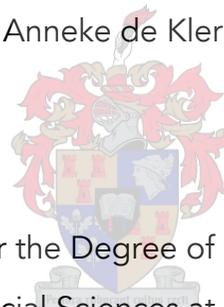


TELLING PLACES

A PHOTOGRAPHIC EXPLORATION

VOLUME II

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PHASE 2: TELLING-OF

PREFACE TO TELLING-OF

The first phase of this thesis documents a cyclic process of reflection on my photographic practice in relation to philosophical and theoretical perspectives on 'being'. Through this process I explore the ways in which experience of place in its multifaceted and layered complexity is shaped in and through relations between the photographer, technology, and place. In Phase 1, I engage with the concept of place as an exploration of self, histories, and social structures that are inextricably entangled with mediating technologies. This phenomenological, and later postphenomenological, understanding of 'being in' plays an integral part in how I, as a photographer, make sense of places and, eventually, what the places come to mean or 'tell'. In Phase 1, I therefore respond partially to the main research question that drives this study by developing an understanding of landscape representation as a co-constitutive process in which personal and social histories are integrated with photographic technologies and bodily praxes. In Phase 2, I further respond to this question by considering what further understanding of landscape can be generated, from reviewing the presentation of landscape

photography and the processes that are involved in this presentation as part of the PbR method.

In more specific terms, the purpose of Phase 2 of this study is to explore how the taking and making discussed in Phase 1, but also the choosing, arranging, and displaying – in other words, curating – of photographic works comprise a 'telling-of' that adequately facilitates an interpretation of the photographer's 'being in' as a true aspect of a place. This exploration takes place within the broader context of landscape in Southern Africa and the politics that are woven into it; in the sense that politics involves the personal and practical.

This purpose is achieved, firstly, by interrogating the notion of landscape, as representational practice, in relation to the experience of place and situating my own photographic practice in relation to traditions and discourses on landscape in general (see Section 4) and then, more specifically, South African landscape photography (see Section 5). Even though I choose to work with the concept of place rather than landscape, the discourse I am entering seeks to understand Southern African landscape photography. In Phase 1, I mostly avoid the term 'landscape' because I concentrate on the act

of photographing rather than the resultant images. In this second phase, however, I work exclusively with the completed images that are now invariably photographic representations that fall within the broad category of 'landscape' with its cumbersome art historical baggage. Wells (2011: 265) acknowledges that when dealing with representations of place or spaces, despite variations in the use of the term 'landscape' in the visual arts, which makes it perhaps too imprecise to be of much use, "we cannot ignore the influence of landscape painting¹ as a genre, which means that we cannot avoid the term". For the purposes of this study, I loosely define landscape photography as any engagement with land, space, place, or environment as subject matter or concept through the medium of photography. The move from experience of place to photographic representation of such experience results in landscape, which, according to Wells (2011: 9), serves to 'stand in' for the original experience of being there. It is this notion of 'standing in' that emerges as particularly pertinent in South African landscape

¹ Even though this definition differs from the traditional definition of landscape painting, i.e. the representation of a natural vista, I acknowledge that there is a

photography.

In order to further explore the relation between place and landscape, I consider Cedric Nunn's *Unsettled* (2015) project as an example of a contemporary photographic engagement with landscape. Although Nunn's work differs conceptually and visually from mine, this discussion serves to further contextualise my own work produced in the present study. In Section 6, I focus on the making of the project and the thinking behind *Unsettled* as a particular example of a PbR project that, through direct perception, imagination, and personal connection, still engages photographically with places. I further discuss how the aims of Nunn's project are accomplished as a curated project in order to understand Nunn's practice as an integrated way of working with place. Although Nunn is not a curator, I consider the way the *Unsettled* project is put together and presented to the public as curatorial practice.

The consideration of Nunn's curatorship precedes the section on my

continuation from landscape painting to landscape photography, as discussed in some detail in Chapter 1.

own curatorship because I hope to make an argument that the way the project is presented as an integrated whole adequately alludes to 'being in' where individual photographs fall short. The curation completes the process of making but at the same time allows the work to enter the public sphere. According to Paul O'Neill (2007: 15), "it is the temporary art exhibition that has become the principle medium in the distribution and reception of art". As "principle agent in debate and criticism about any aspect of the visual arts", through public exhibition the work can become part of the visual (and verbal) discourses around the concerning themes or issues or attitudes. As such a temporary exhibition, I discuss the curatorial presentation of my own work in *Telling Places: A Photographic Exploration* exhibition held from 4 to 17 May 2018 in the Bodutu Art Gallery, Vaal University of Technology, Vanderbijlpark.

The concept of 'telling' is intriguing because it can be both a verb and an adjective. On the one hand, I aim to tell of the specific places I photographed, while, on the other hand, the places, the technology I used, and the resultant images are 'telling' of their own accord. In Hans Ulrich Obrist's (2014: 25) statement that "the very idea of an exhibition is ... to speak", I find a productive tension

between 'telling' and 'showing' that I explore further in the process of curating this body of work in this phase (see Section 7). Obrist (2014: 25) mentions five original functions of a curator that have more or less been preserved in the contemporary idea of curatorship: caring and cultivating; safeguarding heritage; selection and making choices; contributing to art history; and scholarly research with the aim to pass on knowledge. The curator finally has the task of displaying and arranging the art on the wall and in the galleries – the making of exhibitions.

The artist curating her own work (especially as part of an academic study) engages in all the functions mentioned above, but in the present case these activities are focused specifically on the making of a specific exhibition. In Obrist's (2014: 36) account of the history of exhibition-making, he mentions Courbet and Manet as pioneers in curating their own work and developing "the idea of the room as a total unit under the control of the artist", thereby intervening directly in the discourse surrounding what counts as art. Artists now routinely curate their own exhibitions, controlling not only where and how the work is shown, but also managing some of the initial discourse around the exhibition such as through pamphlets, wall

text, and self-published exhibition catalogues (Von Bismarck, 2007: 31; Grant, 2010).

My approach to the discussion of Nunn's work, as well as the subsequent section in which I discuss my own curatorial process as a form of telling, is to root my discussion in perception,² as recommended by Robert Storr (2007: 27). Even so, I am informed by Phase 1 of the study, and am therefore especially attentive to what the work as a created project might reveal about the relations between the photographer, the camera, and the place. In my reflection on the curatorial process, I explore (through literature and practice) the phenomenal qualities of the various presentation technologies that facilitate the telling of these relations (see Section 7). Installed in a space and supported by written texts, the technology helps to create an experience and a telling-of that sufficiently entangle landscape and place, experience and representation, subject and object, but at the same time asks the

² Although this is discussed in more detail in Section 5, what Storr (2007) refers to here is that the exhibition should be structured in such a way that the focus remains mainly on what the visitors can perceive with their senses (visual/auditory/touch/smell), rather than relying heavily on written texts to

viewer to consider the role of photographic technology in this entanglement and how it shapes our 'being in' the various places that are represented, as well as in the exhibition space itself.

explain to them what they are required to understand or experience when viewing the works.

4. Landscape into Place / Place into Landscape: The Relationship between the Representation and the Actual Place

'Landscape' is a word with varied applications and meanings. In *Landscape Theory* (2008), edited by Elkins and Rachael Delue, much of the transcribed panel discussions relate to the interactions between the physical and its representations; the varying degrees of the physicality and textuality of both. At extremes, both the physical and its visual representation are read as symbolic, ideological texts from critical positions. In this mode, landscape takes on too static a shape, which belies the experiential phenomenon that is never fixed. In Phase 1 of this study I explore how the act of photographing can shape 'being in' and vice versa. In this following section of the study I examine how the act of photographing translates into representation. I further argue that landscape as representation and landscape as experience are not two separate, unrelated phenomena. Clive Scott presents two views of photography in his book, *The Spoken Image: Photography & Language*:

The first version maintains that the photograph 'happens' in the act of taking, in visual contact with

the world, which exercises the photographer's ability to see into his environment, to anticipate, to intuit oncoming revelation or significance in his surroundings; the second version, on the other hand, implies that the taking of the photograph is only the necessary bridge between the creative interventions of the pre-photographic and the post-photographic (Scott, 1999: 17).

According to the first view, photography happens with the press of the shutter button, as response to reality; in "an active inhabitation of, or co-operational relationship with, the living environment" (Scott, 1999: 17). In the second view, the photographer selects the moment according to his or her vision, and it only becomes something of value when realised as an image through making it visible to others and in this process of expressing one's own vision. The two views are of course not essentially opposed to each other but rather illustrate two essential aspects of photographic media, either of which can be emphasised in a photographer's approach (Scott, 1999: 18). According to Scott (1999: 21), the two approaches relate to two separate aspects of photography in that "as we shift, then, from our first version of photographic art to the second, we shift from contact or record to image". The implication for landscape photography is that we shift from the 'co-operational

relationship with the living environment' (Scott, 1999: 21) or 'place' that the photographer was fortunate to engage in, to the image, or 'landscape', that precludes such a relationship. In this following section, I explore the possibility that landscape, as a composition of places (as discussed in the introduction to Phase 1), implies an involved relation between the actual place and the viewer.

The word 'landscape' goes beyond any specific art genre or the special practices and aesthetic considerations of landscape architects or designers and has come to be used in connection with lived spaces (Malpas, 2011a: xii). In the foreword to Mitchell's 1994 collection of essays, *Landscape and Power*, he proposes that landscape is a "process by which social and subjective identities are formed" (Mitchell, 1994: 1) and not an object to be viewed or a "text to be read". The word 'landscape', according to such proposals, is therefore not distinct from the notion of 'place', but rather an extension of the concept, as in Casey's (2001: 417) understanding of the concept referred to earlier.

In literature on landscape photography and other forms of art, a distinction between place and landscape is, however, quite common. For example, the opening of the Walther Collection

exhibition, *Appropriated Landscapes* (curated by Corinne Diserens) is announced on e-Flux (6 April 2011) with the following words: "The complex layers of meaning embedded in the physical attributes of a place are explored in *Appropriated Landscapes*, an exhibition on landscape photography of Southern Africa" (researcher's emphasis). A distinction is therefore made here between the physical environment of lived experience, designated as 'place', and the representation thereof, which is termed 'landscape', as in the quote above. In the title of the exhibition, *Appropriated Landscapes*, however, 'landscape' refers to the physical environment. 'Landscape' is therefore used for both the representations (the images) and the physical environment, with intended ambiguity. Godby (2010b: 63) also uses 'landscape' to refer to both the representation and "what it appears to represent", although he indicates the representational value of 'landscape' with a capital 'L'.

In her book, *Photography and Place: Seeing and Not Seeing Germany After 1945*, Donna Brett (2016) is particularly concerned with the distinction between place and landscape, where 'place' refers to "a physical site which can be affected by events and is a lived place, rather than an abstracted space", and 'landscape', which

Brett (2016: 24–25) (mostly) uses in relation to representations. Brett further discusses ‘place’ as the phenomenological site where memories are created through “experiential interactions” (2016: 24–25). Place is therefore a relational concept. Landscape, on the other hand, is the representation of place and as such provides opportunity for a distanced, prolonged pleasurable contemplation (2016: 24–25). In this description, the relational aspects of landscape are downplayed, as Malpas (2011a) argues against distinguishing between place and landscape on the basis of relationality. For Malpas (2011b: 7), landscapes as representations are inherently representations of place and, “as such, it is the representation of a relatedness to place, a re-presentation of a mode of ‘emplacement’”. The landscape represents to the viewer the emplaced experience of the creator of the representation, as well as

the viewer’s own relatedness to place.

As a representation of place and the complexities of emplacement, two-dimensional, static representations are of course limited in various ways. In the late 1800s, Peter Henry Emerson (1856 – 1936) developed what he called Naturalistic photography,³ with the aim of representing nature as true to human perception as possible, advising that realism should replace contrivance in photography (Turner, 2004). Emerson’s aim was to capture an embodied response to the ‘perfect’ picture that nature provided to those who paid attention (Fuldner, 2017). To this end, Emerson adapted his photographic technique to approximate human vision through the use of differential focus (see Figure 1). Before 1891, Emerson (1890: 161, 168) believed that determining exposure and controlling tonal relationships in the print were the result of embodied skills

³ Naturalistic photography should be distinguished from pictorialist photography, although the two approaches seem visually similar. It could perhaps be said that Naturalistic photography falls within the broader category of Pictorialism, but there are important characteristics that set Naturalism apart. The important distinction is in the techniques used during the photographing and printing processes. In Naturalistic photography, the pictorial effect was achieved through optical and ‘natural’ means while exposing the image, while with pictorial photography any number of manual techniques were applied,

mainly during the printing process. The two approaches seem similar due in part to the choice of subject and in part due to both approaches favouring platinum printing paper and photogravure. For Emerson, Naturalism was coterminous with Impressionism, which, according to him, was important for creating a successful image as “all suggestions should come from nature, and all techniques should be employed to give as true an impression of nature as possible” (Emerson, 1890: 24).

developed through long experience and careful study of what nature offers. In order to create true impressions of the landscape, exposures must be made as a response to the light and conditions that nature provided, and “no artificial aids will help” (Emerson, 1890: 161). In 1891, however, Emerson recanted and withdrew his teachings on Naturalistic photography, partially due to the expressive limitations of the medium and the “impossibility of reliably communicating embodied knowledge beyond its corporeal bounds, even as he admits no alternative”, according to Carl Fuldner (2017).

This problem of capturing or communicating embodied experience – what Paul Caponigro (1980: 60) refers to as “simple, direct contact”, and Fulton (1980: 80) refers to as “experience of the event” – remains an issue that landscape photographers grapple with in the contemporary context.

British artist, Hamish Fulton (born 1946), widely known as the walking artist (Jurisich, 2012), ultimately found the problem to be insurmountable in his later work and moved away from using photographs to represent his ‘walks’ because the self-contained object of the framed photograph and text (see

Figure 2) did not point strongly enough to the event of the walk, which was the driving force behind his work at that time (Turner, 1980: 82). Before Fulton moved away from using photographic representations, he explained: “Ideas of experience; these are important to my pictures. They have to be about something – not the activity of making pictures or the conventions of landscape photography but about the land itself; the place where a photograph is made” (Turner, 1980: 80). For Fulton, therefore, it was not the limitations of the photographic medium, but the history and conventions of landscape representation as ‘art’ that presented an unsurmountable challenge.

While the indexical nature of the photographic medium excels at referring to the actual place, the history and politics of landscape representation make it difficult for the image to point to the real place, past the ‘veil’ of aesthetic conventions and the ideologies that are entangled therein. Yet the contact with the actual place remains essential to the photographer.



Figure 1: Emerson, P.H., 1886, *Cattle on the Marshes*, platinum print, 18.8 x 28.2 cm (Fuldner, 2017).



Figure 2: Fulton, H., 1973, *Mankinholes on the Pennine Way* (World within a world: A walk from the top to the bottom of the Island Duncansby Head to Lands End, Scotland, Wales, England, a complete walking journey of 1 022 miles in 47 days , August 31-October 16 1973 on the ground beneath the sky) gelatin-silver print and text, dimensions unknown (Turner, 1980: 91).

The widely held belief that the disjunction and separation of human and nature, subject and object, viewer and viewed, were a necessary development for landscape to emerge as an art genre in the West (Baltz, 1980: 28; Wells, 2011: 39) belies the variety of relations between humans and their environment that earmark the history of landscape. This belief also disregards landscape art that developed in the East, centuries before that of the West, as well as the unavoidable cross-pollination between East and West.

Wylie (2007) describes landscape art in the West as a way for Westerners to understand themselves and others, but especially as a way to understand the relations involved. His description is worth quoting at length here:

As a system for producing and transmitting meaning through visual symbols and representations, landscape art, alongside cognate arts such as cartography, photography, poetry and literature, is a key medium through which Western and in particular European cultures have historically understood themselves, and their relations with other cultures and the natural world (Wylie, 2007: 55–56).

Landscape art, however, does more than develop understanding of relations between self, others, and the natural world. It has also historically been a way to create and structure a sense of self and nation, and even to structure relations according to dominant ideologies, be it the holistic worldview of Chinese culture, capitalist perspectives of Renaissance Europe, imperialist attitudes of colonial efforts, or spiritual experience evident in Ndebele oral tradition (as discussed in Phase 1, Section 3.1.2).

Jeremy Foster (2003: 671), for example, argues that black-and-white photographs of the South African landscape placed in circulation by the South African Railways and Harbours (SAR&H) company helped to shape a sense of a unified, 'white' South Africa between 1910 and 1930. There is, however, a danger in oversimplifying and reifying such relations for the sake of classification.

In the West, landscape painting emerged during the Renaissance

period, almost 900 years later than in the East⁴. According to Cosgrove (1984), the representation of landscape, which developed alongside perspectival vision, revolved around capitalist and mercantile economies where land represented property and privilege, as well as the desire to order and control (Cosgrove, 1984: 58, cited in Wylie 2007: 124). As such, the modern tradition of landscape representation is uniquely European and is closely associated with European imperialism where the representation of non-European land is concerned (Wylie, 2007: 124). Such an approach, according to Heinz Paetzold (2009: 60), is a product of the dualism that has taken possession of the European mind in which human and the natural or 'nature' are irrevocably divided.

4.1. Western aesthetic categories

Much of the Romantic tradition of landscape representation has subsequently been concerned with individual experiences in the landscape, in search of reconnection with nature and spiritual

⁴ According to Paetzold (2009: 60), the holistic worldview of Chinese culture is represented in early landscape painting (at its peak between 960 and 1279) in that the primary aim of landscape painting scrolls were meditative and spiritual. Through the somewhat narrative viewing process of unrolling the scroll, the

viewer would become one with the landscape depicted (Paetzold, 2009: 60). For the sake of maintaining focus on the African context in relation to the West, Eastern landscape painting will not be explored further.

edification (Wylie, 2007: 134), which is largely a reaction to classical rationalism with its emphasis on the analytic as opposed to individual experience (Wells, 2012: 12). Romanticism, according to Wells (2012) was, however, not a unified movement, but was characterised by multiple perspectives. The only commonality between the various Romanticists, according to Hobsbawn (1962, cited by Wells, 2012: 12), was a reactionary attitude towards the 'middle'. Wells (2012: 12) stated that "for some, romanticism was anti-bourgeois as well as being opposed both to logical philosophy and the classicism previously reflected in art practices". These attitudes fluctuated between extreme left and extreme right positions. Romantic literature and painting (often landscape representations), for example, attempted to capture a sense of that which goes beyond human expression; to hint at that which cannot be fully described. Burke (1757) describes such extreme subject matter as "the sublime". According to Phillip Shaw (2006: 3), sublimity refers to

“the moment when the ability to apprehend, to know, and to express a thought or sensation is defeated. Yet through this very defeat, the mind gets a feeling for that which lies beyond thought and language”. This inexpressibility that Shaw’s description of the Sublime refers to is reminiscent of the phenomenological understanding of the ‘earth’ that remains concealed. The Sublime, however, is not to be found in everyday things and experiences, but in the extremes of landscape and of experience. ‘Concealedness’, or the “withdrawn” in Harman’s (2009) term (explored in Phase 1, section 2.3), belongs to all objects, and especially the everyday things of life.

Another term that forms part of the Romantic traditions of landscape aesthetics, but actually predates Romanticism in art, is the Picturesque (Copley & Garside, 1994: 1). The early use of the term was, however, mainly reserved for indicating suitable or ‘proper’ subjects for painting. According to Steven Copley and Peter Garside (1994: 1), the term became a topic of debate with theorists of Romanticism around the turn of the 18th century and, although evidently important, remains problematic. The main difficulty with the Picturesque continues to be “disjunctions between Picturesque

theory and the practices that are justified under its name – or, in other words, by conflicts between the status of the Picturesque as a theoretical category and its manifestations as a popular fashion” (Copley & Garside, 1994: 1).

Landow (1971: 223) describes Ruskin’s understanding of the Picturesque as a reduced form of the Sublime, and therefore occupies a position between the Sublime and the Beautiful. Picturesque landscape paintings arguably represent a continuation of classical aesthetics of harmony and wholeness, but further also seeks aesthetic pleasure in an irregular variety or ruggedness “which characterizes a painting’s line, lighting, color, and composition (Landow, 1971: 223). Such roughness and variation are often found in neglected buildings that show age, decay, and scenes of rugged living (Landow, 1971: 223). In more contemporary debates, the politics of the Picturesque has been critiqued as deploying such motifs for “aesthetic effect which, in other circumstances, are indicators of poverty or social deprivation” and furthermore translating “the political into the decorative, and so, as the route to the naturalisation of the Picturesque image” (Copley & Garside, 1994: 6).

Ruskin, however, distinguished between two kinds of Picturesque in art: the surface-Picturesque and the noble-Picturesque (also the Turnerian Picturesque) (Landow, 1971: 230), or as Malcolm Andrews (1994) names these categories, the lower and the higher Picturesque. The lower Picturesque, or 'surface Picturesque', deflects narrative or political interpretation and therefore justifies the abovementioned criticisms. The higher Picturesque, however, although its indices are similar to the surface Picturesque, does not seek to arrest the past in depictions of age and neglect. Instead, the noble Picturesque exemplifies continuity of time and use that preserves the links between the past and the present and living in relation to others (Andrews, 1994: 295).

Older art history paradigms that conceive of landscape as a site of scenic beauty or subliminal awe, and consequently of aesthetic appreciation and visual representation, tend to efface all other practical, social implications that are associated with humanity's relationship to it, especially if it is conceived of as a visual world spread spatially before the eyes (Xakaza, 2015: 94).

While not necessarily politically unproblematic, Andrews (1994: 294) argues that this kind of Picturesque has a very different source from

the lower kind, namely an anxiety over the growing "fragmentation of community, so evident in the physical and social experience of Victorian London". The relational in the Picturesque relates to landscape representation as a form of 'place-making', as is discussed in the following section.

4.2. The Picturesque as 'place-making' in Southern Africa

According to Susan Stewart (1993: 75), the Picturesque presents a particularly British aesthetic in that it portrays a tamed, accessible version of the world, which is almost (but not quite) controlled. Jeanne Van Eeden (2007: 121–122), for instance, states that the Picturesque was defined as an aesthetic category in the late 18th century in England and as such is "symptomatic of the possession and transformation of landscape, a kind of 'place-making' or inscription that mediates nature into a graspable frame or theme". The notion of 'place-making' here implies an imposition of ideas onto the environment. Instead of seeking understanding relations (as described by Wylie, 2007, quoted earlier), landscape in this instance seeks to structure and shape relations between the human subject and his environment according to pre-established aesthetic

sensibilities.

Van Eeden (2011) argues that the Picturesque, as applied in the representation of colonised or still-to-be 'conquered' land, represents ownership and the desire for mastery. This interpretation goes back to the emergence of landscape painting in Renaissance Italy, as mentioned above. The colonial Picturesque is therefore interpreted as contradictory to the 'European' Picturesque: the European lone wanderer sets out to discover "himself and an authentic experience in nature", according to Van Eeden (2011: 7), or as Ruskin (1851) also, in later writings, advocated, "the artist must begin by being a seeing and feeling creature, an agent of perception – rather than beginning with the assumption that the artist is one who corrects a lesser nature that doesn't rise to one's standards" (cited in Landow, 1971: 231). In contrast with Ruskin's (cited in Landow, 1971: 231) "seeing and feeling creature", the colonial traveller sets out to discover new lands to claim for himself and remake into a familiar place suitable for European inhabitation (Van Eeden, 2011: 7).

Jessica Dubow (2000: 97), however, argues, with reference to the painting of Thomas Baines, that this interpretation is an over-

simplification of colonial landscape representations and practices, and that the colonial Picturesque should rather be understood in terms of a dialectic process of place-making, which is not a mere projection of European aesthetic sensibilities. Both the 'new' place and the colonial subject are transformed in the place-making process, in which representation plays an important role, leading to a slightly altered aesthetic. Even though such an interpretation does not redeem colonial desires and practices by any means, Dubow's (2000: 97) interpretation acknowledges that the environment itself have an impact on resultant representations thereof and consequently on the places themselves, even when such representations are by Europeans of the African landscape. Where Baines' paintings of the Southern African landscape are variously vilified (following Carruthers & Arnold, 1995: 21-22) as typifying the dominant ideological positions that allowed Europeans to view African land as empty and available for conquering, settlement, and exploitation, Dubow's (2000: 97) interpretation portrays his work as a dialectic process of place-making. On the one hand, many of Baines' paintings are partial inventions of his imagination in that he exaggerated natural landforms, intensified colours, and did not stay

true to what he perceived directly in front of him (Dritsas, 2010: 103; Godby, 2010a: 75), as can be seen in the constructed arrangement and inaccurate proportions of the scene of Bloemfontein from Naval Hill (see

Figure 3) and his habit of painting himself into the scenes he depicted. On the other hand, Baines was very aware of his inability to faithfully reproduce 'nature' as the camera was able to do (Baines, 1864: 149). Photographers attached to exploration expeditions were employed to create 'objective' scientific records and documentation of events and to create pleasing images that could be used to raise funds. Official exploration expedition artists and photographers such as Thomas Baines and Charles Livingstone would, however, often be given instructions that steered their efforts away from artistic interpretation and towards scientific record keeping, yet photographers did not necessarily separate art and science so conclusively (Ryan, 2013: 78). Baines (1864), for instance, "as an artist", admired photography as a means to create "effective representation" as

[t]he constant dust raised either by our people or the wind – the whirlwinds upsetting the camera, and no

end of other causes – combine to frustrate the efforts of the operator, and oblige us (myself with greater reluctance than Chapman [the photographer]) to condemn many and many a picture; for in almost every one there is here and there some *little bit of effective representation* that I, as an artist, would give almost my right hand to be able to reproduce (Baines, 1864: 148; researcher's emphasis).



Figure 3: Baines, T., 1851, *Bloemfontein from Naval Hill*, oil on canvas, 78.5 cm x 132 cm (Oliewenhuis Art Museum, Bloemfontein).

Malpas (2011b: 4-5) discusses the work of Australian artist, John Glover (a colonial Australian painter active during the 1830s) along these lines, arguing that the work of this artist was not a mere rehearsing of Romantic conventions, nor of European sensibilities. Even though these paintings portray problematic colonialist sentiments regarding the native population and the appropriation of land, they do also portray the “emplacement” (Malpas, 2011b: 7) of the artist (as part of a community) and, by extension, the viewer. Instead of reading the frame as a distancing device, Malpas (2011b) construes the frame as the means by which the viewer gains access to an otherwise distant landscape and gains some part in the emplacement of the artist. The act of looking is rewarded with a sharing of the experience of ‘being in’ the landscape, as well as sharing a sense of the depicted community’s emplacement. Landscape, according to Malpas (2011b: 6-7), is therefore necessarily a representation of place. Landscape representations that make use of pictorial or sublime devices, especially in

photographs, are therefore never only projected worldviews and aesthetic ideals and the politics that accompany these. Landscapes are almost always⁵ representations of actual contact and emplacement. Hayes, Silvester and Hartmann (1998: 4) describes such contact as “constitutive process in the making of the photographic images” in terms of ethnographic photography, where “people or landscapes or animals came before the lens of a camera, and their framed image was transposed onto glass plates or light-sensitive paper and then chemically developed into a print or a plate to produce the photographic analogue of the actual event”. Although such occasions were real and provide evidence of certain encounters, Hayes *et al.* (1998: 4) points out that there were always also “power relations, administrative contexts and discourses involved in these occasions”.

It is the layering and entanglement of the actual place with human experience, histories, and ideals that make landscapes so enticing

⁵ An exception would be a landscape painted from a photograph, where the actual subject of the representation is the photograph, and not the landscape itself, as in Kieth Deitrich’s *Horizons of Babel: Hottentotsberg* (2005).

and telling. Even if the photographs are not of a landscape (or place) but about something else, such as how light translates into tonal relationships through photographic craftsmanship in, for example, the Modernist work by Edward Weston (1886-1958), it remains essential that the works are of real places and objects (as often indicated in Weston's titles, such as his work done on Point Lobos). It is in this sense that landscape photography (as other forms of landscape art often do) becomes a representation of place, as Malpas (2011b: 5) writes of the Glover painting, "there is a relation, not merely of presentation, but of *representation* here, which is to say that the painting is indeed a painting *of* Hobart Town" (*Original emphasis*).

