

Site-specificity in *The Educator's New Clothes* by Mark Rautenbach

by

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Declaration

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Master of Visual Art

SITE-SPECIFICITY IN *THE EDUCATOR'S NEW CLOTHES* BY MARK RAUTENBACH

I declare that the above dissertation 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.

I further declare that I submitted the dissertation to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.



22 December 2019

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To all my friends, for their continuous interest in my studies, I thank you.

Without the strength from my Creator, this study wouldn't be possible.

Title:

SITE-SPECIFICITY IN *THE EDUCATOR'S NEW CLOTHES* BY MARK RAUTENBACH

SUMMARY:

This study is an enquiry into how *The Educator's New Clothes* by Mark Rautenbach is an example of site-specific art. The aim is to demonstrate how boundaries in *TENC* become blurred between site-specific performance, other art forms, and every-day activities. The key concepts explored are: Rautenbach's approach to the concept of site, the connections that develop between his performance and each site that he travels to; his use of the art gallery and viewer participation. Through literature study relevant theory is explored, and several arguments are applied in a selective manner to my analysis of *TENC*. Various International and South African site-specific artworks are discussed as an indication of how site-specificity can be applied in alternative ways. In October 2017 I installed *GREENER?*, a site-specific exhibition in the UNISA Art gallery. The works on the show underline the theoretical findings and highlight the flexible application of theory relating to site-specificity.

List of key terms:

Site-specific art; Performance art; Public art; Viewer participation; Everyday life contexts; Mark Rautenbach; *The Educator's New Clothes*; Exhibiting site-specific art; Art commenting on education; Connection between art and site; Installation art; Daydreaming; Utopia.

Thaetlele:

MEŠOMO YA BOKGABO YA KA LEFELONG LE ITŠEGO KA GO BOKGABO BJO BO BITŠWAGO *THE EDUCATOR'S NEW CLOTHES* KA MARK RAUTENBACH

KAKARETŠO

Dinyakišišo tše ke phatišišo mabapi le seo se dirago bokgabo bja *The Educator's New Clothes (TENC)* ka Mark Rautenbach go ba mohlala wa bokgabo bja lefelong le itšego. Maikemišetšo ke go laetša ka fao ka go *TENC* mellwane magareng ga mošomo wa ka lefelong le mehuta ye mengwe ya bokgabo le mediro ya ka mehla di thomago go se sa bonagala gabotse. Mareo ao a šomišwago ke: mokgwa wa Rautenbach go kgopolo ya lefelo, dikgokagano tše di hlamegago magareng ga phethagatšo ya ya gagwe ya mošomo le lefelo le lengwe le le lengwe leo a yago go lona, tšhomišo ya gagwe ya kalari ya tša bokgabo le go kgatha tema ga babogedi. Ka go diriša dingwalwa teori ya maleba e a utollwa, gomme dintlha tše mmalwa di a dirišwa ka mokgwa wa go kgetha go tshekatsheko ya ka ya *TENC*. Mešomo ya bokgabo ya ka lefelong le itšego ya mehutahuta e a ahlaahlwa bjalo ka kutollo ya ka fao bokgabo bja ka mafelong bo ka dirišwago ka ditsela tše dingwe. Ka Oktoboro 2017 ke hlomile *GREENER?*, e lego pontšho ya bokgabo ya ka lefelong le itšego, ka Kalaring ya Bokgabo ya ka Unisa. Mešomo ye e bontšhitšwego e laeditše dikutollo tša teori le go laetša tirišo ye e fetogago ya teori mabapi le mešomo ya bokgabo ya ka lefelong le itšego.

Lenaneo la mareo:

Bokgabo bja ka lefelong le itšego; Bokgabo bja tiragatšo; Bokgabo bja setšhaba; Go kgatha tema ga babogedi; Kamano ya bophelo bja ka mehla; Mark Rautenbach; *The Educator's New Clothes*; Go bontšha bokgabo bja

ka lefelong le itšego; Bokgabo bjo bo swayaswayago tša thuto; Kgokagano
magareng ga bokgabo le lefelo; Bokgabo bja tlhomo; Go lora; Yutopia.

Titel:

**PLEKSPESIFISITEIT IN *THE EDUCATOR'S NEW CLOTHES* DEUR
MARK RAUTENBACH**

OPSOMMING:

Hierdie studie behels 'n ondersoek na wat van *The Educator's New Clothes* (*TENC*) deur Mark Rautenbach plekspesifieke kuns maak. Die oogmerk is om aan te toon hoe die grense tussen plekspesifieke uitvoering, ander kunsvorme en daaglikse bedrywighede vervaag. Die kernkonsepte wat verken word, is Rautenbach se beskouing van die konsep van plek, die verband tussen sy uitvoering en elke plek waarheen hy reis, sy aanwending van 'n kunsgalery, en kykerdeelname. Die tersaaklike teorie word aan die hand van 'n literatuurstudie verken, en 'n aantal argumente word op selektiewe wyse op my ontleding van *TENC* toegepas. Verskeie internasionale en Suid-Afrikaanse plekspesifieke kunswerke word bespreek as 'n verkenning van hoe plekspesifisiteit op ander maniere toegepas word. Ek het in Oktober 2017 'n plekspesifieke uitstalling met die titel *GREENER?* in die Unisa Kunsgalery gehou. Die werke wat uitgestal is, onderstreep die teoretiese bevindings en vestig die aandag op die buigsame toepassing van die teorie in verband met plekspesifisiteit.

Lys van kernbegrippe:

Plekspesifieke kuns; Kuns-in-uitvoering; Publieke kuns; Kykerdeelname; daaglikse leefkontekste; Mark Rautenbach; *The Educator's New Clothes*; Uitstalling van plekspesifieke kuns; Kuns wat op onderwys kommentaar lewer; Verband tussen kuns en plek; Installasiekuns; Dagdromery; Utopia.

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PREFACE

The performance artwork, *The Educator's New Clothes* (2013), was created by Mark Rautenbach. I was introduced to the work by an artist colleague who encouraged me to contact the artist, since Rautenbach and I both commented on the flaws of the Department of Education in our respective earlier artworks. In the final year of a Bachelor of Visual Art degree (2013), I explored the inadequacies of the Department of Basic Education through my installation of redundant school furniture titled *Basick*. Rautenbach had become familiar with this work by chance while browsing online, and had included an image of *Basick* and the link to an article about it in *Beeld* (19 December 2013) on his blog (Rautenbach 2014).

I subsequently contacted Rautenbach, and our meeting took place during the time period of his performances at the Union Buildings in Pretoria (part of his Johannesburg tour in February 2014). I began researching his work further as I found it exciting, relevant, and multi-dimensional in its inclusion of elements of site-specificity, performance, craft, art activism, viewer participation, and even sculptural art objects. Since at that point little had been written about Rautenbach's work, I decided to expand this research investigation towards a Master's dissertation.

The aim of the study is to situate *The Educator's New Clothes* within and alongside other site-specific art. This will further the understanding of site-specificity through a flexible, integrated exploration around Rautenbach's distinctive application of the concept of site-specificity to his performances.

In general, site-specific art is considered to be bound to the site, formally determined or directed by the site, and therefore dependent on the direct connotation between the site and the artwork (Kwon 1997:85). In other words, should the work be removed from the site, the work would lose its meaning due to the subsequent loss of association between the work and

the site. Such an association exists because the artwork is created in accordance with the specific nature of that site.

Rautenbach's practice of performing a particular work in not only one specific site, but in multiple specific sites that he chooses with the intention of creating separate associations between the work and each site, raises certain questions. When viewing the same performance in different sites, how is the meaning changed between work and site? What is the anticipated interpretation and/or participative role of individual viewers encountered in sites with differing social and cultural contexts? Rautenbach's performance - knitting a ball of paper yarn - could be bewildering to others in such sites, and lead to tension arising between his acts and the every-day happenings in these public sites. The tension may cause enough curiosity in some viewers to spark conversations with Rautenbach regarding education in South Africa.

The findings from this investigation are applied further through my own site-specific art exhibition installed at the UNISA Art Gallery, and are discussed according to methodology, processes, materials and concepts. Appendices containing e-mail interviews with Mark Rautenbach are included, as they disclose information referenced in the study.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Educator's New Clothes (2013) (forth to be referred to as TENC) by artist Mark Rautenbach exemplifies site-specific performance art. It also comprises aspects of public art, craft, art activism, yarn bombing¹, sculpture, and installation, and is intended to provoke viewer engagement and participation. This study focuses mainly on aspects of site-specificity and performance in *TENC*, with mention of viewer participation. By incorporating more than one form of art in his site-specific art practice, Rautenbach's approach towards site-specificity in *TENC* becomes fluid², and revises existing notions around site-specific art.

The performances take place at sites specifically selected by Rautenbach. At each, he knits together yarn constructed from documents relating to education that he has collected, such as exam papers, notes, mark sheets, projects and attendance registers. These documents are reinforced first by stitching them through with thread, using a sewing machine, then torn into long lengths, and rolled into balls of yarn. He knits this yarn into a three-dimensional art object that resembles a cloak. These processes are described by the artist as *menditations* on the education system, and this term refers simultaneously to meditation and mending (Rautenbach 2014). He feels that "this piece is making a mends" (Rautenbach 2014), referring to the need for necessary improvement within the education system, and provoking the question as to whether this could refer to the metaphorical mending of education through his project's knitting process as stipulated on the Thundafund website³ (<http://www.thundafund.com?Projectetails.aspx?projectId=193>). During his menditation performances he mostly sits cross-legged in a pose of meditation, focused on his act of knitting. These menditations take place at selected public sites, such as on street corners, in shop windows, and at historical places and monuments. He also knits

¹ Yarn bombing in the form of public art projects brings attention to social issues through traditional techniques of knitting and crocheting. It forms part of Third-wave Feminism (Myzelev 2015).

² *Fluid* in this context means that certain site-specific art practices are integrated both with other forms of art and every-day life. The different fields overlap and flow into each other. It also means that key concepts related to site-specificity are not understood as rigidly as may be the case in more traditional practices. Some of the key concepts are: the understanding of the concept of site, the significance of the site, the mobility of the work, the role of the audience and the exhibiting of the work.

³ Thundafund is a crowdfunding site with a limited timeframe and therefore this link is no longer active.

while travelling from one site to another, using public buses and trains, and documents any resulting conversations - which he refers to as travelogues (Rautenbach 2014). Rautenbach's out-of-the-ordinary performances in public places ignite conversations with passers-by (Rousell 2014: 46), and here his aim is to create dialogue with members of the public on the topic of education. Participants comment on their negative and positive experiences around education, which he then documents and posts onto his blog (Rautenbach 2014). Rautenbach encourages the public to participate on his blog via uploading, and to comment on the state of education on Twitter (<http://www.twitter.com/theeducatorsnew>) and Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/THEEDUCATORSNEWCLOTHES>).

Rautenbach's aim is to comment on educational issues, and to develop public interest, opinion and awareness about the state of education in South Africa (Rautenbach 2014). As he was formerly a teacher and lecturer in Surface Design at The Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT), this project reflects his interest in and concern about education in South Africa. He posted the following comment on his blog on 21 July 2013:

I am reminded of my initial impulse to do this work, which had been nudged by my experience as a lecturer at a tertiary institution. After a gap of 4 years in lecturing 2007-2011, I noticed a dramatic change in students' [lack of] critical thinking ability, general world awareness, discernment, language and [un]willingness to work, when I came back to lecturing. It indicated to me that something fundamental had changed in education at a school level. The implications were that students need extra tutorials in order to keep up with required standards, and in some cases, standards were lowered (Rautenbach 2014).

His goal is also to encourage members of the public to become involved in education by sharing their expertise with the youth (Rautenbach 2014). An example given of this, shared on his blog of 12 March 2014, is that of a musician and film-maker from Soweto who, after their conversation, presented photographic and film-making workshops for students at schools (Rautenbach 2014).

1.1 Rational for the study

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate how boundaries may become blurred between site-specific performance, other art forms, and every-day activities in relation to Rautenbach's project *TENC*. This research investigates the following issues: how Rautenbach integrates other art forms with every-day life in site-specificity; his approach to the concept of site, and the links that develop between his performance and each site that he travels to; how the mobility of his performance has an impact both on exhibition possibilities as well as on various interpretations of his work; the role of the viewer; and finally, the consequences of these integrations and connections. Accordingly, the main research aim examines how *TENC* is situated alongside other site-specific art. This includes how his approach to site-specificity is more fluid and integrated as compared to traditional site-specific art which are more dependent on the indivisible link between the site and the work, and how it may further assist the understanding of site-specificity to enable debate around this concept. This study further includes how my own art practice in the form of an exhibition relates to site-specificity.

This study grew from research substantiation for my own creative work. An important factor here is Rautenbach's specific selection of performance sites, since his approach allows for a wider interpretation of the concept of site. Also relevant is the investigation of a reciprocal link between the performance and each different site, as each site contributes to the development of the content of his performance rather than prescribing the nature of the performance. In this way, Rautenbach's work pushes the boundaries around the rigid way of looking at site-specificity where the artwork is bound to the site.

Firstly, *TENC* intends to blur the boundaries between various forms of art such as site-specificity, performance art, participative art, public art, art activism, and craft, and to integrate them with both routine life and social media. Secondly, Rautenbach does not usually present his work in a gallery space, but performs outside in ordinary public spaces where people are engaged in their everyday lives. In doing so, he exposes his work not only to an interested few, but also to passers-by not necessarily concerned with art. Finally, I am interested in the way his work questions the role of the viewer. In most of his performances, the viewer's role shifts from that of a passive spectator to an active participant. This happens through on-site conversations between the artist

and members of the public, as well as through Rautenbach's documentation of participants' experiences and comments on his blog.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

Selected theoretical positions are applied to develop the arguments in this research. Site-specificity, in terms of both a brief history and the way it has evolved to include art forms such as performance and participation, are discussed through the writings of Kwon (1997 and 2002) and Lacy (2008). The intention here is to indicate how these art forms are integral to Rautenbach's project, and to demonstrate the differences between a conventional approach to site-specificity and the fluid approach evident in Rautenbach's project.

This study covers the timeline that stretches from Modernist public sculpture within a formalist practice to the contemporary approach which includes viewer participation. Public art as an aspect of site-specificity informs Rautenbach's use of public space, and this is investigated through the research of Kester (2006), Knight (2008), Miles (1997) and Crimp (2000). The history of Site-specific art in a South African context is explored through the work of Meyer (1998), Maré (2004) and Miller and Schmahmann (2017). Site-specific performance as a construct is discussed through the writings of Chavoya (2000), and serves as a theoretical underpinning for my analysis of *TENC*. This background is essential in my argument that *TENC* creates further understanding around the concept of site-specificity, and in my examination of the physically fixed nature of most conventional site-specific art compared to the mobility of Rautenbach's performances.

The significance of site-specificity grew from the idea that a site-specific artwork is immobile, static, and dependent for its meaning to that particular site, to the realisation of the potential for alterations in viewers' perceptions of an artwork once it is relocated to a different site. From this perspective, although the artwork may provoke specific associations at each site, there would be no fixed overall interpretation of its meaning, as diverse associations would be provoked in the dissimilar groups of viewers who inhabit the different sites. In other words, such an artwork could create complex networks of dialogue between the artwork and separate geographical sites. This is the case in the performance piece *TENC*. The sites in *TENC* are varied through their

geographical situations, as well as in the everyday and social activities of the public who routinely inhabit those sites. Such differing routine and social activities as part of the concept of site or place are described by Norberg-Schulz (1976) and Heathfield (2004). These ideas are applied in an analysis of *TENC* in Chapter Four.

Time and history as part of the concept of site is investigated through the research of both Cresswell (2004) and Lefebvre (1973). Schmid (2008) also refers to Lefebvre's writings regarding time and history. Rautenbach selected every site to include symbolic elements of history and politics (Rautenbach 2015: sp). The site as a dialogical space is explored in the relational aesthetic theory of Bourriaud through the writings of Kester (2004) and Dezeuse (2006). In *TENC*, the dialogical space is evident in the exchanges of ideas through conversations held between Rautenbach and his viewers – the public - around education. Meyer's (2000) research is considered for its contribution towards the existence of the functional site in relation to the physical site. This is the case in the performance *TENC*, where the functional site - that is, the traveling between sites to collect as many conversations with the public as possible - is as important as the different physical sites. Virtual space as a site, is explored through examples of other site-specific artworks mentioned by Kwon (1997). Virtual space in the form of social media sites is considered as a site in Rautenbach's work. Therefore, I focus on how site-specific practices shift according to the given site and the performance-based intervention. The intricacies of *TENC* are analysed drawing on the above theoretical constructs.

Aspects of performance and theatre in Rautenbach's work, together with the role of the viewer as participant, is discussed in relation to the theories of Goldberg (1988), Howell (1999), Kwon (2002), Schechner (1988) and Lippard (1971). The characteristics, history and development of performance are considered through the theories of Goldberg (1988), who discusses performance both as a public event and as emerging from theatre. Howell (1999) makes the point that the role of the viewer as participant in performance art, the characteristics of performance art, and the idea that performance can be traced back to artists painting from life models. Schechner (1988) and Lippard (1971) also provided definitions of the characteristics of performance. The integration of performance art and site-specific art is explored through Kwon (2002) as well as the relationship between the artist and the participants. Kwon (2002) also investigates the role of the artist in speaking on behalf

of a particular community as related to site-specific projects, indicating that the line between artist and viewer as well as the line between art and everyday life experience may become blurred in site-specific performance. In this research emphasis is placed on how these elements materialise in *TENC*. The history, characteristics and inclusion of performance art in contemporary South African art are explored through the texts of Heidenreich-Seleme, Makhubu and Stemberger (2011). These writers still see performance art as a neglected art form within the contemporary South African art arena.

This discussion of Rautenbach's application of site-specificity and performance should contribute further to a wider understanding of site-specific performance through enlarging the concept of site beyond merely a geographical context into other contexts of interpretation. An examination of the merging of site-specific art with other aspects of art in *TENC* - such as performance, viewer participation, intruding on the public's routine life and attempting to engage with them in conversation, as well as Rautenbach's revealing these experiences on social media – could contribute to a fresh approach to the notion of site-specificity. Also, the research will add to the limited research on Rautenbach's work, as besides his own blog and Facebook page, only three independent articles have been written about *TENC*. Claire Rousell's article *Spinning a yarn. Craftivism⁴ as a means of speaking out about education* was published in *Art South Africa* in 2014. Debbie Loots's article *Knit-Picking. Having outlived the lifespan of a trend, it's about time that yarnbombing is acknowledged as a movement* was published in *Visi* magazine in 2014. Both writers discussed his work from a craftivism perspective but did not allude to his work as also being a series of site-specific performances. A newspaper article by Karen Kotze: *Mark's 'menditations' sparks education debates* also appeared on 18 July 2013 in *Tatler*, a local newspaper published in Observatory, Cape Town.

⁴ Craftivism is the notion that, through craft, one can mobilise community action (Rousell 2014:46).

1.3 Aims and objectives

In this study I aim to give an overview of the history and development of site-specificity, as well as discuss some of its characteristics. My aim is to demonstrate that site-specific art is an evolving arts practice in regard to:

- the approach to the concept of site,
- various significances of the concept of site,
- the impact of relocating site-specific artwork to different sites,
- the discourse of exhibiting site-specific art and the role of the gallery,
- performativity in site-specificity,
- and the role of the viewer as a participant and the inclusion of everyday life.

My intention is to show that through his performance in selected and varied locations, Rautenbach's approach is more flexible than traditional site-specific art, and is interlinked with other art forms.

Thus, the objective of this study is to discuss *TENC* in relation to theoretical discourse and through comparison with other traditional and contemporary art practices, in terms of site-specificity and performance. One of the goals is to indicate that the relevance of the concept of site changes over time. It no longer applies merely as a literal understanding of place, but offers various alternative connotations. The close link between a site and an artwork or performance has developed more into a reciprocal relationship, where the site alone no longer determines the creation or meaning of the artwork, but the artwork or performance also contributes to the significance of the site. Artworks or performances can be moved between sites to create new associations between the same work and different sites. This would include the gallery space, where the role of the viewer would shift into a more cohesive response to the art experience than it would in a public space.

Alternative art exhibiting practices have become possible due to the expansion of the approach to the concept of a site, the link between the site and the artwork, and their incorporation with everyday life and viewer participation.

1.4 Literature review

This section identifies the core sources used in this study to provide the theoretical underpinning of the discussion around the application of site-specificity in *TENC*. Two research works by Miwon Kwon titled *One place after another: Site-specific art and locational identity* (2002) and *One place after another: Notes on site specificity* (1997) play a central role regarding the history, development and theory of site-specificity. This is crucial to indicate how the categorisation of site-specificity has progressed over time from an initially rigid to a more expansive application. *TENC* fits into the latter. According to Kwon (2002:60), site-specificity evolved from autonomous Modernist sculptures in public spaces, where these sculptures become more difficult to interpret when not related to the site. (Kwon 2002:64-65). With site-specific works, Kwon (2002: 65) states that a direct link exists between the characteristics of the site and the artwork. Cameron Cartiere (2008:11) holds the opinion that a manifest link between the site and the work makes public artworks more comprehensible to the viewer. Kwon (1997:85-86) suggests that, should the art work be removed from its specific site, such a link will no longer exist, leading to a loss of meaning.

In his article *On Tilted Arc* in *Dialogues in public art* edited by Finkelpaerl (2000), Douglas Crimp highlights the facts surrounding the controversy of the 1989 removal of Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc* (1981) from the Foley Federal Plaza in Manhattan, New York. Serra's (2001) and Kwon's (2002) versions of this controversy are also included in this discussion, to both indicate the implications of the removal of a site-specific work from its site, and stress the importance of community participation site-specific art.

Suzanne Lacy's (2008) and (1995) writings are considered regarding the birth of New Genre Public Art where performance and public participation are included in site-specific art (Lacy 2008:19). The inclusion of the public is a key element in Rautenbach's project, since he converses with passers-by near his selected performance sites, and posts their opinions on education on his social media sites. The significance of public participation in site-specificity is also discussed through Kwon (2002), Grant Kester (2006) and Cher Krause Knight (2008). Kwon's (2002) writing on public involvement as part of the art-making process is valuable to this

study. Kester's (2006) opinion regarding conversations between the artist and the public supports this discussion. Knight's (2008) contribution on viewer participation as one of the functions of public art is also of importance. Douglas Crimp's theories (2000) confirm that public art, when related to a specific site, enhances the viewer's experience of the artwork.

The relevance of these sources lies in the recognition that site-specificity and the inclusion of public participation have developed from public art, and that Rautenbach mainly performs in public spaces while conversing with passers-by. Cartiere's (2008) theory is discussed in relation to site-specific art created inside and outside the gallery, since while Rautenbach performs outside of galleries and museums, he makes use of these spaces to present his project.

The following key components of site-specificity are explored: the concept of site, the significance of the selected site, exhibiting site-specific art and the role of the gallery, performance, and the role of the viewer.

1.4.1 The concept of site

The concept of site is investigated through the work of Kwon (1997) in regards both to the interpretation of the site in site-specificity, and to the inclusion of social elements in the interpretation of a site (Kwon 2002). Michel de Certeau's (1988:117) theory regarding the difference between a place and a space in site-specificity is consulted directly, as well as through the writings of Kaye (2000). Lefebvre's theory on the production of unfinished space is considered through the writings of Christian Schmid (2008). This is an important factor in Rautenbach's project, namely, to indicate that site is no longer a static physical element determining the creation of the artwork or performance.

The work of Meyer (2000) is important in shaping the idea of a functional site where the site itself is not the determining factor, but rather the process and movement occurring between sites (Meyer 2000:31). Kester (2004 1-3, 68) is consulted regarding the creation of a dialogical site where the space of conversation is regarded as a site in site-specific art practice. Christian Norberg-Schulz's (1976) writings contribute to the definition of a site as a physical entity as well as one which encompasses social

activities. This investigation indicates a shift in the understanding and application of the concept of site from that of merely a literal, physical place to one of a more comprehensive space, thereby promoting a broader definition of site-specificity, as seen in Rautenbach's application of the notion of site.

Since Rautenbach focuses on performing mostly in public sites, the concept of public art is investigated through the writings of Knight (2008), Kester (2006) and Lacy (2008). Knight's (2008:51) perceptions of both the nature of public art and its role in socio-political engagement (Knight 2008:38) is of importance when discussing Rautenbach's work in terms of his interaction with the public and his comments on socio-political issues in South Africa. Kester (2006:250) is consulted regarding the development of public art to include the element of public participation. Lacy (2008:21) debates that the parameters of public art have extended beyond the physical site due to online interconnectedness. The flexibility of Rautenbach's approach as he relocates from site to site becomes a focus in the analysis of his work, as it relates to the further understanding of a less rigid approach to site-specificity.

