RESISTING ICONOCLASM: CONTEMPORARY RESPONSES TO LANDSCAPE IN SOUTH AFRICAN ART

by

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Title:

Resisting iconoclasm: Contemporary responses to landscape in South African art

Summary:

This dissertation sets out to find the ways in which contemporary performance artists problematise and resist the iconoclasms found in modernist landscape paintings. The landscape paintings of Maggie Laubser, J.H. Pierneef and Hugo Naudé are discussed to show iconoclastic renditions of the South African landscape that aim to fit the ideologies of the Afrikaner people. These absences are shown to be resisted by contemporary artists though their deliberate presence within it. Berni Searle, Sethembile Msezane, Athi-Patra Ruga and Hannelie Coetzee use remembrances, calculated violence, the speaking of silenced voices and a disruption of power dynamics in their dissent. They practice an embodied phenomenological experience in the landscape to provide a counter-archive and resist the iconoclasms.

Okucashuniwe:

Inhloso yalolu shicilelo bekuwukuhlola izindlela izingcweti zamanje zibhekana ngayo nenkinga futhi zimelane nokuphikiswa okuqinile kwezinkolelo namasiko amukelwa ngokuvamile atholakala emidwebeni yokwakheka kwezwe yesimanjemanje. Imidwebo yezwe kaMaggie Laubser, J.H. U-Pierneef kanye no-Hugo Naudé kwaxoxiswana ngayo ukuze kuboniswe ukuphikiswa okuqinile kwezinkolelo namasiko amukelwa ngokuvamile kwezwe laseNingizimu Afrika okwakuhloselwe ukuhambisana nemibono yabantu abangamaBhunu. Ukungabikho kobandlululo phakathi kwalezi

zindawo kuboniswe ukuthi izingcweti zesimanje ziyakuphikisa nakuba ukuba khona kwabo ngamabomu kuyo. U-Berni Searle, u-Sethembile Msezane, u-Athi-Patra Ruga no-Hannelie Coetzee basebenzisa izikhumbuzo, udlame olulinganiselwe, ukukhuluma amazwi athule kanye nokuphazamiseka kokuguquguquka kwamandla ekuphikisaneni kwabo. Bazijwayeza isipiliyoni esihlanganisiwe sesifundo semvelo namaqiniso sezinhlaka zokuhlangenwe nakho nokwazi ezweni ukuze banikeze ingobo yomlando ephikisayo futhi bamelane nokuphikiswa okuqinile kwezinkolelo namasiko amukelwa ngokuvamile kwemidwebo yokwakheka kwezwe yesimanjemanje.

Opsomming:

Die doel van hierdie skripsie was om die maniere te ondersoek waarop hedendaagse vertoonkunstenaars die ikonoklasme wat in modernistiese landskapskilderkuns voorkom, problematiseer en teenstaan.

Die landskapskilderkuns van Maggie Laubser, J.H. Pierneef en Hugo Naudé word bespreek om ikonoklastiese weergawes van die Suid-Afrikaanse landskap te toon, wat ten doel gehad het om in te pas by die ideologieë van die Afrikanervolk. Die bevooroordeelde ontbrekings in hierdie landskappe is uitgebeeld as teengestaan deur hedendaagse kunstenaars, deur hul doelbewuste teenwoordigheid daarin. Berni Searle, Sethembile Msezane, Athi-Patra Ruga en Hannelie Coetzee gebruik herinneringe, beredeneerde geweld, die praat van stilgemaakte stemme, en 'n verskeuring van magsdinamika in hul meningsverskille. Hulle beoefen 'n beliggaamde fenomenologiese ervaring in die landskap om 'n teenargief te bied en om die ikonoklasme van modernistiese landskapskilderkuns teen te staan.

List of key terms: Iconoclasm; Identity; Landscape painting; Modernism; Performance art; Phenomenology; Postcolonialism; South African landscape.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

Landscape as an aesthetic object is a cultural expression (Mitchell, 1994:8) and acts as a living archive of the culture and history that have played out in the space. It becomes an ideological discourse between perception and representation. Our relationship with landscape and our presence within it is always performed, as it is both presented and represented. Landscape painting is deliberately constructed to communicate the prevailing ideologies and histories within the painted space. What is shown is carefully curated to represent the ideologies and manifestos of those in command. While a great deal of discussion is held on what is shown within landscape paintings, it is also important to consider what is purposefully left out of landscape paintings. Roach (*in* Meloncon, 2017:103) explains that performance "represents one powerful way in which cultures set about the necessary business of remembering who and what they are". This study aims to find how certain contemporary South Africans are in conversation with the landscape as a means to remember where they are from, especially when these histories were actively erased. This tension between presence and absence in landscape art reflects in how some contemporary performance artists problematise the modern ideal that fuels the landscape paintings of Laubser, Pierneef and Naudé.

Landscape is intrinsically connected to the identity of the people populating it. Once a landscape is appropriated, it becomes reconstructed with the ideologies, myths and beliefs of its takers (van Eeden, 2004:21). Nationalism, an ideology that promotes

devotion and endless loyalty to the nation-state (Kohn, 2018), often capitalises on this ideological reconstruction. It is common practice to utilise the ideological significance of the landscape to normalise nationalistic ideals, particularly in the rise of nationalism under the Afrikaner people. As such, the myths and ideologies the Afrikaner people used to reshape the landscape in the name of nationalism will be set under scrutiny. This nationalist ideal expects specific artist to change the landscape as they depict it in their landscape paintings, removing that which does not fit in with the modernist Afrikaner ideologies. Iconoclasm refers to the destroying of images because of religious or political disagreements (Morgan, 2003:170). The landscape paintings of Naudé, Pierneef and Laubser are exemplary of modernist Afrikaner art removing evidence of the presence of indigenous people, as well as the violence and hardship this erasure causes. When these artists reshape and rework the landscape in their paintings, an active obscuration of the cultural images of the indigenous people takes place. Visual evidence of indigenous habitation is obscured and specific indigenous connotations with the landscape are erased and replaced with new meanings. For this reason, the landscape paintings discussed are described as iconoclastic. The study interprets the erasure of the evidence that a specific group has heritage in a landscape as an iconoclastic act.

Contemporary South Africa requires a more complex and inclusive cultural narrative than was presented in the colonial[1] and apartheid (1948-1994) eras. Contemporary performance art relies on their surroundings to the point of site-specificity and are also

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[1] South Africa was occupied by the Netherlands between 1652-1795 and 1803-1806, as well as by Great Britain between 1795-1803 and 1806-1961 (Oliver & Oliver, 2017:1).

landscape-focused works. By placing themselves physically within landscapes as active subjects, these contemporary artists dismiss the iconoclasm seen in modernist landscapes and create an inclusion/exclusion dichotomy. The presence or absence of the other as a postcolonial idiom in the landscapes is problematised. The intersection between race, class and gender in both the modernist and contemporary works are discussed, while their position towards a nationalist ideology is discovered.

1.1.1. Iconoclasm

Iconoclasm can be described as the polemical act of destroying or desecrating artworks, particularly those that show human figures or are representations of religious beliefs as part of social conflict (Morgan, 2003:170, Apostolos-Cappadona, 2005). Its origin and common usage refers to the iconoclastic controversy of the Byzantine era (330-1453), wherein Christian icons and imagery were destroyed in a debate between eastern and western Christianity. The destruction of religious icons saw a revival in the Protestant Reformation (1517-1648), where Catholic icons were destroyed in accordance with the new doctrine (Wills, 2015). The term can be used in a literal sense as the breaking of images, in particular the destruction of images or icons that are seen as objects of veneration. It can also be used more figuratively to imply the attack and defenestration of practices or beliefs that are considered untrue or superstitious (Kolrud & Prusac, 2014:3). Recent study has placed the destruction of imagery with in a larger social and cultural context where the image or icon acts as locus or representation for the conflict at hand, it has also been amended to include iconoclasm that stretch beyond religious imagery (Morgan, 2003:171). It is a deeply symbolic act to defy the

power and reverence these icons have (Morgan, 2003:171). This destruction also creates the opportunity to introduce and establish a new set of ideologies (Zarandona, 2015:466). In this sense it forces a tabula rasa on which to impose one's own ideas.

In this study the iconoclasm is extended to the erasure of social and cultural imagery within a landscape, so as to remove the heritage and agency of people. The iconoclasm happens directly in the landscape and, of particular interest to this study, within representations of it. Landscape iconoclasm refers to the deliberate destruction of sites that are culturally and historically important to groups that do not fit the hegemonic narrative. This act has been described as 'place annihilation' and 'landscape erasure' (Zarandona, 2015:465). The landscape is actively shaped, by the signs of our presence we create in the way we act within and on it. The erasure of the evidence that a specific group has heritage in a landscape is an iconoclastic act. The South African landscape has immense cultural and historical significance for the nations and tribes that have lived there for hundreds of years. The study does not strictly adhere to Zarandona's definition of landscape iconoclasm— the term is broadened to include the removal of visual markers within landscape paintings that suggest indigenous life. An argument is made that landscape iconoclasm takes place in depicting the South African landscape without any traces of indigenous bodies. The destruction or removal of symbols and icons associated with, and venerated by a specific culture is equated to attempting to erase an entire culture (Zarandona, 2015:465).

1.1.2. South African nationalism and landscape

Comaroff and Comaroff (2001:237) describe South Africa as a post-colonial nation-state. This refers to a labile historical formation, a polythetic class with "polities-in-motion (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2001:237)". The colonial past of South Africa influences the attitude and societal formation of its citizens. The neo-colonialism and ownership that the Afrikaner *volk* inflicted on the land itself and its indigenous peoples can be seen as an attempt at finding a national identity through reconstruction. The colonial and Afrikaner ideologies constructed national identity as a singular, homogeneous truth. In postcolonial, post-apartheid South Africa, however, an attempt is made accommodate the many identities and cultures that call it home. Throughout South African history there is a struggle to find a meaningful sense of belonging as well as the importance of a moral and material community (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2001:237). The aim of this study is to explore these ideas of community-making and their intentions.

After the South African Wars (1880-1881 and 1899-1902 respectively) the country was unified with a governing white minority under British rule. Independence from the British rule was achieved in 1934, but the white population kept their oligarchy over the country (Boddy-Evans, 2017). With this new-found power, the white citizens (especially the Afrikaners) experienced a sense of autonomy. Suddenly Afrikaners had more say over their immediate surroundings and the identity of its decolonised peoples. The Afrikaner built a shared identity around the 'free land' and a strong sense of autonomy (Giliomee, 1997:114). This enabled a grand narrative and nationalist ideal to form. The newly fabricated community and positivist autonomy put the Afrikaner under the impression

that they had power over the landscape and people around them (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2001:238).

Though the fight for equality started long before, a new inclusive South Africa was formed in 1994. On 27 April 1994 the first democratic election of South Africa took place (Naudé, 2009:91). Under the African National Congress, South Africa chose to focus on the poli-ethnic, multicultural identities of its people, careful to include all in the Constitution (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2003:448). In postcolonial terms, identity is fluid, ever-changing and constructed by culture, religion, ethnicity and language (Guyot & Seethal, 2007:57). Suddenly a nationalist ideal was difficult to form, or even superfluous within a pluralistic community. When discussing the modulating of the landscape to fit certain ideologies and identities, a taking-apart and contextualising of the different pieces is an effective approach. Here postcolonial discourse presents a platform of context and interpretation with which to discuss the formation of different identities and ideologies in South Africa.

Landscape painting is of particular importance to South Africa as it concerns what is most contested in South Africa's history: distribution and ownership of land (Newham, 2010:4-5). With the emergence of the Afrikaner as an independent cultural group, great emphasis was put on the 'natural bond' between the *volk* and the landscape as a means to naturalise ownership of the land (Coetzee,1988:61). Foster (2008:3) explains that white South Africa's obsession with the landscape is more intricate than representing possession of the landscape, articulating ideologies or forming a new

national aesthetic. The manner in which collectives and individuals appropriate and

understand the concepts of space and place is intrinsically linked to identity formation.

In agreement with Foster, the study finds that white, and particularly Afrikaans speaking

South Africans, encourage a deep-rooted connection to the South African landscape to

create a sense of belonging and validate their identity within the space. To the

indigenous contemporary artist in South Africa, the landscape is also cardinal to

understanding identity, as years of displacement makes one feel like "… a pariah in the

land of his birth", as Sol Plaatjie put it (Walker, 2010:19). Because of this, identity

formation and the expression thereof play important parts in dissecting the chosen

artworks.

1.2.   Research question

The purpose of this study is to deconstruct the iconoclasms found in select modernist

landscape paintings in the pre-apartheid[2] era. The ideologies imposed on the landscape

during this formulation will be investigated and shown to be resisted by contemporary

artists. In particular, the study is interested in the influences that sparked the iconic

landscapes of modernists in the name of Afrikaner nationalism. These nationalist ideals

expect the artist to change the landscape so that that which does not fit in with the

nationalist ideologies is altered. The study will be looking at specific examples of

landscape paintings by Naudé, Pierneef and Laubser in arguing an Afrikaner nationalist

aesthetic. Modernist landscape painting of this period in South Africa is not limited to

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[2] The study will refer to artistic practice in the pre-apartheid period— from the first recognition of South Africa as a republic in 1852, up until the start of apartheid in 1948.

Naudé, Pierneef and Laubser or their white contemporaries. A great deal of indigenous artists such as Gladys Mgudlandlu and Moses Tladi can be classified as modernist painters by their style, technique, and era. The study, however, chooses to focus on the variety of landscape paintings from this era that were specifically associated with Afrikaner or nationalist pride. This provides an orientation of national aesthetics. In reaction to this nationalist aesthetic, contemporary performance artists problematise the skewed nationalism and ideologies by critiquing the empty, canonical spaces and overlying symbols of dismissed societies (TMRW Gallery 2018:4).

The ideologies of the landscape paintings are compared to largely site-specific performance works for several reasons. The mostly empty landscapes that are quintessential to modernist landscape paintings are disputed by artists by, amongst other things, physically placing their (once obscured) bodies directly into the landscape. The natural and cultural spaces in South Africa are reinterpreted by recognising and advocating for the presence and visibility of bodies that were erased by modernist artists. Through this intentional presence, the performance space becomes a medium—like landscape is—to perform and legitimise the identity of people. This facilitates an activation of the landscape. Incorporating conscious remembrance is another way in which contemporary performance artists can disrupt the iconoclastic tradition of modernist landscape painting.

The modernist landscapes are problematised because the alteration of landscapes through the removal of the presence of indigenous bodies can be seen as an

iconoclasm. In other words, that which does not fit in with the nationalist ideals are removed from the representation. Contemporary performance art is in conversation with the landscapes by inserting what was previously removed through an embodied presence and active remembrance. The moment the participant interacts with the performance artwork, they are confronted with the iconoclasms of the past as well as the contemporary reaction to it.

My main research question is thus as follows: How do selected examples South African contemporary performance art problematise iconoclastic modernist landscape paintings?

1.3.   Theoretical framework

The study makes use of theory and research that lie in the intersection between landscape theory and postcolonial critique, taking into consideration the ideologies that support Afrikaner nationalism. The postcolonial discussion rests heavily on Frantz Fanon's (1963:36) description of decolonisation as a historical process. This decolonisation can be achieved through dissent and disruption of the grand narrative. The discourse on memory within the decolonisation process is supplemented by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's (1988, 2008) postcolonial archive. The study relies on her understanding of the other and subaltern as well as the aspects of gender that play out on the postcolonial landscape. Spivak (1988:76) questions if a postcolonial archive is even a possibility when women and the subaltern are silenced in historical canons. Nationalistic ideology and 'shared histories' are explored through the writing of

Frederico Freschi (2009, 2011), Anne McClintock (1993) and Michael Godby (2010) to show the influence these ideologies have on the depiction of the South African landscape. These theories are used to show how contemporary performance artists are actively decolonising the landscape through their work.

The history and development of landscape painting is recounted from a variety of sources, but the study relies heavily on the landscape theories by Denis Cosgrove (2008), John Berger (1973), W.J.T. Mitchell (1994) and Jill Casid (2005, 2011) amongst others. The phenomenological and performative nature of landscape is discussed through Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's periperformative[3] (2003). The postcolonial landscape is siphoned further to the South African context via J.M. Coetzee (1988), Jennifer Beningfield (2006) and Jonathan Cane (2017).

Nationalist identity and censorship as tropes require a postcolonial reading of the social relations and ideologies that influence the iconoclasm in the chosen artworks. The study takes into consideration works from the pre-apartheid, modernist era (c.1852-1948), as well as the postcolonial and post-apartheid era (1994-). The works chosen are selected to show the emergence and repetition of tropes and changing aesthetics of landscape representation, and not provide a definitive timeline of South African landscape art. The study will limit itself to relevant political shifts and cultural influences that falls within these timelines, and these will be indicated throughout the chapters.

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[3] The periperformative is a term coined by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick as a type of statement that doesn't just describe an action, but contains one (Sedgwick, 2003:67).

1.4.   Research methodology

The study is qualitative in nature and will approach the landscape paintings and contemporary performances from a postcolonial perspective, by applying the theories discussed earlier. Peter Barry (1995:194) argues that postcolonial critique includes the knowledge of the representation of non-Europeans as the other, the problematisation of language, emphasis on a hybrid or unstable identity and a focus on cross-cultural interactions. These postcolonial tropes will be applied to the chosen artworks through descriptive and inductive research. Firstly, modernist South African landscape paintings will be discussed and interpreted according to the colonial legacies and ideologies they imply. The study highlights the landscape traditions and visual tropes that lead to an iconoclasm within the modernist landscape paintings. These traditions seem to manifest in the landscape paintings through timelessness, very distinct power relations and nostalgia. The dichotomies between absence and presence and peace and violence also feature heavily throughout. With these tropes and ideologies determined, the study moves on to discuss contemporary performance works that consider, resist, or reinterpret the same tropes. The focus in describing and analysing these works lies in the way they are meant to create dissent and discredit the tropes that imply iconoclasm within the landscape paintings. I apply postcolonial theory and landscape ideology to identify the above-mentioned main tropes observed in modernist landscape painting, and then show how these are addressed through a selection of performance works.

It is important to note that the performance artworks chosen do not address the paintings of Naudé, Pierneef and Laubser directly, they disagree with ideologies and traditions of the time. Each work in was selected as a representative of its era. This places some restrictions on the study, as the intention of the artists and the motivation behind the works are not strictly related. Wayne Barker's *In God we trust, triptych* (2015) and Landi Raubenheimer's *After Pierneef with blue trees* (2015) are direct critiques to the ideologies and intentions of Pierneef, but are not discussed here. I preferred to use the particular performance works as comparison, as the focus of the study is the very clear presence and re-insertion of indigenous bodies and histories into the landscape. The performance works were chosen because the active re-insertion of indigenous bodies into the landscape gives power and control to those once removed from the landscape. These works go one step further than merely problematising the past.

1.5. Chapter outline

Chapter two serves as a review of the literature that addresses the ideological, aesthetic, and cultural conditions of landscape. The chapter interrogates the landscape genre—including its historical development, cultural importance, and social influence. As the study makes use of postcolonial theory, the chapter presents the main theories of Fanon, Spivak and Casid and how they pertain to indigenous bodies within the landscape. The chapter also provides the reader with a summation of Afrikaner culture

and the nationalistic narratives that have led to the belief that they are the rightful heirs to the South African landscape.

In chapter three the modernist landscape paintings of Hugo Naudé (1869-1941), J.H. Pierneef (1886-1957) and Maggie Laubser (1886-1973) will be analysed and discussed through a postcolonial lens to determine the ideological implications race, class and gender have on the representation of landscape. Here I argue that the landscape paintings of the South African modernist painters were canonised within the Afrikaner nationalist narrative, because of the deliberate iconoclasms they contain. A particularly interesting occurrence in the modernist landscape paintings can be seen, where the violent displacements within the landscapes are often represented as peaceful endeavours. These 'peaceful endeavours' are exposed as the violent and disruptive experiences they are by the contemporary performances. The iconoclasm of the modernist landscape depends on a manufactured nostalgia to solidify the disruptions in the landscape, while a sense of timelessness naturalises this. Landscapes are often used as representational tools in showing the power dynamics involved in colonial conduct. There is a strong focus on a hierarchal 'natural order' and definitive power relations in the landscape paintings discussed. These tropes are explored within the landscape context and supported within this genre by discussing the representation of the sublime and the picturesque, the gaze the artist imposes on the viewer and the displacement that takes place in the landscape.

Chapter four aims to find the way in which contemporary artists use their performances and practices to engage and break with the iconoclastic nature of South African modernist landscape painting. The study will take the themes and tropes identified within modernist landscape paintings in chapter three and apply them to the performances by contemporary South African artists. This is done by showing how they use critical remembrances and practice re-presentation to dissent the modernist erasures. To combat the use of nostalgic imagery the contemporary artists depend on memory to restore the validity of the once-removed peoples. These artists make use of storytelling to form a counter-archive that reveals the agencies and absences in the canonical archive (McEwan, 2003:742). The fixity and timelessness of the modernist landscape paintings are countered by fluidity and ephemerality as bases for the performances. Lastly, hierarchal power structures are dismantled by the performance artists using participatory and phenomenological methods in their work. The findings and summary of the study and response to the research question will be set out in chapter five.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Denis Cosgrove (1985:45) explains that landscape as a concept is fixed to the ideological ideas of its own history, as well as the ideas and histories of the people that occupied and experienced the space through time. The observed landscape is intrinsically linked to the histories that played out in that particular space. It is also linked to ideologies that the observer brings along with them. In this chapter a review of the literature that addresses the ideological, aesthetic, and cultural conditions of landscape will be done.

The first part of the literature review is dedicated to defining the term 'landscape' as a way of seeing and processing the natural world. This initial definition is followed by an account of the history of landscape representation, specifically landscape painting. Thereafter the influence of language on the postcolonial analysis of landscapes is explained. Landscape is explored as a mediated view, embedded with cultural significance. It is an instrument of expression and a discursive tool. The landscape as a medium becomes a collection of symbols that are applied and moulded to express cultural, spiritual, and material values (Mitchell,1994:14)

An argument is made in this dissertation that contemporary performance artists problematise the landscape through decolonial aesthetics as a counter-historical process (Fanon, 1963:36). Their dissent with modernist aesthetics and ideas are identified by challenging binaries, practicing remembrance, performing hidden violence, and giving previously silenced or excluded people an opportunity to speak. Context is

provided for this decolonisation by discussing the ideologies and power dynamics that are embedded within the South African landscape. These ideologies are problematised by pointing out the performative nature of landscape and finding the periperformative in contemporary reactions to landscape. English colonialism and its resulting effect on Afrikaner nationalism is offered as the bulk of the grand narrative that the study is hoping to problematise. Lastly, an explanation is given on how this contextualisation is embedded into landscape painting practice in the modern South African canon and how contemporary practice actively resists some of these concerns.

2.1. Landscape theory

2.1.1. Defining landscape

In all cases 'land' refers to the place and the people that occupy it. Landscape finds it roots in the German 'landschaft', Danish 'landscab' and most notably, the old English 'landscibe'. The 'skabe' and 'schaffen' suffixes refer to shaping place (Johnson & Hill, 2002:59). The old English '-scipe' has been developed into today's '-ship' to imply an association or bringing together (Spirn, 2008:92) as well as '-scope', to imply that something is being seen (Hays, 2008:93). The 'land' thus already refers to the people that occupy the space along with the physical area. Though the relationship between the place and the people can be disputed, the fact that there is an implicit relationship is generally accepted. Even landscape understood as a product of natural forces has an

element of human involvement, as it is studied scientifically by its observers (Cosgrove, 2008:90).

It is this complex and undeniable connection with the landscape and its influence on our collective and individual identities that forms the basis for the study. There are the many different interpretations of landscape found in art history, sociology, ecology, cartography, and design I will focus on the following aspects that are relevant the study, landscape as an aesthetic and spiritual reaction to nature; landscaping as a process of shaping the natural world; and lastly landscape as a way of seeing (Elkins, 2008:90,94). Throughout this research it will be indicated that these definitions are not wholly distinct and are interrelated with each other, and I will refer to artworks that reference at least one of these interpretations of landscape. What a landscape is and the influence it has is never clear cut or resolute, leading me to adopt an intersectional approach to the study. The intersectionality of the study makes it possible to alternate the above-mentioned definitions of landscape and show how the physical space and representations thereof are intermingled.

2.1.2. The history of genres

An important aspect of understanding our relationship to the landscape lies in placing landscape painting in historical context. Nature became not only a subject of art, but it also inspired artists to transform the way they see and understand nature into aesthetic objects within specific pictorial traditions. Though initially not the focus of artworks,

landscape as a depiction of natural surroundings is present in artworks as early as cave paintings. From the thirteenth century onwards, art schools, dealers, patrons and many painters dismissed landscape painting as trivial and lacking in value. Landscapes were often painted together with one of the other genres to boost the importance of the artwork. As such, within a landscape painting, 'landscape' was often a secondary theme to the historical, mythical or allegoric scene playing out on the landscape ('Landscape painting', n.d.). In artistic depictions as early as in the Greco-Roman period (8th century B.C. – 6th century A.D.) for example, landscape is added as a background to the subject being painted.

Landscape as a genre of painting had been present in Chinese art since the 4th century, but only came to its own in Western painting tradition in the 16th century. Initially, landscape painting was considered unimportant and was placed low in the hierarchy of genres that was formalised in 1669 by Andre Felibien (1619 – 1695). [4] Felibien considered the painting of human figures as an imitation of 'the most perfect work of God' and it is thus superior to other subjects. Landscape and nature paintings were considered unimportant and was placed below genre painting, while still life was placed right at the bottom of the hierarchy (Butterfield-Rosen, 2020:76).

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[4] Andre Felibien is a 17th century art critic and historian. Felibien presented what he considered proper theories of art as well as biographical details of artists in his book, *Entretiens sur les vies et sur les ouvrages des plus excellens peintres anciens et modernes (1666-88) (Kuspit, 2014).*

2.1.3. Pastoral landscapes

In the tradition of landscape painting, systems of conventions developed as a way to represent what is seen in western art, thus landscape can be understood as a "way of seeing" (Cosgrove, 1985:46). The relationship between the observer and their surroundings determines and regulates how we see our surroundings. These conventions become the way of seeing that we use to look at the landscape. The landscape is thus mediated, because we cannot look at a landscape without acknowledging the conventions and symbols used to represent it (Berger, 1973:7,109), be these deliberate or unconscious.

The Renaissance period (14th to 17th centuries) produced a coherent linear perspective that played an important part in understanding our physical relation to space and how to navigate it effectively (Cosgrove, 1985:47). The scientific and humanist awareness of space necessitated landscape depictions and the genre grew from there (The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2006). Perspective was used as a tool in painting 'prospects'[5] by Flemish artists in the 17th century. These prospects show scenes from a high vantage point, often giving a sense of comfort and abundance (Lothian, 2005). From this early landscape convention, the pastoral landscape emerges as a new aesthetic category of nature. A pastoral landscape can be explained as the depiction of humanity's power and control over nature (Rabb, 2009). The pastoral shows the landscape as peaceful and bountiful and as though the ample resources of nature have been tamed and correctly

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[5] 'Prospects' in landscapes are scenes painted from a bird's eye view and that often conveys a sense of comfort and abundance (Lothian, 2005).

used by humankind. The dominion of the pastoral is supported by the viewpoint of the onlooker being higher than the landscape, as a master looking out at his land.