4.3. Landscape photography as representation of place

The work of New Topographics⁶ photographers such as Lewis Baltz comes across as bland and clinical in its seemingly objective suspension of judgement. Baltz (1980: 26) describes his technique as crafted to conform to the “conventions of ordinary seeing” by using a 35 mm lens that is close to standard perspective, eye-level point, horizontal of view, and small aperture to render the entire scene in focus. Baltz knowingly strove towards the impossible ideal of making the images seem authorless and the medium seem transparent in order to focus attention on the actual land represented and the context of the images, i.e. “what takes place outside their borders” (1980: 26). To this end, Baltz applied exactly the same technique for each image, and presented the series as a unit. The irony is that this approach brings the photographic form to the fore in a powerful way (see Figure 4) The New Topographics’

⁶ *New Topographics: Photographs of a Man-Altered Landscape* was the title of the 1975 exhibition at the International Museum of Photography in Rochester, curated by William Jenkins, and included photographers such as Baltz, Robert Adams, Frank Gohlke, Joe Deal, and Stephen Shore, among others (Dennis,

work was emblematic of a period in which photographers were overtly aware of the photograph’s “artifice and construction” (Tolonen, 2012: 156), making the work about much more than the particular places that were photographed. As Kelly Dennis (2005: 3) states, “while New Topographic photographs appear to be of Western landscapes, trees, deserts, houses, roads, and construction”, they are simultaneously about “the discursive construction of landscape and the literal destruction of the land. Even so, Dennis (2005: 5) acknowledges that the New Topographics Romanticised landscape despite the ordinary, bland subject matter. The construction sites and torn-up land become Romantic and even refer to Picturesque sensibilities (in the sense of the higher Picturesque as discussed earlier) by inspiring nostalgia for the wilderness that once was; by creating variation in that the smooth of the new is contrasted with the ruggedness of the wilderness, which represents the old. This variation is, however, not gradual and

2005: 2). It is from this exhibition that these photographers acquired their grouping as New Topographics photographers.

modulated, but sudden and final.

As exemplified by the New Topographics, Romantic tropes and conventions continued to be influential through, for instance, Modernist/Formalist photography and postmodern conceptual photography, and remained influential in contemporary landscape photography internationally and in South Africa. Wells, for instance, in the catalogue introduction for the European Landscape exhibition of 2014, repeatedly draws parallels between Romantic art and contemporary European landscape photography.

McEvoy (2007) similarly examines the influences of Romantic conventions on South African landscape photography. McEvoy (2007: 86) concludes that Romantic themes (such as gaining access to the divine through nature, and nostalgia for 'unspoilt' nature) and visual devices similar to the Romantic Picturesque and Sublime are influential in postcolonial South African landscape engagement in that artists actively aim to subvert or reinterpret Romantic traditions and conventions. The result is a chaotic, discordant representation of the South African landscape, which attests to the ultimate failure of colonial dominance and control. Despite this failure, as Dubow (2000: 89) argues, South African landscape representation is

perpetually interpreted in terms of Romantic tropes that imply colonial power relations and colonial constructs of human-nature relations.



Figure 4: Baltz, L., 1979, Prospector Village, Lot 12, Looking Southwest on Comstock Drive toward Masonic Hill (from Park City).

On final analysis, Romanticism implies a desire to reunite with nature, which implicitly confesses to the separation between human

and nature, and the physical and spiritual realms. Ulrich Baer (2002: 68) claims that the Romantic sensibility still organises our vision and landscape photography in that it situates us as subjects in relation to place (which is already a relational concept), but also shapes us as landscape's "true point of reference". Although I would agree with Baer that landscape inherently explores relations, In Phase 1 I question this hierarchy, as well as the exclusion of the camera from this relation.

When Tim Morton (2010: 80–82) thus proclaims that there is no such thing as nature (see Phase 1, Section 3.2), he denies the division of the world into nature versus culture, in favour of an ecology that is not centred on humanity, even though humanity is a major force of change in the contemporary age. If nature does not exist, then landscape cannot be an exploration of man's relation to nature or nature as a symbol of the divine and transcendental. Landscape photography positions the viewer within an ecological system: the relations between organisms, our technologies, and our environment.

Part of what structures this complex ecological system of relations between humans and their environment is the way that we look at,

experience, think about, and communicate about land. In Southern Africa, a troubled colonial history (and continuation) of conflicts and violence motivates (and justifies) the reading of landscape photography as either a documentation of the impact of colonialism and apartheid, or the "symbolic underpinnings of brutal campaigns of colonial expansion" (Baer, 2002: 71). While such readings of landscape are mostly valid, as these factors have greatly influenced the ways in which photographers investigate land and landscape, a consideration of the triadic relationship between the landscape, the photographer, and the camera requires that the immediate present of the photographic moment be considered as a way to move the South African landscape into the future, without disregarding history. In the following section I examine such influences, paying specific attention to how a documentation, or record keeping, and a later social documentary approach have informed South African landscape photography.

5. Overview of South African Landscape Photography

Art historical discourse and scholarship within the Humanities on the South African landscape photography tend to place great store in symbolic interpretations, or as Mduduzi Xakaza (2015: 14) stated, landscape is often interpreted as a “metaphoric space of human suffering”. Even so, it is apparent that the causal relationship between the subject and its representation is important to the intensity of the symbolism or metaphoric interpretation. The fact that the photographic image represents the actual place/space/environment is of great importance, together with the implied presence of the body of the photographer.⁷

Within the South African context, the problematised ideologies of landscape representation remain relevant and have recently been

⁷ This implied presence is often consciously erased or downplayed either by the photographer or by the critic. Baltz, for instance, wanted to disembodify the photographic views (as discussed in Section 4.1.2). John Berger (2003: 22) wrote on the purposeful elimination of any obvious trace of human presence in the landscape work of Charles Watkins, Henry Jackson, and Timothy O’Sullivan and

re-examined in *The Frightened Land* (2006) by Jennifer Beningfield, and *The Lie of the Land* (2010) edited by Michael Godby.

These publications exemplify the continuing polemic over issues of possession, belonging, heritage, nationhood, power relations, and exploitation in relation to the South African landscape. A theme addressed in both publications is that of ambivalent relationships to land, evident in visual and written representations by Afrikaners and South Africans of European descent. Even though they might in some cases have cast the South African landscape as an empty, inhospitable wilderness (Beningfield, 2006: 18-19), these representations of the South African landscape⁸ have helped to instil love of the land, which later formed an integral part of the formation of a white ‘national identity’ (Beningfield, 2006: 142-156; Klopper, 2010: 40; Foster, 2003: 675). In *The Lie of the Land*, this theme is set

the implications this elimination has on the reading of both the representations and the ‘natural’ landscape.

⁸ Works specifically mentioned include early settler travel writing and the ‘Farm novel and Plaas Roman in South Africa’ as critiqued by J.M. Coetzee (1984) (1988); Herman Charles Bosman’s *Willemsdorp* (Klopper, 2010: 40), Thomas Bowler’s *Tulbach Pass* (Beningfield, 2006: 21).

against accounts and discussions of representations of the land by a dispossessed, displaced population's sense of loss and joys of reclamation (Walker, 2010), thereby emphasising the variety of ways that South Africans experience and represent land.

Other recent projects on land and landscape in South Africa have an added layer of critical self-reflection on the dominant frames of academic readings of landscape (which Corrigan, 2014, identified as "narratives of trauma", but I would also add narratives of power struggles), and emphasise that alternative frames of interpretation and ways of looking at land should not be suppressed, as this belies the complexity of individual and communal relations with land and human environments. Even though alternative frames of interpretation are allowed for, the dominant narrative of such projects such as *Umhlaba (Land) 1913-2013* understandably remains one of trauma of conflicts and dispossession.

Umhlaba (Land) 1913-2013 was held to mark the centenary of the Natives Land Act of 1913, which laid the foundations for segregation and apartheid, and whose legacy of inequality and division is still felt today. The exhibition was curated by Bongani Dhlomo-Mautola, David Goldblatt, Pam Warne, and Paul Weinberg. The exhibition

accompanied the Land Divided conference held at the University of Cape Town in March 2013, which was co-hosted by the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS) (Weinberg & Claasens, 2018).

Post 2013 there seems to be a deliberate questioning of readings of landscape that are dominated by narratives of trauma. Corrigan's (2014) *Beyond Trauma: Landscape, Memory, and Agency in Photographs by Cedric Nunn and Sabelo Mlangeni*, for instance, interprets the named projects as "visual memory archives" and "reflective nostalgia" (Corrigan 2014: 332); Annabelle Wienand (2014) explores the complexity (and often ambivalence) of Mofokeng's spiritual, personal and political engagement with landscape in *Santu Mofokeng: Alternative Ways of Seeing (1996-2013)*; and Xakaza's (2015) dissertation, "Power Relations in Landscape Photographs by David Goldblatt and Santu Mofokeng", provides an in-depth exploration of conventional ways of understanding landscape, and thereby elucidates ways of looking at and engaging with landscape, that are equally political even though markedly different. In the contemporary South African context where social identities are increasingly described as being in crisis in that

they are “in flux and generalised categories are not yet redefined” (Booyesen, 2007: 1), land and landscape remain important themes in South African creative production, which becomes ever more critical and self-reflexive (Godby, 2010b: 61-63).

According to McEvoy (2007: 3), “a search for the meaning of existence in this colonially encoded space endures”, as evidenced in the work of prominent South African photographers that will be briefly overviewed here as ways in which photographers react to or engage with the South African landscape, or rather, the (re)presentation of places. David Goldblatt and Santu Mofokeng are briefly discussed in this section as representative of photographers who came to prominence prior to 1994 and are currently still active and/or continue to have representation in prominent South African galleries and feature in the projects and texts mentioned above. Goldblatt and Mofokeng are discussed because of their distinct ways of engaging with the landscape and subsequent influence on younger photographers such as Svea Josephy, Sabelo Mlangeni, and Jabulani Dhlamini, who developed their own particular way of engaging with landscape. Unfortunately, much interesting work cannot be discussed for the sake of brevity and focus, and only

cursory references to related works by other photographers are made. All the projects discussed here are, however, linked by a shared connection to the legacy of social documentary photography in South Africa – ‘authenticating’ possibilities of the photographic medium and how this direct contact between photographer and places allows photographers to involve viewers with the places and their histories in various ways.

5.1. Early photography of land in Southern Africa (c. 1860-1960s)

Before I engage with the photographers mentioned above, I provide a brief overview of landscape photography in South Africa prior to and outside the contemporary gallery and ‘photobook’ publication context. As with international landscape photography, there are many approaches to the local landscape in South African photography, which range from Romantic to formal Modernist, conceptual to Topographic approaches, with various degrees of overlap.

However, the Topographic approach characterises much of the earliest South African photographs that could be described as

landscape, as they were associated with documentation or record keeping for various purposes. These purposes include landmarks for touristic purposes, such as the “first important photographic work depicting Cape scenery”, namely the *Royal Edinburgh Album of Cape Photographs* by the Reverent William Fitz-Harry Curtis, published in 1868 in London (De Beer & Barker, 1992: 16). A later example is the c.1909 album publication of *Cape Town and the Picturesque Peninsula* (see Figure 5), which includes images by T.D. Ravencroft (see Figure 6).

When Hayes (2007: 141) writes that “in Southern Africa in the late nineteenth century, photography is related to the history of exploration, colonization, knowledge production and captivity”, she omits conquest, i.e. war. Some of the earliest photographs of the South African landscape relate to surveying of land for military purposes during the South African war of 1899-1902 and the documentation of the war effort (see Figure 7). A further purpose that is also often related to colonising impulses of knowledge creation was the recording and documentation of the landscape’s vegetation by botanists such as the explorer, medical officer, botanist, and keen amateur photographer, John Kirk (See Figure 8)

and the botanist Pole Evans who documented the flora landscape of much of South Africa (Figure 9) (University of Pretoria Institutional Repository, 2006)

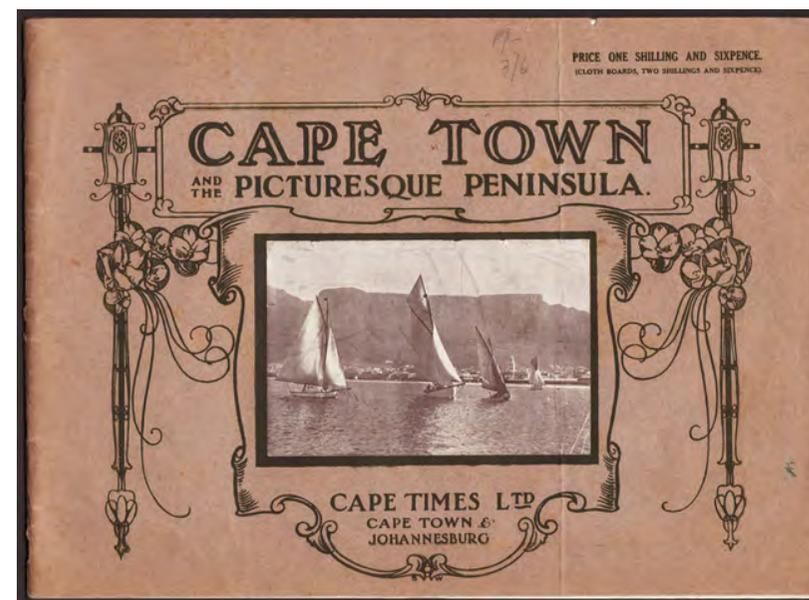


Figure 5: Anonymous, 1909, Front cover of *Cape Town and the Picturesque Peninsula* (Cape Times LTD, c.1909).

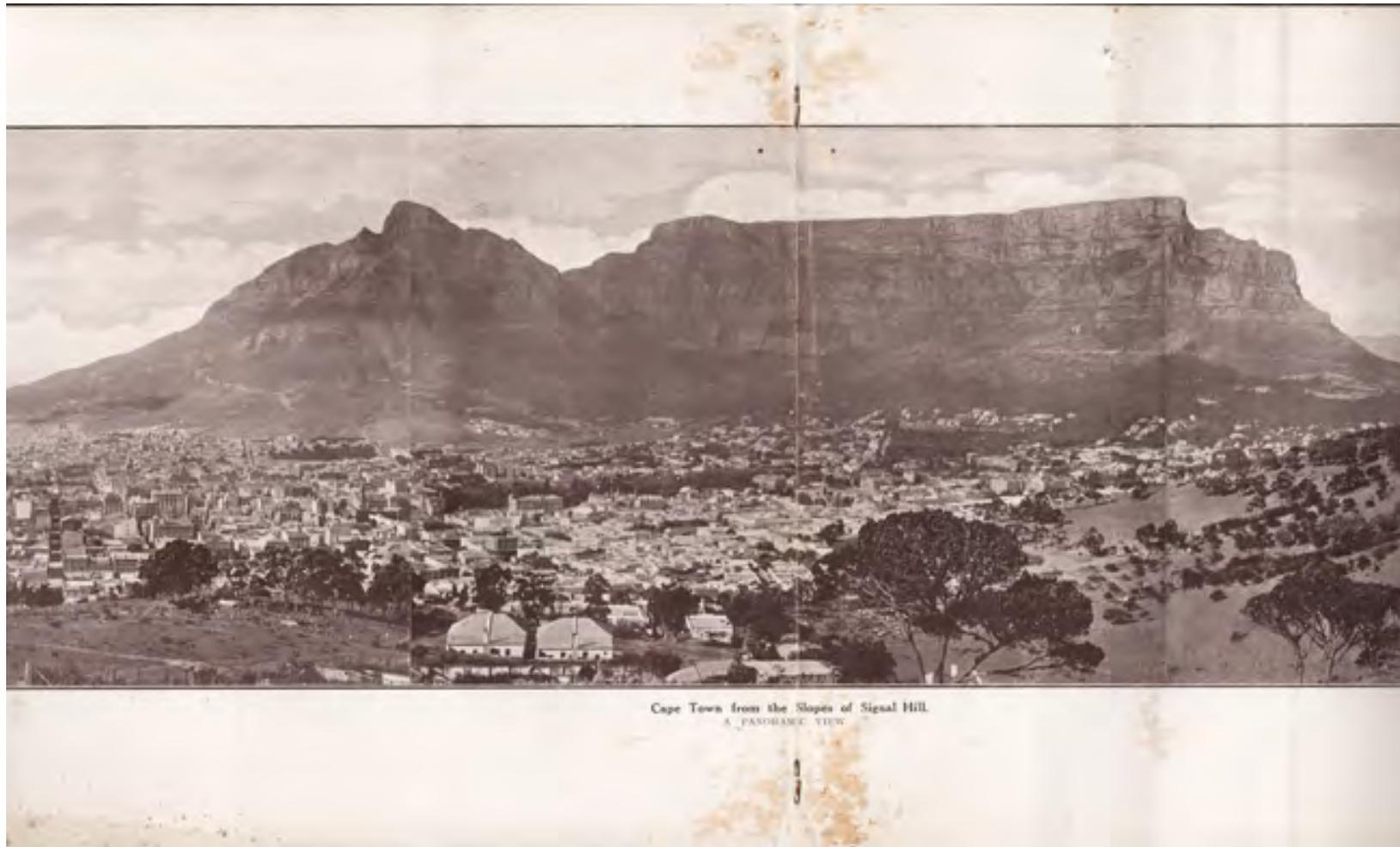


Figure 6: Ravencroft, T.D., 1909, *Cape Town from the Slopes of Signal Hill* (as reproduced in *Cape Town and the Picturesque Peninsula*).



Figure 7: Anonymous, 1899-1902, *Norvalspont* (courtesy of Flip du Toit).



Figure 8: Kirk, J., 1858, *Creepers in the Bush, near Lupata Gorge*, albumen print from wax paper negative (Dritsas, 2010: 100).



Figure 9: Evans, P., 1921, *Drift, Limpopo: Figs and Baobaba in the distance* (©rephotosa.adu.org.za - UCT & SANBI).



Figure 10: Bensusan, K., 1953, *Undulating Sugar Country*, silver print, 40 x 30 cm (Bensusan Photography Museum).

Although Alfred Martin Duggan-Cronin as an amateur enthusiast started photographing 'natives' in 1919, and is therefore mainly known as an ethnographic photographer, Xakaza (2015: 14), identifies Duggan-Cronin "as one of the first photographers who documented landscape while submerging the position of his human subjects posed in it", often in commanding positions, and therefore countering the image of South Africa as empty and awaiting 'civilisation', as described by Foster (2003) (see Figure 12). Figure 11). According to Xakaza (2015: 64), Duggan-Cronin's work is an "important threshold from which to anticipate the ushering in of the South African social documentary⁹ tendencies later in the century". In light of this comment, Duggan-Cronin is also an important figure in South African landscape photography, as his photography marked the interaction between people and their environment as an important way of looking at landscape, even though his more directly ethnographic work (which excludes the environment) has

⁹ According to Harper (2012: 19), social documentary photography focuses on actuality, relevant social events, and processes and makes use of established rhetorical devices that aim to communicate the need for social change (often based on sympathy) (Solomon-Godeau, 1991: 179).

been interpreted as serving colonial desires for the exotic (Xakaza, 2015: 30).¹⁰ Duggan-Cronin's compositions and use of light are clearly influenced by turn-of-the century Pictorialist aesthetics and techniques. Similarly, between the 1930s and 1950s, Dr Bensusan's (see Figure 10) and Will Till's respective contributions to landscape photography idealises rural scenes, building a strong tradition of South African amateur landscape photography that continues to the present day. Bensusan's style became more Modernist later in his career, reflecting international trends, but remained focused on the single-image fine print. This Modernist style is also reflected in the archives of the SAR&H company, which was, according to Foster (2003: 668), responsible for most of the landscape photography circulated in South Africa from 1910 to the 1930s, but continued to commission and publish photographs of trains running through landscapes well into the 1980s with its more commercial, full-colour, glossy style (see Figure 14).

¹⁰ Godby (2012: 57) maintained that Duggan-Cronin's photographs regularly elicited conflicting responses.

Van Eeden (2011: 1) further suggests that postcards and photographs from around the 1940s to the 1970s, published by the South African Railways Publicity and Travel Department (SARPTD) (see Figure 12), that promoted tourism in South Africa, perpetuated “a specific visual trope that consisted of white figures gazing at the empty South African landscape”.

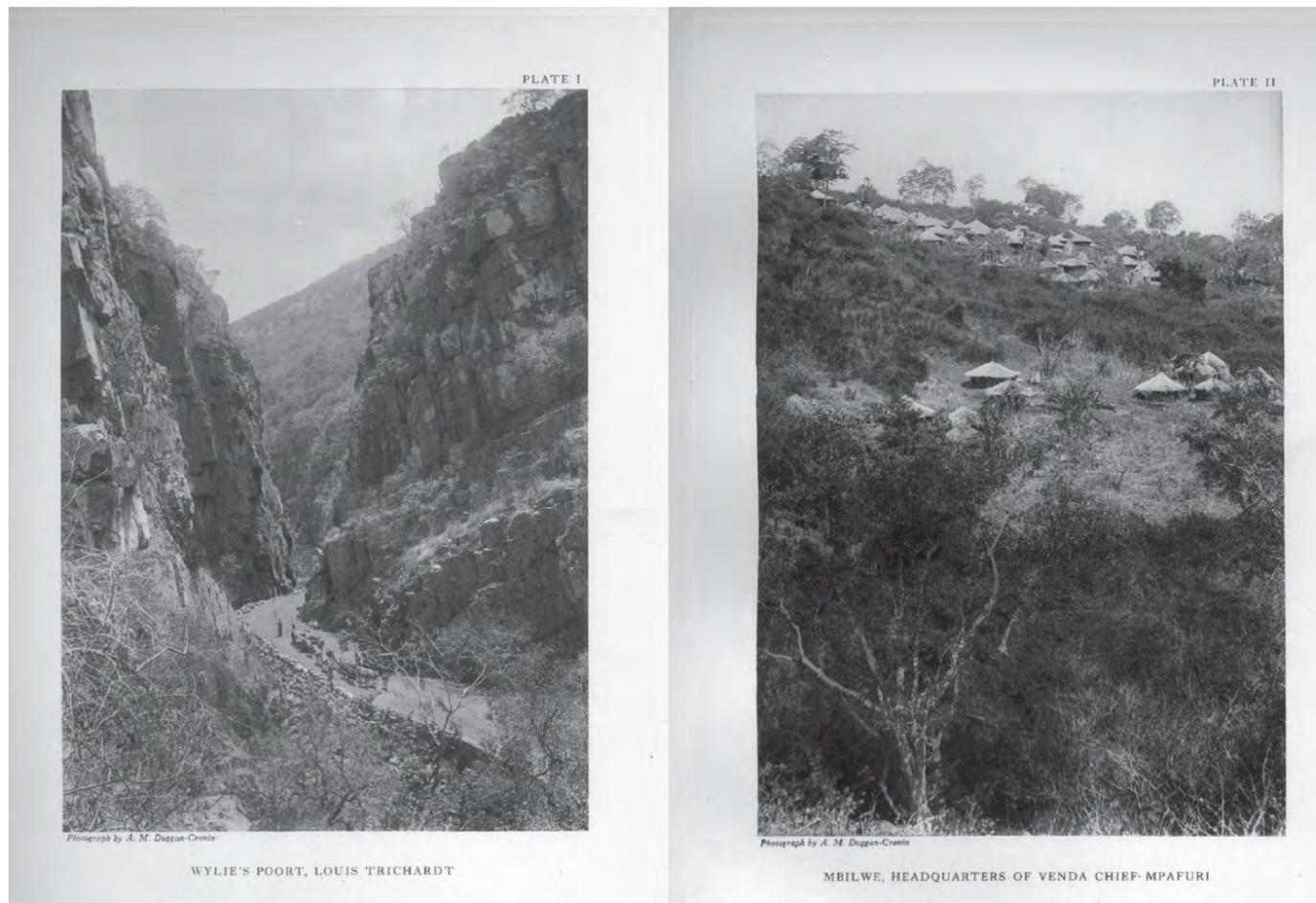


Figure 11: Duggan-Cronin, A.M., 1923, *Plate I and II of The Bavenda, Volume 1 of The Bantu Tribes of South Africa: Reproductions of Photographic Studies*, published by the McGregor Memorial Museum in Kimberley between 1928 and 1954 (Godby, 2012: 64).



Figure 12: Anonymous, c. 1940s, *South African Railways Publicity and Travel Department Photograph from the Top of Table Mountain, Cape Town*,
©Transnet Heritage Library (Van Eeden, 2011: 7).



Figure 13: Lewis, C.P., 1971, *Between Hondewater and Plathuis* (Lewis, 2018).



Figure 14: Perl, D. 1980, *David Perl Rides the Makadas* (Lewis, 2018).

Koos van de Lende's landscape work represents a continuation of Modernist, but possibly also spiritual, interpretations of landscape but he brings in his own peculiar interaction with remote areas by using additional lighting (Obie Oberholzer's landscape work should also be

¹¹ In 2017, these galleries included Stevenson Gallery, David Krut Projects, Goodman Gallery, Barnard Gallery, and Artco.

mentioned in this context).

Such work was (and continues to be) very much contained in photography salons and are not given serious consideration by prominent galleries and critics. As Godby (2010b: 61) notes, the majority of landscape work (in painting and photography) in South Africa remains "generally accessible and popular". Based on representations of landscape photography by galleries that regularly participate in the Johannesburg art fair,¹¹ such Picturesque landscape works are still disregarded by these important galleries that currently represent photographers such as those listed earlier on page 170

5.2. Contemporary approaches to landscape in South Africa (c. 1970-2018)

These photographers (see pages 170) are examples of what Godby (2010b: 61) describes as introducing a "significant intellectual dimension to their work", thereby questioning the Western conventions of landscape representation and exploring the "role of the genre in

South Africa's troubled political history". Interestingly, Godby's (2010b) assessment resonates with Wells' (2011: 16) conclusion regarding contemporary Northern Hemisphere engagement with landscape as being variously "philosophically, theoretically and critically informed". This resonance with international practices cautions that South African landscape photography should not be considered in isolation as especially distinctive. Enwezor and Bester (2013: 33), however, argue that the particularity of South African photography arose through the development of strategies in direct response to apartheid. The legacy of such strategies arguably still linger in contemporary (post-1990) photographic engagement with landscape. Such engagements would thus still fall within what Enwezor and Bester name "engaged photography"; defined as "a photography operating with a critical awareness of apartheid that seeks to represent and understand it", against the idiom of struggle photography, whose explicit mission is to delegitimize apartheid, even though distinctions between the two categories have not always been clear. For the purposes of this study, I use the phrase 'engagement with landscape' in order to refer to the kind of critical awareness and desire to represent and understand, that Enwezor and Bester (2013) sees in 'engaged photography'. In the

context of landscape photography, this engagement is not always directly with apartheid, but this aspect of landscape permeates all issues related to land and the environment, however indirectly.

As such, the majority of 'intellectual' South African landscape work produced in the past 30 years or more is characterised by a strong reliance on the actuality of the photographic image, even though the images are often not 'straight' photographs such as, for example, Francki Burger's 2010 project, *Retracing the Cradle*, where she uses historic photographs of their family farm in composite, altered works (see Figure 15). It is this "peculiar indexical quality" of the landscape photograph to suggest that the representation is of an actual place that also motivates Godby's selection of photographic works to be included in his *The Lie of the Land* exhibition of 2010 (Godby, 2010b: 63).



Figure 15: Burger, F., 2010, *Specimen*, C-type print, 400 x 400 cm
(Burger, 2010).

