fig. 5: Walter Battiss, *African art* (1970). Oil on canvas, 121x213cm. (Schoonraad 1976:Fig.40).



Fig. 6: Walter Battiss, *Man from space* (c.1974). Screenprint on paper, 42.4x61.4cm. (Schoonraad 1976:Fig.36).

1.5 LIVING EVIDENCE OF ‘PRIMITIVE MAN’

Archaeologists world wide in their research on the Bushman after the Second World War came to see the Bushman as a remnant of ‘primitive man’ and so one with a ‘primitive’ set of values.

This view of primitiveness only gradually came to be replaced towards the end of the twentieth century when it was accepted that the Bushman had a totally different set of cultural values which

were as valid as the European ones. The alienating action of separating ‘them’, ‘the primitives’, from ‘us’ is a species of racism which, although academically no longer valid in South Africa, continues. Many cultural manifestations of it remain in history books, museum exhibits and so on.

Rock art, up until 1994 was excluded by the curators of South African art galleries and authors of popular art histories on South African art (Dowson 1996:320). The message here is clear: rock art is not part of South Africa’s ‘real’ art history. Pippa Skotnes’ outrage at these facts is one of the reasons for her Bushmen inspired works.

1.6 MUSEUM EXHIBITS IN THE LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY

During the 1990s there was a shift in the staging and parameters of exhibitions in Western historical museums or galleries (Welchman 2001:2). The exhibitions were situated within ‘historical’ museums and the curators sought to interrogate the museum culture of appropriation. An example of this self-introspection is *The Curator’s Egg* (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, 1991-2), which attempted to interrupt normative museum experience by deconstructing the exhibition space itself using reconfigured interpretive labelling for all items. In the last decade of the twentieth century there has been an emergence of anti-academic counter-theorising or acts regarding museum displays.

Skotnes emulated this trend by staging *Miscast* in 1996. Her three-room installation-exhibition caused an uproar that was written and debated on even ten years after she staged it. Skotnes’s actual appropriation of Bushman and related archival artefacts, set up in an artistic but

deconstructive ‘museum display’, was an endeavour to draw the general public’s attention to the fallacious displays and portrayals of Bushmen. In the exhibition Skotnes confronted the viewer with the actual material ‘evidence’ found in museum archives about the Bushman, to which viewers *had* to react in one way or the other. It was this exact choice that made the exhibition so controversial. *Miscast* through archival appropriation did in fact break open many repressive interpretations of the past but also the present. Most importantly, according to Skotnes herself, *Miscast* was a criticism of the social museum where the Bushman is usually represented as a timeless hunter- gatherer, in sharp contrast to the Bleek and Lloyd manuscripts where she perceived there to be a counter relationship between *Stranger* and *Native*.

Her exhibition catalogue, a book really, for the exhibition is unique on a number of levels as Skotnes sets out to challenge the boundaries of visual representation as art and knowledge.¹⁰ In the three essays of the introduction the themes of racism, oppression and resistance in South African colonial history are introduced with parallel texts by herself. Twenty-eight essays follow from academics in the fields of anthropology, archaeology, art, religion, English, ethno-musicology, history, linguistics as well as a photo essay by Paul Weinberg. Contributions of these authors can be placed in the following broad categories: the role of galleries and museums in creating and disseminating knowledge; ethnic identity and interactions between Bushmen and Europeans; the language of the body; rock art; and the role of Bushman culture and identity in present-day southern Africa. Skotnes’s exhibition book/catalogue therefore forms a comprehensive body of work on the Bushman. It is a testament to the oppression, resistance and resilience of these indigenous people.

¹⁰ This is a huge 360 page coffee table size ‘catalogue’ - perhaps too scholarly for the layperson. *Heaven’s Things*, a later publication, is only 51 pages long and is equally informative for anybody now visiting the new museum display on the Bushman in Cape Town.

CHAPTER TWO

Adoption of Bushman art by the tourist industry and advertisers

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Indigenous people's representations and self-representations are shaped by particular understandings, their cosmology and the land which they inhabit: these ideas were alien to colonial visions. On the other hand, colonial imaginings of place, past and future, also have their own mythic proportions and cosmological coherence. But art objects which emerge from these different bases in southern Africa's multicultural society can be seen placed side by side in museums and art galleries. All point to rival attachments and competing imaginings of a nation whose society's cultural motifs and art forms count as possessions, or things - lost, stolen, even thrown away, recovered and represented (Thomas 1987:14). This has the consequence that interactions between cultures that are radically different produce wonderful combinations, but also make visible deep differences that resist union.¹ In South Africa's new democracy many indigenous people now insist on their own distinctive ethnic identity, even as they experience globalisation.

Today's 'revived' Bushman art is often individualised, with little or no social/spiritual aspect, and it no longer functions as a means to a collective sense of unity. New Bushman art pieces are the

¹ See Appendix 1.

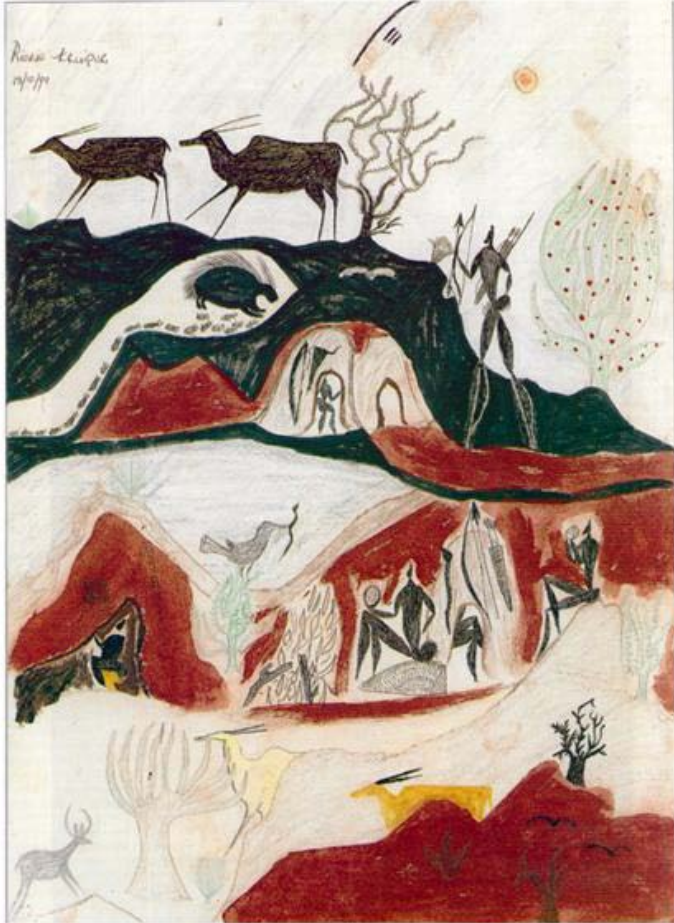


Fig. 7: Drawing by Bushman shaman, Riekie (Bregin & Kruiper 2004:71).

direct result of the 1990s San Art and Culture Projects at Schmidtsdrift Bushman communities and later of the Kalahari Bushmen (Fig. 7 & 8), where art and craft ventures were encouraged. The art works are not related to shamanic practices. Although Vetkat Regopstaan Kruiper's art has become internationally known (Bregin & Kruiper 2004:66), and the art of many other Bushmen is now regularly displayed on websites and sold overseas, it has lost its connection to the cosmology that previously inspired it. In all of these late twentieth century Bushman artworks, in spite of the fact that the eland image is revered particularly by Bushman shamans, the choice for appropriation falls mostly on the image of the human figure. The revered conception from Bushman mythology which sees people and animals as one creation, easily

shifting forms and understandings of the different worlds – the animal and the human – has become noticeably different – there is an adoption of a Western humanistic trend. That trend is to present the body (in the West it was made to stand for the freedom of the individual, for personal rights, and cultural needs). Depictions of ‘humans’ are in any case the most likely ones on which viewers can project their own preoccupations about human relations such as gender roles and stereotypes. The religious underpinnings of the West do not conceive of an equality between humans and animals, rather man is the master of the animals. This is in stark contradistinction to the conception of nature, which inspired the Bushman shamanic depictions of man and animal.

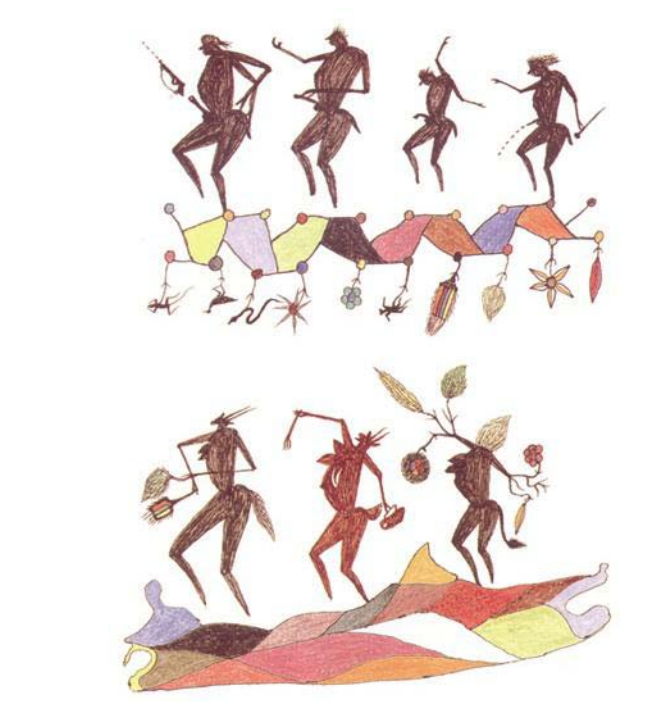


Fig.8: An early drawing by Vetkat Regopstaan Kruiper (Bregin & Kruiper 2004:70).

The contemporary Bushman art works are a visibly hybrid indigenous art, where traditional views co-mingle with contemporary ones.

It is telling that in 1995 Belinda Jeursen, an English tutor at Durban University, in an article titled *Rock art as a bridge between past and future* explores the influence of Bushman images and their appropriation by the commercial world (1995:119-129) at the very moment of the swamping of those images by commodification. In this article she gives a short overview on publications on Bushmen, contacts between colonialists and Bushmen since 1655, the earliest records of rock-art-tracings (by Tongue and Stow in 1896) and a history of rock art studies in its various phases. Jeursen (1995:124) then examines certain statements present in Lewis-Williams and Dowson's (1994:8) *Contested images: diversity in southern African rock art research*, published by Witwatersrand University Press that acknowledge that even if rock art is a disputed field of research, it might now serve as a potential ground for recuperation. It could also serve as a bridge between South Africa's diverse cultures, because no living Bushman is directly connected to it. Lewis-Williams and Dowson (1994:8, 386) suggest that because Bushman art is 'dormant' it is a field "waiting to exercise a challenging and unifying influence on southern African society", in "which the struggle for emancipation from demeaning and politically crippling stereotypes is being contested". Jeursen feels that the appropriation of Bushman images on political grounds is not wholly acceptable. She says that this simply replaces one stereotype with another, one in which the Bushman as the 'first people' represent the past and therefore the future for all South Africans. She asks whether it is acceptable to retain a stereotype simply because negative aspects of it have been exchanged for positive ones. The positive aspect is the growing public interest in Bushman art as a cultural heritage unique to southern Africa and the need to protect these paintings and engravings. The public should not be castigated for seeing the Bushman as a living stone-age hunter-gatherer, because of outdated museum displays and invalid film and advertisement portrayals. In addition, rock art has been a recurrent symbol, or motif, or archetype for South Africans. Today, simply because no Bushman can claim to be a direct

descendant from the painters and engravers, these images can be appropriated to form a link between the past and the future (Jeursen 1995:127). These are all valid points, but in the end Jeursen (1995:128) says that:

[w]hat is really needed is acknowledgement without mystification. It needs to be emphasised that existing communities are culturally distanced from the painters and engravers responsible for the art, both chronologically and spatially. So while the rock art may be viewed as some kind of bridging mechanism, when the image is used in other contexts it speaks of stereotype rather than recuperation.

2.2 ADOPTION OF BUSHMAN ART BY THE TOURIST INDUSTRY AND ADVERTISERS

Tourism has been recommended as a strategy for promoting sustainable development by both the South African government and internal development agencies. South African tourist industries are largely dependent on our climate, natural resources and unique cultures interwoven with history, ethnicity and accessibility for their success. Tourism ‘vacations’ usually satisfy a need that may fall in the category of natural resources, climate, culture, ethnicity, place, or any combination of these things (Saayman 2001:41). In recent years a greater emphasis has been placed on ‘alternative tourism’, where recreational and tourist related enterprises lead to the receiving of an equitable share of the revenues and a say in the frequency, number, types of tourists and kinds of tourism produced by the people whose cultures are exploited by the tourist industry. This type of tourism is a relatively new field in South Africa. It can be described as the sum of experiences and relationships that originate from the interaction between tourist, job providers, government and host communities attracting, accommodating, entertaining and

transporting tourists whose needs must be met. A desire to learn about the habits and culture of 'foreigners' (such as Bushmen) is therefore a strong cultural motivator which often also involves a degree of fantasy. This serves psychological needs in the tourist. The fantasy in the case of the Bushman entails a meeting by the 'tourist' with a hunter-gatherer society of the past that is *even today* managing to live *comfortably* and in harmony with nature.

Tourism has rekindled a revival in Bushman handicrafts (Chambers 1997:101). The cultural effects of tourism on the Bushman today include a changing attitude by them toward material goods and a desire on the part of some to become more involved in the markets of other countries. What was once described as egalitarian Bushman societies are now more stratified, with individuals in positions of leadership. The result is that some Bushman communities have formed pressure groups to establish and promote what they see as responsible tourism that is not environmentally or socio-economically destructive (Chambers 1997:120). Others seek cultural and political autonomy, arguing that they have a basic right of self-determination.

2.2.1 Old stereotypes

Evolution theory resulted in speculative depictions of ancient humans in the manner of the 'natives' encountered in Africa, Australia and the New World (Moser 1997:208). This was regularly reinforced by exhibitions in museums that in the past relied on ideas of race and racist doctrines formulated in the nineteenth century. Such representations continue to lurk in the cultural consciousness. African people at the beginning of the twentieth century came to be seen as either the embodiment of the noble savage (a pre-civilised state of humanity that worshiped nature gods and whose naturalness and genuineness was in contrast to the decadent west); or the

Dark Continent of human sacrifice, witchcraft and primeval spirits – a duality which extended to its art.² Culturally there are many ways to make images. There are also many ways of ‘looking’ at and perceiving any picture. In a publication of 1994, a book on human evolution, there is still imagery which models ‘primitive man’ on modern day Bushmen. This would give an erroneous message, if perceived and displayed for tourists today. Therefore even ten years ago an image was published that plainly implied that the Bushman is a primitive hunter-gatherer. The caption below the image says: “[b]y the sea at Klassies mouth in South Africa, 100,000 years ago, there lived a community of modern humans whose artefacts were often made from special materials, suggesting they were used for exchange or had other symbolic importance in addition to their practical uses” (Caird 1994:155).

2.2.2 Advertising



Fig. 9: Bushman handicrafts (from left to right): ostrich-shell beadwork, hand-painted cards, sandals, painted ostrich-shell earrings and painted gourds (Photographs by Liesbeth Groenewald).