In the 17th century the classical landscape painting was a highly stylized depiction of natural scenes influenced by classical antiquity (The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2006). In the 18th century Pierre-Henri de Valenciennes (1750-1819) campaigned for the study of physical nature and the aesthetic ideal of the "historic landscape" convincing the Academy to acknowledge and honour landscape painting in its own right (The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2006). Even so, landscapes were painted as if they were historic events or pastoral tales to enhance the status of the artwork within the hierarchy of genres. There is always human presence in these landscapes, nature was considered as theatrical backdrop for the spectacle that is humankind (Melikan, 2011).

2.1.4. Picturesque landscapes

The 18th century brought the emergence of the 'picturesque'. A picturesque landscape is beautiful and charming in its natural form, 'unspoiled' by people (Rabb, 2009). A landscape is considered picturesque when it is composed of receding planes. The immediate foreground shows a darkened coulisse (a side scene), often a tree growing diagonally. The viewer is met with rocks, clumps of trees and broken ground or ruins in the foreground. The middle ground contains a main feature, for example, a lake or a snaking river leading the eye through the painting. The background is illuminated as show distant mountains or the outstretched ocean as can be seen in William Gilpin's

(1724 – 1804) *Landscape* (1794) (Figure 1) aquatint series. The foreground is heavily

textured and rough, contrasting the soft 'tenderness' of the middle and background

(Coetzee, 1988:39-40).

Figure 1: William Gilpin, *Landscape* (1794)
(https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/art-artists/work-of-art/landscape-2).

The picturesque is thus also a synonym for 'beautiful'. This supports the notion of a

landscape as being mediated. These landscapes are considered beautiful because they

look as though they should be in a picture—the space appears stylistically arranged and

composed. The picturesque landscape is then not painted 'as is' but framed and filtered;

even though it is celebrated as an untouched landscape. Later, it changed slightly to

mean that the landscape could potentially be a subject in a landscape painting. The

term picturesque implies that natural spaces that look landscaped (like a picture) and

are considered superior to other sceneries. The observer prioritises landscapes and

scenery that fit into classical compositions. A connotation is drawn here between what is

beautiful and what has been made (Lothian, 2005). The picturesque landscape is

beautiful to the observer because it is already culturally mediated. The composition of this landscape is also influenced by the rise in European travel around the world and how it inevitably played a part in colonialisation and slavery. The picturesque was used as a way for the traveller to recode and communicate new landscapes to be pleasing to the colonial viewer. The use of the picturesque as a device to improve the beauty of nature developed alongside the imperial efforts to improve upon nature through plantations and colonialisation (Casid, 2005:13).

The picturesque acts as intermediary between the Neoclassical (c. 1760-1850) and the Romantic (c. 1800-1850) movements. Its focus on wilderness and irregularity was echoed in the Romantic interest in surface variation and abruptness (Coetzee, 1988:40, Sinha & Rajora, 2014:310). This wilderness aesthetic was often mimicked in English landscape gardening styles. Gilpin set about describing the fundamentals of picturesque landscapes and sought the picturesque in landscapes he saw on his travels (Orestano, 2003:163).

The picturesque landscape and the fact that it is positioned as unspoilt was largely influenced by the increased travelling Europeans took part in from the 17th century. This is pertinent to the study as new and 'undiscovered' lands are often painted as idyllic and according to principles of the picturesque. In painting new landscapes as untouched and unspoilt, the observer sees a land that can be conquered and made his own. The unspoilt picturesque played an important part in the development of the colonial gaze, which will be explained later in this chapter. The picturesque however holds a particular

caveat in that in painting a landscape as untouched by humans, often obscures the existence of the native people, who live in that space.

Picturesque landscapes are also romantic and represent a fanciful relationship to place. John Ruskin (1819-1900) implored a return to the refuge of nature and truth to nature in art, as people were reliant upon nature (Sternfeld, 2018). Ruskin and his contemporaries saw time spent in nature as an intense religious experience, untied to conventional dogma. Ruskin frequently used Wordsworth's words "Nature never did betray the heart that loved her" as a way to describe this religious relationship with nature (Wesling, 1967:259).[6] These ideas produced the sublime in landscapes, combining awe and terror. Even though nature was believed to have dominion over humankind, the focus of it in art was clearly still anthropocentric. Ruskin argued that the presence of people is *required* in landscape art, because the historical and contemplative nature of landscape painting fills it with 'human significance' and can therefore only be enjoyed by 'cultivated persons' (Wesling 1967:257). This idea will be approached as problematic in this research from a postcolonial perspective.

2.1.5. Sublime landscapes

The sublime as an aesthetic, gained popularity in the Romantic era. The Romantic landscape was particularly based on Immanuel Kant's (1724-1804) sublime—grounded

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[6] "Nature never did betray the heart that loved her" is a line from William Wordsworth's (1770-1850) poem entitled "Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey, on revisiting the banks of the Wye during a tour. July 13, 1798". The poem's title is often shortened to "Tintern Abbey" (Karabulut, 2013:207).

in the relationship between humankind and nature and the responses we have to it. Romantic artists used this relationship and their own experiences in nature to convey spirituality through art (Ingram, 2019 & Figes, 2019). Kant describes the sublime experience as the confrontation of the imagination with a sublime feature in nature. The imagination cannot aptly represent the sublime feature as it transcends comparison and is considered absolute. The failure of the imagination leads to an experience of amazement and anxiety within the viewer. Edmund Burke (1729-1797) calls the effect "delightful horror" (Coetzee, 1988:54). The combination of ecstasy and terror links the sublime to spirituality. Just as the landscape can be beautiful, as well as frightening, God is seen as both benevolent and kind as well as fierce and powerful.

Figure 2: Thomas Cole, *View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, after a Thunderstorm – The Oxbow* (1836). (https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/10497)

A seen in figure 2, sublime landscapes focus on vertical lines, rather than horizontal. A sense of great height and depth is created within the composition, usually by the inclusion of mountains. The sublime landscape prefers dark storm clouds to clear blue

skies and often shows a single beam of light shining down on the scene. As with the picturesque, the sublime often includes a body of water. Low hanging clouds or mist rising from the body of water adds a sense of mysticism to the landscape. The skies are made the centre of attention: the height and depth created here evokes ecstasy and fear within the viewer (Coetzee,1988:52).

2.1.6. Landscape and modernity

The Impressionist (c.1867-1886) and post-impressionist (c. 1886-1905) movements brought a study of light and shadows into landscape art. Artists began painting *en plein air* (outside) to capture the light and the immediacy of their surroundings ('Landscape painting', 2014). The universal and resolute classical landscape compositions are replaced by ephemeral experiences of light and colour. The immersive Impressionist depiction of surroundings was an especially welcomed form of escapism, though only available to the rich (Jacques, 2000:90). As found in the study, paintings that focus on the essences of beauty, art and light, should be approached with caution, because it ignores the social inequalities of the time (Hemingway, 2020). This escapist tendency is also evident in the modernist landscape paintings from South Africa that are discussed within this study and is thus an important historical and contextual consideration.

Modernism (c.1900-1930) as a movement did not consist of one unifying philosophical position (Jacques, 2000:88), but certain ideas on the functionality and utility of art did become widely accepted. As with the Impressionist movement, *l'art pour l'art* (art for

art's sake) encourages practicing art outside the influence of political, social, and cultural context ('Art for art's sake', 2015). Within a modernist paradigm, landscape painting does not have a function other than studying light and colour in art. Revisionist art history and Marxist readings critique this separation of art and real life as a bourgeois position, as a closer inspection of modernist landscape paintings from this study demonstrates. The modernist canon also supports universal, fundamental truths and natural laws, which are situated within popular discourse as the natural state of order and compared to the harmony found in nature. This normalises the grand narrative as well as the unequal power relationships to aid the ideological projects of those in power (Jellicoe in Jacques 2000:94 & 95).

2.1.7. Towards a postmodern conception of landscape

In the second half of the 20th century the genre of landscape is widened to include urban, cultural, and industrial landscapes as well as an interest in place and space. From postmodernism (c. 1970-1990) onwards, the assumptions and arguments of the colonial and modernist eras are problematised in both theory and practice. It becomes clear that art cannot be divorced from political and social realities and artworks from the past are re-examined to find the influences these realities have had on them. The grand narrative of the modernist canon is challenged and revitalised by multiple histories and contexts that were found during the re-examination of historical artworks. The thoughts, ideas and narratives that were hidden because they didn't fit into the grand narrative are being unveiled and re-contextualised.

Regarding a revisionist landscape theory, W.J.T. Mitchell (1994:5) argues that

landscape should not be seen as a genre of art, but rather a medium with which to bind

the natural land with the human "taking control" over it. To the individual—or nation in

many cases—the land becomes something of value. Landscape, as signifier and

signified, is a representation of the cultural ideology of the land, as well as the land itself

(Mitchell, 1994:5). Mitchell questions the Ruskinian idea that landscape as a mode of

perception was established in the European renaissance. He investigates certain 'truths'

and assumptions made about landscape in the past (Harris, 2018): Previously,

landscape painting was thought to be a modern, western European singularity.

Landscape painting was said to start in the 17th century and reached a crescendo in the

19th century as a genre of painting built around a new way of seeing (Mitchell, 1994:7).

Mitchell refutes this belief by investigating landscape art through a postcolonial lens. His

ideas create an opportunity for contemporary artists that deal with landscape to work

towards exposing the hegemony of the Western canon. Here the myth of European

singularity in landscape aesthetics is problematised. After a hegemonic narrative is

shown to be fictional, these artists include elements of othered people's stories as a

disruption of the grand narrative and remembrance of those hidden from view.

2.1.8. The utilitarian nature of landscape

Throughout the development of landscape painting as a genre up until the 20th century,

the focus has been limited to the utility of the landscape (Garcia, 2017). From our

emergence as a sentient species, people used the landscape as a means to move

about and cross through spaces, as we naturally moved in search of food and shelter. The traces of life left by people passing through spaces caused differentiation from one space to the next. As soon as spaces are divided up and classified, the notion of territory comes into play. When nomadic people settled down to form a more permanent dwelling, territory becomes a defined area under the jurisdiction of the people occupying that particular space. By claiming a certain piece of land as your own, you connote meaning to the physical place. This place has meaning because it provides shelter, food, space for crops and flocks and the like. Beyond supplying basic needs, a landscape gains cultural and social meaning over time. As different generations or groups exchange hands, the landscape holds remnants of each group, small indicators that were left behind. The landscape becomes a canvas for human activity, and it is this notion of use that defines the dimensions of one's territory (Garcia, 2017). As such, landscapes are often performative in nature. It is never just a detached representation of a piece of earth. Because the landscape is used to present and manifest certain ideas and ideologies it can be said that these ideas are performed by the landscape. The landscapes inherently contain ideologies and canonical narratives, as proved throughout the study. The landscape 'performs' these ideologies by depicting the realities in which the ideologies are implemented and omitting elements that do not fit in the narrative. The assembly of the landscape can be prescriptive of the individual and collective identities that exist within it and by relying on either utopian or dystopian aesthetics, communicate what is considered to be right and true by the grand narrative.

The landscape is discussed as a separate space only when it provides a separate function to its occupiers. Landscape becomes a defined entity or a subject, constructed by its viewer and shaped as an object in space and time in accordance with their frame of reference. The occupants work and mould their environment to fit in with and improve their lives. As a practical appropriation of space, we adapt our lifestyle to work in the environment and we change the landscape to fit our needs (Cosgrove, 1985:34). This common thread of landscape as actively produced by human activity is found in various definitions of landscape and is reiterated by Casid (2011:97), when she suggests that landscape should be understood as a verb. Whether it be for religious experiences, conquest or space to live a life in, how we use the landscape is fundamental to how we define and understand it. The landscape is also actively shaped by the way we act within and on it. The landscape can be a social imperative that coerces its occupiers and enforces norms, as well as a reconfiguring force that can connect and disconnect different subjective elements, people, and ideas. To landscape is to form a special arrangement, creating links between the land itself, humans, plants, and happenings (Casid, 2011:107). The landscape thus becomes a curated experience and culturally constructed place. The performative nature of landscape painting is combined with the spacial aspect of performance art to make an argument towards decolonisation. There is a clear dialogue between the performative nature of ideological landscapes and the spacial context which in contemporary performance artworks take place. This study aims to pick apart this dialogue and show exactly how it rehabilitates those left behind by iconoclasm.

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2.2. Landscape and language

2.2.1. Language in the postcolonial landscape

The way in which individuals experience and understand the space around them is intrinsically linked to the language they use to discuss and describe it. The implications of language within a postcolonial context plays an important part in the recognising and disruption of colonial boundaries. The *way* in which a landscape is colonised and coded is influenced by the language chosen to describe the landscape. Language as discourse forms the bulk of the argument, but occasionally the study will gauge the influence of language as a tool used in communication.

As the study relies on postcolonial discourse to analyse South African landscape art, the implication of language as a postcolonial marker, cannot be ignored. Furthermore, when discussing landscapes as cultural and lived spaces, there will always be linguistic relativity present. When a person uses or interacts with a language that is not their own, a certain assimilation to the culture and identities of its native speakers is implied to make the interaction possible (Crystal & Robins, 2020). We use language to articulate the space we find ourselves in. Therefore, once a landscape is acknowledged through language, it is immediately identified and categorised within the viewers' frame of reference. The description of landscape is coded within the culture and ideologies of the viewer (Fanon, 1986:17). The assimilation that occurs can be seen in small instances, for example, if a British person is describing the landscape as a *'veld'*. Seeing that a

landscape is not exactly savannah and that the Afrikaans term is a better fit, shows there is assimilation taking place. Using a language or specific words in the language suggests an inherent set of ideals. '*Veld*', for instance, is connected to the ideas and norms of the Calvinist, Afrikaans speaking whites of South Africa, largely because of its appropriation into the narrative of Afrikaner nationalism. The unknown 'wilderness' is transformed into the known '*veld*' that infers both ownership and intimacy (Beningfield, 2006:30). In this research the linguistic relativity of landscape is also considered. Language ideologies are conceptualisations of language that are socially and culturally loaded. Because individuals have a sense of value, norms, ownership, and status in their conduct and understanding, these conceptions seep through into the language of the speaker. In this way the language used implies values and ideals of the speaker (Blommaert, 2006:241).

Within a postcolonial context it is important to understand and address these values and ideals, as well as how it is brought into discourse. The study will investigate the language used around and about the modernist artworks by looking at the title and what it imposes on the artwork by being connected to it. More importantly, the study will look at how the artworks were received and discussed in their time. As will be shown in chapter three, the works of Laubser, Pierneef and Naudé were used by cultural brokers of Afrikanerdom to promote and display the ideologies that form the basis the Afrikaner nation. It is worthwhile to explore how the artworks were discussed and presented to the public to encourage the zeitgeist by way of articles, exhibition essays and reviews.

One of the ways that contemporary postcolonial artists problematise the iconoclastic nature of the modernist canon is through dissent—in performing their disagreement with ideologies and authorities. This form of creative dissent requires a radical creative language. To clearly articulate their dissent, contemporary artists put together detailed artists statements—the language within these discussions will give the study a clear idea on how the contemporary work differs from the Modern in ideology. The contemporary artworks in the study are all performances and as such the artwork is often accompanied by speeches, petitions, discussions, recitals, and other language-based practices. The study aims to take apart and dissect the linguistic elements to the performances to discover the differences from the modernist landscape works. This will reveal the historical discrimination and the linguistic ideologies that are built on race and class division within the modernist landscape paintings (Makhubu, 2019:20).

2.3. The mediated landscape

The South African landscape from a postcolonial perspective, is connected to ownership, authority, and control. Mitchell (1994:7) argues that landscape as a medium is found in all cultures, but that it is especially linked with European imperialism as a historic formation. Similarly, Cosgrove (1985:46) proposes that landscape should be seen as a way in which Europeans have chosen to reconcile themselves to the landscapes of the new world and those that they encounter there, thus that which is not the European self. It communicates their relationships with their environment and becomes a tool with which to comment on social relations. The mediations we use when

observing landscape, where they come from, and how their effect is presented within the landscape is of particular interest to the study. In this research landscape art is revealed as a relational genre as it focusses on the actions of either persons onto nature or nature onto people. Traditionally, humankind's effect on surrounding landscapes is seen in depictions of farms and well-ordered pieces of land showing the resources yielded from a space. The landscape is coded in terms of what it can provide or what it means to the viewer, owner, or occupant. With an anthropocentric interpretation and an overwhelming amount of Marxist critique in landscape art, it becomes clear that we understand and read landscape in terms of what it provides us (as explained in 2.2.3).

In this section, I will discuss two concepts related to modernist landscapes that will inform my analyses. These are the gaze, and the concept of timelessness. Both provides an understanding of the landscape as mediated.

2.4.1. The Gaze

Mitchell (1994:14) argues that landscape painting is not a uniquely central medium that provides us with different ways of seeing the landscape, but "a representation of something that is already a representation in its own right." As we have confirmed, the landscape is always mediated by a way of seeing, this way of looking—or *gaze* becomes increasingly important (Berger, 1973:7 & Mitchell, 1994:14). The gaze is intrinsically linked to power, as the directed gaze has the ability to subjugate the object,

in turn creating an asymmetry in power relations (du Preez, 2011:1). Within landscape painting, the gaze most often appears in the trope of the commanding master, looking over the land that they have or are about to conquer. This is called the imperial or colonial gaze.

The colonial gaze is an effect of the desire to expand one's territory and rule, as well as collecting trophies of the newly 'discovered' and conquered land as a means to display control over it (du Preez, 2011:3). The imperial gaze can be seen in William Burchell's *Crossing the Berg river* (1822) (Figure 3), showing early colonial travels through South Arica as a means to recording and eventually obtaining the land. The colonial eye is drawn towards untamed landscapes that do not yet show signs of being overpowered by modern civilization, as quintessentially shown in Thomas Baines' *Victoria Falls, Zambesi River* (1874) (Figure 4). The idea of conquering land and making it one's own is directly correlated to the power and agency the conqueror has. This way of seeing the landscape is indicative of the need to transform nature or land and our relationship to it, to create a 'space of ownership', belonging and possession (Cane, 2017:10).

Figure 3: William Burchell, Crossing the Berg River (1822)
(http://digital.lib.sun.ac.za/handle/10019.2/4287)

Figure 4: Thomas Baines, *The Mosi-o-a-tunya (Smoke resounding) or Victoria
Falls of the Zambesi River* (1874) (https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-6122857).

In a pastoral South African landscape, there are two distinctive topographies that the

idealistic eye searches for. The first is a stretch of fields that seem never ending, with

boundaries crisscrossing the land into neat sections for different crops. These patches

of land also show the separation of farms, each a small kingdom in its own, ruled by the farmer (Coetzee, 1988:6). It is usually depicted as a regulated, rectangular view of the controlled farm with the squares of land painted different colours to mark different areas of land, almost in the same way countries are marked in different colours on a map to indicate rule.

Another topography that Coetzee (1988:7) refers to is the landscape as an empty vastness, an archaic, desolate space that is devoid of inhabitants, culture, time, and transformation. This view is more associated with the colonial gaze but also the tourist gaze as a place without owner, a *terra nullius* ("land of no one") that can be cultivated into an asset by the landowner or farmer. Through the acquisition and expansion of territories by Dutch and English colonialists and later Afrikaners, ideological narratives have been made up to mask the colonial gaze to justify the taking of so-called empty lands (Geisler, 2012:15,17).

2.4.2. Timelessness

Modernist landscapes are often shown as outside of history and progress and removed from current cultural and social hierarchies (Delmont, 2001:7). Timelessness as a trope is not unique to the modernist era. It can be seen throughout the different stages of landscape painting, particularly the Romantic period. The timelessness of the romantic and colonial landscapes acts as an escapism. These landscapes show scenes from a timeless past or strange unknown world as a means to break with reality. The modernist

landscapes discussed in this study all have an element of timelessness, though it is not intended as an escape. The study will show how the timeless quality of these works are either a simple disregard to an uncomfortable reality or an ideological statement of how "it should be".

It is a luxury of the white bourgeoisie to create and observe landscape art that is set in an ideal realm that is without any political and social realities (Delmont, 2001:11). Within the modernist canon landscape paintings are broadly positioned as apolitical, neutral in power struggles and outside of ideology (Cane, 2017:4 and Wittenberg, 2004:230). A landscape appearing to exist outside of political reality plays a fundamental part in creating ideologies and depicting 'perfect worlds'. The timeless world is consciously misrepresented—the landscape is passive, the spectator is at the helm and the atmosphere is harmonious (van Eeden, 2004:1).

Another point to consider is that if one creates a world within a landscape that is divorced of social and political realities, one creates an environment that is without consequence to those in power. There is a distance placed between the world of the artwork and the (often troublesome) world of the social and political reality around it. Tim Cresswell (1965) argues that "…we do not live in landscapes; we look at them" (Harris, 2018). This always mediated way of looking at the world is idealistic and presents an ideological fantasy. In depicting the 'divine presence' of the Afrikaner into the South African countryside (Peffer, 2018:47) and in having the right to control and cultivate as they please, the uncomfortable realities of the indigenous workers need to

be removed (Coetzee, 1988:5). If landscape art so clearly represents an ideology that supports prevailing political powers, neither the artist nor those who wield power are held accountable. Situating landscape painting as apart from reality may lead to complicating the ideas on landscape held by the people that live in and contemplate a space (Harris, 2018). The modernist separation of artistic purity from social and political concerns in the name of 'true representation' is problematic—censoring parts of reality to fit in with a political and cultural ideal is undeniably iconoclastic.

2.4.   Decolonising the landscape

This section provides a discussion on the process of decolonisation in accordance with the theories of Frantz Fanon (1925-1961). Contemporary art and discourse point out the disparity found in landscape representation and state that, in rectifying this, landscape representations and the landscape itself needs to undergo decolonisation. Uneasiness regarding problematic representations of the South African landscape can be the result of the *Native Land Act* of 1913. The act set out to create territorial segregation on the basis of race (Kloppers & Pienaar, 2014:681). To this day indigenous people's right to habitation and ownership are undermined by ongoing historical processes, although this law has been repealed. Landscape is connected deeply with its inhabitants' identity and culture, so identity formation and representation are primary concerns in the decolonisation of land. Within colonial and apartheid South Africa the identities of indigenous citizens were sufficiently othered by representing them as one-dimensional or removed from the narrative entirely. Current discourse focusses on the multifaceted

identities of indigenous South Africans to be included in the narrative. Contemporary

artists who seek to rectify these historical injustices through their art turn to

decolonisation as it disrupts the canonical narrative and provides opportunity for

alternate histories to present themselves.

Decolonisation can be achieved through dissent and disruption of the grand narrative.

To understand the process of decolonisation one must contextualise the actions of

disruption with the elements that give it historical form and content. Discerning how the

problem of colonialism is contextualised and how it is represented, is at the heart of

decolonisation as a solution. The goal of this study is to show how contemporary South

African artists attempt to decolonise landscape representation. Fanon's

recommendations will form a central starting point from which these decolonial gestures

will be theorised. From Fanon follows the following decolonial strategies:

2.4.1. Breaking the dichotomy

Fanon (1986:183) explains the colonial society through Manichean dualism (Ashcroft,

Griffiths &Tiffin, 2002:131). This dichotomy further extends to the self against the other,

the coloniser and the colonised, as well as white against black. Blackness[7] is

constructed as a sign of inadequacy and inferiority by the white coloniser and is always

implied as being "lesser than". Binary oppositions are fundamentally hierarchal and

always lead to the inferiority of one of the parties. This systematic subordination is so

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[7] Although Fanon's arguments are centered around blackness and the black colonial experience, these arguments are well suited to discuss the erasure of all people indigenous to South Africa.

strong that it is internalised by, for example, indigenous people by way of an inferiority complex. As the white gaze fixes blackness and the inferiority, it implies that the characteristic of an indigenous person's skin seals the blackness into itself (Fanon, 1986:11 & Drabinski, 2019). The contemporary artists that contest the colonial, do so by removing these binary oppositions and the hierarchy it enforces. Decolonisation thus implies replacing the Manichean dualisms with representations of multiplicity and hybridity.

2.4.2. Memory

Another way in which contemporary performance artists decolonise the iconoclastic tradition of modernist landscape painting is by incorporating conscious remembrance into their own work. Don Mitchell (2003:790) describes landscape as a concretisation and memory-maker. Marschall (2009:3) explains that there is an uprise in the need to counter a legacy of suppression and absence in the memorialisation of the past. The best way for performance artists to combat the iconoclasm is to weave their own and communal memories into their work. The political positions and social identities captured in the memories of the people need to be protected as heritage of the landscape.

Public monuments, in particular, have the potential to be 'discursive formations' that elicit responses, problematise ideologies, contest hegemonic discourse and restructure public memory (Marschall, 2009:3). Contemporary artists engage with monuments to

register their dissent with the hegemony of colonial and apartheid memory as presented by public monuments. The contemporary postcolonial, post-apartheid generation employs art practices to engage with the traumas and ideologies of the past. This is presented in the landscape as site of colonial memory. These practises embrace the effect of oppression and inequality on postcolonial identities exemplified in the landscape or 'land'. This is done through critical memory practice (Brandt, 2020:192) in which the landscape features, but also performs.

2.4.3. Violence and the colonial landscape

While remembering is important in decolonising landscapes, the contemporary artist also inspires and sets out the parameters of revolution. Fanon explains that decolonisation is inherently a violent matter. For any liberation to occur, there must first be revolt (Fanon, 1963:35). Decolonisation is said to be a program of disorder and dissensus that is set out to change the order of the world. The disruption of colonialism towards freedom is messy and violent because it needs to be. The first encounter between coloniser and native was a violent meeting and thus, Fanon suggests all further interactions are rooted in violence. This is the only way to break down the ordered, systematic oppression of the colonial (Fanon, 1963:36). It is this violence that disrupts the colonial system on a multitude of levels: firstly, in the naturalised superiority/inferiority dichotomy within the imagination of both coloniser and colonised, secondly as the colonial influence as exploitation and lastly within the formation of political, cultural, and social identities (Drabinski, 2019).

There are several ways in which contemporary artists react to the violence of the colonial. In many cases contemporary artists present a counter-violence in accordance with Fanon's dissensus, for instance Msezane's *Chapungu The Day Rhodes fell* (2015). Another way to react to the violence is to depict peace and serenity that is juxtaposed with the stark reality of violence within the postcolonial context. The next section will show that finally, it becomes increasingly important for the silenced to voice their experiences, memories, and concerns with this inherent violence.

