# Performing the Self: autobiography, narrative, image and text in self-representations

Ilené Jacobs

Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Art at the University of Stellenbosch.
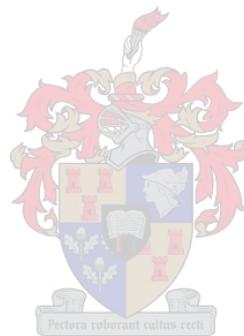
Supervisor: Ms Katherine Bull

March 2007

Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree
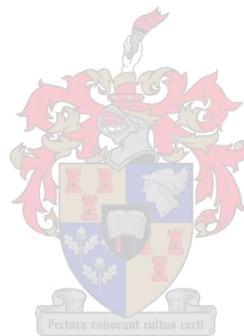
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Abstract

This research follows the assumption that the notion of performativity can be applied to the visual construction of identity within art-making discourse in order to explore the contingent and mutable nature of identity in representation. My interest in performativity, defined as the active, repetitive and ritualistic processes responsible for the construction of subjectivities, lies within the process of production. I indicate how this notion, within the context of self-representation, can provide the possibility for performing identity as a process. I investigate the extent to which gender, the gaze, memory and narrative contribute to the performative construction of self-representations and reveal, through the exploration of my practical research, that these concepts are themselves performative.

Although agency to construct the self can be regarded as problematic, considering the role of language and discourse in determining subjectivities, this research suggests that it is possible to perform interventions from within language. I suggest that the notion of inscription provides a means through which identity constructions can be performed differently; and that my art-making process of repetitive inscription, erasure and re-inscription of image and text and the layering of paint not only reflect the notion of performativity, but also enable me to expose the multiple and fragmented nature of identities.

I am concerned with the performance of identity in terms of my loved ones, my twin brother in particular. As the main stimulus for my practical research was the separation from my twin brother when he left South Africa to work in London, I investigate trauma, loss and grief through my visual self-representations of image and text.

The relationship between image and text is considered in order to indicate the intertextual nature of my art practice. I suggest the blurring of boundaries between several forms of language. I contend that the relationship between image and text can both suggest and disrupt the coherence of my self-representations as well as the linearity that is associated with narrative and autobiographical texts. In terms of these, this research proposes that the performative takes place both in the act of writing/mark-making and the intersecting space between the narratives of the viewer and those of the artist.

The ability of image and text to both construct and deconstruct the cohesiveness of self-representation is theoretically and visually explored through the notion of the split within the subject. This idea is explored in terms of the relationship between self and other; subject and object; the writing 'I' and the 'I' which is written; in order to suggest the physical and emotional splitting between myself and my twin and to indicate the constructed nature of the family unit. I also discuss the notion of suture in order to suggest that my art-making practice can be regarded as a cathartic process through the performative, ritualistic and repetitive inscription of confessional text and the layering of paint, while not completely denying the disruption caused by the trauma of the split in the performance of multiple subjectivities.
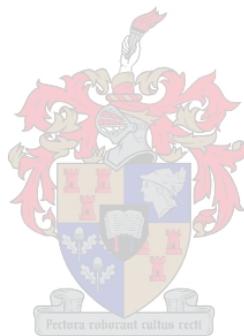
Opsomming

Hierdie ondersoek handhaaf die veronderstelling dat die idee van 'performativity' (performatiwiteit) toegepas kan word op die visuele konstruksie van identiteit binne die diskoers van die kunspraktyk ter verkenning van die veranderlike aard van identiteit in voorstelling.

My belangstelling in performatiwiteit, gedefinieer as die aktiewe, herhaalde en ritualistiese prosesse verantwoordelik vir die konstruksie van subjekposisies, het sy oorsprong in my kunsmaak proses. Ek dui aan hoe hierdie begrip, binne die konteks van self-voorstelling die moontlikheid daarstel om identiteit as 'n proses uit te beeld (perform). Ek ondersoek in watter mate 'gender', die 'gaze', geheue en narratief bydra tot die performatiewe konstruksie van self-voorstelling en lê bloot, deur die verkenning van my praktiese navorsing, dat hierdie konsepte vanuit hulself performatief is.

Alhoewel agentskap (agency) om die self te konstrueer as problematies beskou kan word in terme van die rol wat taal en diskoers in die bepaling van subjektiwiteite speel, suggereer hierdie ondersoek dat intervensies vanuit taal moontlik is. Ek veronderstel dat die idee van inskripsie 'n ruimte voorsien waar binne identiteitskonstruksies verskillend uitgebeeld kan word; en dat my kunsmaak proses van herhaalde inskripsie, uitwissing en re-inskripsie van beeld en teks asook die herhaalde neerlegging van verf, nie alleenlik die begrip van performatiwiteit reflekteer nie, maar dat dit my ook in staat stel om die meervoudige en gefragmenteerde aard van identiteite bloot te lê.

Ek ondersoek die performatiwiteit van identiteit in terme van my geliefdes, in besonder my tweelingbroer. Die hoofstimulus vir my praktiese ondersoek was die skeiding van my tweeling toe hy Suid-Afrika verlaat het om in Londen te gaan werk. Dit het aanleiding gegee tot die verkenning van die kwessies van trauma, verlies en hartseer binne die konteks van visuele self-voorstellings.

Die verhouding tussen beeld en teks word beskou ten einde die intertekstuele aard van my kunspraktyk aan te dui. Ek suggereer die verwarring van die grense tussen verskeie vorme van taal. Verder voer ek aan dat die verhouding tussen beeld en teks die samehang van my self-voorstellings terselfdertyd suggereer en ontwrig, en dat dit dieselfde effek op die liniariteit geassosieer met narratiewe en autobiografiese tekste het. In terme van hierdie gedagte, stel hierdie ondersoek voor dat die performatiwiteit

plaasvind beide in die handeling van skryf/inskripsie en die interseksie tussen die narratiewe van die kyker en die van die kunstenaar.

Die vermoë van die beeld om die heelheid van selfvoorstelling beide te konstrueer en dekonstrueer word teoreties en visueel verken deur die begrip van die 'split' binne identiteit. Hierdie idee word verken in terme van die verhouding tussen self en ander; subjek en objek; die skrywende 'ek' en die 'ek' wat skryf, ten einde die fisiese en emosionele skeiding tussen myself en my tweeling te suggereer asook om die gekonstrueerde aard van die familie eenheid aan te dui. Ek bespreek ook die begrip van 'suture' ten einde te suggereer dat my kunsmaak praktyk beskou kan word as 'n katarsiese proses deur die die performatiewe, ritualistiese en herhaalde inskripsie van konfessionele teks en die herhaalde neerlegging van verf, terwyl ek nie die ontwrigting van die trauma wat deur die 'split' veroorsaak word binne die uitbeelding van meervoudige subjekposisies ontken nie.

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The Master of Arts in Fine Arts degree consists of two components: the theoretical thesis, and the practical research of visual concepts that are displayed in an exhibition. This thesis explores the visual research created during my studies and aims to contextualize my art practice within contemporary art theory and discourse. It is also an attempt to address the theoretical questions that flowed from my visual process and production.

The conceptualization of my practical research developed out of my first experience of separation from my twin brother when he left South Africa to work in London two years ago. Owing to the close relationship that we shared, his absence severely affected me, and both the theoretical and practical components involve the exploration of the loss of my twin. This separation has also encouraged me to question the role that my relationship with him plays in determining my identity and how this impacts on my visual self-representations, which further developed into the consideration of how my family and loved ones influence my sense of self.

The focus of both my practical and theoretical research is based on the intertextual relationship between written text and image (as visual text). The reader of this thesis is therefore presented with alternating pages of image and text, in order to highlight the interdependent relationship between practical and text-based research. The separate volumes that the reader is provided with further suggest the intertextual quality of text which, in turn, reinforces the notion of the split within the subject that forms a thread throughout my discussions of self-representation.

My practical process of production developed out of my desire to investigate the materiality of paint. However, the medium that I chose to use had to appease my need to inscribe text on the images that I created. It is for this reason that I experimented extensively with enamel paint in order to create self-representations onto which I could write my thoughts and feelings. The end product of my experimentation was a process that involved repetitive layering of both paint and text, resulting in panels of paint that could be worked on both sides. It is also through this process that I developed my interest in performativity, which is defined as the active, repetitive and ritualistic processes that are responsible for the construction of subjectivities.

In creating my self-representations I present the viewer with images of myself, my family members and my long-term boyfriend. Thus, by repeatedly inscribing text onto all the figures that I paint, I not only perform my subjectivities, but also present a performance of the subjectivities of my family members from my perspective. In this way, subjectivity is represented as a reflection on one's relation to another, in other words, as informed or influenced by the other.

By creating my works for the US gallery in Stellenbosch and indicating the room in which each individual work is to be placed, I attempt to suggest the importance of spatial context in constructing identity. However, the fact that my art works can also be adapted to another space, by reconfiguring the way in which the panels are hung in the room, I also suggest the flexibility and constant process of identity construction.

I regard my practical research as the visual processing of loss and grief and as such both denial and catharsis form part of my work. Through repetitive representation and writing I experience a certain soothing and healing of my grief, but my denial is evident in the way that I reconnect, or "suture" as I suggest in this thesis, myself and my twin in the imagery that I present to the viewer.

Knip die Naelstring: Performing Gender

2nd Johannesburg Biennale. South African National Gallery. (www.online

newschool. edu/.../graft/ROSE9.GIF).

Fig 17. Tracey Rose, *Span I* (1997). Performance and mixed media.

2nd Johannesburg Biennale. South African National Gallery. (www.artthrob.co.za/

01mar/images/rose05a.jpg).

Fig. 18. Tracey Rose, *Span II* (1997). Performance and mixed media.

2nd Johannesburg Biennale. South African National Gallery. (www.artthrob.co.za/

01mar/images/rose01a.jpg).

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01mar/images/rose02a.jpg).

Fig. 20. Ilené Jacobs, *Knip die Naelstring* (detail) (2006). Enamel paint and fibre glass.

36 panels of 200cm x 30cm each.

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Fig. 6. Ilené Jacobs, *Kiekie* (detail) (2006). Enamel paint and fibre glass. 2 panels of 90cm x 255cm each.

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Fig.11. Gillian Wearing, *Album* series: *Self-portrait at 17* (2003). digital c-type print. 141 x 116cm. (http://www.albrightknox.org/acquisitions/acq2004/Images/Self.Gillian.jpg).

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Fig.17. Sophie Calle, *La Filature* (*The Shadow*) (detail) (1981). Photographs and text. 190,5 x 292.1cm. (http://www.iniva.org/dare/artwork/calle/images/calle3.jpg).

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of 200cm x 30cm each. Installation variable.

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of 200cm x 30cm each. Installation variable.

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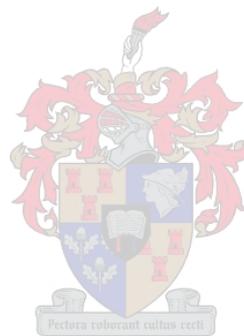
Introduction

> Self-portraits are not innocent transcriptions of what the artist sees in the mirror: they are self-dramatisations. Like autobiography, self-portraits attempt to tell a coherent story – rarely THE truth, but more intriguingly, a truth that suits the author.
> (Borzello, s. a.:http://www.npg.org.uk /live/mirrorpaper5 .asp)

This study is aimed at establishing a theoretical context for my visual research with the focus on how the notion of performativity[1] can be applied to the visual construction of subjectivities[2] within art-making discourse. I specifically investigate the extent to which gender, the gaze, memory and narrative contribute to the performative construction of self-representations and will indicate, through the exploration of my practical research, that these concepts are themselves performative. My interest in the performative lies to a large extent in the process of production, as well as in the process of simultaneous construction and deconstruction of self-representations in order to indicate the mutable nature of identity.

The main stimulus for my creative process was the traumatic separation from my twin brother and the consequent questioning of the role that he and my loved ones play in terms of the construction of my identity. Once the self is considered in relation to others, the complexity of identity construction is revealed. I therefore foreground the problematic of essentialist understandings of the self and consider the notions of intertextuality, inscription and suture as possible modes of approach to self-representation in order to expose the co-dependence of binaries. At the same time I process issues of trauma, loss and splitting, all of which form a central part of my work, particularly in terms of the psychoanalytic theories of Jacques Lacan. These ideas are all explored in order to establish potential agency to perform identity as a process.

Through the ritualistic layering of enamel paint and text, I foreground the use of both image and text in my art-making process and guide this investigation in light of the

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[1] *Performativity* is defined here as the active, repetitive and ritualistic processes that are responsible for the construction of subjectivities. This is primarily based on Judith Butler's notion of gender performativity in her book *Gender Trouble*, 1993.
[2] I refer to subjectivities and identities, as both these ideas around the self are regarded as multiple rather than fixed.

relationship set up by these two elements. Furthermore, I would like to suggest that my art making process simultaneously stimulates and disrupts the narrative potential in my work and that this leads to the critical investigation of how autobiography informs constructions of subjectivity. Supposing that visual constructions of subjectivities can be regarded as performative, I would like to suggest that self-representations which employ both visual and written text play a distinctive role in the performance of identities.

Since I regard identity construction as problematic,[3] I employ the relationship between image and text to concurrently suggest and destabilize the coherence of my self-representations. In terms of this, I define *identity* as the representation of the self in society and discourse, while *subjectivity* is regarded as the subjective positions which inform representations of identity.

I create a contextual framework and background for my art practice by shifting between discussions of my own art practice and those of other female artists.[4] I use the term 'self-representation'[5] rather than 'self-portraiture' as I consider artworks that would not necessarily be considered to fall within the genre of self-portraiture. Self-representation is thus considered as the expression of subjectivities, whether these subjectivities are specific to the artist's own identity, or commentary on the female experience of subjectivities as such.

According to Amelia Jones and Andrew Stephenson, various theorists have adopted the linguistic notion of performativity, which was first developed by J.L. Austin and reinterpreted by, among others, Jacques Derrida[6] and Judith Butler, in an attempt to open up the process of meaning production in narrative and temporal arts, and to stimulate debate in terms of the representation of identity in contemporary society (1999:2). Yet, even though the concept of performativity has generated great interest across the

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[3]Identity is problematic as it is multiple and fragmented, not whole and fixed as is suggested within modernist discourse.

[4] By focusing only on women artists there is the possibility of placing women on the margin, outside of the art context of men. However, I feel it is productive to highlight the contributions that women make in terms of the genre of self-representation (1998:21). These works do not necessarily play a role in the process of production within my work

[5]The earliest "example of women painting their self-portraits appears as illustrations to Boccaccio's *Concerning Famous Women*, written between 1355 and 1359" (Borzello, 1998:20). It shows an artist, known as Marcia, holding a mirror while painting her self-portrait (Borzello, 1998:20). It is clear that women artists have been creating self-portraits for centuries, yet it is only with the advent of the feminist movement that women's self-portraiture has begun to be acknowledged in the history of Western art.

[6] See Austin's *How to Do Things With Words* (1971), in which he is concerned with the performative speech act; and Derrida's *Signature Event Context* in which he comments on this theory. (Jones & Stephenson, 1999:2).

humanities, it has rarely been the focus of critical or historical writing[7] concerning art (1999:2).

In this thesis I attempt to find new possibilities for the application of performativity within the critical discourse of art, where performativity is defined as the active, repetitive and ritualistic processes that are responsible for the construction of subjectivities; a process through which the subject enters into the public realm. This is a rather simplistic definition and the complexities of this concept will be explored in more depth within the body of the text.

This research is an attempt to investigate theoretical questions that developed out of my own practical process, and in order to do so I employ a broad eclectic methodology in my definitions of subjectivities, of which post-structural, psychoanalytic and feminist theories form the central theoretical basis for my investigation of self-representation. I have chosen only the key concepts within each of the theoretical fields that I consider, in order to guide the discussion of my own practical research.

My practical research foregrounds the role my twin and family members play in the construction of my identity, which suggests the notion of the other; thus the exploration of some psychoanalytic ideas also forms a constant thread throughout this dissertation, as it is in this field of research that the role of the other is dealt with most consistently. Psychoanalysis also places importance on the organization of the internal and symbolic constructions of subjectivity, while looking specifically at the emotional aspects of loss, longing and mourning within the subject. These ideas form a significant part of the discussion as the loss of my twin and the accompanying grief was the main stimulus for the creation of my practical body of work.

Various theorists have suggested that identity is produced in terms of the other. Feminist theorist, Sarah Salih, claims that "it is only by recognizing oneself as and in the Other that one will become anything at all" (2004:8). Stuart Hall claims that identity can only be constructed in "relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks, to what has been called its constitutive outside" and therefore, "identities can function as points of identification and attachment only because of their capacity to exclude, to leave out, to render 'outside', abjected"(1996: 4-5). With regard to this idea I specifically consider psychoanalyst's, Jacques Lacan's, discussion of the role that the mirror and the screen play in identity

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[7] It needs to be mentioned, however, that "*practices* in the visual art have consistently opened out the performative dimension of meaning production" (Jones & Stephenson, 1999:2)

construction. I reflect on these theories with reference to feminist theorists, Felicity Edholm and Jane Gallop, philosopher, Frederick Dolan, Australian feminist and philosopher, Elizabeth Grosz, Drama and English professor, Peggy Phelan, cultural theorist, Kaja Silverman, British academic, Jacqueline Rose and art historical theorist, Joanna Lowry.

Because of the separation between me and my twin, I explore the notion of the self as being split into self and other within my practical process. I draw attention to the disruption in our relationship, and also consider the process of being "in between" these subjective positions. By using the notion of both splitting and suturing, I attempt to indicate not only the complexity of representation of self, but also the trauma of loss, both in my practical and theoretical research.

In terms of the self/other dichotomy it is also necessary to note that the subject has been "put under pressure from within, by psychoanalysis, as a delusory product of unconscious processes, and from without, as a delusory product of ideologies or discourses", specifically within the field of poststructuralism (Cosslett, Lury & Summerfield, 2000:5). This suggests that not only is the subject unstable and fragmented, but it also seems to be 'unravelling' under the strain of discourse. In light of this, visual self-representations become an extremely difficult task and I explore this issue in the body of this text.

This 'unravelling' of the subject, together with the fact that the subject is 'always-already' positioned by language, clearly affects the authorship of the subject. South African artist and art historical writer, Marion Arnold, explains that 'subject' is a word with seemingly contradictory meanings:

> A subject is under the control of another, and 'to subject' is to bring under domination. But, in the same grammatical sense, the subject is active, not passive. This energising of the subject is also characteristic of the philosophical meaning, where the subject – the self or ego – thinks, feels, perceives and intends. (1996:2)

In this sense, the subject is again split between being in control and being controlled. This leads me to one of the most contentious questions within critical discourse that arises whenever subjectivity is examined: does the subject have agency to perform the process of identity construction as contingent and mutable? I intend to indicate that although agency to construct the self can be regarded as problematic, especially when considered

in terms of the role that language plays in determining subjectivities, it is possible to perform interventions from within language.

Within poststructural investigations of identity construction, it is accepted that subjectivities are shaped through experiences within the world and formed by an elaborate interweaving of identifications within discourse. The feminist theorist, Whitney Chadwick, explains that in the field of poststructuralist theory, "meaning is constituted within language and is not the guaranteed expression of the subject who speaks it" (1996:12). Consequently, post-structuralism "expose[s] the role of language in deferring meaning" and the construction of "a subjectivity which is not fixed but is constantly negotiated through a whole range of forces – economic, cultural and political" (Chadwick, 1996:12). Structuralists and poststructuralists alike agree that we are "'always already'[8] positioned by semiotic systems – and most clearly by language", while more recent theorists have "referred to the subject as being spoken by language" (Chandler: s.a: http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/S4B/sem09.html). Thus, within post-structural theory, the subject is regarded not as essentialist but rather as fluid and fragmented.

Stuart Hall's consideration of identity in the introduction of *Questions of Cultural Identity* is in line with how I consider identity within this theoretical research. His approach to identity is not an essentialist one, but rather, as he states, a "strategic and positional one", a notion of identity that does not indicate that constant essence of the self propounded by modernism. This identity does *not* unfold from beginning to end throughout history without change nor is it a 'self' which stays identical to itself across time (1996:3). Hall recognizes "that identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but are multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic discourses, practices and positions"[9] (1996:4).

Arnold explains that from a post-structuralist feminist perspective, "meaning is relational rather than fixed, image boundaries are wider than pictorial formats, and … womanhood – translated into art language – becomes a text that can be read from a new angle" (1996:121). In light of this statement by Arnold, I would like to suggest that where artworks that make use of both image and text are under consideration, the distinction between

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[8] This is the Althusserian formulation of the concept. Louis Althusser is a French, Marxist philosopher who is well known for his writings on ideology.
[9] Hall also applies this approach to cultural identities and states that when an essentializing approach is taken with regards to cultural identity, it signifies "that 'collective or true self hiding inside the many, more superficial or artificially imposed "selves" which a people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common' and which can stabilize, fix or guarantee an unchanging 'oneness' or cultural belongingness underlying all the other superficial differences" (1996:3-4).

visual and verbal text-based language becomes blurred. It is my contention that this relationship can be employed to reinforce and disrupt meaning production within self-representations.

This relationship between image and text refers to the concept of intertextuality. This term was coined by the feminist theorist, Julia Kristeva, for a theory she developed in response to Mikhail Bahktin's concern with the "*dialogic* nature of language"[10] (Allen, 2003:79). Intertextuality refers to the fact that each text exists in relation to others and that, in fact, texts are more indebted to other texts than to the author. This notion, according to Daniel Chandler, thus problematizes the "idea of a text having boundaries and questions the dichotomy of 'inside' and 'outside': where, Chandler asks "does a text 'begin' and 'end'?" (s.a: http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/S4B/sem09.html). Within the framework of this concept, I consider my art practice as intertextual form of self-representation.

As my constructions of subjectivities employ the relationship between image and text in order to create and disrupt narrative representations of my identities, it is necessary to define my understanding of this concept. The issue of narrative has been dealt with extensively in various theoretical fields, such as linguistic and autobiographical theory, narratology, structuralism and poststructuralism, and it is again impossible to touch on all the theoretical ideas developed within these fields.

There are various different interpretations of narrative available and it is a concept far more complex than one initially suspects. Literary theorists, Susana Onega and José Landa, in fact claim that the term 'narrative' is "potentially ambiguous" as it can, in a broad sense, be suggested to include linguistic, theatrical, pictorial and filmic narrative text, whereas a narrow interpretation would regard it as "an exclusively linguistic phenomenon, a speech act, defined by the presence of a narrator or teller and a verbal text" (1996:3; 4). They conclude that this definition would restrict the field of study to oral or written narrative (1996:4).

I explore narrative and autobiography from a broad perspective, as I suggest that both image and text have narrative potential. I regard both narrative and autobiography as forms of intertextual representation and signification that exhibit both temporal and spatial qualities and contend that the use of image and text can disrupt the seamless sense of linear cohesion that is associated with narrative and autobiographical texts.

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[10] According to Bakhtin's theory "[l]anguage is dialogic, [as] it is always involved in the relations between specific speakers in specific situations" and it is this feature of language that "alerts us to the fact that no language user creates meaning independently" (Allen, 2003:80).

In this research, narrative is regarded, specifically autobiographical narrative, as a possible cathartic process by which the trauma of loss can possibly be sutured through the process of inscription. I further suggest that narrative, and by implication autobiographical text, is performed, not only through the act of writing, but also within the intersection created between the narratives of the viewer and those of the artist.

Narrative and autobiography are considered specifically in terms of subjectivities. Hilde Lindeman Nelson explains the role that narrative plays in identity construction. She states:

> Personal identities consist of a connective tissue of narratives – some constant, others shifting over time – which we weave around the features of our selves and our lives that matter most to us. The significant things I've done and experienced, my more important characteristics, the roles and relationships I care about most, the values that matter most to me – these form the relatively stable point around which I construct the narratives that constitute the sense I make of myself …. (Nelson, 2001:72)

Nelson continues that "identity is also constituted by the stories other people construct around the things about me that seem most important to *them*" (2001:72; emphasis in original). Thus, the role of the other also plays a significant part when the construction of subjectivities through narrative are considered.

The main body of this thesis is divided into four volumes, each volume being concerned with a separate discussion of each of the main works on the exhibition. Although there are various overlapping issues discussed throughout the body of the text, such as the process of production, the relationship between image, text, narrative and autobiography, as well as the split within the subject, each volume focuses on a different aspect of performativity: gender, the gaze, memory and narrative. As these discussions are interchangeable, I do not dictate a specific order in which the volumes should be read. Similar to my practical research which foregrounds the idea of identity as constructed from fragments that suggest the illusion of a whole, these volumes form fragmentary discussions of the notion of performativity. The use of footnotes acts as a cross-reference between these investigations, which also enables me to indicate the intertextual nature of the volumes.