Advertising sells the past to the future via a sophisticated technology system, or a dream world where anything seems possible. Advertising imagery therefore idealises the Bushman by

² To the mind of the viewer of that time this duality consisted of either the repellent/attractive or the grotesque/beautiful.

portraying a specific ‘image’ of a primitive hunter and gatherer. Images in advertising however are used with one thing in mind: purchase.³

In advertising it is images that draw the attention of the viewer first through the use of sensory anchoring (interpretation of the image), instant access, personal engagement (drawing attention which may be positive or negative) and a cultural multi-connectedness (Schroeder 2002:15). It is now recognised that imagery constitutes a separate type of source material with its own category of meaning and information. This comes about because in contrast to the written word, the picture represents all its information at once within the same syntax.⁴ According to Axel Bolvig “[n]o contemporary visual media can survive without reflecting on ‘what the spectator sees’”(2003:xxviii). The spectator is often culturally conditioned, and may not necessarily see and experience only one intentioned meaning. That is not to say that there is no individual historical power or social stratification as far as images are concerned. But there is now an acceptance of the unique and individual meaning of images independent of the constriction of language. The acceptance of images as invaluable material in our understanding is problematic: the written word can be copied, but the copy of an image is but a resemblance of the original. This is because each individual picture is the result of an unavoidable connection between form and content, any change changes the whole (Bolvig & Lindley 2003:xxx), as is often the case when Bushman imagery is adopted by advertising agencies (Fig. 10 & 11).

³ There is therefore a big difference in the motives for appropriation between, for example Pippa Skotnes or Vetkat Regopstaan Kruiper, and advertising.

⁴ In 1928 Magritte painted a picture of a pipe under which he wrote, ‘Ceci n’est pas une pipe’. This made researchers in art history realise that their work with images was embedded in ‘treachery’, namely, a treachery within the words, which are connected to an image as a title or description, not within the image itself. Magritte was therefore alluding to our belief in the visual representation creating its own text (Bolvig 2003:xxvii).

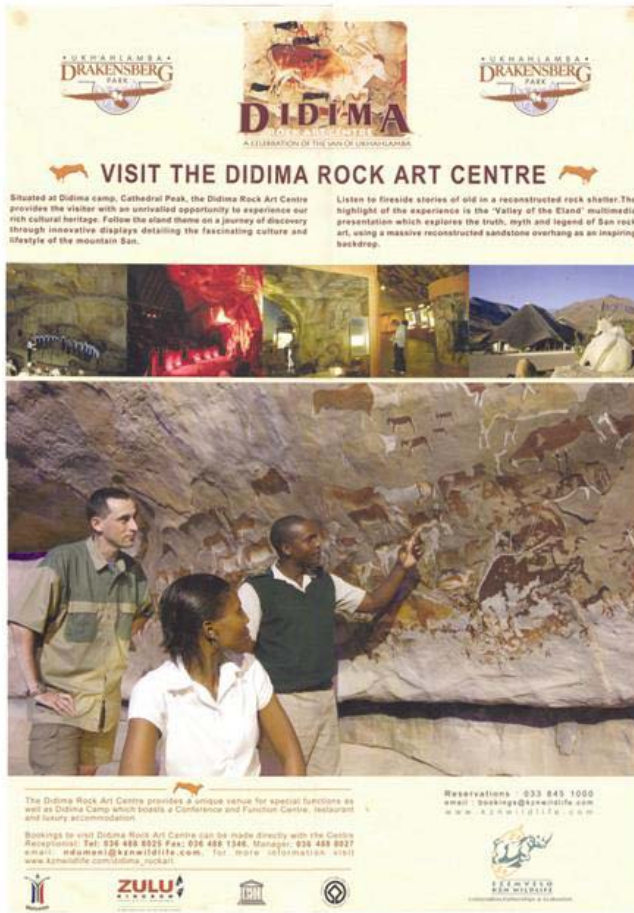


Fig.10: Poster advertising the Didima Rock Art Centre (Conservation & Ecotourism publication).

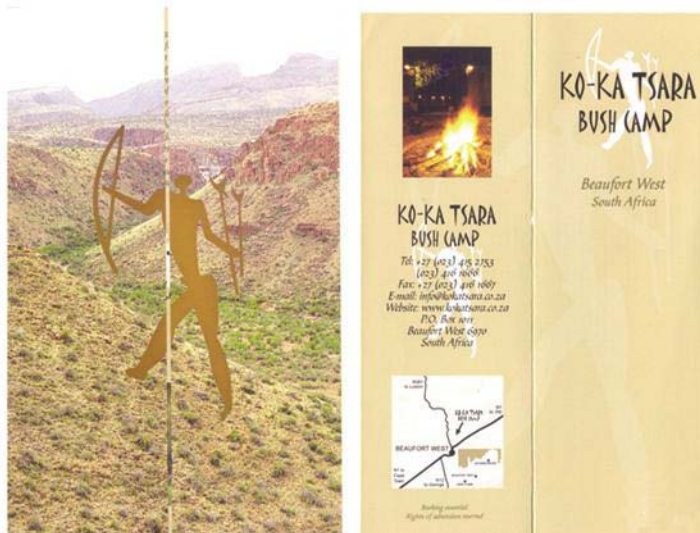


Fig.11: Two sides of a tourism brochure (KoKa Tsara bush camp, Beaufort West).

Advertising might not be considered art, but it has now become a dominant form of visual communication and often displays many attributes of 'fine' art. The line between art and commerce has become blurred, for both are produced for a buying market system. One of the differences is that 'art works' are produced by an individual artist, whilst in advertising art there is often a collaboration between two or more artists. Another difference is that an advertising team is given a task whilst artists 'dream up' the task for themselves. The origin for the work is therefore different. But even advertising, like Western art, excludes much of society. Jonathan Schroeder (2002:18) in *Visual consumption* finds it interesting that, "[w]hile humanists are surveying the marketing of art, marketing researchers have been slow to turn to visual issues to analyze consumer progress – even though visibility is a central feature of the culture that art depicts, packages, comments on, and is marketed within". In recent years indigenous depictions by the media have flourished, because local Bushman icons have proved to be powerful tools. The images engage people's attention, upset emotions, change beliefs and affect policies and programmes. It can be argued that if visual art used by the media is to enrich society by shaping and remoulding our environment, it must be able to use pictorial images produced by others (such as the Bushman), permitting them to do their work for everyone's ultimate benefit, with a proviso that no harm is done (Weil 2002:181). With media images and their circulation, power in the form of money often resides with the company that engages the advertising agency to produce and promote a company vision, article or product. This has resulted in Bushman rock art depictions engraved or painted on rock surfaces originally being reproduced in a wide variety of contemporary contexts for several decades already. This is so much the case that it is now also reproduced in foreign 'advertising' such as AIDS campaigns in California (Fig. 12) and for German shops (Fig.13).

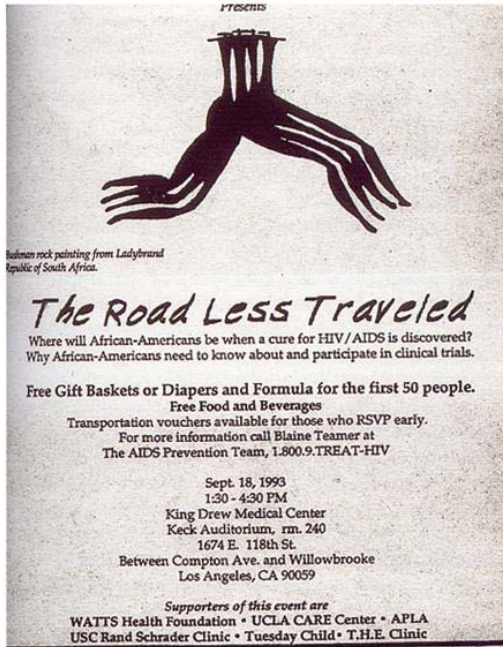


Fig. 12: Advertising campaign for AIDS prevention, California (Dowson 1996:317).



Fig. 13: Use of Bushman icons: a shop in Bonn, Germany (Dowson 1996:317).

This demonstrates how universal southern African rock art images have become. The use of Bushman icons for an AIDS campaign could be attributed to the fact that this viral epidemic

originated in ‘Africa’; or a need for all people to come together to eradicate AIDS. Likewise, it can also be reasoned that the shop in Bonn might not have been portraying Bushman icons at all, but those of Palaeolithic man found on the rock walls in caves in Europe.

In South Africa Bushman images can be found on T-shirts, postcards, writing paper, coffee mugs, tablemats, fridge magnets, key rings, stamps, telephone cards and much more.⁵ The fact that Bushman rock art images are used so frequently perhaps reflects the idea that the social context of their production is so lost in the depths of time that they have become common cultural property. This belief denies the possibility that their art was produced with specific holistic intentions. We need to recognise how these images were reproduced and how their appropriation is affecting perceptions about this art and its creators. There is also the issue of the accuracy and quality of these reproduced images, as well as the intention behind the production of these images. Some reproduced images attempt as accurate as possible a rendering of the original, whilst other examples bear no resemblance whatsoever to the original (Fig.14).

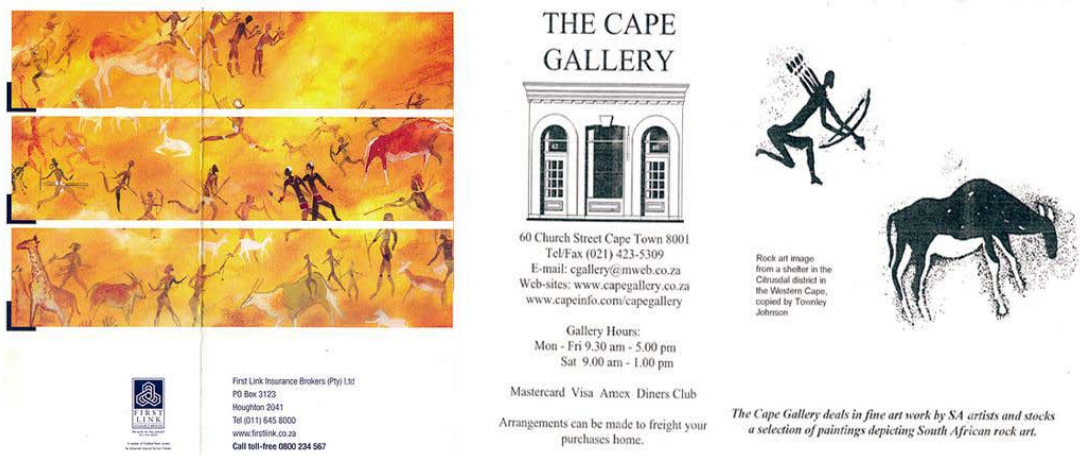


Fig. 14: Two examples of the use of stereotyping of Bushman societies in advertising.

⁵ The South African 1996 Olympic team also used Bushman rock art as a symbol of national unity, and one of the media images for South Africa’s 2010 soccer event also uses a modified Bushman icon.

The issue here is about the sensitivity and faithfulness with which the image is reproduced, for often subtle nuances are critical and crucial to the interpretation and understanding of Bushman shaman pictorial complexity (Dowson 1996:316).

To contextualise this complexity a brief description of the connection between the Bushman art and their trance experiences is appropriate. This underscores the incomprehension of those who freely appropriate the images.

2.3 THE REAL INTENTION OF THE ORIGINAL BUSHMAN IMAGES

Scientists working with the mind and consciousness (for example, Colin Martindale, psychologist and neurophysiologist Charles Laughlin) recognise that during the course of the day people repeatedly shift from outward directed (awake and fully attentive to our environment) to inwardly directed states (contemplative and less alert to our environment). These are both inherent nervous system functions in humans and all mammals. The inward directed state in turn can lead to sleep: a passing from a waking-outward-directed thought into daydreaming in humans (from realistic fantasy to autistic fantasy and reverie), to a hypnagogic state or falling asleep, and then to dreaming. All these states form the conscious shifting from mental wakefulness to sleep on what is called the normal trajectory.⁶ In some cultures the dreams of ordinary people are taken to be glimpses of a world that is more fully visited by religious specialists or shamans in deep trance. This is the case of the Bushmen shamans. For most modern westerners dreams lack the intensity of hallucinations and are consigned to the oblivion of forgetfulness. In earlier times and

⁶ When dreaming people have far less control over their mental experiences than when daydreaming. But in lucid dreaming, or a state between waking and dreaming, people can learn to control their imagery, a spiritual technique also used by shamans (Clottes & Lewis-Williams 1998:14).

in many societies other than our own, dreams were/are taken seriously and so are visions (which are often seen as God-inspired). There is in addition, however, another inward directed state called an *intensified trajectory* (Lewis-Williams 2002(b):124). Western stress on intelligence, however, has tended to suppress this form of consciousness by regarding it as irrational, marginal, abhorrent or even pathological (Lewis-Williams 2002:121). An illustration of human consciousness is useful to depict the different states.

This inward, intensified trajectory or trance state is caused by a wide range of factors.⁷ In a number of pathological conditions such as schizophrenia, migraine and temporal lobe epilepsy, hallucinations often occur. This is why some anthropologists have concluded that at least some, and possibly all stone-age shamans were mentally ill, but able to turn their handicap to their own advantage (Clottes & Lewis-Williams 1998:14). However, altered states can be induced in perfectly healthy people in a variety of ways (and it should be noted that many shamans lead ordinary lives apart from their ritual activities). The conditions for producing altered states are sensory deprivation (absence of light, sound, physical stimulation and certain meditative techniques), audio-driving (or the prolonged use of insistent drumming, chanting, flashing lights and vigorous rhythmic dancing), prolonged social isolation, mental fatigue, intense pain, fasting and the use of psychotropic drugs. An experience of the intensified trajectory of consciousness can therefore be deliberately sought, as this mental state is a function of all human nervous systems. The Bushmen achieve trance by protracted dancing, hyperventilation, audio-driving and intense concentration.⁸ It is only when this power enters the shamans that they are able to travel through the tiered cosmos to perform their duties as healers,

⁷ In the intensified trajectory, visions or hallucinations may occur in any of the five senses, but their content is usually culturally based.

⁸ The young Bushman conducts his or her quest to become a shaman not in isolation but in the midst of the community, through participation in the dance. If after a couple of years a trance state is not achieved, the quest is abandoned without blame.

weather controllers, animal spotters and interveners on behalf of tribal members with the gods (Clottes & Lewis-Williams 1998:23).