2.4.4. Letting the silenced speak

As particular acts of iconoclasm, the study points out the effacing and silencing of persons within the landscape that could be described by Spivak as subaltern. The subaltern is a military term that Spivak has reworked to refer to the marginalised, the silenced lower divisions of the subproletariat. The improvement of the conditions and conversations of the subaltern is halted by imperialism (Spivak, 1988:78). Decolonisation requires a platform wherein the subaltern can make their voice known. Performance as an artform becomes this platform for contemporary artists. This theme often coincides with remembrance as storytelling and lecture performances—a way of teaching-as-art to inspire and inform audiences. As will be shown in chapter 4, the acts of decolonisation are often combined within postcolonial artworks to create opportunity for subaltern stories to be told.

Building on the use of memory in decolonisation the study depends on Spivak's postcolonial archive. She questions if a postcolonial archive is even a possibility when women and the subaltern are silenced in historical canons. The interpretation and construction of colonial archives lead to the erasure of the subaltern's agency from the narrative. Correcting this and providing a postcolonial archive requires the retrieval of written documents, oral histories and visual memories that includes the subaltern in the narrative (McEwan, 2003:743).

This section presented the theories of Fanon and Spivak and how they could be applied to the work of contemporary artists to show the decolonisation of the landscape through artistic practise. Contemporary artists discussed in this study break the dichotomy, practice remembrance, take part in calculated violence and give the previously silenced an opportunity to speak. A disruption of the grand narrative is necessary in articulating the postcolonial landscape.

2.4.5. Performance as a phenomenological response to landscape painting

Performance art can be seen as a rejection of traditional object-based art practises in favour of the physical body and its lived experience. Performance artists use their bodies as artistic work to be performed on the 'canvas' of a particular space (Pather & Boulle, 2019:3). These types of works are by definition unrestricted and deconstructed, it involves a wide range of open-ended interventions and interdisciplinary moments

wherein intentional encounters are put together. Performance art fundamentally disrupts, defies and questions the rules, restrictions and regulations set forth by traditional art practices (Makhubu, 2019:21). As such it is a suitable response to the conservative ideologies found in South African modernist landscape paintings. Performance artists focus on an embodied and lived experience through existing in an emergent state. Performance is an inherently phenomenological practice as it engages with experience and finds meaning in occurrences that are embodied, situated and relational. The focus lies in a subjective synthesis of perceptual, sensory, and body-orientated moments as an interpretation of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology (Küpers, 2017:92). The study finds that a phenomenological embodiment within the landscape is the main form of dissent used by performance artists because of the emphasis placed on 'the primacy of lived experiences' (Meloncon, 2017:100).

A phenomenological approach allows the artist to reproach colonial conduct and modernist ideologies because it highlights the relationship between perception, action and environment found in everyday experiences. It provides an opportunity to explore how people are significantly connected to their surroundings. These everyday lived moments also allow performance artists to reconfigure power relations, shifting the focus from the bigger picture to the subjective and inconsequential (Meloncon, 2017:104-5). The phenomenological experience also intrinsically recodes landscape as a performed experience, instead of a mere representation and is thus fundamental to the comparisons made within the study. Landscape as a concept is a phenomenal reality and should be contextualised within the development of the subjective

experience as a performance (D'Alesandris, 2021:33). Every depiction and experience of a landscape is in effect a performance in its singularity because it acts as a recital of a specific perspective and its accompanying ideologies—this makes landscape a representational interpretation (D'Alesandris, 2021:35).

Performance art was specifically chosen to contrast the discussed landscape paintings, as both genres are fundamentally connected to their site. Both the painting of landscapes and performative pieces are dependent on and in discussion with their space, whether it be physical or cultural. The study also finds that modernist landscape paintings have performative attributes in conveying their ideologies. These landscape paintings and performances are both *in* and *of* cultural landscapes that relate a particular idea to an audience. The only difference being if it advocates dissent or conformity. Mitchell (1994:5) argues that landscape should not be seen as a genre, but rather a medium. As a medium, landscapes are influenced by the culture of the nation and stand as both signifier and signified—a representation of the cultural ideology of the land, as well as the land itself. The interaction between the artwork and the participant shows how dependent both paintings and performances are on an audience. These works are created to be viewed by the participant, who then acts upon the ideas set forth. The performance might be more active and participatory, but the artworks are performed for the same reason that traditional landscapes are painted: to be viewed. The participant is left with the agency to act accordingly.

2.5. Land and power

Landscape is used as a representational tool in showing the power dynamics involved in colonial conduct. The characteristics that intrinsically link landscapes to notions of power and ownership need to be understood before decolonisation can take place. Landscapes are embedded with symbols that hold cultural significance and representations of identity that its occupiers through the ages have left behind. These include evidence of agricultural practices, architectural dwellings or cultural activities, boundaries to mark ownership of the land and the introduction of flora from other landscapes, to name a few. The landscape is thus marked with evidence of traditions, ideals and practices. It is filled with content that represents value and so becomes a medium used for expressing value.

The representational characteristics of the landscape and the narratives that form around them fit the grand narrative of imperialism. Colonial expansion involves the landscape in two fundamental ways: firstly, it is depicted as a natural and inevitable development in history and secondly it is represented as an improvement of nature to make it part of civilisation. Because of this a landscape is never just a spatial scene, but a prospect that will be developed and exploited in the future, something that is meant to be taken (Mitchell, 1994:17). Mitchell depends on Appleton's (in Mitchell, 1994:16) voyeuristic viewer of the landscape by demonstrating that the gaze is grounded in the visual field of violence. The imperial landscape is one of possession, hunting, surveillance, and war. Once again, the landscape is revealed as a place of violence.

The following section sets out to discuss how the power relations and ideologies manifest within the landscape. From there on it shows how these ideologies and apparent authority are interpreted within the South African landscape. After presenting the ideals imbedded within the landscape through a colonial past, the study endeavours to understand the Afrikaner's connection to the land and their neo-colonial practices.

2.5.1. Land and power in South Africa

Power and dominance are intrinsic to the representation and use of landscape. Landscape as a representation of power was first introduced to the South African landscape by colonial travellers. With the rise of Afrikaner nationalism, ownership over landscape was reinterpreted to form and rationalise the nation's identity. Beningfield (2006:281) explains how representations of landscape were used as tools during colonial and apartheid eras to normalise political change and naturalise conquest of the land. Using the landscape in this way results in inseparability between political change and the cultural and physical ownership of the land (Beningfield, 2006:281)

The white South African becomes "no longer European, but not yet wholly African" (Coetzee, 1988:7). Hybridity is thus an unresolved central problem of white identity in South Africa. Because of the binary restrictions placed on cultural and ethnic identities in both colonial and apartheid eras, nationalistic art and literature could be described as artificial (Head, 1997:x). White South Africans constructed a new identity and heritage instead of embracing the hybridity of their existence. The Afrikaner's formulated

nationalisms rests on the unique relationship to the South African landscape—they lay claim to being native as well as conqueror (Coetzee, 1988:174). This is important to the study, as the contemporary performance artworks celebrate and define hybridity as part of the decolonisation process.

The Afrikaner as a governing group relies on the 'Family of Man' and neo-colonial ideals to structure the country and their *volksargitektuur* (Freschi 2011:94).[8] The fact that South Africa has been a colony influences the attitude of its citizens. The neo-colonialism and ownership that the Afrikaner *volk* inflict on the land itself and its indigenous peoples can be seen as an attempt to find a national identity through reconstruction. There is a struggle to find a meaningful sense of belonging as well as a moral and material community (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2001:237).

Comaroff and Comaroff (2001:238) show how the material community that is investigated by South Africans, along with the autonomy, give the people control over the nature around them. Colonialism imprinted the idea that the size of the land a person owns shows importance, authority and how self-sufficient they are. This creates the opportunity and legitimacy to take control of spaces, connecting ownership and land to the social and cultural stature of a person. The dominance of the Afrikaner "sovereignty" aims to bring expansion and consolidation to the Afrikaner, just as much as it does the right to govern. The nationalist Modernism of the time is a product of "the

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[8] The Family of Man is used as a structural metaphor in metropolitan nationalisms and imperial formations. This idea of the nation as a family serves the institution in two ways: firstly, it creates the opportunity for a nationalist system to normalize a sanctioned social hierarchy and secondly, it naturalises the passage of time within the national narrative (McClintock1993:63).

particular imaginary of White nationhood"—a fantasised historical narrative (Freschi 2011:94). Afrikaners proudly memorialised and celebrated heroic acts towards liberation to assert their identity and authenticity (Freschi, 2011:43). A clear nationalist agenda and Afrikaner politics is propagandised through iconography in various monuments and public buildings (Freschi 2009:527, 2011:95).

The problematisation of a constructed nationalism has to include the meaning and discussion of 'native lands'. The Afrikaners placed economic, cultural, and political claim on the land of South Africa by considering themselves natives. They find a sense of belonging in situating Afrikaans as an 'indigenous' language with which to describe the landscape, as well as in taming and understanding the landscape more intimately than groups that have occupied it in the past (Beningfield, 2004:509 & Coetzee, 1988:168,174).

The landscape paintings discussed within the context of *Afrikanerdom*[9] become evidence of a muddled and fictional past. The study proposes to understand the decolonisation processes contemporary artists use to retrieve these histories. Beningfield proposes a history wherein representations, landscapes and identities have layered meaning and hybrid histories (Beningfield, 2006:281). In this study, the modernists landscape paintings are recoded to include multiple histories and narratives and inspire the possibility of an alternative recollection of history.

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[9] Afrikanerdom refers to the Afrikaner nationalism built on pride in the Afrikaans language, Voortrekker traditions and conservative Calvanism (Collins Dictionary).

2.6.   The gendered landscape

The discrepancies and discrimination of past landscapes cannot be fully understood without exploring the gendered implications. Here I will again consider the theories of Spivak. The dichotomies of indigenous/coloniser, worker/landowner and poor/rich are explored alongside the woman/man binaries when studying the examples of artworks in this research. Spivak particularly, focusses on problematising the male dominant society that positions women as inferior and secondary to men (Sawant, 2011:131). As such, indigenous women often experience a double othering (Spivak, 1988:82 & 2008:254).

The hierarchal dichotomy of woman/man is also foundational in the formation of nationalisms. McClintock (1993:61) claims that all nationalisms are fundamentally gendered. Though nationalism is intended to create unity, McClintock highlights the differences (in gender) that determine the nationalist agenda (McClintock 1993:61). The gendered nature of nationalism most clearly also presents itself within a 'Family of Man' structure. The following section thus discusses the use of the periperformative within performance art and how it can assist in decolonisation by challenging gender binaries and normativity. The periperformative forms part of queer theory and is crucial in my discussion of the landscape as gendered.

2.6.1. Performing decolonisation through the Periperformative

The periperformative is term developed by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (2003:67) to describe a type of statement that doesn't describe an action but contains one. She gives the example of "I dare you" (Poletti, 2016:362). Here the action is the words being said in real time. The performative part that follows the statement—the doing of the dare—is a reaction to the original act (vocalising the dare); this is known as the periperformative. The periperformative is *about* the performative, and sort of clusters around the performative (Casid, 2011:100). It is considered a space in which persons witness a performative expression or vocalisation and internalise it (interpellation). The performative expression in question is meant to disturb the ideologies that gives the performance its power and then also pushes the witness towards action. This basically means that the speaking of the sentence is an action in itself, as well as prompting action from the subject it is told to. This also then assumes the witness's acceptance of the values that are implied by the act referred to in the utterance (Poletti, 2016:363). The interpellation experienced when speaking someone else's language, shows that linguistic practice and identity formation happens within the periperformative.

The concept of the periperformative as a space around the performative and also a call to action becomes important when the study turns towards discussing contemporary performance art and its reaction to the landscape. While the modernist landscape paintings—and certainly the larger canon—leant towards iconoclasm to fulfil its ideology, contemporary performance artworks pertaining landscape prefer to linger in

the periperformative (see 2.5.1.4). The aim with contemporary performative artworks within the postcolonial is to disrupt and question the ideologies and values that gave the modernist utterances their power. In the artworks of contemporary performance artists, the truth of the artwork does not only lie in the performance, but in the unspoken context and the air of remembrance that comes with it. Recoding the modernist canon from the periperformative gives the other, the outcast and the diaspora the opportunity to contest and disrupt the narratives that chose to push them aside. The narratives are disrupted by breaking with the dichotomy, acts of remembrance, violence and letting the silenced speak (as discussed in 2.5). It also provides them with a space to 'not-belong' together (Rodrigues & Vargas, 2018). Through the performance artist's protestations, negotiation, remembrances and lecture-performances they are busy unlandscaping or relandscaping the ideologies of the past (Casid, 2011:100).

2.7. South African landscape painting

According to Michael Godby (2010) South African landscape art can be broadly placed into four basic themes. Firstly, *interface* refers to the earliest travellers' depiction of the landscape at the beginning of colonial conquest of South Africa such as the works of Thomas Baines and William Burchell. This type of landscape painting accepts landscape (and nature as a whole) is unknown, exotic and powerful— the sublime becomes an essential trope. It is mostly represented with a clear separation between the artist and the landscape. *Interventions* as a theme represents the South African landscape as it is being tamed and controlled by humankind. This includes farmland

scenes, roads, railroad tracks and other evidence of 'civilisation' within the landscape. Both these themes associate strongly with the imperial gaze. *Contestation* refers to landscapes that are sites of conflict, quintessentially seen in *Storming the stronghold of the rebel chief Sandilli* (1863) by Thomas Baines as well as *Kamp toe* (1948) by W.H. Coetzer. Godby suggests that these artworks hold record of the countless dispossessions and conquests that played out on the landscape, with the artist taking care to show remnants of the violence. Landscape paintings that show pride in the South African landscape, promote nationalist ideals or are more abstract are termed *inventions* by Godby. These are inventions in the sense that the landscape here, is largely constructed; either as a flight of fancy by the artist, or to support the intentions and ideals that the artist, as part of a nationalistic or cultural group meant to be associated with the specific landscape (Godby, 2010:62-63).

Lastly, and often in reaction to the invented landscapes, Godby proposes *interrogations* as representations of landscape. Because landscape painting as a genre is ideologically loaded and often wrought with iconoclasm (as we will soon find out), many contemporary artists use their depictions as a form of interrogation to contest and problematise the conventions and ideologies of traditional landscape paintings (Godby, 2010:62-63).The modernist landscape paintings that are discussed in this study are chosen largely because they fall within the theme Godby terms *inventions*, though *interface* can also be distinguished. In challenging the iconoclasm invented in modernist landscape painting, the contemporary performance artworks that are discussed are clear *interrogations* of the landscape.

2.8.   Conclusion

This chapter discovered and explained the theoretical framework that forms the basis of the study. A discussion on the definitions of landscape that pertain to the study is held here, along with the development of the pastoral, picturesque and sublime through the history of landscape painting. As fundamental influences on the modernist landscape, the imperial gaze and the dehistoricisation of the landscape are shown as ways in which the colonial process is legitimised. As an added contextualisation the Afrikaner nationalism and the Afrikaner identity are discussed as a constructed, ideological narrative that depends on the South African landscape. This places the study at the intersection between the postcolonial landscape, nationalism and the unique South African experience.

The study argues that contemporary performance artists problematize the landscape through decolonial aesthetics as a counter-historical process (Fanon, 1963:36). For this to be proven the chapter investigates Franz Fanon's steps towards decolonisation and the subaltern as theorised by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak as a postcolonial foundation. The study of literature found that decolonisation is attempted through challenging dichotomies, practicing remembrance, performing hidden violence and giving the previously silenced a chance to speak. These four tropes will be investigated in the modernist landscape paintings, as well as the contemporary performance artworks.

CHAPTER 3: INVESTIGATING ICONOCLASMS IN MODERNIST LANDSCAPE PAINTINGS

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter the modernist landscape paintings of J.H. Pierneef, Maggie Laubser and Hugo Naudé will be analysed and discussed through a postcolonial lens to determine the ideological implications race, class and gender have on the depiction of landscape. This discussion will refer to Frans Fanon's theories on colonialised identity (Bhabha, 1986), Jill Casid's (2005) theory on the influence of colonial conduct on landscapes and ecosystems, and W.J.T. Mitchell's (1994) theses on the idealised landscape. In particular, the chapter will look for representations of power, signs of displacement, and attempts at fixity and universalising in representations of landscape. The role memory and nostalgia play in creating an idealised landscape and the juxtaposition of violence and peace found in nature will also be pointed out. A short history and development of each artist and their oeuvre will be discussed. I argue that the landscape paintings of the South African modernist painters were canonised within the Afrikaner nationalist narrative. Pierneef's landscape paintings embody nostalgia within the Afrikaner community and in this way legitimises their presence in the South African landscape and narrative. The myth of the empty land presents itself in the landscape paintings of Pierneef and Naudé.

Whilst Pierneef's landscapes are emptied of human presence, those of Laubser and Naudé depict indigenous bodies as serfs tending to the land of the Afrikaner master.

Laubser depicts a landscape that is peaceful and idyllic and thus reiterates the 'natural order' as it is constructed within the Afrikaner narrative. This study thus investigates the discrepancies of race, class, and gender within selected modernist landscape paintings. The artists discussed in this chapter predominantly painted landscapes as if outside of history and time. The dehistorisation of a landscape is a strategy employed to validate the ongoing presence of the Afrikaner people, by symbolically emptying the landscape to make way for their new 'Promised land'.

The aesthetics of the sublime and the pastoral are applied in the modernist paintings under discussion in this chapter, communicating the divine right to govern that Afrikaners believed God has placed on them (Brukman, 2013:13-14). These tropes link to affects and precepts of the spiritual. In addition to this, the pastoral landscape emphasises ideologically naturalised hierarchies within the 'Family of Man' in terms of race and gender. The distinction between humankind and nature is made apparent and the binaries of nature and culture are upheld. The lack of representation of indigenous people and the apparent authority of the Afrikaner nation is naturalised by painting the landscapes as peaceful and harmonious.

It is important to note that the study does not imply that the artworks discussed in this chapter have been created specifically to form and advance the narrative of Afrikaner ideologies, although this might have been an intention of the artists. The study focusses on the way in which the Afrikaner community and modernist cannon have used and understood these artworks for their own gain and how these images form part of a

greater Afrikaner mythology, rather than the intention and sentiment of the artist. While the study attempts to refrain from conflating the two ideas; the cultural changes, the first and second Afrikaans language movements and political agendas have had an impact on the perspectives of the artist and should be discussed as such. Especially in the case of Pierneef, Afrikaner sentiments and ideologies make up a large part of the artist's world view, because that is what they have been taught and exposed to.

3.2.   Pieter Hugo Naudé

Pieter Hugo Naudé was born in 1868 in Worcester and spent most of his life in this town. Naudé had his heart set on becoming a portrait painter, as this was considered steady work for a painter. He chose not to undergo any training in South Africa and instead, attended the Slade School of Fine art in London between 1889 and 1890. At this time Slade was under the supervision of French artist and etcher, Alphonse Legros (1837-1911) (Prettejohn, 2021:98). Legros' influence can be seen in Naudé's fascination with social realism early in his career. This same influence can also be seen in the uncompromising religiosity of Maggie Laubser's landscapes, who also attended the Slade under his supervision. Naudé also attended the Kunst Akademie in Munich between 1890 and 1894.[10]

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[10] The Royal Academy of Fine Arts was founded in 1808 in Munich as one of the oldest art schools in Germany and has had international influence as an academy (Wieber, 2018:10-11).

Figure 5: Pieter Hugo Naudé, *Drying fruit* (1896) (http://www.artnet.com/artists/pieter-hugo-naud%C3%A9/drying-fruit-QE7MbvKWy7qB4LGSbb9anQ2).

Naudé was a great admirer of the Social Realism movement.[11] This can clearly be seen in some of his earlier works like *Drying Fruit* (1896). His aptitude in figures and portraits of the working classes was perfected during the year he spent at Barbizon school in Fontainebleau near Paris. On his return to South Africa, Naudé tried to establish himself as a portrait painter, but there was a scarcity for opportunities in portraiture at that time in the South African art scene. This period in South Africa saw extended turmoil and unrest, particularly between the British and the Afrikaners in the then Transvaal and Oranje Vrystaat (Orange Freestate). The Transvaal became the leading economic hub of South Africa due to its productive gold mines. The power in industry

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[11] The Social Realist movement of the late 19th century in Europe aimed to depict an honest and 'objective' contemporary reality. The movement focused on the everyday life of the working class as a way to reject the exotic depictions of Romanticism and classicism of academic art (Finocchio, 2004).

that gold gave South Africa within an international monetary system left Britain uneasy about their dominance in the market. Opposing ideas were held by Cecil John Rhodes (1853-1902), premier of the Cape Colony and Paul Kruger (1825-1904), president of the Transvaal about South Africa's independence that eventually lead to the Jameson Raid (1895) and the Second Boer War (1899- 1902) (South African History Online, 2011). There was little stability in the country, let alone the South African art market. As time progressed, Naudé thus changed his subject matter from portraits to figures in landscapes, and later to empty landscapes (Borman, 2019b) (Hunter, 2020). In 1913 Naudé went on another tour and further training in Europe with his nephew and godson. At this time Naudé was deeply influenced by the work done by Impressionist and Postimpressionist artists years earlier and he was particularly struck by Monet's studies of light and colour. From his European trip onwards, a distinct change in style and tone is visible in Naudé's work (Hunter, 2020).

Naudé is often referred to as the pioneer South African Impressionist painter for his work in forming a so-called "Cape Impressionism". He achieved this by taking the principles of European Impressionism and adapting it to fit the South African landscape. He developed his own interpretation of the Impressionist style with contemporaries such as Pieter Wenning (1873-1921), Ruth Prowse (1883-1967) and Nita Spilhaus (1878- 1967). Naudé practiced *plein air* painting and focussed on depicting the dramatic tension within nature through the use of light and atmosphere. He adapted the Impressionist technique and pallet to interpret the harsh African sun and unique flora of the Cape in particular (Borman, 2019b). The aesthetic language and technique that the

British artists and writers, such as Baines and Burchell employed did not fit well with the South African landscape—the deep, bold colours and dense, lush foliage of the typical European picturesque landscape could not be found in the South African landscape (Coetzee,1988:42). The artist's palette had to be softened and subdued to show the subtle variations in browns and greys, the light in the South African landscape is bright and harsh and foliage is replaced with fine shrubbery (Coetzee,1988:42). Naudé believed he could communicate the landscape effectively with these 'Cape Impressionism' techniques.

Naudé started practicing landscape painting almost a generation earlier than Pierneef and Laubser. It is crucial to the study to include Naudé's work, as it lays the foundation for ideological landscapes to come. The fact that Naudé is positioned as a pioneer of a "truly South African style" (Lippy Lipschitz in Delmont 1989:57) is very important to the study as the modernist concept of the artist as genius and creator of dehistoricised worlds are disputed by the contemporary performance artists. Though Naudé didn't actively take part in the promotion of a nationalist agenda, his work was used as a tool to encourage pride and nostalgia within the Afrikaner community. Naudé's paintings were included in the South African section of the Empire Exhibition in 1936 put together by the Commonwealth nations (Van Robbroeck, 2020:43).[12] Naudé's work can therefore be argued to represents the canonical culture and mood of the time.

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[12] The South African Empire Exhibition was held in Johannesburg between September 1936 and January 1937 to bring together people from all over the British empire. The exhibition was essentially a celebration of modernity and cosmopolitanism within South African cities (Robinson, 2003:759-760).

This section looks at three very different landscapes painted by Naudé. *Namaqualand landscape* shows a typical modernist rendition of the South African landscape as a wild expanse that can be used in differentiating the European landscape ideal from the South African landscape. *On the steps, Groote Schuur* and *The Garden of Remembrance, Worcester* are respectively used to show how deeply ingrained the colonial history as well as nationalist history of South Africa is in the modulation and representation of landscape. The variety of landscapes here also shows that the postcolonial discussion can be applied to the many forms and functions of landscape painting and landscaped spaces.

3.2.1. Namaqualand landscape

While European Impressionist landscapes focus on lush greenery, Naudé's *Namaqualand Landscape* uses vibrant colours to show the intricacies of the drier South African landscape. The work may seem muted when compared to those of his European contemporaries, but the artist used a wide spectrum of colour to depict the unique colouring of the Cape landscape, particularly in the flowers. The painting shows the flat plains of Namaqualand with a cluster of rocks in the right foreground with yellow, blue, purple, and orange wildflowers growing over it. On the opposite side of the painting there is a much larger cluster of rocks that resemble a hill. On the rock formation three quiver trees are growing, one large and two smaller ones. The middle ground shows another rock formation on the right and two more following behind. The

background depicts violet mountains with blue sky and soft mountains. The wildflowers are decoratively scattered to frame the rock formations.
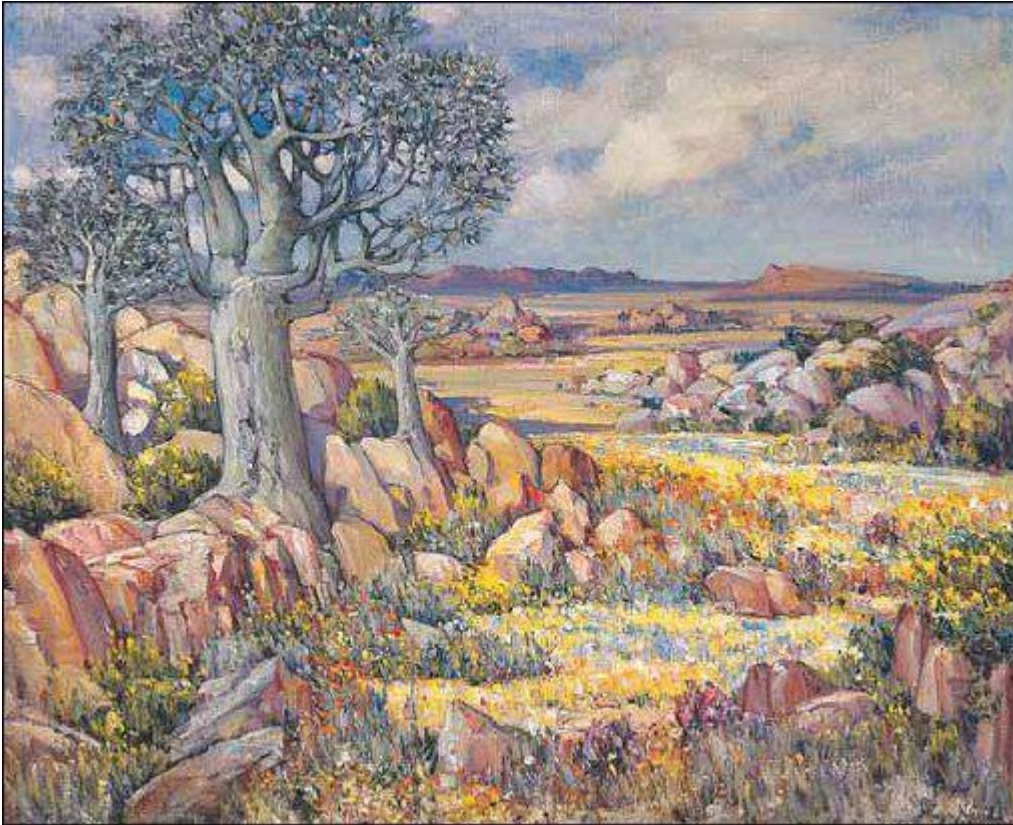
Figure 6: Pieter Hugo Naudé, *Namaqualand landscape* (n.d.)
(http://archive.stevenson.info/exhibitions/dec2004/item2.htm).