The technique that I developed during my studies for the creation of my self-representations also needs to be considered in terms of its intertextual nature. I deliberately disturb the clear distinctions of the different processes by oscillating between printmaking, photography, painting, drawing and installation. By placing the emphasis on the trauma of the split, as well as on the disruption of both binary oppositions and linear

narrative construction, I explore the complexity of self-representations through my repetitive layering of image and text. In order to highlight the disruptive characteristics of the process, I have decided to discuss the artworks in terms of the processes which are dominant in each specific piece. As paint is the main component used in the technique, the works are called paint/print, paint/photo, paint/draw and paint/install, respectively, and each work is discussed in terms of its intersection with the different processes.

The titles of volumes include the titles of the artworks. The order in which the volumes is set out below and in the table of contents is determined by the order in which the viewer, moving through the four rooms in the gallery space[11] would encounter the works, and I emphasize again that this is not *necessarily* the sequence in which the discussions should be read. By creating separate four separate volumes that cross reference each other, each containing an orientational map, I open up the experience for the reader and viewer to consider the pieces in relation to the spatial experience of the work.

In the volume '*Knip die Naelstring*: Performing Gender', I focus on the role that gender and language play in the construction of the subject within the genre of self-representation and I explore these ideas in terms of image, text and narrative. I direct the discussion on the basis of feminist theorist, Judith Butler's, theory of gender performativity[12] as a means to indicate that gender together with self-representations of women artists, can be regarded as performative. I mainly consider Butler's ideas on this subject, as her work has set the standard for current theories centred on the notion of the performative. The theoretical discussion in this volume revolves mainly around feminist discourse, the main references here being Marsha Meskimmon, Rosemary Betterton and Griselda Pollock. As the issue of agency is often associated with the feminist agenda, I discuss this issue in relation to feminism and suggest that the notion of inscription can provide agency to perform the process of identity construction as conditional and variable.

Since my twin and I have different genders, I explore how gender and sexuality inform my identity construction, and in order to do so, I examine some of Jean Baudrillard's theories of sexuality and seduction. The psychoanalytic focus in this volume is on Lacan's mirror theory, in which he suggests that "the self as organized entity is actually an imitation of the cohesiveness of the mirror" (Gallop: 1985:38). This enables me to foreground both the co-

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[11] The artworks were expressly made for the US gallery space in Dorp Street.
[12] Although the concept of gender performativity is often applied within queer discourse, this is not relevant to my discussion, seeing that my focus is not on homosexuality as such, but rather the expression of a gendered identity within my twin relationship, as well as within the family unit as a whole.

dependence and split of self and other. As the notion of the performative involves the entry into the public realm I also consider the private/public dichotomy that is almost inevitable when self-representations are under investigation. Furthermore, I reflect on the role that absence and presence play in my practical research as this work reflects on the temporal implications of my relationship with my twin. Seeing that I regard *Knip die Naelstring* as an amalgamation of painting and printmaking, I refer to this piece as a paint/print. I guide the discussion of this intersection using my own experience as a printmaker and some ideas of British art critic and curator, Chris Townsend. The works of South African artist, Tracey Rose, and the British artist, Tracey Emin, are considered in relation to my own practical research in order to contextualize and highlight the key points of interest in this volume.

In the volume '*Kiekie*: Performing the Gaze', the focus is placed on the performativity of the act of looking and the role of the gaze within representation. This exploration is guided by various interpretations of psychoanalyst's Lacan's, screen theory, my main references within this discussion being Peggy Phelan, Kaja Silverman, Jacqueline Rose and Joanna Lowry. In his screen theory, Lacan explores the notion that the subject is determined by the other through the gaze and that the self can only be constituted through the process of representation. In relation to this theory I consider the idea of masquerade in self-representation and reference Mikhail Bhaktin's notion of the carnival. Lacan's screen theory also suggests that the gaze is involved in the split between self and other. Yet, when the male gaze is considered in feminist theory, it is seen as also responsible for splitting the female body into subject and object. This double splitting allows me to consider how both the concepts of splitting and suturing can disrupt the seeming cohesiveness of the self within representation.

It is inevitable within a discussion of representation that one consider Baudrillard's notion of the simulacrum. He suggests that the boundary between representation and reality has disappeared and that we live in a "'hyperreality' of simulations" (Kellner, 1989:77;62). *Kiekie* forms the intersection between painting and photography. Here I rely on Roland Barthes' ideas in *Camera Lucida* to explore the photographic qualities of *Kiekie*, as well as considering some of his ideas on how the photographic medium is involved in the construction of identity. The works of South African artist, Bridget Baker, the British artist, Gillian Wearing, and again, Sophie Calle are referenced in this work in terms of their use of representation, the focus being placed specifically on photographic images.

'*Karavaankinners*: Performing Memory' initiates the discussion of the role that memory plays within the construction of identity. According to Marita Sturken:

> Memory forms the fabric of human life … it establishes life's continuity; it gives meaning to the present, as each moment is constituted by the past. As the means by which we remember who we are, memory provides the very core of identity. (1997:1)

I investigate the performance of memory in terms of various theories within the cultural field, where I consider the ideas of Annette Kuhn, Paul Antze, Stephan Feuchtwang and Constantina Paupolias. I reflect on Antze's consideration of Freudian theories, as well as the ideas of Kuhn, where both suggest the metaphor of archaeological excavation for memory work. In relation to this, I also take into account the literary and cultural theorist, James Olney's, idea of weaving as a metaphor for memory work as counterpoint to the archaeological metaphor. Furthermore, I reflect on the ideas of Jerome Bruner, Judith Butler and Susannah Radstone concerning autobiography and the confessional, where memory is considered as the process of remembering and forgetting, which plays a distinct role in identity construction.

In this discussion of the performative nature of memory, I explore and process issues of absence, loss, separation, family and the (re)creation of memory in terms of my practical research. *Karavaankinners* is both a celebration and critique of the family construct. This work forms the intersection between painting and drawing and is thus referred to as a paint/draw; as it is here that the notion of inscription is most obviously used. Here the art works of Bridget Baker and Tracey Emin are again discussed, with the addition of the South African artist, Terry Kurgan, in order to highlight the process of memory as a process of remembering and forgetting.

In '*Kaartehuis Kroniek*: Performing the Narrative' I attempt a more in-depth exploration of the role that language and narrative play in my art-making process. I look at some linguistic theories in order to define my understanding of narrative. Furthermore, I consider the Kristevan notion of intertextuality and her explanation of semiotic and symbolic language, as well as the idea of the palimpsest as possible means for disrupting the seamless sense of cohesive linearity associated with narrative. In this manuscript the theoretical applications of poststructural theories of the French literary theorist and critic, Roland Barthes, and French philosopher, Michel Foucault, provide valuable ideas concerning the role of the author and the responsibility of the reader.[13] This discussion

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[13] As artworks can be read as texts, I consider the reader as the viewer and the author as the artist.

again leads to the notion of the splitting that exists within the subject and here the focus is on the split that is created within autobiographical representation: the I' that writes versus the 'I' that is written about.

For the purposes of this discussion, I consider *Kaartehuis Kroniek* as the meeting point between painting and installation and thus refer to this work as a paint/install. The work of South African artist, Bridget Baker, is considered in terms of image, text and narrative, while the work of the French artist, Sophie Calle, is also investigated in terms of these notions but with the specific focus on the process of grieving and loss. The work of South African artist, Doreen Southwood, is referred to, to provide a context for the discussion of the visual portrayal of illness and for my contention that illness is the physical manifestation of trauma.

Amelia Jones and Andrew Stephenson, in *Performing the Body, Performing the Text*, claim that when the notion of performativity is employed, as a critical strategy within the study of visual representations, it enables one to identify interpretation as a "fragile, partial and precarious affair" (1999:2). Interpretation is regarded as both an exchange and a negotiation within this investigation; it is thus important to note that my explanations are merely points of reference and not definitive explications of the work.
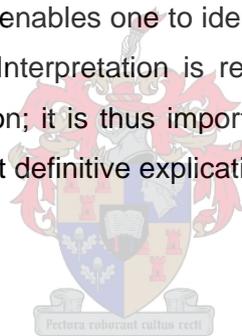
Knip die Naelstring: Performing Gender

> For me identity is fundamentally about desire and death. How you construct your identity is predicated on how you construct desire and how you conceive of death: desire for recognition; quest for visibility…; the sense of being acknowledged; *a deep desire for association* … . (West cited in Beckett, 2004:156)

The title of the work, *Knip die Naelstring* (Cut the Umbilical cord) (fig.1-10),[14] refers to an Afrikaans saying 'hulle is aan die naelstring vas' which in English would translate as 'he/she can not cut the umbilical cord'. This idiom originated from the mother-child relationship but it may sometimes be used to refer to friends (or any two people) who have a really close relationship and who are always found together. For me, the title refers to the act of separating from my twin, but it can also be seen as a command to let go, as this saying is written in the imperative mood. In this sense the work can be considered as both an attempt to hold on to my twin and an attempt to liberate myself from the relationship.

Knip die Naelstring developed out of my interest in how my relationship with my twin affects my identity. This work is informed by theoretical concerns of gender identity and the theoretical discussion is premised mainly on feminist theories,[15] a field in which gender construction is dealt with most consistently. As the enquiry revolves around the exploration of the performative nature of gender, I specifically consider the feminist theorist's, Judith Butler's, ideas surrounding gender performativity. These theories aid me in exploring the contingent nature of identity construction. When gender is under consideration, the role that sexuality plays within identity construction cannot be ignored. This idea I look at in terms of Baudrillard's theory of seduction. Identity as a construction also necessitates the inquiry into psychoanalytic theories, specifically Lacan's mirror theory, where he explores the split between self and other that is created within the development of subjectivities. I also discuss his conceptualization of loss, lack and desire. Through a discussion of my own work and a selection of works by South African artist, Tracey Rose, and British artist, Tracey Emin, these ideas are explored in terms of the role played by gender and language in the construction of the subject, within the genre of self-representation as a visual art practice.

[14] All the images of Knip die Naelstring were taken before baking paper was removed, thus, are not as clear as the images of the other works that are provided.

[15] The social and literary theorist, Andreas Huyssen, explains that the ways in which we now critically inquire into "gender and sexuality, reading and writing, subjectivity and enunciation, voice and performance are unthinkable without the impact of feminism, even though many of these activities may take place on the margin or even outside the movement proper" (1986:220).

The process of performing gender

As indicated by the title of this volume, it is necessary to launch this inquiry by exploring some ideas concerning the performative nature of gender. Most people, according to cultural theorist, Anthony Elliott (2001:46), in his book *Concepts of the Self*, experience some sense, however limited, of performing or acting out specific roles within relationships with others, while everyone has a certain awareness of the various identities that people create, depending on their changing context.

Although Judith Butler's notion of performativity references this aspect of the self, her theory is much more complex than the mere acting out of different roles in society. Relying heavily on Foucault's theorization of the subject,[16] Butler places much emphasis on the subject as determined by discourse and power. Her notion of performativity is extremely dense and first received attention when her book, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, was published in 1990. This book was followed by *Bodies that Matter: On the discursive limits of "sex"* in 1993, where Butler again clarified some ideas with regards to performativity. As it is impossible to discuss all the complexities of performativity within the space that I have available, I will just highlight some of the ideas that I found helpful with regards to the critique of self-representation, as well as those elements that aided me in an informed consideration of subjectivity as multiple and unfixed.
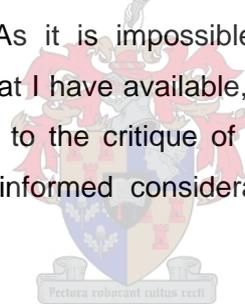
In the article 'Critically Queer', Butler defines gender performativity as follows:

> *Gender is performative insofar as it is the effect of a regulatory regime of gender differences in which genders are divided and hierarchized under constraint. Social constraints, taboos, prohibitions, threats of punishment operate in the ritualized repetition of norms, and this repetition constitutes the temporalized scene of gender construction and destabilization. There is no subject who precedes or enacts this repetition of norms.* (Butler, 1993b:21, emphasis in original)

Butler, drawing on poststructural ideas,[17] defines the subject in terms of discourse and looks specifically at how language and power operate in the creation of performative gender identities. It is important to note that Butler's gender performativity should be

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[16] According to Anthony Elliot, "Butler's performative self can thus be described as a radical Foucauldianism, in which performances on the outside congeal over time to create an illusion of the self on the inside" (2001:117). The idea of performativity was first introduce by literary theorist, J.L. Austin, who was concerned with performative speech acts (Jones & Stephenson, 1999:2).

[17] See '*Kaartehuis Kroniek*: Performing the Text(s)' for a more detailed explanation of how language and narrative function within the construction of identity and self-representations.

regarded as an 'act' without a pre-existent subject, where this act should be recognized not as a singular or premeditated 'act', but rather, as the repetitive practice by which discourse produces the subject that it normalizes and restricts (1990:25; 1993a:2). Performativity should thus be regarded as "a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration" (Butler, 1993b:22). Butler writes further that it is crucial to realize that this reiteration or repetition through which the subject is constructed is a necessary repetition of preceding and 'subjectivating' norms which cannot simply be discarded. Discourse restricts the gendered subject, and yet it is also the means by which the subject can resist and subvert such subjectivating norms (1993b:22). However, as Sarah Salih (editor of *The Judith Butler Reader*) states, this act of performing gender is "a 'strategy' which has cultural survival as its end, since those who do not 'do' their gender correctly are punished by society" (2002:66).

This repetitive aspect of gender performativity is reflected in my process of production through both the repetitive layering of paint and text. Yet *Knip die Naelstring* also echoes the reiterative process of performing discourse through the constant repetition of my body in relation to the image of my twin. Facing away from each other, facing towards each other, facing slightly away, turning slightly towards each other; I face forward, he faces backward; and so the figures revolve around the room. Our poses initially echo each other's (fig.1-2), but this connection between the figures dissolves, my image becoming increasingly darker, while his image fades (fig.9-10). This darkening of my image can be viewed as the blurring of my gendered identity; the sense of a stable coherent identity has been disrupted by the absence of my twin. The slight variations in the poses of the figures, however, could imply a subversion and resistance of gendered identity.

In *Gender Trouble*, Butler vigorously defines the differences between performance as theatre and performativity,[18] maintaining that whereas performance assumes a pre-existing subject, performativity challenges the very idea of the subject (1990:33). She is emphatic about the distinction between performance and performativity when she argues:

> *In no sense can it be concluded that the part of gender that is performed is the truth of gender; performance as bounded 'act' is distinguished from performativity insofar as the latter consists in a reiteration of norms which precede, constrain, and exceed the performer and in that sense cannot be taken as the fabrication of the performer's 'will' or 'choice'…. The reduction*

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[18] At times, specifically in *Gender Trouble*, the terms 'performativity' and 'performance' seem to slide into each other and create some confusion.

of performativity to performance would be a mistake. (Butler, 1993b:24, emphasis in original)

Thus, for Butler the concept of performance involves a certain level of awareness; "the belief that whatever I'm representing is just playacting, and that I can locate the 'real' me underneath the representation", while the notion of performativity is "not optional and not natural" with "no subject underneath gender, no universal self" (Chinn, 1997:294; 300). The question that then arises is – and this is a highly debated topic – is the subject merely a product of discourse and language with no recourse to 'perform' identity differently?

Agency and inscription

This question can, to some extent, be answered by exploring Butler's position on how language functions in constructing gendered identity. As Butler denies the existence of a pre-linguistic subject, she transfers agency to those processes of signification that construct the self. Although the subject is determined by language, Butler argues that because performative identity and gender are constructed through the "repetition of prior and subjectivating norms", human agency is "located within the possibility of a variation on that 'repetition' of norms" (1990:145). Butler explains that "[t]here is only a taking up of the tools where they lie, where the very 'taking up' is enabled by the tool lying there" (1990:145). This idea suggests that it is only possible to perform one's gender differently from within language and discourse; it confirms the agency that is implied in my repetitive process of production in *Knip die Naelstring*, in which the slight variation of the images of myself and my twin occurs.

Sarah Salih has two problems with regard to the formulation of agency[19] in Butler's work, and I am in complete agreement with her on this issue. The first problem is the fact that "the manner of taking up the tool will be determined as well as enabled by the tool itself", which implies that subversion and agency are conditioned, if not controlled, by discourses that cannot be circumvented (2002:66). The second problem leads directly from the first in that, if subversion itself is determined by discourse, then Salih asks "how can we tell that it is subversion at all?" (2002:66). Butler does not provide definitive answers with regard to these questions, nor does she discuss a visual arts application of the notion of gender performativity.

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[19] Numerous critiques of agency "have begun to put interpretive pressure on the relations between the individual and the group as those are embodied, negotiated, or even ruptured by potent acts of speech or silence" (Parker & Kosofsky Sedgwick, 1995:6-7).

In relation to Butler's theories around agency, Salih, suggests that as "[i]dentity is intrinsically political, … construction and deconstruction (note they are not antithetical) are the necessary – in fact the *only* – scenes of agency" (2004:67-68). I would like to propose that through presenting identity as contingent and multiple within self-representations, a space is provided for subversion and resistance within discourse.

I would further like to suggest that the theories of inscription of both Butler and the feminist theorist, Griselda Pollock, also provide a space for agency[20] within artistic practice. Pollock suggests that the work of women artists should be "read as *inscriptions in the feminine*" and this kind of interpretation implies "that artistic practice can be a kind of semiotic[21] interruption, a renovation, a revolution even, that draws upon the negativity of the feminine[22] … in order to create new possibilities for meaning and the alignment of subjectivity and sexual difference" (1996:xvi-xvii).[23] This mode of reading women's art provides a space for action, rebellion and interventions in the canon. Yet, like Butler, Pollock also claims that "we are positioned by language, by culture, by the process of becoming a sexed subject" (1996: xvi). Butler's notion of inscription, on the other hand, is again developed from Foucault's book, *Discipline and Punish*, in which he contests 'the doctrine of internalization'[24] and replaces the concept with "'the model of inscription'" (Salih, 2002:64). Butler asserts that "[the] law is not literally internalized, but incorporated, with the consequence that bodies are produced which signify that law on and through the body" (1990:134-5). Thus, there is no 'interior' to gender but it is inscribed on the body, in what Butler calls "the corporeal stylization of gender, the fantasied and fantastic figuration of the body" (1990:135). Although I agree with the fact that subjectivity is determined by language, I do feel that there is the possibility for resistance from within language and

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[20]Linda Hutcheon explains that several feminist social agendas "demand a theory of agency, but such a theory is visibly lacking in postmodernism, caught as it is in a certain negativity that may be inherent in any critique of cultural domination" (2002:22).

[21]See '*Kaartehuis Kroniek*: Performing the Narrative' for an exploration of Julia Kristevas's ideas around semiotic and symbolic language.

[22]Pollock also maintains that "in current feminist theory, 'the feminine' is a linguistic or a psychic position; it might signify a philosophical possibility: alterity, difference, excess", while *in* the feminine, rather than *of* the feminine, "denies both an expressive and a purely possessive relationship between producer and product" (1996:xvi).

[23] The feminist theorist Marsha Meskimmon also takes up the notion that identity is a 'performance', where she looks at performatitvty as a "particular construction of subjectivity through difference". She promotes "the concept of performativity as an especially apt counterpoint to biological determinism and the fixed sex/gender/sexuality nexus so commonly assumed to underlie identity" (Meskimmon, 2003:73).

[24] This theory of internalization states that subjects are formed by "internalizing disciplinary structures" (Salih, 2002:64).

discourse, and that the notion of inscription provides the possibility for agency, specifically within the art-making process.

The notion of inscription[25] forms a literal and conceptual part in my process of production, as I actively inscribe text into the paint and thus, into the bodies of the figures. Associated with this notion of inscription is a sense of violence. Yet, as *Knip die Naelstring* is the only work where the text was not inscribed but transferred into the paint, the violence in this work is not portrayed through mark-making but rather in the way that the bodies are depicted. Through the act of painting and writing the bodies are represented in the form of image and as performative trace. These images of the body are fragmented, while the text further affirms a separation through noting difference. The 'wholeness' of the image is violated.

TKO, 2000 (fig.11.), a video and audio installation by the South African artist Tracey Rose, combines a sense of violence with the idea of mark-making on a more metaphorical level in order to explore issues of gender, race and power in terms of self-representation. Like *Knip die Naelstring*, this work also originated from a personal experience, seeing that the artist started boxing and training extensively at a Johannesburg gymnasium because, as she stated: "I wanted to beat up a curator who I thought put up an extremely crap show" (Williamson, 2001: http://www. artthrob. c o.za/ 01mar/artbio.html).

In this video installation the unclothed and gloveless artist boxes a heavy punch bag under the surveillance of four spy cameras: one camera was embedded in a punch bag that twists and turns under her punches, while the other three were variously placed inside the provisional architectural construction in which the event takes place. The single-channel result, states art critic, Jan Avgikos, is that Rose appears to "box the camera and herself, while she also seems boxed in by the constantly shifting planes of the temporary walls that surround her" (2002: http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0268/ is_2_41/ai_93213723).

The image (fig.12.) is pale, grainy and filled with wild motion due to Rose's punching. South African artist and critic, Sue Williamson states that the "artist/protagonist is both victim and aggressor, implicating the viewer in this complex visceral exchange" (2001: http://www.artthrob.co.za/01mar/artbio.html). Both Avgikos and art historian and curator,

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[25] Linda Hutcheon explains that it "is the feminist need to inscribe first – and only then subvert – that ... [she thinks] has influenced most the postmodern complicitously critical stand of underlining and undermining received notions of the represented subject" (2002:37).

Kellie Jones, claim that the video builds up to an "orgasmic" peak and the use of this word is obviously due to the guttural and breathy sounds of Rose's exertion (2002:http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0268/is_2_41/ai_93213723; 2003:18). Avgikos further describes the resulting feminine subject that is portrayed as "flamboyant, fragmented, aggressively personal, and enormously desirous"(2002:http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0268/is_2_41/ai_93213723).

When the above description is considered, *TKO* can be interpreted as a commentary on female empowerment and is especially potent when considered in relation to the South African context where violence against women and children escalates daily. However, Rose also performs a powerful expression of gendered identity. Through the revealing and concealing of her naked body, she blurs the boundaries between the private and the public and this, together with her aggressive and violent attack on the punch bag, implies a transgression of accepted female behaviour. In relation to this, her ritualistic and repetitive punches can also be regarded as the reiterative act of gender performativity, while the multiple perspectives that the artists provides of herself can suggest the slight variations of performing gender in a different way.

However, the persistent punching also recalls the notion of inscription, mark-making and violence, especially when considered in relation to the following comment by Rose. She states:
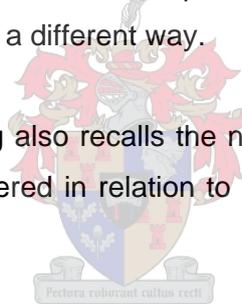
> Monet's waterlilies struck me – that commitment to the surface – my understanding of boxing was that it was an art, a passion, like dancing, and the intention was that each punch would be a mark, a gesture, building up to something. (Williamson,2001:http://www.artthrob.co.za/01mar/artbio.html)

Yet, despite this idea of inscription, the question still remains, how does this theory of performativity relate to visual art-making with particular emphasis on self-representations? In his essay, 'Borrowed Dogs', the prominent portrait photographer, Richard Avedon, creates a connection between performance and portraiture thus seeming indirectly to apply Butler's idea of performativity to photographic self-portraiture. His ideas are also particularly interesting when considered in relation to Rose's use of surface effect. He maintains:

> Portraiture is performance, and like any performance, in the balance of its effects it is good or bad, not natural or unnatural. I can understand being troubled by this idea – that all portraits are performance – because it seems

> to imply some kind of artifice that conceals the truth about the sitter. But that is not it at all.
>
> The point is that you can't get at the thing itself, the real nature of the sitter, by stripping away the surface. The surface is all you've got. You can only get beyond the surface by working with the surface. All that you can do is to manipulate the surface – gesture, costume, expression – radically and correctly. (Avedon, 1987:55)

From this I understand that it is at the level of the surface of inscription that performativity takes place, similar to how Rose acts out her gender on the surface of the punching bag, which can perhaps be considered as Rose's frustrated attempt to transgress the surface.

As claimed earlier, my process of production also places a strong emphasis on the surface and the material use of paint through its repetitive layering and the inscription of text. The relationship between image and text is used to foreground the process of change through inscription, erasure and re-inscription. The layers of enamel paint that I use, however, are compressed into a seemingly smooth but matt and grainy surface (fig.13), on the one side (some people have likened it to a lithograph), and a shiny, almost smooth surface on the other (fig.14). It is only when you look carefully at the edge of the panels, or even better when you break the work, that you can clearly see the layering of paint. Although the surfaces are compressed and smooth, the text that was printed into the surface of the paint suggests something beyond the paint; layers of meaning that reside within the surface.[26] However, the viewer cannot access all these texts and is only presented with the surface effect. This functions in a similar way to the performativity of gender; it is a process not necessarily visible without thorough dissection of the naturalizing effect of society and discourses. Through foregrounding these repetitive surface manipulations in my art-making there is a metaphorical resonance with Butler's notion of performativity and Avedon's idea of portraiture as surface effect.