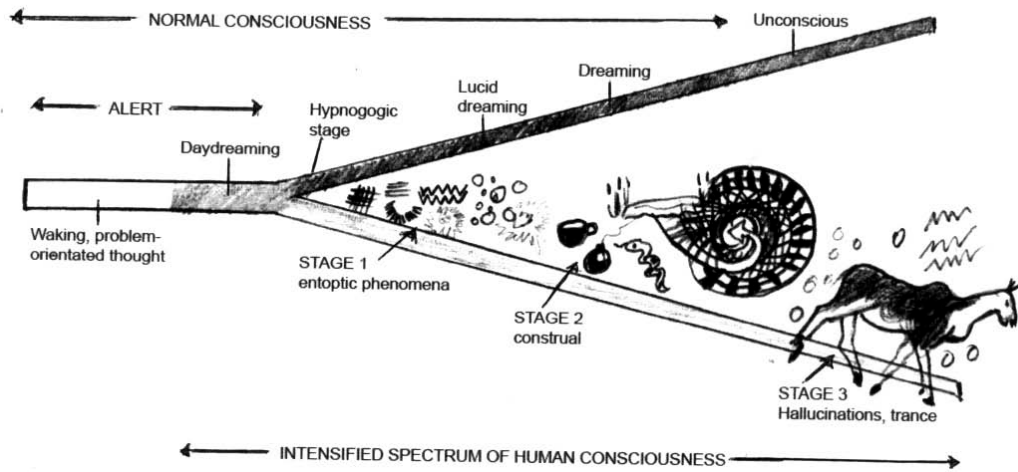


Fig. 15: Diagram of human consciousness (Composite of diagrams found in Lewis-Williams 2002(b):125 and Clottes & Lewis-Williams 1998:14).

In Fig. 15, it may be noted that neuropsychological laboratory research concluded that there are three overlapping stages to the intensified trajectory. The following description of these stages gives a general idea of what shamans experience when they enter an altered state of consciousness. Here, what is experienced visually is mainly dealt with, but the sense of hearing, smell, taste and other strange bodily sensations are also usually present.

In the first or lightest stage or light trance, all people see geometric forms such as dots, grids, zigzags, sets of parallel lines, nested curves and meandering lines. These are experienced whether the eyes are open or closed. These brightly coloured geometric forms are often called phosphenes because they flicker, pulsate, enlarge, contract, blend into one another, sparkle and

rapidly change forms independent of any exterior light source.⁹ Lewis-Williams (2002(b):127) calls them *entoptic* phenomena, from the Greek, “within-vision”. If the eyes are open, these phosphenes are projected luminously onto surfaces such as walls, floors and ceilings. In some shamanic societies, certain of these forms are given specific names and have specific connotations. The meanings are now lost to us which the Bushman or their ancestors throughout southern Africa might have attached to their geometric rock engravings. Examples of engraved geometric forms of the type that occurs in stage 1 of intensified consciousness, can be found at Driekopeiland near Kimberley (Clottes & Lewis-Williams 1998:16).

During the second stage of intensified trajectory, subjects try to make sense of the geometric phenomena by illusioning them into iconic objects which are familiar to them in their daily life – often of religious or emotional importance. Modern Bushmen shamans describe this stage as one of physical sensations – feelings of height, tingling and the movement of energy and potency up their spines (Bennun 2004:355).¹⁰ This process is also linked to their temperament at that time: for example, a round shape may change into a melon/ostrich egg if the subject is hungry, a breast if he is in a state of sexual awakening, a pool of water if thirsty, and so on (Lewis-Williams 2002(b):128).

In the third stage there is a progressive exclusion of all information from the outside and an experience of entering a swirling vortex or tunnel, also often associated with visions in near-death experiences. Here Westerners use such words as *funnels*, *alleys*, *cones*, *pits* and *corridors*, whilst

⁹ Phosphenes can be induced by pressure on the eyeball and are just that: they therefore do not form part of the first state of intensified trajectory. However, migraine sufferers often experience them during the beginning stages of an attack.

¹⁰ Hence the painting on rock walls of Bushman shamans with dots and zigzags over their spines and limbs.

other cultures may describe this as the entering into a hole in the ground, passing through water (stream, pool or sea), or passing through layers of earth or sky. Subjects feel themselves drawn into the vortex, at the end of which is a bright light. On the sides of the vortex is a lattice derived from the geometric imagery of stage one. In compartments of this lattice are the first true hallucinations in the form of people, animals and so forth (Clottes & Lewis-Williams 1998:17). In this iconic stage, entoptic phenomena may be included behind or around iconic imagery. In this way compound images are formed such as a person with buck hooves and head. There is also an increase in vividness until finally they enter and become part of this imaginary realm, becoming or turning into animals or other exalted 'beings'. Many hunter-gatherer societies interpreted the trance of stage three as soul-loss. That is, they believed that the shaman's spirit left the body, using flight to reach an upper realm, or instead entered an underground world. Southern Bushman believed that some shamans could actually become swallows. This ascent and travel through the upper realm, however, could also be achieved by climbing the second stage vortex grid, a tree or post.¹¹ During a descent, also vortex related, into the ground or lower realm there might be a sensation of darkness, constriction and possibly difficulty in breathing, all neuropsychological experiences related to the entering of a hole in the ground (Clottes & Lewis-Williams 1998:28). In the intensified spectrum of human consciousness, here divided into three stages, these stages are cumulative rather than chronological in order. Some subjects enter directly into the third stage whilst others do not progress past the first stage.

The description of 'trancing' is suggested by Lewis-Williams (2002(b): 130-132) as substantially the same as experienced in the Palaeolithic period when our ancestors had the same brains as us,

¹¹ The Bushman version of this concept is an invisible network of threads, rather like a spider's web, (vortex-grid experience) on which they climb to the abode of the 'gods' (Clottes & Lewis-Williams 1998:26).

the same nervous system and the potential to experience an intensified autistic trajectory. In the Upper Palaeolithic when all people were hunter-gatherers, ritual experts would therefore be those who could experience an intensified trajectory – now called shamans. Their visual, aural and somatic experiences would then have indicated to them that there is an alternative reality or a world above and below the world in which they dwelt. As only shamans had access to this alternative reality, this encouraged the other tribe members to believe that the shaman was able to contact spirits with the help of animal helpers (Lewis-Williams 2002(b):133).¹²

If the key to ancient belief is in the trancing of shamans and the records of those experiences are what is represented on rocks, shelters and cave walls, it makes the vulgar appropriation by Western advertisers seem all the more inappropriate.

2.3.1 Bushman art and ‘hunting magic’

Bushman images reproduced for advertising purposes involve altering, re-interpretation, or the juxtaposition of images originating in sites that are geographically and historically apart. The two most popular images to be reproduced involve the male Bushman figure hunting an animal, or Bushman women with bags apparently gathering plant materials. Both images tend to support two popular misconceptions about rock art, namely, that Bushman art is linked to hunting magic or that it depicts aspects of everyday life. These two stereotypical views of the Bushman encourage craftspeople and advertisers using rock art, to choose images which further these

¹² However, these prehistoric shamans could also have suffered from an illness such as schizophrenia, epilepsy or migraine (which caused them to trance), or have used psychotropic plants. From records it is known that approximately half of the males and a third of the females in a Bushman tribe could trance: but this did not mean that they were excluded from hunting and/or gathering.

views. After all, this type of depiction needs no esoteric explanation and can be easily read by the consumers of their goods. Most Bushman paintings, because they were depictions of shaman after-visions from an experience of intensified autistic trajectory, can be said to be surreal in nature. The only artistic expression coming close to this kind of depiction is Surrealism. The misconception about Bushman art arises from a profound misunderstanding of the illogical dream-trance depictions of the Bushman shaman's art – it is too esoteric and enigmatic for the Western consumer. The same type of surrealism is also present in much of Skotnes's works. But this is not the case in commonly appropriated images. Hotels, Conservation and Information centres, Art and Museum gift shops act as vendors of indigenous 'craft' goods (and in the case of the museum, not only as custodians of art and artefacts). This ensures the private home becomes a place for the 'tourist artefact': something that modern texts and interior decorating articles

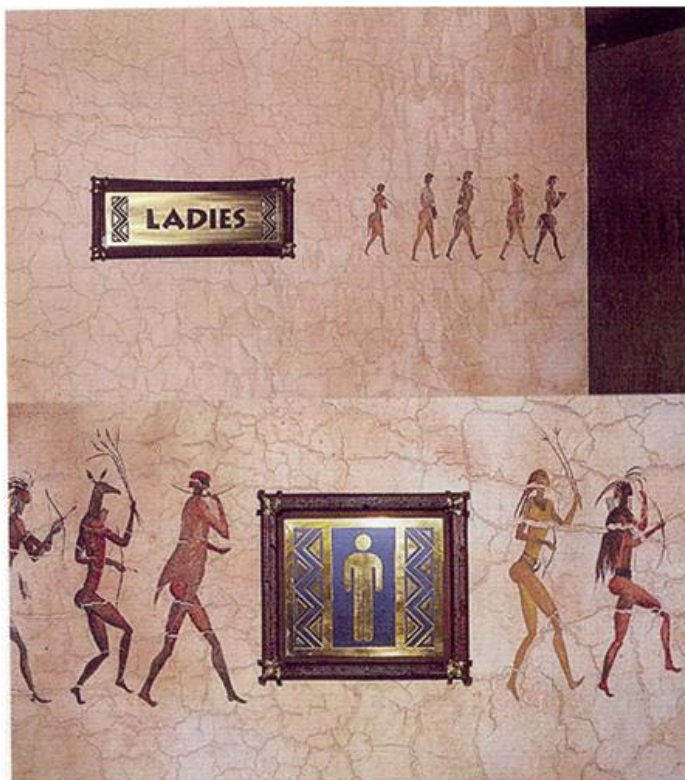


Fig. 16: Signs indicating cloakrooms at the Lost City, S.A. (Dowson 1996:317).

promote. By constantly choosing this type of depiction, artists and craftspeople are guilty of reinforcing and recreating popular misconceptions about rock art and the societies within which it was produced. The result is inappropriate messages and derogatory stereotyping of Bushman societies (Dowson 1996:318), as well as complete ignorance of the real lost heritage. In the light of these interpretations, the use of Bushman images to indicate toilets in Sun City does not seem at all unusual (Fig. 16).

2.4 INTERNATIONAL APPROPRIATION

In our society we have entered an art world of photo- or digital-based combinations of global appropriation of local issues, histories, techniques and materials. This results in an unstable alliance with post modernism, post colonial and post structuralist theory, also called *international appropriation*. The gesture of taking always results in the relocation of context, whether national, ethnic, and gendered or class based and is true of an object, an image or an event. There are therefore many layers of appropriation: from academic debates on copying; originality and imitation; the aesthetic adoption leveled at the culture of clichés and the ready-made itself; as well as the development of photographic theory and technologies; and Surrealist automatism (Welchman 2001:33-48).

Schroeder (2002:4) asserts that, “[w]hereas technology was the primary source of innovation and strategic advantage in the twentieth century, information is becoming the key ingredient for success in the 21st, and that at the centre of this shift is the production and consumption of images”. Images serve as a stimulus, a text, or a representation that drives cognition,

interpretation and preference within a culture. But today visual consumption often involves mere looking without comprehension, gazing without knowledge and watching without engagement. Visualisation of everyday life does not mean that we know what we are seeing, for images succeed or fail according to the extent we can interpret them successfully. Consumers today in many cases have a heightened visual or semiotic literacy, but the overabundance in number, variety and presence of images in everyday life interferes with our ability to look and reflect on individual images, and seeing does then not mean understanding. An indiscriminate appropriation of Bushman images happens in the tourist industry, all types of advertising, the museum and even by today's Bushmen, with the result the images have become part of everyday life and not the power repositories of Bushman shamans.

Perhaps the media should re-centre their exchange around the issues and dilemmas faced by the Bushman who find their positions misunderstood and even out of fashion in contemporary discourse. *Ubuntu* is a term in South Africa's new democracy which is promoted in all walks of life. It has become a tool for transformation in the realities of post-apartheid South Africa: a concept in its political and management discourses to help negotiate the future despite the divisiveness of the past and present. It is, however, driven by academic philosophers and management consultants with a utopian-like philosophy. As far as the arts are concerned, *Ubuntu* has come to stand for available cultural material presented in an eclectic and innovative manner. At best this introduces into the vernacular world of the village and family a deliberately stilted and somewhat ironical reference to the outside world.¹³ It has also come to stand for an attempt to reconstruct, re-appropriate and assert a philosophical perspective which is Western in format

¹³ Family members often disagree and quarrel, and individual members rebel or are ostracised within a family or village setting.

yet proclaimed to be pre-colonial African in content, where African thought is depicted as revolving around a human centred ontology (ceremonies of tribes that unify). The theoreticians of *Ubuntu* produce a Grand Narrative: one that scientific ethnography produces as valid knowledge and allows one to place oneself outside the course of hegemonic history by identifying with any peripheral victims of that history (van Binsbergen 2003:455). In our diverse nation many cultures have become increasingly self-conscious, and have started to create the means of reviving their local languages, traditions, history and community concerns. In the case of the Bushmen this can also be seen as a shield against the unethical use or absolute erasure of Bushman presence in an ever-increasing circulation of their images in general and indigenous lives in particular.

What marks the contemporary, post-modern condition is that the media culture has expanded to pervade virtually all walks of everyday life. We continuously deploy the symbols and communications of media culture to make do in our everyday life. Whether we construct our perceptions of places we visit or people we meet, some element of media culture generally enters as a communicative, interpretive or inspirational device. The rise of the brand is a social and economic reality. Pippa Skotnes's art, but especially in *Miscast* where Skotnes uses photographs of Bushmen (often almost naked) and pamphlets advertising life viewings of Bushmen in Europe (placed on the floor of her installation) comments ironically on a trend of visual communication by artists that started in the 1980s. At this time Western artists appropriated images not of other cultures, but from either their own history of art, mass media and/or popular culture. It became in certain cases, a reduplication by turning the means of the mass media against itself through the re-appropriating of their images, styles, and conventions of representation (Walker 1994:134). This did not stop appropriation by advertisers or the media in South Africa, especially as it was

felt that the adoption of Bushman images would entice more international tourists to southern Africa. Perhaps at first this was an attempt to cement relations in its new democracy, but it can also be seen by the Bushman as a visual reminder of unfinished settler appropriation. Further, because no Bushman tribe can lay claim to ownership of Bushman rock paintings in many parts of southern Africa, but especially the Drakensberg region, these images could be changed, altered and used with impunity purely for financial gain by the mass media. The Bushman-icon-brand becomes an absurdity of consumer entrepreneurship societies, and not a cultural phenomenon. Even so, brands have become an important tool for transforming everyday life especially in its production processes which rely on the appropriation of known sources for their value.

The difference between appropriations by artists as opposed to a tourist/advertising market economy is the use of Bushman iconography in a way that impinges on Bushman moral rights. Skotnes's earlier prints, where she appropriates Bushman icons as well as mythology, are personal mythological accounts. Artists like Skotnes, and this includes modern Bushman artists, through appropriation portray a certain lost spirituality and a piece of lost humanity. Skotnes's installation, *Miscast*, because there was no alteration implicit in any of the museum artefacts used, according to the laws of appropriation, falls into the category of review, criticism and factual reporting. This exhibition criticises the misrepresentation of Bushmen in museum situations and indirectly in South Africa's democracy.