This supports Hayes' (2007: 159) suggestion that the strong documentary tradition in South African photography brought about by the focus on social issues and struggle against apartheid remains a

major influence on both the work of photographers whose careers span the decade before and after the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990 and younger photographers who started their careers post 1990, such as Jabulani Dhlamini, Sabelo Mlangeni, and Thabiso Sekgala. A passage from the introduction to *Then and Now: Eight South African Photographers* (Weinberg, 2007) provides a persuasive description and explanation for the changes that occurred from pre- to post-1990 South African photography:

HIV/AIDS, land redistribution, and the transformation of the urban landscape – with the attendant erosion of social structures, crime, and environmental degradation – are obviously the major social issues facing South Africa today. But they do not mobilise the country – indeed the country is deeply divided over them – and they do not maintain a high visual profile in the media. There is no established iconography, because the issues are too complex, and responsibility too diffuse. Photographers can neither propose solutions nor identify culprits: they can simply document the experience of those affected. Thus photographers who earlier might have combined their statements of human interest with some kind of declamatory intent – drawing on generally accepted notions of right and wrong, and pointing to self-evident political solutions – must now abandon rhetoric and simply address the specifics of each occasion. Current work by these photographers,

therefore, is likely to be both more intimate than their earlier work and visually more exciting. It is intimate because it enters the lived experience of specific individuals; and it is exciting because, in avoiding the well-worn formulae of public rhetoric, it can explore the syntax of visual expression with sensitivity and new creativity (Godby, 2007: 12).

According to Godby's passage quoted above, those who worked pre-1990 had a sense of unified purpose, and therefore the collective approach was viable. Post-1990, however, there is no clearly defined, unifying purpose, especially in connection with the urban or semi-urban landscape. Individual approaches therefore need to be sought in order to do justice to the complexity of the current South African context. Hayes (2007) states that there is a strong shift in the focus of South African photography post-1990 away from a social documentary or struggle impetus, even by those who worked pre-1990. Considering the examples she mentions together with the comments made by these photographers about their work, it is apparent that this shift is geared towards an engagement with the social landscape, or as Guy Tillim puts it, "he has gone from being a documentary photographer, to being a 'photographer of interesting spaces'" (Hayes, 2007: 161). There is thus a subtle shift away from social documentary photography to projects where photographers are overtly self-aware and assert their own

identities as image-makers (Christopher, 2014: s.p.), even though these projects still fall within the frame of 'engaged photography'. For a number of photographers (Goldblatt, Tillim, Nunn, Ractliff, Mofokeng, and Nunn, for example, as discussed in more detail in Section 5), this means a shift towards, but not exclusive to, a more or less direct engagement with landscape. For the younger photographers, this is their starting point.

As an example of this shift, David Goldblatt's considerable oeuvre of photographic engagement with place claims a certain level of objectivity through a relatively systematic use of the camera to create "observations about the world [he lives] in" (Milbourne, 2014: 129), while at the same time claiming a critical, broadly political stance through his selection of what to show "in the 'neutral' venues of museums and galleries". Although there are many examples of powerful single images in Goldblatt's oeuvre, the strength of Goldblatt's work lies in series. Goldblatt's body of work has grown as he continued to explore the structures of South African society, as can be seen in the way his older work (including pre-1990 work) is regularly displayed in relation to more recent work (Corrigall, 2010: 3) as for example, in the solo exhibition, *Intersections Intersected* (2008) at the Michael Stevenson Gallery, curated by Goldblatt himself (Stevenson,

2008), and thereby presents some continuity in his photographic practice from before to after apartheid. Goldblatt's careful choice of vantage point, perspective, and crisp focus foregrounds content through the use of 'objective' formal codes in order to produce a visual sociological perspective. Series or groupings/couplings of images overcome the limitations of single-point perspective inherent in this kind of photography. On the importance of series of images, Baltz (1980: 26) writes that "if individual images can't define the world, perhaps a sufficient number of images could, at least, surround the world and thereby contain some part of it". I propose that Baltz's "define" and "contain" should be replaced by 'question' and 'reveal'.

Image series or essays make it possible to explore highly complex issues and subjects that do not have clear-cut solutions. When Figure 16 is exhibited or published in the same publication as Figure 17, for example, Goldblatt's critical, political stance becomes evident, especially in relation to the descriptive captions. Both images are, however, captured with the same careful, architectural, construction of formal elements. The consistent application of this technique allows Goldblatt to proclaim his images to be "observations".

Photographers' involvement with the struggle against apartheid has

stimulated a strong tradition of harnessing the medium's descriptive ability to explore social and political issues while downplaying the photographer's subjectivity, of which Goldblatt's work is a prime example. To achieve this sense of 'objective' observation, the photographer's position comes across as uninvolved and distanced – a position that is transferred to the viewer and is possibly necessary to be able to look critically at the structures described in the images. Goldblatt's pioneering conceptual approach has been highly influential in South African photography (Hayes, 2007: 144), especially how he "perhaps, unwittingly and unwillingly, insert[ed] and elevat[ed] landscape as a theme of photography in South Africa" (Xakaza, 2015: 92). This influence is especially evident in post-1990 photography including the work of Peter Hugo (*Permanent Error*, 2011), Robert Watermeyer (*Ports of Entry*, 2008), Zwelethu Mthethwa (*Brave Ones*, 2011), Svea Josephy (*Twin Town*, 2007; *Satellite Cities*, 2014-2016), and Jo Ractliffe (*As Terras do Fim do Mundo*, 2010).



Figure 16: Goldblatt, D., 1993, *Monument Honouring Karel Landman who Farmed in this Area Until 1837, when he Became a Leader in the Great Trek*. He took a party of 180 whites and their servants on a trek of 885 km into Natal where he was prominent in several battles with the Zulus, De Kol, Eastern Cape, silver gelatine print on fibre paper, 20 x 24 cm (Stevenson, 2008).



Figure 17: Goldblatt, D., 1983, *Some 1 500 lavatories, built in anticipation of the forced removal to this place of the 5 000 members of the Mgwali farming community, after its declaration as a 'black spot' by the apartheid government, Frankfort Resettlement Camp, Ciskei, Eastern Cape*, silver gelatine print on fibre paper, 44 x 56 cm (Stevenson, 2008).

The examples mentioned above are products of what Josephy (2005: 10) refers to as “new criticality that has emerged in post-apartheid South Africa”. This new criticality focuses on human structuring of place, and mainly does this through a new-objectivist style reminiscent of the New Topographics and the Becher Class.¹² The success and effectiveness of series of images rely on the concept investigated and aim to deflect attention from the medium itself, but often has the result of emphasising the tensions between reality and photographic form. What is essential to the success of such projects is a reliance on the visual literacy of the audience in terms of understanding the workings of the photographic apparatus and the photographic programme. Josephy’s (2007) *Twin Town* and further extension of the same approach in *Satellite Cities* (2016) are worth singling out because of her highly intellectual and refreshingly clever use of form and symbolism together (Van Robbroeck, 2008). The interconnectedness of places is indicated by the place names, but these connections are reinforced by visual resonances between

paired images and other pairs displayed together, thereby encouraging the viewer to search for more connections such as the contested nature of the places and their violent histories and revealing “correspondences, differences, and parallels with other places within South Africa and the world” (Josephy, 2017: 103). While the large prints are presented as an open window on the world, thereby making the connections and differences discovered seem more real, the photographer assumes that the audience has full realisation of this illusion. In the juxtapositioning of the two images in Figure 18, the absurdity of the reality of things that are possibly in the process of being sedimented into the earth for later generations to excavate is revealed and even exaggerated to the point where it becomes funny. This strategy is similar to Goldblatt’s use of image combinations that often point out the farcical nature of everyday reality.

Santu Mofokeng’s grainy, black-and-white, 35 mm landscape photographs are continuous with the social documentary visual style

¹² This includes photographers such as Candida Höfer, Thomas Struth, Andreas Gursky, Thomas Ruff, and many more who studied under Bernd and Hilla Becher in the 1970s and 1980s at the Düsseldorf School of Photography. The Bechers

also participated in the *New Topographics: Photographs of a Man-altered Landscape* exhibition of 1975.

of his earlier work. In Mofokeng's hands, this traditional style has been critical of his own perspective and the politics of representation from very early in his career. Mofokeng is therefore a pioneer of 'engaged photography' and also brings this approach into how he looks at landscape. Mofokeng's engagement with landscape is much more personal and involved than Goldblatt's approach. Mofokeng seems to photograph as much for understanding issues he is grappling with as for communicative purposes.

With the series he photographed in the caves near Clarens, Mofokeng examines the way African spirituality and religious beliefs interact with and form part of the environment and the landscape. Through the combination of his technique of using flattened perspective, deep shadows, reflections, and blur, he creates a sense of otherworldliness and spirituality. In his writing that accompanies the images, his own ambivalence is, however, apparent. The way that he uses the camera in the landscape also speaks of this ambivalence and discomfort.



Figure 18: Josephy, S., 2014, *Excavations, West Bank, Palestine (Jericho)*; 2015, *West Bank, Alexandra, Johannesburg, South Africa (River Bank)* (Josephy, 2017: 107).

The camera becomes a protective barrier between the photographer and the troubling situation and the personal grief he experienced regarding his brother's illness (Wienand, 2014: 320).

Weinand (2014: 320) quotes Mofokeng as stating:

If I am behind the camera I am not in the situation, I am outside it and I can deal with it. Although I am there I am not participating ... what I am thinking is composition. I am thinking colour. I am thinking values. I am not thinking 'you'. So it requires a different way; being there and not being there at the same time.

In this situation the camera allows Mofokeng to be in the place without participating. The camera acts as an emotional buffer, reducing the immediate emotional impact of the situation on Mofokeng.

A further aspect of Mofokeng's (2008: s.p.) landscape work is an effort to claim "psychic ownership" of the land, and exercise his freedom to travel, which was previously denied to him. Mofokeng's 'access' to and appreciation of landscape are, however, still uncertain. As Mountain (2010: 113) writes in relation to Mofokeng's

image, *U-drive Car, Little Switzerland, KwaZulu-Natal* (see Figure 19), to Mofokeng, the South African landscape remains "stuck in the past, attempting to move forward, written by colonialism and apartheid as unstable and unhinged, but unable to re-write its identity in postmodernism and post-colonialism that is by its very nature equally unstable and unhinged".



Figure 19: Mofokeng, S., s.a., *U-drive Car, Little Switzerland, KwaZulu-Natal* (Mountain, 2010: 114).

Through landscape photography Mofokeng interrogates his own appreciation of landscape. Mofokeng (2008: s.p.) writes that for him, “landscape appreciation is informed by personal experience, myth and memory, amongst other things. Suffice to say, it is also informed by ideology, indoctrination, projection and prejudice”.

As a younger photographer, Jabulani Dhlamini does not seem to doubt his own ‘psychic ownership’ or belonging in the land, but instead questions the nature of the landscape he belongs to by exploring the events that have shaped it.

As with most of the South African photographers mentioned in this overview, Dhlamini is a photographer who engages with place and landscape, among many other subjects. In his latest work, however, Dhlamini gains a new ‘comfortableness’ with his method, which also imbues his engagement with places with particular depth. For his latest series, *iQhawekazi* (see Goodman Gallery, 2018), Dhlamini photographed the landscape in response to the passing of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, on the day of her funeral at Orlando Stadium in Soweto (14 April 2018). Dhlamini writes, “I wanted to collect the noise of the event within me, to continue to listen to the atmosphere afterwards — post-funeral, but not post-mourning” (Goodman

Gallery, 2018). With this method, Dhlamini sees himself as absorbing the collective experience into himself and becoming an “embodied archive” (Goodman Gallery, 2018). He then responds by visiting and photographing informal memorial activities in and around the community. The resultant series of images therefore includes the environment and places as participating in the collective mourning (Goodman Gallery, 2018) (see

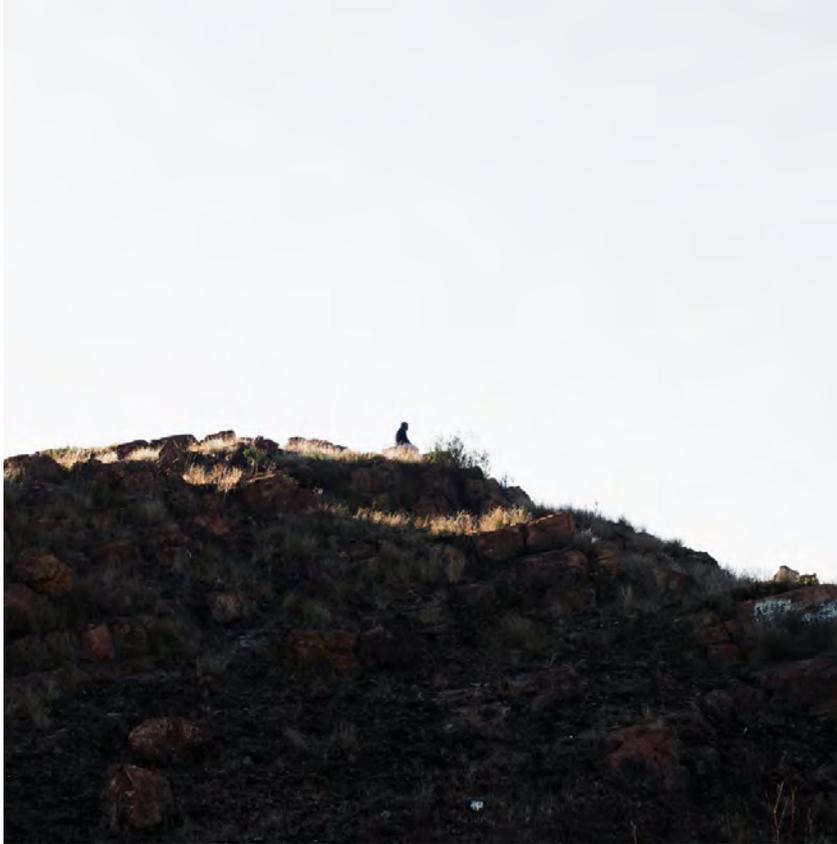


Figure 20).

Dhlamini started working with the notion of ‘channelling’ collective memory in 2008 in relation to the Sharpeville massacre of 1967. In Sharpeville, however, Dhlamini photographed places in response to interviews he conducted with witnesses and survivors of the

massacre (see Figure 21). Dhlamini includes the environment in his photographs in order to express his experience of past and present events. Instead of attempting to document traces of the past, he responds to places in terms of present experiences and memories of the past, thereby not only documenting places in a subtle and sensitive way, but also sharing in how communities (to which he belongs), and individuals deal with trauma and loss.

Dhlamini engages with places physically, emotionally, and intellectually, allowing the camera to connect him to places and

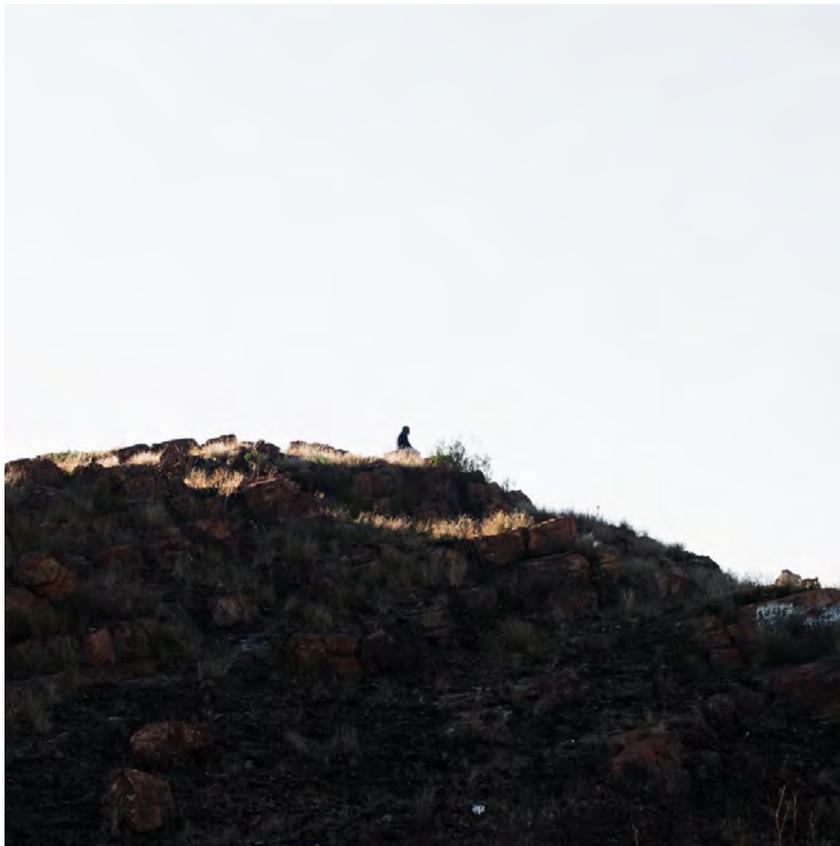


Figure 20: Dhlamini, J., 2018, *Morena, Orlando West, iQhawekazi Series*, pigment inks on fibre paper, 100 x 100 cm / work: 60 x 60 cm (Goodman Gallery, 2018).



Figure 21: Dhlamini, J., 2015, *Shebezi I, Sea Point, Sharpeville*, pigment inks on fiber paper, 90 x 90 cm (Goodman Gallery, 2018).

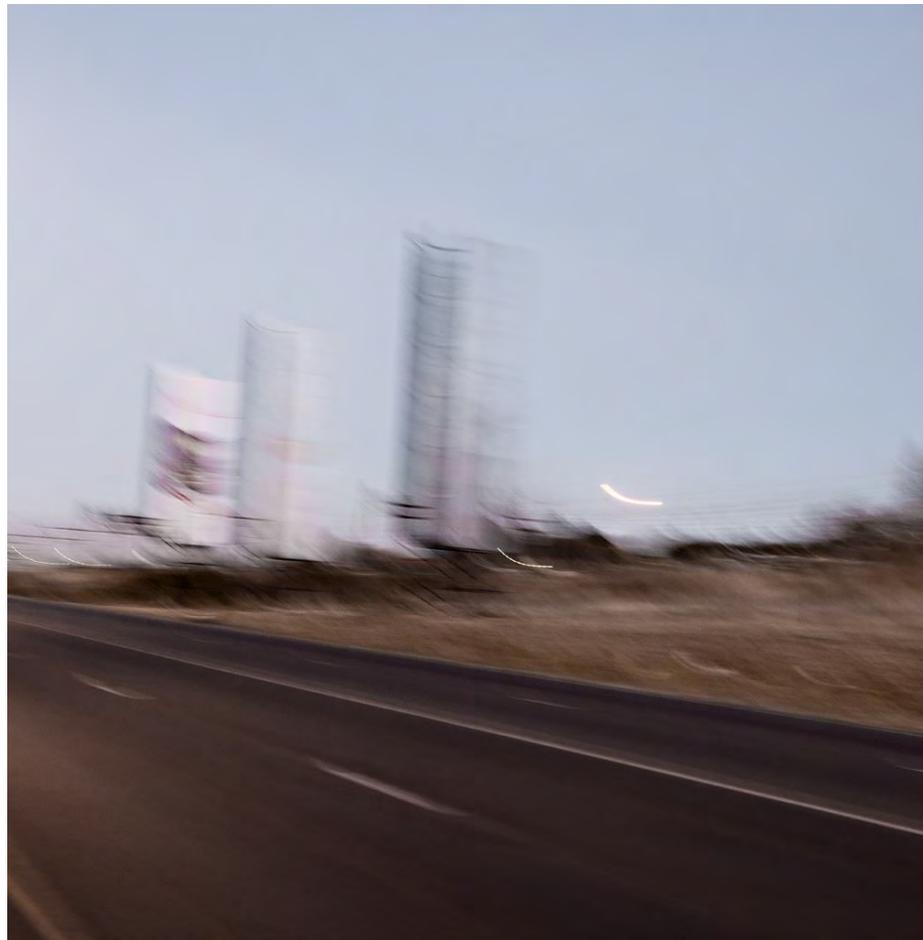


Figure 22: Dhlamini, J., 2018, *ukuhamba ukubona, iQhawekazi Series*, "As I was running to take an image of the brigade escorting Mam Winnie, I accidentally took an image documenting my movement. It's in this moment, I am reminded of a Zulu saying that describes movement as a way of seeing and to see is to know", pigment inks on fiber paper, 100 x 100 cm / work: 60 x 60 cm (Goodman Gallery, 2018).

communities through collective memories and experiences. Dhlamini does not seem to critique or pass judgement directly, but rather observes and expresses the 'atmosphere' he absorbs, commiserating and sharing in the experience.

Another image in the *iQhawekazi* series (see Figure 22) presents a remarkable 'accidental' moment in which Dhlamini connected the moment photographed with a Zulu saying, "*ukuhamba ukubona*" that he often heard from his grandfather growing up in Soweto. Although the literal translation of this saying is 'to travel is to see', the meaning for Dhlamini is closer to movement as a way of seeing, and this 'movement-seeing' as a way of knowing¹³. With this image, which is added almost as a coda to the series with which the photographer points to the importance of his embodied 'being in' the place, includes the camera and his act of photographing as a way to channel experience and become part of the place.

Mountain (2010) argues that much of the criticality of South African

photography is generated through the interaction of image and text, rather than through the visuals themselves. In much of the work by contemporary photographers discussed in this section, however, the texts (in relation to the images) generate more than criticality. Texts such as titles, captions, and artists' statements and essays serve to deepen the understanding of the kinds of engagement the photographers enter into with the landscape as physical place, irrespective of whether this engagement is predominantly intellectual, emotional, or 'memorial' (through memory); personally involved or distanced.

While the importance of written texts to the photographic projects discussed in this section possibly indicates some of the limitations of the photographic medium (Mountain, 2010: 91, 109-110), it also alludes to the complexity of issues surrounding the Southern African landscape and the variety of strategies that photographers use to engage with these issues. The dominant political frames of reading

¹³ This saying, "*ukuhamba ukubona*", as described by Dhlamini, resonates with (and precedes) the phenomenology of Morris (2002) and the findings of Bren- Unwin (2008) discussed in Phase 1.

landscape, such as the narrative of trauma, does not give sufficient credence to the idiosyncratic ways in which photographers as embodied beings engage with landscape. This Southern African landscape is a landscape in the process of decolonisation, a landscape of past and present conflicts; of inequalities, cultural meetings, and clashes, but also beauty, peace, and spirituality that affords life.

Although the strategies of engagement with landscape that the photographers discussed in this section employ differ in important ways, there are also similarities. Firstly, they all rely on the photographic medium's immediacy and ability to convince the viewer that the places photographed are actual physical places. Secondly, they make use of the power of image series and text combinations, and do not demand from the single image the ability to express the complexities of landscape. Despite these similarities, however, this brief overview reveals no unitary way of seeing. In fact, the way of seeing is not the only deciding factor.

The photographer's way of relating and engaging with the physical environment is revealed in the photographic imagery, in relation to the framing texts. The photographers discussed in this section are

not only observers but are also seeing, feeling, remembering, and imagining creatures.

This overview of South African landscape photography examines the telling of landscape not only in terms of *what* is told, but also *how* the telling is facilitated through the photographic practice. The importance of image-text combinations and series of images speak to the practice of curatorship as an expansion of photographic practice that relates to PbR methodologies. In the context of PbR there is a need to conduct a kind of mapping of the research experience in order to demonstrate what the art does: how it affects audiences, discursive frames, material practices and methodologies, and movement of thought or concepts (Bolt, 2016: 141). This 'mapping' is often achieved through accompanying texts and other aspects of curatorship. In order to explore this methodology, as applied in landscape photography, Nunn's *Unsettled* project is singled out for more in-depth discussion in the next section.

As a seasoned photographer, Nunn has recently started engaging much more directly with landscape than in the past, with his latest project, *UNSETTLED: The 100 Year War of Resistance between by Xhosa against and Boer and British* (henceforth referred to as

Unsettled). The title of Nunn's project seems to situate his engagement with landscape solidly within the narrative of landscape as trauma, but on closer inspection, the passage of more than a century, the precise wording of the title, and the curation of the project present alternative narratives, even though these are interwoven with the trauma of conflict as well.

6. UNSETTLED: One Hundred Year Xhosa War of Resistance (1776-1876)

So, how do you photograph a conflict that took place a long, long time ago?

It obviously isn't easy; what became really apparent to me was that I would have to engage the landscape – and I'm not a landscape photographer per se. While I have produced a lot of images and photographed land issues from the 1980s onwards, I haven't regarded myself as a landscape photographer, and so it was a huge challenge for me to engage with this history from that angle. But that seemed the obvious way to go for me, to engage this space as land that was contested, land that was the site of trauma, but land that was also beautiful, enticing, alluring (Nunn, 2015: 155).

The purpose of the previous section is to contextualise and frame my own landscape photography practice, but I am also particularly interested in what photographers say or write about their own ways of working, which often refers to their own embodied experiences. Likewise, in the following discussion of Nunn's work, I draw mainly on published interviews with Nunn and texts by Nunn on the *Unsettled* project, as well as e-mail conversations I conducted with Nunn in 2017 and 2018 about *Unsettled*. Further insights into Nunn's

work, especially his earlier work, are gained from texts on South African photography in general, and academic analyses of Nunn's work specifically. With the discussion that follows, I focus on *how* Nunn's practice facilitates the telling of landscape, yet it is impossible to understand the *how* of telling-of without also examining *what* is told as well.

Unsettled is an ambitious project that Nunn created over a period of three years between early 2012 and 2015, producing a body of more than 130 photographs of the Eastern Cape landscape. A selection from this body of work is included in a book published in 2015 by Archipelago Books and designed by Peter Holm. A selection of 60 16 x 20 silver prints, framed with simple black frames without matte boards, were printed for a traveling exhibition. The purpose of *Unsettled*, in short, is to look at traces of 100 years of the frontier period (1776-1876) in South African and Eastern Cape history, from a Xhosa perspective (Nunn, 2015: 164, 154) in order to reclaim a past that Nunn believes has been subject to "organised forgetting". Nunn conceptualises the *Unsettled* project with full cognisance of the mounting crisis regarding ineffectual land restitution and redistribution in South Africa, but for Nunn the problem of land goes beyond the dispossession of indigenous land in former European

colonies in that there are environmental, health, and psychological ramifications of colonial legacies as well (Leica Camera Blog, 2014). *Unsettled*, however, precedes the debate regarding the amendment of section 25 of the South African Constitution to allow for expropriation of land without compensation, that was ongoing at the time of writing this thesis. Nunn seems to have anticipated the crisis at which the unresolved, maladministered and, according to Tepe and Hall (2017), ideologically flawed land restitution policies and implementation strategies have brought South Africa to in 2018. Within this contemporary context, *Unsettled* gains new significance and importance.

A key subject for exploration that seems inexhaustible in South Africa is the aftermath of apartheid, violence and conflict, which is often successfully explored through the examination of land and landscape.¹⁴ Regarding 'aftermath photography'¹⁵, Brett (2016: 22–

24) writes that,

the photographs promise a possible connection to the event, to the memory and history of the site, but in their failure to deliver, allow space for interpretation and for the possibility of the extension of the event, because the photograph sits outside of time.

Although Brett writes here about the aftermath of conflict in Germany, it seems particularly relevant to Nunn's *Unsettled* project with which he turns to a conflict that took place much longer ago, and which had a tremendous impact on the current demographics of land ownership in South Africa. As Brett (2016) mentions in the quote above, there is a sense in which any attempt to bring past experiences and events into the present always fails. This failure, however, leaves space for other interpretations, over and above that of landscape as site of, or metaphor for, trauma.

¹⁴ Examples include Ractliffe's focus on the aftermath of the Angolan civil war and what is referred to as the Border War in South Africa, Goldblatt's examination of the aftermath of apartheid, and Tillim's Joburg projects (2004 and 2014).

¹⁵ Brett (2016: 5) defines 'aftermath photography' as "photographs taken in the act of return to a location after something has happened, and in response to

traces of events in the landscape". Although Brett refers to aftermath photography as photographs of places that are devoid of human presence yet marked by human action, in the present study even images that include human figures could be considered as falling within the category of 'aftermath photography' because the way that people 'are' in places is often shaped by past events that occurred in these same places.

In light of this 'space for interpretation', I discuss *Unsettled* in two sections. The first considers the making process in terms of how Nunn works with his camera in the landscape, as well as the research conducted by Nunn as part of this process. The second part of this discussion centres around the curation of this project, which facilitates the telling of landscape. Although I realise that these two aspects of practice cannot be separated or truly fruitfully discussed in isolation, I attempt to focus on the resultant book and exhibitions in the second section and on the initial conceptualisation of the project, in relation to Nunn's earlier work, as well as individual images and their captions, in the first section. The two sections overlap somewhat in what I consider 'curation' in this context to include the selection of images, writing captions and the artist's statements of additional essays, selecting or commissioning texts, finally putting all this together, arranging the work, and presenting it to the public. The two sections are separated to show how the relational experience between photographer, camera, and place

influences curatorial decisions¹⁶. Although the two aspects of photographic practice are divided here into two sections, I do not suggest that they are separate practices.