Sexuality: self and other

When the construction of gender is under consideration the fact that my twin is male and I am female becomes significant. Something particularly interesting in this image, which I only realised quite late in the production, is that when the viewer sees *Knip die Naelstring* for the first time, without really engaging with the text or the other works on the exhibition, it could easily be misconstrued as an expression of a break up in a romantic love

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[26]This layering suggests the notion of the palimpsest that is discussed in the volume, '*Kaartehuis Kroniek*: Performing the Narrative', in terms of my art making process.

relationship. The allusion to sexuality, not only as gender but as desire, in this paint/print was not, initially, visible to me.

Avedon thinks that there is "an element of sexuality in all portraiture; the moment you stop to look, you've been picked up", seeing that "[y]ou look in a way you're not allowed to look in life" (1987:59). He asks:

> Is there any situation in life where you can look at the Duchess of Alba for half an hour without ending up dead at the hands of the Duke? A confrontational, erotic quality, I think, should underline all portraiture. (Avedon,1987:59)

Although there was no intention to reference sexuality within the images I made (fig.15), the relationship that is set up between the image and the viewer could possibly invoke the idea of sexuality and this, in turn, refers to the voyeuristic[27] nature of all self-portraiture.

According to cultural theorist, Douglas Kellner, the postmodern social theorist, Jean Baudrillard, regards "sexuality as a play of signs governed by a logic of lack and anxiety" (1989:100). In keeping with this notion of sexuality, Baudrillard also describes "otherness (*alterite*)" as "lacking". He claims that "we cannot experience otherness as destiny" and therefore we "produce the other as difference", where "this is a concern just as much for the body as it is for sex, or for social relationships" (1994a: http://www.uta.edu/english/ apt/ collab/texts/plastic.html).
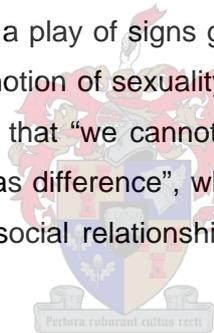
This discussion of the other is based on Baudrillard's theory of seduction in which he explains that "seduction[28] lies in not reconciling with the Other … [but] in salvaging the strangeness of the Other" (1994a: http://www.uta.edu/english/apt/collab/texts/plastic.html). From this I understand that Baudrillard problematizes the notion of sexual difference and the concept of the other that forms such a central part of feminist and psychoanalytic theories. Furthermore, that within the hyperreal[29] society we find ourselves in, he contends that even sexuality becomes an illusion (1979:69).

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[27] All self-representations rely on the voyeuristic nature of all people who want to read the thoughts of others and experience their lives, similar to people's obsession with celebrity.

[28] In his book, *De la seduction*, Baudrillard claims that "[s]eduction cannot possibly be represented, because in seduction the distance between the real and its double, and the distortion between the Same and the Other, is abolished (1979:67). In this idea of seduction Baudrillard also focuses on the issues of cloning in which he sees a possibility for transformations of the body and sexuality in postmodern society. Douglas Kellner explains that this idea of cloning is seen by Baudrillard as a "future model of reproduction which eliminates the need for sexuality as a mode of reproduction and will make possible a new kind of narcissism, new bodies and new personalities" (1989:101).

[29] See '*Kiekie*: Performing the Gaze' for an examination of Baudrillard's notion of society as a hyper-reality of representations.

Due to the fact that within contemporary society otherness and dual relationships have gradually disappeared concomitant with the rise of individual values, Baudrillard suggests that the entire 'erotic machinery' has changed meaning because the "erotic attraction that once came from otherness (*alterite*), from the strangeness of the Other, now shifts to the side of the Same, to the side of similarity and likeness …".[30] He questions whether this form of sexuality should now be regarded as auto-eroticism or incest, but comes to the conclusion that it is "rather a hypostasis of the Same" and that within "modern erotism we are dealing with a diverted form of incest, that of the projection of the same into the image of the other, which is the same thing as a confusion and corruption of all the images"[31] (1994a: http://www.uta.edu/english/apt/collab/texts/plastic.html). He further deduces that "[i]f the body is no longer a place of otherness (alterite), a dual relationship, but rather a locus of identification, we must then reconcile to it, we must repair it, perfect it, make it an ideal object" (Baudrillard, 1994a:http:// www.uta.edu/english/apt/collab/texts/plastic.html).

In light of Baudrillard's discussion of sexuality as both an illusion and the projection of the same into the image of the other, the image of my twin can be viewed as an 'ideal' projection of the male other. It can further be suggested that his physical absence leads to the realisation of my own identity and that this projection is no longer concerned with his identity, but rather my own sense of self.

The Baudrillarian concept of the other as the same is alluded to in the relationship between Tracey Rose's performance pieces *Span I* (fig.16-17) and *Span II* (fig.18-19). Moreover, these works allow me to take the metaphor of the performative to the more literal level of performance art (although it is important not to confuse performance art with Butler's concept of performativity). In her performance artworks Rose explores the intersection between gender, race, memory and autobiography; among other issues the two pieces create a fascinating relationship between the image of the artist and the use of text as a means of expressing ideas around gendered subjectivity.

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[30]Baudrillard explains that in the "extrapolation process of the Same in the production of the Other, in this hysterical invention of the sexual other as a twin brother or sister …, there is a progressive assimilation of the sexes which goes from difference to a lesser difference, and from there to a visual inversion and non-differentiation of the sexes, which … turns the sexual function into something totally useless" (1994a: http://www.uta.edu/english/apt/collab/texts/plastic.html)
[31]According to Douglas Kellner one can see in Baudrillard's notion of the postmodern body how he instantiates his "focus on models of simulation in genetics, miniaturization and modulation through the code" (1989:102). For a further discussion of Baudrillard's ideas of simulation and simulacra see '*Kiekie*: Performing the Gaze'.

Span I and *Span II* (1997) were two performances that were shown simultaneously at 'Graft', an exhibition curated by Colin Richards as part of the 2nd Johannesburg Biennale in 1997. In *Span I*, Rose employed a paroled prisoner wearing a red overall to "perform her confession" of childhood memories on a wall of the South African National Gallery. These memories are concerned with "the role that hair, how straight it was, how curly, and thus how it defined race, had played in her construction of identity" (Williamson, 2001b: http://www.artthrob.co.za/01mar/artbio.html). By using a prisoner she underlines "the conflation of labour, coercion and political cultural pursuits", which are issues specific to her South African context. (Jones, 2003:14).Through the use of a male as the projected other to record her memories, similar to my representation of my twin brother, she references the role that the other plays in determining one's subjectivity, but her work can also be regarded as commentary on how the "[w]oman is defined and described as the negative 'other' of Man …" (Cranny-Francis, 1995:6).[32]

The concept of labour and the racial implications of hair are again present in *Span II*, but there the focus is more on the performance of a specific gendered identity. In this performance, the naked Rose, hair shaven, sat sideways on a television set, inside a glass cabinet, where she engaged herself by knotting strands of her own shaven hair. On the television there was a display of a classic art historical icon: the female nude. Rose said:
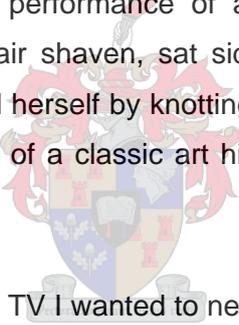
> With my naked body on the TV I wanted to negate the passivity of the action of the reclining nude. In doing the piece, I had to confront what I wasn't supposed to do with my body. The work is a cleansing act, a coming out. The knotting not only invokes the rosary beads of my childhood, but also the working with one's hands, and the meaning of this handiwork as a form of empowerment. (Williamson, 2001b: http://www.artthrob.co.za/01mar/artbio.html)

According to art historian and critic, Roselee Goldberg, performance art has historically "been a medium that challenges and violates borders between disciplines and genders, between private and public, and between everyday life and art, and that follows no rules"

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[32]Rose's art making is often considered in terms of its relationship to her identity as a 'classifiably coloured' person in the racialized South African context (Jones, 2003: 12). As the memories the prisoner inscribes deal with racial issue, it can be suggested that Rose attempts to draw attention to the role that othering plays within racism and in doing so she questions white normativity. Baudrillard argues that "nothing in our culture allows racism to be curbed, since our entire cultural movement goes in the same direction … which is that of a frenzied differential construction of the Other and of a perpetual extrapolation of the Same through the Other" (1994a: http://www.uta.edu/english/apt/collab/texts /plastic.html).

(1998:30). In this work Rose also disregards 'the rules'. By shaving off her hair[33] and becoming an almost androgynous figure, she blurs the boundaries between male and female, while the use of her naked figure indicates the transgression of the private and public realms. The perpetual act of knotting her hair could again be regarded as a metaphor for Butler's concept of performativity, in that she is busy 'doing' her gender in a different way, while Baudrillard's notion of 'the Other as the Same' can again be recalled here, as Rose literally performs *herself* within this work.

Even though performativity is not a conscious act, I would like to suggest that as Rose foregrounds repetition and difference in her work, the relationship between performance art and performativity can be interwoven in the art-making process in order to create powerful commentaries with regards to gender construction. The question that could arise here is why do I not also use performance art to perform my identity? Firstly, I consider my process of production as a process of healing through repetition, and I cannot deny the self-help element that is involved in inscribing my thoughts into the paint. Secondly, the reason I use paint and not my own body is also because I feel that the materiality of paint can both suggest and deny the body, thus disrupting identity as fixed and determined.

Knip die Naelstring, like in Rose's *Span II*, references the androgynous figure through placing fragmented images of myself next to my twin (fig.20). In this way the boundaries between male and female are disturbed. The difference between my twin, as the other, and my own image becomes 'indistinct' and in this way the easy categorization existing between the self and the other is disrupted; thus Baudrillard's notion of the other and the same is referenced. In this way subjectivity is represented as a reflection on the relation to another, in other words, as informed or influenced by the other.

While Rose's work is concerned with the broader socio-political context that she finds herself in, my own art practice is more concerned with the construction of the subject within the social dynamics of the family unit and the relationships within that specific space. Thus, although race inevitably informs the construction of identity, I prefer to focus on the performance of subjectivities in terms of my twin.

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[33] It is in the video *Ongetiteld*, 1996, that Rose initially shaved her hair for the purposes of the performance in this video (Jones, 2003:13).

Splitting subjectivities

As I have touched on the role that the other plays within identity construction in terms of sexuality of the self and gender performativity, I would now like to explore some psychoanalytic theories which explore the role of the other within psychic construction of subjectivities. However, before I enquire into the other I would first like to explore how desire, lack and loss are considered within this field of research

Within psychoanalytic theory, desire is considered as a lack. This lack, according to feminist theorist, Anne Cranny-Francis, "(re)produces the conception of the mind as separate from the body, and constitutes the body as the material ground on which desire is experienced" and this desire can be emotional, physical, intellectual or spiritual (1995:17).[34] In terms of Jacques Lacan's theoretical thinking, desire is a condition of "endless displacement" (Cranny-Francis: 1995:17). Australian feminist and philosopher, Elizabeth Grosz, further expounds on this idea by claiming that within Lacan's theories "the movement from one signifier to another, … is the very moment of *desire*, the endless substitution of one object of desire for another, none of which is adequate to fill the original lack propelling desire – the lost or renounced mother" (1989:24).

When these ideas are considered in relation to *Knip die Naelstring* (fig.21), the repetitive representation of my twin in relation to my own figure can be considered as my desire to fill the lack that our separation has created within me; an attempt to appease the emotional trauma and turmoil that I experienced due to being separated from my twin. Yet this work can also be considered as my interminable attempt to fill the lack that I experience within my psychic construction as a subject.

Lacan's mirror theory is quite significant when self-representation and the mirror effect are under consideration. Within his theory he deals with how the identification of the self in the mirror is a critical moment in a child's[35] ego-formation and the construction of self, as well as the entry into language and gendered identity (Edholm, 1992:161). Jane Gallop states that "[t]he traditional view of a mirror is that it reflects a self, that it produces … an imitation, a translation of an already constituted original self"; however, she explains that

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[34] This idea is also refered to in '*Kaartehuis Kroniek*: Performing the Narrative' in terms of my discussion of the body and illness

[35] Feminist theorist, Nancy Chodorow, explains that "because the primary child-carers in our culture are usually women, boys and girls form their sense of identity in different ways. Boys define themselves against women, and emerge with closed-off, autonomous selves; girls define themselves in relation to women, and emerge with fluid, relational selves" (Chodorow cited in Cosslett, Lury & Summerfield, 2000:5).

according to Lacan's theory "the mirror constructs the self, that the self as organized entity is actually an imitation of the cohesiveness of the mirror" (1985:38).

Grosz claims that Lacan "displaces the ego as the central and most secure component of the individual" (1990:48). Philosopher, Frederick Dolan, further explains how Lacan perceives the functioning of the ego:

> [T]he ego's … apparent ability to experience itself immediately and as a whole, is nothing more than a fantastic misrecognition of a mere image of wholeness and immediacy as a reliable marker of its real existential status, which is in fact that of fragmentation, incompleteness, and dependency. A clear and distinct apprehension of oneself is possible only on the basis of an imaginary identification. (1995: http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~fmdolan/ DOLAN_ AL.HTML)

The self-portrait traditionally portrays this 'cohesiveness' of the subject, but in *Knip die Naelstring* this coherence of the self (and the ego) is deconstructed through the fragmentation of the figures (fig.22). This idea is visually explored in the work through the way that the figures are both connected and disconnected at the same time. By only representing parts of the figures of me and my twin, the imaginary identification of the self as whole and unified is subverted, whereas the negative spaces between myself and my twin activate the sense of distance and resulting loss in our relationship. The sense of loss, as a significant part of representation, is also emphasised by the fact that both our images become indistinct, which further suggests that without my twin as other, coherent representation is no longer possible (fig. 24).

In terms of the role that the other plays in identity construction, the author of *Unmarked: The Politics of performance* (1993), Peggy Phelan, claims that within psychoanalytic theories "[i]dentity is perceptible only through a relation to an other – which is to say, it is a form of both resisting and claiming the other, declaring the boundaries where the self diverges from and merges with the other" (1993:13). She further states that through this "declaration of identity and identification, there is always loss, the loss of not-being the other and yet remaining dependent on that other for self-seeing, self-being" (Phelan, 1993:13). Phelan also elaborates on the role that the other plays in representation, claiming that "[s]eeing the other is a social form of self-reproduction" and it is through "looking at/for the other, [that] we seek to re-present ourselves" (1993:21).

The self within Lacan's mirror theory is unstable and fragmented, but also split between self and other, as the child "identifies with an image that is manifestly different from itself,

though it also clearly resembles it in some respects" (Grosz, 1990:41). Susannah Radstone, theorist of culture and film, expands on this splitting:

> [T]he infant perceives itself as an 'I' depends upon a splitting between the 'I' which perceives and the 'I' which is perceived. Entry into language arguably reinforces this first split, since it necessitates a second division between the 'I' which speaks and the 'I' which is spoken of. (2000:202)

The feminist author, Felicity Edholm, states that in terms of representation women "experience their own bodies and faces from outside as well as from within"; thus a woman has a "split relation to her body and her face; she is both inside and outside, both self and other" (1992:155). When considering Lacan's mirror theory, together with the ideas of Radstone and Edholm, it becomes obvious that within the female subject there is a kind of double splitting. As I am a woman, I experience this double splitting; but, as a part of a twin relationship that has been torn apart, I also experience another form of splitting within my identity.

In the paint/print, *Knip die Naelstring*, the splitting is visually explored in a number of ways. The most obvious one would be the use of numerous narrow panels in order to construct one large installation. Through the use of these panels there is a suggestion of the double splitting that most women experience, but it also references the multiple splits that I experience within my twin relationship.
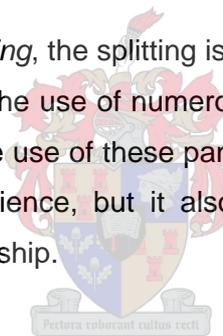
The figures become increasingly split due to the fact that my twin's image becomes fainter and fainter, while mine becomes darker and darker. While our hands are initially close together, almost touching, this connection is also severed (fig. 23-24). The splitting, again, is not merely physical but also an emotional separation. The feminist theorist, Betterton, states that "themes of exile, separation and return have provided a powerful means of exploring the self as ongoing process of construction in time and place through the operation of memory as well as in the present, and in the articulation of loss and desire" (1996:162). In this paint/print the notion of the self as process is suggested in the gradual fading of the figures. As the viewer moves from left to right within the U-shape,[36] my twin's fading image becomes a metaphor for how memory grows fainter because of physical distance. The fading of the figures becomes symbolic of the role that time plays in memory production and how relationships become either more intimate or more distant over time.

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[36]This U-shape refers to the way in which the work is installed in the space.

Yet, if the work is viewed from the right to the left, it will be experienced as a progression in the relationship: either a new relationship is being formed or an old one is being built up again, as the figures start to appear out of the paint, thus altering the intended meaning completely. This could also be viewed as an appeal to the viewer to assist in repairing the relationship; the viewer is invited to complete the circle of the U-shape so that my twin and I can be re-connected.

Paint/Print

In *Knip die Naelstring* (fig.25) there is a reference to the process of printmaking, implied through the mirroring of the figures. Here the process of the butterfly print is suggested, a process in which the image is painted on one side of the page and the page is then folded in order to imprint the image on the other side as well. In referring to a printing process, I want to propose that through its very process of production *Knip die Naelstring* forms an intersection between printmaking and painting. However, it is not merely on the basis of the butterfly print effect that I make this suggestion. The process of creating the work also suggests a monoprint technique, as initially I paint on baking paper which is removed once the paint is thick and reinforced with fibre glass, and the use of the baking paper also creates a reversal of the image. Thus, I also refer to *Knip die Naelstring* as a paint/print.

When creating a monoprint,[37] a single, unique image is produced and no editions can be made. Thus, as British art critic and curator, Chris Townsend, explains, this "is not a means of generating serial imagery but rather a strategy of distantiation, of removing a certain immediacy and directness of gesture which might characterise the drawing" (2002: 80-81). Townsend states futher that "[t]here is, therefore, both a distance between the apparent immediacy of expression that the work conveys, and the necessary preparation contingent on the medium that carries it" (2002:86). Another important element to highlight with regards to the monoprint is the fact that there is a certain lack of control over the image due to the fluidity of the ink, or in my case, the thinned-down enamel paint. This suggests a certain tension between the control over the image that is represented and a lack of control over the paint; thus there is a certain element of chance in my process of production.

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[37] In order to create a monoprint a smooth flat surface is used onto which one paints or draws with printing ink. The ink is often thinned down with turpentine or linseed oil in order to create tonal values and these fluid washes are quite unpredictable. Once the image is finished the mirror or plate is placed on the bed of a printing press. A piece of paper is placed over the painted image and is then printed onto the paper. This process cannot necessarily be completely controlled due to the pressure of the press as well as the fluidity of the ink.

I do not think that my images suggest any immediacy of expression, as they are highly worked and sometimes quite detailed representations; however, the strategy of distantiation that Townsend refers to does apply to my process through the use of baking paper. By using a process where mark making is deferred, there is a sense of mediation created and this becomes symbolic of the emotional distance in my relationship with my twin, which in turn, references the splitting within the subject. The co-dependence in our relationship is also symbolized through this printing process, in that the matrix of the print is dependent upon the print surface.

An artist who also explores the immediacy and mediated control that is implicated within print processes is the British artist, Tracey Emin. She specifically uses the trace monoprint[38] in order to perform her autobiographical self-representations. An example of one such a print is *Beautiful child*, 1994 (fig.26). This image is drawn directly onto the plate so that it suggests a sense of otherness through the reversal of the image in the printing process and further highlights the fact that there is a mediation between that which the artists draws and that which is presented. In this image the defencelessness of the child's exposed body, seemingly in jeopardy from the oversized penis that tilts toward her, is executed with a "slight delicacy that both touches and distances, like fragile traces of memory" (Betterton, 2002: 27). Such "memorializing tendencies" in Emin's work often goes unrecognized by critics, who mainly focus on the shocking subject matter and the unwavering truthfulness with which she deals with her experiences[39]   (Betterton, 2002: 27).

However, it is Emin's use of text within this process that I am primarily concerned with, as it is a very rare thing to use lettering within this technique. The reason for this is that it requires quite a lot of practice to write backwards at speed, something which I can vouch for from experience. In these pieces Emin specifically creates an awareness of the reversal of the text through "a 'failure' in her characteristic use of the reversed letters 'N'

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[38]To create a monoprint, specifically a trace monoprint, is one of the most basic and easily achieved techniques of printmaking and there is indeed an extent to which this method conflicts with the purposes of normal print-production. A smooth surface, a roller, inks, paper and something sharp to scratch with are required before one can start with this process. Ink is rolled onto the surface, the paper is placed gently on the inked surface and one draws on the paper so that only where the sharp object touches the surface, the ink adheres to the paper. When the paper is lifted, the image is a mirror of that which was originally drawn on the back.-

[39] It is interesting to note Adrian Gargett's comment that Emin "often refers to herself by name, as if wanting to separate herself from the Tracey Emin that she has created" (2001). This is particularly relevant when considered in terms of how the self and the other are linked within psychoanalytic theory.

and 'Y' – written in the normal manner on the original inscriptive surface – in the midst of coherently arranged and intimately expressive statements" (Townsend, 2002:82).[40]

The artist also uses the reversed 'N' in many of her other works, including appliqués such as *Love Poem* (fig.27), even though there the text is painstakingly cut from fabric and this inversion could be understood as a more deliberate 'failure' on Emin's part. Townsend claims that this is done in order to highlight the "reflexive nature of the medium", as well as the "conflict between the apparent immediacy of the statement and the constraint of having to inscribe it in a medium that will record every mistake without the possibility of erasure" (Townsend, 2002:82). Thus, one comes to the, perhaps obvious, conclusion that the use of the reversed 'N' and 'Y' becomes a strategic device in order to draw attention to the constructed and mediated nature of the work – while also feigning a sense of immediacy and spontaneity.[41]

Chris Townsend also explains that:

> [This] flipping of the character performs that inversion of incapacity or marginality into aesthetic lure, familiar to the avant-garde since the early years of modernism, which declares just sufficient difference to solicit identification or attention from the viewer. (2002:82)

In relation to this statement by Townsend, it can be suggested that Emin deliberately performs her identity in terms of expectations of the abject and marginal artist. Through her shocking subject matter, overt use of sexuality and transgressive application of text[42] – for example one of her neon signs proclaims "My cunt is wet with fear" – she constructs this specific identity and, in doing so, draws attention to what society regards as acceptable behaviour and representation for women.

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[40] See specifically the images of *Kaartehuis Kroniek*, where mirror text and normally handwritten text are used together, and thus the difference in the lettering is more obvious.

[41] Another aspect of the monoprints that confirms the constructed nature of the text, is the fact that many of these prints contain commentaries in pencil, such as *Walking drunk in high shoes*, 1998, where the pencilled statement is further accentuated through deletion, whereas *Inspired*, 1998, only received text in pencil after the making of the print. Even though the style of the pencilled-in text is similar to that of the printed text, it forms a marked contrast to the small, almost reserved letters that Emin uses when she later, also in pencil, adds a title and her signature to the prints (Townsend, 2002:84).

[42] See '*Kaartehuis Kroniek*: Performing the Narrative' for a discussion of my use of transgressive texts within my self-representations.

Image, text and narrative

Similar to Emin's work, *Knip die Naelstring* as I have said, suggests the distance associated with the print process, and this is specifically reflected in my use of text. In this image I used photocopies of handwritten text, written by my mother in books that she gave to me and my brother on our joint eighteenth birthday. These books include her memories of her own childhood, as well as her memories of our individual childhoods. By carefully transferring these photocopies with thinners, I present the viewer with my mother's handwriting as mediated through the copying and transfer process. The thinners actually creates a chemical reaction with the paint, removing it from parts of the figure and bringing about the simultaneous inscription and erasure evident in this paint/print.

The use of my mother's handwriting implies performance of my identity by an 'other' different from my twin. Our mother now becomes the 'other' to our relationship; this insinuates a mediated splitting through the careful transference of my mother's personal and private thoughts and the recognition of the differences between myself and my twin.

The text that was used also indicates the split between the male and the female, where, for example, he played with cars, I played with dolls (fig.28-29). However, there are also inscriptions that refer to the music that we listened to that is similar, and again Baudrillard's notion of the other as the same is recalled (1994a: http://www.uta.edu/english/apt/ collab/texts/ plastic.html). Although there are differences there are also similarities, and in this way simplistic binary categorizations of male and female are disrupted and identity is considered as a process, rather than fixed and unified.

The way in which the text is placed on the image also disrupts the vertical split between the panels as the writing flows over the separations within the work. Placed at the bottom of the images across the panels, the texts (fig.30) form a horizontal connection which also reminds me of footnotes, as if these inscriptions are supplementary information provided for the viewer. By connecting the panels through text, which is not always that legible and actually seems quite fragile, there is a suggestion that the twin bond is still there – but it is a tenuous connection that can easily be broken.