CHAPTER 3

SKOTNES AND THE BUSHMAN IMAGERY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is a discussion of Skotnes' works, *The Return III* (1988), *For //Kunn* (1993) and *Heaven's Things* (1999). Skotnes makes extensive use of Bushman imagery in her art making, not only in the three works under discussion in this dissertation. As an archaeologist the excavation and examination of such a rich record as Southern Africa has of the hunter-gatherer culture is invaluable for the ethnographic record. Of great value in Southern Africa is the fact of communities who comprise 'living societies and cultures', as Vibe (2006:5) calls them, because they provide analogies for the study of the past. It is in this context that Skotnes has viewed the Bushman paintings and engravings which she comments on in the works. Her encounter with the archival material of Wilhelm Bleek and Lucy Lloyd on the /Xam Bushmen of the Bleekwater prison provided an elucidatory background for the paintings and engravings. Skotnes was also influenced by Battiss' adoption of Bushman formal elements in his paintings which "altered the formal arrangement of his work [because Battiss] mediate[d] and interpret[e] the images of the San through creative exploration" (Dowson & Lewis-Williams 1994:319). Battiss' way of framing and cropping his images to imply an unframed space in the rear of them, the stacking of figures both vertically and horizontally, which causes altered scale relationships has been influential for Skotnes (Rycroft 1996:37). The approach to the discussion and analysis of the works is based on the assumption that Skotnes is resisting the stereotypical representation.

3.2 THE RETURN III (1988)



Fig. 17: Pippa Skotnes, *The Return I, II, & III* (1988-9). Etchings, each 45x60cm. Johannesburg Art Gallery (Williamson 1989:24-5).

The Return III forms part of a series of three etchings (Fig.17). In *The Return III* the viewer is presented with five bound figures which seem to float in a dark sky above a desert scene containing a tiny house and small figure against one wall. The wall is situated on the far bottom right. It is probable that the bound figures represent the Bushman and that the house is one of the buildings at the abandoned diamond-mining town of Kolmanskop, Namibia.¹ The five figures floating in the air and have no recognisable faces. These faces seem to be wrapped up in cloth as if mummified and preserved. Three of them seem to have strings emanating from their heads - forming part of the 'broken strings' of /Xam Bushmen referred to by !Nuin-/kuiten (Bennun 2004:5). These are mythic theriantropes or depictions of shamans in the altered state of trance. They are bound up and unable to function, and it can be inferred that they inhabit the world of the spirits. Two of the figures appear to have footwear, also bound up. These may stand for the shoes the Breakwater Bushmen had to wear: a metaphor for efforts at 'civilizing' the Bushman. The small house in the right hand corner of the barren desert at Kolmanskop is almost covered up by desert sand, an eloquent commentary on the

¹ Kolmanskop has for a long time been reclaimed by the desert, and because of this it has become a tourist attraction, not unlike Bushman cultural sites and Colonial sites of interest for tourists.

Bushman culture, beliefs and territory and also much of the understanding of Bushman paintings, engravings, ceremonies and even their ‘footsteps’. The southern African landscape is made barren by this loss. The failed colonial enterprise is the other part of the commentary which Skotnes makes.

3.2.1 Skotnes’s technique

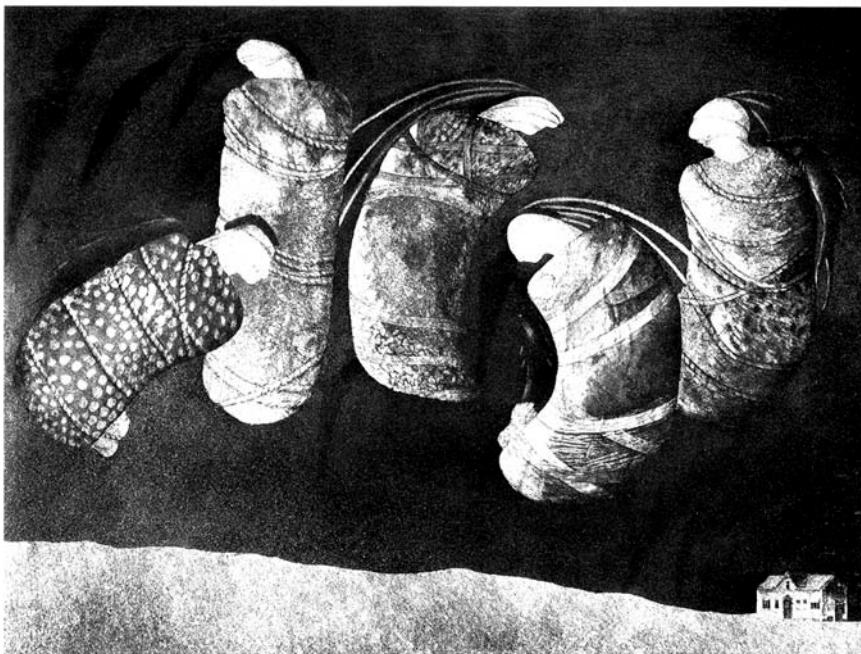


Fig.18: Pippa Skotnes, *The Return III* (1988). Etching, 45x60cm. (Williamson 1989:25).

In *The Return*, Skotnes presents us with traditional etching techniques, crosshatching and aquatinting employed on copperplate to produce black tones from the lightest grey to the deepest black. The fine attention to tonal qualities shows her mastery of established graphic techniques used to impart density and subtlety. The layered forms which resemble Bushman palimpsests on cave walls are recalled by these effects. Sue Williamson in her article in *Resistance art in South Africa* (1989:24), says that, “[i]mages

of the past – the marks, structures and objects left behind by the plundered and the plunderers – constitute much of Skotnes’s artistic vocabulary”.² By these means of so-called *resistance art* the artist emphasizes the plight of the Bushman.

3.2.2 Commentary on *The Return III*

The time of plenty for the Bushman as well as the town of Kolmanskop is a thing of the past: both now are only historic memories. It is fitting that Skotnes has presented to the viewer five large Bushman figures, but only one tiny Western house and figure. These pointedly juxtapose the facts that the Bushman lived on the land for centuries, compared to the scant fifty years of Westerners at Kolmanskop. Such a contrast is implied in the ironic title of *The Return*. There is no strength and fertility to be invoked for the Bushman race and culture; or the desert of Namibia (or for that matter, for Kolmanskop).

Covered up, bound with rope and tape, these Bushman figures in the sky are reminiscent of the bound figures and statues by the American artist Christo in the 1970s.³ Perhaps Skotnes was influenced by his work, for here the wrapping is also a metaphor, but with the addition to the meaning of covering up or hiding truths. The wrapping of an object like a rock with cloth or tape also refers to the protection or preservation of, in this case, Bushman depictions in rock shelters ensuring their everlasting permanency. Skotnes wishes that instead of massive neglect, the Bushman culture would be preserved. The destruction (and use of graffiti) and removal of rock-art-slabs by institutions and private

² Williamson comments generally on the fact that Skotnes’s series of three prints form part of the ‘apartheid resistance art’.

³ Jeanne Claude Christo (b. 1935).

persons is perhaps no longer happening, but as southern Africa's Bushman paintings are very much exposed to the elements, many of these paintings have faded and even disappeared altogether. The wrapping of these figures by Skotnes emphasizes the need to keep Bushman images alive or visible. However, the rocks/figures are also floating away into irretrievable destruction. By the use of synecdoche (part for the whole) these rocks in her depiction are polysemic. There is no return of what has been lost, not the culture, nor the shamans who cannot traverse the spirit world any longer. The terrible poignancy, suggested by the title, of the people lost by genocide, returning, where they cannot do their healing work any longer is rigorously offset by the technical skill of the work. The suggestion of mutilation in the legless figures is in strong contrast with therianthrope figures in Bushman art whose elegance and power to move is revealed in the hoofs which appear instead of feet.

Wrapping in cloth also suggests bandages for the healing of a wound, perhaps the wounds inflicted on the Bushman in the past. There are further issues of being contained in specific areas, interred in army camps or integrated into Bantu societies. All this suggests another form of wrapping: one of bondage or complete restraint. These bound figures can be said to represent Bushman rights which are bound up with red tape and even servitude.

Closer inspection reveals that the wrappings may not represent cloth, but coverings on rocks with ropes and tape around them. These, because they are floating in the air, are also reminiscent of Magritte's floating rock depictions.⁴ As a surrealist Magritte was an expert in freeing objects of the ties that exist between things in the everyday world. His

⁴ Rene Magritte (1898-1967).

rocks possess an artificial power and a more than physical potential – demonstrating an urge to drift away, as thought is liable to drift away, when thought is understood as an active and intense confrontation with the unthinkable (Paquet 1997:79). Similarly Skotnes’s floating rock images personify the unthinkable: the genocide of a whole culture and people.

3.2.3 Direct allusions to Bushman imagery and gongs

The two figures (Fig 19 & 20) below, are an example of the Bushman imagery to which Skotnes alludes.



Fig. 19: Geometric depictions from a site in the Herbert District (Dowson 1992:34, Fig. 42)

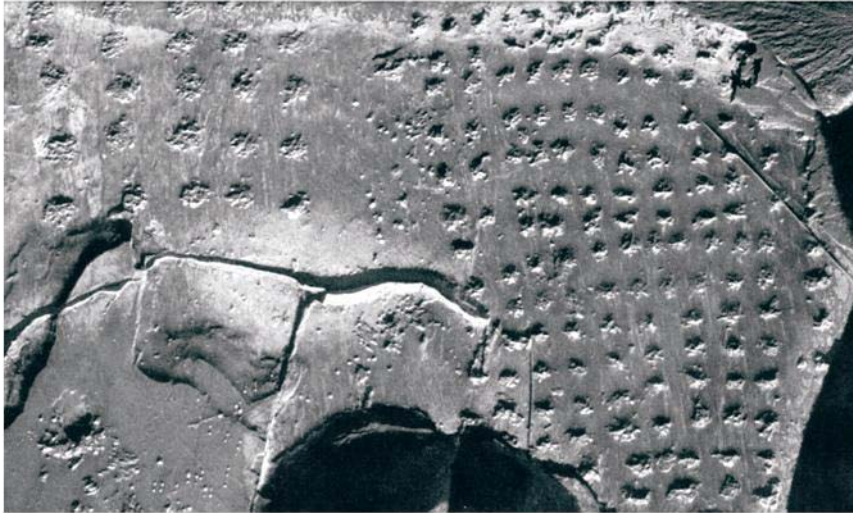


Fig. 20: Pecked dots from the Lichtenburg District (Dowson 1992:33, Fig. 37).

The imagery represented on the rocks refers to the trance experience of Bushman shamans. In the first stage of trance Bushmen shamans experience entoptic phenomena which include dots and scraped lines that eventually form grids (Lewis-Williams 2002(b):127). These dots and lines are present on the rock-like floating figures of Skotnes's five rocks/shamans/Bushmen. Skotnes creates a tension between the physical weightiness suggested by stone-like figures and their remarkable ability to float effortlessly in air. Shamans could traverse the spirit realm. The reference to the spirit realm in the visual metaphor used is the vast sky. Skotnes seems to allude to Lucy Lloyd's recording of Dia!kwain's tale about the white patch peckings on rocks that were made when his mother would call up her long-gone spirit people (*/nu!ke*) from the ground by the pounding of stones (Bennun 2004:255). Sullivan (1995:12) writes about some African belief systems in which the spirits of things of earth (or nature spirits) cling to rocks and cluster in strength on rocky hillocks. These spirits were often called upon to assist with a whole range of human needs, in particular for fertility and health and growth.

Dialkwain's mother pounded the rock to ask for similar things. Metaphorically these 'pecked marks on rocklike-figures' permanently there could imply a supplication on behalf of the Bushman.

A physical explanation for pecking on rocks according to Michael de Jongh and Rina Steyn (2005:108-110) is that the rocks have been hit by a smaller rock and are in fact Bushman gongs. On the farm of Hangklip there are three dolerite stones and rocks of different sizes each with distinct human inflicted strike marks. These rocks were placed in such a way that a "a person seated on yet another [rock can play these rocks like] lithophones" or gongs (de Jongh & Steyn 2005:108). These melodious gongs called 'Bushman Gong' or 'Bushman Piano' seem to be a Karoo-wide phenomenon and can be identified by one or more strike marks on dolerite boulders. When struck they emit clear ringing sounds which are audible from a considerable distance.⁵ All the gongs are found in association with important features in the environment for Bushman activity, namely together with rock engravings (as at Hangklip). If this is the case, then the five large rock-like figures in the air are proclaiming their presence loudly although now in the barren landscape there is no one who can hear. Skotnes' etching calls attention to the rocks floating away and forever making themselves unavailable for pounding.

3.2.4 The destruction of the culture

The positioning of these five figures floating in a dark sky can also be understood on many different levels: the extermination of the Bushman 'under cover of darkness' by

⁵ It is interesting to note that these gongs are also found in many African countries as well as China, India, Iceland, Korea, the Pacific islands, Peru, Venezuela and Vietnam (de Jongh & Steyn 2005:109).

unenlightened Westerners (through cultural bias, a false sense of superiority, and erroneous scientific statements); over-zealous missionaries; and conquering Black tribes. Although there is a slight dawning (light source falling on these figures from the left), much of the value of Bushman lore and culture has been lost forever not only to others, but to the contemporary Bushman themselves also, never to be retrieved in its entirety. The night, sand and rock-figures completely overpower the small building on the bottom right. This pointedly speaks of the small building's insignificance, its impermanence, and the 'smallness' of foresight by Western commercial enterprises. A Western materialistic and destructive attitude toward nature, compared to the Bushman's ecological attunement to the landscape in which they travelled and lived is vividly portrayed. When Kolmanskop was established at the end of the nineteenth century, the efforts on behalf of the Bushman by Bleek and Lloyd were ignored. When it was too late, and the Bushman was all but exterminated, and when Kolmanskop came to be abandoned at the end of the Second World War, then only did some archaeologists start to realise the value of Bushman paintings and engravings.

Of the three works discussed in the dissertation, *The Return III* is the most enigmatic, melancholy and strange, with its sense of a heightened reality. It has great simplicity which also gives it its power. Like the metaphorical engravings and paintings of the Bushman this etching can be read on several levels. Artistically it is a product of post-modernism in its perceived critique of Western attitudes of superiority to indigenous art. Through this work Skotnes acknowledges the recently reviewed national vision of the Bushman.

3.3 FOR //KUNN (1993)



Fig. 21: Pippa Skotnes, *For //Kunn* (1993). Etching and watercolours, 54x40.5cm. (Standard Bank Young Artist Award 1993 Pippa Skotnes catalogue:24).

In the print, *For //Kunn* (Fig. 21), the Bushman and their possessions are described. As an archaeologist, Skotnes has a deep interest in museum displays, as well as the storage and cataloguing of Bushman artefacts. Here she chooses to depict her perception of the possessions of Breakwater Bushmen in Bleek's care. After the series *Sound of thinking strings* (which has 17 etchings) in 1991, *The Dream* and her *White Wagon* series of 1992-3, Skotnes received the Standard Bank Young Artist Award and for this she produced a series of eight larger etchings displaying images of Bushman cultural possessions. This is

another phase in her exploration into Bushman material culture, for here we are offered views of the objects that they used. In these images there is a strong feeling of museum display, which in turn suggests a negation of the interpretive aspect of the art of looking. But these images also make concrete what is implicit: that the viewers' perception can never be neutral but is always informed by their culture.

3.3.1 An elegy

That the work is called *For //Kunn* expresses the elegiac quality of a dedication to someone dead and lost. It is a fitting and powerful commentary on the man //Kunn. He was a shaman, an old medicine man and rainmaker with the power to give or restrain the rain in the dry plains of the North-western Cape.