Throughout the discussion of Nunn's work, I draw parallels with my own practice where relevant, although the purpose is not to conduct a comparative study. It is my hope that a discussion of *Unsettled* will deepen the discourse on South African landscape photography by employing a language in favour of relational terms that consider the triad of photographer/viewer, camera, and place in this representation of place.

6.1. *Unsettled* as Photographic Engagement with Place

Nunn engages very directly with the Eastern Cape as 'place' (according to Casey's definition, 2001); in other words, the histories of various cultures that he imagines in relation to the physical environment and, to some extent, his own personal history and

¹⁶ It must be noted that Nunn regularly outsources some of the tasks involved in the curation of a project. This, however, does not influence the conclusions drawn from the discussion of *Unsettled*.

direct contact with the spaces. In a short essay included in the book publication of *Unsettled*, from which the opening quote to this section was taken, Nunn (2015: 153) proclaims that he was not a landscape photographer. Due in part to his role as founding member of Afrapix in 1982, Nunn is mainly known as a struggle photographer but he has ventured into landscape photography because, according to him, the project demanded it, even though he was uncomfortable with landscape at first.

Yet Nunn has engaged indirectly with the South African landscape as part of various previous projects, some of which have been ongoing since the 1980s, such as his documentation of rural development, as well as *Blood Relatives*, which is a remarkably personal exploration of his identity through a series of photographs of his extended family that consider his history and ancestry (Christopher, 2014: s.p.).

Figure 23 and Figure 24 from the *Blood Relatives* series present situated viewpoints that examine the relations between people (and

animals) and their environment even though these images are not explicitly presented as landscapes. Images from this series were published in *Group Portrait South Africa: Nine Family Histories*, published in 2003, which promotes the ideal of a non-racial South Africa.

In the early 1970s Nunn started photographing as a means to develop a career as an activist within the limited options available to black South Africans then. Although he initially wanted to write, Nunn gradually found in photography a medium through which he could express ideas around the need for change (Leica Camera Blog, 2014). Nunn's discovery of the photographic medium as "a possible form of expression to use as a means of engaging politically or as an activist" in his 20s shaped his development as a person "who engages with things in a visual way" (Nunn, 2018). According to Leica Camera Blog's (2014) interview with Nunn, he took a number of years to learn his medium on his own, and started working independently as a photographer in 1981 and joined Afrapix¹⁷ in

¹⁷ According to Saayman *et al.* (2011: 505), Afrapix's objective was "to expose the atrocities of the apartheid regime, as well as to foster and train a new generation of historically disadvantaged photographers".

1985. Struggle photography (mainly associated with Afrapix) was essentially a strategic movement in which there was a “self-conscious shift away from valuing the individual vision and creativity of the photographer, to asking how photography could be used as a tool of the struggle for liberation and democracy” (Newbury, 2009: 9).

I find in Nunn’s recent work a continuation of the Afrapix vision that prioritises the issue above aesthetic vision. Nunn’s work, in my opinion, exemplifies Heidi Saayman Hattingh and Rolf Gaede’s (2011: 519) conclusion that they reach from 26 interviews with struggle photographers, that in the years post 1990, the notion that photographers have an aesthetic responsibility beyond their own aesthetic vision suggests that the tension between individuality and collective responsibility still remains, but has been brought into a different kind of balance more suited to the new South Africa.

Certain images from Nunn’s *Unsettled* project has a blandness and austerity reminiscent of the New Topographics’ work by photographers such as Robert Adams or Lewis Baltz. Yet, as a whole, there are marked differences. The New Topographics photographers placed great store in consistent, highly crafted, and finely resolved (often a large-format camera on a tripod) techniques

that resulted in a standardised form that tended to make diverse subjects seem uniform. In contrast, Nunn engages with landscape with the same equipment and approach he used in most of his earlier documentary projects, namely a handheld 35 mm rangefinder camera and black-and-white film. In an attempt to define documentary without excluding or including too much, John Corner (2008: 20) states that documentary is defined in terms of purpose rather than form or subject matter. Corner, however, further explains that purpose (if effective), extends into form and subject matter (2008:20). *Unsettled* is, therefore, at core a documentary project that engages very directly with landscape as a representation of place.

As Nunn states, his equipment and processes are not standard for landscape work (Nunn, 2017). When I asked him in an e-mail interview about how he used his camera, he seemed to dismiss the question by stating that he worked with what he had, and that what he had was limited to what he could afford and gain access to: “Access to resources is always a huge factor in the production of images, especially in a society as unequal as South Africa is, and race is always a factor in access to resources” (Nunn, 2017).

With the above statement Nunn acknowledges the limitations within which he has to work and solve problems, but it also indicates a

certain negation of authorial control that plays to the 'principle before aesthetics' idea that marked the initial¹⁸ Afrapix collective approach. In an interview with the Leica Internet Team for the Leica Camera Blog, Nunn is asked how the Leica that he used helped him achieve his vision for his project, upon which Nunn answers, "the Leica M6 with a Elmar-M 2.8 50 mm lens is the only camera equipment I own, and has had to suffice for the job. I think it has" (Leica Camera Blog, 2014). Nunn's statements regarding how race still affects the ability to choose a medium frame his entire photographic career as political. Nunn seems to cultivate a deliberately 'naïve' trust in the documentary ability of the camera, but he simultaneously questions this trust by making his own subjective, even biased, approach to *Unsettled* explicit in the accompanying texts. Nunn makes it clear that he purposefully approached the place from an imagined Xhosa perspective (even if this imagination was based on research) and imagined past.

¹⁸ Hayes (2007: 151) documents how these principles tended to erode over time and how competition and financial pressures eventually undermined the collectivity of the movement.



Figure 23: Nunn, C., s.a., "I had my confirmation ceremony as a child in this Catholic church in the community from which my father originated"

(Nunn, s.a.).



Figure 24: Nunn, C., 2001, Deborah Eksteen and Noel Norris visiting the grave of Deborah's recently deceased father, directly after the marriage, Mangete, KwaZulu-Natal (Nunn, s.a.).

By positioning *Unsettled* as being conceptualised and ‘documented’ from the ‘other side’ of the dominant historical narrative – the side that was suppressed and subject to active forgetting – Nunn points to the questionable authority of historical documentation in which photographic landscape imagery is often also implicated. Nunn is very well aware of the impact of his own subjectivity on the way that the Eastern Cape is represented in *Unsettled*. In his essay included in the *Unsettled* book publication (Nunn, 2015: 154) he states that “a lot of this project is about *imagining*, my imagining”.

The 35 mm rangefinder camera used mainly on a tripod, 50 mm lens, and 400 ISO black-and-white film that Nunn uses comprise a system that is well-cemented in the history of documentary photography and photojournalism.¹⁹ This system is very quiet, highly compact, and allows for quick responses to actions and events. The maximum F-stop of the Elmar-M lens is fast enough to allow handheld use in most conditions. The 50 mm lens provides a standard view (which approximates the perspective of human vision) and the viewfinder

¹⁹ The founders of the highly influential Magnum Photo Agency (Henri Cartier-Bresson, Robert Capa, George Rogers, and David Seymour) all used rangefinder Leicas and 50 mm lenses from the start (1948) and for most of their careers

allows the photographer to see elements outside of the 35 mm image frame, which allows more accurate and responsive framing. The 35 mm roll film allows for multiple frames of any subject to be taken as quickly as the photographer can wind the film with the mechanical film winder. The only electronic feature of the camera is the through-the-lens (TTL) light meter. This system produces a photographic form that is very strongly associated with documentary work, and has in a sense defined the documentary genre for many decades. This standard documentary system allows the photographer to concentrate or ‘focus’ on the often busy or even chaotic situation at hand (as was the case with much of the Afripix work in the 1980s) because the photographer does not necessarily have to think about the technical aspects of the process.

Applied in landscape photography, and used with a tripod as Nunn did for some images in this project, many of the advantages of the Leica M6, fast lens, and 400 ISO film are negligible, but the ‘look’ remains the same: grainy, mostly in focus, and high dynamic range

(Magnum Photos, 2018). W.E. Smith also used this or similar systems for much of his photo-essay work.

that allows image detail and texture to be preserved in the highlight and shadow areas, even in harsh light. True to a documentary approach, Nunn also provides various perspectives on some of the locations he photographs, such as the placement shot that provides the wider context, and then the closer perspective that describes detail and more intimate engagement. This approach is the strongest when Nunn photographs towns and human settlements.

Nunn, however, does not classify his project as documentary. Instead, he classifies this project as the “reclamation of memory, and organised remembering” (Nunn, 2017). By his reluctance to answer questions about the role of the technology or the photographic process he uses, Nunn seems to suggest that his images are created through a tried-and-tested methodology that does not need to be described in any detail, even though this methodology has its problems. In Europe and the United States of America (USA), the politics of representation surrounding documentary photography was criticised during the 1970s and 1980s. Its value as a weapon against social injustices was questioned against the portrayal of human subjects as victims and the eventual exploitation of social and cultural otherness in various ways (Rosler, 1989: 307). In South Africa,

however, the value of documentary photography endures as social commentary (Newbury, 2009: 1), and as a means to expose social wrongs that were kept secret by the state (Hayes, 2007: 147). Darren Newbury (2009: 1) writes that in South Africa during apartheid, “the charge of naïve and uncritical humanism that had been levelled at documentary photography elsewhere did not apply”. A criticism against Nunn’s chosen photographic system that does, however, apply is that black-and-white photographs are widely associated with poverty (Hayes, 2007: 156) – an association that harks back to a “Steinbeckian vision of rural poverty made famous in the U.S. Farm Security Administration work of Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, and Margaret Bourke-White”, according to Enwezor and Bester (2013: 28). Due to this association of documentary style black-and-white photography with poverty, one can therefore read the Eastern Cape landscape as impoverished.

The result of Nunn’s relationship with his chosen photographic system is that it prompts us to stop looking at the photographs as self-contained objects. The photographs are tools to help us imagine the past and connect it to the present. According to Godby (2015: 71), Nunn’s approach in the *Unsettled* project is to draw “on

the basic understanding of photography, that the nature of the medium is to take its subject out of one time and place for contemplation in another". While I would agree with Godby's interpretation, I would argue that the images allow for more than "contemplation" of place (which implies time). The images also help us to step into a relation with these places, which allows us to engage with them in terms of topography, history, and an alternative imagination to the dominant myths that structure contemporary South African society, such as the superiority of the Zulu warrior, which was nonetheless crushed in a span of six months by the inherently superior British forces (Nunn, 2015: 158) and the myth of the "Invader's military, political and cultural superiority" (Jayawardane, 2015: 151).

If we have an emotional response to the images, it is because the subject matter²⁰ "evokes emotion, because it carries the baggage of our past into our present" (Nunn, 2017), even though the images are

²⁰ The subject matter referred to here includes "sites of trauma, missionary incursion sites, military fortification sites, settler incursion sites, white farmer sites, Xhosa tribal land, Xhosa leadership sites, Xhosa sacred sites, indigenous Khoikhoi sites, natural geographical borders during the conflict, natural defence

often banal and 'deadpan' and often seem empty (Knoblauch, 2015).

Nunn states that the biggest challenge he experienced in this engagement with landscape photography was how to deal with the beauty of the landscape (Leica Camera Blog, 2014). With beauty here he refers to the standard "aesthetic canons of landscape, as in 'picture-postcard-beauty'", which, according to Nunn (2017), "interrupts the notions of contestation that always underlie especially colonised land". As part of *Unsettled*, Figure 25 represents an imagined gaze of the coloniser over a desired prize. For the colonisers it represents resources to be claimed and cultivated to produce supplies for further conquests. For those who offered resistance, it represented shelter, livelihood, and a place where they had agency and a connection to the land. For Nunn (2017), this is the beauty depicted in Figure 25 – a paradise. As opposed to the accepted standards of beautiful landscapes, for Nunn, a landscape is beautiful when one has a connection to a place,

geography and topology, massacre sites, current use of land sites, graves of significant characters (mostly Xhosa), sites of contemporary memory, prisons and battle sites" (Leica Camera Blog, 2014).

with mostly (but not exclusively) positive connotations. “So”, states Nunn (2017), “as an inhabitant of a land, whatever its geographical state, one could find beauty in that land”. If we find beauty in the images, it is the connections we have with a place that allow us to find the beauty, brought to us through the photograph. Finding a connection with the places, however, is not made easy by Nunn’s images that are at first glance “decidedly underwhelming”, and if “very little of what they document could be called beautiful or even memorable” (Knoblauch, 2015).²¹

As a photograph, Figure 25 is one of the few images in the *Unsettled* collection that resembles a traditional landscape photograph (in subject matter) in that it is a depiction of a vista of wide open space, with a river running through it. Even so, the image is more reminiscent of the survey work of Timothy O’Sullivan (see Figure 26) than of classically beautiful landscape works with crafted tonal values and dramatic light by photographers such as Ansel Adams (see

Figure 27).

In Figure 25, the mid-morning (or perhaps mid-afternoon) sun seems very bright and harsh, and the atmosphere seems dusty (an effect created by the haze, and light-grey tonal values that dominate). Although the land seems fertile, it also comes across as unforgiving and harsh. Visually there are no strong foreground and middle-ground elements that would, according to traditional conventions, serve to lead the viewer into the image and provide resting places for the eye. The claw-like shapes formed by the river forcefully draws us along the curve of the mountain into the hazy distance.

With the caption of Figure 25, the photographer asks the viewer to find a connection with the place through his imagined tactical perspective: the bush as shelter and the river as barrier between the two forces. The photographer’s imagined relation to this landscape prompts me as viewer to speculate about what he is standing on to gain this view. A bridge over the Fish River was built by the British in

²¹ This statement was made in relation to the installation of a selection of 19 images from the *Unsettled* project at the David Krut Projects Gallery in New York.

1877 at Committees Drift, a photograph of which appears in the *Unsettled* collection, but this is not the view from that bridge. More probably standing on a large boulder, Nunn is asking us to imagine that his viewpoint is that of both the British aggressor and the Xhosa defender.

Through this imagined perspective indicated by the caption, Nunn shapes a specific relation between viewer and place through the image, where the place itself is afforded a certain agency, in this case as natural boundary and as provider of shelter and livelihood. According to Natasha Christopher (2014: s.p.), "This desire to establish an equitable relationship and agency between the photographer and the subject has become part of the working process for many photographers who seek devices and strategies to deal with the problems inherent to the act of representing." At the start of the *Unsettled* project, Nunn did not have a specific personal connection to the Eastern Cape, except that it played such an important role in the history of South Africa. Nunn's connection to the land was initially political, but for him the political is personal and vice versa. Any number of issues relating to use and ownership or spiritual connotations of any land would create political interest for

Nunn, therefore he says, "I don't need to be personally connected to land for it to have a personal/political importance to me" (2017).



Figure 25: Nunn, C., 2015, The Great Fish (Inxuba) River, streaming through the Great Fish River Nature Reserve in which the bush served as a tactical retreat and formidable fortress for Xhosa militants. (Nunn, 2015: 56).



Figure 26: O'Sullivan, T.H., 1872, Horse Shoe Cañon, Green River, Wyoming, albumen print (Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division).



Figure 27: Adams, A., 1942, The Tetons and the Snake River, Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming, gelatin silver print 15 1/2 × 19 (National Archives and Records Administration, Records of the National Park Service).



Figure 28: Nunn, C., 2015, Place of Parting of the 1820 Settlers, 2 metre quartzite monolith, Assagai Bush. One of the points from which 1820 settlers were directed to their allotments, Albany/Zuurveld (Nunn, 2015: 25).

Nunn's imagining of the past is not maintained equally with every image. An essential aspect of the project, which is expedited by the photographic medium, is the connections drawn between the imagined past and the observed present. In Figure 28, entry into the landscape is restricted by a wire fence. By photographing this monolith, which marks the place from which the landscape was divided up and handed to European settlers through the wire and pole fence, Nunn achieves two things. Firstly, he points to the current state of the land as being owned by descendants of the settlers. Part of the landscape (a two-metre quartzite monolith) has even been extracted from the land to commemorate the place. The landscape is visually divided in the frame of the photograph by the crooked vertical and horizontal lines formed by the wire, poles, trees, and monolith, with a branch jutting in from the side to break any seemingly ordered arrangement. Secondly, Nunn places the viewer in his own position of having his movement restricted and not being allowed easy access to the place. Although the amount of effort is not comparable to the actual effort of the photographer to search out all these obscure traces of the past hidden in the present, a good amount of effort is required from the viewer to be able to engage

deeply with this complex body of work.

In *Unsettled*, Nunn uses photographic technology to authenticate the actual places – to proclaim the physical existence of these sites – but he also points to his experience of the place by imagining a specific perspective. In the final essay included in *Unsettled*, Nunn writes about his experience of attempting to find places, things, and traces to photograph in the vast space that is the Eastern Cape. With no pre-existing map indicating points of interest, Nunn had to conduct extensive prior research and physically search, in some cases unsuccessfully at first, for hints of what was often sketchily recorded in British military journals or in Xhosa oral accounts. This feeling of almost being lost, and not knowing where to look, is captured in some of the wider perspective images, such as in Figure 29, in which the landscape seems to purposefully obscure any traces of the past. Yet the image in Figure 30 shows a British fort as a clear 'target' outlined against the horizon and represents in this context the victory for the resistance. This fort was, however, later renamed and declared a monument in 1938, with reference to a different battle.

Nunn uses his vantage points captured through photographs and

written narratives as a way to claim back agency for the conquered people, yet the project as a whole makes it clear that the claiming back of agency remains a struggle. The imagined perspective afforded by the camera and lens cannot seize ultimate control. Despite his initial nervousness regarding engaging with landscape photography, Nunn developed an instinctive approach to landscape, as evidenced by his statement that, "I approached the world of landscape photography with the understanding that this was necessary terrain in order to reclaim agency over this contested area" (Nunn, 2017). Nunn therefore uses the photographic medium to point to the real places as he experiences them, thereby bypassing an aesthetic approach to landscape.

When Nunn photographs the descendants of Xhosa warriors and chiefs that led the resistance during the 100-year war, they stand (or sit) in relation to the landscape and, in some cases, this relation is one of integration and unity (see Figure 31 and Figure 32); in other cases the human figure is more dominant in the frame and outlined against the sky or simplified background (see Figure 31), suggesting a greater degree of command. In none of these images, however, do the people look out over the landscape. All the Xhosa

'representatives' look directly at the camera, except the tour guides, who seem to be looking into the darkness of the "Mankazana Cave where women and children were slaughtered by British forces" (Nunn, 2015: 64); troubled by the recollection of the gruesome events that they have to retell as tour guides. This direction of the look contrasts with the image of the surveyor gazing out over the landscape as prospect as described and analysed by Van Eeden (2011) (see Figure 12).

The difference in the nature of the agency assigned to the Xhosa people in Nunn's images is suggested in how the settler monument, representing a settler family as cast-iron human figures elevated on a platform, is photographed from an angle that shows the figures 'standing' on the horizon in a dominating position, outlined clearly against the sky (see Figure 33) and therefore separated from the landscape. The settler relationship to the landscape is monumentalised here as domineering, and is opposed to the integrated relationship of the Xhosa people with the landscape in relation to Nunn's point of view while photographing.



Figure 29: Nunn, C., 2015, Fort Armstrong on the Kat River. Originally known as Camp Adelaide, it was later named Fort Armstrong after Captain A.B. Armstrong who was based there in 1835. The Fort was garrisoned by the Cape Corps (Khoi) regiment, who surrendered the Fort to Willem Uithalder, Khoi General of the Kat River rebels, on 23 February 1851, during the Eighth Frontier War – so-called Mlanjeni's War, Balfour, Kat River (Nunn, 2015:80).



Figure 30: Nunn, C., 2015, Fort Armstrong on the Kat River was declared a national monument in 1938, Kat River Valley (Nunn, 2015: 81).

This statue of the settlers represents the only white figures in the landscape in the entire collection of images (except for a hardly noticeable lone white male figure that seems to have been accidentally included in the frame, walking out from behind a building). With this deliberate exclusion, Nunn seems to reproduce the strategies of 'white' ways of looking that portrayed the South African landscape as empty, without the presence of 'indigenous' people, such as described by Van Eeden (2011).

Photographing the land to claim agency is a risky move, as Jayawardane (2015: 143) mentions in the epilogue to the *Unsettled* publication, as the same technologies helped produce the dominant narratives that erased the alternative histories that Nunn aims to revive. In certain important ways, however, Nunn does not simply employ the same colonial strategies. Nunn's emptying the landscape of white presence serves instead to point out the self-delusional irrationality of the colonial strategies mentioned above.

The way that landscape photography has been said to be an act of claiming has been through controlling visual elements according to Western aesthetic conventions (see discussion on page 215). Nunn's

apparent negation of aesthetic control, by de-emphasising the role of choices relating to the photographic technology, seems to be contradictory to the desire to reclaim agency. Nunn's desire for agency here, however, does not reproduce colonial desire. His desire is for *agency*, not for ultimate control. The following statement, taken from the final essay in *Unsettled*, suggests that his desire for agency is not only for himself, but also for the indigenous people (in which Nunn includes the Khoikhoi and the Xhosa) as a whole, and for the acknowledgement of the agency of the land itself:

The indigenous people, whether it was the Khoikhoi or the Xhosa, had a different attitude towards land, a more spiritual sense that I think still exists even to this day; a sense of land as being not something that you own, but something that owns you. I tried to imagine a lot of that (Nunn, 2015: 156).



Figure 31: Nunn, C., 2015, Looking out towards Grahamstown. A descendant of the warrior chiefs who led five of the nine wars in the 100 Year War of Resistance against the Afrikaner and British settlers, KwaNdlambe Village, Peddie (Nunn, 2015: 160).



Figure 32: Nunn, C, 2015, Tour guides Miranda Kakancu and Cebo Lekhanya Vaaltein of Mbodla Eco-Heritage Tours at the Mankazana Cave where women and children were slaughtered by British forces in the 100 Year War, KwaNdlambe, Peddie (Nunn, 2015: 64).



Figure 33: Nunn, C, 2015, Monument to the 1820 settlers, Grahamstown (Nunn, 2015: 24).



Figure 34: Nunn, C, 2015, Chief Mxolisi Hamilton Makinana, descendant of five warrior chiefs who fought against the Boers and British in the 100 Year War of Resistance to settler and colonial domination, standing with his councillor, Richard Jonya, at the Nyikiny.

In this section I tease out the interaction between the photographer, his camera, and the places in order to understand how this interaction aids in the telling of places. In this discussion I considered the *Unsettled* project as a continuation of Nunn's earlier work in that he maintains the documentary aesthetic and de-emphasises authorial control.

Yet, Nunn engages with the places he photographs from a very specific point of view, which is shaped by his imagining of the Xhosa perspective on the historical events he wants to bring to his audience's attention. By allowing his photographic engagement with the landscape to be shaped by such imaginings, Nunn develops a narrative of sustained resistance and a closely integrated relationship between the Xhosa people and the beautiful, highly valued land that they defended.

The nature of Nunn's photographic engagement with places as discussed in this section only becomes evident when looking at multiple images and already hints at the immense complexity of the *Unsettled* project through the sense of getting lost that is created in specific images, but also in the combination of many images. In the

curation of the project, which is discussed in the following section, the simplified, two-sided narrative of the 100 Years of Resistance is questioned.

6.2. *Unsettled* as Curated Project

The *Unsettled* project was primarily conceived as an exhibition, with accompanying catalogue publications. The work has been shown in several local and international galleries since early 2015. The work is also published with text translated into German as *100 Jahre Widerstand der Xhosa gegen Weisse Landnahme und die Folgen bis Heute* (see Figure 35) by AfrikAWunderhorn in 2015, with an alternative format and layout and additional essays. For the purposes of this study, and due to limitations of language and access, I will consider the English version published by Archipelago Books (see Figure 36) only. The differences between the German and English titles, however, indicate the difficulty of finding a title that accurately portrays such a vast project. This German title translates as "100 years of resistance of Xhosa against the taking of land by whites, and its present consequences". This title is more direct and controversial than the English title. In the light of recent land grabs that have stirred up emotions and talk of violently defending property, the German title could be seen as more inflammatory than the English title. The English title also does not mention the "*Folgen bis heute*", or 'present consequences', which I

do agree, goes without saying, because the choice of photographic medium represents the present moment of the photographer's 'being in' place. The title, however, sets up two sides: Xhosa on the one side and 'Boer and Brit' on the other side, as continuing into the present. The various sites of conflict, the communities, and the environments Nunn photographed, however, present a much more complicated situation, with no simple solutions in the present.

The title at first provides the context within which we have to understand the work: the history of the Eastern Cape between 1776 and 1876. The words "unsettled" and "resistance", however, develop multiple meanings as the viewer engages deeper with the work. "Unsettled" initially refers to the fact that the war was ultimately lost, resulting in the resettlement of the Xhosa people from the land depicted. It also refers to the initial perception and subsequent representation by colonial forces of the land as being unsettled. A further meaning that develops more slowly is the resettlement of the white population, which is achieved through a marked absence of white figures, as mentioned in the previous section. Finally, the work as a whole is also deeply unsettling, as it presents a need for change, even though the precise nature of this

change is not clearly defined. In order to achieve such complexity, the work is presented in various formats and reworked into different arrangements. The catalogue and exhibition formats of the work perform different functions and provide the viewer with significantly different experiences. According to Joyeux-Prunel and Olivier (2015: 81), “an exhibition catalogue is a book, usually printed, that describes or is supposed to show evidence of an historical event: An exhibition”.

The *Unsettled* book, however, goes beyond the exhibitions in that it includes more images, as well as longer essays, including an essay by Nunn about his thought processes in the conceptualisation and execution phases of the project, as well as the historical information that drew him to the various places (Nunn, 2018) that were not available to viewers at the launching exhibition venue, Grahamstown

in the Eastern Cape. The *Unsettled* exhibition was necessarily adapted to each space in which it was shown. In larger galleries such as the Oliewenhuis Art Museum in Bloemfontein, a full 60 images could be shown, while at the David Krut Projects Gallery in Rosebank, which I was able to view in 2016, the number of images was greatly reduced. The *Unsettled* publication is therefore not a document of a single event, but rather of a series of events for which it functions as a master document – a more enduring document than the exhibit, which has a shorter life span (Nunn, 2018). In this sense, this publication could be considered a photobook²² rather than a catalogue. The book emphasises the essay sequence and the body of work as whole, while the exhibition allows single images to be experienced optimally. In Nunn’s (2018) opinion, although the work functions best as an essay, the best way to experience the *Unsettled* work is through a gallery exhibition that allows the entire body of

²² The term ‘photobook’ is problematic because it is generally used to refer to print-on-demand products offered by print companies, and therefore starting to replace the family photo album and wedding album, or holiday album. Baltz (2012: loc. 608) used the term “artist’s bookwork” to talk about books where the photographer (or artist), either individually or in collaboration with a designer and/or editor, produces a book on a specific theme or subject, which describes the *Unsettled* project accurately, but is unfortunately too close to the

term ‘artist’s book’, which would not be an accurate description. This topic is discussed in more detail in Section 6.2.4 in relation to the making of my own book as part of the *Telling Places* exhibition. My own practice resonates with Nunn’s in the sense that the making of the book forms part of the curatorial practice.

work to be optimised as individual images in terms of print quality and print size. The *Unsettled* exhibition prints are larger (16 x 20 inches) than the catalogue reproductions (between 7.5 x 5 inches and 14 x 9.5 inches), which, according to Nunn, makes the exhibition prints more powerful. Because *Unsettled* was planned from the start as a traveling exhibition, all the images are printed to the same size to make packing and transport more practical. The simple, practical black frames are consistent with the documentary style of the work in that it almost does not bear remarking upon. Nunn's prudent attitude towards the printing and framing is also coherent with his racialised but also anti-capitalist 'non-choice' of photographic equipment with which the work was created, as discussed in the previous section.