The use of text also stimulates the narrative potential within these images, as these panels invoke a sense of the passage of time and the workings of memory. There is a strong temporal element in this work through the use in the present of text appropriated from the past. In this work time becomes an extremely crucial element in indicating the

suggestive fragments of memory that surface and disappear. Furthermore, by exposing intimate memories and feelings of mine and my brother's childhood, and that of my twin's from my mother's perspective, within the public sphere, I provide the viewer with a close-up look at the people that I love.

Summary

Through a discussion *Knip die Naelstring* I have explored the repetitive act of gender performativity; I have came to the understanding, through my theoretical and practical investigation, that construction, deconstruction and the notion of inscription provide a space in which the artist can negotiate the issues of agency from within discourse and language. Furthermore, I suggest that the relationship between performance and self-representation is played out at surface level, and that the materiality of paint can disrupt the fixity that is associated with identity construction. The role that self and other play within identity construction has been considered, both in terms of sexuality and psychoanalysis, and I have used the notion of the split within the subject to explore the separation of myself and my twin. I have also highlighted the printmaking aspect in my process of production and suggested that the distantiation associated with this process can imply the alienation from my twin brother. It can thus be concluded that the performance of gender within the art-making context is able to provide a powerful means for the expression of subjectivities.
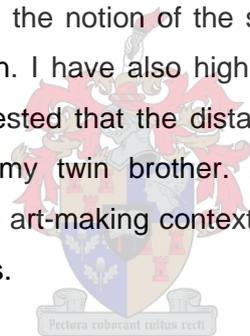
> **kiekie (-s)** *s.nw. amateurfoto, foto sonder voorbereiding geneem, momentopname.*(snapshot: an amateur photograph, a photograph taken without any forethought or planning, capturing of a moment). (Bosman, Van der Merwe & Hiemstra, 1977)

The title *Kiekie* refers to a snapshot or the capturing of a moment (fig.1-2). This is an outdated use of the word and is a nostalgic reference to the past, not a very distant past, but one where I was still with my twin brother. It alludes to the temporal and transitory nature of human relationships, and specifically my relationship with my twin. This constructed 'snapshot' of myself with him, within an equally constructed setting, foregrounds the use of the photographic referent within my process of production. By alluding to the typical 'happy snap' of amateur photography in the way that the figures smile back at the viewer, the act of posing for the camera is highlighted, which, in turn, infers the performative. Furthermore, there is also a suggestion that we are not only looking at the viewer, but also at the person behind the camera, which implies that there is a transference of the gaze.

The main concern of this volume is the exploration of the performative nature of the gaze in relation to identity construction. I suggest that the performative gaze disrupts the assumption of identity as fixed and pre-determined. In my inquiry I consider theories of representation within the field of psychoanalysis, specifically Lacan's screen theory, and I process and explore ideas of the gaze in terms of self-representations. Since *Kiekie* (fig.3) constitutes a disruption of spatial continuity through the compression of time and space within a constructed setting, this paint/photo investigates both the temporal and spatial implications of my relationship in terms of our current geographical separation. As I foreground the use of the photograph within this work, I also investigate its constructed nature. I further point out some ideas around identity construction and representation in terms of the other, a topic that is more extensively explored within '*Knip die Naelstring*: Performing the Gaze'.

The process of performing the gaze

In order to enquire into the performative nature of the gaze in representation, it is necessary first to consider Lacan's screen theory, in which he specifically deals with how the subject is determined by the other through the gaze. Peggy Phelan, Drama and

English professor, explains that "[i]n looking at the other (animate or inanimate) the subject seeks to see itself" and this "[s]eeing is an *exchange* of gazes between a mirror[43] (the image seen which reflects the looker looking) and a screen (the laws of the Symbolic which define subject and object positions within language)"(1993:16). Thus, for Lacan, "seeing is fundamentally social because it relies on an exchange of gazes: one looks and one is seen" (Phelan, 1993:16).

The British academic, Jacqueline Rose, explains that Lacan inverts the Cartesian triangle[44] and, in doing so, shows how the subject is dependent upon the outside for his or her sense of self. She also makes clear that "the subject of representation is not only the subject of that geometrical perspective whereby it reproduces objects as images: it is also represented in the process" and thus, the subject gets "illuminated by the light emitted by the object of its own look and thereby registered simultaneously as object of representation"(1986:191). In her article, 'Fassbinder and Lacan: A Reconsideration of Gaze, Look and Image', cultural theorist, Kaja Silverman, "suggests that it is no more possible to be seen than to see ourselves without the intervention of representation" (1989:74). Lacan's screen theory is also strongly linked to his notion of the mirror stage and feminist theorist, Elizabeth Grosz, explains that this stage initiates the child into the "the two-person structure of imaginary identifications, orienting it forever towards identification with and dependence on (human) images and representations for its own forms or outline" (1990:48). In terms of these ideas, it becomes clear that identity is impossible without the intervention of representation and thus, the gaze, and by implication representation, plays a key role in the constitution of subjectivities within discourse.

According to Lacan's theory, we are aware of the gaze of the other that serves to represent us and this gaze is perceived as violent, a threat to the self. In order to escape this gaze, we can manipulate the self and here "the screen acts as the site of mediation" between the self and the gaze (Rose, 1986:192). Silverman reveals that while the gaze of the other "confirms and sustains the subject's identity", it does not determine the "form which that identity assumes" (1989:72).[45] Rather, the gaze serves to project what is called

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[43]See '*Knip die Naelstring*: Performing Gender' for a discussion of Lacan's mirror theory.

[44] Rose states that Lacan works against the Cartesian optics, which he illustrates with the observer as a "geometric point looking out and seeing objects. From the Cartesian perspective, what I see is my property. I own it in the sense that I experience personally in the privileged realm of the interiority of the subject" (1986:191).

[45] Thus the subject is not necessarily denied agency in order to perform identity differently. See '*Knip die Naelstring*: Performing Gender' for a brief exploration of the concept of agency.

the "screen onto the object", and it is at the level of the screen, not the gaze, that identity is formed (1989:75).

Joanna Lowry, a theorist concerned with the relationship between photography and time, explains that Lacan's account of the "subject trapped in the field of the gaze constructs the 'visible' as a kind of theatrical space, a space in which the subject, rather like an actor on a stage, enters the light of the gaze and performs his or her desire within that light"(1999:273). Furthermore, Lacan's account of the subject's position within the field of the gaze, Lowry explains, implies an awareness of the "act of looking as fundamentally 'performative'" (1999:273). In consideration of these ideas I would like to suggest that the gaze becomes performative through the process of looking. It is through the act of looking that the gaze can be regarded as performative, in which case this performativity is invoked when the self is presented as influenced by the gaze in representation.

In bringing the performativity of the gaze closer to the process of art making, the ideas of Peggy Phelan are relevant. She states:
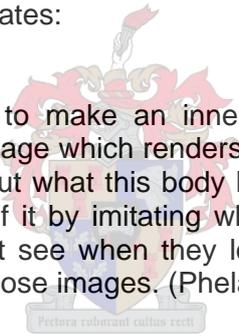
> Portrait photography tries to make an inner form, a (negative) shadow, expressive: a developed image which renders the corporeal, a body-real, as a real body. Uncertain about what this body looks like or how substantial it is, we perform an image of it by imitating what we think we look like. We imagine what people might see when they look at us, and then we try to perform (and conform to) those images. (Phelan, 1993:36)

Informed by Phelan's insights, I would like to suggest that not only is the act of looking performative, but also the process of being photographed; the process of being exposed to the gaze of the camera.

Further deductions that Joanne Lowry makes that are central to this discussion are that as the act of looking takes place within the field of the visual, it is inevitably haunted by the "spectre of technology" (1999:273). She suggests that Lacan's use of the language of technology highlights the underlying "'otherness' of the space of the visible in its relationship to the subject" (1999:273). Lowry employs these concepts in order to propose that contemporary video installations function as "metaphorical spaces articulating the relationship between the eye and the gaze, thereby impelling the spectator to recognize the performativity of the act of looking" (1999:273). Following from this notion, I would like to propose that forms of visual representation, where photography is foregrounded as part of the process of production within the context of installation – with the camera as the 'spectre of technology' – can be regarded as performative.

Construction of identity through photographic medium

In light of my discussion of the performative nature of the gaze and photographic processes, I would like to explore some of the poststructural theorist, Roland Barthes', ideas on photography in his much lauded book, *Camera Lucida.* In this book he explains how he experiences being in front of the camera:

> In front of the lens, I am at the same time: the one I think I am, the one I want others to think I am, the one the photographer thinks I am, and the one he makes use of to exhibit his art. In other words, a strange action: I do not stop imitating myself, and because of this, each time I am (or let myself be) photographed, I invariably suffer from a sensation of inauthenticity, sometimes of imposture (comparable to certain nightmares). (Barthes, 1981:13)

This idea again implies a certain element of performance of multiple subjectivities in front of the camera. Barthes also makes certain observations about the photograph, such as claiming that "the photograph's immobility is somehow the result of a perverse confusion between two concepts: the Real and the Live" (1981:79). He suggests that because we assign an unconditional "superior, somehow eternal value" to reality, the photograph – through demonstrating that the object has been real – encourages one to believe that it is "alive"; however, "by shifting this reality to the past ('*this-has-been*'), the photograph suggests that it is already dead" (Barthes, 1981:79). Graham Allen further clarifies this idea by claiming that "[i]nstead of providing a transparent, uncoded medium between image and reality, photographs disturb our habitual understanding of space and time" (2003:130).

Paint/photo

I regard *Kiekie* (fig.4) as a merge between painting and photography as it consists out of paint, but is constructed from photographs and foregrounds the framing devices of the photographic medium; thus, I refer to this piece as a paint/photo. Barthes also provides some thoughts around the differences between paintings and photographs as he claims that paintings can imitate reality "without having seen it" but contrary to this, in photography one "can never deny that the thing has been there" and "thus there is a superimposition … of reality and the past" (1981:76). Barthes is emphatic about the fact that a painting is not a photograph and claims that what makes a photograph different

from a painting is the fact that "the Photograph is the advent of myself as other: a cunning dissociation of consciousness from identity"(1981:12).

In considering *Kiekie* in relation to Barthes' ideas, I would like to suggest that my visual exploration of the separation between myself and my twin specifically draws attention to this "dissociation of consciousness from identity" that occurs within the photographic process (1981:12). This separation is emphasised through the separation of the smiling figures on the wall and the silhouetted figures on the floor (fig.5). However, through the translation of the photographic referent into paint there is a disruption of the split between self and other, which can suggest a possible suturing within the self; a certain 'fooling' of the loss that I experience, both within representation and through the separation from my brother. In terms of this idea, this constructed togetherness can be regarded as a reflection of my initial denial regarding our separation.

In *Kiekie* (fig.5) there is a disruption of time and space, which is also a characteristic of the photograph,[46] and this is evident through my compression of images in the background of the piece on the wall. Through blending photographs of my immediate surroundings with photographs that my brother sent me from London, the spatial composition of *Kiekie* references an imaginary construct. The images of Stellenbosch that I used are images of places that my brother and I experienced together; as I have never even been out of the country, the London images are reflections of his experiences alone. Through constructing our identities in such a way, I process my grasp of his separateness and the role that context and social surroundings plays in the creation of a seemingly stable identity at a specific moment in time.

Illusion and masquerade within representation

Through my representation of a compressed space there is an inevitable allusion to the postcard, where various prominent landmarks (fig.6-7) are usually condensed onto a small format card, which again foregrounds the framing devices employed within representation. However, the postcard also brings to mind the tourist experience; an experience that is fleeting and superficial and, in a sense, also a mediated one through the constructed views of place.

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[46] While a painting, drawing or print demands the recognition that the image is a construction, a photograph is often perceived as having a more immediate connection with reality. It looks 'real' and is also experienced as such.

The idea that this paint/photo can be regarded as a kind of illusion finds strong parallels in Lacan's description of the mirror phase[47] and, in turn, connects with Barthes experience of inauthenticity in front of the camera. Jane Gallop, in her book *Reading Lacan*, explains that the self, where representation is concerned, is constructed in the mirror stage (1985:80). She further explains that:

> This moment is the source not only for what follows but also for what precedes. It produces the future through anticipation and the past through retroaction. And yet it is itself a moment of self-delusion, of captivation by an illusory image. Both future and past are thus rooted in an illusion. (Gallop, 1985:80-1)

This illusion of identity's "wholeness" and the temporal disruption that is created in the mirror phase is figuratively represented in *Kiekie*. The image of my twin and I with our arms around each other indicates a time when we actually were together (as I paint from photographs), but is can also be regarded as a projection of a potential future re-union. In addition to the illusory nature of the temporal and spatial construction, there is another façade that occurs within this image. We imitated what was expected from us; society and the people around one require one always to smile for the camera. The irony here is that, this specific photograph was taken the day before my twin flew to London – a time when to smile was not really possible (fig.8-9). Barthes, in fact, states: "Photography cannot signify … except by assuming a mask" (1981:34).

Marsha Meskimmon claims that "[m]asking and masquerade [have] been powerful tropes through which women artists have brought femininity into representation" (1996:122). She makes the connection between masquerade and Russian literary theorist, Mikhail Bakhtin's, idea of "excess and the carnivalesque body", in which for him the concept of carnival signifies the space where bodily boundaries can be blurred, even obliterated (1995:122). Masquerade, thus, makes it possible for identities, which are naturally predetermined by discourse, to be temporarily disrupted. Explained simply, says Meskimmon, the carnivalesque identity made it possible for "peasants to play kings", but it also implies the potential to play with gender and sexual subjectivities[48] (1996:122).[49] The

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[47] The mirror theory of Lacan is explained in much more detail in '*Knip die Naelstring*: Performing Gender'.

[48] Anne Cranny-Francis, in her book *The Body in the Text*, discusses Joan Riviere's suggestion that "women adopt womenliness as a masquerade to stave off male jealousy and reprisal, but also that womanliness is itself a masquerade" (Riviere cited in Cranny-Francis, 1995:27). See '*Knip die Naelstring*: Perfoming Gender' for a further exploration of gendered representation of the self and the blurring of the boundaries between genders.

[49] Meskimmon explains that there are two possible outcomes "from 'the carnival', one which resorbs the threat and retains order and one which permits change" (1995:122). She clarifies this

American art historian, curator and writer, Kirk Varnedoe, also takes up the notion of the masquerade, but specifically in relation to contemporary self-portraiture. He remarks that "the Self, paradoxically has become so important that it cannot be dealt with directly, but demands instead a complex mixture of disclosure and disguise" (Bruner, 1993:52).

The British, Turner-prize winning artist, Gillian Wearing, in her series of work, *Album* (2003), explores this concept of masquerade and disguise through the photographic medium. *Album* consists of six larger than life-sized digitally printed self-portraits with a twist. In the tradition of American photographer Cindy Sherman, Wearing made use of costumes and props and worked with a team of people in order to transform herself into different members of her family[50] (Bayle, 2006: http://www.albrightknox.org/ acquisitions/ acq_2004/Wearing.html). The photographs that she recreated include a black-and-white image of her father and mother; what seems like a professional portrait of her uncle (fig.10); a photograph of her brother in his bedroom brushing his long hair; and a photo-booth snapshot of herself at age seventeen (fig. 11) (Johnson, 2003: http://query. nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9E03E2D9143FF93AA25751C1A9659C8B63&pagew anted=print.).

When I first saw these images, I experienced them merely as a combination of snapshots and studio portraits, and not of particular interest. It is only once one looks closer and the odd waxy quality of the skin of each subject, together with the edge of a plastic mask that is apparent around the eyes, is revealed that one becomes intrigued. The realization that these photographs are all self-portraits makes one look for the artist underneath. When considered in terms of Lacan's theory of the gaze, these photographs can also be regarded as Wearing's performance in the light of the gaze, but more importantly her manipulation of the self in order to escape that gaze, that is perceived as violent and a threat to the self (Rose, 1986:192).

Meaning in these images is multiple and they may be viewed as a play on gender and sexual subjectivities, seeing that Wearing transforms herself into both male and female family members. Meskimmon explains that "[the] critical notion in carnival is the excessive body, the body which surpasses strict limitations" and that "[t]hese are multiple, mass

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by saying that "the carnivalesque identity changes may function as a pressure valve whereby everyone acts out fantasies and then happily returns to their 'proper' place. Conversely, the social definition of individuals could change, if only for a short time, permitting the revolutionary potential for more permanent change to be glimpsed" (1995:122).

[50] Some of the individuals that helped Wearing on this project have in fact worked for Madame Tussaud's wax works (Bayle, 2006: http://www.albrightknox.org/acquisitions/acq_2004/ Wearing.html).

bodies, bodies not defined clearly as 'individual' or even as separate and whole" (1995:122). Wearing, writing of her work, says:

> I was interested in the idea of being genetically connected to someone but being very different. There is something of me, literally, in all those people – we are connected, but we are each very different. (Bayle, 2006:http://www.albrightknox.org/ acquisitions/acq_2004/Wearing.html)

Wearing's statement implies the identification of the self through relationships with others[51] and this is particularly revealing when considered in terms of Stuart Hall's explanation of how ideas of the other inform identity:

> Identities are the positions which the subject is obliged to take up while always 'knowing' … that they are representations, that representations are always constructed across a 'lack', across a division, from the place of the Other, and thus can never be adequate – identical – to the subject processes which are invested in them. (Hall, 1996: 6)

This idea suggests that there is a splitting between self and other, not only within the psychic formation of the subject as discussed in '*Knip die Naelstring*: Performing Gender', but also within the process of representation of identity.

Splitting subjectivities: subject/object

I would like to explore the splitting of the subject by first considering the notion that because of the male gaze women are split between subject and object**.** The male gaze,[52] not only within art but also in the media, has traditionally objectified women and therefore representation, especially self-representation becomes problematic.[53] Women are constantly aware of being looked at, as they are viewed by patriarchal society as objects. Australian feminist and philosopher, Elizabeth Grosz, explains that in the mirror stage "[b]y partitioning, dividing, representing, inscribing the body in culturally determinant ways, … [the subject] is constituted as a social, symbolic, and regulatable body" and "becomes the

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[51] The construction of identity in relation to family members is explored in more depth in '*Karavaankinners*: Performing Memory' and '*Kaartehuis Kroniek*: Performing the Narrative'.

[52] In *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger states that "men act and women appear" and that [m]en look at women", while "[w]omen watch themselves being looked at" (1972:47)

[53] Although Meskimmon views the subject-object relationship as problematic she states that "[t]o act in both roles, simultaneously, is to stage a crucial intervention" (1996:14). In other words, by making self-portraits, women are challenging traditional patriarchal objectification of the female body and starting to attain their own subjective voice. Not only this, but this 'intervention' implies agency and in having agency women can make vital contributions to the art discourses.

organizing site of perspectives – in other words, both subject and object"[54] (Grosz, 1990:37-8). Thus, not only society but also the psychic construction of the subject, splits the self between subject and object; self and other.

South African artist and theorist, Marion Arnold, suggests that within art-making the "process of objectification is sanctioned by the sustained looking of the gaze" (1996:2). She claims that "what is especially interesting in art made by women is the strategies through which we become active subjects rather than passive objects" (1996:2). To be both knowing subject and known object in the creation of self-representations, the split between subject and object "energises the object image, vitalising it with subjectivity" and in this way simple binary categorization can be denied (Arnold: 1996:121).

I would further like to explore the splitting of the subject by looking at another aspect of the gaze that Phelan considers in her book *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. She explains that the *exchange* of the gaze indicates the split within the subject, as well as *between* subjects and that within "the opening created by the distinction between the eye and the gaze, the seeing I is split (again)" (1993:21;34). In applying this concept to visual art she suggests that the "burden of portrait photography is both to reveal and conceal this gap" (1993:34). After considering Phelan's ideas, together with those of Arnold and Groz, I come to the conclusion that the subject experiences multiple splittings which, in turn, implies the fragmented nature of identity in the process of representation.

In *Kiekie* I both highlight and obscure the splitting within this paint/photo and this is done through the process of production, as well as the use of framing devices of representation. By breaking up the landscape format of the work on the wall through use of tonal values (fig.12), I suggest the format of the photograph and, in turn, imply the togetherness in time and space of myself and my twin. This was done by painting thick white enamel paint in a rectangular shape comparable to the 8 x10 inches of the photograph onto the image, whereas that part of the image that fell outside that shape was painted with a white turpentine wash. Through using this device, the image is split both vertically and horizontally: a fragment is placed within the whole, reflecting the constructed nature of representing (fig.13).

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[54]Grosz also claims that "[t]he capacity of representing oneself to oneself, the mirror-reversals, the obsession with symmetry, and the division of the subject into both subject and/or object are later reactivated in the dreams of adults or, in a more extreme form, in psychoses" (1990:38).

Joanne Lowry, in her consideration of Lacanian theories, claims that "in our imaginary positioning of ourselves as controllers of the visual world we are never quite secure" as "[w]e are always aware of another position, of something beyond the screen, something which cannot be controlled, the unsymbolizable Real" (1999:280). In relation to this idea I would like to suggest that the darker area of the constructed setting which falls outside the photographic frame in *Kiekie*, can be regarded as a metaphor of that which lies beyond representation. Through my use of framing devices it is placed beyond the gaze of the camera and becomes that which one cannot control. In terms of my relationship with my twin, I feel that this idea projects the way that I feel about him in his new, separate life.

There is another form of splitting in this paint/photo (fig.14-15). In producing the piece on the wall and the panel on the floor, three panels of baking paper were used, respectively, and then attached through fiberglass and thus there is an allusion to the split in the two horizontal lines that can be seen running through the image on the wall. The split within the floor piece is merely hinted at, in the way that the paint seems to make two indented horizontal lines where the panels were sutured.

This attempted concealment of the split is particularly significant when considered in terms of Stuart Hall's definition of identity, which he describes as:
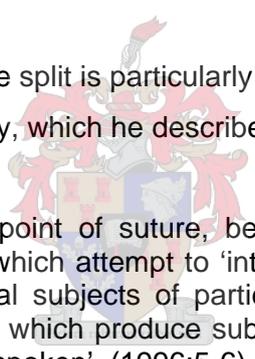
> [T]he meeting point, the point of suture, between on the one hand the discourses and practices which attempt to 'interpellate', speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be 'spoken'. (1996:5-6)

He expands on this idea by explaining that "[i]dentities are thus points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us" (Hall, 1996:6).

By attaching the panels through fibre glass, there is a temporary repair to our twin relationship and our identities. They have been 'sutured'. Yet the ruptures are still present in that the lines of attachment are visible; the split cannot be avoided. In this sense there is a kind of sadness and melancholy to the piece; although we seem happy, the split between us is still there. The suture is just temporary. Thus, the split can be regarded as a metaphor for the emotional distance in our relationship. At the same time, it can indicate the split that is experienced between self and other, subject and object; which is the split that is inevitably created when one is placed within the light of representation.

An example of an artist, who plays with the disruption between subject and object in relation to the gaze, is the French Sophie Calle. This is particularly evident in her work entitled *La Filature* (*The Shadow*), [55] 1981 (fig.16-17). She was commissioned to create a piece for a *Centre Georges Pompidou* show dealing with self-portraiture. For this she asked her mother to hire a private detective to photograph her and report on her activities for a day. (Bois, 2002: http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi m0268/is 8 38/ai 61907735/pg 3). In many of her other works she is the follower, but here she turns the tables on herself and thus, effectively reverses the role of the "photographer as voyeur" as "here the artist assumes the role of the observed person"[56] (Irvine, 2003: http://www.mocp.org/ exhibition/ 2003/05/the furtive gaz.php).

Of course, Calle was aware that the detective was following her[57] and as she strolled through the streets of Paris, she led him "on a trail of places of personal significance to her, such as the garden where she had her first kiss and to her studio" (Irvine, 2003: Internet). The fact that she was being photographed by him places her in the position of object,[58] but her knowledge of the photographer's presence and orchestration of the path he followed implies that she is also the subject. It can further be suggested that she was deliberately performing for the gaze, which can be affirmed through the fact that she "gets her hair done 'to please him'" (Groh, s.a.: http://www-tech.mit.edu/V110/N9/calle.09a. html.). Her work thus places emphasis on the splitting that one experiences when trying to represent oneself. I would like to propose that she was manipulating her identity in order to escape the threat of the gaze and that *La Filature* can be regarded as a self-portrait that is formed on the level of the screen.

Typical of Calle's approach, she also took notes on that day and her colourful descriptions are exhibited next to the clinical and banal notes of the detective (fig.18). These two perspectives are notably different and indicate the complexity of representation, especially "through the distance of unilateral observation and the telephoto lens" (Irvine, 2003: http://www.mocp.org/exhibition/2003/05/the furtive gaz.php). Through the use of text and

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[55] Calle reworked this piece in 2001 and called it "*20 Years Later*" (Ridge, 2004 :http://www.recirca.com/reviews/SophieCalle/Sophiecallereview. shtml).