3.3.2 Bags

As part of the mythological view of the cosmos, even the artifacts hunter-gatherers use are imbued with meaning and power. In about half of these prints, Bushman bags are presented in imaginative ways: mostly depicted as if in a futuristic museum display case. The Bushman as a hunter-gatherer, continually on the move, needed and had few possessions. All their belongings were usually carried in a skin bag that was often decorated with ostrich-eggshell beads (and later glass beads), shells, feathers and other objects (see Figs. 22, 23, 24). In the case of the hunter the whole skin from a smaller antelope, usually a springbok was sewn together to form a bag. But the bag was considered to still have the power of the animal killed, and therefore presents an entirely different iconological meaning here. In addition, of all bags, the shaman's bag was

generally considered to be truly mysterious and potent. Not only did the shaman's bag retain all of the power of the live-form from which it was made, but it was said to move by itself and communicate thoughts – becoming a world in itself. Marshall states that the healer's bag was filled with 'a mixture of n/um plants and marrow or fat', and that these contents in combination with the healer's 'bag' had a potent power or n/um content (1999:56-7). In addition, Marshall (1999:57) says that "[w]hen the healer uses his tortoise shell⁶ in healing, he drops a glowing coal into the mixture. This produces a medicine smoke...[and] he may also touch his fingers to the substance in the shell and convey the benefit of the n/um by running his fingers over the person".



Fig. 22: A leather bag used by the !Kunn to carry everyday necessities such as knives, tobacco, etc. (Marshall 1999:230).

The bag is a physical metaphor for earthly possessions, because the Bushman carried all their possessions in one bag. Only one bag was needed, for in reality they possessed, used and shared the whole world around them with their neighbours, the animals, the spirits and the gods.

⁶ The healer's bag could also be in the form of a small tortoise shell, plugged at one end.

3.3.3 Museum displays of artifacts

Below are illustrations of how bags are displayed currently in museums, naturally all their intrinsic power is denuded and meaningless in a display. They are simply artifacts with historical value. The importance of who owned them, the fragility of the life of that person, their crucial role in performing their deeds in the spirit world become meaningless in the museum case.



Fig. 23: !Ku woman bag decorated with glass beads. Collected in Tsumkwe, Bushmanland, Namibia in 1975. Maker unknown. Photograph Paul Weinberg (Skotnes 1996(b):180).



Fig. 24: Bag made of buck or goat skin, acquired by Dorothea Bleek in c.1913, Gordonia. SAM Collection 1546 (Skotnes 1996(b):180)

3.3.4 //Kunn's bag

For //Kunn presents the viewer with the cultural possessions of //Kunn the rainmaker. These comprise his bag, three stones and the abode he now occupies in the desert. The dominant object present is the single shaman's bag with its connotations of mystery and magic. The bag has images of antelope (probably eland) around its rim. Over these are placed four stones or pieces of hide on which are symbols or pictograms of flags and/or ships with sails and flags. The latter are all symbols of European colonialism. During colonial days the annexation of what was perceived to be new territories in Africa was accomplished by the use of sailing boats, which all flew a flag announcing their country of origin. These are the images of Western cultures which Skotnes overlays on the shamanic bag. She etches these images so deeply that they remind one of the brand-marks for livestock. A brand-mark, just like the planting of a flag, proclaims the item as belonging to someone. There even seems to be a horseshoe attached to the bottom half of the bag, which equally signifies domestication, possession and taming. It can be inferred that all these superimposed images attest to the attempt of the colonists to domesticate the perceived Bushman rootlessness, wildness and primitiveness. On the right hand side there is also a nest of half circles, which does not at first glance seem to fit into the theme of domination and domestication. This might be interpreted as a depiction of the ripple or wave effect a ship has on the sea – a depiction also present in the upper left of the bag – where the ship and the ripple effect become one - an action that spreads until it reaches an edge. Here it is a metaphor for how the colonists dispersed over the whole land until there was no space for previous cultures.

However, Bert Woodhouse (1984:14) suggests the half circles represent beehives. Honey is a very important resource for hunter-gatherers. Stow (1905:86) reports that bees' nests were recognised as private property, and to steal from another man's honeycomb was a crime among the !Kung Bushmen, avenged by death. The honeycomb's colours played an important role in the colour of various buck.⁷ The significance of the bees' nest is enormous. When Bushman shamans entered trance they experienced a stinging sensation (like that of many beestings) all over their bodies⁸ as well as an auditory humming. As entering trance was said to be a 'death' or an entering into an alternate dimension to do battle with the gods and from which one might not return, the inclusion of this half circular-nest on the bag also has a Bushman meaning which is polysemic. The apparently simple horseshoe marks speak simultaneously about the pain and then death of the Bushman shaman and their people because of the unstoppable spreading of colonists in southern Africa, as well as telling about the cultural heritage which was lost to Western greed and exploitation.

3.4.5 Hands on the bag

The most dominant feature on this bag is the three handprints overlapping each other in the centre of this bag. They range from a full handprint, over a decorated handprint, which in turn overlaps a U-shaped entoptic handprint.⁹ All these types of handprint can

⁷ Dorothea Bleek recorded that the hartebeest is red because he ate the red comb of the young bees; the eland is dark because he ate dark wasp honey; but the gemsbok is white because he ate liquid honey. The colours of the springbok are accounted for by the fact that he ate the little white bees and their red cells together, whilst the colour of the quagga was related to that of the small bees' honey (Woodhouse 1984:15).

⁸ In trance, a common experience is a humming or buzzing sound: Bushman shamans equate this to swarming bees over honeycombs (Lewis-Williams 2002(b):153).

⁹ Once again this can be related back to the nest of half-circles discussed previously: the power of trance, the pain of entering trance and the entrance into trance itself. Lewis-Williams (2002:127) called these geometric forms seen in the first stage of trance *entoptics* (from the Greek: within-vision). These brightly coloured geometric forms manifest

be found on rock shelter walls in the Western Cape and the Waterberg rock shelters, and the latter type also on many rock-engraving sites. The plain ones were made by applying paint all over the hand, whilst the decorated ones had paint applied in bands or by scraping off curved lines looping across the palm of a fully painted hand. When first discovered it was thought that these handprints signified ownership or the artists' signature. It was then realised that the decorated prints recall the nested U-shape entopic phenomena of the first trance state, which infers that potency is associated with these prints. Ethnographers now understand that these handprints on rock walls were made with paint containing eland blood as a binder, which according to Bushman tradition has supernatural power. But even today, Bushman shamans are said by the laying on of hands, to be able to draw sickness out of a patient into their own bodies thereby facilitating healing. It seems probable that the placing of a hand 'full of eland power' can be considered to be akin to the painting of the eland, for both the hand of the shaman and the potency of the painted eland fixes power on these walls. This power allows the shaman by the touch of a hand to enter the spirit world that was said to lie behind the rock surface (Lewis-Williams & Blundell 1998:39-40; Lewis-Williams 1989:108).



Fig. 25: Handprints at Stompiesfontein, Western Cape (Woodhouse nd:42).

as dots, grids, zigzags, parallel lines, nested half-circles and meandering lines that pulse, flicker, enlarge, contract, blend and often rapidly change independently of any external light source.



Fig. 26: Nested U-shaped handprints in Eland Bay cave (Lewis-Williams & Blundell 1998:40).

Above are illustrations (Fig. 25 and 26) of what the original handprints look like. As can be seen from the depicted handprints (Fig. 25 and 26), Skotnes has made use of both in her etching *For //Kunn*. The handprints on the shaman's bag indicate his power and possession of potency, ability to enter the spirit world.

The medium used for the various colours in the rock paintings is still being contested.¹⁰ The presence of amino acids in the paint suggests antelope blood was mixed into the darker colours, whilst fat, urine and plant sap was used for the lighter colours. In Lewis-Williams's *Images of Power* (1999:19) he recounts Marion How's description of how Mapote in 1930 mixed paints and then painted an eland. For white paint Mapote used white clay and the juice of the milk weed plant (*Asclepia gibba*). Willcox (1973:46) similarly asserts that the binding medium for Bushman paint was melted fat, milk, blood,

¹⁰ Ochre or ferric oxide for red or orange paint; charcoal, soot and manganese for black paint; and a range of silica, clay and gypsum for white paint are suggested (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1999:18-19).

honey and urine, but he does not state what medium was used for which colours. As the binder for white in 'wall painting' was usually fat, and the binder for healing 'herbs' was also fat, it could be speculated that a white handprint on a rock wall indicated a Bushman shaman with healing abilities.

In this etching all original Bushman images¹¹ or //Kunn's individual Bushman identity are overlaid by settler icons. These added decorations on this bag therefore function as a palimpsest or an overlaying and denying of the original mystery of its use and contents.

3.3.6 The stones

There are three stones prominently placed for the viewer in front of the whole. The stone on the left contains a depiction of a Voortrekker wagon. The rounded flat stone in the middle has a hole in its centre with pictographs of birds on it, and is reminiscent of the round stone with a central hole in it that gathering Bushman women attach to their digging sticks. The stone on the right with pictures of antelope on it looks like a stone button because it has two holes in it. The inclusion of these stones could be read as a flight by the Bushman from the Boer settlers and their way of life. But they could also be seen to represent three circles or three civilizations set in stone, or three different modes of worldly perception. The world of the Westerner is represented on the left, embodied by the pictogram of a Voortekker wagon. There is no 'hole' in it – no Voortrekker used a digging stick, nor had an entrance into a Bushman-like dream or spirit world. The world of the Bushman, depicted by the antelope or springbuck on it, is represented on the right;

¹¹ These images also include the ostrich-egg beads, lower left on the bag, which now become merely decorations or incidental additions.

it has two ‘holes’ in it and therefore access into and out of their spirit world.¹² The stone in the middle has one ‘hole’ in it. According to Lewis-Williams and Dowson (1999:116-7) Bushman beliefs suggest that digging sticks like Bushman bags had special significance beyond everyday use – both standing for trance metaphors.¹³ When a /Xam woman wished to address shamans (whether alive or dead) she beat on the ground with the bored stone from her digging stick, which then allowed her to contact the supernatural world (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1999:117). The inclusion of bird pictures on this stone represents flight, a widespread symbol for dream or trance experience and even death - a sense of rising up and floating in an altered state of consciousness. The middle stone could therefore represent the flight of most Bushmen into the spirit world only, through death. As this stone also embodies Bushman women because of the digging stick association, it in addition becomes a symbol for the ‘use’ of and enslavement of Bushman women and children by both white and black settlers.

3.3.7 Skotnes engages the viewer by emphasizing loss

The bag hovers in the sky, virtually concealing the bleak landscape behind and below it. This is a desert landscape, with a darkening sky, suggesting rain to come. The tassels of the bag are placed over the image of the landscape and shacks, as if //Kunn is still trying to provide rain. But this is an ineffectual ‘dry’ rain, for his bag no longer belongs to him – it is now in an unchanging museum display, one that does not have any animals (or by their very absence, Bushmen in it), only shacks, desert sand and stones.

¹² Bushmen were springbuck before /Kaggen changed them into ‘people’ (Skotnes 1999:32).

¹³ Bushman women used digging sticks to dig up roots. Sometimes paintings show these sticks passing through a round form. These easily missed ‘blobs’ of paint represent bored stones that were used to weight the sticks (Lewis-Williams & Blundell 1998:12).

Skotnes in this series and in this particular etching (Fig. 21) made use of both Western and Bushman conventions of representation, conveying through her use of symbols the idea that the perception of a viewer can never be neutral, but will always be informed by their culture (Godby 1993:22). The Trek Boers are represented as if seen by the Bushman, and the objects of Bushman culture are in turn described in Western terms for Western eyes. The point and key to this etching is that she makes it clear that there are two worlds and two histories to be considered here. The artist also makes the viewer realise the immense richness contained within the Bushman world and culture. Through this she infers that any fragment that contains some evidence of cultural, religious or social activities of any of the people of southern Africa, if missing, obscures our sense of self and any investigation of us. The vital piece of the /Xam culture (here presented as a Bushman medicine man bag), can now only be reconstructed or recreated today through the writings left to us by Bleek and Lloyd.

3.4 SKOTNES'S 'SUCCESS'

By 1993, writers of various articles all describe Skotnes variously as a portrayer of 'the plunderer and the plundered' (Williamson 1989:24); as an artist who presents a 'strong sense of past and present history through the use of San and Western cultural aesthetics' (available at: [artists.html](#): accessed on 10/01/2007); a person who 'confronts various socio-political issues' (Rycroft 1996:31) thereby causing a post-modern shift in aesthetic art making; but also as an investigator of ethnicity rather than gender (Arnold 1996:134). In her foreword in the catalogue *In the wake of the White Wagons* (Skotnes 1993) for the Standard Bank National Arts Festival, Skotnes acknowledged the huge contribution Lucy

Lloyd made to ethnographic studies a hundred years ago by preserving the knowledge of a culture now extinct. It was from this heritage that she drew her inspiration for much of her creative work which culminated in the large colour prints of individual /Xam, of which Figure 21 is one.

Skotnes's interest in the archival material of Lucy Lloyd, led to her 1996 installation exhibition *Miscast - negotiating Khoisan history and material culture*. Its impact, both negative and positive, is still felt in museum circles today. This installation exhibition is extensively documented by Vanessa Rycroft (1996:43-51) in her dissertation *South African history painting: reinterpretation by women artists*; by a Khoisan representative Yvette Abrahams and Keyan Tomaselli who reports on the subsequent National Khoisan Consultative Conference; several museologists such as Shannon Jackson and Steven Robins (1999:69-101); as well as Elana Bregin (2001:87-107). One literary critic, Tony Morphet (1997:97) stated that Skotnes's "installation began to generate controversy long before it opened". This was because the British Museum of Natural History refused Skotnes permission to display or photograph their trophy heads.¹⁴ In addition 'Bushman' representatives, at a special forum, exchanged views that continued throughout the duration of the exhibition.¹⁵ During the exhibition opinions did not coincide fully within racial lines and were sharply divided: some considered the work a path-breaking endeavor, whilst others considered it counterproductive to the interests of the native

¹⁴ Most institutions approached by Skotnes gave unqualified access to their material and permission to reproduce images. However, the *British Museum of Natural History* decided to withhold images of human remains in its collection, which included a small group of dried heads. These heads are part of a collection of Khoisan heads and skulls described by George Williamson in 1857. They were trophy heads collected in military action or after executions. The museum did not wish to cause offense, yet asserted the rights of science to use them (Skotnes 1996:18-9).

¹⁵ Yvette Abrahams (1996:14) as a Khoisan representative, in her review found that the Khoisan was cast as an eternal victim, and what "Skotnes had done was to renew that dishonour in the present" (Rycroft 1996:54).

peoples.¹⁶ Negative critiques often centered upon her representations of body parts; the presumption of a white artist in representing brown people; the laying underfoot of images of the Bushman; and illegitimate appropriation by the artist herself and the ‘white elite’ in general (Morphet 1997:98). Morphet has no doubt that *Miscast* taps into white guilt and brown/black rage. But he also sees that Skotnes sought to construct a place where the guilt of the past could be named, recognised and overcome: a space where both guilt and rage could be released. Morphet states that the answer the exhibition should give its critics, especially those charging Skotnes with ‘othering’, is that “without the archive there can be no collective memory at all”, and that “all forms of collective memory can now be mediated through the formal archive of the established social power” (Morphet 1997:98). Even if the material in an archive is one-sided, offensive and representative of the views of some collectors at that time, it can nevertheless be much more informative than any misguided and simplistic exhibition of that time representing the Bushman.