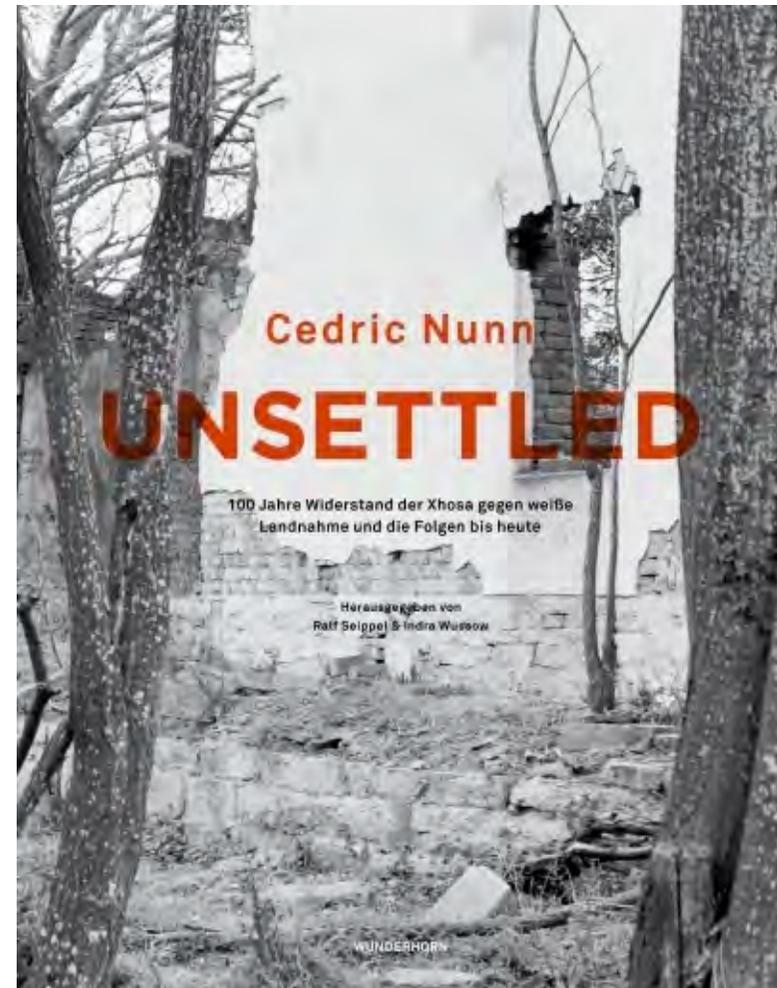


Figure 35: German version of Unsettled publication
(AfriKA Wunderhorn, 2015).

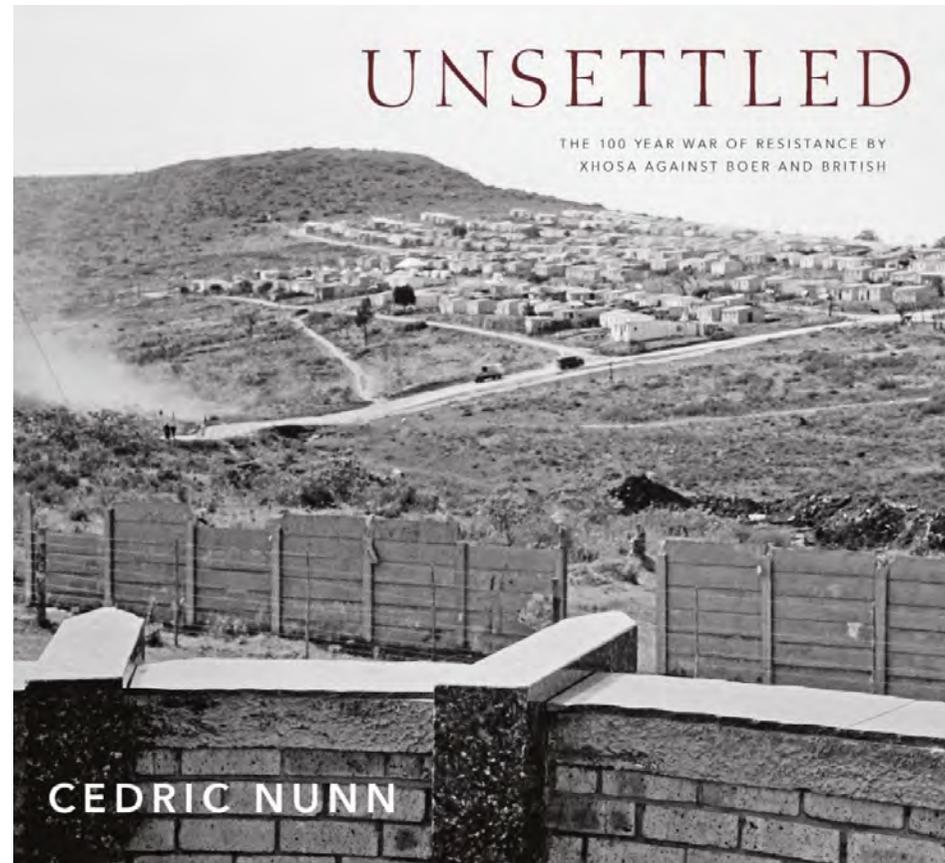


Figure 36: Front cover of *Unsettled*, 2015, as published by Archipelago Books. The cover image is also reproduced in the book with the caption: “Egazini Memorial to the more than 1 000 warriors slain in the failed 1819 attack on Grahamstown led by Makhanda Nxele (Makana). Nxele surrendered months later and was sent by the British to be imprisoned on Robben Island. The contested site of Makana’s Kop on the horizon, now with Reconstruction and Development houses forming part of the contemporary townships of Grahamstown”.

The 16 x 20 inch format is not very big, and with this kind of understated work, does not have as strong an impact on the viewer as single images. Being surrounded by the images in an exhibition space, however, creates a sombre, desolate atmosphere that sets a quiet, even depressed, mood of engagement that is quite powerful. If the viewer is able to overcome the weight of this mood and engage with individual images, each image-caption combination uniquely modulates this mood, either lifting it slightly or darkening it further.

The less fixed structure of an exhibition space (as compared to a book) allows the viewer to be drawn by specific images irrespective of the sequence in which they are arranged. As mentioned earlier, to document a war that took place more than a century ago is to attempt the impossible. The result is that the images often seem empty. The absence of the actual 'subject' of the project is keenly felt, and is an essential aspect of the experience of the work. The historical narrative can therefore, however, not be carried by the images alone, but needs to be represented by written text. As such, the image captions play a crucial role in how the images are interpreted. The captions for the images are sometimes quite long.

Displayed on a wall underneath the images (as shown in Figure 37), the captions are difficult to engage with, but they are essential for the viewer to understand the complexities and significance of the photographs.



Figure 37: Installation views of Unsettled at the David Krut Projects Gallery in New York (Knoblauch, 2015).

With each installation of the *Unsettled* exhibition, Nunn presented walkabout sessions as well as ‘talkabouts’ with a discussion panel that entered into conversations with the public. The exhibitions therefore provide a starting point for discussions of the various issues raised by the work. For Nunn as an activist, the work is the starting point and not the end result. The *Unsettled* images are observations from a specific perspective, but they remain open-ended and do not provide solutions. By discussing the work with the public, viewers are drawn in to examine the images more carefully and to consider the issues raised more critically.

One of the exhibition venues for *Unsettled* was the Nelson Mandela University (NMU) Bird Street Art Gallery. The exhibition opening held on 27 May 2017 included a panel discussion between Nunn, Adv. Sonwabile Mancotywa, and NMU historian Dr Denver Webb on the impact that the “dispossession wars” have on present-day Eastern Cape and South Africa in general. For this event, the works were arranged in vertical pairs of two, with a bigger space between pairs than between the vertically arranged couple. This arrangement allowed for four or more images to be grouped. The individual captions for the four images in Figure 38 are as follows:

1: Church elder, W. Pringle, with silverware donated by a descendant of the founder of the Dutch Reformed Church at Herzog, which was expropriated by the South African government c. 1980, due to the consolidation of the Ciskei Homeland. Most of the church members left for a place called Friemersheim, near Mossel Bay, purchased with the expropriation money. Fewer than ten families remained behind, clinging to the old church. Tambookiesvlei, Kat River Settlement.

2: Fort Armstrong on the Kat River was declared a national monument in 1938. Kat River Valley.

3: Fort Armstrong on the Kat River. Originally known as Camp Adelaide, it was later named Fort Armstrong after Captain A.B. Armstrong who was based there in 1835. The fort was garrisoned by the Cape Corps (Khoi) regiment, who surrendered the fort to Willem Uithalder, Khoi general of the Kat River rebels, on 23 February 1851, during the Eighth Frontier War – the so-called Mlanjeni’s War. Balfour, Kat River Valley.

4: Tambookiesvlei, Kat River Settlement, where Khoi were settled by Sir Andries Stokenström after Maqoma was expelled in 1828, thus setting up tensions within these groups that exist to this day.



Figure 38: Recreation of exhibition arrangement of four images as displayed at the NMU Bird Street Gallery in 2017.

The group of four images reproduced in Figure 38 represents part of a vignette that interrupts the narrative on Xhosa resistance and eventual dispossession to consider the complicated role played by the Khoi regiments and rebels in the Frontier Wars. The Kat River landscape is presented in the captions as having been subject to numerous conflicts that are still ongoing. The captions, however, stand in contrast to the peaceful scenes. The visual traces of conflict are represented by the images of the fort, in counterpoint to the images of the residents. In this way, the presence of the people is situated against the history of conflict, which has now become so deeply embedded in the landscape that it is no longer noticeable. The arrangement of these images is slightly different in the book (published earlier).

With the smaller format of a book, the viewer is physically closer to the work, and therefore more intimate with it. The book does not have the powerful depressing atmosphere that a room full of mid-toned black-and-white images has, but instead allows the atmosphere to grow gradually, and become more complex as the viewer/reader is drawn into Nunn's experience of these places, even though we are allowed to encounter the images anew as our own

experiences. The layout of the book is simple and clean, and has an 'undesigned' look that serves to foreground content over form.

If the reader/viewer chooses to read from the first to the last page (which I did not do. I paged through the images first, and then turned to the texts), they will start with the foreword, written by novelist and playwright Zakes Mda who hails from the Eastern Cape, which provides a context for the works from the perspective of an insider. The introduction is by Jeff Peires, a respected historian of the area and the Xhosa nation, which provides a historical overview of events relevant to both the Xhosa and the British camps. The 130 images are then followed by an afterword that discusses the photographic work directly, from a critical perspective, by English professor, Neelika Jayawardane. The last essay is by Nunn about "the kind of things [he] encountered and engaged with in executing and producing this project" (Nunn, 2015: 158), and the book ends with a last photograph of a descendant of the warrior chiefs that led five of the wars (see Figure 31). Nunn (2018) states that, in a project of the vast scope of *Unsettled*, additional, longer texts are needed because "it adds necessary layers of complexity and further information to the images. Images are often in need of further

information to give clarity to intent, context, etc.”.

The images are arranged chronologically according to historical events, but this narrative is interrupted now and again to insert “vignettes of various scenarios such as the involvement of the Khoi, some of which could be grouped together. Also the role of missionaries and mission education” (Nunn, 2018). Nunn (2018) adds that within the chronological and thematic arrangements, “at all times attention was given as to how images spoke to each other on the page, as well as which ones could stand alone and at which size”. It is interesting to note that of the images that were chosen to be reproduced larger in the book, five of the eight images depict human figures standing or sitting in the landscape. This suggests that Nunn wants to emphasise the human and cultural aspect of landscape. Of the remaining three larger images, two are of churches and the third is a close-up of the ruins of Theopolis, showing ceramic shards among the natural stones and disintegrating bricks. All these images tell a story of the (often violent) integration of human kind into the landscape.

The double-page spread is an essential building block of any book, and the juxtapositioning of images on facing pages contribute

greatly to the understanding developed about the work as a whole and the unfolding of the narrative. In *Unsettled*, Nunn uses a variety of strategies for the selection of double-page spreads, but in general, they create visual harmony and fit comfortably together. In keeping with the difficult issues dealt with, some images often clash and contrast visually in productive ways. The facing pages, reproduced in Figure 39, juxtapose two vantage points – one looking down at, and one looking up to the same fort, from much closer in the opposite direction. The captions refer to various moments in the history of the fort, as it was occupied and captured by various forces. The left-hand image’s caption reads:

Fort Armstrong on the Kat River. Originally known as Camp Adelaide, it was later named Fort Armstrong after Captain A.B. Armstrong who was based there in 1835. The Fort was garrisoned by the Cape Corps (Khoi) regiment, who surrendered the Fort to Willem Uithaalder, Khoi General of the Kat River rebels, on 23 February 1851, during the Eighth Frontier War – so-called Mlanjeni’s War. Balfour, Kat River Valley (Nunn, 2015: 81).

The right-hand image: “Fort Armstrong on the Kat River was declared a national monument in 1938, Kat River Valley” (Nunn, 2015: 81).

In the left-hand image, the fort is hardly discernible in the vast view and clutter of bushes, settlements, and roads that are included in the image. This is offset by the right-hand image where the same fort is clearly delineated against the clear sky, with careful, simplified arrangement of lines and the geometric shape of the fort in stark contrast with the flowing lines of the hills in the background. This contrast between the two images relates to the historical events referred to in the captions, of the fort changing hands four times, with the last being claimed for national pride in 1938. Yet there is continuity between the two images in that the horizon line flows comfortably from left to right.

The limitation of the double page spread is evident here in that only two images can be shown (at this consistent scale) at a time, as opposed to the four-image arrangement shown in Figure 38, which precludes the way the images of the people are presented against the background of the violent history represented by the fort. The simplicity of this double-page spread, however, intensifies the present state in which this history is embedded so harmoniously into the landscape (symbolised by the balanced composition and graceful lines).

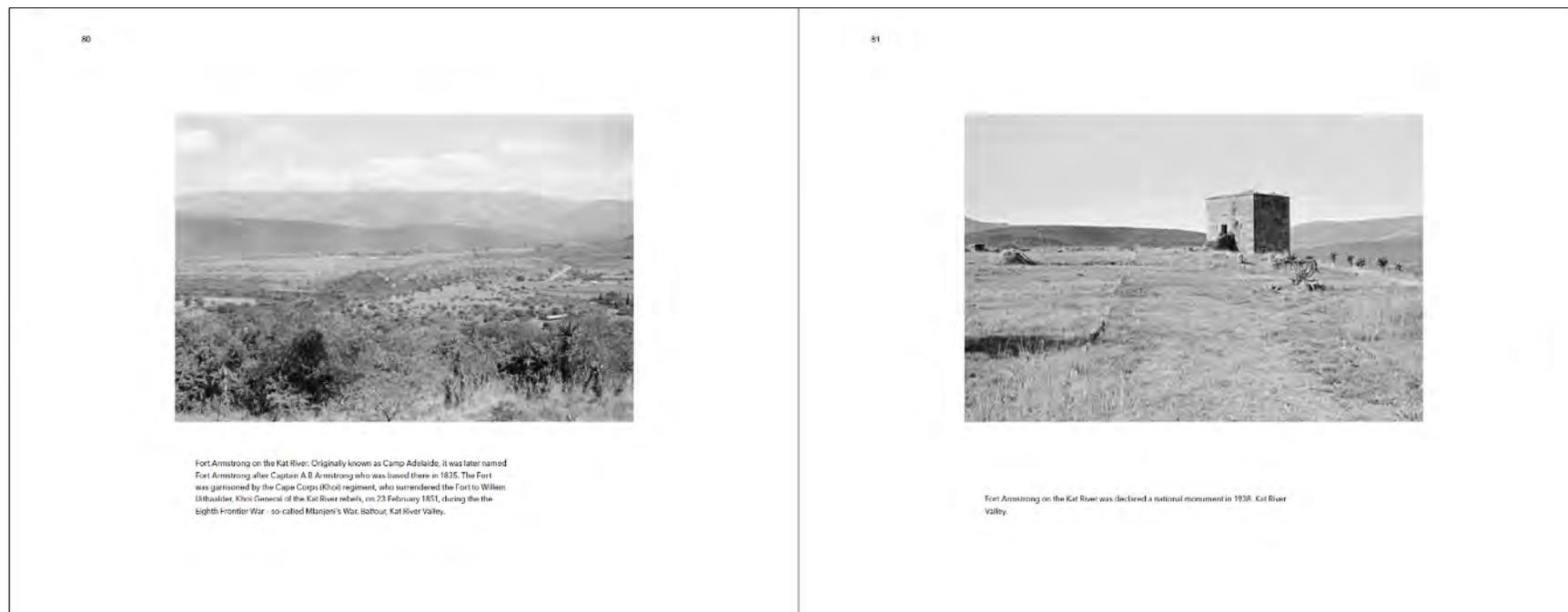


Figure 39: Facing pages 80 and 81 from UNSETTLED: The 100 Year War of Resistance by Xhosa Against Boer and British (Nunn, 2015).

With the facing pages of pages 90 and 91 (see Figure 40), the strategy of the selection of images is based on contrast rather than harmony. The two images contrast visually in terms of light, angle of view, composition, and resultant atmosphere. The images are, however, related in that they both depict burial sites within a wider landscape. While both sites seem neglected as far as burial sites go, the landscape of open fields and clear sunlight makes the burial place of prophetess Nongqawuse seem restful despite the highly controversial role she played in Xhosa history and the history of South Africa. Nongqawuse's history, and the multiple ways in which it has been interpreted by various groups, is retold in more detail in the accompanying text included in the book by Zakes Mda (2015).

In this text, Mda also relates how Inkosi Phathekile Holomisa of the abaThembu people once asked him, "Why do you people keep on writing about Nongqawuse? What are you teaching our children? This is not an episode of our history that we want to remember." Whether celebrated or not, Nongqawuse's prophecies did not realise, and instead caused a civil war that resulted in the collapse of the Xhosa economy, and greatly weakened the resistance against colonial occupation. Her history is also not celebrated in mainstream

history because of the duplicitous role played by the mission stations that offered conditional aid to starving amaXhosa.

The image of the Cattle Killing Monument (which Nunn sees as the result of the prophecies of Nongqawuse), however, is chaotic and ugly, with the backs of nondescript townhouses in the background and a jumble of tracks in burnt grass in the foreground. This neglect shows a reluctance to remember, which is reinforced by the chaotic composition. The peaceful isolation of Nongqawuse's resting place near cattle grazing fields is ironic and doubly so in being placed next to the resting place of so many who died as a result of the famine that followed the cattle killings. This double-page spread leaves me as viewer with a nauseating feeling of despair. In this way, the image combinations create a new experience that possibly resonates with the experience of the photographer, but also likely goes beyond that experience. Nunn (2018) mentions in the e-mail conversation that he does not think about the arrangement of images at all while he photographs. By selecting and juxtaposing the images, meanings and understandings are developed that might arguably not have been conceived clearly in the moment of photographing. In this way, the selection and arrangement are a reflection on and reworking of the initial experience of the photographer in the places.

Left image caption:

The burial place of the prophetess Nongqawuse, whose vision was to cause the Xhosa to destroy their cattle and grain stores in the belief that their dead would arise and the world would be reborn anew – without settlers and colonialists. Alexandria, Albany/Zuurveld.

Right image caption:

Cattle-killing Monument. The memorial to the 'Great Cattle Killing' or 'Great Hunger' of the 100 Year War lies in the mass burial site and town cemetery. The monument was erected by the Eastern Cape government around 2008. In the aftermath of the Nongqawuse prophecies, starving people made their way to the colonial capital of King William's Town in the hope of getting food and medical care. Many of them died nevertheless, and their bodies were buried in the Edward Street Cemetery, adjacent to the graves of British soldiers killed in the wars. They were forgotten there for more than 100 years until their bones were uncovered by developers laying the foundations for a new townhouse complex. King William's Town.

Nunn's captions in general do not describe the images or the places. Instead, the captions provide a rough location of the places, but then beyond that function in parallel to the images by providing a

historical narrative in a matter-of-fact style that could almost function separately to the images. Combined with the images, however, the captions seem charged with much being left unsaid.

90



The burial place of the prophetess Nongqawuse, whose vision was to cause the Xhosa to destroy their cattle and grain stores in the belief that their dead would arise and the world would be reborn anew - without settlers and colonialists. Alexandria, Albany/ Zuurveld.

91



Cattle killing Monument. The memorial to the 'Great Cattle Killing' or 'Great Hunger' of the 100 Years War lies in the mass burial site and town cemetery. The monument was erected by the Eastern Cape government around 2008. In the aftermath of the Nongqawuse prophecies, starving people made their way to the colonial capital of King William's Town in the hope of getting food and medical care. Many of them died nevertheless, and their bodies were buried in the Edward Street Cemetery, adjacent to the graves of British soldiers killed in the wars. They were forgotten there for more than 100 years until their bones were uncovered by developers laying the foundations for a new townhouse complex, King William's Town.

Figure 40: Facing pages 90 and 91 from The 100 Year War of Resistance by Xhosa Against Boer and British (Nunn, 2015).

6.3. Conclusion

In this section I discuss Nunn's *UNSETTLED: The 100 Year War of Resistance by Xhosa against Boer and British* as an example of recent South African landscape photography and as a way of examining how places are 'told' through photographic practice. From this discussion it is clear that in Nunn's practice the inherently political nature of landscape is not underlying, but foregrounded and made primary to the meaning of places. As such, the various choices Nunn makes in order to create and to present the work can be interpreted as politically significant. This political significance, however, also unsettles landscape photography conventions in subtle ways.

Nunn's documentary approach to landscape in this project is exemplary of a general characteristic of critical, intellectual landscape photography in South Africa, where the actual place as referent is essential to the work. With his documentary approach, and the way that he relates to the places through historical research, direct experience, and imagination, Nunn is able to initiate movement of thought about the sustainability of the present-state South African landscape. But he is also, to some extent, able to show the Eastern Cape as innately beautiful as opposed to imposing

Western aesthetic ideals onto the places.

The photographic medium makes it possible for Nunn to tackle enormously complex issues with multiple interwoven histories because even though the photographs serve to authenticate actual places, the visual medium remains relatively open to interpretation. The project as a whole is arguably overly complex. It is difficult to keep track of all the various narrative threads that emerge from the captions, and the various essays that are sometimes supported by the images, sometimes contrasting and in some cases parallel. In this complexity there is an important way in which attempts to clarify and explain fail. Some aspects of trauma and conflict, such as exemplified by the history of Nonqgawuse, is beyond clarification and beyond language (Brett, 2016: 134). It is the "unavailability of referential markers" (Baer, 2002: 71) captured in the absences that are so palpable in the *Unsettled* images, which is the "truth of history" (Baer, 2002: 71). With *Unsettled*, Nunn performs a historiographic task, but at the same time shifts what it means to 'write' history.

The images are quiet and understated, and often require hard work from the viewer to be able to gain access to the image and eventually be drawn in. The captions serve to anchor interpretations

to some extent, but more importantly, to provide access points in the form of fixed meaning (relative to the visuals), such as place names, dates, and historical narrative. The written essays in addition serve to further deepen the viewer's engagement with the visuals. As a result, the work is arguably text heavy and very much reliant on the captions and essays to be able to communicate.

The difficulty of the issues around land and its history in the Eastern Cape is, however, addressed in a very subtle way through the relationship of single images to the project as a whole. Although Nunn does not necessarily curate all the various installations of *Unsettled* images, Nunn's work, with all the various activities involved, can be seen as curatorial practice as well as a photographic practice. As photographic practice – in the moment of photographing, Nunn's own slightly lost position (which he describes in his essay, "From the Photographer", included in the *Unsettled* publication, about his experiences of photographing for this project in relation to the places and the historical narrative) situates the viewer in a similar position. By imagining these places from the Xhosa perspective, the viewer is also allowed access to this position. From this position, the viewer is somewhat overwhelmed by the amount of information detail, which is made all the more

difficult by the understated quietness of the work. Through physical installations of photographic works, together with written and spoken texts and debates, the *Unsettled* project, however, allows for this overwhelming experience to become meaningful over time. *Unsettled* thus continues to create experiences that place local and international audiences in relation to this land and the persistent impact of its violent histories on the present.

When Nunn thus describes his photographic work as a "process of examining ourselves as we're placed in the world" (Motumi, 2017: s.p.), it gives an indication that he sees his practice as a dialectic (rather than didactic) process, through which the photographer, the audience, and the places are shaped. It is important to keep in mind that Nunn is an activist photographer. The photographic work is therefore not the final goal, as Nunn mentions in a 2014 interview regarding the *Unsettled* project: "I begin to feel that what I have done so far is a mere token gesture; that far more needs to be done" (Leica Camera Blog, 2014). Nunn's role as an activist is expressed in his curatorship, which allows the project to evolve and meanings to deepen and develop through reflection and debate. *Unsettled* is therefore not a representation of landscape, but instead is a form of action in the world that activates the increasingly urgent need for

change in light of Ntsebeza's (2018) statement that "[t]he unresolved land question in South Africa is a time bomb. An entirely different approach is required if democracy is to survive in our country".

In the sense that Nunn creates or initiates "movement" (Bolt, 2016: 141) in concepts and understandings about the meaning of land and landscape and how we interact with it, and methodologies of photographic and historiographic practice also affect our experience of places and of landscape, Nunn's practice can be considered as successful PbR, although it does not take place within an academic context, and despite the fact that much of the discursive framing was done by others and that many of the curatorial activities were done in collaboration with others. Where the *Unsettled* project fails as a research project is in the absence of textual mapping of the curatorial practice through which most of the movement in concepts and so on is achieved. Even so, as a PbR project, *Unsettled* resonates with my own practice, especially in terms of how his reflection on his process and reworking of the project into various formats tell about places. Although with my own work I do not exhibit the same work in different formats, Nunn's use of both the print exhibition and book formats is relevant to my own making of a book and selection of display formats. The *Unsettled* project is examined here in order to

show how the curatorship of photography adds meaning that the images alone do not have. In the following section I consider curatorship from a more theoretical perspective, specifically in terms of the relationship of the single image to the project as a whole. In the discussion that follows, I relate the strategies and ideas of theorists who write about curatorship to aspects of Nunn's practice and thereby work to show how the curated event and its products intimate a particular understanding of landscape.

7. CURATORIAL PRACTICE AS 'TELLING'

The purpose of this section is to explore some theoretical and practical perspectives on curatorial practice in order to inform the process of curating an exhibition as a continuation of the work created for the *Telling Places* project. The aim of this project is to show the photographic work in such a way that it is the telling of places, but also allows the places to be 'telling'. The following discussion centres around the notion of telling and explores how photographic images and video can be presented in such a way that they can enter the discourse on landscape photography but still relate to Crowther's (2009: 49) notion of phenomenological depth (as discussed in Phase 1) and therefore exemplify "the reciprocal interaction of body and world at the very ontological level which is most central to it, namely that of space-occupancy".

In this aim, a number of fundamental concerns emerge that need to be explored in order to understand how meaning can be developed in the curation of photographic landscape work. As seen in the overview of South African landscape photography, the criticality and telling-of the relationality of landscape are facilitated in important ways through image series and image-text combinations. In the

discussion of Nunn's work in the previous section, the image series and text combinations within the broader context of curating the work into various exhibitions and book formats are shown to deepen the telling and understanding of the South African landscape.

In what follows I examine the single, unified work in relation to the exhibition installation as a whole. It is important to understand the telling capabilities and limitations of the single image in order to know how they will 'talk' to each other. 'Telling' is normally associated with verbal and written language rather than spatial, tactile, and visual meaning, which is associated with 'showing'. Theoretical perspectives on curatorship, as well as the nature of photographic media, reveal that telling and showing are, however, not necessarily separate qualities or functions. The way in which a 'raw', immaterial photographic image, for example, is articulated into a visible object for display is telling in its own right. For this discussion I draw on insights gained from the discussion of Nunn's *Unsettled* project as an example of curatorial practice of landscape photography work.

Following a discussion of the abovementioned concerns, I then, in Section 8, explore the implications thereof for the curation of a

photographic exhibition that deals with a single theme, and how these concerns can be made productive in the telling of places in the exhibition of my own work. With the exhibition *Telling Places* I present landscape works that make the photographic technologies part of the ecological system of relations between the viewer and viewed, and the photographer and places. In this exhibition I make use of still photography in two different formats, as well as video clips. For this reason, theories of the differences in how moving images and still images are able to 'tell' are also important to understand in a discussion of curatorial practice of photographic work as a form of telling.