Naudé was able to depict the South African landscape in a way that could be understood by the European picturesque landscape tradition. The *modus operandi* of landscape painting was set by Claude Lorrain (1600-1682) and Salvator Rosa (1615–1673), and enthusiastically copied by British painters, eventually spreading through the British colonies. The landscape is neatly planned according to the Claudian scheme of a dark *coulisse* in the foreground to the side, a middle plane with a large central figure and an illuminated horizon in the distance (Coetzee, 1988:39), but Naudé applies it in a way that celebrates the fine complexity of the South African landscape, rather than the

traditional picturesque. Naudé has reinterpreted the categories of the picturesque by making use of strong diagonal lines that can be seen in the zig zag of the path between the rock formations and in the rock formations themselves. The uniform repetition of the rock formations create rhythm in the work and the predominant horizontal lines are contrasted by the vertical lines of the Quiver trees. The free, impasto brushstrokes and kaleidoscopic hues of the Namaqualand landscape is a typical example of Naudé's later works evidencing his exposure to the Impressionist artists in France (Raitt, 2004).

What is apparent about this landscape is that it is empty. There is no evidence of occupation within the landscape; even the path which is overgrown with wildflowers is painted in a way that suggests it as a natural occurrence. The myth of the empty land is thus embodied in this painting. As a result of the colonial gaze, the South African landscape is seen as an uninhabited space that is both timeless and without change, but filled with promise and possibility. The empty land is a popular aesthetic that justifies colonial expansion into new lands and eventual control of territory. The settler chooses to see a specific landscape as devoid of inhabitants or any historical value, giving them the 'right' own and control it. The markers of other persons in the space are ignored to create a blank canvas for the settler to inscribe meaning. The empty land myth filtered through visual culture and was seen particularly in landscape paintings attempting to confirm the presence, entitlement, and ownership of the Afrikaner people within this so-called empty space (Van Eeden, 2011:5).

3.2.2. On the steps, Groote Schuur

In this painting, Naudé's Cape Impressionism style has evolved even further. The foreground shows an indigenous worker coming down the steps form the right-hand side. Where the steps and whitewashed wall end, a large field of flourishing hydrangeas begins and fills the landscape all the way to the background. In the far distance a hill is depicted, the red blotches on it seem to represent the large Aloe plants that grow in the area, with a plantation of trees to the right. The horizontal lines of the steps and the horizon are contrasted by the verticality of the figure, the pillar next to her and the trees in the background. The composition gains movement and balance via the diagonal line of the descending steps, the pathway and slope of the hill in the background. The paint is applied gesturally with a loose hand in impasto form to focus on the movement of the hydrangeas in the spring wind and the light filtering through the leaves.

Figure 7: Pieter Hugo Naudé, *On the steps, Groote Schuur* (Circa early 20th century) (Bronner 2018:52, fig.2).

The painting shows how flora from different parts of the world are transplanted together to form colonial landscapes. These hybridised landscapes are represented as natural, even though they are constructed to ensure their existence and longevity in the space. When looking at the representation of race, as well as botany, hybridity cannot be separated from its colonial legacy (Casid,2005: xxii). There is a pathway depicted that travels from the foreground, through the hydrangea expanse and out of the frame. The French Hydrangea, native to Japan, has been exported to Europe since the 18th century and is now available all over the world (Sawayanagi *et al.*, 1999:1275). The fact that these hydrangeas have French naming and are now flourishing and in the South African landscape, is symbolic of the successes of geopolitical colonisation. The hybridity between colonised ecosystems is a tool within colonialisation, rather than an effect thereof (Casid, 2005:1).

The painting shows the opulence and abundance that the owner of this particular estate has. Without trying to depict the wealth and importance of the owner the painting still indicates the fortunate and blissful life of the affluent white in the Cape. It is assumed that the estate is rich, has servants, extravagant landscaping and a house in the renowned Groote Schuur area can be afforded. The fact that Groote Schuur was purchased by Cecil John Rhodes in 1893 adds another level of meaning by contextualising the painting within a well-known symbol and powerful figure of South Africa's colonial history (Bronner, 2018:54).

The servant is read by the viewer as part of the wilderness that has been domesticated. The naturalisation of indigenous people being depicted in the servant role—even if that isn't the main subject of the painting—essentialises their identity as worker and fixes their position in the hierarchy of the races (Bronner, 2018:54). The servant is painted barefoot; she is depicted as one with nature and in harmony with the environment: simultaneously of this place, but not allowed to be at home in it. The depiction of the female servant figure acts as representation of the ideological hierarchy that places the indigenous female figure as subaltern within the cultivated European estate. As an extension of the self/other divide, the difference between men and women are often used as visual metaphor for the differences between the coloniser and the colonised. McClintock (1993:62) explains that women are intrinsically and symbolically contained in the national body politic. In this context, the servant girl is a metaphor for indigenous South Africans that are positioned as subservient to the white colonialists.

The harmony in the painting serves as a tool to naturalise the European's presence and control in the landscape. Bronner (2018:55) explains that in this specific work, the female figure subdues the tension and resolves the potential conflict between the artistic representation of life and the experience of everyday reality that happen in regulation with pastoral customs.

3.2.3. Garden of remembrance, Worcester

Naudé's depiction of the garden of remembrance found in Worcester shows a well landscaped space. The garden has an array of colourful flowers sweeping across the foreground and cascading over the bridge, this highlights the opulence of the garden. At the centre of the composition is the monument celebrating a hundred years of Worcester. The garden is painted in Naudé's Cape Impressionist style, where the harsh sunlight and fine shrubbery is given depth and detail with subtle colour variations. The tone of the painting is light and calm thanks to the soft blues, greens and whites as the basis of the painting. The garden is depicted as a place of serenity and quiet remembrance, this stands in direct contrast to the violence of the wars, battles and odysseys memorialised here.

Figure 8: Pieter Hugo Naudé, *Garden of Remembrance*, Worcester (n.d)
https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/20617/lot/5/).

Before painting his impressionist rendition of the Garden of remembrance, Naudé

designed the space himself in 1919. The artist spent most of his married life in

Worcester, was active in the community and lobbied for the preservation of historical

buildings in the area. Naudé designed and built his own home in Worcester, that has

now been turned into an arts centre and gallery space. As an avid gardener, Naudé

designed the Garden of Remembrance in honour of the Worcester centenary and the

World War I soldiers from Worcester that passed during the war. Later additions were

made for the lives lost in World War II and the war on the border of Namibia (Theron,

2017:6).[13] A calculated national narrative becomes clear when the observer considers the memorials chosen for the garden. The memorials that have been added since include the Van Riebeek tercentenary, the arrival of the French Huguenots and the 100- and 150-year Voortrekker anniversaries. The canon used against the Khoi people in the Goudini Mountains (1740) and a memorial to the Bloedrivier battle in Natal are also on display in the garden (Theron, 2017:6,7).[14]

It is memorials such as these that are used to validate mythologies that form part of the grand Afrikaner narrative. The functioning of ideology is dependent on the implementation of such myths as objective and affective truths. As an act of "aggressive identity formation" (Ahmad, 1992:78) certain "master symbols" were set in a linear narrative to authenticate the Afrikaner history and supremacy (De Wet, 1997:113). Monuments such as the garden designed by Naudé are put in place for events considered to be formative to the national identity. By linking the events to ideologically charged terms like 'remembrance' and 'memorial', these happenings become cemented in the shared Afrikaner memory.

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[13] The "Border War" or rather the Namibian War of Independence took place between 1966 and 1989. After WWI, South-West Africa (now Namibia) was placed under South African control. The war broke out to attempt to dispel the South African authority in South-West Africa and in particular, the violence and discrimination they experienced as an extension of the apartheid regime. Though the conflict was focused around South-West Africa, it extended to Angola and Zambia (Wessels, 2017:25, Scholtz, 2006:26)

[14] The battle of Bloodriver took place at the Ncome river in Kwa-Zulu Natal on 16 December 1838 between the Voortrekkers and the local Zulus. Conflict grew concerning land rights and the Afrikaners were attacked twice by the Zulu's, once as guests to Dingaan and once at Bloukrans. The Afrikaners seemed defeated but made a covenant with God to celebrate his day if He granted them victory. The 10 000 to 15 000 Zulus that attacked at the Ncome river were defeated by 450 Boers. The battle and the celebration thereof reinforce the myth of the Afrikaners' God-given right to the land and is an ideological cornerstone in the building of Christian-nationalism (Lohnes, 2022, De Wet, 1997:127, Rankin & Schneider, 2020:447).

After identifying the cohesive narrative set forth as Afrikaner history, it becomes clear that the memories and histories of indigenous South Africans were not considered as important as those of the Afrikaner people. Within the Garden of Remembrance, a memorial to Nelson Mandela and his journey towards freedom was added in 2012; this is the only piece in the garden dedicated to indigenous history. Khoi and Zulu peoples are mentioned in the memorials as enemies of the Afrikaner *volk,* that had to be overcome (Theron, 2017:6,7).

There are no figures on display in the painting, but the fact that the garden is well kept and structured implies a power relationship in the landscape. As Cane (2017:6) explains, a lawn (and by extension, garden) requires labour, money and time to be successfully kept. If this is a garden designed for contemplation and remembrance, the people remembering are not taking part in the labour to maintain the garden. Labour must then come from another hidden group of people who do not relate to the memorials. In South Africa, how and by whom a garden is kept is determined by race and class. The way in which the labour in the garden is represented, what is remembered and what is ignored, is telling of the power relations at work within the garden (Cane, 2017:6). The memorials to the Afrikaner canon built in the Garden of Remembrance in Worcester create a clear divide between the white Afrikaner garden dwellers and the hidden indigenous worker tending to the garden.

3.2.4. Conclusion on Naudé

Naudé is credited with forming a 'truly South African' style with the Cape Impressionism he develops. Here Naudé makes use of set landscape motifs and arrangements, but in a way that fits the South African landscape. The Claudian composition is altered by using a scorching sun and fine complexities in the rendering of the flora. '*Namaqualand landscape*' is an example of the timeless empty land trope as seen through the colonial gaze. While deciphering Naudé's landscape paintings, the influence of the colonial endeavour became clear, especially in the hybridity of the landscapes. Naudé's design of the garden of remembrance and his painting thereof shows the importance of memory and nostalgia in nation and identity formation, although it represents a very specific history to fit the modernist canon. The control exercised in a landscaped public space gives power to those designing it in what the patrons will see, do and think in that space, but it also takes away the power of those meant to maintain the landscaped space *sub rosa*. When indigenous bodies are omitted from the landscape the effect is lost histories and hidden perspectives within the South African landscape.

3.3.   J.H. Pierneef

Jacob Hendrik Pierneef was born in Pretoria on the 13th of August 1886 after his father immigrated to South Africa two years earlier from the Netherlands and then married a South African woman. During the Boer War (1899-1902) the Pierneef family sought exile in Holland where Pierneef had the opportunity to receive formal training at the

Rotterdam Academy. His father saw prospects in the construction industry and encouraged Pierneef to study architectural drawing, which he did in South Africa and the Netherlands (Borman, 2019a and Kempff, 1974:32,33).

When the Pierneef family returned to South Africa after the Boer War, the young artist had his mind set on being a professional painter. It is also upon their return that Pierneef developed a deep appreciation for the South African landscape that proved fundamental in his artistic practice. While continuing to work to sustain himself, Pierneef spent his free time practicing and working on his art. He received painting lessons from well-known sculptor and family friend, Anton van Wouw (1862-1945), oil painting lessons from Frans Oerder (1967-1944) and etching and woodwork lessons from George Smithard (1873-1919). Pierneef had his first successful solo exhibition in 1913 and subsequently took part in exhibitions in Bloemfontein in 1919 and Cape Town and Stellenbosch in 1921. Between 1920 and 1923 Pierneef worked as art lecturer in Pretoria and Heidelberg Normal Colleges (Borman, 2019a) (Kempff, 1974:34).[15]
In 1925 Pierneef travelled once more to the Netherlands where he had the opportunity to exhibit some of his work. Pierneef's European contemporaries inspired him with their break from realistic landscapes in favour of emphasising the mood and character of the landscape through composition, even if it requires combining motifs that wouldn't be seen together in nature (Kempff, 1974:35, 36). In Amsterdam Pierneef underwent graphic training and was convinced of Willem van Konijenburg's (1868-1943) ideas on

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[15] Pretoria and Heidelberg Normal Colleges were institutes of tertiary education in the Transvaal, founded at the turn of the century. Heidelberg started as a dual medium institution but by 1920 it was Afrikaans-medium. These institutions became of interest to the Afrikaner nationalist project, using education to instil Calvinism and Christian National ideals (Chisholm, 2019:55).

geographical and mathematical prominence in composition. Fuelled by inspiration and the desire to form his own artistic identity, Pierneef experimented with strong geometric works and abstract expressionism around 1928. This new style did not sit well with the South African modernist painters and traditionalists, and he soon reverted to his iconic style of simplified forms, strong lines and soft colours (Borman, 2019a).

The "economy and harmony of line and form" that is quintessential in Pierneef's art is a stylistic characteristic of his work inspired by European modernism, but also crucially in Pierneef's love of the simplified forms of indigenous art that he was exposed to in South Africa (Borman, 2019a). From San art, for example, Pierneef was inspired by the use of formal elements, simplification, economy of line and relational composition without the use of colour and shade (Duffey, 2002:20). As Pierneef continued to develop his style, he researched the indigenous arts of South Africa. His focus on the form of San rock art that emphasises expression rather than naturalism, falls in the Western conception of primitivism, revealing his paternalistic view of indigenous art. Pierneef believes indigenous African arts to be an ideal basis on which modern South African art should be modelled. Through a revisionist lens, however, Alex Duffey (2002:23) argues that the practice of primitivism represents Africa as a simple other, focussing on the sensuality and naturalism that the white self does not have but longs for (Duffey, 2002:23).

Pierneef's idea of a great artist that creates a new style of painting that is typically South African "…to lay a foundation for true Afrikaans Art" (Pretorius, 1990:65) is problematic in two ways. In the first place, he fails to recognise that the strong influence of European

Expressionism in his work. The formalist style, technique, colour use, composition of the European landscape tradition and Expressionism had an immense effect on Pierneef's style and composition. The motifs he used were not new, they were simply altered slightly to fit the South African terrain. Take for instance the motif of a single tree in the middle ground, stretching diagonally over the landscape, as in *Karibib, Suidwes Afrika* (1932) (Figure 9). The diagonal tree is a popular European icon, often used in picturesque and pastoral landscapes, for example as can be seen in Claude Lorrain's *Landscape with Shepherds* (1644) (Figure 10). Pierneef would have encountered this *repoussoir* that Lorrain uses throughout his European travels and the art he studied there as it is an important motif in the strict formalist movements (Benjamin, 1993:302). [16]
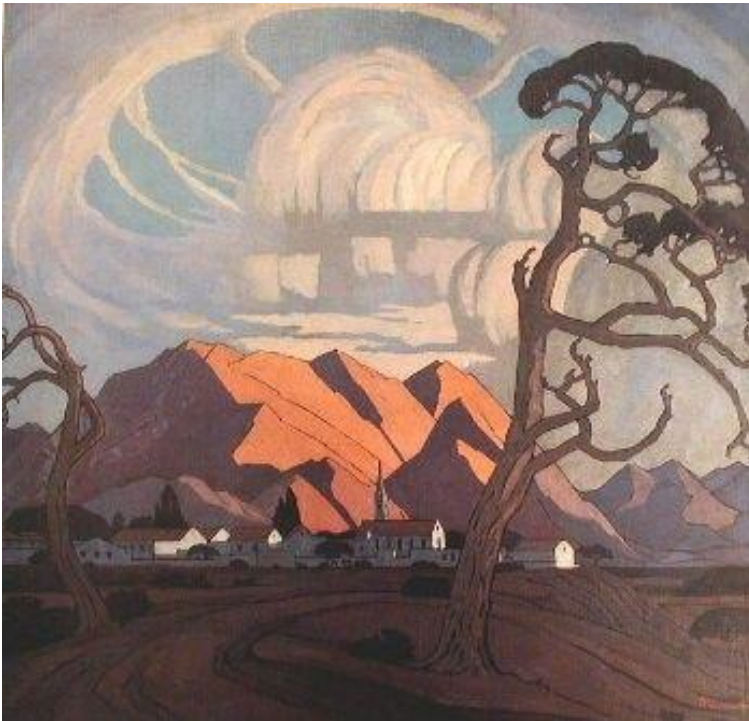
Figure 9: Jacobus Hendrik Pierneef. *Karibib, Suidwes Afrika* (1932)
(https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:JH_Pierneef_-_Karibib,_South_West_Africa_1929.jpg).

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[16] French for 'pushing back', a *repoussoir* is a figure in the foreground on the left- or right-hand side made to frame the artwork and draw the viewers eye into the landscape to create depth (Wind, 1938:117).

Figure 10: Claude Lorrain, *Landscape with Shepherds (*1644)
(https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Claude_Lorrain_034.jpg).

Secondly, Pierneef had drawn inspiration from San art from the beginning of his career,

presented lectures on "Bantu and Bushmen art" and echoed their strong lines and

simple forms in his work (Duffey, 2002:23). Not recognising these obvious influences in

his work, and elevating Pierneef to the position of original genius is a common

modernist phenomenon. The art is thus removed from its historical context in an

attempt to situate it as conceptually new so as to serve a cultural and political ideology.

This dehistorisation is problematised in the study.

In this chapter, I focus on the Johannesburg Station panels as a point of inquiry on the

implications of Afrikaner nationalism in Pierneef's work and the possibility that he

intended to communicate these ideas. Maré and Coetzee (2001:184) assert that

Pierneef's execution of the panels in the formative time of Afrikaner nationalism,

acknowledges these nationalistic ideals and presents the Afrikaner people with a visual

reference of what they "…wanted to believe of the land and of themselves". The South African Railways commissioned these panels as an advertisement and to decorate the station, but in effect it acted as propaganda material. Pierneef shows the South African landscape in such a way that it rouses nostalgia within its Afrikaner viewers, legitimises their control over the land and reinforces the so-called strong bond they have with the land (Maré & Coetzee, 2001:184). The artist was also well aware of his authority, the importance that is bestowed upon him as Afrikaner artist and the effect he can have with this position (Du Plessis, 1994:28).

Pierneef's exposure to the European landscape tradition (particularly the Netherlands) and training with established South African artists had taught him the formalist foundations of landscape painting. This traditional iconography of the landscape is transformed by Pierneef into a 'truly Afrikaans' depiction of the landscape by incorporating the simplicity and expressiveness of San rock art and the Expressionist movement. The following section discusses and analyses three of the twenty-eight Johannesburg Station panels to find the ideological notions they convey in attempting a unique Afrikaner landscape.

3.3.1. Karoo (1932)

Pierneef's *Karoo* has a strong formal composition. The foreground is almost bare, with just a few bushes between the slopes. Further back is a foundation for a building to be built, or perhaps an empty *kraal*. The middle ground holds the focus point of the

artwork, the flat white farmhouse that is surrounded by cypress trees and other shrubbery. The background is filled with a succession of mountains and the atmospheric space is clouded. The eye of the viewer is first drawn to the house in the middle ground, it then follows the cypress trees upwards, through the curve between the mountains and finally to the spherical white cloud that fills the atmosphere. This juxtaposition sets the homestead apart from the rest of the landscape and makes it a focus point. The diagonal lines encourage movement and seep out of the borders of the painting to show the vastness of the landscape. The landscape is painted with a brown undertone that emanates from the dry earth of the Karoo landscape. The browns are accentuated with soft mauves and deep reds that illustrate the warm glow of the afternoon sun. The façade of the farmhouse is illuminated by the late afternoon sun and the use of colour creates a warm and calm atmosphere.
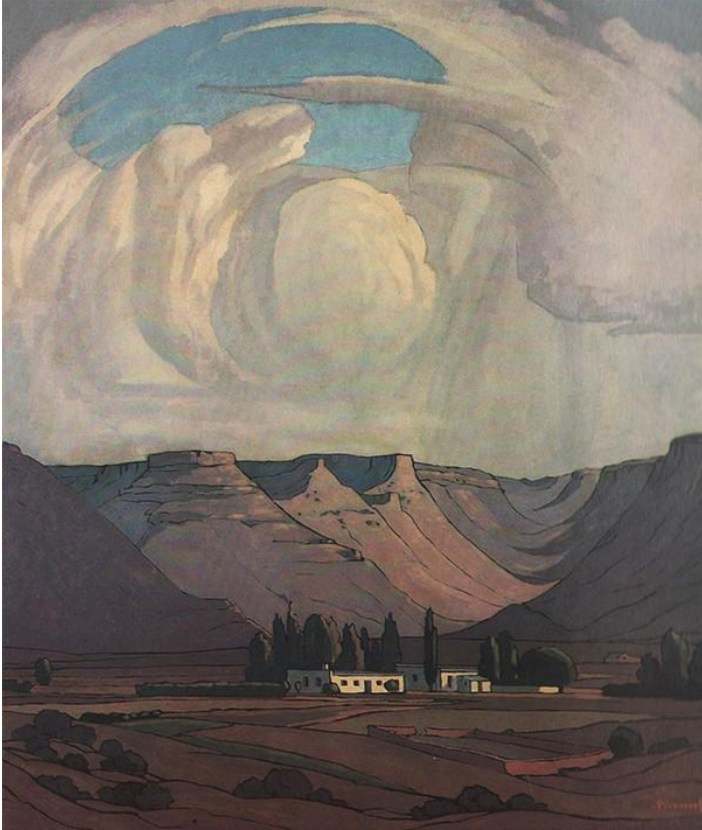
Figure 11: Jacobus Hendrik Pierneef, *Karoo* (1932)
(https://rupertmuseum.org/exhibition/the-johannesburg-station-panels/).

The cloud formation overwhelms the pane by taking over just more than half of the

space on the canvas. So as to avoid imposing any implied meaning onto the large

cloud formation it must be said here that the Station panels were hung at the height of

4,25 meters (Schoonbee, 2019). The panel would have been seen from a distance and

from below, so the foreshortening would have insured that the clouds appear

proportional to the landscape. The overwhelming expanse of clouds lends itself to the

sublime. The fact that the panel is hung this high above the heads of passers-by, and

the exaggeration of the cloud, juxtaposes the small human and the vastness of nature.

The viewer looks up in awe at the grandeur of nature from this point of view.

The farmhouse is clearly the center of the painting. Pierneef has placed the farmhouse in the middle of the landscape, drawing attention to it by juxtaposing the white building with the dark trees around it. The farmhouse has been emphasised further by the setting sun illuminating the façade. Placing the home of the farmer and his people at the center implies that they are the most important element on this farm. The farmhouse is often described as a site of physical and psychological power within the farm hierarchies. It stands in the centre of the farm as a symbol of the absolute power and command the *boer* holds over his domain (Mkhize, 2019). Pierneef is building a narrative around the *boere*, they are the only persons there and they claim ownership of the land. Naming the painting Karoo is also indicative of this emphasis on the *boer*—as if to say this *is* the Karoo—the people of that farmhouse are what makes the Karoo special.

The landscape only has some shrubbery and crop fields, there are no grazing animals depicted. There also are no fences marking out the territory of this farm. A lack in the marking of the space gives the viewer the indication that the farm is almost unmeasurably large, certainly too big to fit in the frame of view. The emphasis on the farmer's presence at the center of the farm without much else suggests a theme of possession. The notoriously dry Karoo doesn't give the *boer* much to work with—there is very little water, and the flora is tough and scarce—but it does provide him with the opportunity of ownership. The diagonal lines of the land and mountains that seep out of the frame, and emphasis on the sheer the extent of the farmer's land, speaks to the power and wealth the farmer has. Colonial ideals imprinted the idea that the size of the

land a person owns shows importance, authority and self-sufficiency. The farm is understood as an opportunity for economic independence and a kingdom for the *boer* where he can exercise his authority and follow his own rules (Coetzee, 1988:1750). This creates the opportunity and legitimacy to take control of spaces, connecting ownership and land to the social and cultural stature of a person.

The only indication we have of an end to the farm is another farmhouse (and thus other property) seen far in the distance. The fact that its similarly shaped and presented as the farmhouse in the foreground suggests that this is another farmhouse of a neighbouring farm, rather than the residence of *bywoners.*[17] The inclusion of this other property in Pierneef's depiction of the Karoo landscape raises an interesting point on community and fraternity among the *boers*. This sense of community is built on narratives set out as 'shared histories and memories' and has stayed with the Afrikaner well into the 20th century with, for example, the launch of the *Helpmekaar Vereniging* (Mutual Aid Association) (Freschi, 2009:523). This single border depicted is, however, so far away that it is only seen upon close inspection of the painting and would probably not have been seen from 4.25 meters in the air.

The South African landscapes that Pierneef presents are not unknown or wild lands: they are intimately known spaces. This landscape does not show a traveller's gaze looking out onto a new land and there is no exoticism present. The spaces Pierneef presents is not a *terra nullus*: it clearly belongs to the *boer*. The depiction of the *boer*,

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[17] A 'bywoner' is a landless white tenant farmer that exchanges his labour for the right to farm and occupy a part of the land. They are usually considered socially inferior (Cane, 2017:1).

and only the *boer*, on this land is used to formulate the narrative that this land belongs to them. What is more, the serenity and calm of the paintings reassures the viewer this is how it should be. The reconstruction and depiction of a landscape with pro-nationalist connotation is used to connect the Afrikaner to the land, normalising their presence in it (Byerley 2009:239).

3.3.2. Graaff-Reinet (1932)

Pierneef reiterates the importance of the Karoo in the Afrikaner narrative by including the town of Graaff-Reinet in his station panels. The dry and arid landscape of the Karoo is experienced as hostile and ancient. However, it is woven into the Afrikaner nationalist narrative because the Afrikaner claims to understand the landscape on a primal, intimate level (Beningfield, 2006:34). The painting is a study of the dry valleys and dolerite columns. The red soil and dark green shrubbery are contrasted by the light blues and white of the sky in the background. Unlike in his other paintings, the clouds in the background are not as detailed, the emphasis rests entirely on the valley and colours.

Figure 12: Jacobus Hendrik Pierneef, *Graaff-Reinet* (1932) (https://rupertmuseum.org/exhibition/the-johannesburg-station-panels/).

The quintessentially dry and barren Karoo landscape gives Pierneef the opportunity to introduce a Cubist composition to the rock formations. The scene appears obviously ordered, structured, and composed to show the grandeur of this scenic landmark (Maré & Coetzee, 2001:189). This is a typically modernist rendition of a landscape. Stylising the landscape in an orderly manner implies the influence of white colonialists in taking the pre-modern, naïve wilderness and guiding it towards an enlightened, industrious modern place (Kane, 2013:22).