3.4.1 Skotnes’s move away from graphic art

It is noteworthy that *Miscast* (the exhibition) contained not a single graphic work of art by Skotnes. Her intention of debunking the perception created in dioramas on the Bushman in museums caused her to make use of archival material on the Bushman only, however offensive. To this end she staged an ‘installation-art-work’ to drive home her message, for seeing this message portrayed in a couple of artistic prints would have lessened the impact she wanted to create. Skotnes confronted the viewer with the actual material

¹⁶ Rycroft (1996:64) considered that in *Miscast* “Skotnes challenges the borders of established history and presents a broader spectrum from which to interpret cultural interaction”.

‘evidence’, to which they had to react in one way or the other. It was this exact choice that made the exhibition so controversial. *Miscast* through archive appropriation did in fact break open many repressive interpretations of the past but also the present. One was the fact that as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission decided to restrict itself to the last three decades of apartheid, this exhibition redressed perceptions of an ANC privileging of African over Khoisan/Bushman suffering. Another positive outcome after Skotnes’s exhibition was the establishment of a Khoisan National Committee and the Khoisan Legacy Project.¹⁷ However, even so, the Bushman still remains the *Other* in public perception. This does not make up for the fact that there are also more non-government organisations helping the Bushman to adapt to market economy through self-help projects, skills workshops and the establishment of craft outlets. By exposing the public to her exhibition, Skotnes’s *Miscast* could be said to be the catalyst for the above outcomes.

3.5 HEAVEN’S THINGS (1999)

There seems to be a silence from Skotnes as far as exhibiting any new works after *Miscast*: only the publication of the little book *Heaven’s Things*.¹⁸ The incorporation of Bushman art into a Western art idiom as seen in the earlier prints of Skotnes has now been adapted further. This book, *Heaven’s Things*, separates text/fact from the illustration of a Bushman myth, the whole forming two separate manuscripts in one. The topmost booklet’s translated and condensed /Xam narrative is illustrated in watercolour by

¹⁷ It is gladdening to hear, on the TV just recently, that many Khoisan children are now also instructed in their own language.

¹⁸ Recently though there has been a publication, Skotnes and Mark Fleishman. 2002. *Stories of the wind: Representing time and space in San narratives*. Cape Town: LLAREC series.

Skotnes, using Bushman imagery, whilst underneath and around this booklet there are historical facts and other information on the Bushman. In this publication Skotnes uses the ideas presented in *Miscast* to create a book of art and history.

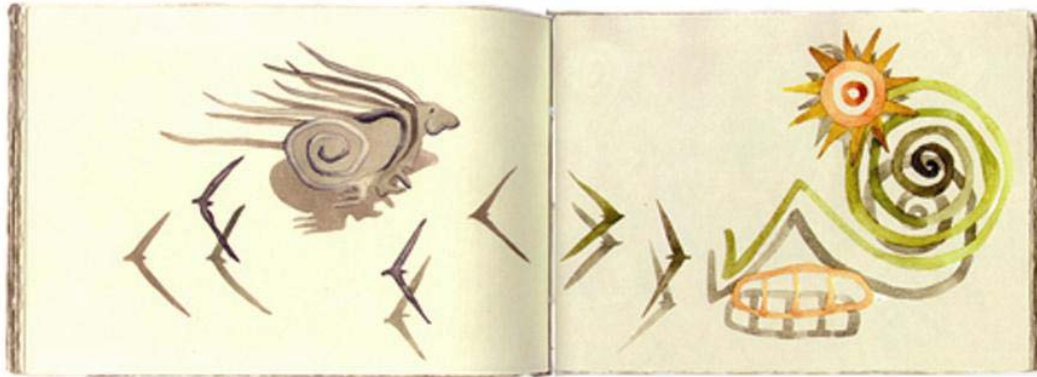


Fig. 27: Pippa Skotnes, *Heaven's Things* (1999). Watercolour on paper, illustration for an extract from the story of the Day Heart Star, top part of page 45-6.

This book, published in Cape Town by Axeage Press in 1999, contains extracts from the story of the Day-Heart-Star as told to Lucy Lloyd in 1873 by //Kabbo and recorded in her notebooks. Skotnes (1999:47) has the following to say about Lloyd's notebook recordings:

[w]hen I first read the Bleek and Lloyd archive and held in my hands the notebooks touched by Lloyd and Bleek, //Kabbo and /Han=kass'o, its strangeness and depth, its messages, both revelatory and mysterious, and stories from the nineteenth century took my breath away. These were the ideas of people who had been characterised as savages and missing links, faithless pagans who did not deserve the land on which they had been born. The distance between the beauty and the pathos of this collection of oral traditions, recorded in the words of the people who owned them, and the image constructed by the people who controlled their fate was so great that no knowledge of the former seemed to have leaked through to the latter. It is true that their extraordinary rock paintings, found in almost every region of the subcontinent, were occasionally admired, but even these seemed to have been largely evacuated of meaning with the death of the last painters, and they were, for the most, trivialised by ethnocentric interpretations.

Skotnes makes it clear that Bushman painting and archival museum artifacts can never do justice to the lost culture of the /Xam Bushman tribe – only the notebooks of Lucy Lloyd can give a glimpse of this. The story of the Dawn’s Heart as recorded in Lloyd’s notes is a dreamlike legend of epic length. Extracts in Skotnes’ publication form a mere fragment of the full narrative¹⁹ (Skotnes 1999:44).

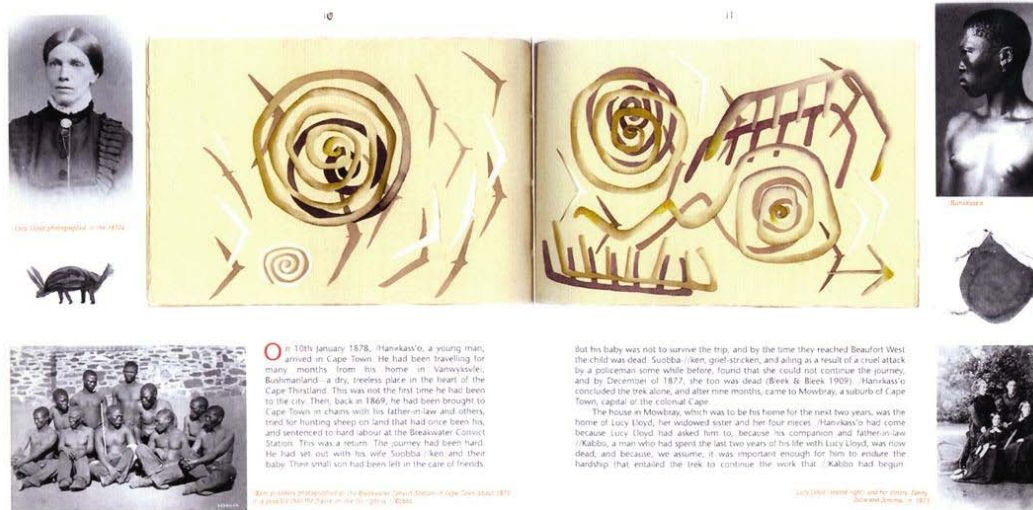


Fig. 28: Pippa Skotnes, *Heaven's Things* (1999). Reproduction of page 10-11.

Heaven's Things is 51 pages long and seems to be intended for visitors at a Bushman museum exhibit as a 'memento'. Skotnes does not only furnish illustrations for //Kabbo's story, but underneath and on the sides of this illustrated-story there is a concise Bushman history. It includes early settler drawings and photographs of Bushmen as well as their opinions of these 'little people'; Breakwater Bushman stories, poetry and images; facts

¹⁹ This myth contains major and minor incidents, and was given in a report on Bushman Researches to Parliament in 1875 by Wilhelm Bleek. It is the narrative given by Father Dawn's Heart to his daughter, which he calls My Heart, with additional speeches given by Hyena. Father Dawn's Heart (or the star/planet Jupiter) daily swallows his daughter (the star Regulus) and then walks as the Dawn's Heart Star. Mother Dawn's heart or Lynx has several brothers and a sister who carries her digging stick for her. One day Father Dawn's Heart hid his daughter under the leaves of an edible root, knowing that her mother would find her. But the birds and the animals found her first. They all vied to be her mother, but the child laughed at them, knowing that Lynx was her mother. Hyena felt insulted. She decided to bewitch Lynx by poisoning her Bushman rice (ants' eggs, a great delicacy), which turned Lynx into a lioness. In the darkness that night Hyena tried to take Lynx's place in the hut. Lynx's sister and husband foiled Hyena's plan, however. But Lynx from that day on only wanted to eat meat (Skotnes 1999:44-6).

about the Bleek and Lloyd families; and depictions of many Bushman memorabilia collected by various people. Pages 10-11 (Fig. 28) of this publication give a clear indication of the form of Skotnes's book within a book: both related, with texts underneath that are unambiguous to a Westerner, whilst the illustrated-Bushman 'poem' has a more layered meaning. It unveils a complex understanding of the Bushman universe with its connectedness between everything living and non-living. This abridged story, here presented in full, illustrates this sentiment²⁰:

13 Therefore we are stars – we must walk the sky for we are heaven's things. 14 Mother is earth's thing, she walks the earth, sleeping in the ground. 15 We are which must not sleep, for we walk around while we sleep not. 16 For we are stars that sleep not. 21 We who climb the sky that we may become the sky's things. I am the day's star, for my name is the Day-Heart. 22 Therefore I do not go by day that I may stand in the red sky. 23 I am like fire. 24 Thou dost resemble a fire's child, 25 for thou art my little heart. 27 Therefore the Bushmen say we are the Day hearts. 29 We who are stars, we must walk the sky. 31 We are sky's things. 33 Old father sun is he who will make warmth when the noon is dry. 35 He makes coldness in winter. 37 The people's feet are cold. He makes warmth when he makes noonday. 38 Old father moon is indeed cold, for dark's thing it is. 39 He indeed walks in darkness. He is cold, 41 for a veldschoen he is. 42 He is cold, 43 the darkness' veldschoen. 45 It makes light by night. He is cold, the Mantis' veldschoen is. 49 Therefore we are stars. We must walk the sky, 51 for we are heaven's things.

²⁰ The red numbers indicate the pages on which these story lines are produced in sepia tones.

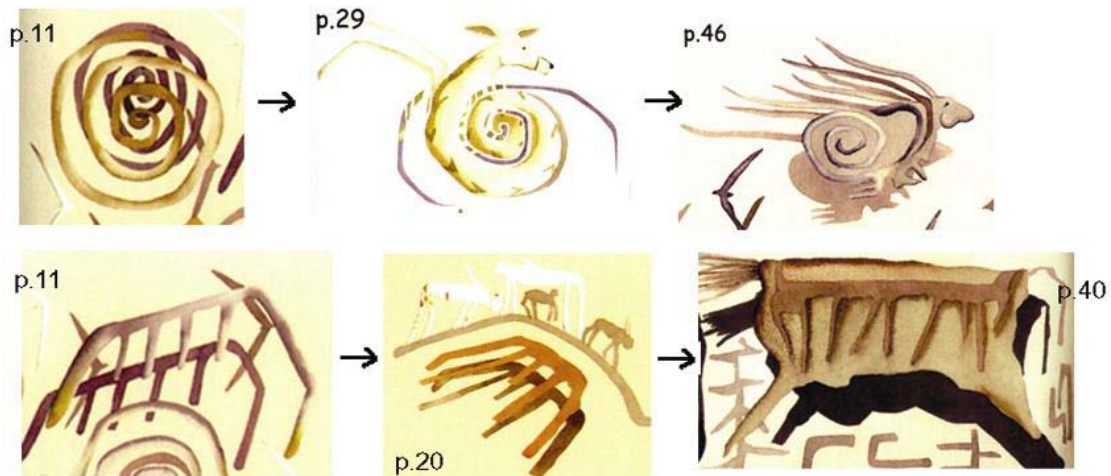


Fig. 29: Pippa Skotnes, *Heaven's Things* (1999). Watercolour, sizes not according to printed sizes, page numbers indicated. Illustration of entoptics becoming construals and then various iconics.

This verbatim worded text is how Lucy Lloyd recorded //Kabbo's mythological narration of the Bushman's understanding of the seasons, the stars, the sun and the moon. Much use is made by Skotnes of Bushman-like images, especially those found in the first stage of trance, or entoptics; of construals found in the second stage of trance; and iconics that are formed in the third and last stage of trance (Fig. 29).

Skotnes integrates both 'booklets' into a subtle whole. To understand how this is achieved in *Heaven's Things*, the whole book should be considered.

On many pages, such as pages 8-13 (Fig. 30), pages 30-31 (Fig. 32) and pages 44-51 (Fig. 34), there appear to be images of swallows in flight. To be able to link these watercolour illustrations of 'birds' to the historical text underneath it, the following accounts need to be considered. One source (Clottes 1998:26) states that some nineteenth century southern Bushman believed that shamans could control and actually become swallows when in

trance. However, Woodhouse (1984:101-3) maintains that these depictions are vultures. One Bushman myth has it that one of the vulture sisters married a man of the early race.



Fig. 30: Pippa Skotnes, *Heaven's Things* (1999). Reproduction of watercolour illustrations of the Day-Heart Star: 8-13.

Every time he brought home a springbok for his wife to prepare for his supper, her sisters would devour it first. Eventually they would follow him and consume any animal he shot before he could even take it home. If these are indeed vultures Skotnes is depicting, then these birds are used as metaphors for the demise of Bushman's tales and trancing: a devouring of their values and terrain. In these six pages (Fig. 30) there is a marked presence of birds, culminating in a large bird-vulture on page 12. On the page next to it, is the first line: 'Therefore we are stars'. Dia!kwain in 1875 explained to Lloyd that stars used to be people (Skotnes 1999:29; Bennun 2004:251), but it was also told that shamans could walk amongst the stars. Dia!kwain also said (1876) said that his mother had told him that a star resembles one's heart: "[t]he star at the time at which we die, at that which our heart does not breathe" (Skotnes 1999:33). The first line in the illustrated 'book' suggests a gathering of Bushman shamans to tell the tale of Dawn's Heart/ Heaven's

Things, but equally a death or a gathering of vultures after a kill. This is borne out by the historical text underneath which introduces the reader to the Bushman in the form of a poem by Dia!kwain, in which it is told how /Han≠kass'o after //Kabbo's death came to stay at Mowbray and why this was necessary.²¹ Skotnes links the illustration to a historical text by Lucy Lloyd to introduce the reader to the cultural richness of the /Xam Bushmen.

In the next fourteen pages (Fig. 31) there is an absence of birds. The historical texts in these pages contain a history describing the role all settlers played in the killing of many Bushman tribes.