Kwon (1997:92) explains how site-specificity has changed from the permanency of an artwork existing in one specific location to mobilizing a site-specific work to other sites to create new meaning. These views are significant factors in my discussion of Rautenbach's performance in different sites. Examples of other artists' site-specific works are considered, to further explain the notion of immobility versus that of mobility. Immobility lends itself to a more open dialogue between the artwork and the relevant sites. *On Tropical Nature* (1991) by Mark Dion (Kwon 1997:92-93) and *The Naked Magician* (2011 - 2015) by Laura Lima (Torp 2015:8) are discussed.

1.4.2 The significance of the chosen site

The writings of Kwon (1997 & 2002) and Nick Kaye (2000) are examined to explore the significance of the site in relation to the artwork. Kwon (2002) and Kaye (2000) are consulted in terms of traditional site-specific art practice where the dialogue between a performance and a site is specific. Kwon (1997:92) maintains that the significance of a particular site need not in itself be a precondition for creating meaning in site-specific art, but that the artwork equally contributes to and influences perceptions

around that site. Thus, the situation where a travelling artwork - intended to provoke a variety of site-specific associations when appearing in more than one site – will also promote further interpretations around the notion of site-specific art.

The above-mentioned sources are used to explain how Rautenbach's movement from one site to another with the same performance transforms the dialogue between the performance and each site. It also shows that the site does not need to be the starting point of informing the performance or artwork, but rather may add to the content and meaning.

1.4.3 Exhibiting site-specific art and the role of the gallery.

The fact that site-specific works must relate to the site in terms of physicality or context, and cannot be moved from the original site without a loss of their conceptual impact, is explained by Kaye (2000:1), who maintains that site-specific works are associated with a fixed position, and when such site-specific artworks are moved from their original intended site to a different site or gallery, their context is lost. The implications of the re-location of site-specific art are also explored through Kwon (1997). According to her, the re-installing of artworks in a site - or an art gallery – different from the one it was originally created for, is linked to the commercialisation of art (Kwon 1997:97). However, new meaning through re-contextualising is possible when site-specific works are recreated from material from other sites (Kwon 1997:104).

These opinions are considered when exploring the exhibiting selections made by Rautenbach for his project. Effecting the same performance, Rautenbach occupies different public sites, each having its own history and context. This is a necessary factor in his concept and in the message that underpins his project. He also makes use of a gallery space as a site, not just to perform, but also to create artworks and to collect conversations for his blog. A performance in a gallery also provides Rautenbach with the opportunity both for professional exposure and to sell his art objects. The role of the gallery is further researched through Knight (2008:54), and according to her, the function of the art gallery is to “promote and distribute art”.

1.4.4 Performance

According to Howell (1999:2 - 4), performance art stems from artists' manipulation of their models in the creation of their artworks, while Goldberg (1988:47-137) maintains that performance art originates from theatre. These opinions are significant when examining Rautenbach's performance work, as he draws on the language of theatre and theatricality both by his use of the site's stairs, pavements and public spaces as stages, and through his exploiting the principles of stillness and repetition. Other important features of performance art are considered, such as the function of costume (Howell 1999:17-20) due to Rautenbach's eccentric dress. The characteristics of performance is explored through Goldberg (1988:163). However, Rautenbach's performance is more informal than a theatrical stage production, since the public experience his performance arbitrarily, stopping to view it in passing and moving off at will. The history of performance art in South Africa, as examined by Heidenreich-Seleme (2011:9), underlines that it remains a neglected art form.

In her research into site-specific performance in South Africa, Makhubu (2011:73) maintains that uncomfortable situations are created in specific public spaces through performance art. This is indicated by Rautenbach's knitting performance in a public space, an unlikely site for such an activity, and which may have led to a degree of discomfort among some bystanders. Performance as a public spectacle is also analysed through the writings of Goldberg (1988). During his performance, Rautenbach's interaction with the public is compared to other contemporary performance artists who exploit viewer interaction, as discussed in reference to Marina Abramovic and the future of performance art (Orrell 2010). Lacy's research (1995) regarding how performance art includes interaction with people on the site is consulted in my discussion of the way Rautenbach's viewers contribute to his artmaking process through their conversations and expressed opinions around the education system, which were subsequently posted on his blog.

1.4.5 The role of the viewer

This study takes note of the genre of public art from the late 1960s onwards, specifically that which involves the role of the viewer in the artmaking process (Kester

2006:267). Kester (2004:68) investigates the artist's exchanges with the public, and this aspect of Rautenbach's performance work is examined, especially his contemporary approach of posting these on his blog, and his invitation to his viewers to post their concerns around the state of education in South Africa on his blog.

Although the relationship between Rautenbach and his viewers appears to be temporary, Rousell and Loots (2014:46) believe that participatory performances could assume long-term relationships. My analysis of Rautenbach's performance work engages with this question - due to the temporary nature of his interactions with the public, could his work be considered participatory? Projects where the artist forms temporary relationships with the public, such as Rautenbach's, are compared with art projects where the artist engages with the public in a more long-term relationship, such as John Ahearn's *South Bronx Sculpture Park* (1985-1991), which is discussed by Kwon (2002:95).

1.5 Research methodology

This study is conducted within a qualitative paradigm. It is executed in a deductive way, by initially examining the background history and theory of site-specificity, and then focusing on Rautenbach's application of these theoretical principles in his project *TENC*. Through literature study the existing theory is explored, and particular aspects of several author's arguments are applied in a selective manner to my analysis of site-specificity, performance and the role of the viewer in *TENC*. I refer to related articles on Rautenbach's work, information gathered during my viewing of his performance at the Union Buildings in February 2014, e-mail interviews I held with him, and visual documentation of his work. I evaluated the timeline on his blog which indicated his movements from one site to another, as well as his comments on the education system and those of the viewers. This method problematises the approach of an artist who travels from one site to another with the same performance with the intention of creating new meanings between the performance and each different site, as in Rautenbach's case, the specific site does not determine the creation of the performance but rather informs the performance.

The insights and conclusions from this research have informed my own art-making processes and been carried into my site-specific art practice. Consequently, this study

may be considered practice-based (Sullivan 2005:84) and multi-disciplinary. My exhibition *GREENER?* was viewed during the Masters exhibition at the Unisa Art Gallery from 14 October until 3 November 2017.

1.6 Chapter outline

An overview of the history and development of site-specificity and its key concepts are discussed in Chapter Two. This includes questioning the general definition of site. Is a site merely a geographical place, or could it also be a functional and/or virtual site, or could a concept even be considered a site? Investigation into the theory around the significance of the site reveals that site-specific art is generally bound to the site and formally determined or directed by the site, thus becoming immobile (Kwon 1997:85). In other words, should the work be removed from the site, it would lose its meaning due to the destruction of the connection between the work and the site. The question is posed about the consequences of a work being moved to another exhibition site. This becomes important when examining Rautenbach's practice of relocating the unchanged performance from one site to another with the intention of creating a different meaning at each site. The issues surrounding site-specific art practices must also include a consideration of the role of the gallery.

The integration of performance art into site-specific art practice is also discussed, as well as the role the viewer may adopt in terms of participation, involvement and engagement. This becomes relevant when examining how Rautenbach's application of site-specificity may further the understanding of the assimilation of these practices.

Chapter Three explores how Rautenbach approaches the key concepts of site-specificity. Questions are posed around the nature of the sites where *TENC* is performed; how Rautenbach exploits the concept of multiple sites and the resulting dialogues between these sites and his work; could a mobile site-specific work retain integrity when positioned in different sites; and the exhibition possibilities of *TENC* in comparison to other site-specific practices?

Chapter Four discusses the performative and theatrical elements in Rautenbach's work. It deliberates the role of the viewer, questioning whether this is participative or engaging, and whether viewers also become authors of *TENC*? It considers the art-

making processes as part of the site-specific performance and the inclusion of everyday activities as part of the performance.

In Chapter Five, the above theoretical research leads into a discussion around my site-specific project *GREENER?* and how this may further extend the notion of site-specificity as well as situate my work alongside other site-specific art. Included here are the methodology, processes and materials used in my site-specific project, and the concept around it.

The findings of the investigation regarding Rautenbach's approach to site-specificity and performance is summed up in Chapter Six (the Conclusion). This serves to emphasise the point that site-specificity may be applied in a fluid way with other art and non-art related disciplines.

The next chapter conducts an overview of the background, history and theory regarding the key factors of site-specificity.

CHAPTER 2: SITE-SPECIFIC ART PRACTICES: BACKGROUND AND THEORY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter a brief history and development of both International and South African site-specific art are discussed. The development includes how site-specific art developed from commissioned public art and how site-specific art can include or exclude the public. The rigid application of site-specific practice where the characteristics of the physical site informs the artwork are explored and will forth be referred to as traditional site-specific art. In comparison to this more rigid application of site-specificity, a more fluid and alternative approach where site and artwork informs each other, are also discussed. The key factors of site-specific practice are highlighted and discussed. These include the interpretation of site other than only a physical site and the possible connections between site and artwork to generate meaning. Although these two concepts are related, it is discussed separately for more clarity. Other key factors include the creation of new interpretative possibilities through alternative exhibition methods, the development of performance art and how it was incorporated into site-specific art, and the extended role of the viewer in site-specific art practice and performance. These discussions underpin my analysis around how Rautenbach applied site-specific performance in *TENC*.

2.2 A BRIEF HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF SITE-SPECIFIC ART PRACTICES

From the middle of the 1960s, enlarged replicas of Modern abstract sculptures by established and favoured male artists dominated public art in the USA (Kwon 2002:60). Public art is considered as commissioned artworks which are easily accessed by the public and reflects the ideology of the establishment of museums (Miles 1997:15). According to Douglas Crimp's description of Modernism, these sculptures were considered to be autonomous of the site (Crimp in Kwon 1997:85). They existed separately from life (Miles 1997:16) in that there was no reference to any political or social event that may have occurred at that site. Many creators of such public sculptures focused on formal art elements and geometric forms (Rose 2006:1097), and the characteristics of the specific site was not considered in its

creation. As a result, the sculptures belonged to no particular place and could exist in any site. Any significant association between such a work and its site was purely coincidental (Kwon 2002:60). Critics questioned the significance of these sculptures, as they were difficult to interpret by the general viewer (Kwon 2002:64-65). Mainly, just viewers who were well informed about the arts could grasp the sculptor's intentions (Kwon 2002:60).

A solution to make works more accessible to the public viewer (Kwon 2002:66) was achieved in the USA in 1974, when The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) changed their guidelines for public art in their Art-in-Public-Places Program to ensure that the creation of the artwork must integrate with elements of the specific site (Kwon 2002:65). In part, this initiated the emergence of site-specific artworks in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and because of their referral to the topography of a site, whether positioned in exterior or interior locations (Cartiere 2008:11), this was regarded as a reversal of Modernism. They were often located outside museums and galleries (Cartiere 2008:15), and became referred to as public art (Kester 2006:255). From this discussion, it can be argued that site-specific art developed from public art, where the characteristics of the site are considered in the final product. It must be kept in mind that not all public art is necessarily site-specific in character and that all site-specific art is also not easily accessible to the public.

Since site-specific art is generally created according to the characteristics of the site (Kwon 1997:85), then in theory the work is bound to the site. The art-making techniques and the materials used to create the work, and its concept, should complement the site. From this perspective, site-specific art cannot be relocated from its site for exhibition in another location without the loss of impact and meaning. The earliest site-specific work focused on the indivisible link between the work and the site, and recognised that the viewer must be present to complete the work (Kwon 1997:86) by acknowledging the connection between the work and the site.

Richard Serra's sculpture *Tilted Arc* (1981) (fig 1) serves as an example of a site-specific artwork that was indivisible from its site. In 1979, the General Services Administration as part of the USA government commissioned Serra to make a public sculpture for the East Plaza of the Federal Building in New York. It was installed in 1981 (Crimp 2000:61). The work was constructed according to the designs laid out in

the paving used for that site (Kwon 2002:74). However, ten years later, after great controversy, *Tilted Arc* was removed by these same authorities (Serra 2001:39). The decision to remove this site-specific sculpture was influenced by criticism around issues such as the non-involvement of the public during its development (Kwon 2002:81); the way it created a potential security risk (for example, its solid wall-like form could shield terrorists); and how it prevented public gatherings by slicing the plaza in half (Crimp 2000:72). According to Serra (Kaye 2000:2), because of its site-specific nature, the removal of the work would destroy its significance. Serra (2001:40) stated: "Permanency is implicit in the commission of any site-specific work". The emphasis on the permanence of site-specific art during the *Tilted Arc* controversy is also referred to by Kwon (2002:73). The controversy which built up around the removal of this work has formed part of the historical development of site-specific work (Kwon 2002:81) regarding the need for public input during the design process.



Fig 1. Richard Serra, *Tilted Arc* (1981).

New categories of public art began to emerge, such as New Genre Public art which includes performative art practice and participatory, community engagement initiatives in specific sites. The term New Genre Public Art was according to Kwon (2002:82) coined by Lacy, a feminist performance artist, writer and lecturer from the 1960s and

1970s. This art form is also referred to as dialogical art, engaged art, or community-based art (Lacy 2008:19). The aim of New Genre Public Art was to undermine the “aesthetically politicised subjects of the traditional avant-garde” public art of the 1960s (Kwon 2002:97). It was a suitable channel for political critique, being able to give people a public voice through their stories (Lacy 2008:31). It also encompassed intense engagement with the people who moved through the space of the site, as it involved direct public communication and interaction over an extended period of time (Kwon 2002:82). Kester (2006:249-250) maintains that public art from the late 1960’s included social media, public funding platforms, and conversations between the artist and the public with the aim of making art accessible to people as part of their daily lives (Kester 2006:249-250). According to Knight (2008:109), it had a “decidedly activist bent”. An example here is the site-specific performance *First Supper (after a Major Riot)* by Asco⁵ in 1974 (Chavoya 2000:196), where the performance was based on historical events which happened at that site. From the 1960s, Performance art and site-specific art were merged by artists who worked independent of theatres and gallery walls (Heathfield 2004:10).

Site-specific art in South Africa also developed from public artworks, and traditionally was characterised by monumental sculptures outside government buildings and banks with the purpose of promoting state ideology (Meyer 1998:3). It was associated with bronze sculptures of colonial heroes and statesmen (Maré 2004:90-93), erected in parks and other public spaces, such as sculptor Anton van Wouw’s bronze statue of President Paul Kruger (1895-1899)⁶ in Church Square, Pretoria, which commemorated Kruger’s leadership from 1883-1900 (Marschall 2004:33). According to Miller and Schmahmann (2017:x), public art in South Africa was also associated with British Imperialism and Afrikaner Nationalism, an example being the bronze bust of mining magnate and politician Cecil John Rhodes, situated on the campus of the University of Cape Town. This was removed in 2015, as it was interpreted by students as a symbol of white supremacy (Miller & Schmahmann 2017:ii).

McLachlan (2011:89) commented that multi-disciplinary artists William Kentridge and Gerhard Marx referred to these early South African public sculptures as “monuments

⁵ Asco, *First Supper (after a Major Riot)* (1974). Site-specific performance. East Los Angeles. (Chavoya 2000:196)

⁶ Anton Van Wouw, *Paul Kruger* (1895-1899). Bronze. Church square, Pretoria. (Marschall 2004:33).

of dead heroes on plinths”, as opposed to contemporary site-specific artworks in public places, such as their work *Fire Walker* (2011)⁷. This eleven-meter high sculptural assemblage is made from laser-cut steel, and is situated in the city of Johannesburg. In the form of an anonymous woman carrying a burning brazier on her head, the sculpture pays homage to the rural migrant workers of the city (Dodd 2011:16). As an integral part of Johannesburg street culture, women like as this survive by selling roasted mealies and roasted sheep heads to pedestrians (Dodd 2011:15). Due to the artists’ consideration of its location and the nature of the surrounding human activity, *Fire Walker* (2011) may be classified as a site-specific artwork. Unlike the public monumental bronze sculptures of the past, *Fire Walker* (2011) is part of South Africa’s new public art and underlines a post-apartheid spirit (Dodd 2011:20). It pays tribute to an anonymous migrant worker rather than reflecting a specific state ideology.

Public art in South Africa includes interventions which may be classified as ephemeral. In 2014, Julie Lovelace placed small ceramic sculptures in specific, forgotten, liminal sites in downtown Johannesburg⁸. The sites included spaces beneath motorway passes, in storm-water drains, and under broken bridges. Her work was aimed at the homeless population who inhabited these specific spaces. Her project represented her own liminal identity as an immigrant, a state which some of the homeless could identify with (Von Veh 2017:240-241). According to Von Veh (2017:258), ephemeral, unsanctioned interventions such as Lovelace’s project create a different form of engagement with the city than that of commissioned permanent public art, since viewers may relate to these projects more intimately. Rautenbach’s *TENC* may also be seen as an ephemeral intervention, as his ongoing unsanctioned performances were restricted to specific timeframes in specific public spaces. During each knitting performance, his conversations with passers-by around the education system could be considered a form of intimate engagement, as many of them could identify with the issues through personal experience.

⁷ William Kentridge & Gerhard Marx, *Fire Walker* (2011). Steel, 11 metres. City of Johannesburg. (Barstow & Law Viljoen 2011:113)

⁸ Julie Lovelace, *Unsanctioned* (2014). Interventions with ceramic sculptures in the Inner City of Johannesburg. (Von Veh 2017:240-241)

Earlier site-specific art projects in South Africa include the !Xoe art project in Nieu-Bethesda in 1998. According to Michael Laidler (1998: preface), the project had two main aims: to bring art to a socially- and economically-deprived community; and to raise awareness about the town's existence, thus stimulating its local economy through tourism. The artists considered alternative ways to exhibit the project's artwork (Meyer 1998:3). Each artist explored Nieu-Bethesda as a location, and diverse responses were created in the form of site-specific art (Haywood 1998:4) according to the characteristics of the land and the town's history. The residents of Nieu-Bethesda became involved as participants in some of the art-making processes. In *Illusions of Permanence – (Stage 1)* (1998)⁹, Bonita Alice painted a sheet of corrugated iron on the soccer field, using the technique employed by advertisers, and from a certain viewpoint, the image appeared to stand vertically. Corrugated iron is often used as building material in Nieu-Bethesda. The community were involved when two local soccer teams played a match on the soccer field wearing kit with images of corrugated iron sheeting (Alice 1998:6). Through their work in Nieu-Bethesda, these artists contributed to site-specific art practice in South Africa (Meyer 1998:3), and the !Xoe art project became a showcase for the development of site-specific art from public art to performance art through public inclusion. It also seems that the aim of some contemporary site-specific art created for the public is not to reflect state ideology, but to intervene, raise awareness, express own ideas and comment on certain matters.

2.3 KEY FACTORS IN SITE-SPECIFIC ART PRACTICES

2.3.1 The concept of site

Site describes a place where, for example, a building or town was, is, or will be situated (OALD 1989. Sv site). Place, as used in this definition of site, refers to a particular area occupied by something or somebody (OALD 1989. Sv place). According to these descriptions, site and place refer to physical and geographical phenomena. A place is made up of tangible, material things which determine the “environmental character” of it (Norberg-Schulz 1976:sp). In his revision of site-specificity, Meyer (2000:24) refers

⁹ Bonita Alice, *Illusions of Permanence – (Stage 1)* (1998). Water-based paint, metal viewing pole with sign. Soccer field, Pienaarsig, Nieu-Bethesda. (Alice 1998:7)

to Joseph Kosuth's interpretation of a literal site as an "actual location" or "singular place". From this perspective, the geographical site is the starting point in the creation of traditional site-specific art practice - the creation of the artwork or performance is determined by the geographical and concrete phenomena within the site (Kwon 1997:85) and (Meyer 2000:24).

Wim Botha's temporary installation, *Solipsis V* (fig 2), made for the 2013 Stellenbosch *Woordfees* in the Sasol Art Museum, is both an example of a site-specific work created to suit the physical characteristics of the site, as well as an example of a site-specific work created in a gallery. According to the Tate's website installation art is mixed-media constructions often created for a specific place and are often installed for a temporary period of time (<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/i/installation-art>). This means that there is a link between art installations and site-specific art. In this case, according to Knight (2008:54), the gallery was not only used as a space to exhibit and sell art, but provided the place for this site-specific artwork. The work was created around a circular opening in the first floor of the building and represented a nest. Constructed from neon lights, its form echoed the empty circle, and polystyrene models of flying birds surrounded it (Pople 2013:sp). This work demonstrates that site-specific art may exist in interior spaces as well as outdoor public spaces. However, the location of Botha's site-specific installation rendered it accessible only to a "gallery-going elite" (Kester 2006:255) rather than the general public. Artworks created for interior spaces not visited by the general public, but only visited by a select few are considered site-specific art, because the characteristics of the site were used to inform the creation of the artwork.



Fig 2. Wim Botha, *Solipsis V* (2013).

As mentioned previously, site-specific art developed from public art and most site-specific art is located in places accessible to the public. Therefore, the concept of site as a public space must be considered. This means that not only gallery visitors are exposed to art, but passers-by too, as part of their daily lives (Kester 2006:255). From the 1960s onwards, public art in the USA shifted from murals and sculptures located in public spaces, such as parks and plazas - funded mostly by the state - to include performances, digital art and community participation funded by private institutions and other funding initiatives (Kester 2006:250). It evolved from the Modernist understanding of “art in public-places” to functional “art as public spaces”, and then to a community engaging “art in the public interest” (Kwon 2002:60).

Knight (2008:38) sees public art’s function as a vehicle for socio-political engagement, and a space for participation and debate. According to Kwon (2002:60), public art has become a platform for political activism, and Duncan (1991:88-89) equally affirms this function. He is of the opinion that public art includes “evidence of political virtue” (Duncan, 1991:88-89). According to Minty (2006:425), protest art has a strong public face. This is evident among other things through the use of political posters, t-shirts and flags during the South African resistance movement of the 1980s, whereby people voiced their opposition to the apartheid government (Archer & Stent 2011:115).

Public art is ‘public’ not only due to its location, but also for its emotional and intellectual accessibility to public viewers (Knight 2008:51). This means that the content of the

work should engage with a public issue. Both Beardsley (1981:43) and McClellan (2003:xiii-xiv) are of the opinion that public art is more open for debate and viewer interaction than art in a museum. Viewers are more comfortable with content related to a public topic, and art may be more easily read in a specific site, as opposed to an artwork exhibited in an art gallery, out of real life context. The concept of publicness could be expanded to include a worldwide population of viewers, due to digital communication and interconnectedness which, according to Lacy (2008: 21), creates a world of simultaneousness where local issues may be understood within an international framework. Rautenbach's blog postings detailing his encounters with viewers of his performances effectively draws on such technology.

A site is more than a place. According to Norberg-Schulz (1976:sp), "the concept of place means something more than location." He includes the concepts of "genius loci"¹⁰ and "everyday life-world" into the phenomenon of place. Site also describes a place where a particular activity has happened or will happen (OALD 1989. Sv site), and refers to the social and everyday experiences and activities of people within this specific place. Therefore, a site may be described not only according to its physical and geographical qualities, but also in relation to the everyday social activities that occur there. According to Kwon (2002:95), *site* is interpreted as a social entity that refers to a "community", and not merely "in terms of environmental or architectural design". This is especially evident in the case of art projects which entail interaction between the artist and the community, for example Ahearn's site-specific work *South Bronx Sculpture Park* (1985-1991).

This project was commissioned by New York's City's Percent Art Program at the 44th Precinct Police Station at Bronx (Kwon 2002:83). The area was notorious for criminal activity and violence (Kwon 2002:84), and mostly inhabited by black African Americans and people of Puerto Rican descent (Kwon 2002:88). Although Ahearn is white, he lived among that South Bronx community. His idea was not to portray any political

¹⁰ °*Genius loci* refers to the spirit and identity of a place (Norberg-Schulz 1976:sp). The concept originates from Roman antiquity and was understood that a genius in the form of a guardian angel was associated with certain places including monuments and natural surroundings. The genius is a certain person associated with the place and can be represented in the form of a sacrificing man or a snake (Petzet 2009:63). Places are connected with the genius of certain people who seems to be present in objects within the site (Petzet 2009:65). The visitor of a place can also experience the history as part of the genius loci of a place (Petzet 2009:67). The secular meaning of the spirit of a place refers to distinctive natural landmarks and built forms whereby the place can be identified by. (Relph 2007:sp).

ideology, or stereotypical views of South Bronx as a crime-ridden area, but intended to show his allegiance with the residents (Kwon 2002:88).