7.1. Curating as Expanded Artistic Practice

As mentioned in the introduction to Phase 2, contemporary artists routinely conceptualise and install exhibitions of their own work, and thereby "transgress into the realm of the curator" (Von Bismarck, 2007: 32). According to Beatrice Von Bismarck (2007:32) the ease with which artists can achieve this in the contemporary system has its roots in the late 1960s, when the focus of art practice moved away

from "object-based art to an art rooted in ideas, art with a relational and discursive constitution". As the artist/curator boundaries closed, language and written texts became more integral to arts practice (Wilson, 2007: 206), resulting in what Mick Wilson calls the discursive turn of the late 1980s to the 1990s. In this turn, the discursive power of the closed, unified artwork was questioned and undermined in postmodern artistic practice and critique, and artistic practice came to require involvement in the shaping of the context and the space within which a body of work is presented (Wilson, 2007: 206). According to Von Bismarck (2007: 32),

[a]dvanced artistic practice today thus always proceeds in an 'installative' fashion, keeping the surrounding space in mind. The essential decisions on making art visible and the positions from which these decisions are made, the criteria that lie at their foundation as well as the forms of address they imply are now up for disposition – also at the hands of artists – and flow into context-related techniques.

From the above statement by Von Bismarck, it is clear that the curation of an art exhibition goes beyond aesthetic choices of selection and arrangement. It follows that the exhibition becomes a work in its own right. If approached as a unified work – as a kind of

installation (or series of installations,²³ together with other supportive activities and a catalogue publication such as Nunn's *Unsettled* project) – a project can allow the viewer to “experience the deconstruction of the artwork's traditional unitary visual presence into a function of intersecting elements and layers of meaning” (Crowther, 2009: 280). Martinon (2013: 26-27; 30) also maintains that contemporary curatorial practice, with its root in the idea of ‘care’, should not primarily be a care for the art object or the artist but rather a concern with the experience of others within the exhibition space; how this experience disrupts received knowledge and pushes others into a continual process of ‘rethinking’. Such an environment allows visitors²⁴ to experience the work within a constructed context or space that relates to broader concerns, such as, in this case, the canon or traditions of landscape photography and how

²³ With the word ‘installation’ I do not refer to ‘installation art’, although aspects of Suderburg's (2000: 4) description of installation art as “the noun form of the verb to *install*, the functional movement of placing the work of art in the ‘neutral’ void of a gallery of museum” do apply. Suderburg's (2000: 5) further description of what it means to install goes beyond what is applicable to my use of the word in this study in that my use does not refer to installation as “art practice in and of itself”. Installation art and the art exhibition are both, however, concerned with the experience of the viewer. The experience of both the exhibition and installation art both happen as an unfolding over time through which the

photographic technologies have been interwoven into how we look at and experience places.

Wilson (2009: 6) locates the ‘discursive turn’ within a variety of cultural practices, including arts practice and curatorial practice “outside the academy” and describes it as engaging “with notions of the relational, the discursive, the production of meaning, the production of knowledge, and the production of science”. The discursive turn, as allied with curatorial discourse, “started to put on the agenda questions of agency, of conditions for understanding what it is that you have done as a cultural practitioner” (Wilson & Smith, 2009: 6). In a PbR study, in which she considers contemporary curating, Elizabeth Muller (2008: 56) cites Shubert (2000) as describing the new role of “permanent collections and temporary

meaning is gradually developed, with the implication that the entire ‘work’ (if one considers the exhibition as a whole as a work) cannot be experienced as a single visual whole all at once (Mondloch, 2010: xiii).

²⁴ I refer to ‘visitor’ instead of the customary ‘viewer’ of an exhibition in order to allow for multisensory experience rather than purely visual. Additionally, the word ‘visitor’ avoids confusion in Section 6, where I discuss the curation of my own work, and where the word ‘viewer’ refers to the optical object through which the slides are viewed.

exhibitions as invitations to an open dialogue between curator and viewer. [They] no longer hide the curatorial hand and present only the end product, but make visible the entire underlying decision-making process". Wilson further also sees in contemporary arts research the potential to be the catalyst for communication that goes beyond the artwork itself (Wilson & Smith, 2009: 6).

Such reflexive and transformational aims and processes are shared between contemporary curatorial practice and PbR, in that PbR requires that the processes and nature of the contribution made through the arts practice be articulated or 'mapped' (Bolt, 2016: 141). The reflection on practice could therefore be understood as a continuation or expansion of the artistic practice in that it develops it as discourse, and at the same time as part of the academic research process. Telling-of therefore involves exhibiting the work because exhibition is a form of telling, and the telling of the process of developing such an exhibition. If the meaning of the work can,

however, be sufficiently paraphrased in discursive terms, the work would not have "artistic meaning" (Crowther, 2009: 16) and therefore becomes superfluous.²⁵ In such a case, meaning becomes rooted in language and not in the perception of the visual work or/and of the multisensory installation. According to Tony Schirato and Jen Webb (2004: 85), a single photographic image "points us in a particular direction, or series of directions, but it can't 'tell' in the way a genuine (written or spoken) narrative would, because it is a collection of signs which readers are relatively free to organise into their own story". If this is the case, however, what kind of telling can happen in an exhibition installation?

²⁵ With this statement, Crowther allows for examples that are text and yet still visual. In such a case the work would not be sufficiently paraphraseable to render it superfluous.

7.2. Telling as Visual, Spatial, and Temporal Practice

Telling can refer to an action or an attribute. If something is 'telling', it is showing something "that has a notable impact or effect, or makes a strong impression" (*Oxford English Dictionary* [OED] Online 2018). But it can also refer to something that reveals or indicates something, synonymous to 'informative' or 'significant'. As a noun, the *Oxford English Dictionary* gives the meaning of 'telling' as: "The action or fact of relating, imparting, or saying something; narration, relation; conversation, talk" and as a verb, it is "to mention, narrate, relate, make known, communicate, declare" (OED Online, 2018) but it is also "to give an account or narrative of (facts, actions, or events); to describe in order". To describe in order, or to give an account, refers to linear, fixed content that is already resolved before the telling thereof. Yet, 'telling' as an adjective or noun has connections to 'showing', even though these two words, as terms in narrative theory, represent different ways of communicating. Telling can therefore be either propositional or demonstrative.

Gaudreault (1987: 29) argues that it is essential to differentiate between two "means for conveying a story which can be called

narration and monstration" based on the differences in the ways that stories are communicated in cinema, theatre, and written texts. Gaudreault (1987: 29) uses the word 'monstration' instead of 'representation' or 'showing', and 'narration' to refer to 'telling' or 'investing with meaning'. Gaudreault (1987: 29) argues that the single shot in film is the 'monstration', or the showing of the present (even though it is an illusion of the present) and the combination of shots in the editing is the narration, which has the power to control the temporal flow and relations between present and past. In the single shot (irrespective of duration) actions, placement, speech and so on are visually demonstrated, as in theatre, thus forming a micro-narrative. The editing then creates a second level of narrative that guides the reading of the micro-narratives (1987: 33).

William Brown (2011), however, argues that the micro-narrative and 'monstration' of the single shot are always already the product of a basic form of editing: "Choosing to depict objects from a certain angle, which on account of the image's frame excludes from sight all that which is beyond its borders, is a form of spatial editing" (Brown, 2011: 45). When an angle of view and period of time are selected, with spatial and temporal relations formed within the single shot, it

is already telling something about the situation. Brown (2011: 48) suggests that a spatial narrative is more active than a temporal narrative because with a spatial narrative the viewer leads the narrative, while with a temporal narrative we 'follow the story'.

As part of this argument, Brown, however, makes a distinction between the photographic shot, which is instantaneous, and the cinematic shot, which has duration. The cinematic shot therefore has a measure of narration (and therefore meaning), because in "an image that is cinematographic as opposed to being photographic – there is always already temporal as well as spatial editing" (Brown, 2011: 53). I would, however, argue that even in the photographic shot there is always already temporal editing. Although less precisely identifiable, it is arguably a more precise edit through the selection of shutter speed and of moment. The selected moment can be of various durations. Longer shutter speeds (the duration of which is subjective and context dependent) are visually compressed onto a still frame in which movement is translated as motion blur, while shorter shutter speeds tend to arrest the movement of various elements in relation to one another, thereby describing the possibility of past and present movement. Photographic shots

therefore do narrate spatially and temporally through perception that takes place over time, although this narration is admittedly partial. Brown's argument is that images (monstrations) demand narrative. Cinematic temporal narration makes it easier to 'follow' the narration, while photographic narration within a single frame *demand*s that we imagine that which is beyond the frame in space and time, thus constructing (with guidance of other images and other forms of narration) a fuller meaning. Brown (2011: 54) concludes that 'telling' is possible only because of 'showing'.

Brown links Gaudreault's concept of cinematic 'monstration' to Jean-Luc Nancy's conception of images as 'monstrous', in the sense that they lie outside of meaning. Images, according to Nancy (as interpreted by Brown), are pre-narrative: "Comprehension takes place after the conjunction of image and viewer even if only microseconds after" (Brown, 2011). Brown points out that comprehension is not something that happens immediately or as a whole; it takes place over time. As we perceive more, the narrative develops. This is true as much for the single image as for multiple works arranged in a space.

Von Bismarck (2007: 36) uses the analogy of the theatre to

emphasise the performative nature of curatorship of temporary exhibitions:

While often only limited to one or just a few presentations, the analogy between theatre performance and art exhibition exposes the processual moment that inheres in curating. As in the theatre, the stages of emergence and presentation are addressed in this way, as are the relational dynamics during development and performance.

Bringing these concepts to bear on the curation of an exhibition, 'showing' can be related to spatial narrative within the single frame, which flows into the exhibition space in which the visitor can lead the narrative unfolding but is constrained by limitations set through temporal narrative elements that are more fixed, in the form of verbal texts (written and audio). The title of Storr's contribution to Paula Marincola's book *What Makes an Exhibition Great?* is "Show and Tell". In short, Storr (2007: 12) describes a good exhibition as presenting a "definite but not definitive point of view that invites

serious analysis and critique". Storr further states that "[t]he primary means for 'explaining' an artist's work is to let it reveal itself. Showing is telling" (2007: 20).

Storr (2007: 22-23) is very much set against regimented progress in an exhibition space: not within a single room, nor from room to room. He advocates using lines of sight and openings to frame key works to draw viewers from room to room. The aim would therefore be to create spaces that can be explored physically, by walking around, but also visual spaces that can be explored with the eye. In the same way that "[t]he eye crosses the river before the body",²⁶ according to a Ndebele proverb, lines of sight in the exhibition space gently pull the viewer into action, to explore in various directions.

According to this logic, the primary (although not exclusive) way that images in an exhibition 'tell' is through how they relate to one another. The images demonstrate the organising principle in how

²⁶ South African landscape photographer, Koos van der Lende, quoted this proverb opposite a photograph of a river in Zimbabwe, in his independently published retrospective art-book publication, *Moments of Grace*.

they relate to one another in space, and form a non-linear spatial narrative. This non-linear spatial narrative allows the viewer to explore and come to their own conclusions within finite limitations set by written texts, arrangements, and lines of sight. It would, however, be an over-simplification to state that the unified single work only 'shows' and how they are arranged in space, and relate to one another only 'tells' (provide meaning). As argued by Brown (2011), even a single visual image demands a narrative from the viewer, even if it does not provide a complete narrative by itself. Furthermore, in the case of the photographic/video work, the means by which it is shown is as 'telling' as what is shown.

7.3. Technology as Telling

When working on a specific project or theme, the photographer at some stage sits with a number of images that are more or less immaterial as negative or positive slides or digital images that were created with display possibilities in mind. An analogy can be drawn between the immaterial photographic image and the software of electronic devices, and likewise the means of display that are used to make images visible to an audience can be likened to the

hardware of electronic devices (Langmead, Byers & Morton, 2015: 160). Langmead *et al.*, with reference to work done by Montfort and Bogost (2009) states that

just as software cannot be created without taking into consideration the ways in which the hardware wants to receive the information delivered for processing, modern hardware ... is likewise never created without considering the pre-existing needs of contemporary software systems (Langmead *et al.*, 2015: 160).

Similarly, decisions about how photographic images are to be made into objects or things that can be experienced by others in order to complete the work or project can, however, be adapted according to the purposes of the project as a whole. Such decisions have direct implications for how the work can be exhibited in a space (and vice versa), and are therefore to some extent part of the curatorial process, especially when the photographer is conceptualising an exhibition of their own work. From a postphenomenological perspective, the photographer-curator creates and facilitates a relationship between human (exhibition visitor) and non-human (artworks and exhibition spaces) that intertwines perception, imagination, and memory, as well as the emotions and intellectual

responses that accompany these.

Vince Dziekan (2016: 178) cites media historian and theorist Sean Cubitt (2014: 2) as describing visual aesthetics as “an inextricable interweaving of the sensations through which we sense the world with the technologies through which we do that sensing”. The technologies used to make images visible therefore ‘matter’ because they fundamentally alter “the constitutive grounds of sensing, knowing and relating to one another and to the world” (Cubitt 2014: 2).

Nancy’s monstrous ‘pre-sense’ or “pre-sent/present” (Brown, 2011: 52) can be linked to affect as discussed in Phase 1, in which I explore ideas developed in postphenomenological human geography that starts to consider an affect theory that is decentred from human experience. In light of these developments, it becomes important to consider relations between non-human artefacts and, in the context of an exhibition, the display technologies and the ‘perturbations’ and atmospheres that result from such relations. In relation to this study, of which one of the aims is to develop an exhibition of landscape work that emphasises experience of place as mediated (and co-constituted) by technologies, it becomes essential to

consider the phenomenological and communicative roles of the displaying technologies, as will be discussed in Section 7.3 The displaying technologies facilitate ‘monstration’, which, as shown in the preceding discussion, demands narration on various levels.

Generally, in cinema, and in photographic exhibitions such as Nunn’s *Unsettled*, artists aim to obscure the labour and technologies involved in the making processes in order to not distract the viewer/visitor either from the narrative or the meaning, or from how the photographic medium authenticates the physical places themselves. In this regard, Brown (2011) discusses pre-cinematic attractions such as *Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat* (Louis and Auguste Lumière, 1896), which consists of a single shot, as primarily exhibitions of the (at that time) new and novel technology. Yet, he argues, even in such pre-cinematic shots, there is an active hiding of the making processes and technologies in that the attention is drawn to the spectacle of a moving image that seems to bring the real scenes into the cinema theatre. In continuity editing that subsequently develops in order to better narrate, the editing and filming process is actively hidden through adherence to cinematic conventions that gradually develop. This aesthetic of hiding

technology and the labour involved in using the technology, for the sake of the narrative, occludes the agency and 'monstrous' potential of the technology in the shaping of the image, and therefore also, according to Brown's (2011) argument, of contributing to the meaning. By foregrounding display technologies as an essential aspect of the curatorial process and eventual displays, the 'making of' is acknowledged and made productive in the 'telling-of'.

Narrative meaning is therefore rooted in perception, which is mediated through the display technologies of, for example, prints on paper, projections, magnification, or LCD screens. If display technologies are to be made productive in the telling of place, they must be used in such a way that they do not only facilitate perception but also become part of the narrative, without consuming the whole story, and maintaining a tense balance.

Nash (2007: 152) cautions against a "neo-Greenbergian preoccupation with medium and form, rather than the properly artistic preoccupations which are inevitably and increasingly explored across media". In this discussion I am mainly concerned with the phenomenal aspects of the presentation technology that contributes to the telling of the places, thereby linking content and

technology, although this link does not preclude translation across media and alternative technologies. An interesting question would be whether a photographic image printed on paper should be considered as being transposed to a different medium when this same image is displayed on a television screen and therefore constituting a form of intermediality. If this scenario is similar to a case where a painting is shown on a television screen as a painting, and not as somehow filmic, then, according to Jens Schröter (2011: 5), this would not be the case. The difference between the printed photograph and the photograph displayed on a screen is possibly closer to the difference between the screening of a film in a cinema theatre and on a home television set. This difference is significant. Although the narrative structure and even the content and story line (if present) stay the same (Schröter, 2011: 4), the viewing experience is different, and therefore aspects of the meaning are also affected. This difference in meaning, however slight, in terms of intertextual theories, is due in part to viewing context which "engages our intellectual capacities" (Petho, 2011: 4). According to postphenomenological theories, however, the way the technologies that are used to display the content mediate experience has an

impact on understanding the content, and often has ideological or political implications. As mentioned earlier in relation to Nunn's work, the prudent choices that he makes is consistent with his anti-capitalist stance that underlies most of his work. The way in which media reference and interact with other media, is, however, a central concern of intermedial studies. If a photobook, for instance, becomes cinematic, or if cinematic shots reference landscape, intermediality is at play (Schröter, 2011: 2). This will be discussed in more detail in Section 8.2, in relation to the specific technologies used in the *Telling Places* exhibition. Intermediality, according to Schröter (2011: 2), "has the function of the breaking up of habitualized forms of perception" and is therefore a way in which established or 'habitual' ways of engaging with landscape photography can be questioned. Habitualised forms of perception are shaped by the cultural function and history of any given medium and its technologies.

However, as argued in Phase 1, technology is a co-constitutive force in human experience of place, which is in essence a relational concept. In order for the display technology to become part of the perception and the telling, its mediatory function needs to be made

noticeable as not only a background relation but also embodied and/or hermeneutic, or even as alterity relations in the experience of the exhibition. In telling of place within a postphenomenological understanding, technology forms part of the meaning of the experience and should therefore be considered with care, which, as mentioned earlier, refers to care about the visitor's experience and how this impacts on the 'telling-of'. The technologies should therefore be understood in terms of how they operate phenomenologically and how they mediate experience because this affects the meaning of what is told. If the technology is backgrounded, for instance, it mediates and communicates in a different way from when it is foregrounded. My argument is that the technological mediation that happens in the photographic event is an essential, meaning-generative aspect of landscape photography. In order for this to be understood, communicated, or be made part of the experience, the technology must be foregrounded. A point of caution, however, is that the technology could easily usurp the telling-of; as when it is overly nostalgic, 'technology for technology's sake', or when it is used for novelty value.

7.4. Conclusion

In this section I discuss various concerns that emerge in the consideration of contemporary curatorial practice as 'telling'. Curation is explored as a continuation of the artistic project, and therefore an expansion of photographic practice that adds layers of meaning but also exploits the multisensory potential of an exhibition installation.

The possibilities of telling (understood as to be 'significant', but also as narrative meaning) through the spatial arrangement within the image space of static and moving images are examined in relation to the notion of 'monstration' that demands narrative (Brown, 2011: 52). The notion of potential narrative that must be fulfilled by the visitor is explored as productive in an exhibition because it allows the meaning to be "rooted in perception".

Curators curate experiences (Spaid, 2013: 10), which involve active interest rather than "disinterested contemplation". In her examination of curatorial practice, Susan Spaid (2013: 154) works with the phenomenological understanding of experience to be "driven by each perceiver's intentionality" or "directedness of

consciousness". Perception in an exhibition space is no different from perception in the world, except that the curator actively offers specific (not necessarily material) things to be perceived and attempts to steer what the visitor's consciousness is directed at. The choice of display technology productively structures what visitors perceive and becomes part of the telling, by showing something of the making process, and also contributing to the subtle steering of what visitors pay attention to. Yet, each visitor will choose their own path through the space and make decisions about how long to look at what, thereby weaving their own narratives.

According to Storr (2007: 27), "the job of the exhibition-maker is to do all that can be done so that those decisions will be well informed, rooted in perception and, in a positive sense, inconclusive". As discussed in Phase 1, perception and sense-making are simultaneously active and passive. There is a constant interaction between what the visitor already knows from their own experiences and the understanding the curator wants to draw them into. As Jacob (2007: 136) advises, "creating of space is about making room for individuals to find their own place in relation to the work of art".

In this discussion of curatorial practice as telling, I draw together

ideas about the narrative potential of multisensory media, as installed in an exhibition space, within a postphenomenological approach. In the following section I reflect on the curation of my own photographic work, as informed by the approach mentioned above. As part of the PbR process, the reflection in the following sections also performs an evaluative role, which is an essential function through which insights and understandings are generated (Candy & Edmonds, 2011a: 125). As Candy and Edmonds (2011b: 125) note, “when practitioners carry out research in parallel with making works, they engage in a process of developing frameworks that guide their practice and the evaluation of the outcomes of that practice”. In the following section I develop such a framework for my practice as curator of my own work against which the successes and failures of the *Telling Places* exhibition will be measured.

Please join us for the opening of

TELLING PLACES

A PHOTOGRAPHIC EXPLORATION

By Anneke de Klerk

Bodutu Art Gallery, K-Block (K102)
Public viewing by appointment until 10 May
Opening address by Prof Allan Munro

Opening 4 May, 2018, 18:00
Please contact Anneke on 072 190 3659
or email annekel@vut.ac.za



Within the politically fraught context of the South African landscape and equally fraught traditions of landscape representation, Anneke de Klerk reconsiders how she experiences places in Southern Africa. With this exhibition she tells of places where she has lived and is living currently, by showing 3 bodies of photographic work. Through various photographic processes she presents different ways of seeing, but also of experiencing place. The focus of the exhibition is on place rather than landscape, in the sense that places are made up of relationships between people, their environment and their histories. In Morgenster (Masvingo, Zimbabwe), the first mission station in the then Rhodesia, her use of slide film and an often fogged-up 28mm lens relates to the imagined place of her father's childhood and his photographs; in Mochudi (Botswana), she uses a digital mirrorless camera with live-view and instant feedback options to interrogate, in relation to the local residents, this landscape of her own happy childhood memories; In Kempton Park (Gauteng, South Africa), which she is currently getting to know as home, the digital video and audio recording capabilities of the full-frame DSLR and a range of lenses, extend her point-of-view options while she remains stationary, often restricted by roads and fences.

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Figure 41: A. de Klerk, 2018, Invitation to Telling Places exhibition.

8. CURATING TELLING PLACES: A PHOTOGRAPHIC EXPLORATION

The *Telling Places* exhibition opened on 4 May 2018²⁷ at the Bodutu Art Gallery situated in the Department of Visual Arts and Design of the Vaal University of Technology (VUT), Vanderbijlpark Campus. With the exhibition *Telling Places* I presented landscape works that make photographic technologies part of the ecological system of relations between the viewer and viewed – the photographer and places. The exhibition included work on three places, each photographed and presented in a different way, as Part I, Part II, and Part III.

In Section 7.2 I discuss the relationship between showing and telling in still images, series of images, as well as in an exhibition as a whole. Crafting a balance in this relationship through the use of space, technological devices, visuals, audio, and text is to curate an experience that is telling (significant) in a way that another form of

exhibition or another medium cannot be. Curating an experience in this sense means that the relationship between the visitor and the places is shaped by the way technology mediates the experience in the gallery, i.e. curating the specific kind of interaction between viewer, image, and display technology within the gallery space. To explain in words what it is that the exhibition would be ‘telling-of’ in this case would defeat the purpose in that the experience would no longer be rooted in perception and would therefore ‘tell’ something else. I want to therefore attempt to describe how the telling-of happened rather than re-telling what was told, although it is seldom possible to do either task effectively without also engaging with the other in some way, because the way something is told also affects the meaning of what is told. Consistent with Barbara Bolt’s (2016: 141) recommendation regarding the role of reflection in practice, the purpose of this section is not to provide an interpretation of the exhibition, but to describe the decision-making process involved in making the exhibition, which forms part of the broader curatorial

²⁷ The exhibition was initially scheduled to run from 4 to 10 May, but was extended until 20 May, upon request of the VUT Department of Visual Arts and Design.

process that allows me to bring the images created in Phase 1 into the discourse on the South African landscape. As such, I reflect critically on the exhibition – its failures and successes – as a way of creating an accurate and honest telling of places. I reflect on the ways in which this practice shifts understanding and experience of landscape photography and how it interacts with our understanding of place. Through this reflection I aim to also consider the political or ideological implications of such a shift. In order to structure this reflection and to also facilitate a critical evaluation of the exhibition, I develop what Candy and Edmonds (2011) call a practitioner framework, which translates to ‘guiding principles’ or curator’s ‘hypotheses’ within the context of curatorial practice.

8.1. A practitioner framework for *Telling Places*

Spaid (2013: 277) proposes that curated exhibitions are designed to test the curator’s hypotheses. Such hypotheses motivate specific organising principles that are shown in the way the artworks are presented (Spaid, 2013: 277). As Spaid further explains, the curator organises the exhibition “in a manner that persuades audiences to

consider experiencing the presented artworks in a particular way” (Spaid, 2013: 277). Through the various choices I as curator made, I aimed to persuade visitors to consider experiencing landscape photography as representation technology that shapes places, as an alternative way in which landscape is politicised. I refrain from using Spaid’s notion of testing a hypothesis as the purposes of practice-based methods are not to provide conclusive evidence to either confirm or contradict a hypothesis but instead to provide insights and new apprehensions, as mentioned earlier.

Although readings of the work in terms of power relations and/or traumas of the past would be valid and often accurate, my intention was to attempt to shift the force of the telling toward the relations between the triad of photographer, camera, and place. The work, however, does not function in a vacuum, and established frames of ‘reading’ and looking at landscape cannot be erased, but maybe aspects can be ‘eroded’ and new layers can perhaps be added with this exhibition.

Through the process of reflection on my photographic practice and ‘chewing over’ of my ‘being in’ in relation to phenomenological and

postphenomenological perspectives and the further discussion of landscape as representational practice, and the context of Southern African landscape photography, the premise that I aim to work with can be crystallised into the following:

Landscape photographs are telling and 'tell' places in that they are a chronicling of the photographer's emplacement, which constitutes a crossing of body and world but also continue to come about through the particular co-constitutive relationships and tensions between human (photographer and by extension, exhibition visitor), technologies, and environment, thus highlighting the tensions and struggles involved in looking at, experiencing, and documenting land which also emplaces the viewer.

In order to test this premise, I formulate it as a 'practitioner framework' or set of guiding principles that guide the development of strategies for organising an exhibition space to allow a telling of landscape in a particular way. I then reflect on the practical implementation of these strategies. As with the premise stated above, this framework draws from the theoretical and practice-based engagement with phenomenological and postphenomenological perspectives in Phase 1. One of the key insights developed from

Phase 1 of the study was that human experience of place develops through the perception of space and time, which are intertwined through bodily movement and activities and mostly mediated by technologies. Furthermore, through memory and imagination, the human subject is able to mentally project his or her embodied being into the past or future, through memory and imagination.

A phenomenological approach to curatorship would therefore be focused on the shaping of the audience's temporal and spatial engagement with the work in terms of present perception, imagination, and memory. A postphenomenological perspective would consider how technologies structure this engagement. In the curation of the exhibition, I need to draw insights gained from Phase 1 through which I developed a body of photographic work, together with insights gained through examining landscape representational practices and South African landscape photography in general, and as a curated project in particular in which the use of multiple images, together with a variety of additional texts (which mostly, but not exclusively, serve to link the photographs to specific, real places) came through as tools with which to present landscape in a particular way. In a way this framework brings to the fore the strategies

developed through the reflective practice process.

In order for the premise formulated above to be true, the selection, arrangement, installation, and contextualisation of the work produced in Phase 1 should be strategised according to the following principles:

1. Reveal the photographer's mediated 'emplacement' (embodied being that involves direct perception, memory, imagination, and intellectual and emotional awareness in relation to the socio-political history and physical environment of places).
2. Draw the audience into a situation of 'emplacement' by involving their own embodied being that involves direct perception, their own memories, imagination, and intellectual and emotional awareness in relation to the socio-political history and physical environment of places.
3. Present places as 'continually becoming' an open, co-constitutive process in which layers of experience and understanding can be perpetually eroded or added.
4. Reveal the places as represented in that the photographs are generated through engagement with actual places that involve actual communities of people and environments.
5. Acknowledge the personal, spiritual, political, and economic significance of land and places and accept responsibility for their representation. Even though such representation is not objective in any way, it should have a sense of honesty and truthfulness.
6. Encourage visitors to consider photography as multiple

technologies. The distinctiveness of the various incarnations of photography arise from how the technologies mediate experience, which differs slightly in each case. In general, photography reveals infinite, yet never conclusive, aspects of the world that reveal more and less than what can be perceived by human vision.