[56] In *Suite Venetienne*, 1980, she followed a stranger around Venice, playing the detective for two weeks until the man discovered her presence; in *L'Hôtel*, 1981, she took a job as a chambermaid in a hotel to document the belongings of the hotel guests; in *L'Homme au Carnet* (The Man's Address Book), 1983, she called up every person in an address book that she found and then published their observations of the owner in a newspaper (Jones, s.a.: http://www.frieze.com/feature single.asp?f=361).

[57] "What the detective did not know was that he was her employee; nor did he notice that she had him tailed as well – a friend of hers shot him entering a porno cinema" (Bois, 2000: http://www.findarticles.com/ p/articles/mi m0268/is 8 38/ai 61907735/pg 3).

[58] This idea is affirmed by Barthes in *Camera Lucida* in that he claims that "[p]hotography transform[s] subject into object" (1981:13)

image, Calle eliminates "the intended documentary nature of the detective's report, and tests both the truthfulness of photography itself, and the honesty of our public selves" (Irvine, 2003: http://www.mocp.org/exhibition/2003/05/the furtive gaz.php).

The last thing that I want to point out with regards to this work is the fact that Calle's face does not appear in any of the photographs and the search for her identity fails to reveal a fixed image; she emerges only as a shadow. By not displaying a distinct image of herself, Calle places emphasis on the difficulty of self-representation. *La Filature* also indicates that one cannot rely on the photographic medium to produce a reliable version of the self and that this work should rather be considered as a constructed performance of subjectivity through image, text and narrative.

My use of the silhouette in *Kiekie* (fig.19) functions in a similar way to Calle's use of the shadow, and can be regarded as a negation of subjectivity as whole and fixed. However, in terms of Henry Sayre's observation, in his book *The Object of Performance*, that the photograph can "be read in terms of *both* presence and absence", I would like to suggest that the silhouettes in this paint/photo can also be interpreted as a simultaneous absence and presence (1989:1).

The silhouette is visible in all the works on my exhibition; *Kiekie*, however, is the only piece in which this kind of image appears in the background. The silhouette in the London telephone booth on the left is, in fact, my brother, although it is not recognizable as him. This figure of my twin acts as a metaphor for the construction of multiple identities, but specifically references the projection of his various identities in a context where I am absent. It becomes my projection of an unknown identity, because within that context I am not aware of how *he* performs his subjectivities. Owing to my inability to visualize him in this setting, he becomes a mere outline in a box that I cannot reach. The silhouette figures on the floor, on the other hand, suggest the blurring of both our identities because of our separation (fig.20). As these silhouettes are looking back at the figures on the wall, the relationship between the figures on the wall and those on the floor can be seen as the exchange of gazes between the mirror and the screen. The wall panel becomes a metaphor for the mirror – "the image seen which reflects the looker looking" (Phelan, 1993:16). The floor panel, on the other hand, suggest the screen – "the laws of the Symbolic which define subject and object positions within language" (Phelan, 1993:16) By using silhouettes, I invoke the notion that the screen act as a mediation between the self and the gaze and this becomes a masquerade to protect the self against the threat of the gaze (Rose, 1986:192).

Simulacra and fantasy construction in representation

Alberto Melucci, in his essay *Identity and Difference in a Globalized World*, states that our society is governed by technological power which is "accompanied by the exponential growth of symbolic possibilities, of self-reflexive activities, of the capacity to reflect and represent reality through a multitude of languages" and "this capacity seems to be gradually replacing reality itself"(1997:61). He goes further by saying that "we inhabit a world constructed out of the images we ourselves have created, a world where we are no longer able to distinguish reality from the reality of the image"(1997:61) Thus, everything becomes representation.

The postmodern theorist, Douglas Kellner, explains social theorist's, Jean Baudrillard's, theory of simulation. In the contemporary world, he states that "the boundary between representation and reality implodes,[59] and, as a result, the very experience and ground of 'the real' disappears" (Kellner, 1989:63). He further explains that within our media dominated society, according to Baudrillard, all "dichotomies between appearance and reality, surface and depth, life and art, subject and object, collapse into a functionalized, integrated and self-reproducing universe of 'simulacra' controlled by 'simulation' models and codes"; and thus we live in a "'hyperreality' of simulations" (Kellner, 1989:77;62).[60]

Some of the South African artist, Bridget Baker's, more recent photographic works explore the relationship between image, narrative and text in order to question issues of representation in a less personal biographical manner than her earlier works.[61] Through her performance of fantasy identities in the two photographic works, *The Maiden Perfect* and *The Botched Epic Attempt to Escape the Maiden*, I interpret her works as play on Baudrillard's idea of the simulacral nature of all representation.

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[59] Baudrillard developed this idea from Marshall McLuhan's cybernetic concept of implosion (Kellner, 1989:62). See McLuhan's *Understanding Media* for an explanation of his theory of implosion.

[60] By the late 1970s, Baudrillard was interpreting the media as "key simulation machines". While in the past "the media were believed to mirror, reflect or represent reality", for Baudrillard they "constitute a (hyper)reality, a new media reality, 'more real than real', where 'the real' is subordinate to representation thus leading ultimately to a dissolving of the real" (Kellner, 1989:68). Alberto Melucci makes a similar statement by claiming that "the media represents and reflects human action, but they gradually acquire an independent ability to produce reality because their messages are incorporated and reproduced in social praxis, in a spiral that seems destined to feed upon itself and grow in a never-ending process" (1997:59).

[61] See '*Karavaankinners*: Performing Memory' for an example of Baker's earlier autobiographical works.

In *The Maiden Perfect* (fig.21), Baker presents a young woman in a bathing suit wearing a beauty queen's sash, desperately holding onto a ship's railing with an enormous wave threatening to engulf her. In the lower-section of the photograph the deck-game of shuffleboard hints at an era of the past. Baker suggests that the relationships between the various references in her work can "take you back to another time or history even if it never actually existed" (Gurney, 2006: http://www.artthrob.co.za/06mar/artbio. html). *The Botched Epic Attempt to Escape the Maiden* (fig.22), on the other hand, seems to be situated in a strange, smoky and futuristic world with hook-like objects in the ground surface, that appear to threaten the figure hunkering down on the vintage motorcycle. In this image there seems to be a compression of both past and future into one photograph.

The South African artist and critic, Kathryn Smith, in her critical essay, *Grass Grows from the Middle*, in Baker's 2006 Joao Ferreira exhibition catalogue, claims that both *The Maiden Perfect* and *The Botched Epic Attempt to Escape the Maiden* "embrace the simulacral environment of the film set, with backdrops and lighting creating an artificial yet illusionistic space in which the scene plays out" (2006:9).[62] The fact that Baker has worked as a clothing stylist in the film industry since 1999, together with her interest in 1950s movies, obviously "feeds her hyper-real episodic photographic narratives" (Gurney, 2006: http://www.artthrob. co.za/06mar/artbio.html).

The backgrounds or settings of both Baker's images are obvious constructions. Through creating large-scale reproductions of embroidered surfaces,[63] (the wave in *The Maiden* and the cave-like vault in *The Botched Epic Attempt*), Smith claims that Baker is creating a link with her early works, but now the embroidery serves as a "signifier of the elaborate fiction of the event" (2006:9). Through the merging of handcraft processes and the technology of photography, the artist foregrounds the constructed nature of the photographs and her images, like Gillian Wearing's reference the ground-breaking work of Cindy Sherman.

Although these images seem less autobiographical than Baker's earlier works, she claims that this element is now just less apparent than before.[64] She says:

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[62] Within Bridget Baker's *Blue Collar Girl* series on the other hand, she relies on the "reality of urban space" in order to create her narrative representations (Smith, 2006:9).

[63] Through the use of embroidery, Baker "draws attention to the domestic dilemma, here using highly styled beauty queens and biker girls to explore the peril of the historically and domestically-bound woman" (Stupart, 2006: http://www.artthrob.co.za/06mar/reviews/ joao.html).

[64] In both these works the artist used her own body and for *The Botched Epic Attempt to Escape the Maiden* , she "had to be cut out of her jersey at the end of a 15-hour shoot" (Gurney, 2006: http://www.artthrob.co.za/06mar/artbio.html). *The Maiden Perfect* also has a distinct

I am creating another narrative for a possible life of my own with characters that don't exist but I try to project myself onto them ... creating structures or environments in which they can operate (cited in Gurney, 2006:http://www.artthrob.co.za/06 mar/artbio.html).

These images are constructions of fantasy and I consider them as metaphors for how the ego is perceived within Lacan's psychoanalytic theories. According to his theories the "ego is governed by fantasy (imagination) and modes of identification, and introjection", rather than "being dominated by the demands of reality and logic of expediency and compromise" (Grosz: 1990:31). Through the creation of fictional characters and by creating disruptions of past and present across time and space, Baker highlights the transience of human relationships.

The relationship that Baker sets up between her photographic images and their titles immediately evokes a sense of narrative. This is an element that is quite prominent in her art-making process. Between the two works, *The Maiden Perfect* and *The Botched Epic Attempt to Escape the Maiden*, there is an obvious relation that heightens the narrative potential. Furthermore, Smith draws one's attention to the fact that images of *The Blue Collar Girl* and *The Maiden* are placed in the licence disc holders of the motorcycle, which further stimulates the viewer's search for narratives in these images (2006:9).

Image, text and narrative
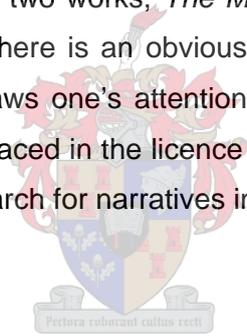
The source of the text used in *Kiekie* comprises the words of my favourite song at the time I was creating this paint/photo. The title of the song is *Hide and Seek* by Imogen Heap (fig.23-24), a title that immediately invokes thoughts of childhood. This can either evoke a feeling of happiness or melancholy, depending on the perspective of the viewer, but I would like to consider it as a nostalgic reference to the past; the past when I was still with my twin. This nostalgic feeling is also reinforced through my use of black and white paint that inevitably makes one think of old photographs, that in turn create associations with memory.[65]

The text on the image is closely spaced and smaller than the handwritten text in any of the other works on the exhibition. The reason for this is to reference the way in which one

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autobiographical reference in that her mother won the Miss Castle Line pageant on board a ship during her honeymoon (Smith, 2006:9).

[65] See '*Karavaankinners*: Performing Memory' for a broader discussion of this idea.

writes on a postcard: too much to say, with too little space to say it in. Although a person sends a postcard with the longing to share an experience, it is only received after the person has experienced that specific space. There is a delay between the actual experience of the sender and the reading of the receiver. By the time the postcard is seen the experience is already a memory. The postcard, as an outmoded form of communication, also has a very different quality from other more electronic forms of communication; it is not only one's loved one's handwriting that evokes this sense, but also the awareness that this object was held in the hand of the loved one. Thus, the reference to the postcard suggests a distance through time, but also a closeness that is transferred through the object.

The appropriated words of the song that I inscribed fragmentarily onto the image on the wall, were specifically used for the feelings of melancholy and longing that this song stirred in me when I first heard it. The words become a medium through which the emotions that I experienced when my twin left are presented, such as "this can't be happening" and "you don't care a bit" ; while words such as "that it's all for the best" refer to the banal ways in which my family tried to console me. I regard the song as the screen through which I perform our identities. Much like the postcard is a condensed version of an unknown place, the song is a compression of loss and longing, the distance in our relationship.

By mainly using English text, which is my second language, I reference the othering that I experience without my twin, which again reinforces the split in our relationship. As one's mother tongue generally plays an important role in the construction of one's sense of self, my use of English in this image implies a certain distancing and alienation. It also references misunderstandings through translation, an idea which is further reinforced by the only Afrikaans words in this paint/photo, which are inscribed into the floor panel: Jy praat Engels met 'n aksent (You speak English with an accent) (fig.25-26). He has become the other in several different ways: he has experienced things that I have not; he has engaged with a culture that I have not; he has an accent that I do not have.

Summary

In volume '*Kiekie*: Performing the Gaze', I have discussed the fact that identity is impossible without the intervention of representation, and that the gaze plays a central role in the construction of subjectivities within discourse. I considered the gaze as performative because of the process of looking and also suggest that forms of visual

representation which foreground the photographic referent can be regarded as performative. The constructed nature of the photograph has also been explored and I propose that through painting the photographic referent there can be a suturing of the split between self and other. *Kiekie* is a reflection of my initial denial in terms of our separation.

Further, there has been a discussion of the photograph as an illusion and I have considered the notion of the masquerade as a possible means to escape the threat of the gaze. The role that the other plays within identity construction through representation was considered and I explored the notion of the split between self and other, and subject and object. By deliberately using this splitting in *Kiekie* I destabilize the idea of identity as whole and fixed, proposing that it is by contrast fragmentary and multiple. I further explore the simulacral nature of representation and propose that, through the disruptions of past and present across time and space, one can imply the transitory nature of human relationships. The processing of text within my work has also aided me in demonstrating the alienation that I experience because of my twin's relocation.
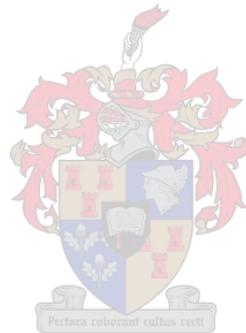
Karavaankinners: Performing Memory

> Memories are partial. They do not actually *reconstruct* events that happened, but rather *construct* them. What we think we remember about our past is shaped by our present needs and present concerns. (Schmamann 2004:22)

The title of this work *Karavaankinners* (fig.1), refers to the caravan holidays we, as a family, go on every year. I chose the word *'kinners'*, which is the colloquial Afrikaans for children, because my parents also went on caravan holidays as children. It is, in fact, when they were on one such holiday with their parents that they met each other. These holidays form a significant part of my childhood memories and the title of this work is a nostalgic reference to family unity.

Karavaankinners is a highly constructed, large-scale family portrait that revolves around one specific memory. The work was inspired by the first weekend that my family went camping without my twin brother. In this piece I explore and process issues of absence, loss, separation, family and the construction of memory. This is an exploration of self-representation as a process of presence and absence, loss and remembrance; a celebration and critique of the family construct.

In this volume I will explore identity construction in relation to autobiography, narrative, image and text, with the specific focus on memory work and how this informs my process of production. In order to do this, I will look at theories surrounding memory within the fields of psychoanalytic, literary and cultural theory and consider these ideas in terms of my own art practice and the work of British artist, Tracey Emin, and South African artists, Bridget Baker and Terry Kurgan. I also attempt to deconstruct the stability of the family unit and look at how my use of text functions within this process. I will regard memory as the process of remembering and forgetting, where this can be viewed as a performative process of (re)constructed representations within the present. Further, I consider the possibility that this (re)construction can be a process of healing.

The process of performing memory

In psychoanalysis, memory is often interpreted not as reflections of remembered events, but rather as complex representations produced by a variety of associations, which are made in the present (Radstone, 2000:207). Annette Kuhn, author of *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination*, also links memory to ideas of representation. She claims:

> The past is gone for ever. We cannot return to it, nor can we reclaim it now as it was. But that does not mean it is lost to us. The past is like a scene of a crime: if the deed itself is irrecoverable, its traces may still remain. From these traces, markers that point towards a past presence, to something that has happened in this place, a (re)construction, if not a simulacrum,[66] of the event can be pieced together. (Kuhn, 1995:3-4)

The cultural theorist, Paul Antze, in his article, 'The Other Inside: Memory as Metaphor in Psychoanalysis', explains that recent critical work on memory within the psychoanalytic field has formed "an understanding of memory as something more like a faculty for imaginative reconstruction, one that relies heavily on contextual clues as it patches together an untidy collection of scenes" (2003:96-7). This implies that memory is not only a reconstruction, but also a fragmentary and imaginary construction.

The process of developing the work, *Karavaankinners* could be viewed as similar to both Kuhn's and Antze's ideas of memory reconstruction. Each family member, including myself, was individually photographed in front of our tent and these images, together with a much older picture of my twin brother, were then 'pieced together' in order to create one large image. The constructed, or perhaps (re)constructed, nature of this family representation is quite evident in the inconsistencies of perspective and light source between the figures in the family group (fig.2). These inconsistencies become a physical representation of one's tendency to form multiple perspectives over time with regards to memories; memories become blurred, not necessarily accurately reflecting the original experience.

The constructed nature of this paint/draw not only refers to the constructed nature of all forms of representation, but also to how I choose to present my identities and memories in terms of my family members. Through piecing together the 'traces' of that weekend, I imaginatively construct a new memory, where my brother is also present. This is an attempt to re-construct a time and space, in the not so distant past, when my twin and I were so close that we could finish each other's sentences.

In his essay, 'Loss: Transmissions, Recognitions, Authorisations', the anthropologist and cultural theorist, Stephen Feuchtwang, is concerned with the "loss of props of memories", which "stir a chain of recalling attached to an original memory trace" (2003:76). According to him "[l]oss of a prop of memory is incurred by the loss of any object of attachment,"

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[66]See '*Kiekie*: Performing the Gaze' for a discussion of Baudrillard's concept of the simulacrum in relation to self-representations.

where "forced dislocation or … destruction, of persons and things that were themselves the props of memory" can be included among these objects. In such instances, "grief and mourning are more likely to remain unfinished", seeing that "[l]oss demands confirmation" (Feuchtwang, 2003:77).[67] In my case, the object of attachment is my twin (fig.3) and, as my loss was incurred by a displacement of sorts (my brother went away, but it was not my choice) my mourning is still in process. Given these theories of memory, my self-representation could be regarded as a grieving process and a re-construction of a prop of memory, not merely an image that I created so that I can 'be' with my brother. The silhouette of my brother represents this prop and suggests the possible cathartic process that can be accomplished through creation and self-representation.

In his exploration of memory from within the field of psychoanalysis, Antze, elaborates on some of Sigmund Freud's later theories, where he changed his metaphor of memory (specifically in relation to trauma) from 'foreign bodies'[68] to "fragments of a lost world or buried city" and portrays memory "as an active – though hidden – force in our daily lives" (2003:101-2). Freud built on this idea in a number of ways. First he compared the analytic task to an "archaeological excavation", as both these occupations involve deliberate and patient labour: "a sifting away of debris to reveal incomplete objects that could be understood only indirectly, through painstaking comparisons and reconstructive conjectures" (Antze, 2003:102). Secondly, Freud elaborated on the notion that "repressed memories are buried in layers" and "that burial is what preserves them"; only when these memories are "exposed to the light of day" do they begin to change (Antze, 2003:102). Thirdly, Freud developed the idea that childhood is similar to a "lost civilization" and contended that we return to this ancient world in our dreams, where the interpretation of dreams is somewhat like reading hieroglyphics (Antze, 2003:101-2).[69]

In light of these Freudian notions regarding memory, it is interesting to note how similar the metaphors are that Kuhn uses in her enquiries. She claims that "[m]emory work has a great deal in common with forms of inquiry which – like detective work and archaeology,

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[67] Feuchtwang explains that death rituals confirm the loss that the grieving person experiences, a process taking place by means of "a convention and eschatology of departure and continuity" (2003:77) By eschatology, Feutchwang means "a more or less well-defined apprehension of what is beyond departure and loss of life" (2003:77).

[68] Freud and Joseph Breur, in the book *Studies on Hysteria*, which is considered as the beginning of psychoanalysis, likened traumatic memory to "a *foreign body* which long after its entry must be continued to be regarded as an agent that is still at work" (cited in Antze, 2003:101).

[69] In Freud's concept of the psyche … "the shapes of memory are ultimately determined by unconscious fantasmatic scenarios, by indelible sexual templates, to which all of an individual's variable experiences and social interaction must return. In short, Oedipus is to memory studies as structuralism is to the 'turn to practice'" (Papoulias, 2003:118).

say – involve working backwards – searching for clues, deciphering signs and traces, making deductions, patching together reconstructions out of fragments of evidence" (1995:3-4). She takes the metaphor of detective work further by comparing memory to a mystery novel, where the characters of the book remember things long forgotten and concealed in their past. However, while a novel builds to a climax and normally provides a resolved ending, the exploration of personal memory is potentially never-ending and immeasurable, seeing that at every turn more questions arise; there are always more memories to explore (1995:6).

These associations of memory with the mystery novel and archeological excavation, create a strong link to my process of production in *Karavaankinners*. The text (fig.4) that at times is almost illegible, or merely traces of text, needs to be deciphered and can be regarded as either the clues for the detective or similar to hieroglyphics, while the layering of the paint may reflect the potential for archaeological excavation as the painted layers underneath contain previously inscribed texts. However, unlike the archeologist that finds fossils in the sand, it is not possible to peel away the layers of paint and it is not always possible to decipher all the text. The viewer is left to piece together that which is visible, while also knowing that access to some information is secreted away, buried beneath the layers of paint. The viewer is left only with the surface effect. As my art-making process represses some of my confessions within the paint, this image becomes a metaphor for both 'remembering' and 'forgetting'.
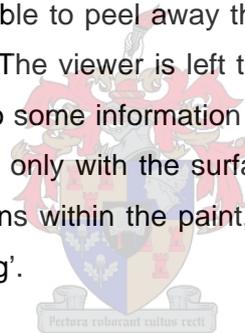
The metaphors of memory of both Kuhn and Freud suggest that there is an element of labour involved in memory work. In considering these ideas I aim to suggest that memory work is an active process; a process of both remembering and forgetting that not only constructs memories but also plays a distinct role in constructing an individual's subjectivities. Like Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity,[70] memory can be viewed as an act, a repetitive and ritualistic act through which subjectivities are performed within discourse.

The literary and cultural theorist, James Olney, uses the idea of weaving as a metaphor for the operation of memory, by which he counters the archeological metaphor of Freud and Kuhn (1998:20). He claims that:

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[70] See '*Knip die Naelstring*: Performing Gender' for a discussion of Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity.

> Unlike the archeological dig, the weaver's shuttle and loom constantly produce new and different patterns, designs and forms, and if the operation of memory is, like weaving, not archeological but processual, then it will bring forth ever different memorial configurations and an ever newly shaped self. (Olney, 1998:20)

However, Olney also states that it is through memory's "repetitional, restorative capacity – but repetition and restoration always with a difference, in part due to the most immediate previous repetition – that the second, and beyond that, third, fourth … readings of experience are performed" (1998:344). The fact that Olney aligns memory with the idea of process and repetition brings memory even closer to the notion of the performative, also suggesting that the experiences of the subject are performed through memory. He further proposes that memory as weaving "may be thought to maintain something of a free and adaptable, mediatorial position between the inner and the outer, the private and the public, the fixed and the changing" (Olney, 1998:419). In this sense memory occupies an uncertain space, which provides the subject with the possibility of denying simplistic binary categorizations of self.

The feminist theorist, Rosemary Betterton, provides some valuable ideas concerning the relationship between the memory process and subjectivity. According to her, it is "[t]he stories we tell ourselves about who we are – the half remembered events and places which shape our lives – [which] are the foundation on which we build up a sense of self" (Betterton, 1996:173). It is only through "[r]e-working what has already happened", that we give it meaning in the present, as "history always represents the present as much as the past" (1996:173). It is thus possible to deduce that memory is necessary in order to make meaning out of our existence and, much like gender performativity, the performance of memory is not necessarily optional, but something one does in order to be constituted as a subject within society.

It is perhaps necessary then to investigate briefly the societal implications of memory. According to cultural theorist, Constantina Papoulias, some cultural historians have suggested that the process of memory is responsible for holding social groups together and sustaining community. Within this context memory is seen as a "process of self-making" through "collectively authored stories". She maintains that memory is responsible for "the very social bond through which the exchange of stories, conversations and other social acts becomes possible in the first place" and thus "memory becomes equivalent to an inventory of bodily practices through which certain aspects of a past are continued into the present" (2003:117). She continues by defining memory works as a 'space-in-

between', saying this space is "neither individual nor collective, but one that emerges as a site of intersubjectivity …" (2003:117).[71]

Karavaankinners becomes symbolic of this 'space in-between', as it is both my subjectivities and those of my family that are performed: it is my memory but also a collective memory of all the weekends that we went camping that is reconstructed. As this paint/draw goes beyond mere individual thoughts, feelings and intentions, the memory becomes an exchange between individuals. Yet Papoulias's suggestion that memory holds social groups together also comes into play when the concept of family is under discussion, thus my reconstruction of this memory can also be regarded as an attempt to keep my family unit together. When one considers the image, this endeavour seems to have failed, as the family seems disconnected; the figures do not touch or look at each other, but rather stare out at the viewer. An ambiguous space is thus constructed: one of both proximity and alienation.

Another important point that Papoulias makes is that memory is "socially embedded action" and that "the social aspect of memory tends to be inflected towards a practice of local re-inscription rather than a structure of regulation" (2003:117). She affirms my suggestion that memory is an active process, but contradicts feminist theorist, Judith Butler's, use of gender performativity, which is defined as a "regulatory regime of gender difference" (1993b:21). In light of this suggestion, I wish to argue that the performance of memory should be regarded rather as aligned with Griselda Pollock's notion of inscription,[72] which, in turn, suggests that there is a larger sense of agency involved in memory work.