Over a time period of six years, he engaged with the community by creating life plaster casts of residents on the side-walks. These two-dimensional busts were displayed on walls in the area (Kwon 2002:88-89). For the South Bronx Sculpture Park, he cast three youths from the community to capture the attitude of the local community (Knight 2008:95). Unfortunately, according to the Department of General Services, the sculptures were considered to be racist by the South Bronx community, who argued that Ahearn did not have the right to represent them because he was white, and they did not see him as an authentic part of their community (Kwon 2002:91). Ahearn therefore spoke on behalf of a specific community he wasn't perceived as belonging to. Also, some residents complained that the sculptures of the three youths portrayed the criminal aspect of the community (Kwon 2002:91). Fearing a racial scandal, he decided to remove the sculptures (Knight 2008:95). Ahearn put his work in service of this community and supported the ideologies and political power of this community as a marginalized and disempowered group (Kwon 2002: 88). Ahearn became the spokesperson of a community where he lived but did not belong because of his race. These sculptures may be considered site-specific in that they were created according to the characteristics of the community rather than the characteristics of the geographical site (Kwon 2002:95). The notion of including everyday life into site-specific art, is to distort the lines between art and routine life (Kwon 1997:91).

Social events and everyday life activities occur in a site over a period of time, creating a history. Cresswell (2004:5) adds the element of history to the concept of site, maintaining that every space¹¹ has a history. Place and memory become intertwined, as the place can make the past come to life in the present, contributing to the reproduction of social memory. Monuments are an example of how history can become intertwined with a place (Cresswell 2004: 85). According to Petzet (2009:64), monuments act as an archive for history and "should evoke remembrance of something". Henri Lefebvre (1977:73) holds the opinion that the element of time also plays a role in the concept of space connected to history, since space is produced over a historical period, and time, specifically relating to a certain period, is associated

¹¹ According to Cresswell, space is a more abstract concept than place (Cresswell 2004:8)

with a space. Schmid (2008:29) refers to Lefebvre's writing on the production of space relating to time and history, in that people are connected to certain places through memories of their experiences in these sites. As time passes, these memories may be reawakened when they encounter an experience in the specific site.

An example of a public site-specific performance which was based on the history of the site, is the work by a group of artists known as Asco. Chavoya (2000:196) wrote about this project titled *First Supper (after a Major Riot)* (1974). The artists deliberated on the history of the site, where public demonstrations and social protests were once held, and which were characterised by death and destruction. One of the demonstrations held there on 29 August 1970, was the National Chicano Moratorium March which was an anti-war protest. After police intervention three protesters died. One of them, a Mexican journalist for the Los Angeles Times died due to a fired tear-gas canister hitting his head at close range (Lampert 2013:244). This site had subsequently been transformed into a non-place of historical amnesia as a traffic island functioning as an obstacle to prevent demonstrations in East Los Angeles. Their performance took the form of the re-enactment of The Last Supper combined with elements of the Days of the Dead celebrations. The intention was to pay remembrance to these riots, and was performed during rush hour traffic for maximum effect. The forgotten history of the place was brought to life through their performance, and informed the content of the performance. This is significant in *TENC*, as Rautenbach's knitting performances are informed by the selected historical sites.

The concepts of place and space are significant to the understanding of the concept of site. Cresswell (2004:5) noted that an abstract space like an empty house which has a history is turned into a place when material things such as furniture are added to it. However, this seems to be contradicted by his later statement, that space is a more abstract concept than place (Cresswell 2004:8). This seeming contradiction raises questions such as, how is an empty house an abstract space, because its physical structure has the tangible characteristics of a house? I argue that a house is a place that becomes a *space* when people inhabit it with their material things and live there to collect memories. Even long after they leave, its history can be re-lived when they are confronted with related material objects or a performance.

The performance *First Supper (after a Major Riot)* (1974) was intended to resurrect memories of past experiences in a certain space. This argument is confirmed by Kaye's discussion of how Michel de Certeau sees the relationship between place and space. De Certeau describes place as an ordered and structured street defined by urban planning, which is transformed by pedestrians into a space that incorporates unpredictability and ambiguity (Kaye 2000:3&5). Any geographical place is altered into a space by the individuals who bring their own social, personal and historical framework to create a different situation every minute. This relates to De Certeau's (1988:117) opinion that place implies stability, while space is "actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it" and thus has no stability.

A place is also about the interactions that occur in that place. Heathfield (2004:10) is of the opinion that place is not neutral, but rather the product of social encounters in relation to the architecture and physical movements. This is relevant to my argument around site-specific art practices being determined not just by the stable elements of the geographical site, but also by the unpredictability of the activities that happen there over time, and change the connection between the artwork and the site, and thus the content of the site minute by minute. An example of unpredictable activities includes art performances, such as Rautenbach's knitting performance in public spaces as well as the interactions with viewers. Schmid (2008:43) made the following conclusion after analysing Lefebvre's theory of the production of space: "Space is unfinished, since it is continuously produced and always bound up with time". This idea of space and place must be considered when analysing Rautenbach's site-specific art practice, since he moves between specific sites with his performance to create different experiential situations in each site. Through his performance, he transforms each geographical place with its existing history into an unfinished space with unpredictable incidents. Rautenbach's ongoing conversations with passers-by around educational issues contribute to the ever-changing character of the space due to each viewer's different experience of and response to his performance.

Performance is an intervention into social space to re-articulate a specific space by opening up possibilities that did not previously exist there (Heathfield 2004:11). In Rautenbach's case, his performance interventions occur in a variety of public places, for example where the usual activity is people sight-seeing and taking photographs. His unexpected performance turns this public space into an ambiguous space. Due to

the specific history of every public site, the connection between his performance and each site will be different, leading the site to shift into an unfinished space.

This idea is supported by Heathfield's comments on Ricardo Dominques' opinion that sites where performances take place contribute to information and discourse, and cannot be reduced to material places (Heathfield 2004:10). In *TENC*, each viewer's own expressed opinion about education and personal connection to the specific site, will reconstruct and change the site. Each viewer's perception of the performance in relation to the site also shifts to create open-ended interpretations of the performance within the specific site. The viewer's response is unpredictable, as site-specific performance is based on chance encounters.

A site can exist in the form of a conversational space. This is possible when a viewer becomes part of a performance through interaction and conversation with the performer as part of the art-making process (Howell 1999:64). According to Bourriaud, cited by Dezeuse (2006:146), when the aim is the creation of personal relationships rather than a physical artwork, it may be conceived as relational art, where conversation as a social activity could be seen as a site. An example is the work by WochenKlausur, *Intervention to Aid drug-addicted women*¹² during 1994-95 in Zurich, Switzerland. For two weeks, each day, small groups of politicians, journalists, sex workers and activists took three-hour unmonitored boat trips on Lake Zurich. Among other issues, they developed a plan to create a boarding house where drug-addicted sex workers could sleep during the day (Kester 2004:1-3). The creation of personal relationships through this interaction contributed to a solution to a community based problem.

An artist listening to a participant's viewpoint forms a relationship from within the art project, leading to an exchange of power between artist and participant. The participant's suggestions are on a level with those of the artist and of equal significance. This relational and conversational component of an artwork creates a platform where questions can be asked, critical analyses and comments can be made,

¹² WochenKlausur, *Intervention to Aid drug-addicted women* (1994-1995). Relational aesthetics. Zurich and Shedhalle. (Kester 2004:1-3, fig.)

and the problem can be approached in an unconventional and open-minded way (Kester 2004:68).

Such a conversational space is a core component of Rautenbach's project, as he initiates exchanges on education with the public, to be documented on his blog. These conversations are spontaneous and include the experiences of passers-by, critiques of the education system, and suggestions for its improvement. However, compared to WochenKlasur's intentions, Rautenbach merely talks to viewers interested in having a conversation with him during his performance at the specific site, with the view to document opinions rather than to allow for the development of personal relationships. According to Meyer (2000:25), a site such as a relational or conversational site that incorporates elements other than just the literal site may be described as a functional site. Here, the physical site is not the determining factor, rather the process. The site-specific functional site is also impermanent compared to works created as art objects for a specific site.

A functional site may also take the form of a mobile site as an in-between site (Meyer 2000:31). The movement between the sites is an important factor. An example is the work of Tom Burr, *Circa 1977* (1995)¹³. He moved earth and flora from the Platzspitz Park in Zürich to the Kunsthalle, to stand in a plywood box constructed for this purpose. This mobile site was intended as a monument to recall the park's past, in particular its 1970's social memoir as an easy-going meeting place for gay men opposed to its later (1980s), more violent associations with drug trading. Here, the symbolism, social character and history of the park is more important than the actual geographical character of the park. (Meyer 2000:31). Timeframes, as part of history, were as incorporated in this work as in *First Supper (after a Major Riot)* (1974), where previous happenings were re-lived in the performance.

The idea of a functional site may also be applied to works where a site is non-tangible rather than physical, such as the fact-based exposés of the 1960's and 1970s by Hans Haacke (Kwon 1997:89). The "techniques and effects of the art institution as they circumscribe the definition, production, presentation, and dissemination of art" as a

¹³ Tom Burr, *Circa 1977* (1995). Site-specific art. Landscape displacement from the Platzspitz to the Kunsthalle, Zurich. Plywood container with soil, plants, trees and rocks, 4 x 4 meters. (Meyer 2000:31, fig.)

concept were under critique in this work (Kwon 1997:91). The site shifted from the physical site of the gallery to the system of the social, political and economic institutionalising of art as a site. With *Condensation Cube* (1963-65)¹⁴ the conditions of the exhibition space, such as the humidity level and the fact that it is something not noticed visually, were the primary focus (Kwon 1997:89). Haacke placed a clear, sealed, acrylic box with one centimetre of water on the gallery floor to demonstrate the creation of the condensation inside the gallery (Jarzombek 2005:35). The visible characteristics of the gallery such as the walls and floors were not the focus, but rather the condensation in the site which is usually not discernible to the viewers.

Another example of the art museum being used as a functional site was a work of Laura Lima's titled *The Naked Magician* (2014) (fig 3). Rather than exhibiting artworks, a performer dressed as a magician inhabited the art museum for the total duration of the exhibition, creating seemingly mysterious things from collected everyday objects and garbage (Torp 2015:8). The museum space was literally transformed into the Magician's studio (Torp 2015:12). The collecting and moving of these objects between spaces was part of the functional processes of the work.



Fig 3. Laura Lima. *The Naked Magician* (2014).

¹⁴ Hans Haacke, *Condensation Cube* (1963-65). Sculpture, plexiglass and water 76x76x76 cm. MACBA Collection, MACBA Foundation. Gift of National Committee and Board of Trustees Whitney Museum of American Art. (<http://www.macba.cat/en/condensation-cube-1523>)

Willem Boshoff created a similar functional site as part of Art Basel in 2009, titled *Big Druid in his cubicle* (2009) (fig 4), where he lived in a custom-made space for the duration of the exhibition. Viewers observed him working on his computer, writing dictionaries and making artworks, revealing the thought processes behind his artworks (www.willemboshoff.com). This performance shows that a functional site may also be described as a space where the usually unseen actions and processes in the making of art take place. Art-making in the last two decades has focused on ideas and thinking processes rather than merely the production of the final artwork as an object (Lippard & Chandler 2007:255).



Fig 4. Willem Boshoff. *Big Druid in his cubicle* (2009).

Social media platforms such as blogs, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are significant spaces for the realisation of recent site-specific art practices. One example is *Geolocations* (2012) by Nate Larson and Marni Shindelman. Over a period of time, they responded to emotive tweets via the geolocation option on Twitter by visiting the place where the tweet was created. They photographed an area of the specific site,

and this photograph and the tweet are presented as a single print or as a page of an artist's book (Stern 2013:22) (fig 5), in other words, as an art object. Twitter as an online chat room becomes a site in itself which they utilise in their art-making process. This virtual site is interpreted as a functional site where people express their thoughts and emotions in a tweet as well as respond on other's tweets. *Geolocations* (2012) is characterised by a play between the actual location of a site, representations of the site as photographs, and social activity in the form of viewing, responding and tweeting. The viewer's response on the final artwork (fig 5) is experienced through the lens of social media (Twitter) as well as through the lens of how Larson and Shindelman combined their photograph of the location with the specific tweet. The concept of representation becomes relevant when analysing *TENC*, as viewers of Rautenbach's social media pages experience comments on education made by viewers through Rautenbach's interpretation. It opens up the concept of site in a representational form. Due to the fact that information and emotions are represented, transformation thereof is inevitable.



Fig 5. Nate Larson & Marni Shindelman, *I just got laid off. Despite the raise, I had a sneaking suspicion there was no money. And yep, I was right. I knew something was off* (2012).

A virtual site such as Twitter can be utilised as a site in site-specific art practice. These spaces may be visited from any location and at any time. Knight (2008:38) views public art as not necessarily tied to a physical place. She also views the internet as an

extension of physical borders. According to Phillips (1988:93-94), public art can happen anywhere and take any form. In the same way that public site-specific art is accessible, so are social media sites.

Therefore, site-specificity should be investigated through the underlying concept of site, rather than by a formal approach to site (Kaye 2000:3). A formal approach is understood as an investigation into site-specific art practices as determined by the physical environment.

2.3.2 The significance of the chosen site

In traditional site-specific art practice the artwork is created for a specific site in terms of the geographical specifications and the history of the site. This causes the site and the artwork to become inseparable (Kwon 1997:86). The site usually determines the concept, art-making technique and the material of the work (Kwon 1997:85). Therefore, according to Kaye (2000:1), site-specific work is defined and may be read in relation to its place and position. In the USA during the 1970s, a significant connection between site and art work was stipulated as a requirement in the guidelines for public art funded on a national level (Kwon 2000:65-67). Meyer (2000:24) referred to Serra's statement that the place and the artwork in site-specific work are dependent on one another, because the artwork was made for the specific location. Meyer (2000:23) quotes Stephen Prina in this regard: "The site-specific seems to be grounded in a very particular location and a particular time".

This approach to site-specific art practice has been and still is evident in South Africa. One example is *Stone and time* by Randolph Hartzenberg (1998), created as part of the !Xoe site-specific project in Nieu-Bethesda. To create the artwork, stones from the site were used as material, and it was constructed by the technique of dry stone stacking, traditionally employed in the Nieu-Bethesda region to build structures such as gravestones, steps and walls (Hartzenberg 1998:14) (fig 6). The history, building techniques, and materials from the area were used to create a strong association between the artwork and site.



Fig 6. Randolph Hartzenberg, *Stone and Time* (1998).

Although Kwon (1997:92) noted that in recent and more contemporary site-specific art the site is not a precondition for creating the artwork, it does assist in informing its content and meaning. This means that the association between site and work still exists, but the site is not the starting point of the work and does not entirely direct the work in terms of concept, art-making techniques and choice of materials. From this perspective, the artwork assists in creating further meaning to the site (Kwon 1997:92), in that the addition of the artwork to a specific site can change the viewer's experience of the site. Here, a situation develops where both site and artwork have equal importance regarding the meaning and content encountered by the viewer.

This situation becomes evident in projects where several different sites are utilised as part of the concept of the site-specific work. One example is the project of Mark Dion titled *On Tropical Nature* (fig 7) (1991), analysed by Kwon. His intentions were to portray the different ways that nature is represented, and to comment on the global environmental crisis. He transported various collected specimens of plants and insects from a rainforest in Venezuela to be exhibited as works of art in a gallery in Caracas, thus using two geographical sites (Kwon 1997:92-93). The gallery as site did not determine the making of the art works. The natural specimens collected from a different site and subsequently exhibited as an art installation created a new association between themselves and the gallery as site, and so a new meaning

evolved. These specific plants and insects could be read as examples of extinct specimens representing environmental damage, and were exhibited in a similar way to artefacts in an anthropology museum storeroom, that is, stacked in containers and seemingly stowed for later use, as if they were the last of their kind.

The gallery as a site where artworks are usually exhibited was transformed by this installation of natural specimens into a temporary anthropology museum storeroom. *On Tropical Nature* was part of a larger exhibition, and the complexity of the connotations between of Dion's work and the other artworks in the exhibition created further meaning, forming another more abstract site/space, but this refers to the curatorial framework of the group exhibition becoming the third site (Kwon 1997:93). Although this is acknowledged here, it is excluded for the purpose of this study. The specimens were moved again in 1992, to be displayed at the American Fine Arts Gallery in New York, making this the exhibition's fourth site (Kwon 1997:93). Regarding the relationship between this installation and the American Fine Arts Gallery, this gallery was also transformed into a temporary anthropology museum storeroom, so the association between the specimens and both galleries were the same. In *TENC* however, the connections change between Rautenbach's knitting performance and each site he occupies, because of the different contexts of each site.



Fig 7. Mark Dion, *On Tropical Nature* (1991).

Therefore, a site is no longer necessarily associated just with a geographical site or map, but also with an itinerary characterised by a sequence of events where the artist moves the artwork from one place to another to create a narrative (Kwon 1997:95). Dion moved between the initial physical location where he collected his specimens to other physical sites - the art galleries - and also conceptually created a theoretical and abstract site through the overall curatorial framework.

Another example is *The Naked Magician*, which travelled from Rio de Janeiro in 2011 to Zurich in 2013, then on to Stockholm in 2014, and finally to Copenhagen in 2015. With each movement from one geographical site to another, all the created artefacts were brought along, and new objects collected from each new site to be added to the installation and performance (Ortiz 2015:sp). Here, the process and in-between activities of collecting and traveling were more important than the production of art objects. This method of gathering extra materials from successive sites demonstrates that every manifestation of the work was different, and that each time the work is installed, it takes on a different form. The associations between the performance as

an artwork and the gallery or museum as a site shifts from being a site where art objects are exhibited and viewed, to a site where art is also created.

I argue that all site-specific art practices are characterised by a connection between the site and the work. The nature of this connection may vary from a situation where the site specifically determines the work to a more malleable connection where the work or performance contributes to the expansion of the site's content. Ongoing, diverse interpretations by viewers are therefore possible. The same artwork creates different meanings when placed in different sites. The traveling from one site to another changes the nature of the connection between the site and the work from permanent and fixed to temporary and unrepeatable (Kwon 1997:91). In the latter case, the creation of new meaning is continual, and the significance of the site in terms of directing the meaning of the artwork becomes less important. The result is a more open connection between site and artwork where both contribute to each other's content.

2.3.3 Exhibiting site-specific art

The nature of the connection between the site and the artwork or performance determines the exhibiting of the work. Kwon (2000:25) noted that Crimp and Fried suggested that the site of the artwork is part of the viewer's experience. This also applies to performances created for specific sites. If performed in a different site, there will also be a loss of the original content. The exception occurs when the work is transported from the initial site to another site as part of the exhibiting concept, such as with *On Tropical Nature* (1991) (fig 5). According to Susan Hapgood (1990:122), this means that the more traditional approach of destroying a site-specific work if moved is replaced by the idea that it may be moved to another location if the original meaning is not destroyed, or as in Rautenbach's work, where the journey narrative is part of the conceptual framework.

Renée Green's *World Tour* (1993) problematized the convergence between specificity and mobility of site-specific art practices. This project was conceived for exhibition in four different parts of the world, with the intention of to be re-exhibited as four separate installations in one showing at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, to find new meaning through re-contextualising without losing the impact of the individual

exhibitions (Kwon 1997:104). Green commented on race and the politics of the African diaspora, and the concept of diaspora informs its creation and exhibition in different sites¹⁵. Both Dion and Green challenge the traditional idea of the indivisibility between the artwork and the site in site-specific art practice. They achieve this through mobilising the artworks to different sites as part of their concept. The connection between an artwork and the site therefore shifts to a more interdependent connection between the artwork and different sites, where various sites and one artwork equally contribute to the content of the overall site-specific art work.



Fig 8. Renée Green, *Mise en Scene* (1991).

In 2015, Anish Kapoor re-exhibited artworks in sites different from where they were originally intended to stand. One such work, *Dirty Corner* (2011), was originally created for an industrial warehouse (Fabbrica del Vapore) in Milan in 2011. The work was composed of 60 metres of steel in the form of a long tunnel ending in a flower-like opening. During the exhibition in Milan (fig 9), an apparatus deposited 160 cubic metres of soil over the tunnel. Here, the work commented on life's journey as well as

¹⁵ One of the installations was titled *Mise en Scene* (fig 8) which deals with the 18th century slave trade in France. *Import/Export Funk Office* deals with the inclusion of Hip-hop music into German culture. *Bequest* comments on stereotypes of being black or white and *Idyll Pursuits* has to do with the 19th century obsession with exotic landscapes. (Kandel 1993:sp)

the mystery and darkness of death (Artdependence magazine 2015:sp). It was later (2015) re-exhibited in the gardens of the Château de Versailles, protruding from the well-groomed grass, disrupting the symmetry of the gardens (fig 10). Sections of the tunnel were underneath the soil and covered with rocks, some painted red. The meaning and content of the work in its new site which has its own loaded history shifted to completely new and different interpretations. The artist suggested that the sculpture could be interpreted as "the vagina of the Queen taking power" (Hegert 2015 :sp), alluding to the gossip during Queen Marie Antoinette's reign around sexual promiscuity, indulgences and extravagance. These were considered part of the many perceived scandalous secrets under the reign of Louis XVI (Saint-Amand & Curtiss Gage 1994:385-389). Since the immaculate gardens were considered a metaphor for the public face of the Royal Family while living at the Château de Versailles, this work implies the dirty secrets waiting to surface. Through reducing the impact and the significance of the original site on the artwork, the artist creates a different connection between the work and the new site. Hereby he challenges the idea that the removal of an artwork from a specific site, leads to the destruction of the work.



Fig 9. Anish Kapoor, *Dirty Corner* (2011).



Fig 10. Anish Kapoor, *Dirty Corner* (2015).

The Naked Magician (2014) (fig 3) challenges the traditional purpose of the art gallery, where instead of the gallery's just exhibiting and selling art, art is created through performance during the artist stay in the gallery for the duration of the exhibition. This formed part of a group exhibition titled *x-rummet* where the artists challenged and expanded on the traditional art museum practices of collecting, arranging and displaying art (Ortiz 2015:sp).

With *Condensation Cube* (1963-65), Haacke also questioned the function of the art gallery as an institution, when he measured and visualised the humidity level of a specific gallery rather than exhibiting and selling art objects created prior to the exhibition. Here, the artwork existed as a continual art-making process, commenting on the gallery as a living organism. Similarly, with *On Tropical Nature* (1991) (fig 7), Dion transformed the exhibiting function of the art gallery to a temporary anthropology museum storeroom. Non-profit art projects held in the 1970s in spaces other than art museums and galleries questioned the monetary association with art exhibited in such spaces, for example as in *The Times Square Show* by CoLab which was held in empty spaces of a former massage parlour and bus depot (Knight 2008:70).

The exhibiting and re-exhibiting, or performing and re-performing, of site-specific art is complex and part of the planning and the concept of the work.

2.3.4 Performance

Performance is associated with site-specific art practice. According to Schechner (1988: xii-xiii) performance is an umbrella term for the following associated activities: theatre, rituals, art-making processes, everyday life, displays of emotion, and entertainment. These activities form part of the characteristics of performance art and a number of them will be discussed in this section. Performance art was accepted in the 1970s as an art medium and practiced by Avant Garde artists (Goldberg 1988:7), such as Vincent Trasov who ran for the position of the Mayor of Vancouver as Mr Peanut in 1974 (Goldberg 1988:180) (fig 11). With this performance he commented on the fact that politics is a joke. By voting for him he underlined the fact that people usually vote for “nuts” in any election (Griffin 2014:sp). He incorporated politics and humour as part of everyday life into his performance.



Fig 11. Vincent Trasov, *Mr Peanut* (1974).

Goldberg (1988:47-137) states that performance has a theatre background, and that some performances were presented in theatres on stage. This theory is supported by Sukhovo-Kobylin's performance titled *Tarelkin's Death* (fig 12), which took place on a theatre stage (Goldberg 1988:48). Sukhovo-Kobylin was part of the avant-garde Blue Blouse group (Goldberg 1988:46).



Fig 12. Sukhovo-Kobylin, *Tarelkins's Death* (1922).