Strategies for the selection of images to be included in the exhibition were as follows:

- Include images for display that reveal a sense of vulnerability in how the photographer relates to the places so as to show the places as forming part of the co-constitutive relationship in the triad of place-camera-photographer.
- Display multiple frames to record various aspects of a place in such a way that the combination of images still seems inconclusive.

Strategies for the contextualisation of the work in accompanying texts were as follows:

- Encourage the audience's memories and imagination about other places to bleed into the specific places that I represented by indicating my own relationship (as photographer and curator) to the places in accompanying texts.
- Use texts to link images to my memories about places where applicable, without providing individual captions for each image. This would force the audience to guess and imagine how each image fits in with the information and the narratives provided in the text.

- Represent the continuity of time: Link the present moment represented in the photographs to the past and future.
- Acknowledge the role of the technology and foreground the subjectivity of the photographer in this process by making these part of the viewer's experience in the gallery space.
- Communicate details of the photographic process in the text and structure the displays in such a way that the photographer's use of different photographic technologies is evident.
- This might be achieved by encouraging visitors to supply the images with the narrative they demand by imagining the past and future of the moments.

Strategies for the spatial arrangement of the exhibition space were as follows:

- Arrange channels and lines of sight in the exhibition space to suggest particular movement patterns that place the audience in a specific physical relation to the various objects.
- Allow visitors to gradually explore the displays and shape multiple narratives while still anchoring meaning to the places represented in the photographs.

Strategies for choosing and implementing display technologies, as well as the arrangement of the work displayed thus within the space, were as follows:

- Use display technologies to render the 'raw' photographic images in such a way that a new co-constitutive relationship between viewer, technology, and place emerges, as a layer over this triadic relationship revealed in the photographs.
- Use different display technologies through which a variety of relationships between the viewer, the space, and the visuals

are shaped and habitual ways of engaging with photography and landscape are potentially disrupted.

- Require more than just 'looking' from the audience by including audio content with the visual displays and requiring physical actions (besides walking) from the viewers in order for them to experience the work.
- Establish a 'preferred' route through the gallery by numbering the places represented as Parts I to III and using line of sight to 'draw' visitors from Part I to Part II but at the same time create spaces that allow visitors to choose how they want to move.

In the following sections I reflect on the implementation of this framework in terms of these principles and strategies, but first I provide a quick tour of the exhibition to place the discussion of specific elements and decisions in the following sections into context.

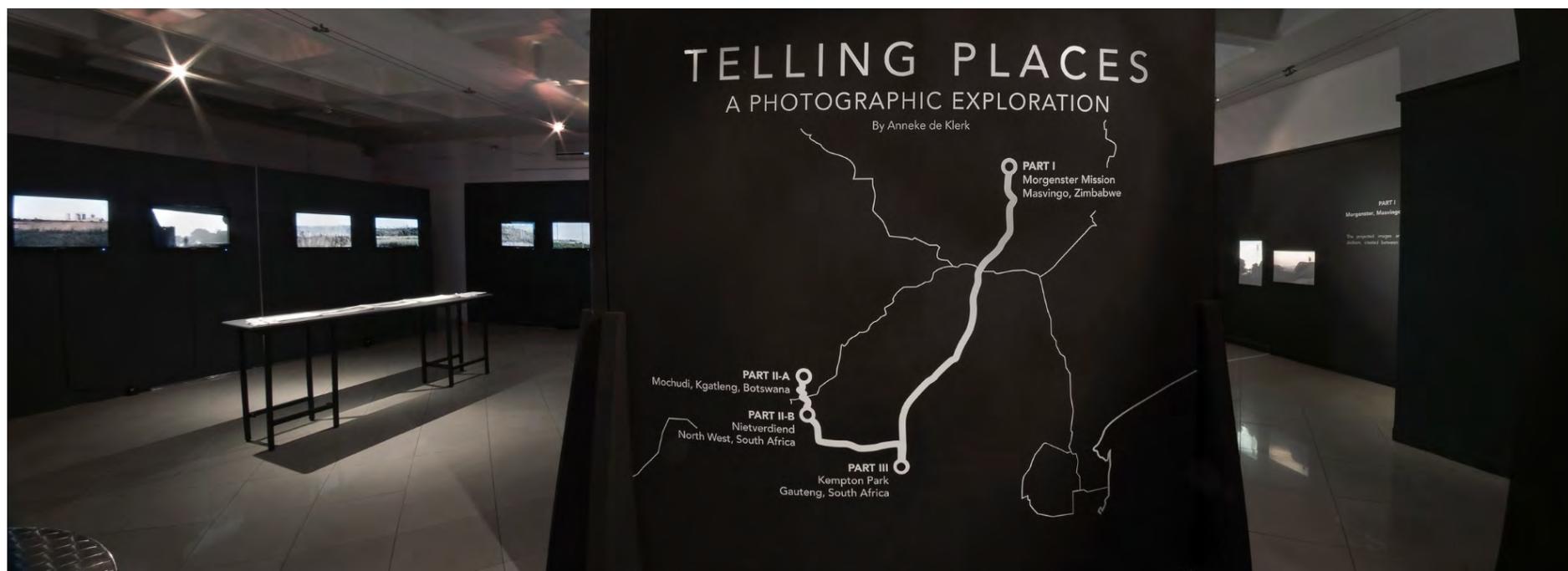


Figure 42: A. de Klerk, 2018, Entrance view of the Telling Places exhibition.

8.2. A 'tour' of Telling Places

Entering the gallery, a visitor first entered a small foyer space created by a dark wall (see Figure 42) with the title of the exhibition, with the three place names as subtitles linked to the numbered parts, and a stylised map to show the spatial relationships between the three places.

A visitor could turn to either the left (to Parts II and III) or the right (to Part I) from the entrance. The three parts were clearly numbered, and a very simple map on a pamphlet (see Figure 42) that was available at the entrance indicated where each part was located in the gallery.

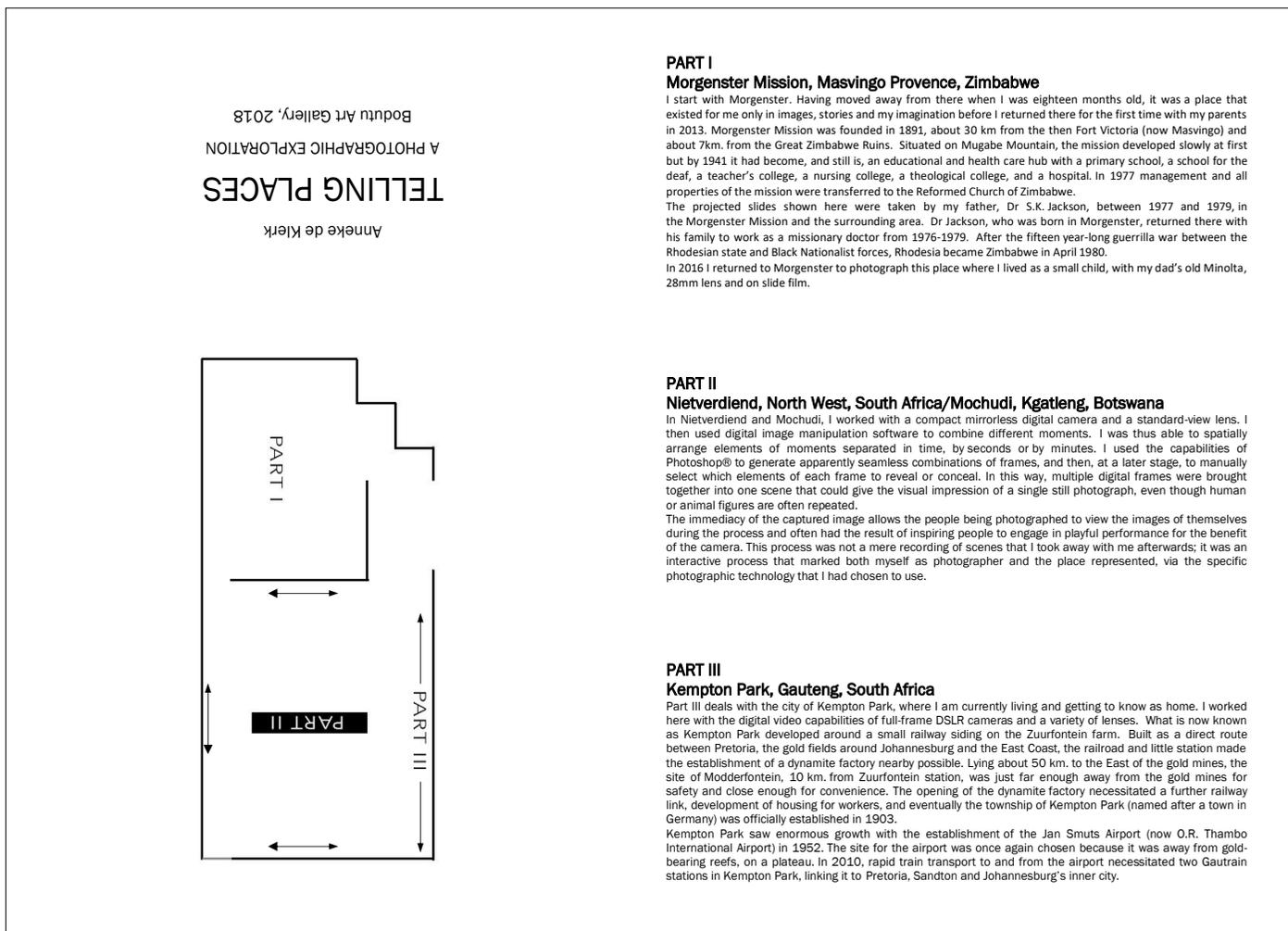


Figure 43: Telling Places pamphlet layout.



Figure 44: A. de Klerk, 2018, Installation view of Part I of Telling Places.

The pamphlet provided an introduction to each part of the exhibition in relation to brief explanations of the process involved in photographing and displaying the work.

Moving into the darkened space of the gallery towards Part I from the entrance, the direct line of sight was towards projections of slides taken by my father, Dr S.K. Jackson, between 1976 and 1979.

The changing of slides every five seconds created a slow visual and audible rhythm that combined with the sound of a voice recording telling the story of the photographer's interaction with Morgenster Mission, and the making of the images displayed in slide viewers arranged in a long row on a shelf. The internal light sources of some of the viewers attracted attention to the shelf, away from the projections. Within this darkened, intimate space, surrounded by

the background noise of the projectors and the voice, visitors could pick up the viewers to view against a light box and replace them in any order, as long as they were replaced close to the marked place for the relevant group. Each slide viewer was also marked according to the group it belonged to. While listening to the audio track that looped continually, the audience could either look at the projections or pick up slide viewers one by one. The images in the viewers were arranged in such a way that key images that were mentioned in the audio track would stand out. As visitors viewed the slides, they would have their backs to the projections, and as they turned back to the shelf, they would have the projections to their right again. Moving from the shelf to the bigger of the two areas through a doorway-width space left between the loose-standing L-shaped wall and the wall on which the shelf was installed, the direct line of sight led to a table with the book display, which was surrounded by light-emitting diode (LED) screens. Many visitors would look at the screens while moving to a long table where one could view Part II: an accordion-fold book, unfolded to display up to five pages at a time. As only a few people (six at the most) could view the book at any given time, looking at the screens would be a

way to wait for a turn with the book.

The table was placed parallel to the short wall of the gallery space, and thus 'facing' the visitor with the book as they moved from Part I to Parts II and III. Two pairs of gloves were placed on the table next to the book, implying that the book should be handled but not without gloves to protect it. Each visitor would typically put on only one glove in order to allow more people to page at a time.

Surrounded by 15 screens, the Mochudi and Nietvedind images in the book were in constant interaction with the video loops of Kempton Park scenes. The video images further also reflected in the screens placed on opposing and perpendicular walls, such as shown in Figure 45. Decals marking this area as containing Part III were installed on the wall next to the entrance. The sound of each clip was played through the built-in speaker of each LED screen at a low level, forming a pool of sound in the vicinity of each screen.

Standing back, the viewer was able to hear a constant, almost uniform drone of white noise, with the sound of the projectors changing slides and the voice track from Part I now becoming a drone in the background.



Figure 45: A. de Klerk, 2018, Telling Places installation view of Parts II and III.



Figure 46: Hess, J.J., 2017, Installation View of Telling Places, Part III, Showing Reflections of Other Screens in a Screen.

From here visitors would typically return to Parts I and II for a second viewing. In this way the three parts interacted and referred to one another in terms of the images, as well as in terms of the technologies used to create and display the work. Each part was therefore experienced as a unit, and not as a collection of separate images. The three parts, in turn, were tied together in the written texts, as well as the map at the entrance that presented the three places as part of a single journey and exploration. In the following section, I reflect in more detail on the way each element was used, in terms of the framework of principles and strategies outlined earlier, towards testing the hypothesis formulated at the beginning of this section.

8.3. Slide projection and magnification

The intimate, darkened space of Part I, combined with the hum of the projector fan, the rhythmic clacking of the changing slides, and the gentle voice, referenced a typical event familiar to many (white) middle-class families such as my own. Showing my father's images of the same area on colour transparency slide film created between 1975 and 1979 next to my own work drew deliberate parallels

between the two bodies of work, but also brought subtle differences to the fore. In contrast with the individual viewing experience provided by the handheld slide viewers, in the past slide projection shows were normally shown to a group of people, such as at a family gathering or a reunion of friends (Waterman, 2018: 108).

Slide projection technology predates photography, and its influences can be detected in many of the technological advances and cultural significance of photography. The modern version of the technology (i.e. a slide projector with carousel that automatically, or manually, advances to produce a continuous, rhythmic flow of images) was very familiar up until the end of the 20th century, and was often used in lecture halls, trade shows, and family gatherings (Stone, 2005: s.p.). In 2005, however, Kodak stopped the manufacturing of slide projectors, and with the disappearance of this technology, a particular form of storytelling is also disappearing (Gustavson as interviewed by Stone, 2005: s.p.).

The projection of my father's slides acknowledged that my own way of looking has been shaped by a personal history of looking at landscapes in such privileged, protected environments. My father's images of Morgenster reveal an unhurried reverence with which he

photographed the environment and which he seemed to share with the people depicted in some of the images, such as in Figure 47. In this image the photographer looks at the people relaxing and looking into the distance. The 28 mm lens he most likely used included the whole group and the wide view, as well as the rock on which he is standing in the frame. This way of enjoying landscape as a leisure activity echoes the SAR&H tourism promotion imagery mentioned in Section 5, Figure 12, in which the lookers purportedly assumed a position of power in relation to an empty landscape (which, by implication, is available to be explored further). Most of the people depicted in Figure 47 were, however, working for the Morgenster Mission station during war time and were therefore under no illusion regarding the emptiness of the



Figure 47: Dr S.K. Jackson, c. 1978, at the 'The View', 35 mm transparency.

land. The photographer's relation to the environment here should, however, be considered in terms of the 'missionary gaze' as described in Phase 1. The camera allows the photographer to celebrate God's creation in humility, and to share that mediated experience with others but there is also an implication of the photographer-missionary being placed there for a divine purpose.

Also included in the slide projections, however, was an image of a group of people playing volleyball in the mist. However, in this image, in which the people are also engaging in a leisure activity in the landscape, it is not white people only, and the mist serves to integrate the people and the place and present a counterpoint to the image above.

Besides locating the images in the Morgenster area, and as dating from the late 1970s, the projected images were presented without specific commentary or captions and the audience were therefore left to interpret these images in terms of their own experience. By including the projectors as very solid, visible objects in the otherwise empty space and projecting images created in the 1970s, I pointed to the past of a real place in terms of the relationship between the photographer, the people, the environment, and the photographic

technology through which landscape is represented. There is a gap of about 40 years between my father's photographs of Morgenster and my own photographs of the same place. Presenting images from the 1970s together with images from 2016 also emphasised 'place' as something that is continually becoming – and changing over time.

My own photographs were displayed on a perpendicular wall to the projections in slide viewers that also dated from the late 1970s or early 1980s. Certain elements appeared in both sets of images: distinctive boulders, the church, home gardens, 'The View', the town, and the environment semi-obscured by *guti* and many other less recognisable objects. In the voice recording I mentioned some of these objects, such as the Finger Rock, which is now an all but forgotten overgrown 'monument'. The audio track that looped continually allowed different relationships between the visuals being handled at any given moment, the spoken words, and the projected images to happen. A person might be looking at the image of the Finger Rock (see Figure 48) in a viewer, for instance, while the voice track mentions the tree in the yard of the doctor's home (see Figure 20 in Volume1) with a misty image of the candle monument projected on the wall in the background. A person would then make

the link between the words and images only later, perhaps with a second viewing, if at all. In this way the set of images functioned together with the voice recording and projections as a whole that unfolded gradually, and never in the same order, creating a certain atmosphere rather than any fixed meanings.



Figure 48: De Klerk, A. 2016, Finger Rock, Morgenster Mission.

This was done deliberately in order to place the greater burden of telling on the visual, spatial, and relational aspects of the exhibition. The nature of the telling was naturally different from what words alone would achieve, although in this situation the words were intended to ally with the visual rather than stand in opposition to it. The relations between people, the technology, and the visuals (and by extension the place) are shaped by the materiality of the technologies, as well as their social context.

Four of the viewers displayed on the shelf had their own light sources, but most were simple plastic boxes with a plastic lens and viewing screen, as shown in Figure 49. The original purpose of handheld viewers as display devices was to enable the viewing of slides without the need of a projector and projector screen. The slides could be quickly evaluated by the photographer or person putting together a slide show, normally to decide which images to add to a carousel for later projection. The handheld viewers therefore facilitated intimate viewing of each image individually. The images displayed in the viewers can never all be viewed together, and cannot be seen at all unless the visitor makes a directed effort to engage. The Hama viewers are held close to one eye and held up

against the light to see the image. In a darkened room the extra-image world is blocked off, similar to a cinematic experience. Inside the viewer, the image is projected on a viewing screen and should therefore be considered together with television, cinema, computers, and mobile devices as screen-based media.



Figure 49: Image on packaging of Hama viewers, showing how it is held close to the eye when viewing.

Ingrid Richardson (2010) contends, however, that while all screens are typically encountered on a front-to-front (or face-to-face) basis, such encounters are not static, and television, cinema, computer,

and mobile phone or tablet screens all engender different body postures, as well as social and private habits. Television and cinema screens, for instance, are traditionally associated with a 'lean-back' and remote mode of engagement that implies a passive body and active eyes, while computer and mobile device screens' interactive nature demand a 'lean-forward', direct engagement (Richardson, 2010: 8) that require physical actions, even if these are limited to the hands only. As explored in Phase 1, bodily movement is essential to perception and meaning making. Interactive engagement through active bodies and eyes allow choices and therefore multiple perspectives and multiple paths. Even the simple action of walking, according to Ingold (2011: xii), is a way of moving, knowing, and describing, all at once. In keeping with the argument in Phase 1, which develops from the phenomenology of perception into a postphenomenological understanding of the active role that things play in shaping human experience. In this exhibition, the 'things', or rather the technological artefacts, play an active role in requiring certain patterns of movement. The context of use, however, elicits more than just movement, in that it elicits verbal responses from the participants as well.

The analogue slide projection in the domestic context that was referenced with the projection installation of Part I described earlier demanded a mix of 'lean-back' and 'lean-forward' modes of engagement as the images often elicited storytelling by the photographer or the people depicted, while others would sit back and watch and listen. At the opening event of the *Telling Places* exhibition, at which both my parents were present, they added to my own recorded narrative, in conversation with many of the guests about the places and the images.

The slide viewers in turn demanded active bodies and eyes, as well as active tongues. The viewers are intimate and small, fitting easily in the palm of a hand, but the magnified image fills the view and needs to be taken in in several glances, from the centre to the corners and back. This one-eye viewing dynamic is different from the way binocular vision is normally led through the image frame by design elements. With one eye, and the image being so close, the corners are difficult to focus on. Depending on which eye is used, one side would be easier to view than another.

While the filtered light and soft tones of many of the images felt very comforting, viewing the images up close (but focusing far) for an

extended period places uncomfortable strain on the eyes. The slide viewers with their own light sources, on the other hand, are designed to be viewed with both eyes, with a comfortable viewing distance of about 10 cm as opposed to the 3-4 cm viewing distance of the smaller plastic viewers. Even though with the self-lit viewers the images appear slightly more distant, they are still in the viewer's personal space. Peering into these little dark boxes is similar to the experience of looking through the viewfinder of a camera and is thereby analogous with the photographer's physical presence in the place while photographing.

The quality of the magnification optics of the various viewers vary, with some creating blue fringing around strong lines, especially in the corner areas, most noticeable around trees outlined against the sky and around the image frame itself. The magnification also distorts the image, creating a pincushion effect (curving the image frame lines inwards) and the bright areas in the image reflect in the inside of viewer itself (see Figure 50 and 51). Even so, the magnification enlarges the back-lit grain structure of the film, thus pointing to the fact that these images, once framed, are the direct result of the action of light from that specific place and time. This

light is further mediated through the film, optics, camera, and chemical technologies, as well as the way it becomes visible in the gallery space through filtered light and plastic optics.



Figure 50: 35 mm slide image from the Morgenster selection: The 'Pastorie' #2, photographed through a plastic slide viewer with an iPhone camera.

In Figure 52 the particular arrangement of hexagonal shapes created by the lens flare reveal the type of lens used. By including this image (which would normally be discarded due to the lens flare) in the

selection, the way the photographic system mediates the scene is emphasised. This image was displayed in one of the bigger viewers with a built-in light source and superior optics.

It is to be expected that a contemporary audience would be unfamiliar with analogue photography, which, on the one hand gave this part of the exhibition a novelty value that could potentially dominate the experience and prevent visitors from exploring the content in depth. If visitors could get past the novelty aspect of the technology, they would be able to engage with how this particular display technology highlighted important qualities of the analogue photographic medium. The analogue presentation technology preserves the continuous tonal gradation and specific colour reproduction of the film and development. The five-times magnification provided by the slide viewers magnify the relatively organic grain structure of the film, which is very different from digital noise, image pixels, or the dot structure of a digital inkjet print. The grain structure, together with the visibility of the slide mounts, highlight the fact that each image represents a moment of choice within conditions outside of my control – a culmination of chance and choice elements.



Figure 51: 35 mm slide image from the Morgenster selection: Mugabe Mountain and Surrounding Area #2, photographed through a plastic slide viewer with an iPhone camera.



Figure 52: 35 mm slide image from the Morgenster selection: Mugabe Mountain and Surrounding Area #1, photographed through CENEI Scoper®.

Contemporary audiences who are used to digital photography, however, do not associate photography with these optical, mechanical, chemical, and material processes and extra information is therefore needed to make the visitors aware of the nature of the process. The explanation of the photographic process in the text of the pamphlet and in the invitation asked the viewer to look specifically at the process – the way the images were created, instead of only at what the images depicted. This implied request was re-enforced by the use of different processes for each place.

The interaction between the viewers and projections of Part I provided the background against which to encounter Parts II and III. The implication was that my exposure to landscape through my father's photography unavoidably carried through into the way I photograph currently, even in a very industrial space of Kempton Park, which contrasts dramatically with the atmosphere of Morgenster. Even if the exhibition was viewed from the side of Part III and II side first, the numbering of the parts would locate them in chronological order, and suggests that they built on each other.

8.4. Accordion book with inkjet prints

In the Morgenster selection I introduced family memories in the form

of my father's photographs, with reference to the practice of family slide shows that, even though it is now mostly obsolete, influenced my own way of experiencing and photographing places. For Part II (Nietverdiend and Mochudi), the book as presentation technology offered a way to build on the active engagement with the work that happened in Part I. A book requires a paging action that brings the image closer physically and immediately creates a connection between the viewer and the work (Paton, 2012: 3).

With the choice of presenting the Nietverdiend and Muchudi work in book form, as a curatorial decision, I was concerned with the phenomenal qualities of the book, and how it would shape the experience of the visitor in the gallery space with the work and images.

Visual illustrations have been associated with the recording of information and scientific knowledge in book form almost from the making of the first book (Horsfall, 1983). According to Elizabeth Shannon (2010: 56), books have been used to collect, store, display, and disseminate photographic prints ever since paper-based photographs were invented. The photographic images in books have been associated with the documentation of knowledge-gathering expeditions, and early examples include personal and

commercially published albums such as the *Pictorial Cape* publication mentioned in Section 5, which was marketed as a travel souvenir and object of imperial pride in 1905 when the Cape was still a British colony. Since the printing of images and text with the same process on one page became practical, photographic imagery has been used in various ways in books.

A distinction must be made, for instance, between a photographically illustrated book and what has become known as the 'photobook'. The term 'photobook' is problematic in that it designates a wide variety of approaches and is often used interchangeably for books made by artists that are based on the photographic image, photographers' monographs that only show the photographers' works (thus devoid of a specific visual narrative), and the "products offered by retailers of personalised photo applications, before known as photo albums" (Neves, 2016).

In a 1984 article, Baltz (2012: loc. 608) uses the term "artists bookwork" to talk about books where the photographer, either individually or in collaboration with a designer and/or editor, produces a book on a specific theme or subject to be commercially printed in large or small runs. This definition by Baltz is quite different from what is termed and 'artists book' in contemporary

literature. According to Keith Dietrich (2011: 3), the term 'artist's book' refers to "art objects that are informed by the concept of the book and are realised in the form of a book". Baltz's definition, however, corresponds with the kind of works that Shannon (2010) regards as 'photobooks', but Shannon includes hand-bound collections of photographic prints in her discussion of photobooks. For this reason, I will continue to use the word 'photobook'.

Shannon (2010: 56) argues that the mass-produced photobook has had a major role in the history of photography; firstly by popularising it, establishing it as an art form, and secondly by bringing certain photographers to prominence, thus cementing their careers and influence on future photographers and other artists. Photobooks are now often created as single bespoke objects or published in very small runs, making them scarce commodities, and increasing their monetary value. According to Shannon (2010: 56), the popularity of the elite photobook in the art world, however, loses the function of wide influence and dissemination, although I would argue that this function has been taken over by online media. For Shannon (2010: 56), the book is the most effective vehicle through which to present and disseminate a body of photographic work: "Its life extends beyond that of an exhibition (or a photographer); it is easily portable;

and its contents retain the potential for rediscovery.” The most successful photographic careers are built around books where the collection of images as a whole creates the statement, but selected images are also able to stand on their own merit, and are marketed and sold as single prints.

Landscape photography displayed in large book form has strong associations with wilderness preservation activism, mainly due to the 20 books published as the *Exhibition Format Series* by the Sierra Club under direction of David Brower (Dunaway, 2008: 118). Starting with Ansel Adams and Nancy Newhall’s *This Is the American Earth*, published (1960), the *Exhibition Format Series* are large, high-end publications that aim to provide viewers with an experience similar to viewing a photographic exhibition in terms of the quality and the size of the prints, in the comfort of their own homes (Dunaway, 2008: 118). The images were also accompanied by texts written by Nancy Newhall that present Adams’ work as connecting spiritually with nature. In both titles the roles of the photographer and photographic

technology are downplayed and it is as if the photographs make the American earth physically present through the book. Eloquent light (Adams & Newhall, 1964) refers to nature ‘speaking’ through light. As shown in the double-page spreads from two of these publications reproduced in Figures 53 and 54, each image is captioned by identifying the main content of the image and the location. While a full analysis of these publications falls outside the scope of this study, I briefly mention it here in order to highlight the problematics around the representation of landscape in book form, especially in light of the role these books played in American environmental politics (see Dunaway, 2008). The landscape photographs reproduced in these volumes are emblematic of the grand aesthetic associated with masculinity²⁸ and American nationalism, which have come under scrutiny in postcolonial and feminist critique (see Bright, 1985; 1992).

²⁸ Between 1960 and 1968, 20 books were published in this series, of which only one showcased the work of a female photographer (William E. Colby Memorial Library, 2018).



Figure 53: Ansel Adams and Nancy Newhall, 1960, This Is the American Earth title page.