The valley Pierneef is depicting here is the Valley of Desolation, known for the dolerite pillars that rise to 120 meters. Evoking the sublime is a primary objective, with the viewer standing in awe of the power and strangeness of nature. The columns are made

enormous by giving the viewer a low perspective of the wide-angle shot, this effect would have been enhanced by hanging the paintings at 4 meters high in the station. Framing the scene with the arc in the sky in the background adds to the unfamiliar almost other-worldly quality of the monolithic landscape (Maré & Coetzee, 2001:189). Aside from the exoticism, the monumentality of the rock formations also goes a long way towards being a metaphor for the steadfastness of the Afrikaner people. Within the Afrikaner narrative, the people are said to belong in the dry and arid Karoo because they consider themselves just as tough and resolute as anything else that can survive there. The Afrikaners possess a "deeper right" to the South African landscape by 'understanding' the harsh and hostile environment. The true abundance of the landscape can only be accessed by those who belong there (Beningfield, 2006:48). As the monolithic rock formations stand tall and proud as the essence of this landscape and have stood there for all eternity, so have the Afrikaner people.

The rock formations also strengthen the sublimity of the Karoo landscape; the enormity of the formations symbolise the magnitude and unlimited power of God. The religious sublime experience in these landscapes involves being terrified and dazzled by the vast majesty of God's power and our lack of understanding of His ways, followed by the reassurance that He is in control (Chignell & Halteman, 2012:184). The sublime experience can result in a kind of fanaticism wherein there is believed that God has intervened from outside the phenomenological realm of sensory experience to instruct or assist the believer in some manner (Chignell & Halteman, 2012:201). This experience is fundamental to the myth of Afrikaner nationalism as it presents in the

'sign' from God for the Afrikaners to break free from British rule, to make the journey to their 'promised land'. It also features when God intervened and gave the Afrikaners victory at the battle of Bloedrivier.

In both *Graaff-Reinet* and *Karoo* the artist creates a sense of emptiness, untouched natural resources and opportunity. The urge to keep expanding, keep exploring and taking the land is created by painting the landscape that pulls the viewer in, and invites them to move through the bushes towards the mountains. The Afrikaner would see the land around them exactly in this manner. English speaking whites and other European immigrants are also driven to explore the vast new landscape, though their focus would shift towards legitimising and stabilising their colonial presence. Whether the South African landscape is being taken by imperial powers or by the Afrikaner *volk*, the narrative heavily depends on the myth of the empty land and by extension, the virgin lands. The new landscape is equated to the female body that is devoid of sexual agency or desire within the colonial narrative. The virgin land has no previous suitors and passively awaits the "male insemination" that will introduce European military power, reason, order, strength and culture to it. The metaphor of colonial lands as virgin spaces also removes any conflict in imperial conquest. If the land is considered virgin and empty, the Africans have no right to own and live in the space (McClintock, 1993:69).

The Karoo is notoriously difficult to farm and "… almost seems to yield being farmed", making it difficult for the farmer (Mkhize, 2019). It is a personal victory for every

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Afrikaner that the *boer* has managed to make the impenetrable Karoo landscape farmable. Perhaps the fact that the *boer* can in fact farm this otherwise unnavigable land is proof of God's approval of their presence there. Pierneef's depiction of the Karoo as part of the station panel series shows the pride and power of the Afrikaner people for being able to acquire even this pitiless piece of land. Use of the monoliths naturalises the passage of time to create a stable and timeless narrative of the Afrikaner people.

3.3.3. Louis Trichardt (1932)

One of the first panels painted in the series is *Louis Trichardt*, a landscape showing the small town that is known today as Mahkado in the Limpopo province, in the north of South Africa. The immediate foreground of the painting has the onlooker standing on a hill with a palm tree and some other shrubbery. Behind the slope downwards off the hill lies a small piece of cultivated fields, with the titular town in the middle background. In the background the town church stands on a slightly elevated piece of land. The landscape takes up less than half of the panel and the skies that make up the remaining space are filled with clouds, with a small piece of blue-sky behind it.

Figure 13: Jacobus Hendrik Pierneef, *Louis Trichardt* (1932) (https://rupertmuseum.org/exhibition/the-johannesburg-station-panels).

The town is named after Louis Trichardt (1783-1838), a prominent Afrikaner and leader of the Great Trek leader that set up camp in the area between 1836 and 1837.[18] This call-out to the history of the Great Trek speaks to the Afrikaners' nostalgia for the land and the history of the *volk*, whilst validating their appropriation thereof (Maré & Coetzee, 2001:184). The Afrikaner *volk* acquired many of the practices and ideologies of the Voortrekkers in an attempt to form a unified nationalist identity (Freschi, 2011:94). As they were the first to create a separation between the people supportive of the Cape Colony and those opposed to the Cape Colony's ideals, they could be seen as a precursor for the Afrikaner. The quest of the Voortrekker to find a new territory or 'Promised land' for their people becomes embedded in Afrikaner mythology. The *volk*

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[18] The Great Trek refers to emigration of 12000 to 14000 Boers out of the British run Cape Colony from 1835 to the early 1840's (Britannica, 2020). This trek was equated with the journey the Jewish Chosen people took out of Egypt to the Promised Land. Their right to the 'Promised land' was legitimised by a covenant made with God for victory in the battle of Bloedrivier against the Zulu inhabitants (Petzold, 2007:117).

idealised the heroes and martyrs of the journey, made legends of certain stories of that time and took the Voortrekker conduct on as their own. The importance of the Voortrekkers in the Afrikaner history was also used to reinforce the idea of a separate, nationalist *volk* (Freschi, 2011:95).

It should be noted that the church in the painting is depicted far larger than the other buildings, it is set apart from the rest of the town and it is bathed in sunlight—every technical measure has been taken to highlight the church. Setting the church in the middle of the panel, with as much emphasis as an artist can muster, shows the cultural and social symbolism of the church and religious experience (Maré & Coetzee, 2001:185). The vertical lines of the cypress trees lead the eyes upwards, towards the church, while the church tower in turn acts as an arrow directing the viewer's head towards the heavens. The combination of ecstasy and terror shown by the ominous clouds link the sublime landscape to spirituality. Just as the landscape can be beautiful, as well as frightening, God is seen as both benevolent and kind as well as fierce and powerful. Calvinist ideals played a strong role in the forming of a Christian nationalism in the Afrikaner community (De Gruchy, 1991:228).

The placement of sunlight is different than in *Karoo* and *Graaff-Reinet*. The warm glow coming from the afternoon sun in *Karoo* and *Graaff-Reinet* is absent in *Louis Trichardt* where the sunshine comes from a higher angle and seems to provide clarity rather than warmth. The sunshine falls on the church and most of the town, while the surrounding area (including the immediate foreground) is left in the shade. The use of sunlight here

is highly metaphorical. The town of Louis Trichardt is situated in the northern part of the country and was seen as the closest to the rest of "darkest" Africa. The emphasis on the church and the strategically placed sunlight shows the enlightenment and civilisation that is believed that the *volk* brought to this area, by way of Christianity (Maré & Coetzee, 2001:185).

After the town's establishment, there was some conflict with the local Venda and subsequently the town was destroyed during the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902). The buildings in the painting are depicted as clean, new and uniform as the town was rebuilt after the war (Maré & Coetzee, 2001:185). The rebuilding of the town is made to show the strength of the Afrikaner against adversity, to enlighten darkest Africa, and make antagonists of indigenous South Africans.

3.3.4. Conclusion on Pierneef

Pierneef's landscapes are almost exclusively devoid of any figures and shows a fascination with the 'empty land' that is found and transformed by European settlers. The virgin land becomes a home for the settlers and a resource to provide bounties. An emphasis is placed on the God given power the Afrikaner has within the landscape without actually showing the Afrikaner people within the landscape, the changes made to the landscape implies their presence and dominance there. As a means to legitimise the Afrikaner nation within the South African landscape, Pierneef draws on timeless, dehistoricised representations of the landscape through the eye of the Afrikaner. The

deep connection the *volk* has with the landscape is also solidified by creating a sublime

atmosphere within the paintings and relating it to the Calvinist religious experience. This

depends on the painting evoking nostalgia in the viewer for an idealised time that never

existed.

3.4.   Maggie Laubser

Maria Magdalena Laubser was born on 14 April 1886 on the family's farm, in the

Malmesbury district of the Western Cape. Growing up on a grain farm, instilled a sense

of appreciation for the beauty and wonder of nature, fauna and flora from an early age.

Laubser's happiest memories of her childhood are of those she spent in nature. It

becomes clear that this exposure to nature proved fundamental in the development of

her unique style and artistic beliefs (Ballot, 2015:1). She writes:

> *"I have always thought it a great privilege to be born on a farm. I was one of those fortunate children, who are (sic) awakened every morning by the different sounds of nature, and who could watch the animals come home every night to their kraals; and these are among my earliest recollections and with joy I shall always remember them, for these farm memories have formed the basis upon which I later built up all the visions which constitute my art* (Laubser in Ballot, 2015:1)."

Laubser's strong association with nature is not an uncommon one. In an attempt to

naturalise the volk's possession of and presence in the landscape, focus was put on the

'natural bond' between the Afrikaners and the land. In particular, the freedom and joy

felt by Laubser on the farm as exemplary of the "spaciousness of land" that leads to the

"spaciousness of character". Coetzee (1988:61) explains that a landscape that provides

freedom of movement and stretching horizons implies an expansive future and freedom in personal and national growth.

Laubser attended a farm school and later attended the Bloemhof Seminary in Stellenbosch from 1896 where she was given art lessons. At aged 15 (1901), Laubser moved back to the farm to give her siblings the opportunity of an education. While she was attending to the farm and the household, Laubser continued to take part in creative activities. In her time on the farm Laubser is said to develop creatively in isolation, hence there were no immediate contemporaries to influence her work. Her early farm life made a fundamental influence on her life and art and cemented her compassionate identification with nature (Delmont, 2001:55).

After moving to the Cape, Laubser was inspired by Beatice Hazell (1862-1946), who was a reasonably successful South African painter, to consider painting as a profession even though it wasn't deemed a fitting career for a woman at the time. She received some training from Edward Roworth (1880-1964) in 1903 and continued to establish herself in the South African art scene. By 1909, Laubser took part in the annual exhibition of the South African Society of Artists (where Hugo Naude was also a member) and the Fine Arts Association of Cape Town. In the following year, she established her own studio (Delmont, 1989:13-15).

Jan Hendrik Balwé (1858-1921), businessman and Dutch consul in Durban, had an enormous influence on Laubser's life. He introduced her to Christian Science and

supported her artistic career. [19] He also insisted that she further her training by travelling to Europe and paid for her sister to accompany her (Delmont, 2001:59). Laubser spent time in the Netherlands, at the Slade school in England, Belgium, the Italian countryside and Germany. Though Laubser was already painting *plein-air* in her formative years, her time with Dutch painters and exposure to the English landscape tradition reinforced her practice of *plein-air* landscape painting (Delmont, 1989:13-15).

Whilst in Belgium, Laubser turned to a lighter, more vivid palette, most likely influenced by Flemish Fauves and Expressionists. In Italy she focused on the simplification of detail and shape and amplification of hue. Her time with the German Expressionists had the largest influence on her work, most notably the *Die Brücke* and *Der Blaue Reiter* movements.[20] Laubser developed her sense of self-expression and symbolic interpretation with bold, sharp shapes, darker and brighter tones, simple contrasts and a reduction of details (Delmont, 1989:13-15).

As a follower of Christian Science, Laubser was inclined to represent only the positive aspect of the Creation, abstracted to their spiritual forms (McDowall 2016:68). Laubser practiced expressionism to the point of painting the idea or "final spiritual shape" of the object. Her isolation of the good, beautiful and ideal in representation may have to do

[19] Christian Science is a religious movement founded by Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910) in the United States. Followers practice spiritual healing and believe that God did not create the universe as this would include the creation of suffering. Jesus is presented as proof the limitations of the mortal state can be overcome by acquiring the mind of Christ (Gottschalk & Melton, 2019).
[20] Die Brucke was a group of German printmakers and painters that was formed in Dresden in 1905 that played an important part in the development of Expressionism until its expansion in 1913 (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2015. Sv "Die Brucke"). Der Blaue Reiter was a group of artists working together in Munich between 1911 and 1914 who had an impressive influence on the establishment of abstract art (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2011. Sv "Die Blaue Reiter").

with her stance in Christian Science wherein only the positive aspects of God's creations should be shown (Ballot, 2015:302). The landscape is often presented as an innocent and natural backdrop to mankind's actions, ignoring that it is intertwined with conflict, colonial expansion and settlement that takes place there (Sachs in Beningfield, 2006:9). Laubser's depiction of the good and beautiful speaks of a longing for the "pristine paradise" that existed before history. Her landscapes, like those of Pierneef and Naude, thus become dehistoricised.

Laubser moved back to South Africa from Europe and had her first solo exhibition in Cape Town in 1924. With her first two successful exhibitions arranged by the Afrikaans Language and Culture conference in 1929 and the *Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurverenigings* (FAK) in 1930 respectively. Laubser became synonymous with what it means to be Afrikaans, and a woman artist (Delmont, 2001:64). The *Nuwe Brandwag*'s (New National Guard) 1929 conference in Bloemfontein was formed to make the Afrikaans voice heard and was seen as a foundational step in the third Afrikaans language movement. The conference included an exhibition that showed five quintessentially Afrikaans artists whose architecture, painting and sculpture assisted the forming of an Afrikaner culture of which Laubser was one (Delmont, 2001:7). The "suiwer Afrikaanse karakter (Dekker, 1953:137)" (pure Afrikaans character) is pointed out as unmissable in her art. Laubser's paintings of the farm, pastoral life within it, and motifs unique to the South African landscape is meant to evoke a sense of nostalgia in the Afrikaner. The essentialism and expressiveness of her work was interpreted to convey an uncomplicated, modest and empathetic disposition, and gratitude for the

simple pastoral life (Dekker, 1953:137). Laubser's paintings were understood to depict

socially constructed feminine qualities such as modesty, simplicity and empathy by her

audience and critics (Delmont, 2001:8). This straightforward, unpretentious character

was foundational to the Afrikaner national identity as well as imposed individual identity,

and so Laubser was elevated to a beacon and representative of the Afrikaner *volk*.

Even if the artist had no political or cultural aspirations of her own, her ideals and

character thus fitted in with those of the Afrikaner Nationalist movement (Delmont,

2001:6). In particular, Laubser's love of the farm and the harmony between humanity

and nature aligned with prevailing Afrikaner ideals. This made her inadvertently an

example of the 'natural order' kept in an Afrikaner ideal. This iconography and her

simplified style became a popular representation of what it meant to be an Afrikaner

(Delmont, 2001:10).

3.4.1. Landscape with cows, trees, huts and figures

In *Landscape with cows, trees, huts and figures* Laubser's paints a cow with a bird on

its back, eating grass on a hill in the foreground. In the background there are two trees

nearby two small farmworker's homes. The eye follows the light pink path with three

coloured women walking past a round hut into the distance. On the horizon are

mountains that add scale and sublimity to the painting. This landscape has a warm

tone about it that gives the impression of the afternoon sun softly curving over the land

as the day reaches an end. Laubser makes use of soft pinks, mauve and orange

undertones to create the golden hour atmosphere in the painting. This is well

contrasted by the fresh green of the trees and grass and the soft blue mountains on the horizon.

Figure 14: Maria Magdalena Laubser, *Landscape with cows, trees, huts and figures* (n.d.) http://www.artnet.com/artists/maggie-maria-magdalena-laubser/landscape-with-cow-trees-huts-and-figures-OFX12meu4_3vX1hR-O2Tvw2).

Laubser's colour use and style is evocative of the Expressionists and Fauvists she encountered on her European travels. Upon her return to South Africa these influences resulted in simplification of her images, intensified contrast and colour, and a focus on the essential symbolic form, rather than visual accuracy (Van Rensburg, 2020:36). This 'emotional primitivism' positions the landscape as a timeless, pastoral space that is void of history. The idealised and harmonised depiction of the pseudo-feudal system within the farming community is reinforced and normalised (Delmont, 2001:7).

The display of the cow and bird, a Cattle Egret, is highly symbolic. They can be found on the backs of cattle because they feed on the ticks found on the cows (Molepo et al,

2018). This is an example of a symbiotic relationship and is metaphorical for an ideal

situation wherein each individual on the farm has to play their part for the farm to be

successful. This ideological depiction obfuscates skewed hierarchies and gendered

dichotomies between the farmers, *bywoners* and workers as well as men and women.

Looking at the landscapes of Laubser, it becomes clear that there is a perceived

ideological harmony in the land and between peoples that seems questionable.

Laubser would have been very familiar with this image of natural symbiosis on her

family's farm. She thus likely painted the young cow and Cattle Egret to convey the

harmony and agreement found in nature. It is safe to assume this imagery is as

obvious as it seems, as Laubser became increasingly interested in symbolism as her

career developed. Laubser echoed the Symbolist movement's concern with the

emotional and metaphysical by focussing on the 'true form' of the object she is painting.

As a movement away from realism and formalism, the Symbolists refocus on mysticism

and the spiritual experience. The representation of the spiritual through symbols and

nature is imbued in Laubser's landscapes. These representations surpass realism

whether it be for subjective experience or idealistic purposes (Goldwater, 2018:4).

According to Gustave Kahn (1859-1936) the aim of symbolic painting is to objectify the

subjective instead of subjectifying the objective (Goldwater, 2018:1). Laubser's

application of symbolist practices raises an individual experience to an ideological point

of view for an entire group. For example, her memories of a childhood in the countryside

are elevated to the ideological idea that Afrikaners has a deep understanding of the land

and how to farm it. The subjective experience is escalated to the grand narrative.

Another ideological implication of Laubser's symbolic inclination is the loss of context the artwork is created in.

Laubser's landscapes are often painted from an elevated perspective. It gives the impression that Laubser is painting from the farmhouse, perhaps sitting on the wrap-around porch looking out onto the animals, workers and landscape. Laubser had probably rather been painting *en plein air* from a hill, making an active choice in positioning herself in relation to the landscape she will be painting. The choice to have an elevated perspective is an intentional stylistic strategy. She places herself, and by implication, the viewer 'above' the farm, with only the mountains in the distance higher than herself. This reveals her sense of control over the landscape she sees. Here the hierarchy on the farm is shown by having the (presumably white) viewer atop, the cow and bird on the next tier and the coloured workers on the lowest level. The adoption of a birds-eye-view implies an authoritative, magisterial gaze whereby the artist is surveying the vast expanse of landscape. The hierarchy of Laubser's positioning also speaks of the imperial gaze. In especially the depiction of farmlands, the gaze is indicative of the need to transform nature, to create a 'space of ownership', belonging and possession (Cane 2017:10).

It's important to note how the three figures represented are reduced to blanket covered figures with no faces. A simple black dot to indicate a head revokes all identity and individuality from the figures that they might have. Laubser's simplification and generalisation of the working figure is indicative of their status in relation to class, race

and gender. By fixing the figures firmly in the status quo of the time, Laubser doesn't merely paint what she sees: the farmworkers are represented as the other and constructed as such according to the expectations and beliefs of the artist. (Delmont, 2001:22). The visual language of the simplified and stylized figures shows the apparent naivety and perhaps dependency of the coloured workers, as seen by the Afrikaner eye (Delmont, 2001:64). The fact that she shows the figures deeply embedded into the landscape, without identifying or individual features fits well with the representation of a natural order. The depiction normalises the idea that the coloured workers are somehow closer to the natural surrounding and are thus better fit for working the lands.

Laubser shows the figures deeply embedded in the landscape, without identifying or individual features, which fits well with the representation of a presumed natural order. The depiction normalises the idea that the coloured workers are somehow closer to nature, more primitive, and are thus better fit for working the lands. This is all communicated through the generalised, anonymous image of coloureds as a homogeneous group of simple manual labourers. Laubser depicts the workers in prescriptive manner, they're shown working—as it should be (Delmont, 2001:64). In addition to showing indigenous labour as natural their work is also presented as a labour of love—something that is an honour to do.

Beningfield (2006:124) states that race and labour are inseparable from pastoral depictions. By way of the 1913 Natives Land Act, no.27, it became illegal for indigenous South Africans to be farmers or tenant farmers, they were instead seen as "invisible

labour". These acts and cultural representations attempted to naturalise the hierarchy within the South African landscape and remove the autonomy and legitimacy of the indigenous farmer. The very definitive hierarchy of labour on the farm is not only achieved by race, but also class. The owner of the farm is the patriarch, he and his family exercise the most power on the farm. Socially beneath them are the *bywoners* (classified as poor whites) and the indigenous seasonal workers at the lowest point in the hierarchy. While there are class differences within the community, the racial divide is most prominent. When the *bywoner* cannot afford a piece of land of their own, they are given the opportunity to lease a piece of land and make a living. Even successful indigenous farmers are given no such opportunity, and have their land taken away to ensure the success of the Afrikaner people. Laubser's depiction of the indigenous workers at ease with their position naturalises the identity of a subservient black labourer. In constructing a consistent narrative for the pastoral farm, evidence of indigenous farmers transforming land and cultivating their own resources before the arrival of white settlers needs to be removed (Beningfield, 2006:124, Coetzee, 1988:5).

Laubser spent the duration of the first World War in Great Britain amidst the war. Upon coming back to South Africa, she would have been exposed to the effect a world war can have on a commonwealth nation, as in both world wars South Africa fought on the side of the Allies. The mining industry saw strikes and conflict after the mine owners suggested reduced wages, dismissal of thousands of white workers and the lifting of the 'colour bar' in the wake of the post-war depression. This led to an armed upheaval from white workers, who were unhappy about the economical and racial effects of this plan.

The time period between WW1 and the start of apartheid also led to many additions and amendments to various Native Acts and Land Acts to limit the movement and opportunities of indigenous South Africans (Byrne, 1997: 44-45). It is noteworthy that the war affecting the whole world as well as racial, cultural and economic crises in South Africa did not filter through to Laubser's depiction of the landscape.

Laubser's approach to art fits in well with the critical framework that A.C. Bouman (1892-1966) places South African art in.[21] Typically modernist, Bouman explains art as a constructed and dehistoricised activity that takes place in an ideal space that is devoid of the social and political realities we face (Delmont, 2001:11). A modernist perspective of art playing with form, rather than engaging with reality comes from a place of privilege. Due to her privilege, Laubser could put the social reality and cultural context aside to focus on the sublimity of her work (McDowall, 2016:68). This is a luxury that indigenous South Africans did not have. Consequently, I argue that Laubser's oeuvre should be considered an example of white privilege and ideological obliviousness in the political and social context of colonial and apartheid South Africa.

3.4.2. The Harvesters

The Harvesters is painted with soft colours. In the foreground Laubser depicts three coloured workers collecting wheat bundles. Two of the workers have picked up all they

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[21] Arie Cornelis Bouman was a Dutch artist, linguist, writer and art critic who spent some time in South Africa studying Afrikaans, practicing landscape painting and writing about South African art. Bouman is mostly noted in South Africa for his dramas written in Afrikaans and his book *Kuns in Suid Afrika* originally published in 1938 (Stutterheim, 1969:58).

can carry and are heading to the right of the plane, while the third worker has one bundle under his arm and is bending down to pick up another. Laubser makes use of an atmospheric perspective. The middle third of the painting shows different crop fields spread out as loose squares alternating between green, red and yellow. To the left of the centre Laubser paints a small group of trees casting a cool shadow over houses. In the extreme background Laubser depicts a range of mountains in soft blue and violet hues. Once again, Laubser makes use of the warmth that the late afternoon sun from the west casts over the landscape.
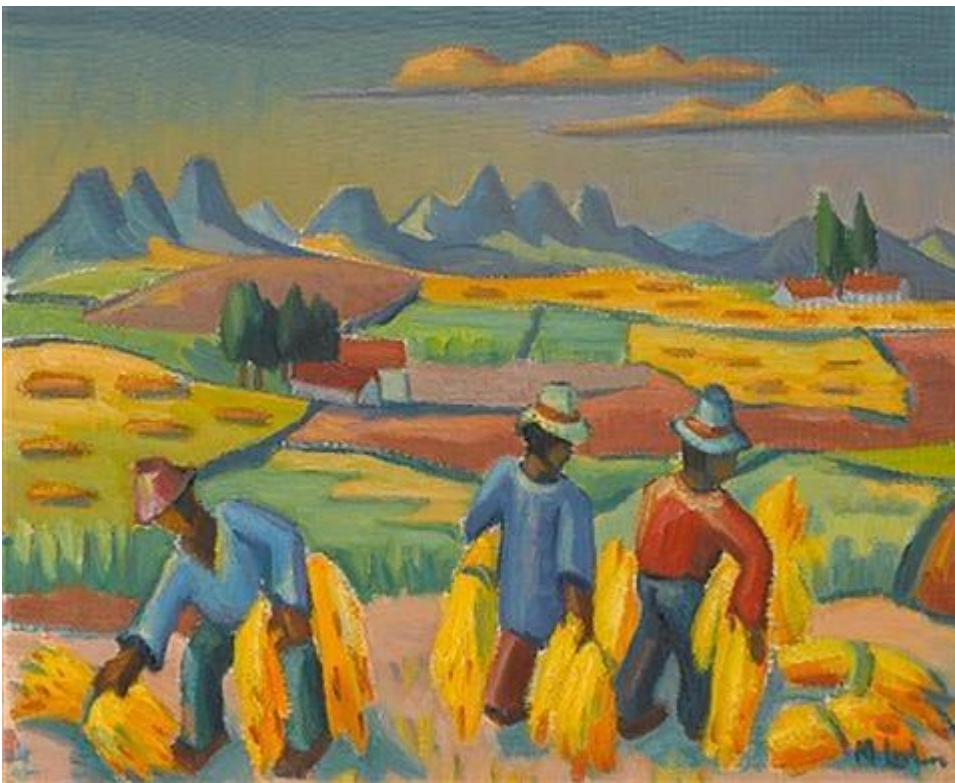
Figure 15: Maria Magdalena Laubser, *The Harvesters* (n.d.) (http://www.artnet.com/artists/maggie-maria-magdalena-laubser/the-harvesters-aX9KOgqJoI4--jlHwi9dpA2).

The horizontal lines seem to seep out of the frame in the same way Pierneef's horizontal lines do. A combination of stretched horizontal lines and atmospheric

perspective work together to show just how vast and never-ending the expanse of farmland is. The vertical lines, in turn, move the attention of the viewer up through the composition and towards the sky. The triangular shape of the mountaintops and the worker's hats are acting with the tall cypress tress as arrows that are pointing upwards, drawing the viewer's eye up to the heavens.

Within this painting Laubser presents a pastoral theme that is again reinforced by the spiritual motifs. The control over the landscape is not held by the three men in the foreground, but by the farmer that owns this piece of land. The three men are simply workers and are depicted as such. It is noteworthy that the indigenous workers are predominantly painted as working. The worker on the left is captured in the moment of him bending down to pick up the bundle of wheat. The emphasis is placed on the action the figures are taking. As they are depicted without facial features, the only identity markers the viewer has of them is their skin colour and the fact that they are workers. This is a very reductive depiction of the indigenous farm worker's identity and personality and immediately gives them a 'lesser than' status. Laubser did not include these harvesters into the landscape as individuals, but rather as tools in service of the farm.