Howell (1999:2-4) offers a different opinion about the background of performance art. He noted that performance should be traced back to visual art rather than theatre. According to him, performance developed from the reality that models posed for artists through stillness, to assist them in creating two dimensional and sculptural works. An example is Carolee Schneemann as a performer in Robert Morris's performance *Site* (fig 13), posing in a similar way to the nude model in Manet's painting *Olympia*. Stillness in performance can take the form of a meditative state with Zen elements, and during this state the performer is able to hold a position from before the arrival of the audience until they leave (Howell 1999:1). Stillness in performance was used in early experiments during the 1960s (Howell 1999:2). Another relevant element in performance led by concept is ritual (Goldberg 1988:163) and repetition of action

(Howell 1999:29). In Morris's performance (fig 13), Schneemann is performing by not moving as part of the concept that models must pose in stillness.



Fig 13. Robert Morris, *Site* (1964).

The title of the performance *Site* also opens up the question as to which site the title is referring to. It also suggests a connection between the dance performance and the specific site of the performance, in this case the Surplus Dance Theatre in New York City (Spivey 2003:113). The elements of performance in a theatre, the utilising of the stage and the fact that performance is based on visual art and stillness, are relevant factors in the site-specific performance of Rautenbach. Utilising pavements and steps as his stage, he sits most of the time in a specific meditational pose while knitting.

Avant garde artists from the Futurist, Constructivist, Dadaist and Surrealist movements experimented with concepts through performance before expressing them in their art-making (Goldberg 1988:8). They used performance as part of their planning and experimenting processes before the actual creating of the artwork. In this regard,

performance can be interpreted as a process rather than a final product. Performance in *TENC* is part of one of the many processes the artist utilises in his project to spread awareness regarding the state of education in South-Africa. Rautenbach's approach to performance art in his project resembles Makhubu's (2011:73) description: performance as a term in contemporary South Africa excludes stage theatre and dance, rather intervening in time and space, and including site-specificity and engagement with passers-by, resulting in less distance between the performer and viewer than in the case of theatre. Makhubu (2011:73) also comments that performance is process-orientated.

Performance art in South Africa has been integrated into the art museums and contemporary art gallery arena as theatrical events or institutional critique (Heidenreich-Seleme 2011:9). Since 1994, more South African artists started to explore performance art as a medium (Stemberger 2011:15). An example is Steven Cohen's performance *Voting* (1999)¹⁶, where he created an uncomfortable situation in a public space by targeting the Independent Electoral Commission's voting station at Orange Grove as a specific site for his performance. He dragged himself among one thousand citizens to vote during the 1999 elections. He wore part-drag animal skin and black fetish shoes with heels comprising one metre-long gemsbok horns. His message was that anyone has the right to vote, commenting on the previous regime where only white South Africans had the right to vote (Stemberger 2011:32). By performing during the 1999 elections, Cohen reached a large public who will otherwise not come into contact with performance art. Barend de Wet is another South African artist who is worth mentioning, because of his knitting performances and obsession with knitting. This is a reflection on his desire to upset expectations around gender and art (Corrigal 2016:20). One of his performances *I knit you not*¹⁷ happened in 2009 when he stood naked on a plinth during the FNB Joburg Art Fair while busy with his knitting performance (<https://artthrob.co.za/2017/03/28/remembering-barend-de-wet/>). His work relates directly to Rautenbach's knitting performance, as Rautenbach

¹⁶ Steven Cohen, *Voting* (1999). Performance. Orange Grove voting station, Cape Town. (Stemberger 2011:33)

¹⁷ Barend de Wet, *I knit you not*. (2009). Performance. FNB Joburg Art Fair, Sandton. (<https://artthrob.co.za/2017/03/28/remembering-barend-de-wet/>)

also upsets the expectations around gender with him being a male knitting in public spaces.

The performer's choice of clothing - or choice to be naked – is a further element in performance, and plays a role beyond its usual function (Howell 1999:17-20), as is the case in *Site* (fig 10) where Schneemann poses naked in reference to *Olympia*. According to Lippard (1971:230), as in the theatre, a performer must be noticed, and costume plays a vital role. In *The Naked Magician* (2014) (fig 3) although the performer adopts certain clothing, namely a top hat and tails, to refer to his representing a magician to create the illusion of mystery, his jacket has no sleeves. Despite these clothing accessories, he is referred to as naked in the title, to reveal to his spectators in an intimate way how he lives and that he may create at any time of the day. Every trick is shown for what it is, even the thread from which a floating book hangs (Torp 2015:8-9).

Props in performance art must be considered (Howell 1999:63). In *Site* (fig 10), the couch and draped cloth, as well as the wooden panels used in the choreographed dance performance, portray the message of the viewer's physical relationship with the art objects (Spivey 2003:113).

As part of site-specific performance, the presence of the artist has become an important element, as the artist generally executes the performance (Goldberg 1988:8). This is not the case in theatre (Goldberg 1988:8). As a consequence of the concept developed in the 1960s for New Genre Public Art (Kwon 2002:82), the physical presence of the artist is required as a creator of art, a facilitator in a collaborative, participative, site-specific project, or an instigator of conversations with the viewers. In *The Naked Magician* (2014), although the artist is the creator of the work, he makes use of a number of performers on a relay basis to act as the magician. Cohen performs himself in *Voting* 1999 while engaging with co-voters. Rautenbach stages his knitting performance while holding conversations with the public. The function of the performer therefore stretches far beyond only performing.

Site-specific performance is a way to express social and political concerns and reach a larger public. It enables the transformation of the specific site beyond just a place with physical characteristics, historical associations, and where social activities happen, into a space of immediateness and present real time.

2.3.5 Viewer participation

The viewer's experience of the site is significant in the interpretation of the artwork. Because of an individual's everyday involvement with a place, he/she develops a sense of that place, including experiences which may manifest as memories, often triggered by senses such as smell and sound. Each person will develop his or her own separate awareness of the same place (Relph 2007:sp). Some will be more familiar with the place than others and have stronger associations, developed over time (Cresswell 2004:1&2). In this case the word place suggests both ownership and belonging, as well as a position in the social hierarchy. Although passing time blurs memories, these may be sparked by revisiting a place. A connection between person and place is important in the viewing and interpreting of site-specific art, since it leads to a more intense experience and interpretation of the artwork. Due to these factors, the viewer's role could be extended into participation.

In the USA in the 1960s, the role of the viewer shifted from attempting just to discover the artist's inner intentions while creating an artwork (Kwon 2002:60), to viewer participation in the artwork, and sometimes even collaboration with the artist in the art-making process (Kwon 2002:82). The participation of the viewer in the art-making process strengthens the ability of art to contribute to the everyday socio-political arena (Kwon 1997:96). New Genre Public Art involved the viewer directly in the creation of the work (Kester 2006:267). In South Africa, New Genre Public Art in the form of community art practice may be traced back to the time after the Soweto uprisings in 1976 when artists collaborated in creating protest art through community art projects, such as CAP (Community Arts Project) (Minty 2006:425).

An art form related to performance art which aim was to remove the barriers between performer and spectator, is the Happenings movement of the early 60s pioneered by Allan Kaprow. Viewer participation happened through abusive involvement of the audience in often small and crowded spaces. One example is *A Spring Happening*¹⁸ by Kaprow in 1961 where spectators were confined in a wooden box-like structure. They could peep through holes in the wall to look at events happening outside the box. The Happening ended with the walls collapsing and someone driving the participants

¹⁸ Allan Kaprow. *A Spring Happening*. 1961. Happening. Reuben Gallery, New York (Sontag 1962:sp).

out with the sound of a lawnmower (Sontag 1962:sp). An example of a more recent artwork which invite viewer participation are from Rirkrit Tiravanija's *Apartment* series, created from reconstructions of the artist's home inside art galleries. Here, viewers may do what they wish within the installation spaces (Bonham-Carter & Hodge 2011:227) (fig 14), such as cook a meal or use the toilet (Searle 2005:sp), thereby exploiting their own acts of participation to generate their own experiences. They also become the performers in this work for other viewers to consider.



Fig 14. Rirkrit Tiravanija, *Apartment* (2005).

Participation may take the form of collecting comments from viewers during the exhibition. Green included comments made by from viewers of previous exhibitions held in different parts of the world in the Los Angeles *World Tour* exhibition (1993) (fig 6). These included expressions around socio-political issues, and allowed viewers at the Los Angeles exhibition to self-reflect in relation to race and the African diaspora through combining their own experience of the exhibition with people's experiences from different parts of the world (Kandel 1993:sp).

The viewer can also become part of a performance and of the art-making process through an interaction with the performer (Howell 1999:64). Early performers in South

Africa like Cohen interacted with viewers and co-voter's by responding to their questions and reactions (Stemberger 2011:32). In *Voting* (1999) Cohen combined the act of voting as part of everyday life with performance and viewer participation. When Kwon (2002:95) discusses the interaction between Ahearn and the local community as part of his *South Bronx* project (1985-1991), she comments that the conversations and interactions are considered as an integral part of the artwork. This is also the case in *Apartment* (2005) and *Voting* (1999/2010). It is also relevant to Rautenbach's work as he brings his knitting performance into everyday life while having conversations with the public there.



Fig 15. Steven Cohen, *Voting* (1999).

Viewer participation does not necessarily include interaction through conversation, but the viewer might intrude into the performance, as in *The Naked Magician* (2014) (fig 3), where he/she wanders uncomfortably through the lived-in studio space of the performer while he creates artworks and undertakes every-day tasks (Torp 2015:8-9). In Torp's interview with the artist, Lima stated "You just take a look and try not to get caught looking." (Torp 2015:13). The artist also comments that when the viewers enter the studio, it must feel like they are trespassing into the private space of *The Naked Magician* (2014) (Torp 2015: 9). The Magician's role is to make the viewers feel uncomfortable and like intruders into someone's private space that they have not

visited before (Ortiz 2015:sp). The magician performer does not entertain the viewers and does not engage with them, unless he feels that a viewer is interfering in his space (Dansey 2008:sp). The involvement between a performer/artist and a viewer may build a relationship, but in the case of *The Naked Magician*, this is temporary, as the viewer enters the space momentarily before leaving the space.

The creation of long-term relationships between the artist and participants are possible. Ahearn's public work *South Bronx Sculpture Park* (1985-1991)¹⁹ is an example where he created portrait casts of his co-residents on the side-walks over a period of six years, and these were exhibited on the city walls in that same area (Kwon 2002:88-89). Because the casting took place on side-walks, the residents became participants as well as viewers. Participation was taken further by the artist creating sculptures of some residents. Without the participation of the viewer, the artist would not have been able to execute this site-specific project. It is important to differentiate between examples of site-specific performance where the artist/viewer relationship is short term as in the *Naked Magician*, or longer-term as with Ahearn's engagement with his community.

Community becoming part of the planning and creation of public artworks is possible. The Vilakazi Street Precinct in Soweto is an example of where the local community became involved. The Trinity Session Agency worked with the local community making artworks to commemorate the struggle against the apartheid regime, and to represent the spirit of Soweto. Artworks include a metal sculpture of children protesting against Afrikaans as instruction language in black schools, and murals, such as the one depicting the police presence and schoolchildren holding placards with slogans during the Soweto uprisings in 1976. Mosaics were also created on pavements (fig 16) and concrete benches. The Johannesburg Development Agency oversaw the project, and the community was satisfied with the outcome (Mooiman 2014:sp).

¹⁹ John Ahearn, *South Bronx Sculpture Park* (1985-1991). Sculpture park. South Bronx. (Kwon 2002:84, fig.)



Fig 16. Trinity Session Agency and community of Soweto, *Untitled mosaic* (2014).

The viewer plays an important role in completing site-specific art through his/her interpretation of the work. The role of the viewer is also extended into participation through his/her intrusion into specific functional spaces or through temporary interaction with the artist or performer. Some artworks are not possible without the viewer's participation, where the viewer becomes an integral part of the art-making process. Engagement over a time period is possible, where a long term relationship is created between the viewer as participant and the artist.

2.4 CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER 2

The origin of site-specific art in the USA took the form of Modernist public sculpture with no relevance to the sites they were placed in. In South Africa site-specific art developed from public sculpture supporting state ideology. Site-specificity developed later into projects where the characteristics of a site directed the construction of the artwork for that site. Even later, site-specific art developed to include performance as well as viewer participation. It seems that the key factors in contemporary site-specific art practice - the concept of the site, the connection between the artwork and the site, performance in specific sites, and the role of the viewer - can be applied as rigidly as in traditional site-specific practice where the characteristics of the physical site informs the artwork or performance. However, it may also be approached more fluidly, to create alternative site-specific art practices to offer fresh possibilities of interpretation as in the re-exhibiting of artworks in different spaces.

Site-specific performance can be executed by the artist, by other performers, or even by the viewer as a participant. A shift in site-specific art practice has been noted from the former emphasis on the need for the geographical permanency of public art to that of fleeting events or performances in specific sites. Site-specific art practice is a genre which cannot be explained according to fixed characteristics, but it finds its way into many art practices where a site plays a significant conceptual or physical role in either the art-making process or the exhibiting/performing of the artwork. This includes public art, as well as art in galleries and museums. The role of the viewer is extended to being part of the art-making process as intruder, performer, co-planner and co-creator.

The theory of site-specific art practices as discussed in this chapter is applied to an analysis of *TENC* in the next two chapters. In chapter three, the main focus will be on the concept of the site, the significance of the site and exhibition possibilities. Chapter four will explore performance and viewer participation in Rautenbach's site-specific performance.

CHAPTER 3: *TENC*: SITE-SPECIFICITY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focusses on how Rautenbach's work can be explored in terms of site – specific theories introduced in Chapter two. These include theory around site as location, and as a public space where mundane, social and historical events occurred; and an alternative view of site as a specific community, a conversational space, or a functional space where the focus is on the process and movement between sites. Site can also exist as a virtual space where viewers can communicate. The significance of a specific site to create context for and meaning to the artwork, and how this affects exhibition practice, is included as part of the discussion around site-specific practice. *TENC* will be analysed in relation to other artworks sharing similarities in these separate approaches to site-specificity. This examination will shed light on the complex, reciprocal and ever-changing connection between Rautenbach's site-specific performance and the multiple sites he occupies with his performance. Arguments include exclusivity versus inclusivity, education as a consumer commodity, and the literacy of scholars. Finally, the manner in which *TENC* is exhibited as a public performance compared to traditional practices of exhibiting site-specific work also features in this chapter.

3.2 THE CONCEPT OF SITE

Rautenbach's work contributes to a further understanding of the perception and nature of site in site-specific art practice. His work stretches beyond the use of a single geographical place since he travels between different sites to perform. Rautenbach explores different aspects to the notion of site, especially to non-literal sites such as dialogical, virtual, functional and conceptual. He also considers the social, political, historical and cultural factors in play at different geographical sites.

The geographical site is explored regarding the public nature of the site. Since his proposals to perform in art galleries and civic spaces were all rejected, Rautenbach chose to present his knitting performance in public spaces. "TENC got born out of rejections and dismissal by the art, civic and education institutions" (Rautenbach 2015:sp). Administrators of public civil spaces were interested in his ideas but would

not commit to hosting a performance. Ironically, he sometimes performed in front of the very civic institutions that rejected his proposals, for example, in front of the Cape Town City Hall (fig 17). This performance could be interpreted as a comment on the way that art, civic and education institutions encourage exclusivity, and include only select groups (Kester 2006:255).

His performance at Stevenson gallery in Cape Town was achieved by intruding into the space without permission - according to the artist, he “guerilla-ed” the site (Rautenbach 2016:sp). The only sanctioned gallery exhibition at Room Gallery in Johannesburg was part of his tour from Cape Town to Johannesburg in March 2014, and he chose to sit outside the gallery (Rautenbach 2014). By doing this, he attempted to include people who would usually not visit an art gallery. This issue of inclusion versus exclusion, one of Rautenbach’s concepts, can also be applied to education in South Africa, as quality education is limited to an exclusive group of scholars: Although school attendance is compulsory between the ages of seven and fifteen²⁰, not every scholar is exposed to equal quality education. In 2010, Barbara Creecy, the MEC of Education, stated that almost half of all pupils going into high school in Gauteng were illiterate, and many schools completed only 60% of their year’s curriculum (Mouton 2010:6).

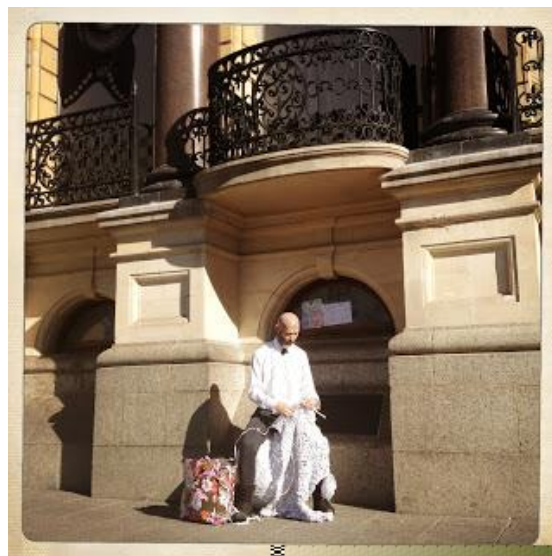


Fig 17. Mark Rautenbach, *The Educator’s New Clothes* (2013).

²⁰ According to the South African Schools Act of 1996 (<http://www.gdeadmissions.gov.za/Content/Files/SchoolsAct.pdf>).

Rautenbach deliberately selected public sites for his performances because of their accessibility to the general public, thereby promoting the idea of inclusivity. Rautenbach states on his blog (6 August 2013) that “Private space is ... inappropriate for the work” and “the stance is to fill public spaces, to claim and occupy space which is available to any and all” (Rautenbach 2014). These comments support his ideal of equal learning opportunities for all, one of his concerns around the state of education in South Africa. Rautenbach wrote on his blog (24 February 2014):

Although education is free, there are also private schools, catering for the affluent rich; maintaining a steady standard of quality education. A situation is now arising that students coming from these backgrounds, with their high level private educations, are filling the universities, thus shifting a balance, creating a wealthy, educated elite (Rautenbach 2014).

Rautenbach’s use of public sites for his performances corresponds with Kester’s opinion of public art, that it is not just created for and accessible to collectors visiting art galleries, but is also made accessible to and created for the public, the pedestrian, the passer-by (Kester 2006:255). Rautenbach’s aim is to reach the broadest audience possible (Rautenbach 2015:sp) to spread awareness about the short-comings of the South African Education System. These sites had to be local to the public, as it was necessary for Rautenbach to interact freely with passers-by. This corresponds with Knight’s view of the function of public art, to create a space for participation and debate regarding socio-political issues (Knight 2008:38).

Rautenbach also performed in government institutions, such as the police station in Mowbray (fig 18), as these spaces are open to the public and he didn’t need permission to occupy the space. In an Elna sewing machine shop, he stitched together education documents, initiating conversations with the customers (Rautenbach 2014).



Fig 18. Mark Rautenbach, *The Educator's New Clothes* (2013).

His critique of the public issue of the South African education system by knitting together education-related documents is in line with Knight's view that public art is not public only due to its location, but also due to its content (Knight 2008:51). Ross (2005:2) states that an artwork cannot be considered public merely due to its location, but also because of the context. This especially applies to socially-conscious and activist art. According to Phillips (1992:298), art becomes public when it addresses questions, rather because of its number of viewers. Knitting as a private domesticated activity was politicised in the United States during World War II, when women knitted war mittens in public - symbolising each fallen troop with a stitch - while having conversations with the public about their purpose (Groeneveld 2010:266). Rautenbach's knitting together of education-related documents also serves to politicize the act of knitting, in the way he raises questions about the public issue of education through his performance in sites accessible to the public.

The geographical site was not explored as a singular site, but as various locations in the Cape Province (where the artist lived); and in Gauteng and Tshwane which formed part of his *I Can't, We Can Tour* in 2014 (Rautenbach 2014). According to his blog,

Rautenbach planned to visit KwaZulu by train and, beginning in Durban, perform at such public sites as The City Hall, The Botanical Gardens, The NSA Art Gallery, the beachfront and The Moses Mabhida Stadium. In Pietermaritzburg, he planned to perform at the Tatham Art gallery, the City Hall, his former high school, the Arts Department of the University of Natal, and on the Midlands Arts and Craft Meander. The following cities and towns would be visited by car en route from Cape Town: Barrydale, George, Wilderness, Hogsback, Nieu Bethesda, Graaf-Reinet, East London, Port Elizabeth, Coffee Bay, Port St Johns, Clarens, Ladybrand, Kimberley, Bloemfontein, Polokwane, Mussina, Kruger National Park, Nelspruit, Upington, Alexander Bay and Springbok (<https://www.thundafund.com/ProjectDetails.aspx?projectId=193#aboutTheProject>). The artist decided to perform in as many sites as possible to spread awareness about the state of education in South Africa far and wide. Unfortunately, only the first crowd-funding milestone of R10 000,00 was reached, enabling him only to complete the tour to Johannesburg and Pretoria (fig 19). According to the artist, *TENC* as a project came to an end in 2014 (Rautenbach 2016:sp).

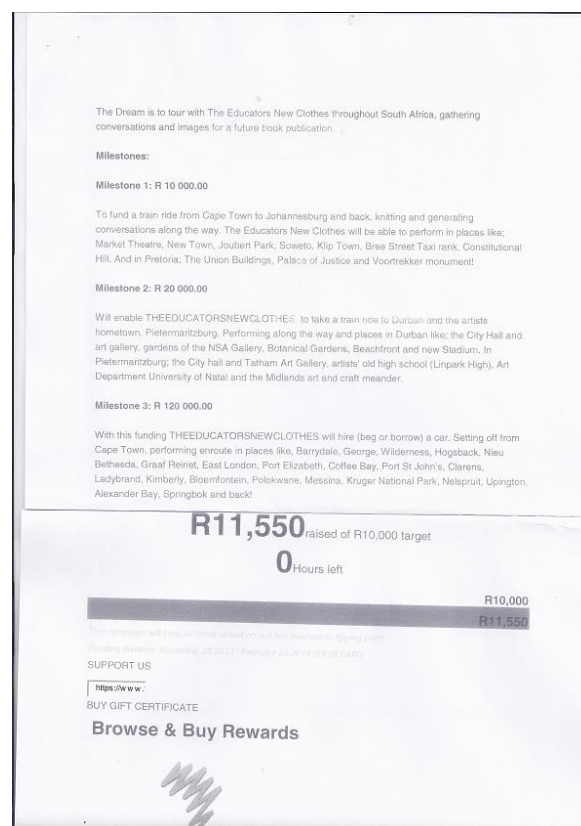


Fig 19. Mark Rautenbach, *The Educator's New Clothes* (2013).

Site as a concept includes not only physical and social paradigms, but also political constructs (Kwon 2002:74). The Union Buildings in Pretoria are the symbol of governance in South Africa. Rautenbach's knitting performance there (fig 21) - where I met him in February 2014 - took place three months before the five-yearly democratic elections. It could be considered as a political act, and be read by the viewer as a critique of the inefficient management of education matters in South Africa.



Fig 20. Mark Rautenbach, *The Educator's New Clothes* (2013).

Elements such as the identity and spirit of the site must be considered as well as the public and geographical elements of place. In choosing the Voortrekker Monument (fig 20) as a site for his knitting performance, Rautenbach was aware of the monument's having previously represented Afrikaner Nationalism and history (Du Toit 2008:570). The monument had been associated with what was perceived as an Afrikaner mindset, having been built as a reminder to white South Africans of the significance of the Great Trek (Steenkamp 2015:33) and the ideal of their forefathers to start a white state in the interior of South Africa (Ferreira 1975:53&66). Post-democracy, the Voortrekker Monument was embraced officially in a spirit of reconciliation

(www.voortrekkermon.org.za). Therefore, Rautenbach's presence as a white male performing an unconventional domestic activity allows him to become part of the present identity and spirit of the Voortrekker Monument.