In these pages (Fig. 31) of the booklet images are repeated over the page inverted (Fig. 31: pages 17-18, pages 19-20, pages 21-22 and pages 23-24). It is also noticeable that when the depicted figures are inverted they have no shadows.²² According to Verryn, Bushmen believed that the shadows of humans and animals are charged with power or 'spiritual life' (1982:18). The inverted depictions, having no shadows, indicate the diminished power of Bushman people. On pages 14-15 (Fig. 31) there is a large snake with a buck's head. This image is not uncommon in Bushman paintings and usually suggests a shaman (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1999:130), or in this case //Kabbo as the narrator and rainmaker. Snakes, through shedding their skins, and are symbols of

²¹ At the request of Lloyd, /Han≠kass'o travelled for many months, losing his wife and child on the way, to complete the work of //Kabbo, his father in law. The recording of Bushman tales and myth became crucial as the conflict between settlers and Bushmen did not favour the latter.

²² Only now, because of the insights provided by neuroscience about the body maps do we start to understand that there is a neurological reason for what was previously considered to be superstition. The human brain maps not only the body but it annexes the active space around the body as an extension (including shadows). This function of the brain is absolutely essential to orientate the body spatially (Blakeslee & Blakeslee 2007: 7-15).



Fig. 31: Pippa Skotnes, *Heaven's Things* (1999). Reproduction of watercolour illustrations of the Day-Heart Star: 14-27.

regeneration, as are 'rain-makers' to Mother Earth. But the narration states: "Mother is earth's thing, she walks the earth, sleeping in the ground." This suggests that here //Kabbo is talking about Mother Dawn's Heart in her form as Lynx. On page 15 the narration continues with: "We are which must not sleep, for we walk around while we sleep not". Biesele (1982:18) reports that for the Bushmen: "[o]nce you are dead and buried you walked the path of the !Khwe//na s'o !kwe, the people of the Early Race, to this great hole where you would live and walk around, while your heart went to the sky and became a star". //Kabbo here talks about the fact that Bushmen after death become stars that look after the living by being constantly vigilant. Skotnes, however, uses these inverted images without shadows as a representation of the massacre of the /Xam, which

the historical text underneath these watercolour illustrations exemplifies. On pages 23-26 (Fig. 31) unraveling of circles or spirals eventually combine with their shadows to form 'wheels' on either side of a buck-like figure on page 25, which on page 26 seems to become a wire-car around a theriantropic animal. As both of these spiral images suggest conveyances, it can be inferred that traveling to another world, dimension or death is implied. Here the historical text underneath describes the imprisonment of Bushmen at the Breakwater prison and the arrival of Bleek, a 'traveling' of both the Bushmen and Bleek towards each other. Throughout pages 14-27 the text accompanying the Day-Heart Star watercolour illustrations (Fig. 31) there are words such as *red sky*, *fire*, *fire's child* and *heart*, all suggesting heat or the idea that for the remaining Bushmen their 'world' was becoming hot and unlivable (the historical text underneath corroborates this fact).

As noted, the historical text on page 14 starts with the history of the various settlers over the last 2000 years. This is followed by the genocide of Bushmen in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries using an extract by Thomas Pringle that gives a graphic description of killings.²³ Under British rule in the eighteenth century this killing could not be stopped. As most of the game was hunted extensively, Louis Anthing suggested a Bushman reserve to parliament.²⁴ This was not realised. But the Border Protection Act

²³ Thomas Pringle (as described in Skotnes 1999:18) was an author and poet, who gave an account of an 'adventure' related to him by a Dutch colonist who had been out with a commando. This tale relates the indiscriminate slaughtering of Bushman men, women and children.

²⁴ Louis Anthing (in Skotnes 1999:18-21) was a magistrate of Namaqualand who wrote to the Cape Parliament after he was sent to investigate reports of extreme violence and lawlessness along the Orange river against the Bushman. He came to the conclusion that:

- a. The killing of Bushmen was not confined to the punishing after stock theft occurred.
- b. Bushmen were killed without provocation by hunting commando parties.
- c. That wild game was becoming increasingly scarce and almost inaccessible to the Bushman hunting with bow and arrow. Ostrich eggs, honey, seeds and roots were also scarce due to the invasion of the colonists. The Bushmen were therefore dying of hunger.
- d. Bushmen in servitude were treated harshly and given insufficient supplies of food.
- e. All these factors causing the Bushmen to return to the 'bush' and resorting to stock theft.

was, resulting in the /Xam and Korana War of 1868. The last four historical pages (pages 24-27) relate how Bushmen and Saartjie Baardman were exhibited in Europe and the fascination displayed by scholars about Bushman anatomy.²⁵ But the final paragraph of page 27, introduces the reader to Wilhelm Bleek, a German scholar of linguistics who came to Natal with Bishop Colenso: the writing in the illustrated booklet equally alludes to the coming work by Bleek with the Bushmen, but also to the fact that up to that time the only people holding the tribes together were their shamans of whom //Kabbo was one.²⁶



Fig. 32: Pippa Skotnes, *Heaven's Things* (1999). Reproduction of watercolour illustrations of the Day-Heart Star: 28-31.

The images in the illustrated booklet on page 28 (Fig. 32) are graphic metaphors for the sun rising and setting behind the mountains, or the beginning of the demise of the Bushmen. The star-buck next to it (page 29), unfolding, implies a sense of duty by Bushmen or //Kabbo to speak about themselves. Yet on pages 30-31 (Fig. 32) the 'buck' is rolling up again and becomes a fixed aspect in the form of a star in the night sky – Dawn's Heart is 'sky's things', but so are many Bushmen.

²⁵ Their fascination led to the taking of body plaster casts and photography of naked Bushmen holding measuring sticks. This includes an obsession with the women's labia and the collection of trophy heads. All in stark contrast to the texts in red on the side of the book (Skotnes 1999: 24-5) by //Kabbo about the Lion star, the Sun, moon and stars, and The great star !gaunu, which singing, named the stars by Dia!kwain.

²⁶ 'Therefore the Bushmen say we are the Day Hearts'.

The historical text of pages 28-31 contains photos of Bleek's Mowbray home, where he (Skotnes 1982:18) wrote in 1875, just before his death: "[we could] preserve, not merely a few 'sticks and stones, skulls and bone' as relics of the aboriginal races of this country, but also something of that which is most characteristic of their humanity, and therefore most valuable – their mind, their thoughts and ideas". Skotnes (1982:18), reflecting on Lucy Lloyd's 13,000 pages, comes to the conclusion that "[i]t speaks with melancholy eloquence of the culture and lifestyle that was feverishly being annihilated, and of the intellectual traditions the /Xam held dear ... it locates these traditions within the landscape, and it shows how the taking away of the land and its resources meant the destruction of the people themselves". These four pages also make the reader aware of the range of the Bleek and Lloyd archive, by including little snippets of text in red on the sides: an extract on Mantis by /Han≠kass'o (1878), on Stars and flowers by Dia!kwain (1875), and a phrase by //Kabbo on the promise of Bleek to supply him with a gun. The illustrations and the historical texts of pages 28-31 both point to a coming together of Western (Bleek and Lloyd) and Bushman people in a preservation attempt.

A prominently displayed sun on page 32 (Fig. 33) of the illustrated booklet is copied in the writing on page 33 with a downward direction, like rays of a sun, or death inflicted from afar or above. These images seem to represent dryness and draught. But this depiction of a 'sun' could also represent a wheel (with spikes; or Voortrekker wagon wheels) and therefore death, invasion, the [r]evolving of the Bushman way of life and the unstoppable moving forward of time. Bennun (2004:305) observed that the /Xam people's conflated time, place and landscape defined their culture. Their massacre by settlers was an attack of a spiritual kind. All subsequent imagery such as

seeds²⁷, skeletal birdmen²⁸, bare trees²⁹, buckskin³⁰, shoe³¹ and the writing about cold, darkness and winter attest to a metaphysical onslaught and decline.



Fig. 33: Pippa Skotnes, *Heaven's Things* (1999). Reproduction of watercolour illustrations of the Day-Heart Star: 32-43.

The historical text underneath and to the sides of pages 32-43 talks about the myth that Bushmen were springbuck in the early time; the broken strings that no longer vibrate; the creation story by //Kabbo; how /Kaggen created the moon from an old bent shoe; and many additional Bushman tales.³² The story of the Dawn's Heart on which Skotnes's

²⁷ The seeds on pages 34, 35, 39, 41 and 42 are presented opened and exposed or merely floating on the page – this could indicate no or poor germination of these seeds.

²⁸ These skeletal birdmen could represent poorly functional shamans unable to 'fly'.

²⁹ The bare trees could stand for a stripping away of Bushman food supplies: in the form of plant as well as animal resources.

³⁰ On page 40 there is a seed, a buck-skin and Bushman icons. All are presented next to page 41, which depicts bare trees perhaps suggesting the demise of buck, edible veld food and the Bushman.

³¹ This shoe on page 43 is called a 'veldschoen' in the accompanying text. A shoe /Kaggen threw into the air became the moon: no sunlight and no germination.

³² The Bushmen saw everything as interconnected: voices to speak the stories and people to perform them were all important. //Kabbo at this time felt that there were now too few people left to perform this task (Skotnes 1999:37).

shortened *Day-Heart Star* is based is found on pages 45-47 - almost at the end of this booklet - which means that the reader needs to return to the beginning of the book to fully understand her watercolour illustrations. Skotnes also makes the reader aware that the tales that Lucy Lloyd recorded were not narrated to her in a linear or chronological order. Most of these mythical tales were presented as a complex network of interweaving ideas and linking stories. This type of presentation for rational, scientific Westerners gives a different sense of Bushman lived reality. Their landscape is peopled with spirits and shamans and every part of it is filled with significance. For: “[t]he wind cried for the dead whose corpses filled the hollow of the new moon”. According to Bushman beliefs each person had their own wind, and when they died, that wind would rise and blow away their footprints, leaving no trace of them on earth (Skotnes 1999:40).

These twelve pages (Fig. 33) in addition also show the rising of the ‘sun’ and the moving forward of and delivering of Bushman knowledge and lore by both //Kabbo and Bleek and Lloyd. This is depicted as the giving and planting of seeds of knowledge even though night has arrived. A whole skin or shoe full of folklore, creation stories, tales of the early people, Bushmen who as animals exhibited patterns of behavior which alluded to a sharing lore, first hunt rituals and rites of passage, rain and much more. Another insight into the complexity and interconnectedness of all human beings can be seen when author Jill Purce (1992:115 & 7) suggests that spirals, here present in the ‘sun’ on page 32 (and quite often on other pages), represent the “development of structured consciousness” but also “eternity, since it may go on for ever”. This also points to the interrelation and links Skotnes accomplished in *Heaven’s Things*.



Fig. 34: Pippa Skotnes, *Heaven's Things* (1999). Reproduction of watercolour illustrations of the Day-Heart Star: 44-51.

The last eight pages in the illustrated booklet (Fig. 34) show the return of images of birds in the book. The wording: “It makes light by night” and the subsequent depictions by Skotnes suggest that //Kabbo’s task to leave behind a ‘Rosetta stone’ (page 48, or digging-stick stone) of knowledge of the Bushman has been achieved. However, the last pages contain almost no illustrations – implying loss and the demise of most /Xam Bushmen.

The historical text on pages 44-51 starts with the fact that Bleek gave a shortened version of //Kabbo’s narrative of Dawn’s Heart in his Second Report on Bushman Researches to Parliament in 1875. The last pages have photos of remaining /Xam in Western clothing living in squalor in 1910. Bleek’s daughter, Dorothea found that they had lost their cultural heritage. Lucy Lloyd continued Bleek’s work after his death in 1875. But publishing proved to be very difficult.³³ In addition these notebooks disappeared when

³³ A sad fact, for //Kabbo told Lloyd that he would dearly love the narratives he presented to her to be published. However, Lloyd’s attempts were slighted for almost a hundred years.

Bleek's personal library was donated to the University of Cape Town in 1948.³⁴ Skotnes in the final sentence in the text asks if /Han=kass'o's sacrifice of his wife and child was worth it to bring /Xam knowledge to Bleek and Lloyd. She ends with the following words: "[u]ntil their names and the stories they told are familiar to all South Africans, we will not know how great was their sacrifice, nor how deep their loss". These last lines clearly express her intimate involvement with her own Bushman cause. Once again it confirms Skotnes's commitment to the plight of the Bushman through the medium of her art (in print form) and her archaeological knowledge to change set ideas of museum displays by its curators as well as enlightening the public frequenting these. What is remarkable is that Skotnes in *Heaven's Things* succeeds in integrating historical text and a watercolour illustration of an extract of the Day-Heart Star (as told by a Bushman) into a whole – the one complementing the other on a subliminal level.

Colours traditionally used by Bushmen in their rock paintings and engravings are used throughout in these watercolour illustrations. In *Heaven's Things* the only technique that indicates a Western influence in these watercolours is the use of shadows thrown behind each image. The effect created is a surreal three-dimensional one.³⁵ It is almost as if Skotnes is lifting these images off the page. She therefore virtually 'throws' Bushman images at the reader in an attempt to attract their attention. Because the printed English words of //Kabbo do not have shadows, it can be said that the artist wants the reader to understand that only these words are real and nothing else. To emphasize this fact she illustrates the story with Westernised Bushman images (making it more accessible to

³⁴ In the early 1970s Roger Hewitt applied to the librarian at the university for permission to study the Bleek and Lloyd notebooks. The librarian replied that they had probably been destroyed. Hewitt persisted and eventually came across a reference to small notebooks in storage. All 118 notebooks were found (Bennun 2004:338).

³⁵ But equally this might illustrate an absent Bushman 'spiritual life'.

them), for the Bushman would never have illustrated this story or painted it on their rock walls. The 'old fashioned' English translation by Lucy Lloyd, which may not be quite understandable today, as well as the otherworldliness of the Bushman tale of the Day-Heart Star (which is in itself enigmatic), adds an additional dimension. At the same time she simply and succinctly states facts about the Bushmen, presents samples of their views on life, making it plain how rich their culture was. The use of an illustrated-book within a text-book, the latter presenting an extract of a lengthy saga by a Bushman, means that the former is perhaps meant as a lure to the layman to further investigate and read about this subject. Only then does it become plain how integrated these 'books' really are.

Bushman imagery has been used as an instructive and informative tool in all of Skotnes' works. The images have been westernised to draw the attention of her public to the plight of the Bushman. The core of her art is a meditation on the predicament of a dying culture that can never be revitalized. This booklet can be seen as an attempt by Skotnes to bring these facts home to a visitor of Bushman dioramas. *Heaven's Things* becomes a minute but concentrated form of the huge catalogue or book published for her exhibition *Miscast* in 1996.

3.6 LAMB OF GOD (2004-5)

The incorporation of Bushman art into a Western idiom as seen in the early prints of Skotnes has almost been abandoned in later work. Her success enlightening the museum exhibitors and the public thanks to the earlier works, has enabled her to amplify her work. That her exhibition-installation *Lamb of God* was first staged out of South Africa is important. This suggests that she wants to inform another public about her views. This

exhibition (January 2005) in Norway at the Kulturhistorisk Museum is a combination of /Xam narratives and works representing Catholicism.

In *Heaven's Things*, there is a separation of text or fact from imagery or illustration. The latter, however, is neither purely Bushman nor Western 'art'. Even so, Skotnes has moved into the realm of installation art with her *Lamb of God* (2004-5). In this installation by presenting the language of the /Xam on the horse bones she has safeguarded herself against an accusation of othering and moved instead into the world of anthropological hermeneutical semiotics.