As the vertical lines draw the eye of the viewer upwards their gaze settles on the two clouds stretching out across the sky; the viewer becomes aware of the spiritual undertone of the painting. Suggesting that the viewer turn their head towards the heavens is understood as relying on guidance from God. Using landscape to promote

dependence on God appears often in South African culture and folklore, especially. for example, the well-known Afrikaans hymn lyrics based on Psalms 121: "Ek kyk op na die berge, waar sal my hulp vandaan kom? My hulp kom van die Here wat hemel en aarde gemaak het" (*I lift up my eyes to the hills— from where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.*). The late afternoon sun flushes the clouds with a light orange hue that contrasts it well against the blue sky. The contrast also adds emphasis on the clouds. Clouds are often used as a way to represent the unrepresentable and are therefore connected to the sublime. In this painting the clouds are also a depiction of God, who is a sublime unknowable Being. Laubser shows God as benevolent, a constant subliminal presence that does not intervene but observes. Keeping this in mind with the mood and general tone of the painting, the viewer assumes that God is content with this scene. The painting becomes a representation of the natural hierarchal order on the farm, with God at its head, thereby the right to govern is bestowed upon the Afrikaner people. The implication is that the Afrikaners were chosen by God and given the divine right to rule and cultivate the South African landscape (Coetzee, 1988:118).

As with Pierneef's *Karoo* a second farm house is shown in the distance, the border between the farms is clearly marked with a resolute blue line. It is interesting that these farmers chose to steer clear of neighbours and other farmers in the district even though they could provide security and alliance to each other. This comes from the preoccupation with freedom and autonomy the Afrikaners had, each farm was

considered a little kingdom wherein the *boer* had absolute authority and freedom (Coetzee, 1988:175).

3.4.3. A Landscape with tree and birds

In this landscape Laubser once again makes use of atmospheric perspective to give depth to the stretch of land before her. Another feature is the clouds (or perhaps sunrays) that point diagonally away from the setting sun. These strokes place emphasis on the sun and simultaneously function as compositional elements that connotes movement. The atmospheric depth, soft sunset and strong diagonal strokes create a sense of awe at the wonder of nature. The landscape materialises as a sublime and religious experience through nature. Laubser had a strong connection to the sublime in two ways. Firstly, she considered the artistic process as transcendental, that there is a universal, principal spiritual essence that becomes the foundation for all 'great' art. In her paintings Laubser also focusses on painting the vision or 'final spiritual shape' of the landscape (Delmont, 2001:11). As her career developed, she moved away from objective representations of an 'ideal reality' and towards creating dreamscapes with atmospheric perspective and vivid colour (McDowall, 2016:66).
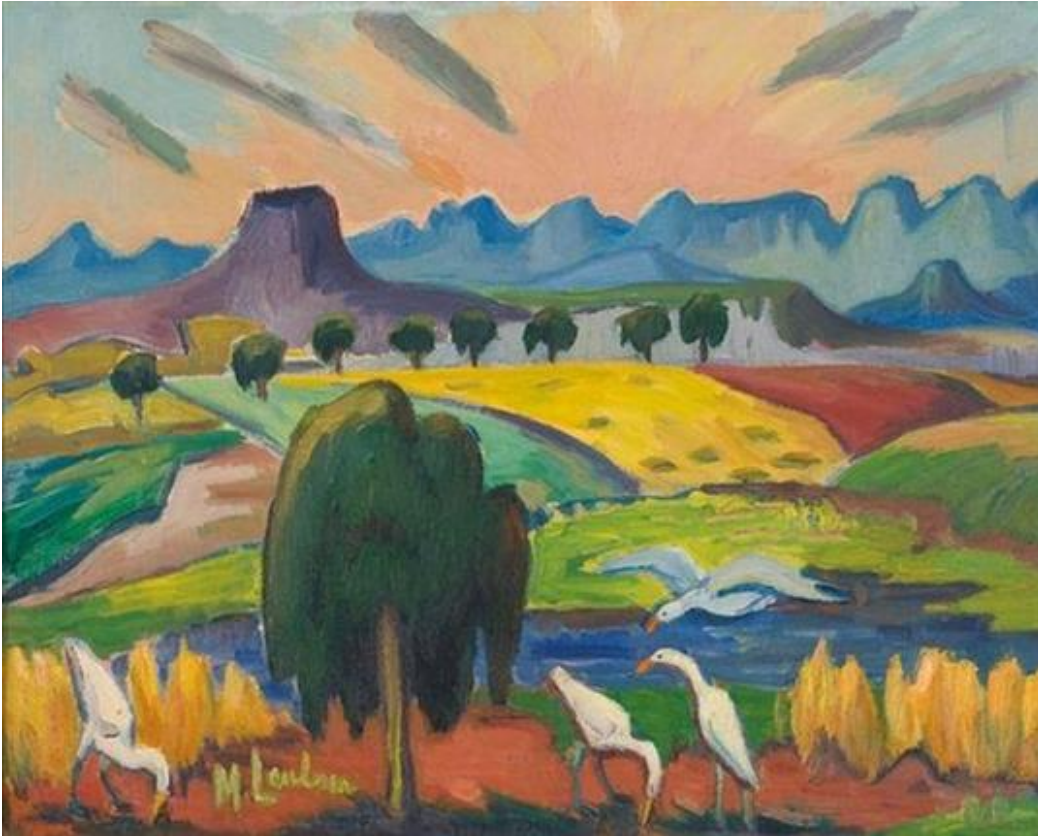
Figure 16: Maria Magdalena Laubser, *A landscape with tree and birds* (n.d.)
(https://www.mutualart.com/Artwork/A-Landscape-with-Trees-and-Birds/055302E609CCC00E).

In the extreme foreground as a single tree standing upright, its leaves are reduced to one green shape on the tree. Three storks are foraging for food around the tree, with a fourth swooping in to join them. Just behind the foreground is a body of deep blue water with a patch of green grass or Lucerne behind it, creating a typically picturesque scene. Further back Laubser paints crop fields of different colours to show the variety in the crops. There is a straight row of trees growing over the crop fields. In the far background we see a range of mountains and the sun setting behind it.

The viewer's attention is caught by the white birds in the foreground. The eye then follows the line of the tree skywards and even further upwards via the violet hill, towards the sky. The colours used in the painting are bright, varied and well contrasted. It

communicates a joyful and harmonious mood to the onlooker. Flora and fauna are

depicted to be thriving in their lush new home: the farm. Even in a painting that is a

celebration of the wonder of nature, Laubser's landscapes are rarely found without

evidence of farming and she usually depicts the farm as part of a larger 'natural' order

(Godby, 2010:92). There is want for nothing here. The storks symbolise fecundity

within the landscape. There is a large expanse of fresh water, and many different types

of crops are growing happily side by side. The transplanting and integrating of different

flora served a symbolic function within the colonial landscape. The crops growing well

side by side with indigenous plants can be seen as the justification of colonisation and

naturalisation of variety (Casid, 2005:4). In the modernist era, variety within a landscape

is considered aesthetically pleasing as it creates visual interest, this most likely explains

the diverse flora Laubser depicts. The land of riches, myths, dangers and opportunity as

an earthly paradise (Grebe, 2011:127) is dreamt up by the colonisers that wish to

conquer and tame it.

Laubser practiced expressionism to the point of painting the idea or "final spiritual

shape" of the object. Her isolation of the good, beautiful, and ideal in representation

may have to do with her stance in Christian Science wherein only the positive aspects

of God's Creations should be shown (Ballot, 2015:302). This leads to very harmonious,

happy idealised landscapes, such as *Landscape with tree and birds.*

The mountains that are ever-present in Laubser's landscapes can be interpreted as part

of the idealistic representation of the South African landscape in several ways. If one

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considers the imperial gaze, it becomes clear that the depiction of mountains implies the achievement and fascination that comes with climbing a mountain. The mountains are another element of nature that can be conquered (Blake, 2005:528). In the Afrikaner tradition we are reminded of the *Groot Trek*, the perilous journey the Voortrekkers took over the Drakensberg to find a new paradise for the *volk*. There is pride in the accomplishment of such a journey and taking control over the mountains. The Great Trek is reworked into a political myth that serves as founding narrative for the Afrikaner national identity. The myth provides legitimacy to their presence in and authority over the land as well as God's approval of the white minority rule. The Arikaners entered the 'covenant' with God as a group, the promotion of this myth ensures unity within the Afrikaner nation and equal access to the title of 'chosen few' and 'promised land' (Petzold, 2007:117).

Mountains also represent timelessness, permanence, stability and steadfastness. The Afrikaner viewers of Laubser's landscape would have appreciated this as a metaphor for the resolute and enduring nature of the Afrikaners, as well as confirmation of their place in the landscape. Most likely, the symbolism that Laubser would have referred to when including a range of mountains in the landscape would be transcendence. Mountains are often considered to manifest divine stimulation and spiritual transcendence (Genn, 2016). The mountain's sheer size or the journey it takes to cross it, suggests a sublime or spiritual experience. This interpretation can also be applied to the mountainous paintings by Pierneef discussed earlier.

3.4.4. Conclusion on Laubser

Laubser's depiction of the South African landscape relies heavily on the pastoral landscape and the so-called 'natural order' that a farm functions in. The pastoral implies the hierarchal power relations set out in the Afrikaner tradition and normalises it. By using the sublime in her landscapes, Laubser adds a spiritual aspect to the painting that encourages the viewer that this is the way God would have wanted it to be. The harmony on the land and the success of the farm naturalises this order. These landscapes evoke a strong sense of nostalgia for a time that never existed and seem removed from historical and social context.

3.5. Conclusion

The iconoclastic nature of the modernist landscape lies in taking the landscape out of historical context, the confirmation of the enforced pastoral order and the blatant removal of indigenous bodies from the landscape. While dissecting the chosen modernist landscape paintings for traces of power, memory, fixity and fluidity and the violence and peace dichotomy, it becomes clear how interleaved these tropes are. Representations of power within an ideological landscape tends to make use of the sublime. The awe and bedazzlement within these sublime landscapes are also corroborative to the religious experience of the viewer. Landscapes are depicted as either empty spaces that can be conquered and owned or as landscaped wherein the

control of humans are already enforced upon the land. These landscapes are usually vast to show the unending wealth and power of the possessor/coloniser.

Memory plays a very important role connecting the land to its coloniser, as well as in the formation of nations. Shared histories and memories of the Afrikaners become the grounds on which to build a community and naturalise the enforcement of heteronormative ideals. Landscapes that rely on this trope are often removed from intersectional context so the nostalgia the work evokes is for a time and place that never really existed. The separation from context gives the landscape paintings discussed a timeless atmosphere that is reinforced by the sublime. This timelessness fixes and normalises the presence of the Afrikaner within the South African landscape. It also supports the unified identities that is enforced by shared memories. The interplay between violence and peace can be seen in picturesque landscapes where the sublime features heavily, as well as in the forced 'natural order' that pastoral landscapes show. The ordered landscapes are depicted as peaceful to normalise the order, when in fact it is only achieved through violence.

The study has found a focus on representations of power, memory and nostalgia, fixity and peace. It is through these tropes that the iconoclasm in modernist landscape paintings take place. Chapter four attempts to determine how contemporary performance artists overturn the colonial ideas of power, retell forgotten histories, encourage fluidity and question the presumed pastoral peace by the violence that is decolonisation.

CHAPTER 4: CONTEMPORARY PERFORMANCES CONTESTING THE ICONOCLASM OF INDIGENOUS BODIES

4.1. Introduction

The previous chapter showed how different erasures and representations were chosen to curate a hegemonic grand narrative within the modernist ideal. This chapter sets the ways in which contemporary artists use their performances and practices to engage and break with what I have identified as the iconoclastic nature of South African modernist landscape painting. In contemporary practice, landscape is seen as a spectrum of involvement, engagement, immersion, and connection. It becomes a 'living tapestry of practice' and bears evidence of the histories, moments and erasures that took place on it (Wylie, 2009:282). The study will take the themes and tropes identified within modernist landscape paintings in Chapter 3 and apply these to contemporary performances. This is done to show how artists employ critical remembrance and practice re-presentation to register their dissent with modernist erasures. Some contemporary artists interrogate and resist the displacement of indigenous bodies within the landscape and point out the colonial violence that has either been obscured or misrepresented as peaceful and natural acts. I argue that by intentionally placing their bodies, identities and memories in the landscape, Berni Searle, Sethembile Msezane, Athi-Patra Ruga and Hannelie Coetzee counter the iconoclasm of the modernist landscape tradition.

4.2. Berni Searle

Berni Searle (1964-) is a South African contemporary artist that works in video, photography, installation, and performance. Searle makes use of her own body as a site to problematise identity, race, and displacement. The artist is currently an Associate Professor at the Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town where she received her bachelor's degree in fine art and master's degree in sculpture and education (Paik, 2021). Searle's earlier works comment on ethnicity, nationality, and collective identities, but she has since moved toward an intersectional interrogation of site, place and identity (Van der Watt, 2004:75). Her work focusses on personal, collective, or national identity, as well as the interplay between different identities. Searle's oeuvre is important to the study as she discovers the role the body plays in determining certain identities. Searle has been ascribed specific characteristics and attributes and have been displaced and relocated because of the colour of her skin. In her art, Searle demonstrates the constructions of identity ascribed to her body and attempts to reclaim her body. Her performances create the opportunity to have counter-spaces wherein political and social agency can be discussed (Schwartz, 2014:3). This is important to the study as the creation of these counter-spaces and the telling of counter-narratives are imperative in unveiling the iconoclasm in the South African landscape. Searle's 'Black Smoke Rising' series is used in this study to illustrate the use of a present, phenomenological experience to counter the displacement sustained in South African landscapes.

'Black Smoke Rising' is a series that consists of three performance videos, namely '*Lull*', '*Gateway*' and '*Moonlight*'. This part of the chapter focusses on '*Lull*' and '*Moonlight*' though the tropes pointed out (particularly fire) are recurring throughout the entire series. The video starts with Searle sitting on a tyre swing tied to a tree in an unkept garden. Searle is sitting with her back to the observer and is wearing a plain black shirt. There is a serenity and peacefulness while the artist is swinging. The peace and tranquillity that is associated with a garden can be seen in the light breeze, sunshine and the stream of water passing by. The sound of leaves rustling and birds calling creates a calm, idyllic atmosphere.

Figure 17: Berni Searle, *Lull* (2009)
(http://archive.stevenson.info/exhibitions/searle/black_smoke_rising/lull.html).

Figure 18: Berni Searle, *Lull* (2009)
(http://archive.stevenson.info/exhibitions/searle/black_smoke_rising/lull.html).

Figure 19: Berni Searle, *Lull* (2009)
(http://archive.stevenson.info/exhibitions/searle/black_smoke_rising/lull.html).

For the first minute of the performance the artist sits on the tyre, swinging listlessly while humming a lullaby. Tyres are often used to make swings for children in South African playgrounds and home gardens. Searle softly hums struggle and protest songs to suggest the performance's connection to the fight against apartheid (Searle, 2009). Thereafter, she gets up from the swing and disappears from the frame, only to appear at the water's edge moments later, becoming part of the landscape by going deeper into the visual plane (Kahn, 2016). The serenity of the landscape is disrupted as a tyre is set alight where the swing once was. Searle stands by the body of water, still looking away from the camera. The tyre slowly burns brighter, producing copious amounts of thick black smoke. The flames break the tyre loose from the rope and it falls to the

ground. Eventually the smoke takes over the entire visual frame and the video fades to an end.

Searle's performative video has a burning tyre as the central motif. One minute into the performance the idyllic, picturesque view of Searle swinging is replaced by a tyre burning on the same rope that held the swing. A tyre burning is a loaded image in South Africa as it is strongly associated with anti-apartheid riots and demonstrations. Necklacing is a form of public execution that involves a tyre filled with gasoline put around a person's neck or arms and set alight. This cruel form of torture was mostly reserved for traitors that were informants to the police, but it is linked to the anti-apartheid movement and contemporary xenophobia in general (Oliver, 2018 & Karimakwenda, 2019:559). The symbols of the necklace itself and the burning fire are combined in a powerful performance of the horrors inflicted on traitors within the community (Ball, 1994). It is politically charged with memories of extra-legal punishment, terrible acts against humanity during the apartheid era, and modern-day executions for those who were said to collaborate with the police against indigenous people (Karimakwenda, 2019:559 & Ball, 1994).

This image is symbolic devastation and, to a lesser extent, victory (Schwartz, 2014:143). The devastation is undoubtedly reference to the violence, trauma and atrocities of the apartheid era and its legacies, but a sense of victory is also implied here as the violent protests ultimately lead to the collapse of the apartheid regime.

While the artist is swinging, the rustle of leaves and calls of birds add to the peace, as well as the soft humming of the artist. Once the artist moves away and the tyre starts burning the birds, crickets and leaves rustling become more urgent, adding to the anxiety of the situation. Searle uses the sounds of the garden and the image of the tire to create juxtaposing atmospheres, depending on its context and connotations. The space as a garden should offer safety from danger and the passing of time but can easily become the setting for violent incidents, as Searle (2009) shows here. The garden becomes a space that transcends time, culture and place and is often representational of personal or political power (Francis & Hestor, 1990:2,4). In the artist statement Searle (2009) makes reference to the garden being a *locus amoenas* or pleasant place. It is a leisure site where those lucky enough to have access to one may escape their reality and step into another idyllically constructed world. The garden also echoes the social processes of its surroundings. Even in this place of rest there is struggle between the male and female, good and evil, self and other, coloniser and colonised (Parry, 2005:179).

Searle has her back turned to the viewer with no acknowledgement of them. The artwork is a pre-recorded video installation, but the viewer of the video performance is immersed within the landscape through surround sound and visual cues. The viewer is thus a voyeuristic observer and almost attempts not 'disturb' the artist (Schwartz 2014:149). *Lull* creates awareness of the terrors in South African history, but also reminds the viewer of the revolutions that led to a state of transformation (Searle, 2009). The title *Lull* refers to the artist trying to soothe and calm herself, or maybe others in

post-apartheid times, but it may also refer to the struggle songs that are being sung by Searle as if they are lullabies. The people who were once disadvantaged are put to ease by the promise of change. One of the transformations we can witness is the shift from a hierarchal point of view to equality, quite literally shown in the point of view Searle assigns to the observer.

Searle focuses the observer's attention on the terror and distress experienced by people of colour by juxtaposing and intermingling it with peaceful elements. Once Searle steps away from view, the very elements that created a peaceful atmosphere become the aspects that cause distress. The tyre swing morphs into a tyre burning, the ambient sounds become eerie when joined with the crackling of fire (Searle, 2009). To intertwine peace and distress further, the burning tyre is the focal point, and the viewer becomes entranced by it. The viewer is mesmerised by the burning tyre in the same way one would sit and watch a campfire.

Furthermore, Searle takes the violence and destruction associated with the burning tyre and gives it an aesthetic quality (Schwartz, 2014:149). The artist is playing with the idea of sublimity, alternating between signs of peace and terror to create a sense of uneasiness with the viewer. It is this feeling that Searle (2009) references as *dé jà vu* in her description of the work. As Schwartz (2014:149) explains, the sense of sublimity that Searle creates does not intend to disregard the political significance of these symbols, but rather grant it transcendence that sparks contemplation with the viewer. The fact that these symbols transcend their either peaceful or terrorising connotation

speaks to Searle's representation of identity and meaning being in flux. This provides an alternative to the clear set dichotomies found in modernist depictions.

At first it seems that Searle is swinging in complete wilderness, it looks like a marsh next to a river or body of water. Upon closer inspection, there are signs that this space used to be a garden. The row of agapanthus is overgrown by unkept grass and there is a lone arum lily next to the tree. *Water's edge II* (stills that accompany *Lull*) shows a dried fountain with creepers travelling beyond the fountain's edge (Searle, 2009). The garden used to be maintained but is now abandoned. Much like the weeds, the wilderness creeped its way into the ordered garden. The artist uses the wilderness taking over the garden as a sign of revolt against the order and control inflicted by colonisers. Searle also shows that identity, culture, and history cannot be systematically separated and ordered in accordance with a fast set of principles. Identity—both personal and communal—is fluid, ambiguous and hybrid.

The perspective Searle creates in her works is of particular interest to the study. While Laubser and Pierneef tend to place the observer at a high point looking out over the landscape, Searle places the observer at equal footing in *Lull* and even lower in *Moonlight*. The point of view in the modernist landscape paintings tend to follow the rules of linear perspective. The observer is singular, motionless, and detached from what is happening in the landscape. This point of view makes it possible to see the view as an ordered, homogenous space (Lauwrens, 2012:31). The observer is made to feel removed or 'objective' to the landscape and is raised above it almost in an all-seeing

manner. In *Lull*, however, the viewer feels as though they are sitting cross-legged in the grass, watching the artist hum while she swings. The lower perspective forces the viewer to practice grounding while watching the work and makes them aware of their and the artist's presence in the moment. This adds to the tactility of the lived experience.

Performance artists such as Searle, problematise the absence created by iconoclasm by filling the space it leaves with bodies and narratives that do not fit modernist ideologies. These ideologies support a 'natural' hierarchy between the white Afrikaans landowner, indigenous worker, and nature in a pastoral design. If the grand narrative suggests that these are the ideas and symbols that represent the sublime and the beautiful, Searle is showing that the elements normally absent from sublime landscapes can also have a sense of sublimity or spirituality. Through this she is questioning why it has been left out in the first place. Postmodern performances show the gaps in the metanarrative of modernist identities by reinterpreting the sublime. The sublime in its original definition is not something that can remain ahistorical, it is always contextualised within the Romantic era and spiritual transcendence. Postcolonial contemporary artistic practice and theory moves the sublime from transcendence to presence. This presence, however, is likewise a romanticised way of existing in the world, as a deep spiritual connection to the landscape that constitutes as a reinterpretation of the sublime (Wylie, 2009:282). Through this presence, the performance space becomes a medium (just as landscape is) to perform and legitimise the identity of the people. This leads to an activation of the landscape.

Moonlight (2010) is a video performance that makes up the third instalment of Searle's *Black Smoke Rising* series. The video shows a piece of land in Philippi, Western Cape that has been burned to the ground with Table Mountain in the background. Where modernist landscape paintings show mountains in soft blues and violets and as a representation of divine stimulation and spiritual transcendence, the same cannot be said for this rendition of Table Mountain (Genn, 2016). The stark simplicity and dark colouring remove any semblance of the spiritual sublime here—instead of being beautiful, Table Mountain is just shown as frightening. It seems to leer over the people of Philippi in judgment and contempt. The viewer's focus is on the men moving through the landscape—some are pulling along burning tyres, while others seem to be scavenging, searching for wire to sell (Schwartz, 2014:152). Besides its connections to political violence, burning tyres are strongly associated with poverty in South Africa as they are often burnt to collect the wire inside to sell as scrap metal. A very large number of tyres are burnt since this type of scrap is very valuable, so views such as in 'Moonlight' are not uncommon in the outskirts of large cities (Schwartz, 2014:146).

The video is accompanied by Ludwig van Beethoven's (1770-1827) Moonlight Sonata,[22] played at a slightly slower tempo. The listener anticipates the next note in the sonata's tune and when it doesn't sound at the expected time it creates disjuncture and unease. The dissonance caused by the languid rendition of Moonlight Sonata is symbolic of the disruption and dislocation felt by the people in Philippi and by extension the oppressed

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[22]Piano Sonata No. 14 in C-sharp Minor, Op. 27, No. 2: *Sonata quasi una fantasia*, better known as *Moonlight Sonata* was composed by Ludwig van Beethoven in 1801 (Schwarm, 2016).

people of colonial and apartheid South Africa (Schwartz, 2014:152). The uneasy and

jarred tone connotes the dislocation caused by colonialism, the displacement of

personhood and the defilement of territory and culture, as suggested by Fanon

(Bhabha, 1986:x).

Figure 20: Berni Searle, *Moonlight* (2010)
(http://archive.stevenson.info/exhibitions/searle/black_smoke_rising/moonlight.html).

Figure 21: Berni Searle, *Moonlight* (2010)
(http://archive.stevenson.info/exhibitions/searle/black_smoke_rising/moonlight.html).

Figure 22: Berni Searle, *Moonlight* (2010)
(http://archive.stevenson.info/exhibitions/searle/black_smoke_rising/moonlight.html).

Philippi as a site is filled with memories of displacement, that served as refuge for

indigenous South Africans who have been violently displaced from the so-called

Bantustans in the conflicts of the 1980's States of Emergency (Schwartz, 2014:152). [23]

The dispute over housing developments and placement of indigenous citizens who were

previously not allowed in urban spaces transformed Philippi into a battleground during

the apartheid era (Brown-Luthango, 2013:316). The town is an urban area that is

populated by mostly seasonal workers within the agricultural industry. The comparison

with Lauber's pastoral farm scenes is stark. Within the same agricultural environment,

the bodies of indigenous labourers are no longer hidden completely or shown to be

content. They are placed at the centre of attention, giving the viewer no chance to avoid

their struggle and hardships.

Currently Philippi's agricultural customs and practices are threatened by plans for large

scale building projects for corporate development and updated infrastructure (Schwartz,

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[23] Bantustans are territorial homelands or reserves where Africans were made to live during the apartheid era, although the practice had started as early as 1800) Ten areas were designated to the prevalent tribes of Africans to encourage "separate development" (Khapoya, 1980:28-29).

2014:152). The burned earth also highlights the halt in agricultural practices to make way for contemporary infrastructure. Philippi is a site of dislocation because of these narratives of displacement in the colonial and apartheid eras, as well as contemporary reconfigurations towards a new South Africa. The Philippi landscape becomes a palimpsest as Searle makes a point of engaging with the displacement experienced here in the colonial and apartheid eras, as well as economic struggle it is currently experiencing.

Searle makes use of remembrance to give context and meaning to this performance. Her artworks usually rely on the tactility of what she is representing to evoke memory of an irreconcilable past and unjust present. The rough feel of the burnt earth, the crunch of the fire, the ground under the subject's shoes, the overwhelming smoke and the harsh sunlight cements the ugly, gritty reality Searle depicts. The beautiful and picturesque is replaced with a frightening encounter with the sublime and a reminder of the stark reality of the people that were displaced. Where the modernist sublime lends itself towards transcendence and elevation, the contemporary sublime—although also indicating fear—depends on presence and embodiment within the landscape. The sublime landscape is reworked as a space where the self and the landscape coexist, the participant is engaged in the landscape by looking *at* Searle as well as *with* her (Wylie, 2009:282).

The tactility of Searle's work places her body undoubtedly within the landscape. By securing her presence within the landscape she contradicts the absence of indigenous

bodies in modernist landscape paintings with a phenomenological approach. Farber (1992:3) explains that tactile artworks make use of dispersal, fragmentation, textural articulation, open-endedness, and indeterminacy. *Moonlight* shows a great deal of textural details, especially in the burnt earth, smoke and the rough, unsteady dragging of the tyres across the ground. The burned down area also speaks of a scattering, not only of the physical items, but also of the lives that once played out there, thus countering the idea of unity or intactness, suggested by modernist landscapes. Searle makes use of these tactile elements to highlight the disruption that plays itself out in the landscape (Rennie, 2002:109).