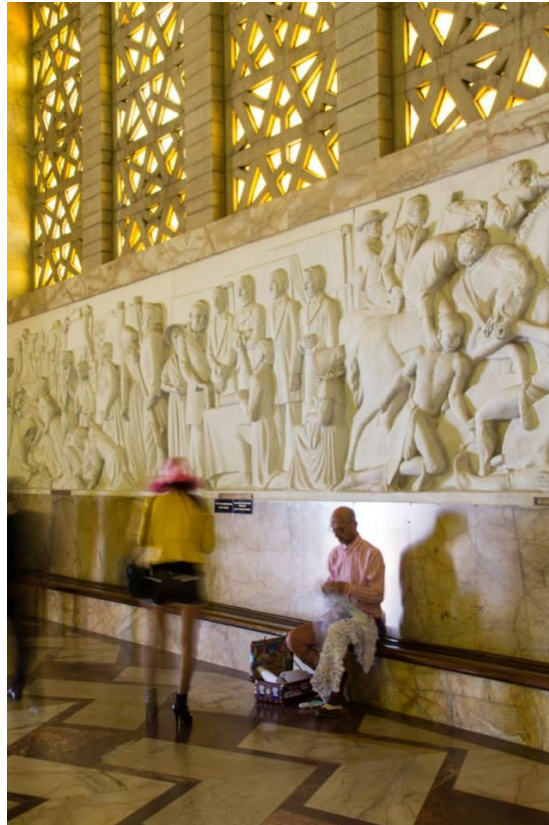


Fig 21. Mark Rautenbach, *The Educator's New Clothes* (2013)

Rautenbach judged the history of sites such as the Voortrekker Monument (fig 16) to add meaning to his work. According to Cresswell (2004:85), history is intertwined with a place (Cresswell 2004: 85). The Voortrekker Monument as a site in Rautenbach's performance is not just a representation of the Afrikaner's political identity in the 1930s and 40s (Crampton 2001:221) and a place to celebrate the Great Trek, but also refers to apartheid as part of Afrikaner identity (Crampton 2001:221). Rautenbach's performance is a reference to impoverishment in education, including that of the

Voortrekker children²¹. Decades later, the facilities in schools in some areas of South Africa is still a matter of concern²².

The background education-linked history of another performance site, the street corner where Hector Pietersen was shot by police during the 1976 schoolchildren's protests against Afrikaans being instituted in township schools as a medium for education, is significant, according to the artist's blog (Rautenbach 2014). During the apartheid regime, Afrikaans, the oppressor's language, was forced into black schools as the language of instruction (Willemse 2017:sp). A platform with metal sculptures that show schoolchildren faced by a policeman with a growling dog²³ was erected at this specific site, as a reminder of the brutality of the police on 16 June 1976 (Davies 2015:sp). Rautenbach uses this platform as a stage for his knitting performance to comment on one of the unfortunate incidents in the history of education in South Africa (fig 22).

²¹ They learned how to read, write and do mathematics while trekking through the country on ox wagons (Oliver 2005: sp).

²² According to *Equal Education*, in 2013, of the 24,793 public schools in South Africa, 93% did not have libraries, 95% did not have science labs, 2,402 had no water supply and 913 had no toilet facilities (Child 2013:8).

²³ Trinity Session Agency together with the local community of Soweto, (2014). *Day of uprising*. Iron rods. Corners of Vilakazi and Ngakane Streets, Soweto.



Fig 22. Mark Rautenbach, *The Educator's New Clothes* (2013)

Various sites in Rautenbach's work are loaded with history. According to Lefebvre (Schmid 2008: 43), history is part of space, in that space is bound up with time as it is continuously produced and therefore unfinished. As time changes, so history and space change, because of the ongoing social activities in a place that transform the physical site into an abstract space (Schmid 2008:43), and such was the case with the sites that Rautenbach selected. These changes played an important contextual role in the dialogue between his performance and every space occupied by him. For example, the Voortrekker Monument changed in terms of history from representing Afrikaner Nationalism (Du Toit 2008:570) to representing reconciliation in a democratic South Africa (www.voortrekkermon.org.za).

Other contemporary sites in the history of South Africa, such as the Credo Mutwa Cultural village in Soweto²⁴, originally built in the 1970's as a sacred healing space, were also used for his performance. This healing space was chosen since Rautenbach considered the knitting performance as a form of healing, and through this connection

²⁴ On 27 February 2014 Rautenbach performed at the Credo Mutwa Cultural Village in Soweto: "The village was begun in the early 70's and its original purpose was that of a sacred healing space," (Rautenbach 2014).

his intention was to make amends and compensate for flaws in the education system. Rautenbach wrote on his blog under the heading “Writing”: “I have a sense of urgency about this, coupled with a feeling of duty...this piece is making amends.” (Rautenbach 2014). The specific historical context of each site connects to Rautenbach’s performance, and corresponds to De Certeau’s notion (Kaye 2000:3&5) that a place is stable but is transformed into a space by unpredictability and ambiguity. This happens when a different situation is created every minute to change the connection between the site and the work, thereby continuously creating new meaning (De Certeau 1988:117).

Each of Rautenbach’s performing sites may be described as a functional site, since *TENC* is concerned about processes. These include the processes of collecting, stitching (fig 23), tearing (fig 24), binding, rolling (fig 25) and knitting (fig 26). This corresponds with Lippard and Chandler’s idea of a “functional site”, where the focus is on the working and thinking processes and ideas, rather than on creating physical art objects (Lippard & Chandler 2007:255). In Rautenbach’s site-specific approach, the physical site is not the determining factor, but the meditation processes and his movement between sites are the key aspects as he travels between different sites to spread awareness regarding the status of South African education.

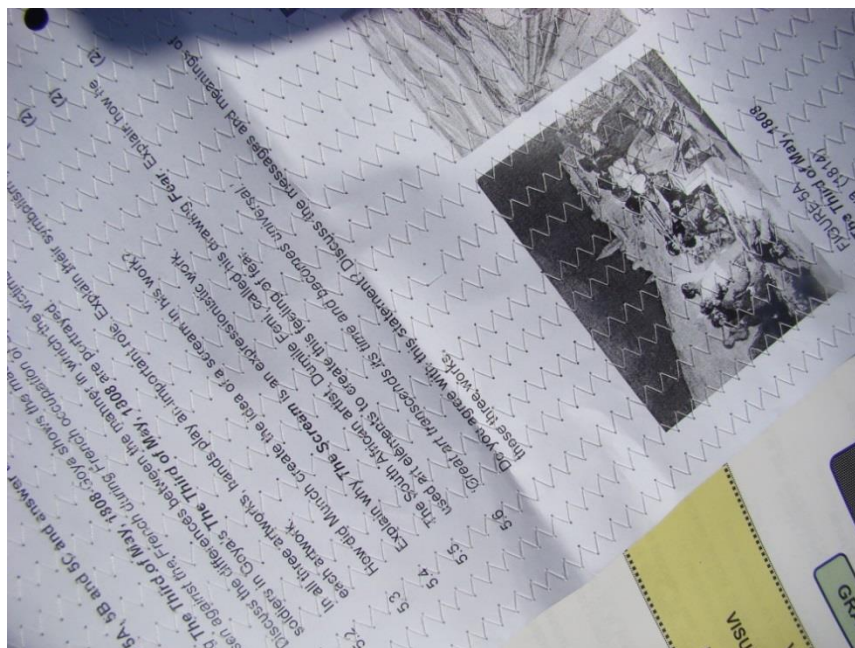


Fig 23. Mark Rautenbach, *The Educator’s New Clothes* (2013).



Fig 24. Mark Rautenbach, *The Educator's New Clothes* (2013).



Fig 25. Mark Rautenbach, *The Educator's New Clothes* (2013).

safe space is important for the existence of freedom of speech within an artistic framework, where the focus is not on creating a physical art object, but rather on collecting the opinions and experiences of the viewers. Rautenbach describes his project as more about the conversations than anything else. He wrote on his blog that he “realised the true work to be the conversation. The rest, the menditations, the fabric etc., become props for the setting of the conversations.” (Rautenbach 2014). These conversations were uploaded onto the artist’s blog, which is in itself a site, namely a virtual site in the form of a social media platform. The blog site is not bound to time or geographical location, and may be visited by a multitude of viewers. It functions as a space for the documentation of his art-making process, as well as for the public aspect of his performance, which also extends onto his Facebook page.

The virtual site also becomes a site in a representational form, because viewers of this site are not able to experience Rautenbach’s performance in person. They are not able to share in conversations with him, but must rely on the representation of his work. The specific site he performed at becomes a representational site through the photographic documentation of his performance at the site. The documentation of conversations with viewers on the blog also forms part of the representation of the site-specific performance. This creates a certain distance between the site-specific performance and the viewer. The viewers are not able to experience the performance or site as active participants.

Craftivism is the notion that, through craft, one can mobilise community action. The focus shifts from the physical site to an idea as a site. A functional site based on ideas was demonstrated by Haacke’s *Condensation Cube* (1963-65). The system of social, political and economic institutionalising of art represented the site (Kwon 1997:89). Within the framework of craftivism, Rautenbach, functioning as an activist for education, spreads the awareness of the inadequacy of the education system. As characterised by the craftivism movement, Rautenbach uses the same material produced by the system he is critiquing to create his art (Rousell 2014:46). Another quality of craftivism (Rousell 2014:46) which Rautenbach shares, is the hope that the public will be mobilised into action through his speaking out about education (Rautenbach 2014).

Site as understood as a specific community rather than a geographical site is the case in *South Bronx Sculpture Park* (1985-1991) by Ahearn (Kwon 2002: 83-84). It can be argued that because Rautenbach comments on education related issues in South Africa, his work is applicable to South Africans as a community. His starting point with his site-specific performance is the education of a specific community.

Rautenbach shifts away from the literal interpretation of the site in locational terms towards a further understanding of the concept of site. The artist considered the public character of site in terms of accessibility. He also incorporated South African history and the political associations of various sites into his performance to put his message across. The identity as well as history relating to education contributed to the connection between the site and his performance in the creation of meaning. The physical sites he visited with his performance were extended into representational sites through the documentation of his site-specific performance on social media sites.

When Rautenbach occupies a specific place, it becomes a space due to his performance, which again shifts the context. Therefore, to create content and continuous dialogue between the site and the performance, site-specific art practices are determined by both the stable elements of the geographical site, and the history of the site. With his knitting performance, Rautenbach opens up a dialogue between the inadequacy of the education system and the history of the selected site.

3.3 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CHOSEN SITE

Rautenbach's knitting performance at each physical site creates a new relationship between his performance and that specific site. The architecture, environmental character, history, political and social elements, as well as the identity of the place and the activities undertaken at each site, all add meaning and content to Rautenbach's performance. The performance assists in creating the site (Kwon 1997:92), the site is not a precondition in creating the performance (Kwon 1997:92). Therefore, the site does not direct the characteristics of the performance, that is, Rautenbach did not create his performance according to the specifics of each site. He selected each site consciously so that its characteristics, identity and history would both add content to the concept behind his knitting performance, and act as a metaphor for the shortcomings in the South African education system.

An example of how specific sites assist in creating content rather than directing the performance, are two of his performances in Cape Town in 2013. One took place in front of the Cape Town City Hall (fig 17), and the other outside the Iziko National Art Museum (fig 27). His proposals to perform were rejected by both these institutions. According to Knight (2008:48-49), art museums are still institutionalised and not sufficiently involved with public engagement, so decision makers within the institutions decide who will exhibit and/or perform. As a result, these institutions are characterised by a spirit of exclusivity (Hein 2000:20). By performing on the entrance steps of the museum, Rautenbach comments on the exclusivity of art museums, which in turn are governed by the state, represented by the City Hall.



Fig 27. Mark Rautenbach, *The Educator's New Clothes* (2013).

In 2013, as a further comment on exclusivity in Cape Town, Rautenbach performed at the Art Walk Open Studio events²⁵ (fig 28), as well as at an Open Streets event, since these events take place in a spirit of inclusivity and create the opportunity for the public to experience art on the sidewalks during their daily activities.

²⁵ On 6 and 7 December 2013 the Eastside and Greatmore studios were opened for the public to visit. On 26 October 2013 Rautenbach performed with a knitting and crocheted circle on the corners of lower Main and Rochester Streets in Cape Town on the side walk in front of one of his friend's studios (Rautenbach 2014).



Fig 28. Mark Rautenbach, *The Educator's New Clothes* (2013).



Fig 29. Mark Rautenbach, *The Educator's New Clothes* (2013).

By performing in the *O.live chemistry of living* shop window, Rautenbach is referring to consumerism, where goods are normally displayed in a shop window to invite passers-by to purchase them. Rautenbach is not only presenting his performance in this space usually reserved for commerce, but is advertising his balls of yarns which consumers can buy as art objects through Thundafund crowd funding initiative ([https://www.thundafund.com/ProjectDetails.aspx?projectId=193#aboutThe Project](https://www.thundafund.com/ProjectDetails.aspx?projectId=193#aboutTheProject)). By selling in this space he is drawing on the infrastructure of retail to sell an idea, in other words he is critiquing consumerism and by extension, the educational system. The impact of this performance is evident in the comments of viewers documented on the

artist's blog (16 July 2013). One stated that education is a commodity which can be bought and that it leads to the attitude of entitlement among learners, that if they pay for a certificate, they must receive it. According to Rautenbach (24 July 2013), the focus is on the qualification rather than the development of young people's "moral fibre and human connectedness" (Rautenbach 2014). Rautenbach further wrote (16 August 2013) that a viewer commented: "The prevailing instant-gratification-use-up-spend-now-pay-later global culture does not encourage deep learning and understanding" (Rautenbach 2014).

A consumerist approach to an education system is also mentioned on Rautenbach's blog, when he refers to a comment made by Sir Ken Robinson in an Educational TED Talk that education systems are handled as a mechanical and industrial process (Robinson 2013:sp). In other words, education has become a commodity, and learners go through a system associated with consumerism with their only goal being to obtain a certificate.

The Elna sewing machine shop (fig 30) - a space also associated with consumerism, where the public purchases goods - is occupied by Rautenbach to reinforce and stitch together education documents. By performing this unexpected activity, he invites the shop customers to question him, and gives him the opportunity to converse with customers about education. Rautenbach has a similar intention when he performs in a food stall (fig 31).



Fig 30. Mark Rautenbach, *The Educator's New Clothes* (2013).



Fig 31. Mark Rautenbach, *The Educator's New Clothes* (2013).

For Rautenbach, performing in a shop window (fig 25) also became a metaphor for how the Education department seem to 'window-dress' their image in the eye of the public. According to Myburgh and Prince (2014:1), at the end of 2013 the Minister of Education maintained that the matriculation results improved year after year, from

67,8% to 73,9%. They indicated in their article that, according to research, most scholars who pass their matriculation examinations cannot write properly or do maths (Myburgh and Prince 2014:1).

One of the first sites in Cape Town where Rautenbach performed was a public pavement in front of a recycling depot. The signage of the depot has spelling and punctuation mistakes²⁶ (fig 32). This builds up a dialogue around his performance since, according to research, many learners cannot spell properly. The MEC of Education, Creecy in Mouton (2010:6), stated that almost 50% of learners going into high school in Gauteng in 2010 were illiterate, and many schools only managed to complete 60% of the year's curriculum. Rautenbach commented on a concern expressed by a viewer on his blog (23 July 2013): "A Psychotherapist...is exasperated by the apparent lack of fundamental literacy skills in graduating students" (Rautenbach 2014). Rautenbach's performance creates an interesting dialogue with other words in the signage as well. The word Recycling connects well with his knitting performance, as he is recycling education related documents by using them to knit a cloak. Irony is embedded in the fact that expensive materials such as brass and copper are referred to as Scrap.

²⁶ "We Bvy ALL Scrap copper ally brass Etc" ought to read: We buy all scrap copper, alloy, brass etc



Fig 32. Mark Rautenbach, *The Educator's New Clothes* (2013).

Rautenbach also performed in sites associated with leisure time as part of every-day life, such as Table Mountain (fig 34), the Company Gardens (fig 35), Sandy Bay beach (fig 36), and Second Pool (fig 37) at Gifberg, Van Rhynsdorp. He also performed next to the roadside in Citrusdal (fig 33). Performing in these surroundings differ from the inner city performances in that, the opportunity to engage in conversations with viewers is traded for an enhanced awareness of the physical surroundings. In education, such encounters are necessary to create opportunities for scholars to experience natural phenomena rather than merely to learn from books, isolated in the classroom. On his blog²⁷, Rautenbach wrote “get education out of school and back to earth” and maintained that there should be a shift from the rational to the body connecting with the natural.

²⁷ Rautenbach wrote on 7 December 2013: “Get education out of school and back to earth. Encourage and develop embodiment of spirit. Less head/cerebral rational focus, more physical body connection with the natural” (Rautenbach 2014).



Fig 33. Mark Rautenbach, *The Educator's New Clothes* (2013).



Fig 34. Mark Rautenbach, *The Educator's New Clothes* (2013).



Fig 35. Mark Rautenbach, *The Educator's New Clothes* (2013).

According to Rautenbach, a balance is needed in education between the mind and the body (Rautenbach 2014). He also states that both exploration of the unknown, and experience, are important in learning. This thinking is evident in a comment he posted (11 December 2013) with images of himself naked, performing at Sandy Bay (fig 32)²⁸. He also performed naked at Second Pool, Gifberg (fig 33), and these two performances refer to the importance of the connection between the body and the earth, as he would have sensed the natural surroundings with his body without the interference of clothing. It would seem that his performing naked in deserted spaces should contradict his project's intention to spread awareness about the state of education and collect public comment.

²⁸ On 11 December 2013 Rautenbach commented the following on his blog: "A balance needs to be established in education. The rational and cerebral needs to be balanced with the body, emotions, the breath, the intuitive...Education would be less about knowing and more about a willingness to embrace and explore the unknown (Rautenbach 2014).



Fig 36. Mark Rautenbach, *The Educator's New Clothes* (2013).



Fig 37. Mark Rautenbach, *The Educator's New Clothes* (2013).

3.4 EXHIBITING SITE-SPECIFIC ART

Rautenbach's site-specific performance to spread awareness on the state of education in different parts of South Africa, ranging from Cape Town to Johannesburg and Pretoria is characterised by knitting education related documents to create several cloaks. He ended his Johannesburg and Pretoria tour with an exhibition of his knitted objects and a final performance in Room art gallery in Braamfontein (1 March 2014 at 11h00) (Rautenbach 2014) (fig 34).

His project echoes Green's *World Tour* (1993) regarding the convergence between the specificity and mobility of site-specific art practices. Green's project was created in four different parts of the world with the intention of being re-exhibited as four separate installations within one exhibition, without losing its impact. New meaning relating to the African diaspora is created through re-contextualisation (Kwon 1997:104). Rautenbach continually re-contextualised meaning through the existence of different connections between his performance and each specific site he travelled to. Both Green and Rautenbach created works in different sites to exhibit during one exhibition. This was deliberately done as part of the concept of the artworks.

Traditionally the function of the art gallery is to promote and distribute art (Knight 2008:54). This means that the work is moved to a gallery for its ultimate exposure, to allow for the viewing and purchasing of the artworks. For Rautenbach, the gallery did not only function - as it did for Green - as the final public exhibiting space for the work, but also as a site to create more objects through a knitting performance, and to collect more conversations by giving different viewers an opportunity to participate. Rautenbach writes on his blog that his exhibition in Room Gallery "challenges the space of the gallery, its function...and how can this be stretched."²⁹

During his exhibition in Room art gallery, Rautenbach conversed with David Andrew, head of the Wits School of Arts (fig 38). Andrew, together with Marcus Neustetter, challenged the way art is taught in schools through a site-specific art project titled *C30* (2007) at P J Simelane secondary school in Soweto. The aim was to motivate the

²⁹ "It also challenges the space of the gallery, its function...and how can this be stretched. The original plan for the show was for me to sit and knit outside of the space, on the pavement, and have knitted cloth and other artefacts exhibited in the space. A tread of yarn was to entice viewers into the space. The intense rain down pour, however, took care of that!". (Rautenbach 2014).

students to view their context in a different way by making exploration part of the creative process. Students used materials found on the site to create art - one such artwork was an installation of school chairs – and here, the creative process was more important than the outcome. (Baard 2013:sp), although the works created throughout this project were exhibited at the Sandton Civic Gallery (Smith 2007:sp). In Rautenbach's project, the conversations during his knitting performances and the aim to spread awareness was more important than the outcome, namely, the knitted objects exhibited at Room Gallery.



Fig 38. Mark Rautenbach, *The Educator's New Clothes* (2013).

Rautenbach had originally intended to perform outside the gallery on the pavement. A thread of yarn on the gallery floor led to the entrance, to entice passers-by into the space (fig 38). According to Kwon (2002:24) and Hein (2000:20), art galleries are generally visited by just a small group of knowledgeable art viewers and collectors, but by sitting on the pavement, Rautenbach could invite the general public into the gallery

to view his art, and possibly to initiate and collect more conversations about education for his blog, and to reach more viewers with his project.

The pavement acts as a bridge between the exclusive, private gallery interior, intended to be visited mainly by art enthusiasts, and the inclusive, public exterior space of the street, accessible to all. Rautenbach's intention to sit outside the gallery corresponds to a comment he made on his blog regarding suitable spaces for his performance and the art objects created through his process: "Private space is thus inappropriate for the work" and "the stance is to fill public spaces, to claim and occupy space which is available to any and all" (Rautenbach 2014).

The knitted artworks and other artefacts were exhibited inside the gallery. The knitted cloths were displayed on hangers on a rail in the form of an installation, which resembled a cloak and elicited the connotation of an academic gown often worn by educators to command respect (Widdowson 1987: 85), thus becoming a metaphor for teaching. Some knitted artworks were also displayed on the walls (fig 38). Since the exhibiting of these objects in the gallery corresponds to the general function of a gallery as described by Knight (2008:54), his work would be shown, thus assisting him in his aim to raise awareness around the state of education, as well as give him the opportunity to sell his knitted objects. By doing so, he is contradicting his critique towards the consumerist approach in education.

Unluckily, there was an intense rain storm which interfered with his plans, and he had to perform inside the gallery. The idea to knit outside the gallery extended the idea of exclusivity versus inclusivity in Rautenbach's work, but unfortunately, these plans had to be abandoned and the conceptual border between the private space and the public space - and between exclusivity and inclusivity - was therefore undermined. In addition, since he had to move his performance inside the gallery, the exhibition did not challenge the function of the art gallery as he had intended it to do, but the gallery performed its intended professional function - to exhibit, sell, and host a performance - while becoming just one more site in Rautenbach's project.

3.5 CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER 3

In Chapter Three I demonstrate how Rautenbach considers the concept of site from different perspectives when compared to a more rigid approach to site-specificity where the site determines the artwork. Site can be understood as a geographical location yet also in abstract terms. In his approach, Rautenbach focuses on dialogical spaces which allow for conversations, social media platforms as sites, functional spaces where the process in the movement between sites is important, and the notion that an idea or concept may even be considered as a site. The links between the different sites and his performance are explored to indicate that moving from one site to another with the same performance does not necessarily destroy meaning, but can add to the content of the work to create various possible interpretations. The art gallery as a site which forms part of the process, rather than just a space to exhibit and sell art is explored.

Rautenbach's work is investigated in such a way to demonstrate that it is interconnected with other art forms. With his performance and conversations, he intended to bring awareness of his concerns to the general public in a non-threatening way while they travelled to work or visited public sites. Therefore, this research may contribute to the further understanding of how site-specificity can be approached differently.

CHAPTER 4: THE PERFORMANCE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Although the site-specificity of Rautenbach's performances is a key element in *TENC*, performance art also includes happenings such as rituals, art-making processes, theatre, displays of emotion, entertainment, and everyday actions (Schechner 1988:xii-xiii). It is a way to reach a larger public and to emphasise process over product (Goldberg 1988:7-8). These characteristics are applied to an analysis of *TENC*. This chapter investigates how Rautenbach exploits these features in his approach to performance, particularly site-specific performance; and includes an examination of both the role of the viewer, and the relationship between the viewer and the artist in performance art.

4.2 THE PERFORMANCE: MEDITATIONS

Rautenbach's meditations³⁰ features the processes of collecting, stitching, tearing, and the rolling of education-related documents into large balls of yarn which are subsequently knitted together during the performances. These processes fall into the categories of rituals, art-making, theatre, and everyday action - performance art characteristics as defined by Schechner (1988:xii-xiii). As Rautenbach presents his knitting process, he formalises his performance by creating a stage or platform by placing himself sitting on pavements or benches.