Autobiography and memory: construction of self

The relationship that is set up between the image and text, in my work, together with the fact that it is my family that is represented, inevitably sets *Karavaankinners* (fig.5) within the genre of autobiography. Betterton feels that autobiography, in its traditional form, is often viewed as "a line tracked from childhood to the achievement of an adult identity that is conceived as an endpoint, as the resolution of choices made and obstacles overcome,

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[71] Within the context of memory studies, Papoulias suggests, 'the social' is materialized in two ways: firstly, where 'the social' represents "a public memory which is de-individualised in so far as it is produced through social institutions", while secondly representing "an arena of exchange … [that] becomes equivalent to the conversations through which memory is shaped" (Papoulias, 2003:117).

[72] See '*Knip die Naelstring*: Performing Gender' for an exploration of Pollock's theory of inscription, as well as a discussion of Butler's notion of performativity.

however convoluted the journey" (1996:173). Yet, in contrast to this idea feminist writing regards the self as "unfinished business, often taking the form of a series of movements between present and past, self and Other, towards the production of an identity that is 'still in process'" (1996:173). [73]

The feminist theorist, Marie-Françoise Chanfrault-Duchet, explains that identity, like memory, should also be understood in terms of the social and that within the autobiographical process not only facts and events are offered, but also "social representations and cultural values" (2000:61). According to her, there is a conflict between the subject and society and this is reconciled through the narrative portrayal of a unique self which is acceptable to society (2000:61). Jerome Bruner, a professor in psychology, also makes this link between autobiographical narrative and society and feels that autobiography should be regarded as not only personal expression but also as a product of culture (1993:39). Thus both the autobiographical process and memory are to a large extent determined by the context and discourse of the subject. In the case of *Karavaankinners* (fig), the social context is the South African landscape and the tradition of caravan holidays that forms a prominent mode of vacationing in this country, yet it also includes the cultural context of art making within an academic institution.

Bruner provides some other enlightening ideas with regard to the relationship between autobiography and memory, in that he claims that any "autobiographical reconfiguring of a life" is not necessarily concerned with making "new discoveries in the archeological record of our experiences" and memories, but should be viewed as the rewriting of "a narrative along different interpretive lines" (1993:40). He continues by stating that "[p]erceiving and remembering are themselves constructions and reconstructions", where what is "laid down in memory is not some aboriginal encounter with a real world, but is already highly schematized" (1993:40). Olney in his weaving metaphor also sees memory and narrative as 'symbiotic activities' (1998:419). I would like to suggest that memory work can therefore be regarded as a highly constructed narrative representation. [74]

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[73]This kind of writing of the self has become "an important means through which women have explored the social psychic production of feminine identity" (Betterton, 1996:173).

[74]Caroline Steedman suggests that the connections between memory and narrative "have led to a recent interest in eigteenth and nineteenth-century thinking about childhood, and it has become clear that in some autobiographics of the last two centuries the idea of the child was used to both recall and express the past that each individual life embodied; what was turned inside in the course of individual human development was that which was already latent; the child (the child the autobiographer had been) *was* the story wanting to be told" (2000:27).

Historically, the self-portrait, much like literary autobiographical works, "has been envisaged as a vehicle for not only accurately 'reflecting' the physiognomy of the maker, but also for revealing hidden 'truths' about the artist's personality or state of mind" (Schmahmann, 2004:6). The feminist author, Marsha Meskimmon, explains that complex self-portraits have often suffered from such 'simple readings' and have been explained through reference to superficial details and events in the artists' lives (1996:79). She calls this a 'psychobiographical' approach and states that the art of women has "suffered from this approach even more frequently than that of male artists because of assumed links between women and the personal sphere" (Meskimmon, 1996:69) These kinds of interpretations she claims, "mirror the idea of the visual artist as a genius who has an especially sensitive, intuitive nature which unfolds in the artwork produced" (Meskimmon, 1996:69).[75]

The culture of the confessional

It has been my impression that through this 'psychobiographical' approach artists' works are reduced to what I call 'confessions' of their life experiences, while other deliberately constructed meanings within the images are overlooked. It would thus be worthwhile to enquire into some ideas around the concept of the confessional. In her book, *Undoing Gender* (2004), in the chapter titled 'Bodily Confessions', Judith Butler considers the relationship between language, the body and psychoanalysis by specifically focusing on the act of confession. Butler critiques Foucault's claim that "psychoanalysis, as the inheritor of pastoral power,[76] seeks to use the confession to augment its own control and power" and focuses on "the confession as an act that shifts the desire that it reports" (2004b:154;170).

She states:

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[75] The reason for women's marginalization within the field of self-portraiture, Meskimmon explains, was due to the fact that in the modernist tradition "the intellectual subject capable of rational thought and the genius who created art, was not a neutral subject, but masculine, heterosexual, white, Euro-ethnic, middle-class and able bodied" (2003:71).

[76] Foucault defines pastoral power as "that form of power by which the administration of the soul takes place" (cited in Butler, 2004b:162). He claims that by accepting "the knowledge about themselves that is offered, those whose souls are administered to in this way come to accept that the pastor has an authoritative discourse of truth about who they are, and come to speak about themselves through the same discourse of truth" (cited in Butler, 2004b:162). Foucault also later returned to the notion of pastoral power in late antiquity, only to discover that "it was not administered exclusively in the service of regulation and control", but that confession is also about "an effort, through speech, to 'transform pure knowledge and simple consciousness, in a real way of living'" (cited in Butler, 2004b:162).

> What is the content of confession? Is it a deed, a desire, an anxiety, an abiding guilt for which the confessional form serves as a balm? As the confession begins, it usually centers on a deed, but it may be that the deed conceals the source of the desire for confession. (Butler, 2004b:165)

Furthermore, she claims, the confession at the centre of psychoanalytic practice is this: "[T]he fact that we always show something more or different than what we mean, and we hand this unknowing part of ourselves to another to return to us in ways that we cannot anticipate in advance" (2004:173).

When this idea is considered in relation to autobiographical self-representation one can reflect on Bruner's statement that autobiographical writing involves a discourse of witness, where the concept of witness "creates existential immediacy for both the writer and the reader" (1993:45). In line with this, I would like to suggest that the relationships that are set up between the analyst and the confessor, the reader and the writer, the artist and the viewer, can be seen to function in a similar way. The revelations of the artists, writers and confessors are not necessarily interpreted in the way that was originally intended. *Karavaankinners* (fig.6) presents strong confessional and autobiographical aspects through the use of image and text, and it is left to the viewer to construct a narrative from these representations. Furthermore, I experienced the creation of this paint/draw (fig.7) as a therapeutic healing process through my ritualistic, repetitive and confessional performance of my subjectivities.
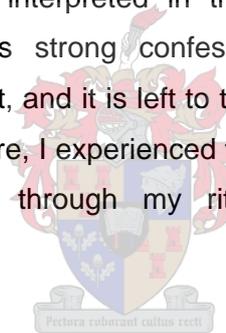
In contemporary life the concept of the confessional has taken a very interesting turn. The feminist author, Whitney Chadwick, in fact, suggests, that we live "in a culture shaped by the confessional of the television talk show" (s.a: http://www.mirrorpaper. npg.org.uk/live/ mirrorpaper 1.asp)..She further claims that parallel to this culture "self-portraits offer the illusion of intimacy, the chance to look as long as we like at the face of another without fear of retribution, the freedom to interpret inner states of feeling from external signs" (s.a: http://www.mirrorpaper. npg.org. uk/live/mirrorpaper1.asp). The British artist, Tracey Emin,[77] deliberately employs this element of society to create her self-representations. In fact, Rosemary Betterton compares her art to "the feminised genre of day-time television shows where audiences … consume not so much commodities as experiences as they watch subjects confess the private and public" (Cherry, s.a: http://www.sussex.ac.uk/Units/ arthist/sharp/issues/0002/pHTML/pTraceyEminMyBedo4.shtl).

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[77] See '*Knip die Naelstring*: Performing Gender' for a discussion of Emin's trace monoprints.

Frances Borzello in her book, *Seeing Ourselves: Women's Self-portraits*, argues that through Emin's "willingness to put everything about herself into her art … she walks a very fine line between art and life" (1998:189). It is exactly this aspect of Emin's art that captivates people and it is clear that she is an expert at capturing attention when you look at the media-hype surrounding her work and life. Her ability to evoke interest and controversy may have something to do with people's fascination at seeing someone else's problems and emotions laid bare, combined with the voyeuristic nature of people, which is why the genre of self-representation functions.

Adrian Gargett claims that Emin's "curious celebrity means she is better known for her perceived persona than for her art" (2001: http://www.3ammagazine.com/litarchives/oct 2001/going down.html.). This is also the reason her work is often subjected to 'psychobiographical' interpretations. London critics specifically questioned "whether Tracey was telling the truth", seeing that "[i]f art is no more and no less than the artist's life, then authenticity becomes a key benchmark for a critical practice that judges the artist rather than the work" [78] (Cherry, 2002:142). The persona that Tracey Emin has created for herself can be seen as problematic, as viewers often interpret her work rather literally, and thus, it is denied any form of constructed meaning.

The work that first gained Emin her celebrity status was *Everyone I Have Ever Slept with: 1963-1994* (fig.8), a small domed tent with a hundred and two names appliquéd inside. This piece, displaying how she effectively eliminates the boundaries between the private and public domains,[79] challenges the notion of what is acceptable behaviour in society. I contend that this piece should be regarded as a highly constructed and mediated self-representation.

As the title suggests, the appliquéd names are of everyone she has ever 'slept' with, from which one immediately jumps to the conclusion that these are the names of Emin's sexual partners. Yet Tracey Emin refutes this by saying:

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[78] Julian Stallabrass is particularly critical of Emin's work, refusing to see it as anything but "confessional and self-exploratory" (1999:41). Feminist writers are also troubled by Emin's 'exhibitionist' ways and Natasha Walter states that "'by making a parade of her suffering' the artist stands 'at the end of a long tradition of female artists who've gained esteem through public self-flagellation'" (Walter, quoted in Cherry, 2002:143).

[79] The blurring of the boundaries between the private and the public is very much a feminist concern and Emin's art is reminiscent of an earlier generation of feminists "when speaking the unspoken about domestic violence and sexual abuse could lead to a sharing of experiences and a recognition of the structures in which they took place" (Cherry, s.a. http://www.sussex.ac.uk/Units/arthist/ sharp/issues/0002/pHTML/pTraceyEminMyBedo4.shtml).

> The thing about the tent that really annoys me, when it's in the media, is people just write it's the names of my lovers. But it's not. … It's about conception, sleeping in the womb with my twin brother, up to my last friend or lover that I slept with in 1994. That's what the tent's about. It's about sleep, intimacy, and moments. (Gargett, 2001:http://www.3ammagazine. com/litarchives/oct2001/goingdown.html)

Despite this statement by Emin, it would be naïve to suggest that she did not deliberately construct the title in order to elicit this response from the viewer. It can also be suggested that she deliberately plays on the confessional culture that has been created by television, specifically so-called 'reality' televisions shows that invite the viewer to watch real people's every move.[80] Tracey Emin's overt use of her own sexuality can be viewed as a strategic device: an attempt to define an identity for herself.[81] Laura Marcus claims that "to put a life into a narrative or to make stories out of personal experience implies a creative 'staging of memory' in a way that resonates with the performative character of much of Emin's work" (cited in Betterton, 2002:33). It can be understood that Emin reconstructs a complex, interwoven narrative of her subjectivities through a performance of memories. What I would like to suggest, however, is that she also 'performs' a deliberately provocative and controversial image of herself for the sake of public and media sensation.

I would like to suggest, further, that the confessional element of my paint/draw presents some parallels to Emin's *Everyone I Have Ever Slept with: 1963-1994.* Her compression of time through listing moments as memories is similar to how I compress our caravan holidays into one image through text. Yet, this seeming unity is also disrupted through my inscription of confessional autobiographical text. I expose extremely private thoughts within the public sphere, some of which can be regarded as quite crude. As a young, white, Afrikaner woman who grew up in a very conservative context, the use of foul language would be seen as profoundly 'unlady-like' and in this way I also attempt to question the boundaries that are set for women within my specific social context.

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[80] Emin refers to this idea as 'the psyche of the nation' and she comments: "Big Brother would never have got on telly 10 years ago in this Country (Gargett, 2001:http://www.3ammagazine.com/ litarchives/oct2001/going down.html.). It is therefore interesting that Helen Bushby also makes a comparison between Emin's work and Vanessa Feltz's emotional breakdown during her stay in the Celebrity Big Brother house (Gargett, 2001:http://www.3ammagazine.com/litarchives/ oct2001/going down.html). It is important to note that, like Emin's work, the environment of the Big Brother house is one that is highly constructed and mediated; the contestants are constantly aware of being watched and act accordingly.

[81] Adrian Gargett suggests that "[i]n the space in which women invent personae, the one statement the female can make to declare strength and autonomy (her self as a 'self') is to somehow be 'bad'" (2001: http://www.3ammagazine.com/litarchives/oct2001/going down.html).

The cultural and film theorist, Susannah Radstone, in an essay entitled 'Autobiographical Times', claims that although confessional autobiography still draws a considerable number of readers and critics, it is another form of autobiography, which she calls 'remembrance', that has recently attracted attention. She explains that the rise of remembrance is intrinsically bound to contemporary Western society's fascination, perhaps even obsession, with memory, and that this has been associated with an "epochal shift from modernity to the postmodern". Here "modernity is linked with a future-oriented temporality aligned with ideas of progress, [while] postmodernity is connected, rather, with a temporality that folds the future back onto the past" (Radstone, 2000:201).

Radstone distinguishes between confession (with the implications of guilt on the part of the narrator) and remembrance. She explains that "in confessional writing it is memory that arguably sutures over the break between the writing 'I' and the 'I' that is written about", while "in remembrance, it is memory's relation to subjective coherence that comes under scrutiny" (Radstone, 2000:205). Radstone further claims that "[i]nstead of suturing[82] the division between the writing 'I' and the 'I' that is written about, texts of remembrance tend rather to undermine the resilience of that suture, by emphasizing memory's tenuous relation to the 'past'" (2000:205). Thus, I would like to propose that *Karavaankinners* (fig.9) be considered as aligned with Radstone's idea of remembrance, rather than the notion of the confessional. In this piece, the emphasis is on both the conceptual and physical split within subjectivities: *Karavaankinners* oscillates between suturing and splitting the self through the process of performing memory.

Splitting subjectivities

The individual panels that make up this paint/draw (fig.10) create physical separations in and between the figures. When this separation is considered from a poststructural or psychoanalytical perspective, the splitting within the figures implies the fragmentary nature of subjectivities; the self that is divided between self and other, subject and object, as well as the notion that identity is multiple and constantly in process through the production of remembrance and inscription in representation. By depicting myself in relation to my family members, I set up more relationships between self and other. Here the split can also refer to the disconnected way in which the family is depicted and to how my brother's absence created a physical and emotional splitting within our twin relationship, as well as

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[82] See '*Kiekie*: Perfoming the Gaze' for other ideas regarding the notion of suturing.

the family unit. Yet, the twin relationship complicates this easy binary categorization, as I experience my brother as a large part of myself.[83]

Opposed to the vertical splitting in this work, the tent in the background forms a horizontal connection between the figures. The tent (fig.11), as a portable home, suggests a sense of stability in the family. However this stability, like the tent, is temporary as the holiday is bound to end. The family holiday becomes a nostalgic representation of family unity, which is only applicable to certain times in one's life. In the same way that memory and subjectivities are fragmented and unfixed, the family structure and the relationships formed within this unit are also unstable, dependening upon social dynamics and discourse.

Absence and presence

The use of my twin as a silhouette in this work suggests that his absence was acutely experienced during that weekend, so much so, that he was in fact present. The way in which his silhouette is constructed, however, hints at the fact that I cannot hold on to this memory of him and, like all memories, his becomes vague and moves in and out of my consciousness. The rift in our relationship is visually portrayed, in that the hand of the shadowy figure touches the edge of the image. His shoulders and feet are slightly turned away from my image and it seems as if his figure is trying to move out of the frame. The space between my figure and his is wider than the space between all the other figures, suggesting a distancing within our relationship; a distance which is both physical and emotional.

This absent/present figure of my twin also references the notion of living in someone's shadow; being overshadowed by someone.[84] The slightly diminished size of my figure (fig.12), in comparison to those of the other family members increases this overshadowing and alludes to the loss of identity that I experience without him. My father also seems frail in comparison to my mother, and this implies that she is the stronger one in their relationship. Even though my father is physically larger than my mother, it is my impression of her emotional strength that is portrayed. Through this use of hierarchical proportioning, together with the text inscribed across each figure, I attempt to suggest the

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[83] See 'Knip die Naelstring: Performing Gender' for a more detailed look at the twin relationship. Also see '*Kiekie*: Performing the Gaze' where I discuss Gillian Wearing's *Album*, which can be regarded as an excellent example of the representation of the self in terms of the family.
[84] See the images in the volume '*Kaartehuis Kroniek*: Performing the Narrative' images where idioms of the shadow she used on the actual works.

complex relationships that reign within the family unit, specifically in relation to mourning the absence of my twin brother.

The South African artist, Bridget Baker, also explores issues of absence and presence in one of her earlier works,[85] *So it goes* (1996) (fig.13). She uses an image of herself and her father to visually explore memory, loss and family, as her father died from a heart attack when Baker was only five years old. Her father left her with only one tangible memory of him: a photograph. This photographic memory is repeated in four tins, in which Vicks Vapor Rub is placed – in increasing amounts – to fill the containers, gradually obscuring the image of Baker and her father (Kellner, 1999:133). The artist uses this medium in order to indicate how memories become blurred as time passes, while the distinct smell of the Vicks also references how memory is often triggered by odours. As the viewer experiences the smell of Vicks, it generates associations that are completely different from those of the artist. These associations based on memory lead to the creation of other memories, indicating how the process of memory is interminable. Through the use of an autobiographical reference, together with the repetition of the tins of Vicks, Baker suggests a simultaneous absence and presence of her father. This idea parallels the performative process of memory as both remembering and forgetting.

The use of smell also plays a role in my own art practice, as enamel paint has quite a marked odour. My personal associations with this smell are linked with change, as the smell of paint usually implies redecorating or fixing up old and chipped paint surfaces. Thus, my association is quite positive, but it also has implications of erasure or perhaps concealment is a more appropriate description. For others, the smell of strong paint can be unpleasant: some of my friends have felt nauseous when they come into my studio. Therefore, the paint and its smell can trigger both positive and negative emotions. I would like to suggest that, as the paint can signal both newness and an erasure, this element in my work, like in *So it Goes*, reflects remembering and forgetting as part of performing memory.

Inscription: Paint/Draw

In *Karavaankinners* (fig.14), the idea of inscription is again physically manifested within the work. Thus it is through this form of mark-making that I perform my memories. I suggest that the physical production of *Karavaankinners* can be regarded as a meeting point between painting and drawing. Drawing, an extremely difficult concept to define, has

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[85] See '*Kiekie*: Performing the Gaze' for a discussion of some of Baker's more recent work.

been subjected to very limiting definitions. For example, Philip Rawson in *Drawing* claims that it is "that element in a work of art which is independent of colour or actual three-dimensional space, the underlying conceptual structure which may be indicated by tone alone" (1969:1). As I focused on drawing for the larger part of my undergraduate studies, I have struggled with the problem of finding an adequate definition of drawing.[86] However, for the purposes of this discussion, I would like to suggest that drawing includes all processes of inscription.

I consider *Karavaankinners* as a paint/draw, as in this work I foreground the notion of inscription. The act of inscribing the text within the figures of my family members, together with the meaning conveyed by them, which displays some quite aggressive views or emotions, reinforces the sense of violence[87] associated with the process of mark-making. Thus there is a strong relationship between the text and the physical process through which it is produced.

In contrast to this aggression and sense of violence in the text, the faces and body language of the figures are not very emotive and seem quite stiff in relation to my expressive autographic mark, which suggests a certain tension in the work. The figures are practically naked, yet there is a static quality and lack of sexuality in them that strongly contrasts with the sensuous feel of the paint. The surface appearance of the work, through highlighting the lifelessness of the figures, contradicts my own emotional experience of the weekend in question.

Family secrets: image, text and narrative

In this work, as in all the others on the exhibition, I use the paint to both hide and expose my secrets, either by erasing my thoughts through painting over them or exposing my secrets by inscribing them into the painted surface. This exposure of secrets implies that memory is constructed in the present rather than in the past. According to Kuhn, secrets form a significant part of memory work. She suggests that "secrets inhabit the borderlines of memory" and she specifically elaborates on family secrets (1995:2). Kuhn claims that

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[86] Defining the concept of drawing is a highly debated topic in art discourse, but the spatial restrictions of this research do not allow me an indepth discussion of this issue.

[87] The feminist author, Simone de Beauvior, in her acclaimed book *The Second Sex*, states: "Violence is the authentic proof of each one's loyalty to himself, to his passions, to his own will; radically to deny this will is to deny oneself an objective truth, it is to wall oneself up in an abstract subjectivity; anger or revolt that does not get into the muscles remains a figment of the imagination. It is a profound frustration not to be able to register one's feelings upon the face of the world" (354:1949).

"[a] family without secrets is rare indeed" and that these secret memories "are so deeply buried that they elude the conscious awareness even of those most closely involved" (1995:2).

She elaborates:

> Secrets haunt our memory-stories, giving them pattern and shape. Family secrets are the other side of the family's public face, of the stories families tell themselves, and the world, about themselves. Characters and happenings that do not slot neatly into the flow of the family narrative are ruthlessly edited out. (Kuhn, 1995:2)

Kuhn claims that although most of us perceive the family environment as safe and secure, like many things in life, it is not quite so uncomplicated (1995:1). As claimed earlier, the family is a precarious construction, in which there are reciprocal constructions of each other's identities being played out.

Another South African artist, Terry Kurgan, explores processes of remembering and the revealing of family secrets in her investigation of the family construct through combination of image, text and autobiography. This is particularly evident in *Family Affairs* (1999), an artwork that consists of three photographs and two e-mail letters, where Kurgan engages particularly with the "process of memory and how it yields alternative forms of knowledge" (Schmamann, 2004:29-30).
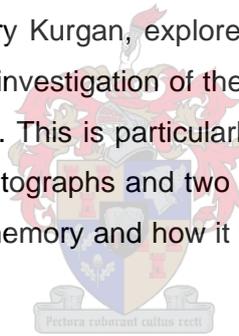
In the first photograph (fig.15), presented in *Family Affairs* the viewer is confronted with Kurgan's maternal grandmother, Tusia, who is holding her one-year old daughter, Leonia, in her arms. The second photograph (fig.16) reveals the next generation, where Leonia Kurgan is holding the one-year old, Terry, while the third photograph (fig.17) presents the artist herself with her one-year old daughter, Jessie.

The first e-mail, dated August 24 1999, is from Terry to Leonia. In it, the daughter asks her mother, now living in California, about her memories of the photographs:

> Dear Mom,
>
> I'm working on a new show and wanted to ask you something. I've recently been looking at some of my childhood photographs and thinking about family photographs and their meanings. How powerful they are in their ability to 'make' memory and construct family relationships. And then too how ambiguous and deceptive these pictures can be ... . (Williamson, 2000: http://www.artthrob.co.za/00aug/artbio.html)

In a second e-mail, dated August 26 1999, from Leonia to Terry, the mother responds to her daughter's questions. Initially Kurgan's work seems to be merely an interesting record of three generations of mothers and daughters. However, once one engages with the content of the e-mails, the work is activated in a very different way. In her e-mail to Terry, Leonia Kurgan indicates that this photograph is disquieting, because Tusia 'looks like such a regular mother'. Leonia explains this statement by saying that perhaps her mother was also 'regular', but that her impression of her was 'coloured' by the fact that Tusia once told her about an affair she had while pregnant with Leonia (cited in Schmamann, 2004:29;30).

She continues:

> She was not particularly maternal but she did love me in her own way. I wish I had a picture of my mother with her mother. It would probably explain a lot. There were things she gave. Her charm, her optimistic attitude to life. What she did not give me was a feeling of being special, that she loved me no matter what. And it colours how I look at her picture of her and me, when I was a baby and she was a young woman of 32. (L. Kurgan, cited in Schmamann, 2004:30)

It is therefore only when one reads the e-mail that one learns the significance of these images. An image that seems to be an expression of the ideal to the viewer is, in fact, experienced very differently by Leonia Kurgan and once again – like in *Karavaankinners* – the surface appearance is very different from the subjective experience of both mother and daughter. The text serves to alter the meaning of the image quite considerably and the constructed nature of the images is therefore revealed through the text .[88]

As these photographs are black and white, there is a nostalgic reference created with the past, but it is my impression that Kurgan is critical of this idealization of memory and questions the so-called security of the family construct. Various questions also arise from the relationship that is set up between the image and the text. Why did each generation take the portrait when the child was one-year old? Why and with whom did Tusia have an affair? How could the artist reveal this information about her grandmother to the world?