Besides destruction, the burning simultaneously signifies regeneration, in the same way that grass burning in early Spring makes way for new growth. The fire gives the opportunity for perpetual renewal (Pyne, 2016:2). As Fanon explains, the violence that is responsible for the destruction of native life will now be used by the colonised to "embody history in [their] own person." The only way to break down the ordered, systematic oppression of the colonial is through planned violence and revolution (Fanon, 1963:36,40). By creating ceremonial burning of the picturesque landscape in that entraps and limits her in *Moonlight*, Searle brings an end to the institutional and systematic oppression. The violence is directed toward the colonial and modernist narratives, through planned revolt by those once oppressed. By removing and destroying these traditions and institutions it becomes possible to build a new, inclusive South African narrative.

4.2. Sethembile Msezane

Sethembile Msezane is a South African contemporary artist born in 1991 in KwaZulu

Natal and raised in Soweto. She completed a master's degree in fine art at the

University of Cape Town and now lives and works from this city (Arts House, 2017:4).

Msezane felt that after living in Cape Town for more than five years, she still

experienced a sense of displacement and dispossession in the public spaces. In

particular, she doesn't resonate with the symbols and figures erected in public spaces

that were meant to foster national identity. These monuments and statues typically

celebrate leading figures in the union between Britain and South Africa, or those

considered influential in the emancipation of the Afrikaner people. Cape Town is filled

with memorials to influential men with examples such as King Edward VII, Jan van

Riebeeck, Cecil John Rhodes and Jan Smuts. These are usually intimidating larger-

than-life sculptures showing the men as proud, strong, and resolute. Msezane found the

landscape decorated with monuments and statues celebrating these colonial and

Afrikaner nationalist men particularly discomforting (Matroos, 2018).

Msezane uses her own body in performative works such as *Untitled (Women's Day)*

(2014) and *Excerpts from the Past* (2017) to counter the narrative that these

monuments are representing. Her performances are important to the study as she aims

to reclaim and retell the stories of indigenous women in the public spaces they have

been removed from. Using her body as artistic tool, Msezane reminds the viewer of the

complex history written on indigenous bodies in terms of race, gender, class and power

(Matroos, 2018).

The Women's Day performance forms part of Msezane's public holiday series wherein she addresses the role that women played in the overturning of apartheid coupled with her aim of making gender-based violence visible. This work was performed on the 9th of August 2014, on National Women's Day in South Africa. The public holiday serves as a reminder of the peaceful women's march that commenced on that day in 1956. Over 20 000 women of all races marched to the Union Buildings in Pretoria to object the use of pass laws to regulate the movement of women. The pass laws were previously only applied to indigenous men who were required to show these pass books as a way to monitor their movement when going into urban areas for work (Adendorff & Sutherland, 2014:393).

Figure 23: Sethembile Msezane, *Untitled (Women's Day)* (2014)
(https://www.artafricamagazine.org/december-2014-sethembile-msezane/).

The performance shows the artist standing on a tall white plinth in Langa Freedom Square in the outskirts of Cape Town. She is bare chested, wearing a large traditional blanket as a skirt, an *isiheshe* and long strands of beads around her neck. She embodies her great grandmother, Gog' MaShange (Pather, 2021:151).[24] The blanket belonging to her great grandmother reminds the artist of the generations that came before her and the plaid pattern thereof is representational of how 'chequered' the past and present South African society is (Hewson, 2014).

Langa was declared a heritage site in 2021 as it was used as a meeting area for anti-apartheid activists in the area during apartheid. The Freedom Square was made a heritage site to highlight the resistance and dissent that took place here, as well as the eventual triumph over adversity (Western Cape Government, 2021). Making the space a heritage site deliberately unveils the stories and lives that were hidden throughout *Afrikanerdom* and as such, it breaks the iconoclasm. The artist is performing this work at this site to remind the viewer of the active role indigenous women played in the dissent and protests that lead to the end of apartheid. This intention is shared by Women's Day and its celebrations. She is specifically engaging with the space as this is a site where so much of the anti-apartheid movement was cultivated. The role of indigenous women in the movement should not be dismissed. There is a retelling of the stories that played out in the square, making this an act of critical remembrance.

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[24] An *isiheshe* is a beaded veil worn by Zulu women on their wedding day (Pather, 2021:151).

Msezane has always felt discomforted by the monuments and statues in public spaces in South Africa that are often linked to the celebration of a national narrative that centres around the colonial and the patriarchal. She confronts the dominance of white colonial male figures in memory-making by placing her own body on a plinth. Msezane also invites passers-by to engage in an active dialogue with the past and present by inscribing the white plinth she is standing on (Hutchison, 2021:111). One woman who lives in the surrounding neighbourhood became an unsuspecting co-performer as she sang while Msezane performed and wrote "*Wathint' abafazi wathint' mbokodo, Viva Women's Day*" on her plinth. "*Wathint' abafazi wathint' mbokodo*" is a resistance song written specifically for the march of 9 August 1956 and means "you have struck a woman, you have struck a rock" (Hewson, 2014 & Pinto, 2015). The audience thus participated in active remembrance together with the artist because she performed and reacted to the space and its historical value.

The artist counters colonial monuments and statues through the ephemerality of her own performances. These monuments are meant to stand forever as a timeless memory of these 'great' men. These monuments attempt to convey the same timelessness as Pierneef's *Graaff-Reinet* (1932) wherein the monolithic rock formations stand tall and proud as the essence of this landscape and have stood there for all eternity. These monuments are meant to be permanent in a landscape whilst history is always evolving. The temporality of Msezane's performances reminds the viewers of what has been lost, simply because they have not been memorialised in stone (Matroos, 2018). The fixity and rigidity of the landscape that these monuments were

created for are resisted by the embodied presence of the indigenous body and the ephemerality of the performance.

The artist attends to the absence of women, particularly indigenous women, within the public sphere and South African narratives by inserting herself (and by extension other indigenous women) into the landscape that once rendered them invisible. She maintains that there is a lack of representation of indigenous women. Msezane also states that the obfuscating of the stories and bodies of indigenous women in publicly memorialised spaces remove their visibility and presence within the South African landscape (Pinto, 2015). The artist makes use of the tensions and ambiguities created by the absence-presence nexus (Wylie, 2009:279) to create awareness of her displacement and *re-present* the indigenous body into the landscape.

Msezane chose to use the Freedom Square as a site for the performance because of its proximity to a taxi rank. Apart from the women's position in the anti-apartheid movement, the artist also wanted to address the gender-based violence experienced by women in South Africa. Within the public space of the taxi rank, indigenous women often experience violence and defamation because of their gender. Msezane refers particularly to the case of the Noord taxi rank in 2021 where two young girls were deemed 'inappropriately dressed' and were subsequently sexually harassed by about 60 men (Hewson, 2014). Her performance is in discussion with the landscape by referencing these events that took place on the land. A link is made between the

landscape that has been harassed by its colonisers in the past and the contemporary harassment of indigenous women at the taxi rank.

As Msezane is performing in the Freedom Square, it becomes a periperformative space. Casid's periperformative is a space in which persons are interpellated as they witness a performative expression that is meant to disturb the ideologies that gives the performance its power and pushes it towards action (Poletti, 2016:363). Part of creating dissent and awareness through performance is to encourage the passers-by to take action and retell the narratives that are lost.

Msezane extends her problematisation of public monuments in her popular work *Chapungu The Day Rhodes fell* (2015). This work is an example of participants stepping in and taking part in the retelling of their stories. As the statue of Cecil John Rhodes was taken down at the University of Cape Town,[25] Msezane erected a new counter-memorial. She embodied a soapstone bird (Chapungu) that had been ransacked from Great Zimbabwe and is still found at Rhodes' estate (Msezane, 2017). As with *Women's Day,* Msezane stood on a plinth in a black leotard with golden beads on her signature *isiheshe* and glorious wings covering her arms (Brandt, 2020:192). The statue once stood in front of the main hall, named the Jameson hall. [26] The placement of

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[25] Cecil John Rhodes (1853-1902) was a British diamond magnate, imperialist and white-supremacist who planned on colonising the entirety of Africa, starting with South Africa. He served as the prime minister for the Cape Colony between 1890 and 1896. Rhodes is known for dispossessing Africans of their land, genocide, exploiting natives and looting resources. In spite of these atrocities, Rhodes has memorials and statues, the Rhodes University, Rhodes scholarship, the Mandela-Rhodes foundation and a chair of race relations at Oxford University named in his honour (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018:221).
[26] Dr. Leander Starr Jameson (1853-1970) was Rhodes' political ally, (Brandt, 2020:192).

the Rhodes statue there contextualises the space within a colonial framework and it is coded in a way that leads to indigenous students feeling displaced and unwanted.

Figure 24: Sethembile Msezane, *Chapungu The Day Rhodes fell,* (2015) (http://www.tyburngallery.com/artist/sethembile-msezane/#lg=1&slide=17).

Public monuments can often alter or define the space they are located in. Because a monument stipulates what should be remembered or celebrated within that space, it prescribes how the space should be used. Once a public monument is placed within a landscape, it recodes the landscape and indicates how the people within the space are meant to react towards it. Because these public monuments have a set ideology that they imply, once revolution and change within the public ideologies take place a conversation can be had with the context that the monument creates. These then have the potential to be 'discursive formations' that elicit responses, problematise ideologies, contest hegemonic discourse and restructure public memory (Marschall, 2009:3). Hugo

Naudé's *Garden of Remembrance* defines the space of Worcester and the artist has decided on behalf of the community which of its histories should be archived. Msezane and other postcolonial artists work towards a counter-archive in their performances and practices. Brandt (2020:194) points out that "Msezane's work speaks to the historically gendered nature of these institutions and their physical spaces of power. Her symbolic rite implicitly emphasises how whiteness and 'coloniality' are embedded in institutional culture and gestures towards dislodging historical whiteness and masculinity from its centrality and authority". Msezane (2017) explains how through her performance, she finds that landscapes and public spaces are never neutral and that she as a young indigenous woman often experienced dislocation and invisibility in these spaces. Contemporary postcolonial, post-apartheid artists use these practices to engage with the traumas and ideologies of the past, embrace the effect it has had on their identities, without falling victim to a colonial legacy. This is done through critical memory practice (Brandt, 2020:192).

Excerpts from the Past (2017) by Sehembile Msezane is a performance work that deals with land, loss, language and the effects of colonial pursuits within the South African landscape (Makhubu, 2019:29) (Arts House, 2017). Msezane performs on a bed of soil that has a chair, small table and old radio in the centre of it, as if the soil was a round rug. Surrounding Msezane are teacups and saucers that she drinks from, fills with the soil and then smashes to the ground (Msezane, 2017). She is wearing an *isiheshe*, a black corset with a full-length cape over it and a skirt made of artificial hair (Makhubu, 2019:30).

Figure 25: Sethembile Msezane, *Excerpts from the past* (2017) (http://www.sethembile-msezane.com/excerpts-from-the-past).
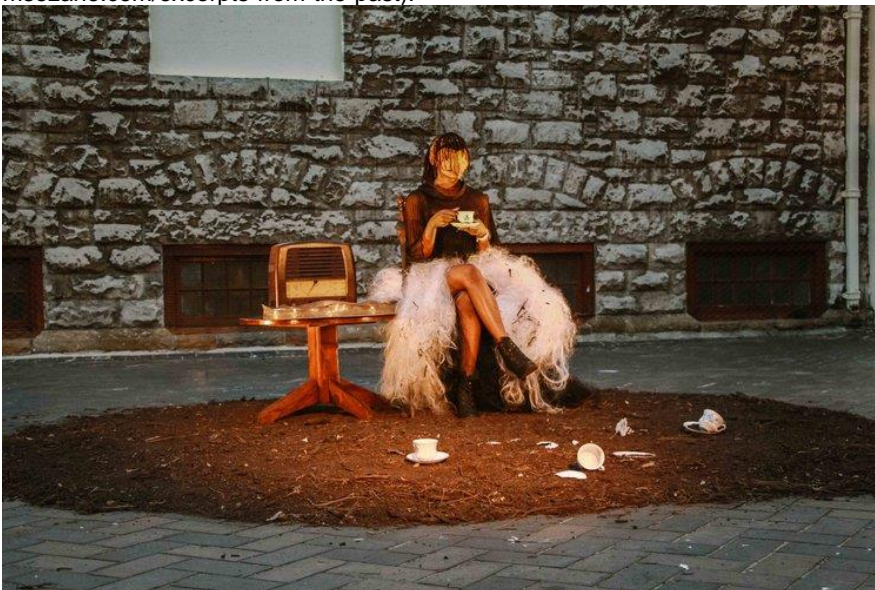
Figure 26: Sethembile Msezane, *Excerpts from the past* (2017) (http://www.sethembile-msezane.com/excerpts-from-the-past).

The skirt that Msezane is wearing simultaneously reminds the viewer of a Victorian

bustle as well as a traditional Zulu skirt of cow tails (MacKenny, 2020:95). Msezane

contrasts the idea of a full, smooth skirt by making it out of coarse and messy artificial

hair and does the same with the fragile porcelain made for the indoors carefully laid out

on the soil that's clearly 'for the outdoors'. The work as an embodied experience does not depend solely on what the participant can see but is a multisensory experience. Msezane uses different textures, the audio coming from the radio, and the sweet smell of the soil to build an embodied experience for her audience

The bed of soil is contrasted by the stern colonial architecture of the Ritchie Building courtyard, where the performance is held. The placement of the performance is evocative of the disorientating and unjust experiences of the colonial era, as well as the dissonant and eclectic spaces we have because of it (Makhubu, 2019:30). The Ritchie building forms part of the UCT campus, it was the location for the South African College high School, the oldest high school in South Africa that was notably for boys only. Msezane likely made use of this space as she was attending Michaelis School of Fine Art, but the inferred meaning of the building highlighting class and gender biases adds an element of site-specificity to the work.

The vintage radio eerily plays a few sound clips: a British voice speaking, Miriam Makeba explaining her song *Igqirha Lendlela Nguqongqothwane* and parliament proceedings in Zulu. The most haunting of the recordings is a discussion between Shaka and a British lieutenant on the separation in settlement and governance the English planned for themselves and the Zulus (Makhubu 2019:30). With this history, both belonging to and owning land becomes problematic and contradictory. In her porcelain cup, Msezane has red soil instead of tea. Upon finding that she is unable to drink it, she pours the ground into her saucer and smashes the teacup. This action

speaks to displacement by evoking the feeling of Africans being of this land, belonging

to it, but unable to enjoy or take part in the sustenance it provides (MacKenny,

2020:95). The soil as a metaphor for land and memory is no longer in her hands as she

drops the cup. The act speaks of the loss of land that colonial conquests impose. At this

point the conversation between Shaka Zulu and the English lieutenant concerns how

much space the country has to offer. The lieutenant argues: "The land is vast, Baba,

there's plenty room for all, without crowding." Msezane reiterates Shaka's scepticism

with this by angrily smashing the teacup, an item that represents the white, privileged

culture and society. With a land so vast, why was it expropriated from its natives,

displacing them in congested urban townships or small rural villages? (MacKenny,

2020:95 & Makhubu 2019:33) Msezane's inclusion of the discussion and Makeba's

song in her work plays an important part in forming inclusive postcolonial memory-

archives. McEwan (2003:742) explains how artists, historians and activists make use of

memory projects and truth-telling to form a counter-archive that reveal the agencies and

absences in the canonical archive.

Msezane takes on the role of *Nolwazi*—a fictional character that she created. Nolwazi is

a time traveller who uses remembrance as a form of resistance. Her ritualistic

movements invoke an ancestral memory to contest the displacement and dispossession

that has been brought upon by the problematic colonial conquests (Arts House, 2017).

Incorporating conscious remembrance is another way in which contemporary

performance artists can disrupt the iconoclastic tradition of modernist landscape

painting. Don Mitchell (2003:790) describes landscape as a "concretisation and maker

of memory", while Norval (1998:255) describes national memory as archival. Marschall (2009:3) explains that there is an uprise in the need to counter a legacy of suppression and absence in the memorialisation of the past. The elite, privileged communities preferred institutionalised memory, while ordinary people prefer 'living memory' (Norval, 1998:255). What Msezane aims to do in *Excerpts from the Past* (2017) is to raise the importance of active remembrance to the institutional level. She is using the sensory experience and tactility of her work to change the 'hard facts' of history into a lived memory. Performances like this give the opportunity for artists to critique and change the discourse on which histories are celebrated and which are omitted (Msezane, 2017) within the spaces we find ourselves. The best way for performance artists to combat the iconoclasm is by weaving their own and communal memories into their work. The political positions and social identities captured in the memories of the people need to be protected as heritage of the landscape. Remembering the narratives, critiquing the modernist canon, and building multiplicity in our discourse are pertinent steps towards comforting the distressed within the landscape.

4.3. Athi-Patra Ruga

Ruga (1984-) is a South African contemporary performance artist creating works that lay bare the political, cultural and economic systems that hamper black and queer liberation (Brown, 2017:67). Ruga is focussed on performing blackness in a postcolonial and post-apartheid context, as will be discussed in *An intervention at the Anglo Boer monument* (2015) as part of *The Future White Women of Azania* series. The artist also performs

blackness on a transnational scale to understand displacement, temporality and the phenomenon of existing within a space (Brown, 2017:67). This will be illustrated by discussing *Even if I exist in Embo: Jaundice tales of counter penetration* (2007) from Ruga's oeuvre.

The Future White Women of Azania (F.W.W.O.A.) (2010-) is a series of works in performance, photography, tapestry and stained glass, created over several years, that Ruga created to illustrate a history for the fictional nation of Azania. The works are faux cultural artefacts and evidence of civilisation created by the artist. Ruga's rendition of Azania is a matriarchal state that is ruled by the Versatile Queen Ivy and inhabited by the White Women. Ruga takes on the role of The Elder, the only man in Azania that is held captive as a reminder of patriarchy. The Elder is kept to record the histories, myths and legends of Azania (Corrigal, 2014:89). Ruga's role as the Elder shows the importance of practicing remembrance and reforming the archive until it is inclusive.

One of the earlier uses of the term "Azania" is found in the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* (40AD) as the name for the east coast of Africa. Through history, variations of the word refer to slaves from this area as well as towns in Tanzania (The Jounalist, 2018). In the 1930's Azania was seen as an ancient, pre-colonial civilization with ruins found in Mapungubwe, Limpopo and was reiterated as a utopian black homeland by the Pan African Congress in the mid-1960's (The Jounalist 2018 & Corrigal 2014:89). Most recently, Azania is mentioned in Marvel's *Black Panther* as a neighbouring country of Wakanda. Here Azania is based on Apartheid South Africa with a white minority

oppressing an indigenous majority (Brown, 2017:72). It follows that Azania as a space

to exist in is intrinsically linked to the displacement of indigenous people with its roots in

the East African slave trade. The histories and use of Azania are complex palimpsests

for Africa and African people; it implies an unresolved past and an unrealised future

(Brown, 2017:72). Ruga draws on all these complexities to provide context for his

performances and creates his Azania as a place to come to terms with the postcolonial

experience.

An intervention on the Anglo Boer monument (2015) is a performance that forms part of

Ruga's *F.W.W.O.A.* series. Ruga takes on the role of the White Woman, dressed in

bright pink stockings and red stiletto heels with his torso and head concealed under

multi-coloured balloons. The balloons are filled with a red liquid that moves and

splashes around as the artist moves. In this particular rendition Ruga interacts with the

memorial in Makhanda [27]that has been dedicated to the men of Albany and Makhanda

"who died for the Empire" in the Anglo-Boer war (Martinson, 2019)(Hennlich, 2014:309).

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[27] Makhanda was previously known as Grahamstown (Irvine, 2021:163).

Figure 27: Athi-Patra Ruga, *An intervention on the Anglo Boer monument* (2015) (Adendorff 2021:3, fig.1).

The memorial consists of a marble plinth and obelisk with carved reliefs, topped with a

bronze statue of the Winged Figure of Peace watching over a dead soldier (Martinson,

2019). The piece is performed at this memorial on the High Street as well as in the

poorer parts of Makhanda to highlight the stark difference in economic and class

positions within the site. Ruga as *The White Woman* approaches the monument, climbs

onto the plinth and starts caressing and touching it. As the White Woman grazes

against the memorial, the soft latex pushing against the rough marble causes some of

the balloons to pop, spilling the liquid over the ground and the memorial. Soon the

writhing becomes more intense and Ruga starts trashing at his own body to pop the

balloons as his head and limbs slowly appear. When most of the balloons are popped, Ruga walks away from the memorial exposed, tired and covered in balloon remnants (Brown, 2017:68). There is a strong focus on the tactility of the performance, Ruga juxtaposes the soft latex balloons and fine stockings with the rough marble and paved road and splattering it all in a red liquid seeping from the balloons. Practiced and performative encounters with landscape seems to focus on the body's presence within the landscape. The tactile, sensuous and experiential elements of Ruga's work are central in the conversation between self and landscape (Wylie, 2009:279). Through this experiential approach, the performance combats the absence of indigenous bodies in the landscape.

As an addition to the work, Ruga conceptualised *Performance Obscura* with Mikhael Subotzky where a very small amount of people was meant to watch Ruga's performance of *An intervention on the Anglo Boer monument* from an elevated point through a 19th century *Camera Obscura.* Via the *Performance Obscura*, Ruga's artwork and the space to which it is site-specific is mediated (Simbao, 2014a). This addition raises interesting points on the colonial gaze as well—though the onlooker is looking out over the Makhanda landscape from above as in landscape paintings, but they do not own or control it. The view is much more voyeuristic. This highlights the landscape and space driven aspect of the performance and reiterates Mitchell's statement that landscape is a mediated view (Mitchell,1994:14). Becoming painfully aware of the act of seeing and how flawed and mediated it can be is a critical point in performance works such as these. Here the trope of a passive spectator gazing over the work from an

outside, disinterested position is contested. The distance between the subject and object is made disproportionate and the participants are reminded that seeing is an active and participatory response to what is shown (Lauwrens, 2012:28,33).

Along with questioning the gaze, the work reconsiders the hierarchy on sensory experiences in art. Western culture and art history in general is dominated by vision-centric practices (Lauwrens, 2012:28). Embodied performance artworks contest the importance of the visual in art. As found in all the performance works discussed in the study, a focus is placed on the tactility of the work and the embodied experience this creates, rather than what is seen. By deliberately making it difficult to view the work through the *Camera Obscura*, the tactility of the performance itself comes to the foreground. The interplay between what is shown and what is obscured also reaches an interesting point with this work, as the *Camera Obscura* fails to find Ruga within the landscape. The power and agency that the voyeur has is overturned as they *look* but cannot *see*. The irony of Ruga making himself as visible and unmissable as possible and still being missed through the *Camera Obscura* supports the argument of the iconoclasm of indigenous bodies within the landscape (Simbao, 2014b).

Ruga's performance stands in conversation with the institutionalised violence of the colonial and apartheid eras. Ruga reiterates Fanon's argument that colonisation and oppression should be met with a controlled violence to deconstruct it. Fanon explains that the first encounter between coloniser and native was a violent meeting and thus, all further interactions contain some measure of brutality. This is the only way to break

down the ordered, systematic oppression of the colonial (Fanon, 1963:36). The Anglo-Boer monument stands as a representation of violence in the most literal sense. It is a memorial for those who fought on the imperial side of the Anglo-Boer war for the control over South Africa. The irony of the Winged Figure of Peace representing colonial cruelty is not lost on the viewer. *F.W.W.O.A.* as an artistic concept forms a counter-archive and displays the brutality and 'persistence of power' of the colonial and apartheid era's that followed through into the transformation of South Africa (Brown, 2017:75).

To meet this violence in an act of dissent, Ruga practices his own destruction in the performance. By rubbing, and later thrashing, the balloons against the statue, the balloons are popped. The popping is a barbarous act in itself, that is intensified by the liquid inside the balloons staining the memorial as metaphorical blood. What is interesting is that Ruga chooses staining over destruction. Rather than a 'reperformed violence of racial domination' Ruga shows the result of these atrocities (blood flow) that has been hidden before (Brown, 2017:73).

The performance aims to juxtapose the modern canon's universal status with its own ephemerality. The colonial structures and the narrative of the Afrikaner's existence relies largely on fictional historical narratives that justify economic, cultural and political claim on the land (Beningfield, 2006:48). There is an obsession with timelessness, permanence, stability and steadfastness to show that the particular oppressor should be and always has been the superior. Monuments and memorials emphasise the permanence of what or who is memorialised. These statues are usually carved in strong

materials that will not wither away as the years pass, ensuring that its memory will remain for many years to come. The memorial is also placed in a public space so that as many people as possible will see it in their daily lives, normalising and legitimising the idea it represents (Marshall, 2009:2). This permanence is countered by the ephemerality of the performance that only lasts until the last balloon has popped. The fleeting presence of the balloons and the performance itself is meant to undermine the authoritative power of the history and memory implied by the statue (Hennlich, 2014:311).

The multi-coloured balloons reference Archbishop Desmond Tutu's term 'Rainbow Nation' to describe post-apartheid South Africa (Habib, 1997:15). Ruga draws the viewer's attention to the unkept promises and forgotten ideologies that the Rainbow Nation represents. By performing the work along the route in a township, Ruga makes clear the poverty and inequality still felt in the so-called Rainbow Nation. Ruga very rightly recognises that the Rainbow Nation is a utopian dream in the same way that Azania is. The Rainbow Nation as a form of nationalism is problematised in *An intervention on the Anglo Boer monument* (2015) as well as all *F.W.W.O.A.* artworks. Though nationalism is intended to create unity, it often highlights the stark differences that determine the nationalist agenda (McClintock, 1993:61). The multicultural inclusivity of the nation is a utopian dream that Ruga exposes by showing how blackness is portrayed differently by the rich elite than by the poor working class (Brown, 2017:74).

Understanding the performance of blackness is an important step towards

decolonisation. Ruga's work implies that there are many different registers of blackness

that does not only differ from person to person but can also change within an individual

depending on environmental factors. The differentiation what performing blackness

entails is a result of the blurred and muddled account of what race is (Brown, 2017:75).

On his way to the *Winged Figure of Peace* Ruga journeys through the rural area of

Makhanda, not to share his work with the people that could not afford to attend the

national festival but to juxtapose the figure of the *White Woman* with the poor

indigenous majority. The failure of the Rainbow nation is pointed out by Ruga through

an intersectional account of blackness and class in South Africa.

In *Even if I exist in Embo: Jaundice tales of counter penetration* (2007) Ruga performs

as the avatar *Inj'bhabha. Inj'bhabha* is an isiXhosa term for the gradual hair loss that is

caused by wearing braids. The figure is dressed in a big cloud of synthetic afro-esque

hair (Ruga calls it an 'afro-wobble'), a large black bow and red and gold heeled boots. In

this particular photograph, *Inj'bhabha* is found in a misty landscape in Switzerland with

some sheep in a pen.

Figure 28: Athi-Patra Ruga, *Even if I exist in Embo: Jaundice tales of counter penetration #7* (2007) ((Buys 2009:18, fig.1).

Figure 29: Athi-Patra Ruga, *Even if I exist in Embo: Jaundice tales of counter penetration #6* (2007) ((Buys 2009:18, fig.2).