4.2.1 Rituals and the pose during the performance

The processes of collecting, stitching, tearing, rolling or knitting resemble the repetitive rituals as described by Howell (1999:29). Howell (1999:30) maintains that repetition as part of a performance may be associated with obsession. In this way, Rautenbach's repetitive actions may be considered obsessive, becoming a metaphor for his desire

³⁰ Rautenbach wrote on 27 February 2014 on his blog: "I am working with a photographer, Jeaniene Dekker. Having someone photograph the performances comes as a relief, as I can focus on the knitting, meditations and conversations" (Rautenbach 2014).

to spread awareness about the failures of the education system. Obsessive action informs Rautenbach's overall methodology in art-making and he writes that "my approach to art-making is quite obsessive, compulsive and sub-conscious." (<http://marksplendid.yolasite.com/in-between-years.php>). He recognises a sense of urgency in his perceived duty to comment on education³¹. Obsessive knitting is not limited to his performances, but he also knits during private activities. This includes a time when he attended a retreat, and he commented afterwards on his blog: "I took the knitting with on a Zen retreat that I participated in this weekend. (Rautenbach 2014).

The word *menditations* is derived from combining the words *meditation* and *mending*. Here, the aspect of mending refers to the need for improvement in the South African education system. Rautenbach states that, by commenting on ineffective learning structures, his work is about "making amends" (Rautenbach 2014). The question is raised as to extent that Rautenbach's aim to spread awareness about the inadequacies of education in his performances can compensate for its failures. Further, is it enough to merely make amends and instigate change? Although *TENC* comments on issues within the education system and provokes debate, it seems to stop at that point and does not appear to mobilise viewers into any action that may bring about change in the system. It is unlikely that key figures in education able to bring about change are aware of Rautenbach's performance plea for better education?

The meditation aspect of his menditations refers to his intense focus on issues around education while performing (Rautenbach 2016:sp). Rautenbach mostly performs sitting cross-legged, especially while knitting (fig 32, 33, & 34). His intention is that this should reference the classical lotus position of meditation (Ribush 2000:sp & Pagnoni 2007:1623). This physical position reflects a form of stillness, and according to Goldberg (1988:163) and Howell (1999:29), stillness through meditation is a relevant element in performance art.

³¹ Rautenbach wrote on his blog under the heading "Writing": "I became increasingly aware how established learning structures have learning as their least concern. How there appears to be a disconnection with information, meaning, skill, accountability, application and actuality. I have a sense of urgency about this, coupled with a feeling of duty..." (Rautenbach 2014).

4.2.2 Art-making processes

The act of collecting is an important aspect of Rautenbach's artwork. In the first stage of his process, he gathers administrative documents related to education. Throughout his teaching practice, these documents had seemed to him unnecessary for the essential processes of teaching and learning - although necessary for procedural purposes and as proof of following rules³² - since they rapidly became outdated. In preserving documents which over time lose significance, and by transforming them into an art-making medium, he creates further meaning from their irrelevance.³³ This conceptually strengthens and justifies his concern that too much time is wasted on administrative tasks instead of promoting learning. During his performances, Rautenbach also collects views and personal experiences from his viewers. He documents these stories and opinions, reinforcing the fact that non-learning documentation is an integral part of education.

The second step of his process relates to stitching. Rautenbach commented on his blog that "things can be mended through stitching" and "stitching can hold things together" (Rautenbach 2014). Mending through stitching acts as a metaphor for the repairs needed in the education system, as reflected in the conversational themes documented on Rautenbach's blog.³⁴ According to the artist, the systematic rolling of the paper yarn transforms chaos into a new, compact, integrated form which may be read as a metaphor for creating effective education in South Africa.

Rautenbach's knitting performance is the final process in the creation of the knitted pieces, the one witnessed by the public. Again, this is intended to convey his message

³² Rautenbach wrote on his blog under the heading "Writing": "Through my teaching practice I developed quite a collection of paper. This paper is comprised of mark, sheets, notes, absentee forms, lesson plans, student projects; the paper that collects through the course of teaching and educating. Much of this paper could be seen as unnecessary. Many of the procedures and projects which use these paper forms may be seen as unnecessary, and have very little to do with learning, and maybe a lot with education. Often the paper cannot be thrown away directly, as it needs to be kept for quality assurance. Some documents are confidential and may need to be destroyed; procedures and rules which literally result in substantial volumes of paper." (Rautenbach 2014).

³³ Rautenbach wrote on his blog under the heading "Writing": "Collections of paper: collecting and holding onto stuff which loses and gains significance through time." (Rautenbach 2014)

³⁴ Rautenbach documented the following conversation themes on 7 December 2013: "School/education needs to provide strong role models, healthy setting of boundaries, development of principles and need for mentorship and get education out of school and back to earth...less head/cerebral rational focus, more physical body connection with the natural." (Rautenbach 2014).

regarding the inadequacies in education. Writing on his on 21 October 2013 (Rautenbach 2014), he stated that “the education system is like the knitting, full of holes”. Rautenbach’s processes of collecting, stitching, tearing and finally knitting everything back together emphasise in visual form his opinion that the education system needs to be taken apart and analysed before it can be repaired – that mending is only possible through deconstruction and reconstruction.

Although Goldberg (1988:7-8) maintains that the significance of performance art lies in process and idea rather than with the resulting product, Rautenbach does create objects through knitting, and exhibited these on 1 March 2014 in Room art gallery (fig 38), where he also performed. Here, the viewer was able to look at and touch the knitted pieces from past performances while experiencing a performance in progress. According to the artist, these knitted products are flexible structures similar to the human intestines or brain – that is, able to be moulded in changing contexts – which he refers to as “Intelligent assimilation”.³⁵ This indicates the artist’s view that learning environments have the ability to mould students both positively and negatively, and triggers questions like “Does teaching equip young people with skills to adapt to changing situations and be flexible in life?”. On his blog on 25 July 2013, the artist asked: “Do the existing teaching/learning models adequately serve contemporary learning needs and requirements?” (Rautenbach 2014).

4.2.3 Rautenbach’s performance as part of everyday life

Rautenbach performed in public spaces where people were going about their everyday activities.³⁶ This corresponds to Bourriaud’s (2002:14) belief that art is a ‘social interstice’ because of its connection with both a social context and the relationships between people. Dezeuse (2006:147) expanded on this theory, stating that there is no opposition between art and the everyday when articulated in the

³⁵ Rautenbach wrote on his blog under the heading “Writing”: “Knitting develops flexible fabric which adapts and moulds according to various contexts, whilst maintaining its integrity. It looks intestinal and brain-like. Intelligent assimilation/assimilating intelligently (Rautenbach 2014)

³⁶ Rautenbach wrote on his blog under the heading “Writing” about his performance in public places: “It becomes part of everyday life, as with education and learning” (Rautenbach 2014).

transfiguration of the commonplace. While Tiravanija's intervention - where he cooked and served curry to gallery visitors - was about bringing everyday activities into an art gallery usually associated with the viewing and purchasing of art, so Rautenbach brought his art into public places usually associated with everyday activities. These locations included an Elna sewing shop, or his sitting on pavements and benches, or while commuting (fig 39). Rautenbach's intertwining of his performance with every-day life is supported by Howell's (1999:16) statement that everyday life is a performance.



Fig 39. Mark Rautenbach, *The Educator's New Clothes* (2013).

Another example was when he made yarn while waiting in a five-hour queue to apply for UIF at The Department of Labour (fig 40).³⁷ This unobtrusive performance represented his subtle way of intervening in every-day life.

³⁷ UIF is the acronym for Unemployed Insurance Fund.



Fig 40. Mark Rautenbach, *The Educator's New Clothes* (2013).

This may be likened to Heidi Sincuba's performance (2019) in which she slept as a homeless person on the floor of the International Convention Centre as part of the Cape Town Art Fair to comment on the exclusivity of art exhibitions (Boonzaaier 2019:7). Rautenbach's performances do not discomfit the public, as was the intention of other South African artists who performed in specific spaces at specific times with the aim of creating unease in the public (Mahkubu 2011:73-74). One example here was Steven Cohen's performance *Voting* in 1999, when he unsettled the public at a voting station by crawling along wearing fetish shoes that he could not stand in since the heels had been made using gemsbok horns (Stemberger 2011:32-33). Compared to Rautenbach's performances, Cohen's was dramatic, theatrical, intended to draw attention to his action, and not meant to blend in with ordinary life. Unlike these two artists whose performances cannot be repeated since they commented on specific happenings in society (during an art fair or on voting day), Rautenbach's intention was to perform at multiple times and spaces where his project would create ongoing public engagement and information-gathering.

4.2.4 Theatrical elements

While Rautenbach considers his private preliminary process of collecting, stitching, tearing and rolling the documents to be part of his performance, the final act of knitting is performed in accessible public places, whereby the immediate presence of the viewer creates a theatrical event. Kwon (2002:11) mentioned Michael Fried's statement on the genealogy of site-specificity, "the art object or event ... to be ...

experienced in the here and now through the bodily presence of each viewing subject, in a sensory immediacy of spatial extension and temporal duration ... is characterised as theatricality”.

Performance is linked traditionally to the formal theatre background (Goldberg 1988:47-137) when avant-garde artists would perform on a theatre stage for viewers, such as Sukhovo-Kobylin's *Tarelkin's Death* (fig 9) (Goldberg 1988:48). Rautenbach's performance sites may be considered theatrical in that he creates a stage in each of the public spaces that he chooses, to formalise spatially a platform to perform. By seating himself in shop windows, on steps of entrances to buildings, public park benches and pavements, he exploits these elevated spaces to increase his visibility to viewers to more easily instigate communication with them.³⁸ Performance art may also include entertainment (Schechner 1988:xii-xiii). The entertainment value that Rautenbach's performance causes has the specific intention of raising awareness about the state of education in South Africa.

Howell (1999:17-20) proposes that although clothing is a secondary element it plays an important role in performance by being functional and through carrying meaning. Although his performance is a subtle intrusion of public space, dressing up in an eccentric way to get into character (fig 43 & fig 44) distinguishes Rautenbach from the crowd and draws their attention. Howell (1999:15) states that the function of clothing in performance is to attract others, and according to Lippard (1971:230), noticeability is a prerequisite for performance art. Such types of clothing, or costume, communicates that the performance is not part of everyday day life but is art. Costume is necessary to distinguish Rautenbach's performances from everyday life, as they are not presented in an art gallery and are not formal invited events where people will expect an art performance. Therefore, by its association with the theatre, costume adds to his noticeability. According to the artist, (Rautenbach 2014) dressing up for a performance assists viewers in realising that the enactment is an intervention as opposed to his daily life.

³⁸ Rautenbach (2014) comments that, although his performance is part of every-day life, he selects these elevated spaces to improve his visibility to attract with which viewers to communicate.

A further function of the costume is to situate him in the role, allowing him to be focussed on his performance.³⁹ Although his clothing varies from site to site, there is commonality in his costume to create a unique brand. He uses clothing and accessories from different fashion eras, such as men's sock garters⁴⁰ worn with shorts (fig 41,43 & 44), and traditional Oxford shoes in brown and white tones with perforated designs (fig 41).⁴¹ Neck ties, scarfs, and other tie-like accessories are also worn with a buttoned-down shirt. This creates an image of eccentric formality (fig 32,35,38,39 & 43).



Fig 41. Mark Rautenbach, *The Educator's New Clothes* (2013).

The brown cardboard school suitcase is an important prop in Rautenbach's performances (fig 42 & 43), both adding to the theatricality of his performance while creating an association in the viewer with South African education, having been used in the past by primary school children. The picture alphabet glued onto the lid of the suitcase was used by teachers to teach literacy and is familiar to most viewers. The suitcase becomes a metaphor for the significance of the junior primary years of

³⁹ On 27 February 2014 Rautenbach commented on his blog: "I have noticed that I feel more comfortable if I am more 'dressed up'. This element brings a sense of theatre helping me move into a more focussed space, and I think assisting the audience into the intervention (Rautenbach 2014).

⁴⁰ Men's sock garters were used in the 1930s to hold up socks before lastex was used in socks. The lastex ensures that socks can stretch for easy fitting (Young & Young 2002:90).

⁴¹ These shoes were introduced in 1910 during the Modern era (Webber-Hanchett 2007:47).

education when scholars learn the essential skills of reading and writing. In this way, the suitcase functions as a clue that his performances comment on the South African education system. The suitcase also serves as Rautenbach's way of inviting viewers to follow and comment on his work, as he has pasted his blog address onto the suitcase, as well as his Facebook and Twitter information (fig 42).



Fig 42. Mark Rautenbach, *The Educator's New Clothes* (2013).

It is important that Rautenbach executes the performance himself, as this allows direct communication with the viewers. This relates to Howell's (1999:16) statement that performance artists usually do the performance themselves. This is opposed to artists who create a work of art in the form of a performance enacted by others, as in the case of *The Naked Magician* (2014) where several performers participated. Artists who perform their own creations became defined as part of the New Genre Public Art movement (Kwon 2002:82). The aim was to facilitate collaborative, participative, site-specific projects, as well as to urge viewers to engage in conversations. Rautenbach falls into this category in that his art-making process consisted of his conception,

planning, and execution of site-specific performances, with the intention of inviting viewers to connect with him in conversation about his particular subject. However, since they were not part of the planning process, his viewers became participants rather than collaborators.

His sites of enactment are also consciously selected for the purpose of commenting on education. An example is his performance on the pavement in King George Street in Johannesburg (fig 43) during his 2014 Johannesburg and Pretoria tour *I can't, we can*. This precise location links with Goldberg's (1988:159) statement that the body itself is an art object and its placement in a specific site is important in performance. Here, his bodily presence serves to convey a critical commentary which derives from the historical significance embedded in the name of the street.

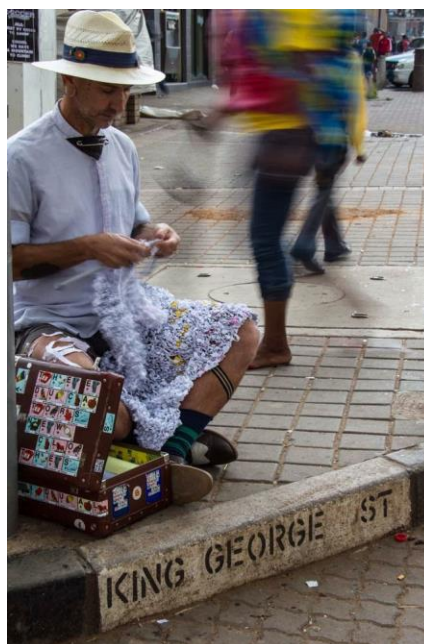


Fig 43. Mark Rautenbach, *The Educator's New Clothes* (2013).

This site - above the street name King George Street – is relevant in education in that King George II's reign saw the beginning of the industrial revolution in Britain and the production of coal, shipbuilding and agriculture (www.royal.uk/george-iii) According to Ken Robinson (2009: 13-14), the flaws in global education may be traced back to that time, since the focus of education then became mathematics,

science and language skills to meet the economic requirements during the developing industrial revolution in Europe and America. According to Robinson (2009:13-14) the education emphasis has not changed and skills such as creativity and innovation - much needed for the future - are not being developed in young minds. These skills are developed through subjects associated with the arts, such as theatre, dance, music and visual art, and are often considered to belong to the bottom of the teaching hierarchy (Robinson 2009:13-14).

A further example of the impact of Rautenbach's theatrical bodily presence occurred when he selected the pavement in front of The Department of Education in Pretoria (fig 44) as a site since the department is responsible for creating a policy for effective learning. Officials had requested him not to do knit in front of their offices, so he chose rather to tear long lengths of yarn from education-related documents (Rautenbach 2014). This tearing up of documents that are part of the institution situated in this specific site could be interpreted both as his opposition to their request that he not knit in that space and as a direct critique of the Department of Education, implying his dissatisfaction with their service and that he holds them responsible for education issues. Although his manner is restrained, the act of tearing documents could be considered confrontational and aggressive. With this performance, he also comments on the Department of Education's focus on unnecessary administrative tasks instead of learning,⁴² and suggests that a deconstruction of the system is necessary to develop new perspectives on education in South Africa.

⁴² Rautenbach wrote on his blog under the heading "Writing": "Through my teaching practice I developed quite a collection of paper. This paper is comprised of mark, sheets, notes, absentee forms, lesson plans, student projects; the paper that collects through the course of teaching and educating. Much of this paper could be seen as unnecessary. Many of the procedures and projects which use these paper forms may be seen as unnecessary, and have very little to do with learning, and maybe a lot with education. Often the paper cannot be thrown away directly, as it needs to be kept for quality assurance. Some documents are confidential and may need to be destroyed; procedures and rules which literally result in substantial volumes of paper." (Rautenbach 2014).



Fig 44. Mark Rautenbach, *The Educator's New Clothes* (2013).

4.3 VIEWER PARTICIPATION

While witnessing Rautenbach's knitting performance, the viewer can decide whether to merely remain curious about his unconventional activity in public, or to ask him questions. When approached, Rautenbach shares his aim with the viewers and asks their opinions regarding education in South Africa. By entering into conversation with the artist and sharing opinions and experiences, the viewer becomes a participant in the performance (fig 45), and this remains documented on the social media sites created for *TENC*. Rautenbach describes his work as "A travelogue of conversations on education and learning" (Rautenbach 2014). Here, "travelogue" may represent a collection of dialogues or conversations between Rautenbach and those who he passes on his travels from one site to another.

I visited one of his performances at the Union Buildings (fig 17) and we shared our stories from our own experiences as educators, both concluding that teaching does not prepare students for life. However, such participation through conversation lends itself to just a transitory relationship between the artist and the viewer, and once either

leaves that performance space, no further engagement⁴³ occurs. It is not a situation that allows for the development of any significant relationship between artist and viewer. This is also evident in Cohen's performance *Voting (1999)* (fig 15), regardless of his conversations with co-voters while waiting in the queue.

According to Knight (2008:115), the line between artist and viewer can become blurred as seen in the work *Apartment* by Tiravanija, where viewers become performers by conducting any activity of their choice inside gallery reconstructions of the artist's representation of his home (Bonham-Carter & Hodge 2011:227) (fig 14). In other cases, the performance itself is integrated with the site through the "artist's assimilation into a given community...no matter how temporary" (Kwon 2002:95). This occurs when an artist wants to speak on behalf of the community regarding certain issues. An example is Ahearn's production of representative sculptures of members of the community he worked and lived in (Kwon 2002:95). According to Kwon (2002:95), the unity between the artist and the community is crucial. With Rautenbach's performance, no integration between artist and viewer takes place - he is the only performer and the viewer remains as such, providing only content for Rautenbach's blog and social media sites, to confirm his critique on education in South Africa. The line between artist and viewer is clearly defined, leaving no opportunity for the viewer to interfere with the art-making process.

⁴³ Engagement entails a long-term relationship between artist and viewer and to spend time with them over a long-term period (Kwon 2002:83).



Fig 45. Mark Rautenbach, *The Educator's New Clothes* (2013).

Rautenbach posts photographs of viewer/participants on his blog (fig 46), taken by the photographer Jeaniene Dekker who travels with him to document his performances.⁴⁴ The blog post (fig 46) features an enthusiastic conversation Rautenbach had with a female viewer in the Elna sewing shop, who is involved with skills development projects in the Free State. Their conversation focussed on the importance of such projects within a South African context (Rautenbach 2014). Viewers become more long-term participants in Rautenbach's project when their photographs, suggestions, opinions and stories are posted on his blog, and their poses in the photographs holding up Rautenbach's knitted objects affirm his performance intentions.

⁴⁴ Rautenbach wrote on 27 February 2014 on his blog: "I am working with a photographer, Jeaniene Dekker. Having someone photograph the performances comes as a relief, as I can focus on the knitting, meditations and conversations" (Rautenbach 2014).

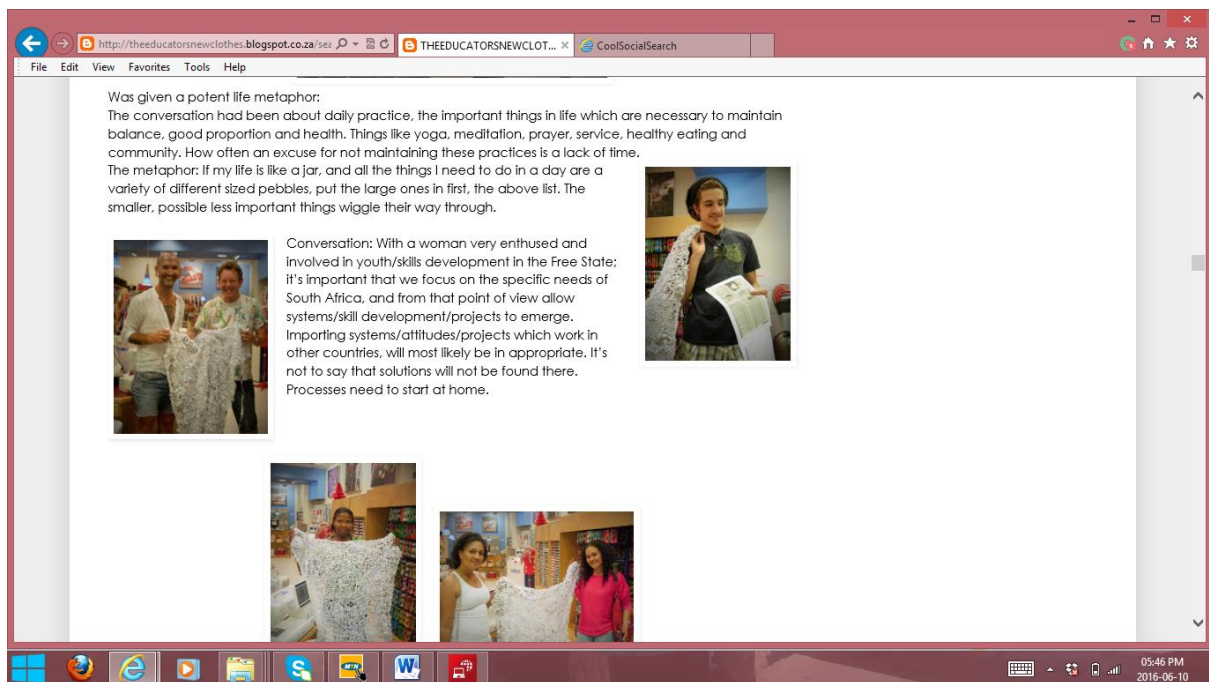


Fig 46. Mark Rautenbach, *The Educator's New Clothes* (2013).

Ahearn was criticised as a white man who was perceived to be commenting on behalf of the marginalized and disempowered black African Americans and Puerto Ricans of South Bronx (Kwon 2002: 88). Rautenbach is not speaking on behalf of participants, but re-shares their stories and personal views on his blog. However, Rautenbach (2016:sp) is aware of the possibility that his version of their opinions and experiences may not be accurately presented, as details may be mistakenly lost or changed due to hear-say paraphrasing and editing.

To fund his project, viewers were invited to hold a conversation with him around education via text or WhatsApp messaging for R100; or they could participate by paying to join one of the artist's Master knitting classes; or by purchasing art objects created by the artist which are related to *TENC*.

On 29 November 2013, Rautenbach made the following entry on his blog regarding the Thundafund crowd-funding campaign he had set up to finance his South African tour:

“Support can be given in the following manner:

- Cast on: by showing support you become a friend on the wall of friends page
- Knit 1, purl 1: R50, THEEDUCATORSNEWCLOTHES postcard with a piece of paper yarn stitched to it
- French knitting: R100, sms/WhatsApp conversation on the state of education
- Higher Diploma: R300, square of knitting +/- 15x15cm (<http://goo.gl/wbUF0M>)
- Degree: R500, ball of alphabet yarn (<http://goo.gl/npmbw5>)
- Honours: R500, personalised ball of yarn (<http://goo.gl/WFwBAb>)
- Master Knitting Class: R1 000, knitting circle in my studio
- Victor and Victrix Ludorum: R5 000, hosting of an event which features THEEDUCATORSNEWCLOTHES
- Vice Chancellor: R23 000, sale of the first piece of fabric (<http://goo.gl/gtQoEe>) (Rautenbach 2014).

The systematic increase in sponsorship and reward indicated here by Rautenbach reflects the systematic increase in the level of difficulty regarding knitting skills, tertiary qualifications, and the skills necessary to obtain a certain position or award; and also serves as an ironic comment on the commodification of education (Rautenbach 2014). On his Thundafund website page (fig 47), viewers are also invited to 'like' his Facebook page (<https://www.thundafund.com/ProjectDetails.aspx?projectid=193#aboutTheProject>) and share comments and information around his project on their own social media sites. However, since here Rautenbach attempts to shift his viewers' participation from verbal engagement to becoming funding vehicles to promote his aims and project, the question is raised as to whether he is transgressing an ethical boundary in art.