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[88]From the fact that this photograph was not in Leonia's private possession, together with the fact that one learns from her e-mail that it was a professional photographer who was hired to take the photograph, one can assume that Tusia's intention was for this photograph to have wider signification than mere personal pleasure. Rather, the image was sent to various family members and "consciously or unconsciously, she was motivated by a drive to construct herself as the image of the model mother and, more importantly, to be witnessed in this role by others" (Schmamann, 2004: 31)

However, there are no definitive answers provided – through images or text – and, like all memory work, this only leads to a further process of questioning.

In *Karavaankinners* I deal with issues similar to Kurgan's, as I also question the stability of the family unit, expose some of my family's so-called 'secrets' through the inscription of text and also create a nostalgic feeling through the use of black and white paint. The lack of colour in my work serves to highlight the sadness experienced without my twin.

The relationship between image and text is quite effective as I express my unhappiness by scratching onto the figure of my twin. The feeling of rejection that I experienced when my brother left is expressed in the following words: "Hoekom het jy my abandon? KOM TERUG ek val uitmekaar sonder jou" ("Why did you abandon me? COME BACK I am falling apart without you"). (fig.18). The sense of violence associated here with scratching into the figure is appropriate, because there is also an anger in these words; anger at him and anger at myself for not being able to cope without him. In this case, the relationship between text and image reinforces each other, but this is not always the case in this paint/draw.

Some of the statements that I make are extremely contradictory. For example, inscribed on my mother's bathing suit are the words "STOP with the weight obsession" and "MOENIE SE EK MOET RELAX NIE. Dit pis my af" ("Don't tell me to relax. It pisses me off"), yet, right underneath that are the words: "MAAR EK LOVE JOU NOGSTEEDS" ("But I still love you"). (fig.19). There is not only tension between the images and the text (as mentioned earlier), but also within the different texts themselves. In one sentence I am angry and flinging around accusations, while in the next I am sad and longing. As such, I am critical of my family members, but also express my love for them.

Through the process of inscription I provide the viewer with family 'secrets', private jokes, lines from songs and, sometimes, whatever thoughts came into my head at the time (fig.20). The exposure of family secrets includes the fact that my sister had expensive laser therapy on her bikini-line and that my dad secretly started smoking again. By exposing these private stories I attempt to disrupt the flow of the ideal family narrative. Through this intervention I represent the family not as whole, happy and unified, but rather as a space where tension and masquerade is often, in my experience, the norm rather than the exception.

However, by disregarding the splitting between the panels when I inscribe the text, these texts, like the tent in the background, forms a horizontal connection between the figures. My confessional writing process could, thus, suggest a certain sense of suturing of the relationships between the family members, which, in turn, can imply that the inscription of text reflects a cathartic process; a process which can make the family whole again.

Finally, I would like to recall Kuhn's approach to memory:

> For the practitioners of memory work, it is not merely a question of *what* we choose to keep in our memory boxes – which particular traces of our past we lovingly or not so lovingly preserved – but of what we do with them, *how* we use these relics to make memories, and how we then make use of the stories they generate to give deeper meaning to, and if necessary to change, our lives today (1995: 158).

Summary

In this volume, '*Karavaankinners*: Performing Memory' I have investigated various theories about memory and come to the conclusion that it is performative, in that it can be regarded as an active process of remembering and forgetting, through representation of the past in the present. I have also explored the relationship between memory, narrative and autobiography and revealed that within this symbiotic relationship memory can be regarded as a processual textual representation of subjectivity. Furthermore, I have revealed that the family is a precarious construct similar to individual subjectivity. Through the use of both image, text and the performance of memory, I represent my own subjectivities in relation to those of my family members as 'still in process', and by oscillating between binary oppositions, such as presence and absence/ revealing and concealing/ remembering and forgetting/ proximity and alienation, I attempt to refuse simple readings of *Karavaankinners*.

Kaartehuis Kroniek: Performing the Narrative

> … narrative starts with the history of mankind; there is not, there has never been anywhere, any people without narrative; all classes, all human groups have their stories, and very often these stories are enjoyed by men of different and even opposite cultural backgrounds: narrative remains largely unconcerned with good or bad literature. Like life itself, it is there, international, transhistorical, transcultural. (Barthes, 1975:237)

> … in ethnographic societies the responsibility for a narrative is never assumed by a person but by a mediator, shaman or relator whose 'performance' – the mastery of the narrative code – may possibly be admired but never his 'genius'. (Barthes, 1997:142)

This volume of my thesis, *Kaartehuis Kroniek*, is concerned with the performative nature of narrative. The first word of the title 'Kaartehuis' (House of Cards) signifies something that is unstable and fragile and suggests the saying 'to collapse like a house of cards', and the second part of the word '-huis' (house) refers to a home, and this leads to connections with family, stability and security. The second word 'Kroniek' (Chronicle) refers to a group of narratives. The title of this work, *Kaartehuis Kroniek* (fig.1-6) therefore indicates the problematic and precarious nature of identity construction and the role that narrative plays within that process.
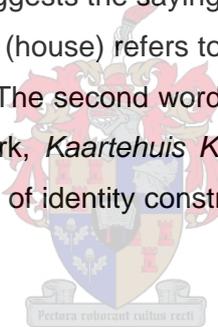
This volume explores how image, text and narrative function in the determination of subjectivities. In this piece I process deconstructing notions of family, illness and fixed identity through the depiction of myself, my family and my boyfriend. I suggest that my process of production references the Kristevan notion of intertextuality and the linguistic concept of the palimpsest. Through a discussion of the poststructural linguistic theories of Barthes and Foucault, in which they reconsider the role of the author and acknowledge the role of the viewer in the construction of meaning, I suggest that the performativity of narrative lies in the dialogue between the viewer and the artwork, as well as in the act of writing within an art-making context. I suggest further that narrative has a spatial quality in terms of Barthes' ideas concerning text, a temporal quality in terms of the palimpsest. There is also an exploration of the installational characteristics of this work which turns the discussion to the split that is created within the subject when autobiographical inscription takes place. Finally, I explore the binary categorizations in self-representation.

Defining narrative in terms of identity construction

Before I delve into a definition of narrative, it is perhaps necessary to define what it is not. According to Gerald Prince, a theorist of narrative, "a single linguistic sign or the repetition of the same sign, a series of nonsensical syllables, a purely phatic utterance, a simple existential statement, but also the mere description of an action …, a syllogism … an argument", none of these constitute a narrative (2005:375). Prince defines the difference between a sign and a narrative by claiming that "unlike a sign, a narrative is not recognized but understood" (2005:375). Thus, a certain level of comprehension is necessary before a text may be considered a narrative.

Cultural theorist, Paul Colbey, claims that narrative is "part of the general process of *representation* which takes place in human discourse" (2001:3). Cultural theorist, Arthur Asa Berger, on the other hand regards it as *both* a form of representation and a "mode of reasoning" and contends that narrative is "the primary way through which humans organize their experiences into temporally meaningful episodes" (1997:10). As indicated by Prince, narrative is also "universal and infinitely varied" and "among other things, a collection of signs which can be grouped into various classes" (1982:7) Literary theorists, Susana Onega and José Landa, assert that a narrative is the "semiotic representation of a series of events meaningfully connected in a temporal and causal way …" and that such a text "is also an instance of discourse, of linguistic action" (1996:3; 5). In consideration of these ideas, I would like to employ the term 'narrative' as a form of representation and signification which is responsible for the constitution of subjectivities within discourse.

Furthermore, it is important to note that I take a constructionist approach to narrative. Colbey explains, on the basis of cultural theorist, Stuart Hall's theorization of representation, that this kind of approach regards meaning as "neither in the control of the producer nor the thing being represented; instead, it identifies the thoroughly social nature of the *construction* of meaning, the fact that representational systems, rather than their users and objects, allow meaning to occur" (2001:3).[89] This reinforces my view of the subject as reliant on language and discourse in order to be positioned within society, in which I position myself as a young white South African woman, working from within the context of an academic institution.

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[89] Hall also identifies two other ways of interpreting representation, namely the 'reflective' and 'intentional' approach, where the first "sees meaning as residing in the person or thing in the real world; a representation such as narrative 'reflects' that meaning"; while the latter sees meaning in the control exercised by the producer of a representational form such as narrative; *s/he* uses representation to make the world 'mean'" (Hall cited in Colbey, 2001:3).

The philosopher, Hilde Lindemann Nelson, suggests that "[p]ersonal identities consist of a connective tissue of narratives", where some of the stories that define a person's subjectivity "may be deeply at odds with one an other … while others might be contained one within the other and so be part of the same larger narrative strand" (2001:72;76). Peggy Phelan, in her book, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, also connects the subject with narrative by claiming that the process through which we create our identity is "a leap into a narrative that employs seeing as a way of knowing" (1993:5). She continues by saying that "[m]imetic correspondence has a psychic appeal because one seeks a self-image within the representational frame" (1993:5). This resonates with Kaja Silverman's suggestion that it is impossible to see ourselves without the involvement of representation (1989:74).[90] From this it can be suggested that the subject is constituted through multiple narrative representations within discourse.

Intertextuality and the palimpsest

The fact that identities involve a multitude of narratives that exist in conflict and in harmony draws on the Kristevan idea of intertextuality (Allen, 2003: 79). According to this idea, each text exists in relation to others and suggests, in fact, that texts are more indebted to other texts than to the author. Daniel Chandler explains that the notion of intertextuality not only blurs the boundaries between texts, but also "between texts and the world of lived experience"; he states: "we know no pre-textual experience"; thus the "world as we know it is merely its current representation" (s.a: http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/S4B/sem09. html). Harold Bloom, on the other hand, takes the concept of intertextuality to the extreme by claiming that "[t]here are no texts, but only relationships between texts" (cited in Pfister, 1991:213).

The intertextual nature of the work, *Kaartehuis Kroniek*, is evident from the way that I interweave autobiographical (fig.6) and found text, including medical definitions and Afrikaans idioms in it. By using these texts in conjunction with images of my family and boyfriend an intertextual relationship is set up, not only between different texts but also between image and text, and so the boundaries between several forms of communication become blurred. This idea is also visually reinforced by the figures that increasingly fade under the weight of the text, as one moves towards the back of the installation space, which, in turn, reflects the poststructural idea that subjectivities are determined by language and discourse. The repetitive representation of the same figures (each figure

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[90] See '*Kiekie*: Performing the Gaze' for an exploration of how the subject is constituted by the gaze within representation.

appears three times in an increasingly faded form) also suggests the multiple selves of poststructural identity, indicating not only identity's fluidity, but also the inability to be fixed in a concrete form.

South African artist, Bridget Baker's, two-projector video installation *Stitch* (1999) (fig.7-8), can be viewed as a play on the notion of intertextuality from the way she sets up a relationship between image and found texts with autobiographical references. This self-representation originated out of an angry letter the artist received from an ex-boyfriend, in which he repeatedly accuses Baker of running away from him. This led Baker, "who has described her shielded upbringing in a fundamental Christian family as 'monstrously idyllic', and whose adult work turns on a questioning of that past" to look in the Bible for references to running. She found quotations such as: 'Run in such a way as to get the prize' and 'Let us run with perseverance the race'. Furthermore, she looked at letters from her sister stating: 'It seems to be running in the family', and her mother saying: 'I am concerned that you are running around' (cited in Atkinson, 1999: http://www.artthrob. co.za/99apr/listings.htm).

The artist then embroidered these phrases on reflective running belts and the same texts were pinned on the wall as a background for the twin video projections. According to South African art critic, Chris Roper, the left panel shows a close-up of Baker's striking, yet tranquil face as she slowly runs, going nowhere, seemingly on a tread-mill, while the right panel shows an endless stream of blurry runners coming towards her (1999: http://www.chico.mweb.co.za/mg/ art/fineart/9904/990401-channel.html). The text on the running belts serves to disrupt the cohesion of the imagery and fragment the image of the artist, again suggesting the disjointed nature of post-structural identity. The effect of the panels of text read from left to right is also disrupted because of the runners that move from right to left. In this way Baker deconstructs the cohesion of the narrative through the intertextual relationship between image and text.

In his book *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology*, W.J.T Mitchell suggests that the relationship between visual and verbal forms of representation relies on the notion of the other, where he defines this relationship as a "subversion, in which language or imagery looks into its own heart and finds there lurking its opposite number" (1986, 43). In a later publication, *Picture theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representations*, he defines the relationship as follows:

One must precede the other, dominate, resist, supplement the other. This otherness or alterity of image and text is not just a matter of analogous structure, as if images just happened to be the "other" to texts. It is …the very terms in which alterity as such is expressed in phenomenological reflection, especially in the relation of the speaking Self and seen Other. (Mitchell,1994:28)

Mitchell also suggests the "suturing of image and text" (1994:9;28) and in considering this idea, together with the above statement, I would like to propose that image and text, which are both languages of discourse, can be used in a relationship, since both suggest and disrupt the seamless sense of cohesion of linearity that is associated with narrative. The relation between the speaking Self and seen other also suggests the exchange between the viewer and the art object.

Mitchell's use of the self/other relationship, which is a term associated with psychoanalytic theories, leads me once more to one of the ideas of the feminist theorist, Julia Kristeva, in which she explores the role that text plays in the signification of the subject, while drawing heavily on the psychoanalytic theories of Lacan. Kristeva outlines two orders of signification, namely "the semiotic and symbolic". She explains that the semiotic is controlled by the mother's influence at the pre-Oedipal stage, where words are not used for their meaning or what they signify but for their "rhythm, intonation, [and] the musicality" thereof (cited in Burke, 1998:49) This semiotic language "arises from a maelstrom of irrational signification", while symbolic language "is the linear, syntactic and representational discourse of socially constituted reality", which is gained during the state of decline of the Oedipus complex (cited in Burke, 1998:49). If the Symbolic can be regarded as "'the domain of propositions and positions, the site for the creation of unified texts, cultural representations and knowledges'", then the semiotic, "'is the undirected and uncontrolled input of the repressed impulses, energies and spasms of the infant in the first case, and later, of the subject in moments of crisis and upheaval'" (Grosz, 1992:195, cited in Schmamann, 2004:30).

I would like to propose that my use of text within my work displays characteristics of both the semiotic and the symbolic. In defiance of logical linear narrative structure, specifically the hand-written autobiographical texts that are inscribed into the figures, I bring the semiotic into play (fig.9-10). Kristeva's suggestion, that this kind of text emerges when one experiences moments of crisis, is also especially relevant, as I usually wrote these texts when I missed my twin the most; and even though they do not neccesarily all say something about him, the trauma of our separation, which I perceive as his abandonment of me, is the underlying motivation for these fragmented narratives. The symbolic is

invoked, on the other hand, through the use of Afrikaans idioms (fig.11), which are stamped onto the images. By using this mediated form of expression and denying the personal element of handwritten text, I construct a relatively distanced impression of me and my loved ones. Yet these idiomatic expressions are sometimes quite contradictory, as they do not all reflect how I feel about these individuals. By moving between the semiotic and the symbolic an intertextual relationship is set up between different kinds of language, which implies a tension in the overall narrative in *Kaartehuis Kroniek*.

The intertextual characteristic of the text that I employ can also be linked to the notion of the palimpsest, a term which Gerard Genette in fact uses to refer to a form of intertextuality (Macey, 2000:288).[91] According to The *Penguin Dictionary of Critical Theory*, 'palimpsest' refers to "[a] paper or parchment on which the original text has been partially erased or effaced to allow a new text to be written, leaving fragments of the original still visible" (Macey, 2000:288).

Richard Terdiman indicates that Baudelaire suggests the palimpsest[92] as a metaphor for remembering:

> The metaphorical substrate for inscription – memory – thus *rewrites* the text that it makes available for rereading. In inscribing, it simultaneously transforms. The point is crucial: the texts of memories are not copies but representations. They are always overwritten by the process of writing itself. (Terdiman, 1993:109)
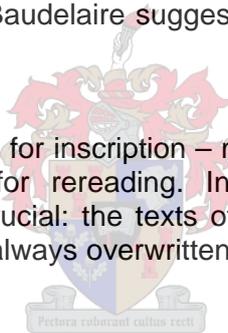
From this I understand that, in the process of writing down memories, the act itself alters the memory to such an extent that the act of inscribing becomes more prominent than the memory.[93] It can, thus, be suggested that the physical act of inscribing can be regarded as performative.

The notion of the palimpsest is visible in *Kaartehuis Kroniek* (fig.12) in the fragmentary quality of both image and text. Through the processes of inscribing, erasing and re-inscribing, the works have become layered and complex. Sometimes there are only traces of hand-written text visible beneath the stamped and stencilled texts, and the figures have also become merely faint impressions under the layers of text. By suggesting the

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[91] See Genette's book *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* for a more literary definition of this concept.

[92] According to The *Penguin Dictionary, of Critical Theory* 'palimpsest' refers to "[a] paper or parchment on which the original text has been partially erased or effaced to allow a new text to be written, leaving fragments of the original still visible" (Macey, 2000:288).

[93] See '*Karavaankinners*: Performing Memory' for a reflection on both memory and the notion of inscription in terms of identity construction.

presence of absent text, both presence and absence are suggested. Yet, the fact that texts are visible from underneath also suggests the temporal quality of the narrative in this work, as the passing of time in terms of the writing of these texts is suggested by the layering and traces.

In layering image and text through the act of painting, there is both a revealing and concealing of my thoughts, which also implies both self-revelation and self-protection (fig.13). Because of this layering, the viewer cannot access all the information and so he/she becomes responsible for constructing a narrative out of the traces that are provided.

The nature of language and the process of performing narrative

In line with the responsibility of the viewer, or in this case the reader of text, to perform the text, Umberto Eco states that:

> To salvage the text – that is to transform it from an illusion of meaning to the awareness that meaning is infinite – the reader must suspect that every line of it conceals another secret of meaning; words, instead of saying, hide the untold: the glory of the reader is to discover that texts can say anything … . (1994:39)

In linguistic theory, through the application of poststructural ideas, the role of the author has been questioned and the responsibility of the reader[94] has been moved to the foreground. The French literary theorist and critic, Barthes, in his essay 'The Death of the Author' defies traditional views of the author[95] of texts, liberating the meaning of texts from the "bounds of particular biographical details", while separating the "traditional connections between the 'life' and 'work' of the artist" (Barthes cited in Meskimmon, 1996:71). He contends that the traditional impression of literature in ordinary culture is obsessively focused on the author and that clarification of a work is always sought in the subject who created it, "as if it were always in the end, through the more or less transparent allegory of the fiction, the voice of a single person, the author 'confiding' in us" (Barthes, 1997:143).[96]

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[94] Since artworks can be read as texts, I consider the reader as the viewer and the author as the artist.

[95] Barthes elaborates on the traditional view of the author by maintaining that it is a "modern figure, a product of our society insofar as, emerging from the Middle Ages with English empiricism, French rationalism and the personal faith of the Reformation it discovered the prestige of the individual, of, as it is more nobly put, the 'human person'" (1997:142-3).

[96] See 'Karavaankinners: Performing Memory' for a discussion of the confessional in terms of self-representation.

Through claiming the 'death' of the author, Barthes conceptualizes a new way of looking at text and it is his belief that "[w]riting is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body of writing" (1997:142). Thus, like identity that is no longer stable and unified, "the text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash" (Barthes, 1997:146). Barthes further explains that the multitudes of writings that make up a text are focused on one place and that is the reader and not the author. He suggests that "the reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed,[97] without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination" (1997:148). Barthes comes to the conclusion that "it is language which speaks, not the author; to write is ... to reach the point where only language acts, 'performs', and not 'me'" (1997, 143).

Barthes' idea of equating text with a spatial construction resonates within *Kaartehuis Kroniek* (fig.14), as the multiple texts are expanded into a three dimensional space. The work consists of eighteen pieces that can be divided into three sets made up of six pieces each. The formation, in which the pieces within each set is spaced in the room, represents a kind of distorted family tree, or perhaps rather how I would 'place' my loved ones in relation to their influence on my subjectivities. As the viewer moves between the pieces, there is a confrontation with life-sized figures that restricts linear movement through the space. The viewer needs to weave between the images in order to look at them and in this way there is a disruption of the various narratives at play within the work. It becomes a physical encounter of the multi-dimensional way that language informs experience and, consequently, representations of subjectivities. Seeing that the movement of the viewer cannot be prescribed, the narrative becomes interchangeable and so each viewer is responsible for the potential performance of new narratives.

The viewer's disruption of the narrative can also be considered in light of the linguistic notion of "interactivity", which is defined as the "participation of the reader in the actual production of the narrative text, especially participation that affects the information displayed to the reader/spectator"[98] (Phelan & Rabinowitz, 2005:547). Peggy Phelan also

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[97] The notions of inscription of both Griselda Pollock and Judith Bulter are explored in '*Knip die Naelstring*: Performing Gender' in relation to performing subjectivity.
[98] The notion of interactivity is mainly associated with digital forms of text; this "[i]nteractivity can be either strictly selective or productive: in the selective variety the user's participation is limited to clicking on hyperlinks, while in the productive form the user's input consists of text or simulated

claims that when one attempts to represent oneself there is always a need for a witness, whether this witness is real or imaginary (1993:5). As narrative can be regarded as a representational process of constituting subjectivity, the viewer not only disrupts the narrative but also forms a necessary part of the performance of my subjectivities and those of my family members.

Liz Stanley, an author who is concerned with the intersection between autobiography and requirements of regulatory organisational systems, claims that:

> Reading is both active and a process; it also relies heavily on intertextuality. Texts are certainly not inert and how they are structured certainly intends a preferred reading. ... However, readers are also active readers. ... We may be textually persuaded, cajoled, led and misled; but we can, and we do, also scrutinise and analyse, puzzle and ponder, resist and reject. (1992:131 cited in Scott & Scott, 2000:129)

Since performativity is defined as the active and ritualistic processes that are responsible for the construction of subjectivities, reading can be regarded as performative and it is through the process of engaging with the text that narrative becomes performative. Phelan states that "the interaction between the art object and the spectator is, essentially, performative" (1993:147). I would like to suggest then, that narrative is performed, not only through the act of writing but also within the intersection between the narratives of the viewer and those of the artist.
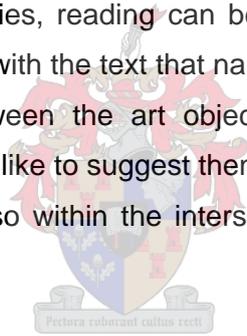
Before I consider my work in more detail I would first like to consider some of the French philosopher's, Michel Foucault's, ideas regarding the question of authorship, as he also places prominence on the role of the viewer. In his essay 'What Is an Author?', he introduces the concept of 'author function', where, unlike Barthes, he does not merely "'kill' the author and invent the reader as the agent by which texts gain meaning," but introduces "social expectations about authorship and its uses" (Foucault, cited in Meskimmon, 1996:71).

Foucault claims that "the function of the author is to characterize the existence, circulation, and operation of certain discourses within a society" (1994: 184). He suggests that "the 'author-function' does not refer, purely and simply, to an actual individual insofar as it

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actions that become events in a fictional world" (Phelan & Rabinowitz, 2005:547). The author of *Hyper/Text/Theory*, George Landow, claims that hypertext "has much in common with recent literary and critical theory. For example, like much recent work by poststructuralists, such as Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida, hypertext reconceives conventional, long-held assumptions about authors and readers and the texts they write and read" (Landow, 1994:1).

simultaneously gives rise to a variety of egos and to a series of subjective positions that individuals of any class may come to occupy"[99] (1994: 184; 188). Foucault also claims that within this configuration of the author, writing is transformed "into an interplay of signs, regulated less by the content it signifies than by the very nature of the signifier" (1994:180) Through this claim, he not only affirms the visuality of text, which is one of the central components of my paint/install, *Kaartehuis Kroniek*, but also references the multiple subjectivities that are involved in poststructural identity construction.

Yet, Foucault also states that writing is now "primarily concerned with creating an opening where the writing subject endlessly disappears" (1994:180). Although this idea can be seen to be reflected in my practical research in the way that my figures fade beneath the text, this statement can be regarded as quite problematic when viewed from a feminist perspective. As the writing subject or author disappears, the agency of the subject is clearly affected and when one considers the definition of Barthes and that of Foucault of the author, it seems that control over meaning production is, in fact, completely denied.

The feminist author, Rosemary Betterton provides a counter-argument for Barthes' theory of the author in which "[l]anguage itself is seen as constructing an imaginary coherence of the self which achieves its unity only in the act of being read" (Betterton, 1996:164).[100] Betterton argues that if language and discourse are primarily masculine, then these present a sense of subjectivity to men which is not the same as that presented to women (1996:164). In recent feminist theory, she claims, there has been an increasing exploration to delineate a space from which women may speak and act as subjects, the reasoning behind this being that "a female artist cannot simply inhabit masculine artistic space" because, as "a woman she is differently positioned within language" (1996:164-5). Betterton suggests that "it is the mastery of language and codes of representation which must be disrupted in order to open up a space for the feminine" and as "language and meaning are themselves open to change, this self is not fixed, but continually in change and sometimes in conflict" (1996:165).