The green landscape wherein Ruga performs the work serves as more than just a natural backdrop for the sheep and cattle. The classic pastoral landscape as we know it is inverted by Ruga in this performance. A typical pastoral landscape is a depiction of humankind's power and control over nature (Rabb, 2009). The pastoral shows the

landscape as peaceful and bountiful, and as though the ample resources of nature have been tamed and correctly used by people. Ruga includes only one symbol of control, the cattle pen that the sheep are kept in. In photograph number 7 (Figure 27) in the series, the pen is left wide open, failing the control it is supposed to have over the cow. The previous photograph of the performance (Figure 28) shows that the cattle pen is closed and achieving its purpose by keeping the sheep and *Inj'bhabha* contained. This containment is not the peaceful control and order one sees in a pastoral landscape. There is very little space for the sheep to move around and they clearly seem distraught. Ruga counters the natural order of the modernist pastoral landscape by showing the violence and terror experienced to make the pastoral possible. Ruga contests the pastoral once more with the juxtaposition of the clean-shaven sheep to the woolly *Inj'bhabha.* The sheep fall under pastoral control having been shaved and their wool reworked into clothing or sold for profit while the *Inj'bhabha* is unshaven and thus 'untamed'.

The landscape is also covered in a thick blanket of mist. Within traditional landscape painting the mist is added to evoke the Sublime and mysticism, but Ruga uses it in such a way that it only leads to indistinctness. The modern spiritual sublime is replaced with the ambiguous sublime that is *presence*. The mist leaves the viewer cold, wet and unsure. Identity is interpreted as undefined, evolving and pluralistic as Ruga obscures his markers of race, sexuality and gender in performing *Inj'bhabha.* The indistinctness of his representation facilitates fluidity in identity.

Ruga invents and uses 'counter-penetration' as a mode to decolonise the pastoral landscape *Inj'bhabha* is the first avatar that practices counter-penetration in *Even if I exist in Embo: Jaundice tales of counter penetration* (2007) and the concept has since filtered through to all his performances. Counter-penetration is a 'hypervisible intrusion' that challenges the territorial and social properties of a space that is defined by 'accepted truths' and uncontested ideas that make up the space (Siegenthaler, 2013:169). To understand why Ruga chooses 'counter penetration' as a method of decolonisation, it is worthwhile to discover the implications of the term 'penetration'. It refers to an (often violent) act of insertion with a sexual connotation. Within the postcolonial context it is often used to describe the 'rape' of Africa for its resources and people. Here it implies the forceful insertion of whiteness within an African context through colonial and apartheid practices.

Ruga sees this work as a reply to the xenophobic claims on a political poster by SVP (Swiss People's Party) (Ruga in Libsekal, 2014:146). The SVP received a backlash after a campaign poster that shows three white sheep 'kicking out' a black sheep with the Swiss flag as backdrop in 2007. The party claimed that foreigners committed more crimes than Swiss citizens to justify the deportation plans. The poster reads: "*Sicherheit schaffen*" that can be translated to "For more security" and has been described by the United Nations as blatantly racist (Foulkes, 2007). The themes of skewed nationalism, displacement and racial segregation transcends national boundaries in this work. Ruga, as South African, has conceptualised the performance from what he knows and

experienced in South Africa and could apply it to discrepancies he witnessed in other countries.

Figure 30: Swiss People's Party, Campaign poster (2007) (Stockemer, 2018).

The title of the performance refers to Nicolas Poussin's *Et in Arcadia ego* (1637-38) that translates as "I too am here in Arcadia". The painting shows three shepherds and a woman inspecting a tomb they have come across. The tomb reads *Et in Arcadia ego;* this is a *memento mori* that seems to say that death can be found even in paradise or utopia (Zucker & Harris, 2015).[28] Arcadia from the ancient Greek tells the tale of a happy shepherd and is interpreted in art usually in the depiction of rural bliss within a landscape (Malherbe & Stevens, 2016:80). Ruga explains that the SVP poster "had a displacing effect on minorities contrary to the utopian stereotype" (Ruga in Libsekal, 2014:146). The artist replaces 'Arcadia' with 'Embo' in naming the performance. Embo is said to be a tribe of Bantu-speaking people from the time of King Solomon that have migrated towards Southern Africa from the Great Lakes region in Central Africa. Today, the kingdom of Embo is made up of 65 tribes in South Africa ruled by King Bhungane III

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[28] In art or literature, a *memento mori* is a reminder of death, literally meaning "remember that you must die" (Sparks, 2017:29).

(Nayaran, 2017). The vision of King Bhungane is to unite all the tribes in Africa as one nation—this seems to be a recurring theme, as it was also seen in the Pan-African Congress and the ideologies of Azania. By changing the classical 'even I exist in Arcadia' into 'even if I exist in Embo' Ruga shows his scepticism for the precolonial utopian dream (as reiterated by the subtitle: *Jaundiced tales of counter-penetration*). Ruga implores some cynicism in the strive for a Rainbow Nation that is built on the ideologically charged vision of the past. The fact that so many of South Africa's social and cultural difficulties did not give way to a pluralistic post-apartheid South Africa in 1994 fuels Ruga's scepticism and resentment. Even in a precolonial utopia (such as Azania or Embo) there is violence, inequality and death.

The hypervisibility of counter-penetration is a technique to combat absence with his very deliberate presence. It is an intentional and tenacious insertion of the self into places where one does not 'belong'. This concept evolved into a rousing technique by Ruga and other artists to question and negate reductionist and homogenous grand narratives. Ruga uses it as a method to reinsert blackness and queerness into spaces and the narratives around the spaces in a transgressive manner (Adendorff, 2021:4,5 & Libsekal, 2014:157). Intersectional analysis of this form of insertion also includes the patriarchal and heteronormative ideals thrusted onto cultural and social psyches. Ruga's practice aims to problematise, override and warp these ideals (Adendorff, 2021:5).

Ruga carefully balances absence and counter-penetration to show the difficult relationship South Africa has with representation. He chooses to not to depict those who have been left out in the past as a restorative gesture, but rather to make the viewer aware of their perpetual absence and destabilise the narrative that keeps them hidden (Hennlich, 2014:311). Ruga's use of Embo and Azania is an act of counter-archiving, through these performances he reminds the viewer of the rich pre-colonial histories, myths and stories that have since gotten lost.

4.4. Hannelie Coetzee

Hannelie Coetzee (1971-) is a contemporary South African artist that makes use of natural materials, found objects, industry waste and the combination of unlikely objects to create her multi-disciplined work. Her education in the fine arts, environmental science and business has fostered her interdisciplinary interest in environmental art. Her artworks are often ephemeral and always site specific (Coetzee, 2019). Coetzee's land art works are essentially performances and are thus discussed from this angle.

Her work is of particular interest to the study as she creates postcolonial contemporary performances from the point of view of a white South African. Coetzee grew up in a conservative Christian home and makes a point of referencing her poorer *bywoner* heritage in her works, such as in *Tant Koek* (2015) (Sassen, 2018). Whiteness within a post-apartheid South African context is not as 'invisible' or 'non-raced' as it is in other discourses. The characteristics and effects of whiteness are thoroughly discussed within

political and cultural debates in South Africa. The dissemination, interrogation and confrontation of whiteness is an important step in decolonisation and forming a new national identity (van der Watt, 2001:65). Where the artists discussed in this chapter create their art from the perspective of the exploitation and displacement of the past that they still experience in the present, Coetzee has nuanced memory and nostalgia differently in her work. She tends to focus on the displacement and exploiting of the landscape and nature itself.

Figure 31: Hannelie Coetzee, *Tant Koek* (2015) (https://www.hanneliecoetzee.com/tant-koek-2015-pretoria-cbd/).

Here the ideologies of the past are not critiqued by an insertion and foregrounding of the self, but rather of the landscape. The inevitable white postcolonial guilt that Coetzee experiences moves the locus of identity from the person experiencing the work, to the space (landscape) it is being experienced in. Coetzee steps into conversation with the colonial ideals of the modernist landscape paintings and thereby creates a different

approach to dissent through her work. Coetzee's ephemeral and embodied counter to colonial pastoral conduct will be illustrated by discussing two works created on the same piece of land, two years apart: *Eland and Benko* (2015) and *Locust and Grasshopper* (2017).

Eland and Benko is a land art performance that Coetzee completed in 2015. The performance took place on a hill in the Khatlhampi Private Reserve on the border of the Nirox Sculpture Park and Artist Residency in the Cradle of Humankind. Coetzee worked with scientist Sally Archibald and MSc student Felix Skhosana to create this vast depiction of a child reaching out to an eland. The image was plotted out by surveyors using 1500 points to burn the outline of the image into the grass before the start of the performance. Once the weather was clear, Coetzee, Archibald and around two hundred people hiked five kilometres to the site of the performance. The outlined images were set alight in a similar manner to hazard reduction burnings and were controlled and eventually put out by a team of firefighters (Wood, 2015).

Figure 32: Hannelie Coetzee, *Eland and Benko* (2015) (https://www.hanneliecoetzee.com/2015-eland-and-benko/).

The motivation of the artwork is to interrogate human relationships with the landscape and the fauna and flora that exist there naturally. Archibald's intentions with the project are to research animals grazing and the effect wildfires and controlled fire has on their grazing patterns and eventually contribute to the improvement of grassland conservation and management. Coetzee recognised this project as an opportunity for a large-scale ecological artwork by which she aims to blur the lines between art and science (Wood, 2015).

As with Searle's *Black Smoke Rising* series, Coetzee's performances rely on the powerful effect of fire, as well as the symbolism that it carries. The representation of fire or a flame is quintessentially sublime as it transfixed the viewer with beauty and fear. In the same way that the artist's performance comments on the relationship between

humankind and nature, the sublime also focusses on this relationship and the "delightful horror" nature can evoke within mankind (J.M. Coetzee, 1988:54). The flame is feared because it can destroy whole cities, burn crops to the ground and has power that cannot be tamed by people (Pyne, 2016:5). The sublime aspect of the fire also links it to spirituality.

The use of fire in this artwork also speaks to the violence and disruption that the landscape has experienced in pursuit of wealth and comfort for humankind. For ecologists, two significant (and unfavourable) practises in the imperial conquest are foresting and the development of the internal combustion engine. The European custom of planting vast plantations did not fit the ecologies of their colonies. This combined with the burning of landscapes to produce fuel for combustion engines had an immense effect on the colonised landscape. Industrialisation also brought land clearing to create space for living. Fires became not just practical, but also political (Pyne, 2016:6). As a practical appropriation of space, people change the landscape to fit their needs (Cosgrove, 1985:34). While, for instance, Pierneef's *Premiermyn* (1932) celebrates the ingenuity and progress industrialisation brings, Coetzee shows the detrimental effect it has.

To burn a piece of land of this size is a violent act, but Coetzee and Archibald know that systematic burning of grazing lands may provide the animals of the area with new, fresh grass to eat (Wood, 2015). In this performance the violence of fire is reinterpreted and redirected to the burning of grasslands to promote biodiversity. Coetzee's use of fire

also refers to the symbolism of a phoenix rising from the ashes. Here fire has the power to destroy that which is old (the dry and insubstantial grass) to make way for the new (the fresh new shoots of grass). The fire gives nature the opportunity for perpetual renewal (Pyne, 2016:2). In the same way the grand narratives and harmful ecological practices can be violently burned to make way for a new, sustainable ways of living.

Eland and Benko (2015) plays out on a field in the Westrand of Gauteng—the use of a *veld* here infers particular ideologies onto the work. Beningfield (2006:49) explains why the *veld* plays an important role in the political narration of the Afrikaner people: it can at once appear to be a timeless, unaltered piece of land and a symbol of the control and power of the Afrikaner as 'natural' owner of this land. Coetzee contests this ideology through her performance. The burning of the images of an eland and young child onto the grass is a temporary alteration to the landscape, once the fresh shoots grow, different animals graze and nature takes its course the artwork is gone. This seems to say that all human intervention, no matter how violent, is temporary and the Afrikaner's presence within the landscape is not as timeless as they once believed. Coetzee shows the landscape as a palimpsest, constantly being reinscribed with meaning rather than a fixed point in place and time. The colonial gaze most often appears from above as though the viewer is the commanding master, looking over the land that they have or are about to conquer. Coetzee counters this specific gaze although she films her artwork from above. However, she denies ownership or command through the ephemerality of the work.

Coetzee is also disputing the hierarchal relationship that the Afrikaner has with the landscape by putting the eland and child on equal footing and encouraging the participants to work *with* nature, rather than to deplete its recourses entirely. Both instances of ideology that the *veld* carries for the Afrikaner people have been problematised within Coetzee's artwork. This artwork does not focus on the ideologies and nostalgia that the people hold with the land but looks at what the land needs presently from its inhabitants.

Following the success of the *Eland and Benko* project, Coetzee held another performance at the Khatlhampi Private Reserve. This 'performance burn' titled *Locust and Grasshopper*, took place much in the same way that the 2015 project has. In this instance, however, the two figures were a locust and a grasshopper with the words "Hittete" written below on a banner. The banner refers to the Afrikaans idiom, "dit was so hittete" (It was a close shave), Coetzee uses this phrase to call attention to how close we are to ruining the planet. Coetzee and Archibald focused their attention on the effect of controlled burns on smaller species like locusts and grasshoppers and recoding these species from pests to full-fledged members of the ecosystem. Archibald argues that grasshoppers and other smaller animals prefer pieces of land with shorter grass and might gain from controlled burnings like these. Coetzee placed the two insects facing one another to draw the participant's attention to the disruptive effect humankind has had on landscapes in the Anthropocene era,[29] and in particular the smaller species that inhabit them (Lauwrens, 2019:90, Coetzee, 2017).

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[29] The Anthropocene era is the geological age wherein human activity has had a visible negative effect on the environment (Coetzee, 2017).

Figure 33: Hannelie Coetzee, *Locust and Grasshopper* (2017) (https://www.hanneliecoetzee.com/2017-locust-and-grasshopper/).

Archibald explains that the controlled burnings are a way to break the uniform tall-grass plains and create opportunity for a diversity of species to flourish. These burnings create grazing 'hotspots' within the landscape to ensure a diversification (Lauwrens, 2019:90). The uniformity in landscapes is a result of colonial practises of creating monocultural plantations and farms (Casid, 2005:9). The vast stretches of a single crop or plant is an unnatural state and detrimental to the other animals, insects and plant species within the original ecosystem.

Ecologically, there is an interesting dynamic between locusts and grasshoppers. The two species belonging to the Orthoptera order appear very similar but have many differences, particularly their behaviour. Locusts have two behavioural states: solitary

and gregarious. In their solitary state they behave in the same way that grasshoppers would and don't prove much of a threat to the ecosystem. In the gregarious state, however, locusts switch to a collective mentality and swarm. The gregarious state occurs when the locusts find themselves in a high population density. This only happens when the ecosystem has limited resources and the locusts all flock to singular sites where nutrition is available. The gregarious state of locusts and the destructive swarming is a reaction to the lack of widespread resources caused by humanity's cultivation of the landscape. It can be safe to assume that Coetzee makes use of the grasshopper and locust imagery to show how humankind's agricultural endeavours have tampered and destroyed the delicate ecosystems we find ourselves in to such an extent that there are not enough resources to sustain the biodiversity. Thus, Coetzee's work is a critique on the colonial cultivation practices that underlie pastoral narratives and landscapes.

Coetzee is often influenced by her Afrikaans heritage and uses this to nuance her ephemeral eco-conscious works. There is usually a thread of Afrikaans culture found in Coetzee's works such as seen in *Oumagrootjie* (2010) and *Tant Koek* (2015). This adds another layer to the palimpsest of *Locust and Grasshopper*. As stated before, a definitive part of being Afrikaner lies in owning, cultivating and domesticating the South African landscape. Karshmer (2019:40) explains that working land changes the landscape and leaves a permanent mark, in this case of the Afrikaners' heritage and ownership of the space. Coetzee questions the permanence of this tradition as well as problematic agricultural practices as romanticised through the pastoral tradition with her ephemeral burnings.

Figure 34: Hannelie Coetzee, Oumagrootjie (2010)
(https://www.hanneliecoetzee.com/2010-oumagrootjie/)

Both *Eland and Benko* and *Locust and Grasshopper* depend largely on the

phenomenological experience to complete the works. In both instances around 200

people joined Coetzee and Archibald and hiked to the top of the hill to watch the

performance happen. The artwork is much more than just the burning of the image, it

also includes the months of research beforehand, process artworks in a variety of media

and the conversations had with the viewers on their hike to the site and afterwards; this

makes the artworks participatory. These works are also considered site-specific as the

accompanying research involves the specific ecosystem of the grasslands where the

burning took place. The core of the artworks in site-specific works such as these lie in

the ideas, opportunities and subjective experiences that the artwork creates (Lauwrens,

2019:95). The artwork depends on the subjective synthesis of perceptual, sensory and

body-orientated moments as experienced by the participants and the extended

executive team (Küpers, 2017:92). The work is wholly participatory, the presence of the viewer-participant is necessary for the completion of the artwork (Lauwrens, 2019:95). More so, it is the lived experience of the participants that becomes the artwork. The lived experience and expected engagement of the participant repudiates the ideological gaze and visual tradition found in modernist landscape art. Instead of the viewer being a passive spectator to the work (as in landscape paintings) Coetzee invites the participants to walk with her and become 'active citizens' (Lauwrens, 2019:93).

The ephemerality of these 'performance burnings' contest the steadfastness and timelessness that modernist landscape paintings embody. These performances last only a few hours for the burning and become completely removed once the new shoots of grass start to grow. This shows that eternal ideals and grand narratives about nations are not as 'natural' as they set out to be. What is natural is constant change, fluidity and the recreation of self, as contemporary performance artists aim to prove. As an extension of this, Coetzee performed *Locust and Grasshopper* (2017) on the exact same location as *Eland and Benko* (2015), two years later there were no more signs or remnants of the previous artwork. It can almost be said that Coetzee created a palimpsest of sort, by layering research, artworks and experiences from different times in one space.

Figure 35: Hannelie Coetzee, Process shot from *Locust and Grasshopper* (2017)
(https://www.lizatlancaster.co.za/blog/firegrazer-2017-locust-grasshopper-2).

Coetzee's performance burnings may not discuss the racial or gendered aspects of the

decolonisation, as with the other works discussed here, but they contribute an important

method of breaking the iconoclasm that this study reveals. Coetzee and Archibald

attempt to raise awareness about the ecological problems we are facing, in the same

manner that other performance artists are raising awareness about inequalities and

injustices in South Africa's past and present. She also demonstrates the importance of

intersectionality in postcolonial studies. These landscapes are re-presented as natural,

even though they are wholly human-made and constructed to ensure humanity's

existence and longevity in the space. The augmentation of a natural space can thus not

be separated from its colonial legacy (Casid,2005: xxii).

4.5. Conclusion

This chapter has discovered the ways in which contemporary performance artists in South Africa counter the absence of indigenous bodies (and narratives) in modernist landscape paintings. The main method of countering the iconoclasm involves very clearly and unashamedly placing the indigenous body back into the landscape as an act of 'hypervisible intrusion'. The performance artists make use of Fanon's structured violence, and also depend on the juxtaposition of peace and violence to highlight inequality in their work. The dynamic between peace and violence is also used to interrogate humanity's relationship with the landscape and the fauna and flora that exist there naturally.

The passive, 'flat' landscape painting is resisted with an active performance artwork that becomes intimate and interactive. The artists rely on tactility and corporeality to create an authentic lived experience within their works; the sensory experience and tactility of their work to change the 'hard facts' of history into a lived memory. This chapter found that critical remembrance and the building of a counter archive is integral in restoring the landscape. In particular, these artists interact directly with monuments within planned landscapes or becoming monuments themselves.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

This dissertation set out to find the ways in which contemporary performance artists problematise and resist the iconoclasms found in South African modernist landscape paintings. Firstly, I set out to contextualise modernist landscape paintings produced after colonisation and before the commencement of apartheid. The development of the Afrikaner nation and the individual and collective identities created within it are intrinsically linked to the South African landscape. Landscape as a communicative tool had been brought to South Africa through colonial endeavours and have since morphed into a conveyor of national identity for the Afrikaner people specifically. This may be because the *volk* identifies with the landscape as conquerors as well as natives (Coetzee, 1988:174). The Afrikaner's formulated nationalisms and ideologies are seeded in what they perceive as their unique relationship to the South African landscape.

The landscape paintings of Maggie Laubser, J.H. Pierneef and Hugo Naudé are discussed as representative of the landscape paintings created at this time. Comparable examples can be seen the work of W.H. Coetzer (1900-1983), Pieter Wenning (1873-1921) and Bertha Everard (1873-1965). In particular, evidence of the traditional picturesque, sublime and pastoral were pointed out within the chosen artworks.

The pastoral landscape is the most popular landscape depicted in the South African landscape tradition. The frequent use of this trope can be attributed to the multitude of

farming communities in the country, particularly among the Afrikaner people—however, this study shows the preference is more nuanced than that. The pastoral landscape implies that the space is controlled and tamed by humankind (Rabb, 2009) and thus speaks to the Afrikaners' claim to power rather than love of the land. When a landscape is shown to flourish under the hand of the farmer the power dynamic is communicated as successful and peaceful. This also reinforces a 'natural' hierarchy within the landscape. Particularly in Laubser and Pierneef's work, the pastoral is often depicted with a deep nostalgic quality to it. Associating nostalgia with the Afrikaner's control over the landscape aids the timelessness and permanence of the Afrikaner people within the space.

The picturesque in landscape tradition lends itself to a landscape that is beautiful and well arranged, but seemly 'unspoilt' by people. This is argued to support the myth of 'empty lands' and is used to confirm the presence, entitlement and ownership of the Afrikaner people within this so-called empty space (Van Eeden, 2011:5). Ironically, in creating a painting according to picturesque rules the landscape becomes framed and filtered; even though it is celebrated as an untouched landscape. The picturesque also communicates the landscape as a peaceful space. The violence of emptying the landscape is hidden and there is a sense of 'calm' in the order created by humanity.

The sublime landscape sets out to leave the viewer with a sense of awe and this combination of delight and terror often adds a strong spiritual aspect to the landscape. Within the paintings discussed the spiritual sublime conveys the divine right to govern

that Afrikaners believe God has placed on them (Brukman, 2013:13-14). The sublime is also used to communicate the timelessness and fixity of the Afrikaner *volk*—this metaphor is seen especially in the large mountains Pierneef depicts that likewise demonstrates the iconoclasms within the modernist landscape paintings. Indigenous bodies are either removed completely or repositioned as in servitude. Ironically, the Afrikaners were legitimising their own presence in the landscape by removing others within it.

In answering the research question, I attempted to show how contemporary performers challenge and overturn the iconoclasms identified within the South African landscape. The ideological landscapes of modernist South Africa have been subjects of dissent before by artists such as Wayne Barker and David Goldblatt. I set out to discover how performances attempt the same from a postcolonial point of view, by referring to theories by Fanon, Spivak and Casid. Decolonisation is therefore revealed to be achieved through ordered violence, critical memory practice, letting silenced voices speak and disrupting the hierarchal power dynamic.

Berni Searle's body of work was discussed as sublime, by physically placing her body in the landscape and transforming the sublime from a moment of transcendence to an act of presence. Searle depends on tactility and the embodied phenomenological experience to shift the gaze of the participant and by extension, disrupt the power dynamic experienced within the landscape. The ephemerality of her work also stands against the fixity and timelessness of the modernist tradition. An excellent example of the disruption of the picturesque can be seen in the works of Gugulective. The work

Akuchanywa Apha (2007) was conceptualised to create awareness of the lack in basic hygienic amenities at shebeens and in the public space of the township in general (Lemu, 2016:256). The embodied experience is physically placing bodies into the landscape, rather than showing it unpopulated. The power and control that picturesque insists upon is also subverted by the act of urinating within the artwork. The crowded, disorganised and, frankly, unpleasing to the eye scenes stand in direct opposition to the charming, untouched picturesque landscapes. Here the myth of the 'empty lands' are completely obliterated by showing indigenous people existing in and using the space as a form of counter-penetration. *Titled/Untitled* (2007), also by the group, returns the discussion to an embodied experience, turning the removed viewer into an active, *present* participant. This cements the argument towards a phenomenological approach.

Critical remembrance as a method to resist iconoclasm is quintessentially shown in Sethembile Msezane's performances. Once again, a phenomenological approach creates a *madeleine moment*[30] for the participant, wherein they are very consciously placed within the memory and transported back to it. Through these memories a counter-archive is created to retell and remember the stories of those once obscured. A noteworthy example of archival practice can also be observed in the oeuvre of Senzeni Marasela. Her work *Waiting for Gebane* (2018) nuances the absences and presences within the telling of her character, Theodora's, story brilliantly and reiterates the point this study is making.

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[30] A 'madeleine moment' refers to an involuntary memory or sudden vivid memory evoked by a certain taste, smell or experience. This was coined by Marcel Proust in his autobiographical novel *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* (Gibson, 2016:42).

The pastoral landscape is contested by Athi-Patra Ruga and Hannelie Coetzee. Ruga puts the emphasis in his presence specifically in *Even if I exist in Embo: Jaundice tales of counter penetration* (2007) stating: "I want to insert my body and its history into scenes that have etched my body out of it, or spaces that have told me I cannot be in (Ruga in Libsekal, 2014:146)." Ruga's method of counter-penetration is described as a 'hyper-visible intrusion', as he uses this technique to physically and deliberately place his body in the landscapes where his existence has been obscured in the past. Ruga's performance shows a figure that cannot be tamed or controlled, a direct contradiction to the pastoral. *An intervention on the Anglo Boer monument* (2015) and the complimentary *Camera Obscura* (2015) is used by the artist to contest the modernist Gaze. Here Ruga questions the agency the colonial gaze gives the viewer. The ocularcentic nature of landscape painting is also defied by putting the phenomenological experience at centre stage, as well as by the accidental disruption of the view through the *Camera Obscura*.

Hannelie Coetzee chooses to interrogate the pastoral landscape from an ecological standpoint. Coetzee's oeuvre also adds an interesting perspective as she is the only artist discussed here to create work from an Afrikaner heritage and not an indigenous one. Both *Eland and Benko* (2015) and *Locust and Grasshopper* (2017) are phenomenological events that show how humankind's agricultural endeavours have tampered and destroyed delicate ecosystems. The hierarchal order and governance

humanity imposes on the landscape is not as 'natural' and successful as it once was believed to be.

Each one of the performances discussed are taking place in the periperformative. The performances are active disruptions of the colonial and modernist ideals, as well as calls to action for the participants. The artistic focus has shifted from a removed, passive gaze over the landscape to a very active embodied presence *within* it. This leads me to the following answer to the research question stated at the beginning of the study: The contemporary performance artists apply a phenomenological approach to their work in resistance to the iconoclasms of the modernist landscape paintings. They combat the absences previously pointed out in the landscape paintings by focussing on their embodied presence, a hypervisible insertion, within the landscape. The iconoclasms are reworked into a palimpsest through remembrances, calculated violence, hearing silenced voices speak and disrupting power dynamics. Through these embodied practices contemporary South Africans have the opportunity to rewrite archives and compose inclusive narratives.

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