Fig 47. Mark Rautenbach, *The Educator's New Clothes* (2013).

By extending the role of the viewer into the role of a monetary sponsor of his project via the Thundafund crowd-funding website (<https://www.thundafund.com/ProjectDetails.aspx?projectid=193#aboutTheProject>), the above-mentioned ethical boundary relates to issues such as transparency and accountability around informing his sponsors regarding the specific details of what the money is used for, and acknowledging his sponsors' contributions in a meaningful way. Contributions of 11,550,00 of the 10 000,00 milestones were collected and his Thundafund website page indicated that the money would contribute to his return train journey Cape Town to Johannesburg (<https://www.thundafund.com/ProjectDetails.aspx?projectid=193#aboutTheProject>).

Rautenbach's blog (fig 48) features a 'Friendship Wall' to acknowledge his supporters, but as their relationship with him is transitory and not characterised by friendship, maybe this is inappropriate wording.

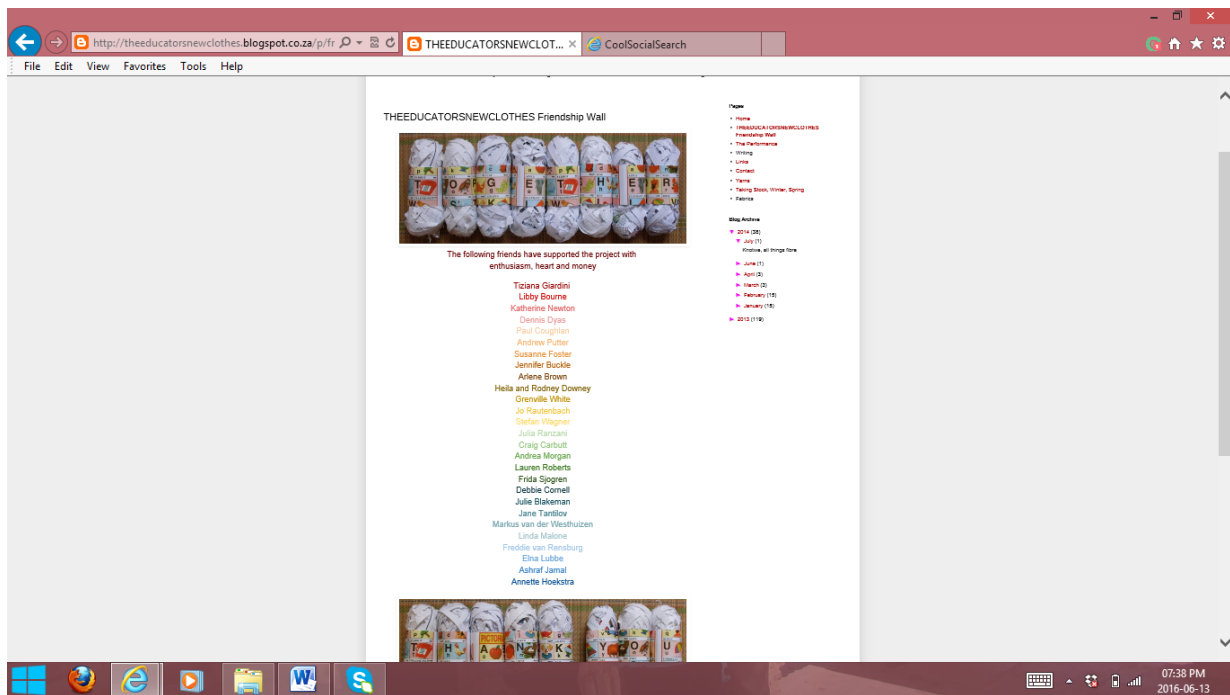


Fig 48. Mark Rautenbach, *The Educator's New Clothes* (2013).

4.4 CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER 4

Rautenbach's concerns about the state of the education system in South Africa and what role it should play are taken further through his performance works, through which vehicle he collects opinions and stories from viewers who witness his knitting performance. He travels from one site to another to spread awareness about these issues, and his aim is to provoke interest in these concerns in as many people as possible through his public knitting performances. He uses social media to share these gathered stories, to reach a broader audience, and to validate his opinion of education in South Africa. By raising money through a crowd-funding campaign to allow him to travel countrywide with his performance, he extends the role of his viewer from that of a transiently engaged participant to a financial sponsor.

CHAPTER 5: PRACTICAL COMPONENT

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapters of this study dealt with how TENC can be situated alongside other site-specific art. Some of the key components of site-specific art practice were discussed, namely the concept of the site, the link between the site and the artwork/performance, the exhibiting of site-specific art practices, performativity, and the role of the viewer. Theory related to the above-mentioned key components were explored and applied to Rautenbach's *TENC* performance artwork.

The following is a summary of the exploration of site-specific art and especially site-specific performance in *TENC*. Site-specificity is not rigidly applied by Rautenbach in his performances. Some traditional site-specific art practices are characterised by a fixed association between the artwork or performance and the specific site where it is located, so that should the artwork be removed from that site or the performance is executed in a site different from where it was initially created for, the impact and meaning are lost. Rautenbach approached site-specificity in a more fluid way by traveling to multiple sites with the same performance.

The collection and posting of viewer conversations during each site-specific performance adds to the process and aim of Rautenbach's project – to collect opinions around the state of the South African education system - as different perspectives are revealed at different sites. The site of the performance is used not only as the exhibition space to showcase the artwork, but also as a functional space where the artwork is created. The key components of site-specificity serve as a framework for the practical component of this study which was presented in the form of an exhibition at the UNISA Art Gallery with the title, *GREENER?* A description of the exhibition held at the UNISA Art Gallery as well as the application of the findings on the exhibition will follow. My art practice will also be situated alongside other site-specific art.

5.2 GREENER?

5.2.1 Background

The exhibition *GREENER?* was generated through my inclination to daydream about my life being somehow different – that old cliché of the grass being greener on the other side of the fence. Nathan Feiles (2013:sp), a psychotherapist from New York City who specialises in disorders such as anxiety and depression, as well as relationship and commitment issues, termed this phenomenon as the “Grass is greener syndrome”, referring to the tendency of some people to exist in a constant state of dissatisfaction with their own life situations, always believing that there is something or somewhere better. This often refers to a different life situation that would include a new career, a new relationship or a new place to live. According to Feiles (2013:sp), this syndrome is based on their fantasies or fears - such as the fear of being trapped into commitment, the fear of boredom, and the fear of the loss of individuality - and leads to the projection of their unhappiness and dissatisfaction onto something outside themselves, where the grass will appear greener (Feiles 2013:sp).

This exhibition concerns the way my thought processes build up imaginary situations while I daydream in moments of relaxation at my favourite spots – in other words, the illusory worlds that my mind creates (further referred to as *utopian spaces*) while I am at specific places within my personal environment (further referred to as *daydream sites*). According to Hobbs (2008:49), utopia can be interpreted as a mystical place, or an existence which is out of reach and where everything is perfect. It can also represent the emotions of happiness and contentment. She refers to the title of Thomas More’s book *Utopia* (written in 1516), meaning “no place” (Hobbs, 2008:49). Roberts and Freeman-Moir refer to utopia as something crafted from everyday things and situations as well as from searching for better ways of living (2013:28). In their discussions they found that utopia is a means of renewal and reconstruction (Roberts and Freeman-Moir 2013:15). With *GREENER?* I am reconstructing my own utopia through daydreaming of better places. Smith (1904:465) describes daydreams as an idle exercise of the imagination during waking hours while the focus is not on the external environment and a degree of mental automatism is present. According to him daydreams are about the longing for something great which has no real foundation (Smith 1904:466). The assumption can be made that the something great referred to by Smith can be something in the form of a utopian space. A South African artist

working with the concept of utopia is Athi-Patra Ruga. His work *Night of the long knives I* (2013)⁴⁵ reflects a utopia in the form of a tropical scene, bright colours, soft fabrics, brightly coloured balloons, plastic plants and flowers and a stuffed zebra. The scene was staged and then photographed. The name of this alternative utopian place is Azania. Although it is bright and colourful it sarcastically reflects the surreal fictional utopia within Post-apartheid South Africa characterised of neglected politics. (Berning Sawa 2018:21). According to him it was inspired by his own marginalised black, queer story, and is in some way autobiographical (Berning Sawa 2018:21).

The research I undertook has been recontextualised through my exhibited artwork in the form of video installation. My intention is to present my daydream sites in a way that they become thresholds to my utopian spaces. In life, my daydream sites contain some form of chair, and it is while resting on these that I contemplate the escapist illusions that have become my utopian spaces. Throughout the duration of the exhibition, these actual chairs with their immediate surrounds are relocated from my personal environment into the gallery, while my utopian spaces are presented as video imagery projected onto these reconstructed daydream sites. In *GREENER?* the concept of site specific has been applied as an exploration of intimate sites, thresholds and spaces – or, identifiable, physical sites that reveal shifting aspects of illusory, imaginary spaces. The UNISA Art Gallery as a place becomes a *space* when my personal representations of my physical daydream sites and illusory utopian spaces are added. A geographical place is altered into a space by the individuals who bring their own social, personal and historical framework to create a different situation every minute. This relates to De Certeau's (1988:117) opinion that place implies stability, while space is "actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it" and thus has no stability. This means that each viewer has the opportunity to experience my work in his or her own way.

⁴⁵ Athi-Patra Ruga. *Night of the Long Knives I* (2013). Pigmented inkjet print
233.19 x 150 cm (each), 233.19 x 300 cm (Berning Sawa 2018:21)

5.2.2 Creative methodology and the art-making process

To place my work within the context of the research undertaken for this study, the following creative methodology and art-making processes were used. I identified six daydream sites as being significant portals to escape to my utopian spaces. These are the reclining chair in my lounge, my desk chair in the study, a garden chair as well as a hammock under an umbrella in our garden, a beach chair on the seashore of Cape St. Francis, and the front passenger seat of our family car. Since daydreams are constructed in the privacy of our own minds (Singer 1976: 3 &15), the time I spend in my daydream sites is solitary, where I am alone or detached. The selection of these sites, especially the hammock, passenger seat and beach chair on the beach link to reports by children and adults about the physical characteristics of daydreaming in a study discussed by Smith (1904:467). According to the collected responses from the study daydreaming is accompanied by monotonous activities such as driving and swinging in a hammock, listening to the sound of water or soft music and being by oneself (Smith 1904:467).

In my daydream sites I often browse through magazines with images of idyllic destinations, unrealistic blue skies and the greenest of grass. These act as triggers for building fantasies about utopian spaces. This process exists as a conscious internal monologue which is also one of the characteristics of daydreaming, according to Singer (1976:4). It is seen as the starting point in the creation of fantasy worlds. My art-making process began slowly by cutting sections of such images of idyllic places from magazine pages. The monotonous activity of cutting can also lead to daydreaming. These image fragments represent fragments from my daydreams and are likened to Klinger's (2009:227) description of daydreams being composed of different segments. As part of my creative process I was inspired by the use of fragmentation in some of the collages of Hannah Höch, Höch was associated with the Dada movement and created surrealist collages and photomontages with fragments and images from mass media periodicals (Makela & Boswell 1996: 7). One collage characterised by the use of different fragments to create the collage is *The Lace Star* (1924) (fig 49). I used the fragments which I cut from magazines in a similar way as Höch to create four collages of utopian landscapes (fig 50-53). The collages were built up by pasting the fragments one by one in an instinctive and unplanned method. According to Klinger (2009:225), the content of daydreams drifts into the mind in a

spontaneous way. The utopian collaged landscape spaces were not pre-planned or created by visualising the final product, as I wished to reveal that daydreaming is less to do with mind tasks and physical activity (Singer 1976:3), but rather about eluding exterior realities (Singer 1976:4). Daydreams allow fleeting images and fantasies to intrude together with half-heard sounds from the environment (Singer 1976:4). The result is spontaneous surrealist landscapes. Surrealist artists in the 1920s and 1930s used the collage technique and automatism⁴⁶ to produce surrealist images. This was done by tapping into the unconscious through visions of half-sleep and hallucinations while cutting up and assembling disparate elements to challenge the aesthetics of coherence and explore the irrational (Adamowicz 1998:5, 7). The collages of my fantasy worlds were done by tapping into my unconscious through daydreaming.



Fig 49. Hannah Höch, *The Lace Star* (1924)

While I construct mental fantasies, my mind is filled with fleeting images of idyllic and utopian spaces, and I am aware only of some of the sounds from the specific physical environment that I am in. For example, while daydreaming on the beach, I recognise the sound of breaking waves, whereas in the garden I half-hear sounds of birds and the barking dog. Klinger (2009:225) refers to Singer's book from 1966 *Daydreaming*:

⁴⁶ Automatism is subconscious drawing in which the artist allows the unconscious to take control. (<http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/definitions/automatism.htm#definition>)

An introduction to the experimental study of inner experience, where Singer states that daydreaming “involves imagination and is a shift away from reality and therefore [from] the activity the person is busy with while daydreaming”. Such activities include being a passenger in a car, drinking champagne in a hammock, having tea in the garden, sitting in a lounge chair eating popcorn and listening to the radio, looking at the sea while browsing through a magazine or painting one’s toenails. Shifting away from reality while reading and writing are other examples.

In my artwork, acts of daydreaming in specific personal sites become tangible through the creation of utopian landscapes in the form of collages, produced through an undirected process. The fragments of images from magazines represent the fragments of my imaginary fantasy worlds and have been structured in an illogical and surrealistic way to instil a visual sense of daydreams. These characteristics are in line with Singer’s (1976:9) description of daydreams as “bizarre reorganisations of past material, wishes and hopes”.



Fig 50. Zilda Cloete, *GREENER?* (2017). (Collage 1).



Fig 51. Zelda Cloete, *GREENER?* (2017). (Collage 2).



Fig 52. Zelda Cloete, *GREENER?* (2017). (Collage 3).



Fig 53. Zelda Cloete, *GREENER?* (2017). (Collage 4).

The final constructed collages were documented by moving a video camera over the surface of the collaged fragments at different speeds, so the random, fragmented viewing experience will echo Klinger's (2009:225) suggestion that the content of a daydream drifts into the mind in a spontaneous way. The video-documentations of the collages were performed in the daydream sites to capture their specific sounds. This is intended to reference Singer's (1976:4) explanation that daydreaming allows the intrusion of fantasies and images as well as half-heard sounds from the environment. It also strengthens the concept of site-specificity by including the visual and auditory experience of the artist while daydreaming in a specific site. An example is that the video projected in the installation that represents the lounge was filmed there to incorporate background music from the radio.

The use of video projection as a non-tangible medium supports the concept of utopia being a non-tangible entity, an unreachable place or space that exists only in the artist's mind. When Singer (1976:3) describes daydreaming as the tendency to create "airy nothing", this could equally describe a video projected onto an object or wall. As daydreams are experienced in a visual way (Singer 1976:5), so my presentation of them is visual through video projection. According to Singer (1976:5), daydreams are

a good source for creating movies, paintings, music and poetry because of their communication value. Therefore, my aim is to communicate my version of utopia through image and sound.

Viewers may relate to the experience of daydreaming as a way of escaping reality. The videos are projected on the found objects used to re-create my daydream sites within the gallery (fig 54 - 58), creating a tension between the illusory space in my mind and the physicality of my daydream site, a juxtaposition of the imaginary versus the real. The continuous looping of each video references unstructured thought. There is no beginning and no end. It represents an ongoing process of a spontaneous construction of different images and background sounds. The technique of projecting videos onto found objects is also evident in the work of Gem Chang-Kue. This artist projected a digital projection of a 16mm film onto the inside of the open lid of a suitcase in 2016. The work is titled *Baggage* (fig 59) commenting on the path of her life which has unfolded in a circular way and often coming back to the places she has previously visited (<http://www.gemchangkue.com/gemchangkue/Home.html>). The video projections of my daydreams are seen as part of the installation as in Chang-Kue's case and not intended to be projected as an artwork on its own.

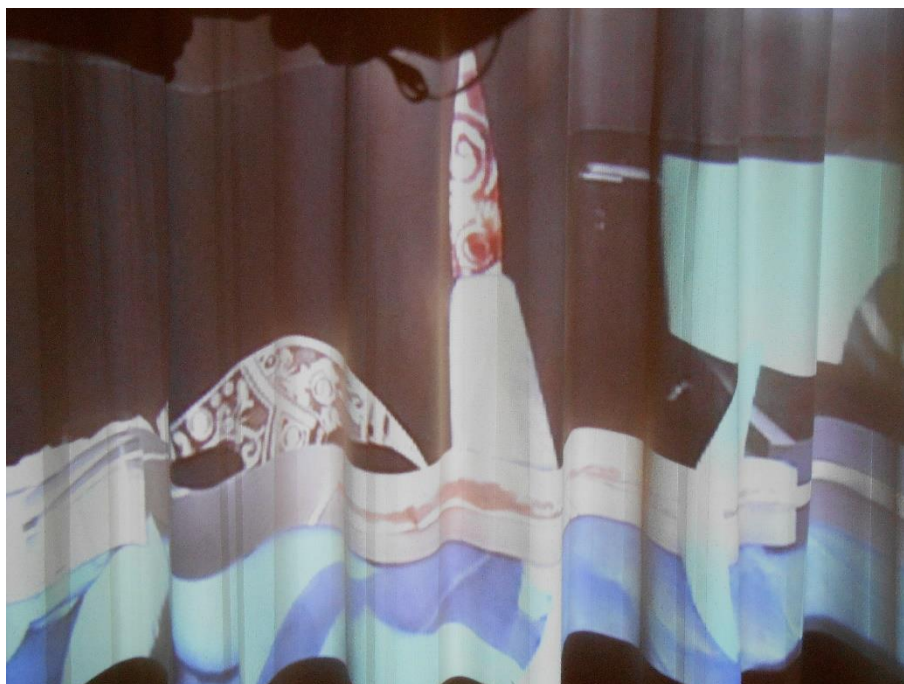


Fig 54. Zilda Cloete, *GREENER?* (2017). (Video projection on curtain).



Fig 55. Zilda Cloete, *GREENER?* (2017). (Video projection on umbrella).



Fig 56. Zilda Cloete, *GREENER?* (2017). (Video projection on beach towel).

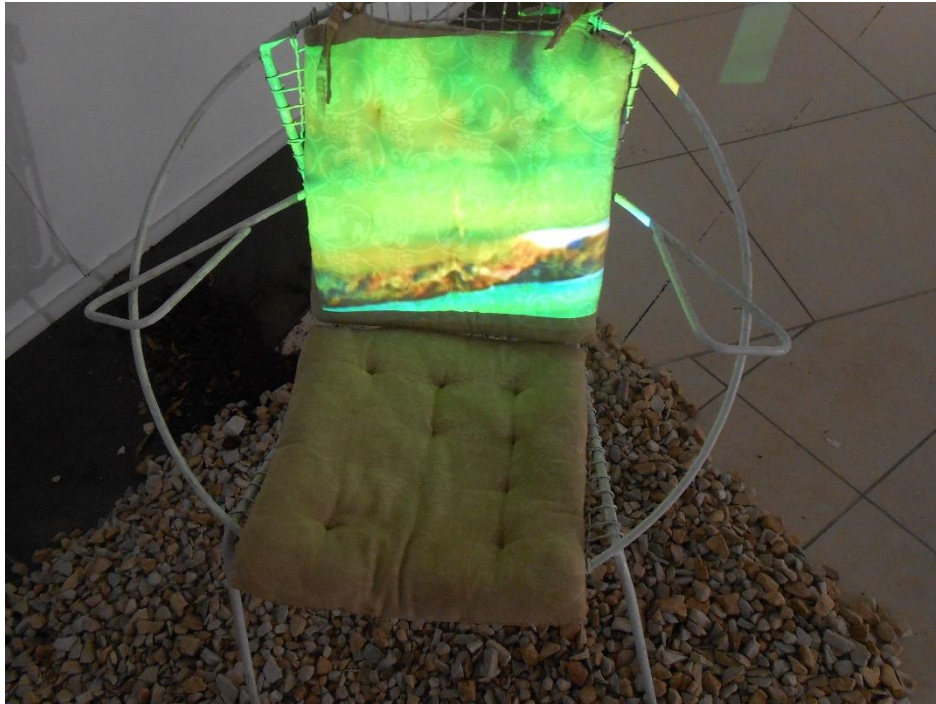


Fig 57. Zilda Cloete, *GREENER?* (2017). (Video projection on garden chair).

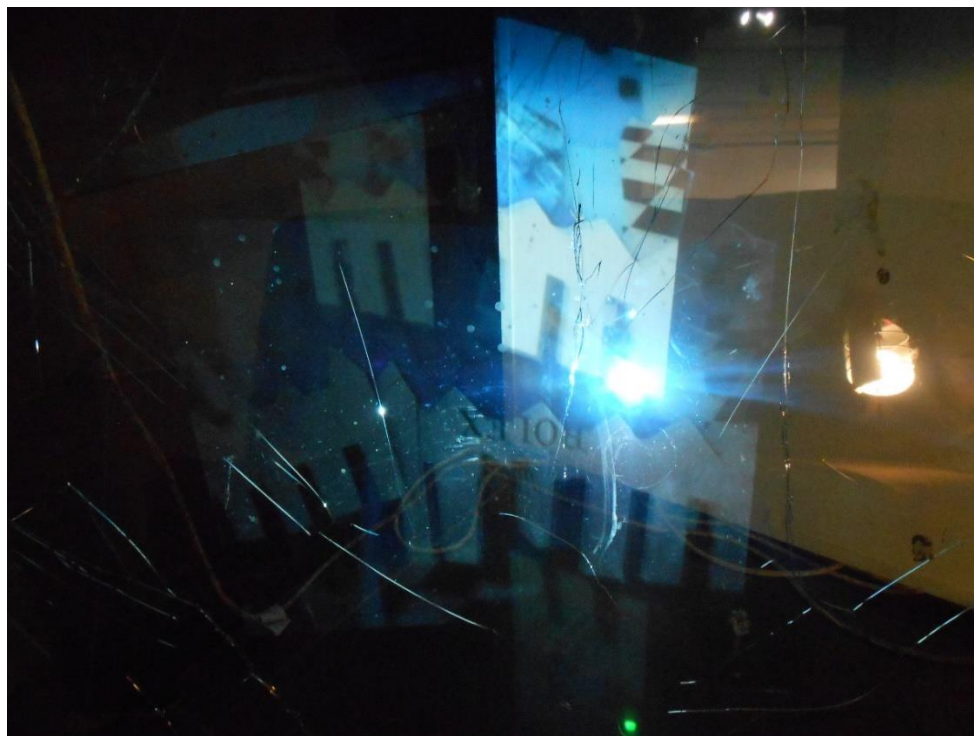


Fig 58. Zilda Cloete, *GREENER?* (2017). (Video projection on windscreen of car).



Fig 59. Gem Chang-Kue, *Baggage* (2016).

5.2.3 Artworks

As mentioned, each placement in the gallery is a re-creation of a daydream site, and the found objects used in the installations are objects belonging to those sites in my environment. Furniture from the lounge, study and garden are displaced from the home to the art gallery. The found objects that recreate my daydream site on the beach are those that I take with me when visiting Cape St Francis. The only daydream site constructed with a found object not belonging to me is the passenger seat of the car seat (fig 60). The use of personal items is an attempt to enhance my concept that the daydream site is intimate, private, and a space where I exist isolated in the presence of my thoughts and imagination. That there is only one seat in each reconstructed daydream site refers to necessity for solitariness associated with daydreaming.

Thomas (1990:sp) comments that a single chair represents solitariness, and as mentioned above, my six daydream sites are: the passenger car seat (fig 60), the hammock in my garden (fig 61), my garden chair in a specific spot in my garden (fig 62), my beach chair at Cape St. Francis (fig 63), my favourite lounge chair (fig 64), and my study chair (fig 65). My personal signature is strengthened through the presence of a specific chair placed in a specific site. Each chair is a materialisation of me as, according to Thomas (1990:sp), a chair refers to embodiment. Each is associated with a specific daydream site and alludes to the activities that should be happening there while I am mentally absent. For example, in my study chair I should

be working rather than fantasising, whereas the hammock in my garden is designed for relaxation, so a degree of imaginary journeying is to be expected.



Fig 60. Zelda Cloete, *GREENER?* (2017). (Front passenger seat of our family car).



Fig 61. Zelda Cloete, *GREENER?* (2017). (Hammock and umbrella in our garden).



Fig 62. Zelda Cloete, *GREENER?* (2017). (Chair in our garden).