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[99] According to Foucault, the author-function is also "tied to the legal and institutional systems that circumscribe, determine, and articulate the realm of discourses; it does not operate in a uniform manner in all discourses, at all times, and in any given culture; it is not defined by the spontaneous attribution of a text to its creator, but through a series of precise and complex procedures …" (1994:188).

[100] Rosemary Betterton claims that although "[w]omen might be expected to have a vested interest in the disappearance of this 'writing body' since, following the classic Cartesian mind-body split of the rational Enlightenment subject …, masculinity has been identified with mind, rationality and culture, whereas femininity is aligned with the body, emotion and nature", Barthes' solution to the "problem of the body in the text seems equally unsatisfactory, positing an aesthetics of the self which is disembodied and without specific identity or location" (Betteron, 1996:191).

Creating art from a female subject position, I also experience this problem and that is probably why I am concerned with the nature of language. In *Kaartehuis Kroniek*, but also in most of my other work, I use crude language (fig.15-17) in an attempt to disrupt and transgress the boundaries that are set for women within the South African context, specifically in terms of the conservative Afrikaans community. This language is not only displayed in the autobiographical text but also in idioms, like "Daar is kak in die land" which translates as "The shit has hit the fan", where it is mediated and becomes acceptable through idiomatic expression. I also use idioms such as "Vuil Hart, Vuil Mond", which means "Foul-minded, foul-mouthed", as a subtle questioning of the constructed nature of language and the standards set by society.

The crude texts also form part of my so-called semiotic, autobiographical texts, which are mainly visible on the side of the pieces that do not have figures on them. It is interesting to note that the black panels with white texts have the feeling of the school blackboard (fig.18), and suggests the notion of the child having to write out her/his transgression on this board. By deliberately using crude text, this association is also disrupted.

However, this connection with a school blackboard also references the concept of the confessional, which, in turn, leads to the association with autobiography. Given that narrative is considered in terms of self-representations, an inquiry into theories around autobiographical narrative also becomes necessary.

Splitting subjectivities within autobiographical writing: the double self

Cultural and film theorist, Susannah Radstone, suggests that lately, under the influence of structuralism, poststructuralism and psychoanalysis, autobiographical criticism has moved from a comprehension of autobiography's history as a "'r*esponse*' to changing ideas about the nature of the self to an understanding of the part played by language, genre and discourse in the constitution of subjectivity" (Radstone, 2000:202). Now, suggests Radstone, autobiographical criticism has taken up the idea of the "subject's *illusory* coherence, unity and autonomy", a notion primarily, but not exclusively, influenced by Lacanian psychoanalysis, specifically his theory around the mirror stage,[101] where the infant's development is based on the ego's misrecognition of itself as whole and cohesive" (2000:202). The impact of Lacan's theory has "brought about a thoroughgoing

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[101] '*Knip die Naelstring*: Performing Gender' provides an examination of Lacan's mirror stage.

reconceptualisation of the relation between the author – the writing 'I' – and the 'I' which is written about by that author" (2000:202). Radstone continues by explaining that once it has been suggested there are two subject positions in conflict with each other, rather than mirroring each other, it becomes no longer feasible to argue that autobiography mirrors the life of its author (2000:202-203). It can therefore be maintained that within autobiography "at least two 'selves' are involved in the writing of a life: the self then, and the self now, doing the writing" (Cosslett, Lury & Summerfield, 2000:5).

This idea is also propounded by Sean Burke in his book, *The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida*. He claims that, even if there were an ideal scenario[102] created for the autobiographical writer, "there would always be a hiatus, both spatio-temporal and ontological between he who writes, and what is written" and that this splitting is unavoidable[103] (1998:55). Burke also quotes the Russian literary theorist, Mikhail Bakhtin, who claims that "[t]o identify oneself absolutely with oneself, to identify one's 'I' with the 'I' that I tell is as impossible as to lift oneself up by one's hair … " (1999:55).

These ideas all suggest that the autobiographical author experiences a double split, which results in the obvious reference to the multiple identities of poststructuralism, yet it also infers the split between the "speaking Self and seen Other" (Mitchell, 1994:28); the split between the author and the reader; the viewer and the artist; text and image.
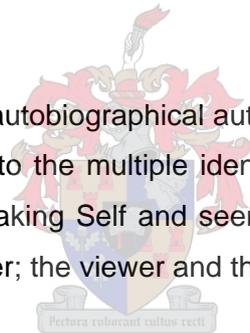
This notion of the split is visually explored in my work not only through the physical splitting of the panels that constitute the individual figures, but also through the splitting of the space by the creation of an installation with individual pieces. The space is even further split once the viewer moves into the installation environment.

Paint/Install

The work *Kaartehuis Kroniek* (fig.19) can be regarded as an intersection between painting and installation: as this work was inspired and developed from my desire to fill the long room, of the US gallery in Dorp Street, Stellenbosch, with figures that represent those people who are closest to me. According to J. H Reiss, within the tradition of installation

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[102]For such an ideal scenario, Burke proposes "that of the author who is engaged in a continual and self-reflexive autobiographical writing, a perennial diarist whose only concern is with the act of diarising" (1999:55).

[103]The linguist and poststructural theorist, Jacques Derrida, "in his more recent work, has warned against the tendency to confuse the complexities of autobiography with its 'impossibility' or 'death'" (Burke, 1998:57).

art there is always a "reciprocal relationship between the viewer and the work, the work and the space, and the space and the viewer" and the "spectator is in some way regarded as integral to the completion of the work" (1999:xiii).[104] Because of the way that this work is placed in the space and the role that the viewer plays within the construction of narrative representations of subjectivity, together with the fact that each piece consists primarily of paint, I regard this work as a paint/install.[105]

An installation is also a temporary construction. As *Kaartehuis Kroniek* consists of a distorted family tree, I would like to suggest that the use of installation[106] deconstructs the seeming stability of the family unit. The spectators also become part of the 'family tree' in the way that they position themselves within the space, and this also indicates the insecurity of the family structure. It is interesting to note that, according to feminist theorists, Sara Scott and Sue Scott, regardless of the prominence that is placed on the tracing of one's family tree, the role of narratives within families have not attracted a large response from the sociological field (Scott & Scott, 2000:129).

Alberto Melucci claims that within contemporary society the "traditional co-ordinates of personal identity (family, church, party, race, class) weaken" and, thus, "it becomes difficult to state with certainty who we are" (1997:61). Foucault suggests that it is, in fact, "systems of power such as the family or the legal system that produce subjects, not vice versa" (cited in Chinn, 1997:298) In this piece I aim to draw attention to how family narratives can play a central part in the performance of personal identities, especially through the viewer's role as "witness". However, I would also like to suggest that like poststructural notions of identity, the family and its narratives are unstable and open to deconstruction.

The body as image and text: trauma and illness

As in all the other works, the silhouette is used to indicate the mutable and fragile nature of identity construction. In *Kaartehuis Kroniek* these figures denote a simultaneous

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[104] In creating an installation, the artist treats an entire indoor space as a "single situation, rather than as a gallery for displaying separate works" (Reiss, 1999:xiii). In this exhibition, I regard the entire gallery as such a single situation and the interaction between the works is also suggested in this thesis, by the way I cross-reference between the four volumes.
[105] Although *Knip die Naelstring* is also installed in the space, I chose to focus on the main process that informed the creation of that work, namely printmaking.
[106] Installation art has also had particular significance within postcolonial feminist art practices, as it allows the investigation of identities that are "'founded on imaginary trajectories of here and not here, I and not-I and hence on metaphors of movement and place'" (Robertson et al, cited in Betterton, 1996:162).

absence and presence, invoking the idea of 'here and not-here', a space in-between. By using the silhouettes I attempt to deny easy binary categorization in my work. As one moves backwards into the space, there is a progression and a regression in both the images and the text. The images become increasingly filled with text, while there is a regression in the visibility of the figures. As one moves forwards from the back of the installation space, there is a confrontation with textual surfaces that also gradually become less visible, and, in the end, the text fades to mere indentation in the surface of the paint. Through the gradual fading of the figures there is also the suggestion that the image of the body becomes text, but in using text within an art-making context the text too becomes image. By moving between the visible and the invisible (fig.20-21), I not only disrupt binary oppositions, but also reference the processes of remembering and forgetting of memory production.[107]

Similar to the way that memories become blurred over time, the fading of the images and the text can also suggest the diminishing of the grief that I first experienced when my twin went to London. The French artist, Sophie Calle also draws on her life experiences in order to create art. In *Douleur exquise* (Exquisite pain) (2003),[108] she explores the process of coming to terms with grief and loss.

In this work she documents the 92 days of her travels through the Far East before a break-up with her lover who failed to meet her at the Imperial Hotel in New Delhi. When she returned to France, Calle decided to drive away her pain by engrossing herself in the suffering of others. Instead of telling people about her trip when they asked about it, she talked about her pain, in return asking them to tell her about the time they most suffered. She did this 99 times, until she had worn out her story through pure repetition, and in the process she came to terms with her grief.

The first half of the exhibition charts the 92-day period leading up to the separation, while she was visiting Japan. It is made up of photographs, letters, travel documents and all kinds of memorabilia, everything marked impersonally and retrospectively with an ominous looking, visa-like red stamp, denoting the specific day before unhappiness, for example, "28 days to unhappiness" and "67 days to unhappiness" (fig.22-23) (Cullinan, 2003: Internet). Many of these stamped photographs feature images of the bed and

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[107] See '*Karavaankinners*: Performing Memory' for an exploration of the silhouette as both presence and absence in the performance of memory.

[108] The dictionary definition of the title of the exhibition is: "Exquisite pain. [eks-kwizit payn] (med.) acutely felt, pin-point suffering". This definition features on the opening page of Sophie Calle's book 'Exquisite pain' and was also prominent at the exhibition (Calle, 2004:8).

through displaying these images Calle brings highly private moments of both solitude and sex into the public sphere. However, there is also a suggestion of the absence of the body; the bed as surface holding the body's trace.

The second half of the exhibition is concerned with how Calle worked through her pain and it is divided from the first half by the re-creation of room 261, where Calle was supposed to meet her lover (Princenthal,2005: http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mim1248/is_8_93/ai_n15379633/pg_2).

For the exhibition in Paris, she had her stories and those of the people that she interviewed hand-embroidered[109] onto large wall hangings, with the anonymous stories done on white silk and her own on grey (Gentleman, 2004: Internet). It is particularly appropriate that the various stories are stitched onto material "illustrating the minute intricacies that produce an apparently seamless surface" and this also reflects the way in which Calle's "narrative weaves in and out of other narratives" (Ridge, 2004: Internet).[110] In Calle's book, *Exquisite Pain*, which is based on her Paris exhibition, her own story and reflections are placed each time next to the story of an anonymous person's misery. Each of these people's stories is accompanied by a photograph illustrating some aspect of her/his experience, while Calle's story is matched with the image of the red phone that signalled the start of her pain (fig.24).

The work becomes almost a visual display of the way grief functions. This is particularly evident in the book, [111] where the text describing Calle's misery gradually fades from crisp white letters on a black page, to grey, until finally one is presented, at the 99th telling of the story, with a blank space. Thus, the memory has been dulled and the pain is not as 'exquisite'. Gentleman states that Calle "would be horrified at any suggestion that there is a self-help element to her work, and yet the way the narrative becomes less hysterical and more detached as the weeks pass is a soothing demonstration of how misery fades" (2004:http://www.guardian.co.uk/arts/feature/story/0,11710,1372510,00.html#articlecontinue).

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[109] See '*Knip die Naelstring*: Performing Gender' where I discuss the use of my mother's handwriting in order to perform my identity as well as that of my twin.

[110] According to Amelia Gentleman the stories of other people's distress, which are beautifully and movingly written, "save the project from being merely contrived and pretentious, or an exercise in self-indulgence" (Gentleman, 2004: http://www.guardian.co.uk/arts/feature/story/0,11710,1372510,00.html#articlecontinue).

[111] The way in which this thesis is presented also refers to some elements of my exhibition: there is the format of the diary that suggests the notion of autobiographical writing and the placing of image and text in relation to each other within this document,

There is a strong link between my paint/install and *Douleur exquise*, not only in terms of the processing of grief, but also in terms of the repetitive performance of narrative. I freely acknowledge the self-help element in all my works, however, and admit that the process of art-making can be a cathartic experience, specifically through the performative process of writing.

Calle's use of the word 'exquisite' in relation to pain suggests a certain mixture of pleasure and pain, which further implies a measure of masochistic dependency on pain. Through the medical text (fig.25) that I use in the last set of images within this paint/install, I reference my relationship with pain over the past three years. The text that I used refers to all the illnesses, emotional and physical, that I have suffered during the period of this research: including panic attacks, typhoid fever, depression, bronchitis, insomnia, and others.[112] There are also references to sleeping pills and other medication, which implies a certain level of dependency in relation to pain.

I explore illness as a kind of physical narrative that is performed on the body in order to draw attention to the trauma of dislocation and resultant disruption of the self. The cultural theorist, Paul Antze, in considering Freud's theories around "repressed memories", suggests that "in response to conflict or trauma we have split certain memories away from consciousness, thereby giving them the power to make us ill: therapy is then a simple matter of undoing the repressions, filling in the gaps, restoring what was originally ours" (2003:103).
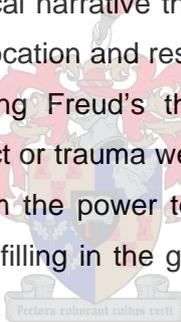
Through physically inscribing appropriated medical text, not only onto the image of my own body, but also onto the images of the bodies of my loved ones, I perform illness in order to visualize emotional pain and loss (fig.26). The found text that I use functions as a mediation between myself and the actual experience. The traumatic and sometimes painful procedures are represented to the viewer in a matter-of-fact way and, although the individual descriptions cannot be regarded as a narrative, I feel that by placing them in relation to the figures of my loved ones a narrative of illness is performed onto the bodies.

The "illness" texts were stencilled twice in both grey and white enamel paint and these, unlike the hand-written texts and the idioms, bleed from one piece onto another, so that the viewer has to move between the pieces in order to read an entire definition. These

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[112] "The self-portrait of the tormented artist has a long history from Dürer as the suffering Christ to Goya in the grips of demons. Physical degeneration was brought into self-portraits by the demands of honest reporting" (Borzello, 1998:145).

painful experiences now form links between the individual figures, which also references the impact that my physical and emotional illness had on my family and my boyfriend. By layering these medical texts over the idioms, the text becomes difficult to read, requiring some effort from the viewer to decipher the palimpsest of narratives that is represented (fig.27). In this way, there is again a certain sense of self-protection involved from the gaze[113] of the viewer. But this almost chaotic layering of texts also implies the confusion I experienced with regards to my identity when my twin departed, leaving me behind.

An artist who also deals with illness[114] in her art-making process is the South African artist, Doreen Southwood, in her exhibition *Too Close For Comfort*. In *Floating Trophies* (fig.28-29), she documents all the stress-related illnesses from which she suffered during the two-year period leading up to this exhibition. This work consists of rows of small silver trophy cups – all engraved with some of the following texts: Doreen Southwood Panic Attacks, 1997-1999; Spastic Colon, 1998-2000; Headaches, 1996-2000, and so forth. Sue Williamson, South African artist and critic, suggests that Southwood exposes her '*hardlywigheid*', diarrhoea, sleeplessness and fatigue in order to expose extremely private issues in the public sphere (2001a: http://www.artthrob.co.za/01jan/reviews.html). South African artist and critic, Paul Edmunds, claims that "the ailments she chronicles are merely symptoms of a deeper dis-ease, and, like floating trophies they pass" (2001: http://entertainment. iafrica.com/artzine/art/204442.htm). In light of the exhibition as a whole, there is, Edmunds writes, the "suggestion that these complaints are inherited and passed on in the demented domestic cycle which the artist depicts" (2001: http://entertainment.iafrica.com/artzine/art/204442.htm). *Floating Trophies* is accompanied by *Freedom, Hope, Strength* which consists of three trophy-like shields filled almost ornamentally with painkillers, a work suggesting a sense of relief for the artist from all her ailments.

These works, and the exhibition as a whole, have strong autobiographical overtones and Southwood "plays a number of opposites off against each other – interior/exterior, private/public, surface/depth, comfort/discomfort", which leads the viewer to examine the troubled relationships these elements have in relation to each other (Edmunds, 2001: http://entertainment.iafrica.com/artzine/art/204442.htm). The fact that Southwood presents her ailments in the form of trophies and shields, suggests a subtle irony and the

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[113] See '*Kiekie*: Performing the Gaze' for a discussion of the role that the gaze plays in identity construction.

[114] The Mexican artist, Frida Kahlo, also deals extensively with self-representation, illness and the body, but as I primarily deal with contemporary artists I feel that a discussion of her work would have seemed out of place in this context.

sophisticated way in which the pieces are presented denies the possibility of this work being interpreted as an indulgence in self-pity.

Like Southwood, I also set up a number of oppositions in close relation to each other, not only in this paint/install, but also in all the other works on my exhibition. In *Kaartehuis Kroniek*, in particular, there are the shiny and matt surfaces of the enamel paint; the depth of layering and the surface effect of the intertextuality of image and text; the horizontal text as opposed to the vertical figures; self and other; all are used together to question the complexity of identity construction. However, by disrupting these binaries through the sense of progression and regression that is created in terms of the fading of the figures and the text, I complicate the performance of identity even more. By both suggesting and disrupting binaries I indicate that identity is mutable, fluid and a performance that is constantly in process.

Summary

In *Kaartehuis Kroniek* I come to the conclusion that subjectivities are constituted through multiple narrative representations within discourse. In light of this idea, I suggested that the intertextual relationship between image and text, both of which are languages of discourse, can be used simultaneously to suggest and disrupt the seamless sense of cohesion of linearity that is associated with narrative. I also proposed the notion of the palimpsest, which is suggested in my process of layering image and text, as a possible means to disrupt the linearity of narrative. Through considering various linguistic theories, I came to the conclusion that the process of writing is performative and suggested further that a narrative is performed in the intersecting space between the narratives of viewer and those of the artist.

I came to the conclusion that the autobiographical artist, experiences a double split. Because of my splitting of space by means of an installation, I classified *Kaartehuis Kroniek* as a paint/install and explored how this way of displaying can function as a deconstruction of the family unit. In terms of discussing the body as both image and text, I concluded that my art-making process can be regarded as a cathartic experience which helped in dealing with the loss of my twin. In terms of this same idea, I also considered illness as a kind of physical narrative performed on the body in order to draw attention to trauma that the self experiences. These ideas were all explored in order to indicate that identity is constantly in flux through the way that we form different narratives of ourselves over time.

Conclusion

In my visual self-representations I oscillate between a number of opposites – shiny/matt, vertical/horizontal, presence/absence, revealing/concealing, remembering/ forgetting, male/female, surface/depth, private/public, celebration/critique, proximity/alienation – in order to highlight the complex relationships that are responsible for the performance of identities. I visually portray these binaries to suggest the splitting that the subject experiences. These binaries further foreground the process of change. My interest in the performative lies within the possibility of change that this notion provides; the possibility to produce art as a repetitive, ritualistic practice by which discourse produces the subject.

By deconstructing the images of myself and my loved ones, I invoke the multiple splitting of subjectivities between self and other; subject and object; the writing 'I' and the 'I' which is written, in order to explore the physical and emotional split between myself and my twin. By foregrounding the splitting of subjectivity into multiple positions, I reflect on my art-making practice as a process of mourning and loss. The split, both formal and conceptual, is further used to disrupt the unity of the family, to suggest that this unit is as much a construction as identities are. Yet, the notion of the split is also disrupted through my process of suturing by horizontally connecting the panels through text. In *Kiekie* this suturing is specifically evident as a further form of suture takes place, in that the panels are physically connected with fibreglass. In this work the suturing evokes my initial denial of the absence of my twin brother.

Suturing can also imply the process of healing. By horizontally connecting the figures of my family members in *Karavaankinners*, not only through the performative ritualistic and repetitive inscription of confessional text, but also through the tent in the background, I suggest the reuniting of the family. In *Kaartehuis Kroniek* I also indicate the self-help element of my art-making process, with the specific focus on the performative process of writing, while in *Knip die Naelstring*, on the other hand, it is the repetitive layering of paint which brings into play a form of catharsis. Through indicating that the cathartic process lies within writing and the repetitive layering of paint, I reinforce my interest in the process of production as a performative repetitive and ritualistic process responsible for the construction of subjectivities.

In '*Knip die Naelstring*: Performing Gender' I reflect the repetitive aspect of this notion, not only in terms of my repetitive layering of paint, but also through the constant repetition of the images of myself and my twin. However, through painting our figures with slight variations, I also suggest the agency to perform one's gender differently. I thus indicate that performativity can be employed in self-representations as a possible means of performing identity as a process, and this can also be used to blur the boundaries between gender constructions. With hindsight, I came to realise that the creation of this work enabled me to see my identity, specifically my gender, as separate from my twin brother's identity.

Where agency is concerned, I propose that the notion of inscription provides the possibility for performing the process of identity construction as contingent and mutable. Throughout this theoretical discussion, I foreground my art-making process as focused on the inscription, erasure and re-inscription of image and text and the layering of paint. By highlighting these processes, I draw attention to the possibility of human agency within self-representations, while also reflecting on the poststructural notion of how language and discourse produce identities.

In drawing attention to the relationship between image and text through the act of inscription, I suggest the intertextual nature of the relationship between these forms of discourse. In the volume '*Kaartehuis Kroniek*: Performing the Narrative', I specifically contend that this relationship can both suggest and disrupt the coherent linearity of narrative and autobiographical texts. In terms of narrative, I further claim that this performance takes place both in the act of writing and the intersecting space between the narratives of the viewer and those of the artist. Thus, the performance of narrative – particularly autobiographical narrative – in my work aids me not only in suturing and splitting identity constructions, but also in setting up a particular performative relationship between my identities and those of the viewer.

In my process of layering both image and text, I further implicate the notion of the palimpsest, which enables me to simultaneously reveal and conceal my private confessions. However, in suggesting traces of text beneath the layers of paint, not only is the passage of time suggested in my art-making process, but also the simultaneous absence and presence of these texts.

The temporal aspect of my art practice and the notion of presence and absence are mainly discussed in the volume '*Karavaankinners*: Performing Memory'. In a discussion of

memory in relation to theoretical concepts, I argue that memory in self-representation is an act of performativity brought about by the active process of both remembering and forgetting and I further suggest that the notion of presence and absence parallels this idea. An investigation of the performative aspect of memory has informed the way that I have represented the past in the present, which additionally aided me in (re)constructing an image where my twin brother is simultaneously absent and present in the form of a silhouette.

The use of the silhouette forms a thread throughout my body of work. In *Knip die Naelstring* it is used to indicate the loss of identity that I experience without my twin. In *Karavaankinners*, on the other hand, the silhouette reflects the way in which memories become blurred over time, while also referring to the notion of my being overshadowed by someone. The most prominent use of the silhouetted figures occurs in *Kaartehuis Kroniek* and here it is employed in order to deny simple binary categorisation of my art-practice. I use the silhouettes in *Kiekie* to signify my inability to visualise my brother within his new context, while with hindsight, I reflect a negation of identity as fixed and unified.

In *Kiekie*, the relationship between the silhouetted figures on the floor panel and the figures on the wall suggests the exchange of gazes between the mirror and a screen. I indicate in the volume '*Kiekie*: Performing the Gaze' that it is through the act of looking that the gaze can be regarded as performative, in which case this performativity is brought into play when the self is presented as influenced by the gaze in representation. I also use the silhouette in the discussion of the work in order to highlight the way in which the screen acts as mediation between the self and the gaze. In terms of the performative nature of the gaze, I further propose that forms of visual representations that foreground the photographic referent can also be regarded as performative, as the gaze behind the camera stimulates a certain sense of performance. Through relating these ideas to my art-making, my inquiry into the gaze revealed to me the aspect of masquerade in this work, which further assisted me in realizing the emotional denial that I was experiencing during the creation of *Kiekie*.

By creating these four works, and through exploring the notion of performativity in terms of my own art-making, I came to the conclusion that the application of this theory to art practice can provide new insights, not only in terms of artistic discourse but also in terms of one's own emotional experience of creation. It is only with hindsight, and in the writing of this thesis, that I realised the different ways in which I was working through my grief and loss by means of my art-making processes. But these are highly constructed images

which are mediated through complex processes of production. It would thus be misguided to regard this exhibition as the mere outpouring of personal emotion. These four volumes comprise my theoretical research act as parallel supplements that have informed and are informed by the process of production of my practical work; they are not meant to be a definitive interpretation since that is also the role of the viewer.
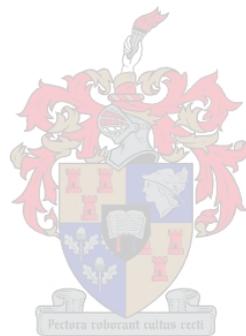
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