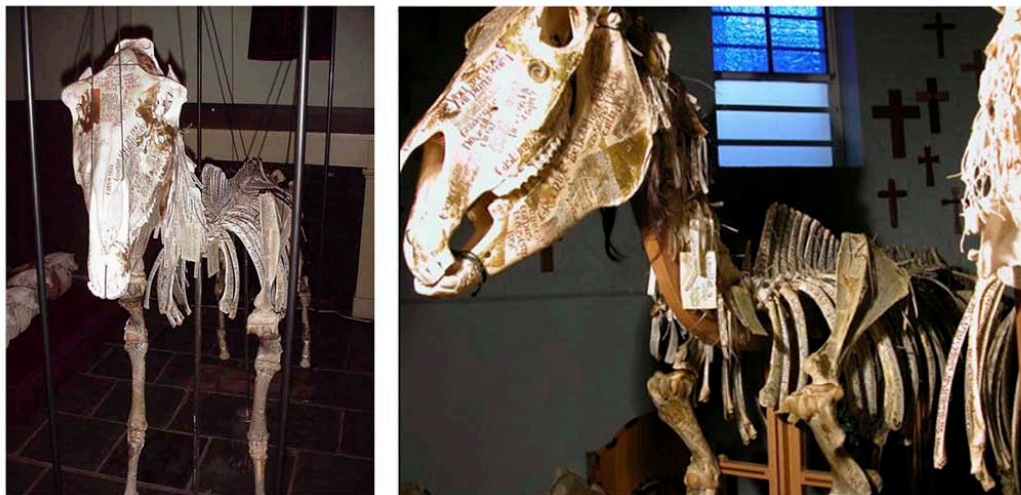


Fig. 35: Pippa Skotnes, *Lamb of God* (2004-5). Installation, Two aspects of carthorse skeletons (available at www.artthrob.co.za/05jan/listings_intl.html).

In *Heaven's Things*, there is a separation of text or fact from imagery or illustration. The latter, however, is neither purely Bushman nor Western 'art'. Even so, Skotnes has moved into the realm of installation art with her *Lamb of God* (2004-5). In this installation by presenting the language of the /Xam on the horse bones she has safeguarded herself against an accusation of othering and moved instead into the world of anthropological hermeneutical semiotics.

Striking aspects of this installation are the horse skeletons, turned into ‘books’: their surfaces covered in writing, gilding and there are additions of writing on vellum pages and other precious materials. The texts used are in /Xam, which Skotnes obtained from the Bleek and Lloyd archives. This puts an emphasis on the theme of translation.

Translation is now identified as critical to theorisations of transnationality as it asks under what circumstances texts, concepts and objects can be seen as “equivalent and translatable or incommensurate and untranslatable”. Horse skeletons and archives are here likened to cemeteries, both places where fragments of lives, pieces of time, shadows and relics are preserved. But in archives fragments may be resurrected and brought back to life, depending on the curators who administer them. This theme of resurrection is furthered by Skotnes in the use of repeated images of early twentieth century priests³⁶ several of whom hold out a Eucharist wafer.³⁷ These figures seem to represent the christianisation of indigenous people and the subsequent betrayal of their own culture for one which in no way gave them resurrection, comfort or redemption. To be able to convert people the priests had to learn the language of indigenous people. Skotnes, in her inaugural lecture, entitled *Real Presence* explored the idea of the Eucharist wafer signifying ‘flesh’ and resurrection. Resurrection here stands for a ‘recreation’, but never for a true return to a previous status quo.

3.7 CONCLUSION

Although the demise of the Bushman was the result of a deep cultural divide that existed between them and migrating Bantu tribes, the Cape colonists and colonialists, were as

³⁶ These are all images of friends, family and students dressed in priestly attire.

³⁷ The Eucharist wafer represents the Host or body of Christ.

much to blame. Issues about land ownership in the context of the pastoralists and hunters are part of a wider phenomenon in Africa, as Smith (1992) points out. But in Southern Africa, that there were people such as Thomas Pringle, Louis Anting and Wilhelm Bleek and his sister-in-law, Lucy Lloyd, among others, who spoke out against the Bushman genocide in the wake of land acquisition, is to their credit, but in the end proved to be too little too late. Today researchers and scholars on Bushman culture can only ‘venerate the bones of Bushman paintings and engravings’, as Skotnes’s carthorses suggest in *Lamb of God*. These ‘bones’ may even be resurrected, but will never truly be what they were before colonial appropriation.

CONCLUSION

This chapter concludes the dissertation on the exegesis of the three chosen works of Skotnes, namely, *The Return III* (1988), *For //Kunn* (1993) and *Heaven's Things* (1999). The purpose of the analysis was to show that Skotnes had appropriated the Bushman mythology, icons, history and sense of place in the world without trivializing them. A sense of nostalgia pervades her works. The study tried to amplify what she had adumbrated in her 1994 paper, *The visual as a site of meaning. San parietal painting and the experience of Modern Art*. This appropriation is in stark contrast to the way the commercial world has appropriated the same Bushman iconology. In *The Return* of 1988 Skotnes confronts the observer with the patent truth that Bushman spirituality and their world-view is a thing of the past. There have been attempts to restore their former value systems – Kolmanskop, for instance, is now revived as a tourist attraction.¹ However, as soon as the value system underlying the shamanistic practices of the people who made the original paintings and rock engravings has been eroded, none of the contemporary Bushman art can speak with the same force. Skotnes' indignation is aimed at the narrowing of the scope of our morality in relation to the lost Bushman world and to the vulgarizing, trivializing and commodification of the arts and crafts of contemporary Bushmen. As Mary Midgley (2001:219), the contemporary moral philosopher, says, “[c]an it really be true (we ask) that we have duties to people so distant from us, people belonging to quite other communities? Can we still more strangely, have duties to the non-human world?” Skotnes thinks so, and her works “widen the scope of morality” (Midgley 2001:219), rather than narrow it.

¹ Both Bushman cultural sites (such as the numerous rock paintings and engravings) and way of life, as well as colonial places of interest have become some of southern Africa's most compelling tourist attractions.

It was shown that the earliest appropriations of 'primitive' art in the twentieth century were marked by a lack of understanding of the people who made the art, and the attitude to their world view, characterized by the old Euro-centric stereotypes, was only overturned in the late 1980s. Faced with a view of the spiritual world which is more like that of our palaeolithic ancestors, most Europeans (settlers included) believed that their own self-interest should come first as the Enlightenment philosophers had taught. A worldview that took into account duties and obligations to supernatural beings was not about to be taken up again. Sympathy with a worldview which had been so difficult to eradicate over the last two thousand years of Western history did not make a lot of sense to the earliest twentieth century. In an atmosphere where there was a desperate desire to 'civilize' from some quarters, and from others a colonial greed for possession of the lands inhabited by indigenous people, in South Africa, the Bushman genocide largely passed unnoticed.

Skotnes (1994:315) has enabled the public to attempt to interpret the Bushman reality, which is quite different to the commercial, contemporary Western idea of what the 'environment' means, through her paintings. The 'spirit realm', a place, which interpenetrates the physical world, referred to in the Bushman art, is what Skotnes attempts to make palpable in her works. The description of the intrusion of Western reality on the Bushmen, by the disruption of the Bushman concept of what reality is, through the appropriation of their land, their freedom to hunt and gather and their egalitarian society, and their deep respect for the land, is poignantly revealed in *For //Kunn*. The juxtaposition of Western conceptions of reality and the Bushman sense of reality (*Heaven's Things*) that are represented simultaneously to the viewer to mark the distance between the two views, invites comparison. The question Mithen (2003:510) raises, although in

the context of global degradation, “[w]ould it have been better if we had remained as Stone Age hunter-gatherers forsaking the development of literature and science”, is pertinent here.

However, an important part of the exercise has been to reveal how her hypothesis (1994: 318-320) about the compositional aspects of the Bushman paintings she has seen, exemplify the fact that the *site* of the painting supports its meaning, the site affects the orientation which the viewer takes in relation to the painting, and finally the site is chosen to reveal the interpenetrability of the world of the viewer and the world of the painting. This conception of the site of a painting, rather than its technical aspects, or its aesthetics, as the most important assumption to understand about the artwork is a profoundly different way of approaching the Bushman works, as artworks, that there seems to be no one subsequent to Skotnes who has developed the idea. That is despite many landscape artists working in South Africa.

In her presentation of the myths, cosmology and history of the Bushmen, Skotnes has ensured that the lessons from the art of the lost culture are taken to heart. The sites of her works within the larger body of fine art on display for a public and executed with refinement and a sensibility marks the material as valuable and worthy of attention. She links together her feeling as an ethnographer/archaeologist and an artist to provide materials which are accessible to the public without demeaning the makers of the original art or their tragic history. By directly using the names of the lost narrators in the titles of some of her prints she ensures a directness of address to her viewing public. The allusions are denigratory but aim at a direct appeal to the onlooker who feels sympathy for a person with a name and a history. Efforts to document genocides in other parts of the world rely on the same tactics.

The sense that some of her paintings convey of floating and perspectives which are unconventional is another of the features of her understanding of the actions of the shamans in their spiritual worlds. She attempts to draw the onlooker into the cosmological view of the Bushmen. The shamans can travel weightlessly, can become the animals they hunt and revere and they have a close connection with the environment in which they live. The shamanic bag which is magical and encloses all sorts of regenerative possibilities and medicine for healing and killing is a richly developed motif. Skotnes emphasizes the container which is in itself a humble bag, but which has power and significance through the belief and convictions of the users and owners of the bag. The range of perspectives from vertiginous distance to the close-up of the bag is what Skotnes has used to enable her viewers to understand the importance of the orientation of the viewer to the work of art.

Her final point about the interpenetrability of the viewer's world and the work of art in the way that the Bushman paintings were made is not translated literally in her works, it is rather a metaphorical experience. Necessarily, Skotnes' works were displayed in art galleries for viewers who chose to visit them. The late twentieth century Western public is not renowned for its interest in art. But for a South African audience brought up on colonial histories of the trek and ox wagons and the idea of the *indigeni* as other than themselves, Skotnes has successfully yoked together the completely different view of the hunter-gatherers and the colonists. In that sense there is an interpenetration of the world view and the artwork.

More general conclusions from this study show that there has been no development in the use of the insights into the Bushman art which Skotnes announced in 1994. The general appropriation of Bushman art motifs and iconology remains superficial and popular in the tourist trade. Despite

the multiculturalism of the South African scene, there are no signs that the genocide of the Bushmen is recognized, that their art is a cultural treasure on a par with other parietal art in the world, or that interpreters like Skotnes should be more widely recognized for their efforts to bridge the gap from the Paleolithic worldview to the modern one.

Her work has resulted in a reform in the way museum displays about the past are set up. Her artworks achieved a publicity which was in tune with ideas circulating about the need to review museum display practice. In the series of eight colour prints which includes *For //Kunn* (1993) Bleek and Lloyd's Breakwater Bushmen are presented as museum objects. The Bushmen that came to stay at Bleek's Mowbray home were /A!kunta, //Kabbo, Dia!kwain, ≠Kasin, !Kweiten ta/ken and later /Han≠kass'o. The latter and //Kabbo were the main contributors to Lloyd's documents. Tales of //Kunn through /Han≠kasso, his grandfather on his mother's side, thus came to be recorded.² Bringing attention to the people in the displays not as objects but humans has been a powerful force for change in museum practice. *Miscast* of 1996 (with its catalogue of more than 350 pages) also impacted on South African museum practice.

Skotnes' privately owned Axeage Press has helped to disseminate her ideas about Bushman art, the need for its preservation and understanding and she has made available an innovative way of appropriating the Bushman art. *Heaven's Things* published in 1999 is a fine example of the effort.

² Janette Deacon, 1996. *A tale of two families: Wilhelm Bleek, Lucy Lloyd and the /Xam San of the Northern Cape*. And in Skotnes's, 1996. *Miscast. Negotiating the presence of the Bushman*. All of these documents were brought together in Skotnes's latest publication, 2007. *Claim to the country. The archive of Lucy Lloyd and Wilhelm Bleek* (Appendix 2).

The subject chosen for this dissertation may not be topical when compared to the subjects reviewed at Art Historical conferences, however, when a whole cultural 'art' methodology is wiped out it should be topical. In the context of the twentieth and twenty first centuries, regularly labeled as the centuries with the worst Human Rights transgressions history, on a hitherto unknown scale, the Bushman genocide deserves some mention. The metaphysical art of the Bushman, like the art of our Paleolithic ancestors, can speak to modern people about a view of the environment/earth which resists globalization, commercial degradation and some of the other ills of exploitation.

Appendix 1



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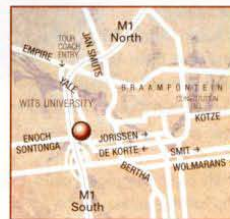
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We are who we are because of who we were

Appendix 2

2007/06/20

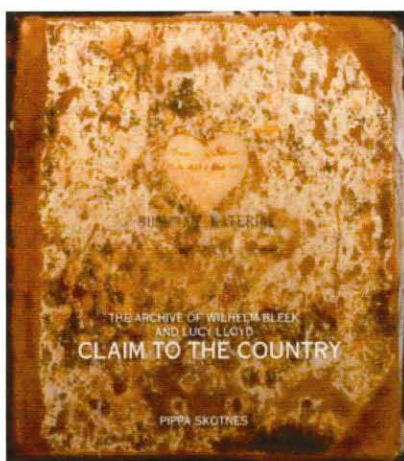
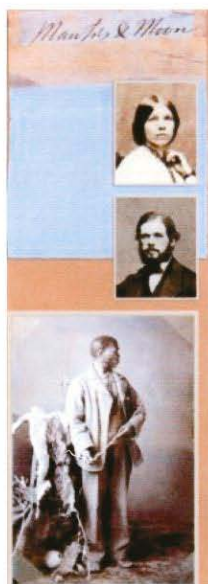
Invitation to book launch for Mr Brian Groenewald

Exclusive Books and Jacana Media invite you to the launch of

CLAIM TO THE COUNTRY THE ARCHIVE OF LUCY LLOYD AND WILHELM BLEEK

By

Pippa Skotnes



About the Book

Claim to the Country, created, compiled and introduced by Pippa Skotnes, publishes for the first time a collection of San stories, told to two pioneering 19th century scholars in the Cape, Wilhelm Bleek and Lucy Lloyd.

These San narratives were about the land, the rain, the history of the first people, the origin of the moon and stars. They told stories of their beliefs and their individual lives. They described how stories floated on the wind. They told how they had come to Cape Town as prisoners of the British Crown. All these narratives were faithfully recorded and translated by Bleek and Lloyd, creating an archive of over 13 000 pages which includes drawings, notebooks, maps and photographs.

About the Author

Pippa Skotnes was educated at the University of Cape Town, where she is now Professor of Fine Art and Director of the Lucy Lloyd Archive, Resource and Exhibition Centre (LLAREC). She studied both fine art and archaeology and has published essays on the rock art of the San. She is the author and editor of several books, including *Sound from the Thinking Strings* (1991); *Miscast: Negotiating the Presence of the Bushmen* (1996), which accompanied a major exhibition on the colonial history of the San at the South African National Gallery; and *Heaven's Things* (1999).



v

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