Fig 63. Zelda Cloete, *GREENER?* (2017). (Beach chair).



Fig 64. Zelda Cloete, *GREENER?* (2017). (Reclining chair in our lounge).

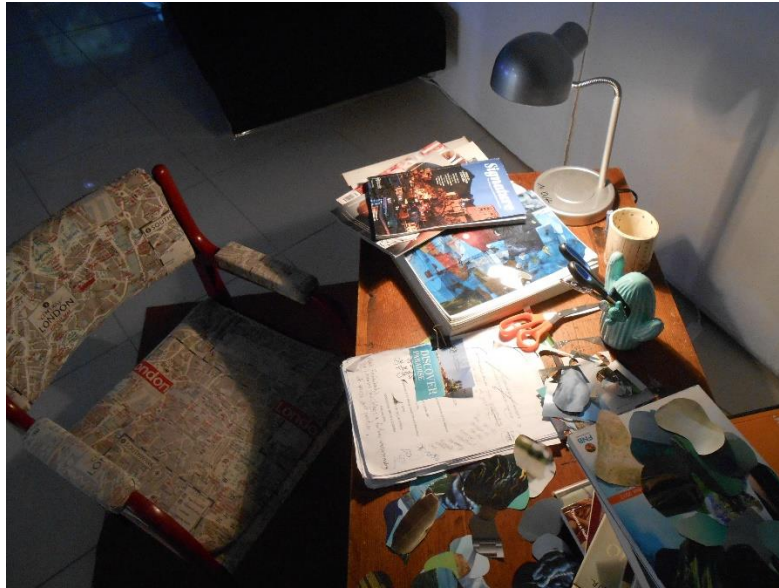


Fig 65. Zelda Cloete, *GREENER?* (2017). (Chair in my study).

The daydream sites are scattered through the art gallery in random locations, which suggests that daydreaming is a spontaneous act that may happen unexpectedly in different places at different times. This placement decision is further supported by Thomas's (1990:sp) research around the significance of chairs, when he states that the way chairs are placed together contributes to the interpretation of that specific grouping; and that a chair relates to a context. According to Thomas (1990:sp), the chair also has a transitional meaning, and as the found objects in the installation, they represent the continuous transition between reality and fantasy. The specific daydream site – the chair - therefore becomes a portal or a threshold to a liminal state between waking and sleeping. This liminal state only exists in my mind when I mildly dissociate from reality to meander with my inner thoughts.

The fragmenting of the installation into randomly placed daydream sites throughout the gallery correlates to Klinger's (2009:227) notion that daydreams consist of different fragments or segments, and this placement refers to the randomness of the onset of daydreaming. The idea of fragmentation is continued by using the magazines themselves – images from which have been used to create the collages – as props in the installation. For example, in figure 66, a stack of magazines is used as a platform to elevate the projector, while in figure 67, a magazine is placed next to the beach chair. Fragmentation is present again in the form of a small collage created as part of

the plant stand in the garden installation (fig 68); and features during the opening of the exhibition in October 2017 (fig 69), when a performer cut images from magazines at the study site, imitating both my daydreaming in the study as well as my creative process. In comparison to Rautenbach who used performance as his main medium, I only used it to give viewers a peep into my process of cutting and creating the collages. The evidence of this performance remained as part of the specific installation for the duration of the exhibition (fig 70).

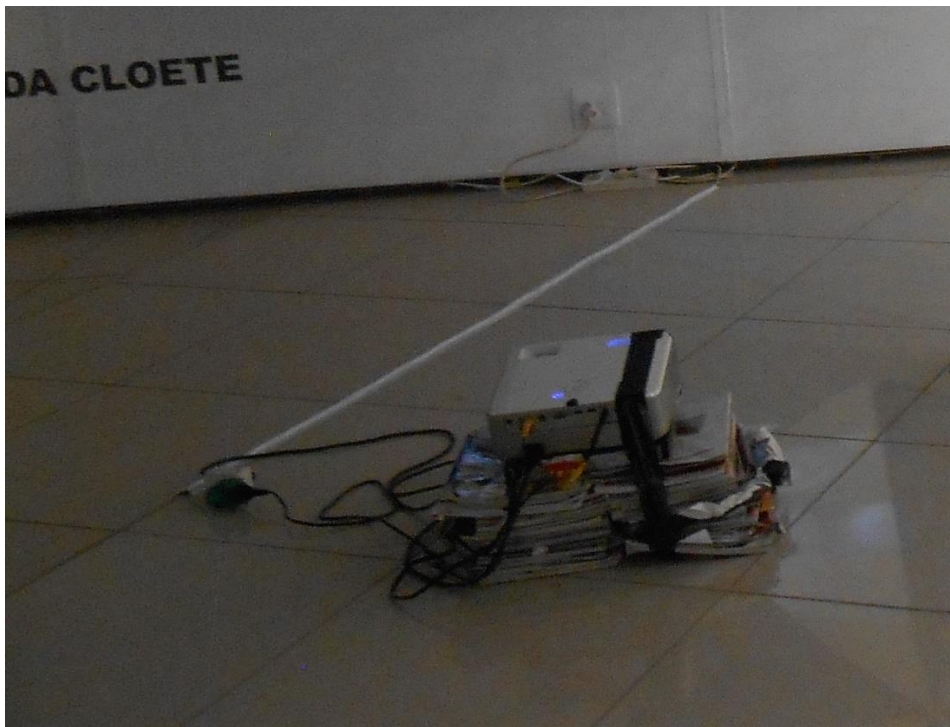


Fig 66. Zeldá Cloete, *GREENER?* (2017). (detail of projector on a pile of magazines).



Fig 67. Zelda Cloete, *GREENER?* (2017). (detail of magazines used in the process of creating the collages).



Fig 68. Zelda Cloete, *GREENER?* (2017). (detail of collaged image as part of the garden installation).



Fig 69. Zelda Cloete, *GREENER?* (2017). (detail of the performance during the opening night).

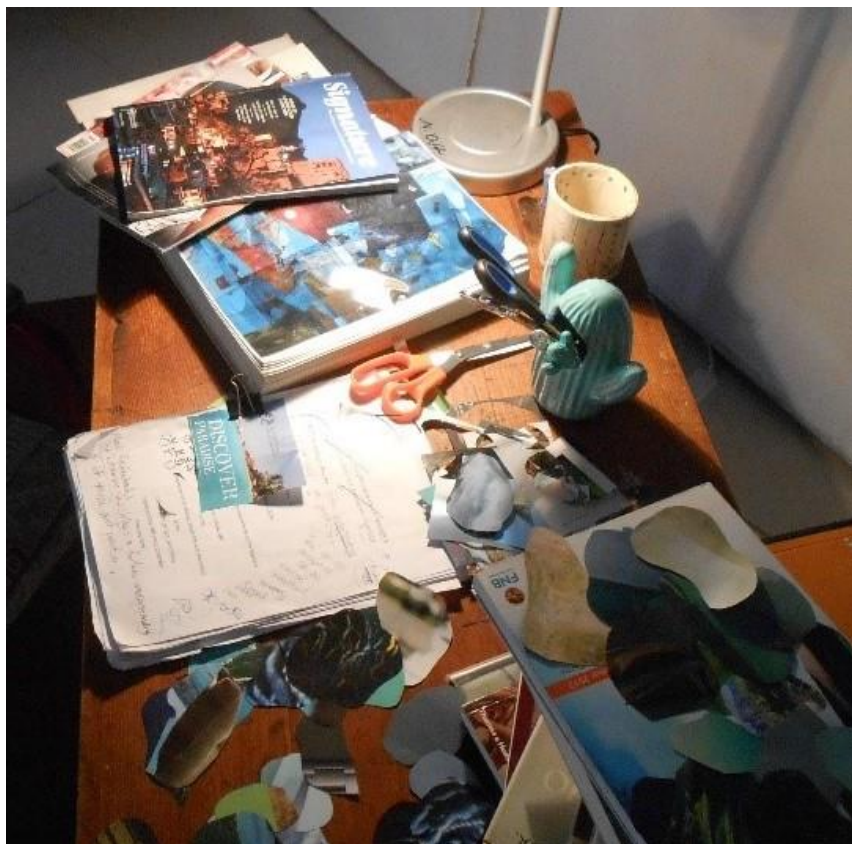


Fig 70. Zelda Cloete, *GREENER?* (2017). (detail of fragments created during the performance).

5.3 FINDINGS AND APPLICATION

The concept of site can be applied in various ways, In *GREENER?* the physical installation site contains found objects from my daydream sites; and through creating physical collages and video-documenting them, the installation site also contains visual evidence of the utopian spaces that otherwise exist only in my mind.

The idea of using more than one physical site was initially sparked by my research into Rautenbach's performances in multiple public sites. In his work there is play between geographical sites, virtual sites, dialogical sites, functional sites and non-literal sites, but the overall concept relates to the significance of the site. This idea motivated my decision to employ different sites and different aspects of site in one installation exhibition – representations of actual daydream sites, representations through video of imaginary utopian spaces, and the thresholds between the two. As Rautenbach applied Meyer's (2000:31) concept of a functional site to his work, where process and movement between sites are the focus, so my installation underpins the connections and continuous back-and-forth transitions between the real and the imaginary, the daydream site and the utopian space. The scattering of the sites throughout the gallery enhance the idea that daydreaming is a continuous activity that may occur at any place, at any time, and in any situation.

The displacement of objects from one site to another as part of the concept and functional process presents itself in some site-specific art practices. Although the concept is different, the technique of the displacement of found objects from various physical sites from my home to the art gallery is similar to the action of transporting plants, specimen and insects from a rainforest in Venezuela to be exhibited in an art gallery in *On Tropical Nature* (fig 7) (1991) (Kwon 1997:92-93). In the same way Tom Burr moved earth and flora from the Platzspitz Park in Zürich to the Kunsthalle, to stand in a plywood box constructed for this purpose as part of *Circa 1977* (1995) (Meyer 2000:31).

The fact that Rautenbach also performed and knitted in sites associated with leisure time as part of every-day life, such as Table Mountain (fig 34), the Company Gardens (fig 35), Sandy Bay beach (fig 36), and Second Pool (fig 37) at Gifberg, Van Rhynsdorp

links with the fact that most of my daydreaming happens during moments of relaxation in my favourite spots.

My process involves creating collages of utopian places such as appear in my daydreams – and simultaneously, fragments cut from magazines further influence my daydreams. Documenting these collages as intangible moving images via video and then projecting them onto tangible personal objects indicates how my daydreams are ongoing illusionary images that sometimes push real life into the background. The aspect of motion also refers to time: my actual movement between daydream sites and how long I spend there. The process also consists of literal movement, displacing the objects from my daydream sites into the gallery and selecting their positions. To apply the link between site-specific art and installation art, the various daydream sites in the gallery are constructed in the form of six separate installations with found objects to include video projections. The fact that I used installation as a medium also links to Rautenbach's exhibition at Room art gallery where he displayed his knitted cloaks on the walls and on a rail in the form of an art installation. To use installation as a medium was also inspired by Renée Green's *World Tour* (1993) (fig 8). To comment on the 18th century slave trade in France, she included couches, a coffee table, a television and framed pictures on the walls in the form of a formal sitting room (Kwon 1997:104).

The performance of cutting fragments from magazines in the study site of my exhibition during the opening night (fig 69) reflects on the fact that some site-specific art takes the form of a functional space where art is not only exhibited, but created. This performance was inspired by *The Naked Magician* by Laura Lima (2014) (fig 3) where a performer dressed as a magician created seemingly mysterious things from collected everyday objects and garbage (Torp 2015:8) as part of the performance.

Site-specific art may be found inside of galleries and buildings or outside in public spaces, and this choice depends on the intention of the artist. Rautenbach mainly performed in outside public spaces to attract more attention for his cause and enable more engagement with the public. Once he performed in a gallery which allowed him to display the products from his ongoing knitting performances, but his public space work was also intended to comment on the exclusion of the broader public from private sites such as galleries. Rautenbach raised his own profile to widen his message by

using Facebook to post images and writing a blog to document his verbal engagement with the public.

By contrast, within a contained gallery place, I give art viewers – not the broader public - a glimpse of my daydream world. *GREENER?* is about my occupying specific private places in my intimately-known environment – daydream sites that allow utopian spaces to intrude into my mind. Because in this exhibition I am revealing my innermost imaginings, I interpret the art gallery as a public space when compared to my real daydream sites which are safely and privately located within my personal environment. With my permission, visitors to my installation enter my privacy, both tangibly by coming across my reconstructed daydream sites, and intangibly by viewing the video projections of my utopian spaces.

Another research finding was that in contemporary art performance, the link between a site and an artwork is no longer necessarily indivisible but may be reciprocal, where each selected site contributes to the content of the artwork rather than the meaning of the artwork being dependent exclusively on the specific elements of a given site. For example, each site that Rautenbach visited with his unvarying knitting performance was chosen to contribute to the comment on the South African education system by exposing his work to different types of audience and extending the range of responses to his concerns.

GREENER? reflects this fresh approach to site specific art in that here, personal physical sites were reconstructed into representations of sites not normally found in a gallery situation. By recreating my daydream sites through moving the furniture from these specific places at home into the art gallery, I have extended the notion of site, since the relationship that has been built up between the representation of the daydream sites and the space of art gallery creates the sense that the viewer is intruding both into the artist's own private environment, as well as into the imagination of the artist.

GREENER? invites participation by offering the viewer the choice of either experiencing the illusion of entering my represented utopian space by sitting in my reconstructed daydream site, or just to view the projections from a distance. The exhibition focuses on the viewer's or participant's response to both my daydream site, and my utopian space.

5.4 CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER 5

This exhibition plays with notions around site-specificity. Its focus was not on creating a single artwork in a specific site, according to the demands of the site. Rather, I attempted to challenge the concept of site-specificity by exploiting it in multiple but connected ways.

I displaced objects from my original daydream sites, relocated them to the gallery site and then reconstructed representations of the daydream sites. These are used as backdrops to video-project my utopian spaces. My original utopian spaces both influenced and were influenced by images that I contemplated in magazines found at my original daydream sites. These images are equally displaced by being cut out of the magazines and constructed into collages, which in turn were videoed. By being projected across the reconstructed daydream sites in the gallery, my utopian spaces moved out of the privacy of my mind and into the viewing space of the gallery visitor.

With this installation, site-specificity is challenged to the extent that no site exists any longer in its original form. In this way, my installation artwork attempts to set up tensions between binary states of being - the real versus the represented.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

The research question for this study is: How can *TENC* be situated within and alongside other site-specific art? The key theories researched as part of this exploration are: the understanding of the concept of site, the significance of the site, the role of the audience, and the exhibition possibilities of the site-specific art.

Discussion in this research paper includes the history of site-specificity as well as how it developed to include other art related fields such as performance and viewer participation. By investigating specific related artworks, I come to the conclusion that a site can exist as a geographical site or a series of geographical sites. Site can also be understood in terms of social media sites, functional sites, dialogical sites where conversations are created as part of the art making process. The significance of the site in site-specificity is a crucial aspect of site-specificity. The tight link between an artwork or performance and a site evident in more traditional site-specific art practices made way for a more fluid situation where site and art informs each other. This is possible by moving one artwork or performance to different sites. This fluid existence between site and art creates numerous different interpretations of the work. The discourse of exhibiting site-specific art with special mentioning of site-specific performance and the role of the viewer as part of the art-making process was explored. When viewer participation is part of the art-making process, the role of the gallery to only present art, changes to a more dynamic and inclusive role where viewers are part of the completion of the art in the gallery by contributing to the creation of the art.

Rautenbach's approach to site-specificity and specifically site-specific performance was investigated with specific theory in mind. His manipulation of the idea of site and how he used it to the benefit of his art making process and project was highlighted. Rautenbach combines site-specificity performance, viewer participation, relational aesthetics, public art, social media and everyday life. By subtly intervening in public spaces where people are busy with everyday activities, passers-by not usually visiting art exhibitions are able to come into contact with art in the form of site-specific performance. His approach to site-specificity revisits more traditional site-specific art practice where the creation of the artwork or performance depends on specific historical characteristics of the site. By moving his knitting performance between

carefully selected sites, the site and performance co-exist in a specific space to create new meaning each time. Rautenbach therefore challenges the significance of the site by reducing the impact of the characteristics of the site on the artwork or performance. The physical and geographical interpretation of site in site-specificity is questioned by interpreting site in a much fluid way to the extent that anything can be interpreted as a site as long as it can be justified. A social media site can become a site as a space to voice the artist as well as the viewer's opinions and narratives relating to education in South Africa. This mindset contributes to the dissolving of boundaries between art and everyday life.

This study is the first academic contribution to the archive of written documents on *TENC*, except for a few articles published in magazines and newspapers. This investigation has brought the research study of site-specificity and performance into a full circle, affirming the findings of the analysis of the theoretical component and highlighting the fluid and broader application of site-specificity including performance, viewer participation, and everyday life. It confirms that the concept of site-specificity has a complex nature and there is always scope for the reconsidering of this concept.

Although this study is reconsidering Rautenbach's fluid approach to site specific art practice, a few concerns and questions can be raised as positive critique. By dissolving the boundaries between art and everyday life his knitting performance in public places can be overlooked by some as an everyday activity instead of site-specific art. Did he then succeed with his aim to raise awareness about education? Is the ephemeral relationship between Rautenbach as the artist and the viewer's who share their opinions with him, valid enough to give his project ethical fitness and artistic authenticity mentioned by Kwon (2002:95)? Is this relationship necessary to enable Rautenbach to speak about education in South Africa on behalf of the viewers and the public in general? Are the collected comments posted on Rautenbach's blog a reflection of the general opinion of the community? Is he therefore talking on behalf of the public and serving the community or is his project a validation and confirmation of his personal opinion about and experience of education in South Africa? Is the role of viewer participant not deflated to the role of a client funding his project by paying for certain services such as to have a conversation with him via sms or WhatsApp? Another main question remains: Does Rautenbach succeed in his aim to make people not only aware of the situation in education, but spur them on to initiate change?

Wasn't his initial plan to perform in government buildings traded for plan B in the form of accessible public spaces due to his proposals rejected by governmental institutions? Weren't the rejections of his proposals for performing within these institutions enough proof that education is in a crisis? He had to turn to unsanctioned public sites to comment on education through his performance.

Besides these concerns, Rautenbach challenges viewers with his project, to think about the state of education in South Africa. His commentary can also be applied to the world's education crisis. The title of the work: *The Educator's New Clothes* can thus be seen as a metaphor for new ideas and perspectives needed to challenge existing education issues. This project therefore not only challenges the education system, but also the way we understand site-specificity. Education is challenged in terms of the relevance of content and skills being taught to prepare students for life after school. The accessibility of good quality education to everyone is also questioned among other things. Site-specificity can be challenged to a point where any artwork can be placed in any site and connections between the artwork and site can be rationalised.

This study can be expanded through the investigation of the concept of craftivism (craft as means of art activism) as applied in *The Educator's New Clothes* by Mark Rautenbach. The acceptance and aim of yarn-bombing as a valid movement in art and how it can be practiced in a fluid and integrated site-specific way can also be considered as a point to investigate further. Craftivism and yarn-bombing were not included in this study, as the focus were on site-specificity, performance and viewer participation.

In Rautenbach's work site-specificity evolves to the extent that if an artwork or performance has been created for a specific site, and it is moved to a different site or sites, connections between the displaced artwork and the site occurs. This is possible through analysing the site in terms of physical characteristics and history as well as exploring the artwork in terms of the intention of the artist, concept and the viewer's own experience.

As an extension of this study my own exhibition titled *GREENER?* can be situated within site-specific art practice exploring site in the form of displaced, reconstructed sites to include utopian spaces existing in my mind as video projections on found

objects in the reconstructed sites. This means that site-specificity can be pushed and challenged to the extent that it no-longer exists. This allows for fluid and integrated art which can't be categorised and which depends on the viewer for completion. I come to the conclusion that site-specific art has always been negotiated by various artists, including Rautenbach and myself.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

E-mail interview with Mark Rautenbach: 13 January 2015

Dear Zelda

Blessings for the year ahead too !!

It was only when interviewed by Knotwe that I became aware of the term craftivism.
I was not aware of the movement before!

Yes the sites are very specific:

I had sent proposals to galleries and civic Public spaces in order to have a site(s) for the performance.

I was repeatedly ignored and turned down by galleries.

The intention was that the performance be accessible to anyone and everyone.

I thus turned my attention to public civil spaces, like the city hall, civic centre. The administrators of these spaces were very interested, but never committed in the end.

TENC got born out of rejection and dismissal by the art and civic/and education institutions.

I therefore took to the streets; in order to claim, occupy and activate spaces which were available to me. Spaces that I or anyone else need not ask permission to be in.

This became the criteria for the selections of the specific sites:

- 1) that I didn't need permission to occupy them
- 2) that they are accessible to the general public
- 3) some had specific historical, political, educational content/meaning/symbolism
- 4) that the performance include and be exposed to, the broadest population demographic
- 5) performed in spaces in which I had been invited to participate in

craftivism I found out also aligns with the occupy movement

I am deregistering

I've been doing the masters in the wrong institution
CPUT, it is design not visual art, and the research is art not design!

im not clear if I will continue with masters!

all the best x

On Tuesday, 13 January 2015, 11:47, "Cloete, Zelda" <cloetz@unisa.ac.za> wrote:

Dear Mark

I wish you a very blessed 2015!!

How is your writing going?

Two quick questions please:

1. I know that your work is about craftivism, but will you describe your work (Educators new clothes) as site-specific too, as you are performing at different sites?
2. Did you carefully consider each site where you performed (concerning the meaning of the site in relation to your work?)

APPENDIX 2

E-mail interview with Mark Rautenbach: 05 July 2016

Hallo there Mark

Hope you are very well? I am hopefully busy with the final stages of the completion of my dissertation. I am submitting in February 2017.

I will appreciate it so much if you could answer some questions regarding TENC. I need more detail for my writing regarding some issues.

1. Why did you use astrological names for your knitted cloths?
2. Was your performance at the Stevenson gallery just another site for your knitting performance or was it a site where you did an organised exhibition?
3. Where is Second Pool where you knitted?
4. Do you still plan to tour Durban with your knitting performance or do you see TENC as final and something of the past?
5. Is meditation part of your performance and how does it link to "menditations"? How does meditation and menditations relate to the lotus position in most of your performances?
6. What information was on the planted USB stick during one of your performances?
7. Do you see your stay at the Dharma centre as part of your travelogues and performance and did you have conversations on education while there?

Much appreciated and warm regards



mark rautenbach

02:30 (9 hours ago)

to me

Dear Zelda

Please find my reply attached.

TENC is to be included in a group show at Iziko, later this year or early next year!

I'll keep you posted.

Id love to read your script when you are finished.

much love

x

Mark

Attached reply:

1. Why did you use astrological names for your knitted cloths?

I wanted to do a different timing system, other than gregorian/commercial/industrial calendar. I work with Astrology and the astrological signs refer to a procession [of time] through seasons.

The whole performance works outside of commerce and industry, situating itself through the body into a greater body [seasons, sun/planetary cycles].

2. Was your performance at the Stevenson gallery just another site for your knitting performance or was it a site where you did an organised exhibition?

I 'guerilla-ed' the site, it was not organised. I didn't feel entirely happy about it as I felt I was vandalising private property. All other sites were public or I had been invited.

3. Where is Second Pool where you knitted?

Gifberg, Van Rhynsdorp

4. Do you still plan to tour Durban with your knitting performance or do you see TENC as final and something of the past?

TENC finished in 2014. There have been off shoots; Woordfees, Stellenbosch University, 2016; District 6 Museum 50th commemoration print exchange.

5. Is meditation part of your performance and how does it link to "menditations"? How does meditation and menditations relate to the lotus position in most of your performances?

Yes. Menditations are various processes which embody/facilitate/are meditation

Meditation and sitting-with are interchangeable.

Meditation/sitting-with/menditations are encouraging the engagement with uncomfortable 'matter' without any agender, no attainment with nothing to attain.

Sitting cross-legged is a comfortable and stable position for me to sit in, and yes it references a classic meditation pose.

6. What information was on the planted USB stick during one of your performances?

It was a guerilla marketing campaign for the movie 'Four Corners'.

Information pertaining to that.

7. Do you see your stay at the Dharma centre as part of your travelogues and performance and did you have conversations on education while there?

Yes, I am a member of that Sangha, and by performing at that site include that practice as part of TENC.

I don't recall conversation as retreats there are silent. Being there, performing there in that space was the conversation.

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