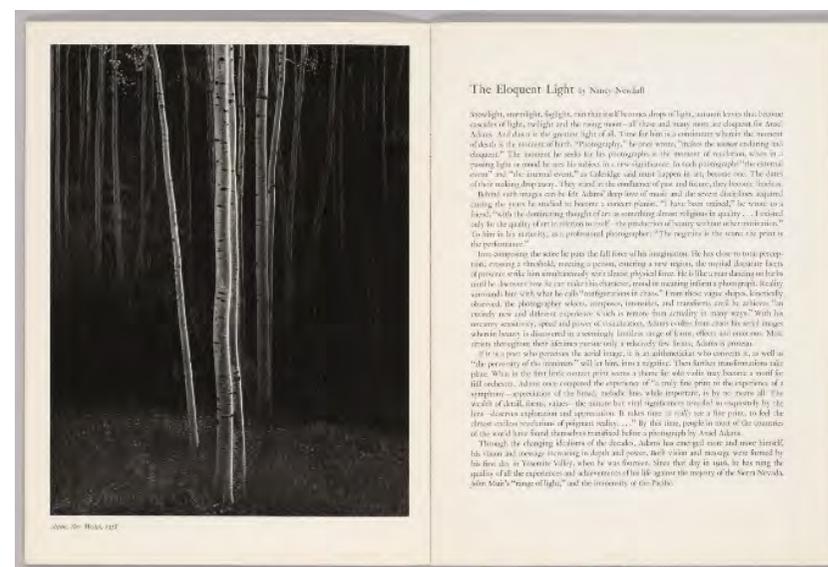


Figure 54: Ansel Adams and Nancy Newhall, 1963, double-page spread from Ansel Adams: The Eloquent Light.

As presentation technology, the book in its form as bound pages (the codex form) dates from at least the third century in the West (Norman, 2011), and has ever since been associated with the permanent storage of knowledge. By using the book form to display landscape photography, there is an implication that landscape photography is a kind of knowledge. The way that the book is designed and constructed, however, impacts on the nature of this knowledge. To disassociate the Nietverdiend and Mochudi work from the history of the photobook as coffee-table book, and to develop the notion of alethic truth explored in Phase 1, the format and design of the book had to be carefully manipulated without compromising the personal, intimate connections that were established in the Morgenster body of work.

Within the context of my own purposes for this project, the one drawback of the codex form book is that the visual juxtaposition of images cannot be altered and must be predetermined for the viewer. As explained earlier, one of the organising principles of this exhibition was to facilitate, within limitations, non-linear engagement with the work and allow visitors to construct their own spatial narrative through the gallery. A modified version of the

accordion book form presented a solution.

One of the main advantages of the codex over earlier scroll or whirlwind-bound texts is that specific pages can be accessed quickly without needing to go through the whole of the text. Sequential page numbering facilitates non-linear access to specific pages, especially of non-fictional works (Norman, 2011). The fixed page sequence and numbering, however, also emphasise the linearity of the modern book. On the one hand Patricia Allmer (2011: 8) contends that for narrative texts, “[l]inearity threads through the conventional printed book, from cover to cover, from the beginning of the narrative to its end”. On the other hand, the codex form offers a non-linearity by allowing pages to be skipped.

In first-century China, the accordion book could be seen to represent a transition phase between the scroll and the codex forms of binding. Single, long sheets, be it sheets of bamboo strips, leather, or silk, were folded into multiple folios that could be flicked through easily, but also opened up to view many ‘pages’ together (Chinnery, 2007). The accordion format therefore has the structure of both scroll and codex: pages are formed between folds and can be turned on each fold, or unfolded further (see Figure 55).



Figure 55: Late Tang Dynasty (848-907) Chinese accordion-folded scroll, 8.7 x 28.3 cm, British Museum, London (Chinnery, 2007: 17).

In the contemporary context, the accordion book is more directly associated with artist's books. An additional requirement is that

artist's books be made as the "primary works of art – not reproductions of existing work that merely use a book format" (Drucker, 1997: 94). Photobook designer Hans Gremmen also treats the photobook as an autonomous medium that becomes a work in itself, and not a collection of reproductions of exhibition prints.

The format has, however, also been used for commercially published works such as Guy Tillim's first publication on Johannesburg (2004), and his latest book, *Joburg: Points of View* (2014). With the 2014 book, Tillim makes use of accordion binding to present diptychs flat on a double-page spread without a gutter. The accordion-folded pages are bound in a hardcover case wrap, attached to the cover on the last page. This binding method creates a page-turning experience similar to section-sewn or perfect-bound books but allows each double-page set to lie totally flat. This body of work comes across as having been conceptualised simultaneously as exhibition prints and books as alternate presentations, where neither is a reproduction of the other. Both the exhibition at the Stevenson Gallery and the book were conceptualised to best present the diptychs. Although, as Andrew Piper (2012: 517) claims, "every book is a diptych", by eliminating the gutter, this format allows the image

pairs to be displayed as a unit, while at the same time making the most of the page space to present a specific image size. "Taken all together, then," according to Piper (2012: 518), "the book is an amalgam of the arbitrary, the simultaneous, and the sequential" in that the pages are fixed in a certain order, yet individual pages can be bookmarked, and two pages are normally viewed together and all the pages are available for view even though they have to be viewed sequentially.

For my own purposes, the accordion structure preserves the linearity associated with traditional narrative, but also opens the possibility for the page order to be altered, within limitations. For this reason, the pages are not numbered, and all the images are kept the same size and orientation. Where the codex form offers a gradual unfolding – one double-page set at a time – the accordion form offers further unfolding, to three-page spreads, or even four- or five-page spreads, depending on the length of the table. Besides unfolding and turning the pages, the accordion form also offers refolding, covering, uncovering, and sliding actions. As Joyce Brodsky (2002: 107) argues, such bodily interactions between viewer and object allow the viewer to understand "aspects of the process

of forming the book that is manifest in the particularity of that object".

The gradual unfolding of the book, page, or double page at a time, has been likened to cinematic media, unfolding frame by frame, although an essential aspect of the photobook as medium is its slowness (Gremmen, 2015, in Katyal, 2015), as compared to cinema. By unfolding more pages at a time with the accordion book, the relation to cinema is reinforced due to the physical resemblance of the strip of images to a film strip, but at the same time, the sequential, linear, gradual unfolding that links the book to cinema is undermined. The arrangement of the pages was considered as one long strip that could be viewed from either side, meaning that the book could be paged through from either left to right or right to left (see Figure 56 to view a simple paging action from left to right).

In arranging the sequence of images, I focused on creating a continuous visual flow in order to promote continuous eye movement along the long strip of images. Because there are no captions, the information pages (see Figure 57 and Figure 58) were repeated at both ends of the strip of images, as well as in the middle, separating the Nietverdiend and Mochudi images.



Figure 56: Video of simple left-to-right paging action of Telling Places Part II.

NIETVERDIEND

Nietverdiend is a small rural settlement on the R49 that stretches northward across the South African border into Botswana via the Kopfontein border post. Nietverdiend is not quite a town as it consists only of a school, a post office, a police station, a church, a petrol station and general dealer, all scattered along the same road. The name Nietverdiend was inherited from the farm on which the school was originally built. Myself and two of my brothers attended Nietverdiend Primary School as boarders while we lived in Mochudi, Botswana. This small primary school in the North-West province of South Africa, about 60 kilometers from the nearest town, had less than 70 pupils in total at the time that we were there (1984-1987). In the 1980's there was a constant military presence in the Nietverdiend area due to its proximity to the Botswana border. With a police station right next door and a counter-insurgency unit stationed in the area, the school was constantly patrolled. Sometimes, going home for weekends, we would be transported from Nietverdiend to the Botswana border in Casspirs (mine-resistant military vehicles) for our protection.

Upon my return to Nietverdiend during the winter break of 2016, I learned that the pupil numbers of this little school had tripled due to the closure of many of the smaller surrounding farm schools. Just like in the 1980's, the school's pupils come from surrounding farms and are mostly boarders. In spite of the growth in pupil numbers, the school's infrastructure has not changed all that much. While a few class rooms and offices have been added to the school buildings, the hostel buildings and high fencing remain the same.

Figure 57: Nietverdiend text from Telling Places Part II.

MOCHUDI, BOTSWANA

Mochudi is a sprawling village about a hour's drive from the South African border in Botswana. This village is of some political significance as it is the headquarters of the Bakgatla-Bakgafela nation and ancestral seat of Chief Linchwe I. Linchwe I led a part of the Bakgatla-Bakgafela to escape from the Ndebele onslaught and oppression from white farmers in the late 1800's, across the Limpopo river. The rocky hillocks of Mochudi was a suitably strategic location that provided sufficient shelter and was close enough to running water for the Bakgatla to settle and thrive in spite of the arid climate.

Mochudi was also important in the history of the South African anti-apartheid struggle in that ANC fugitives, fleeing from the South African Defence Force and South African Police Service, were concealed and aided by Chief Linchwe II. The Bakgatla also secretly aided in the distribution of weapons that enabled African National Congress (ANC) military action in South Africa. In spite of this tense political situation (of which I was not directly aware as child). When the Dutch Reformed Mission withdrew all the missionaries from Morgenster, due to the threat to their lives, my father was re-deployed to a mission hospital in Mochudi. Mochudi was the place of my own happy childhood memories. Here I experienced a freedom that contrasted starkly with the rigid and confined atmosphere of Nietverdiend.

Figure 58: Mochudi text from Telling Places Part II.

The roles of the text in the book are similar to the way the voice recording functioned in Part I. These pages provide information about the history of the places, my personal connection to the places, with links to my more recent photographic exploration of the places. In these introductions to Mochudi and Nietverdiend, the text also points out the links and differences between the two places, especially my memories of traveling between the two. The way the book is constructed allows the people at the exhibition to do the same by walking from the Nietverdiend side to the Mochudi side and back, or moving the pages so that images on the Nietverdiend side are placed next to images from the Mochudi side. The links and differences between the two places are also expressed in the selection and placement of images. Figure 59 and Figure 60 both show forms of washing lines in very different environments, for example, placed on either side of the central information pages. Moving 'across the border' from Mochudi to Nietverdiend and the shifting atmosphere that accompanies this move are also symbolised in the book by the subtle differences in the kinds of "marking and claiming" (Rose, 2012, as discussed in Phase 1, practices such as is visible, for example, in paths, footprints, carvings, and perhaps the

less subtle proliferation of fencing on the one side and the lack of fencing on the other side (see Figure 61 and Figure 62).

The introduction to Part II in the pamphlet provided further information about the photographic technologies and processes used to make these images, pointing to the fact that the images were created by combining several image frames of the same scene into one image. The fact that the manipulation was declared and explained to some extent preserves and possibly also increases the 'truth' value of the images as representation of the relation between photographer, place, and technology, rather than objective records of the environment. That the images are built up from multiple frames is discernible only upon close inspection and therefore needs to be pointed out in the text. It is important for the participant to be aware of the digital manipulations, in order to point to the role of the photographic technology in shaping the relationship between photographer and place. In Figure 63, the manipulation is more noticeable due to the clearly repeated figure of the lady clad in a black-and-white blanket.

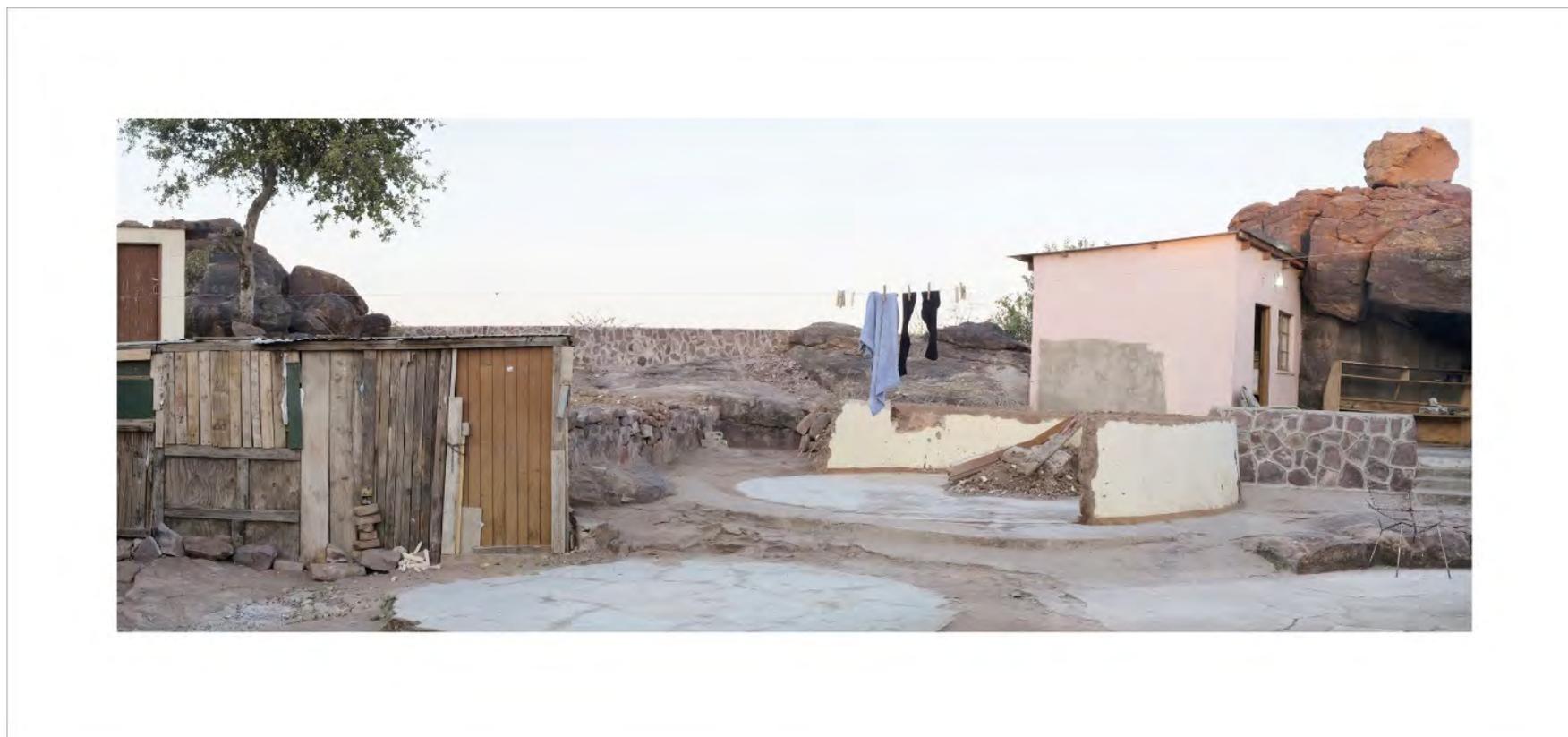


Figure 59: Extract from Telling Places Part II: Mochudi, Botswana, with washing line.



Figure 60: Extract from Telling Places Part II: Nietverdiend, South Africa, with washing line.



Figure 61: Extract from Telling Places Part II: Nietverdiend, South Africa.



Figure 62: Extract from Telling Places Part II: Mochudi, Botswana.



Figure 63: Extract from Telling Places Part II: Mochudi, Botswana, with the figure with a black-and-white plaid blanket appearing twice.



Figure 64: Extract from Telling Places Part II: Mochudi, Botswana, with a repeated figure of a man with his hands in his jacket pockets and white hat.

In order for the pages to be able to be reorganised, the pages needed to be sturdy enough to allow for paging without damaging the pages. The folds also had to allow some extra space for other pages to fit comfortably between and be reversible; in other words, be able to fold to both sides. To achieve this, in such a way that the folds are also durable, separate pages are taped together with archival hinging tape on both sides of the prints, leaving a 2-mm gap between each page. Archival paper tape (Filmmoplast® P90 Plus) presented the ideal solution, as it is designed as hinging tape and could bear repeated folding without showing wear and tear. It also takes on the texture of the paper. The process of taping the pages together made the production process extremely labour intensive, and will have the possible consequence of not allowing the book to move beyond the single object into production. As Gremmen (2015, in Katyal, 2015) states, “It is the easiest thing in the world, to come up with an idea. The tricky thing is to confront the consequences of that idea and to put it into production.”

²⁹ Cold Press Natural paper is advertised as having a high D-max and wide colour gamut, but tonal values in shadow or dark areas tend to reproduce as

The paper and tape were selected together to ensure a good match in white tone. 340g Epson® Cold Press Natural paper provided the best match from the selection that was available to me at the time of printing. Careful consideration of the paper selection was crucial, in light of Joanna Drucker’s (1997: 95) statement:

Sequence and finitude may be the two descriptive attributes of the codex, but the articulation of time and space within a book are produced through many means – textual and visual, substantive and formal, as well as physical and material ... properties of paper, for instance, such as smoothness, softness, degree of whiteness or opacity, translucence or reflection, affect even the most neutral-seeming use of this material.

Cold press paper is thick and soft, with muted colour reproduction²⁹ (as compared to many coated papers), which supports the dusty scenes depicted in the images of *Nietverdiend* and *Mochudi*.

compressed, and therefore lack detail. Even after calibration it is necessary to ‘open up’ the shadow tones by manipulating the reproduction curve.



Figure 65: Telling Places Part II installation.

The paper resists kinks and folds, and therefore can withstand considerable handling (although too much friction can create a fluffy texture).

This costly exhibition-quality paper, however, also makes the book even more of a precious, unique object, which is an unfortunate compromise, as this brings the book back to the association with exhibition prints against the wall. For Baltz (2012: loc. 663), the advantage of the “photo bookwork”, as he calls it, especially as it was used by 1970s and early 1980s American photographers, was that it escaped the commodity status as well as “vanity book” label, thereby increasing the range of audiences that it could reach. The main advantage for Baltz (2012: loc. 663), however, is that the “photo bookwork” pushes photographic work beyond the technically perfect print that disguises what Baltz called a “bankruptcy of vision” and “pseudo-spiritual utterances”, with which he possibly refers to the typical content of the Sierra Club *Exhibition Format Series* publications of the 1960s. The layout and printing choices for the *Telling Places* Part II book positions the work somewhere between the artist’s book and the photo bookwork as described by Baltz.

As a particular kind of photobook, this part of the exhibition references and questions the book as a knowledge container in that it presents a personal, subjective engagement with places. The use of digitally manipulated images is presented as truthful in this context and thereby further questions the nature of knowledge associated with landscape photography. As discussed in more detail in Phase 1, the digital medium facilitates a specific interaction with the place in how it allows time and space to be represented. Within the context of this exhibition, this way of merging multiple moments or glances into one image played off the looped video clips displayed on the screens that made up Part II surrounding the book. In the following section I discuss the interaction between Parts II and III in more detail, especially in terms of the representation of time.



Figure 66 Wide-angle installation view of Part III of Telling Places.

8.5. Digital video displayed on LCD screens

In the preceding sub-section in Part I, I discuss the use and curation of analogue slide photographs, which originate from different times, as projections and in-slide viewers that tell of Morgenster as a remembered and imagined place. In the subsection on Part II, I reflect on the curation of digital prints that incorporated multiple moments into single images, presented as an accordion-fold book that operates as a codex form and as a strip of images in such a way that it tells of places remembered, but yet unfolding in the present time of the photographer and the viewer, through multiple glances. As such, Parts I and II therefore relate to the earlier stated

supposition in that the work emplaced the viewers in particular ways in terms of their experience of time in the gallery space.

In this section I further reflect on the curation of Part III, which consists of digital video clips, in terms of the phenomenology of moving images represented on television screens. A key issue that arises in phenomenological and postphenomenological analyses of film and video relates to the experience of time. The differences in the way video, film, and stills represent time are often proclaimed as the essential differences by practitioners and theorists such as Allan Casebier (1991), Sobchack (1992), Unwin (2009), and Gabrielle Hezekiah (2010). Martin Lefebvre (2011: 74), for instance, argues that within the context of narrative film, moving imagery's ability to

“temporalize the landscape and move us into it” is the basis of any potential contribution to the idea of landscape – and to its use as a symbol to be interpreted.

Through reflection on the curation of the video work and still photography in the same space, in relation to theories of moving imagery, I critically examine differences between the various forms of photography, as well as explore similarities. I thereby question the established belief that moving imagery (as opposed to stills) mediates our perception of the environment is “more suited to an articulation of embodied experience” (Unwin, 2008: 141) of the environment and is therefore more suited for landscape.

A further central issue relates to Sobchack’s notion of double mediation that characterises film and video viewing experiences. In the *Address of the Eye*, Sobchack (1992: 10) states:

Watching a film is both a direct and mediated experience of direct experience as mediation. We both perceive a world within the immediate experience of an ‘other’ and without it, as immediate experience mediated by an ‘other.’ Watching a film, we can see the seeing as well as the seen, hear the hearing as well as the heard, and feel the movement as well as see the moved.

Within the context of the *Telling Places* exhibition, double mediation related to the forms of still photography is displayed here as well. Experience of place is doubly mediated, in how the viewer’s direct experience in the gallery space is of the photographer’s perceptions as mediated by both the video-enabled DSLR system and the television screen as display technology. It must be noted here that perception is not limited to what the body is capable of. Through a mediating relation of embodiment between myself as a photographer and the camera, the camera can become an extension of my body, allowing perspectives and perceptions that are impossible for me to achieve with my own eyes and ears. As discussed in Phase 1, in relation to photographing in Kempton Park, and which is touched on again later in this section, the camera does not have to be an extension of my own body or any other body than itself. The camera can present its own relation to the environment and can be placed so as to assume the ‘point of view’ of things including itself.

Mediation, as understood in postphenomenological terms, is co-constitutive. There is therefore a creative aspect to the photographic and curatorial mediation instances that potentially reveal something

new about places and about landscape photography practice. The aim of this reflection on the curatorial process in relation to the theory is therefore also to develop the telling of Kempton Park as a particular place and uncover what implications this telling has for the understanding of landscape photography as a representational practice.

In Part III of this installation of *Telling Places*, single-shot video clips of mundane scenes were displayed on television screens. This body of work was installed on the gallery walls as if it were a series of conventional photographic prints. Some of the static camera shots were so still and quiet that they looked like still photographs, until after a while a tiny bird suddenly flies up from a branch, such as in Figure 67 or in Figure 68 for instance, and subtle movement becomes noticeable upon closer inspection. In these ways (in the way work is presented and in the way that it was created), video 'tells' about still photography by referencing its stillness and its subject matter, which one could argue, still photography inherited in turn from painting. The video work pointed to the differences in experiencing movement in space and time, as mediated by the various technologies. As Monica McTighe and many others have

pointed out, the photograph's stilling effect "is an effective means to explore the complexity of the visual and temporal world" (McTighe, 2012: 82). This stillness is broken sporadically in some of the video works; in others the perpetual 'noise' of movement creates a different kind of monotony. In this arrangement – screens surrounding the book placed on a table in the middle of the 'room' – the rural scenes of Part II that were built up from multiple moments, but represented as still photographs, could enter into direct visual relation with the way movement and time were represented in these video images of the urban and industrial scenes of Kempton Park.



Figure 67: Frame grab from Telling Places Part III: Video clip #1.



Figure 68: Frame grab from Telling Places Part III: Video clip #2.

The notion of 'emplacement' in the context of this study refers to embodied being that involves direct active perception, memory, imagination, and intellectual and emotional awareness in relation to the socio-political history and physical environment of places. Unwin (2008) makes a convincing argument for the use of video and film with the camera placed to incorporate the moving subject into the description of embodied experience, but her understanding of embodied experience purposefully excludes her memory, imagination, and intellectual and emotional awareness, and therefore focuses on describing pre-reflexive experiences of the physical environment. As such, Unwin's (2008: 168) framework for how "film and digital video might articulate a phenomenological experience of the landscape" is useful. Through an analysis of the methods of production of her own practice, she draws attention to the necessity of describing time and movement as "persistence and change that is revealed by the light reflected from surfaces within an environment" (Unwin, 2008: 160) from the perspective of an active perceiver (Unwin, 2008: 174). A further important aspect of her framework is that the work should reveal "something of the bodily

actions involved in its production and the way in which the work is shown" (Unwin, 2008: 174).

If, however, landscape photography is understood as a representation of place, with all its complexity, and perception of the environment is understood as part of the complexity of 'being in', in which our memories, and future orientation, or imagination are also entangled, then perhaps there is a basis for questioning whether moving imagery such as video and film is the most suited to representing experience of place.

As mentioned in Section 7.2, cinematic and photographic shots are distinguished by duration, but I argue earlier, with reference to Brown (2011), that both have spatial and temporal aspects, and both have narrative potential – the difference lying in whether narrative is *followed* by the viewer or whether it is *demanding* by the images from the viewer, which translates into various levels of determinacy. Marie-Laure Ryan (2014: par. 21) describes indeterminate narrative in single images as opening "a small window on time through the technique of the pregnant moment, but many different narrative arcs can pass through this window", depending on how the viewer's imagination and how it is influenced by the context in which it is

viewed, or how it is curated in an exhibition space. This notion of a “window on time” relates to the often-used metaphor of the window on the world in relation to photographic screen-based media, which I discuss in more detail later in this section.

Although these single, static video shots that constitute Part III of this exhibition possess duration, they do not offer much more in terms of narrative determinacy. Instead, they offer stretches of time in which nothing happens except the repetitive rhythms of daily movements. According to Maria Walsh (2008: 45), such empty time is often neglected in filmic representations even though it is an essential aspect of our experience of time. As part of the exhibition, the Kempton Park video clips were not identified or linked to any specific location or event with either captions or other textual information – thus preserving the indeterminacy of the video loops and with it the *demand* of narrative (in the sense of meaning) from the viewer.

In the Kempton Park videos, time is evident mainly in the spatial and temporal layering of changing elements over (seemingly) persistent things in the environment and not in narrative events. In Figure 69, for instance, sounds, weeds, cast shadows, people walking in front

of and behind both barriers, and traffic form layers of change and persistent elements that modulate each other in the visual field. Furthermore, as mediated by the stationary camera and telephoto lens, effects such as the light shimmer in Figure 70 reveals changes that would not be so clearly described if the camera had been in motion. A visible relation therefore emerges between the camera and things: The electric wires of the Gautrain railway create a path for the airplane; the bridge creates a frame for human movement and transportation; the hill creates a space for the dam, which channels the movement of the birds; and the sun’s rays perform a little dance around the tree branches within the field of view of the stationary camera and lens.



Figure 69: Frame grab from Telling Places Part III: Video clip #3.



Figure 70: Frame grab from Telling Places Part III: Video clip #4.

The video clips represent how the video-enabled DSLR also stood in relation to the audible environment and recorded the sounds of things in and beyond. Sound is an essential element of the experience of time, as its rhythm can often provide a measure of time, but it also describes space. While viewing the work in the exhibition, the viewer would often hear things before they became visible in the frame of the screen, depending on how close or far away the thing was from the camera, as sound travels at a much slower speed than light.

By now it is a truism that photographic media are not transparent, as Casebier (1991: 138) states from a phenomenological point of view: “[T]he issue is not whether perception is unmediated or mediated but rather what kind of mediation is involved.” As discussed in Phase 1, much work has been done in postphenomenology to develop in-depth understanding of the nature of technological mediation. In relation to film media, Sobchack develops Ihde’s “single act of mediated perception” (Unwin, 2008: 134) into a theory of film that involves a double mediation, as Unwin explains: “A double act of instrument-mediated perception involves the filmmaker perceiving the world

through the camera and the spectator perceiving, through the instrumentality of the projector, a perception of the filmmaker’s relationship to the world” (Unwin, 2008: 134). It is important to note that this double mediation involves an intricate relationship between perception and expression that involves not only the film maker, but the viewer as well:

The film experience not only represents and reflects upon the prior direct perceptual experience of the filmmaker by means of the modes and structures of direct and reflective perceptual experience, but also presents the direct and reflective experience of a perceptual and expressive existence as the film (Sobchack, 1992: 9).

Although Sobchack develops her theories for film specifically, arguing for essential differences between the materiality of film and electronic media, the concept of double mediation is been productively applied to video by Unwin and Hezekiah. Hezekiah (2010: 28), for instance, states that, as an instrument of mediation, “it [video] too serves as an interface between the bodies of artist and viewer, making a material connection which brings towards us a specific, embodied perception of the world” (Hezekiah, 2010: 28).

The exhibition visitor's experience of Kempton Park as place was therefore doubly mediated, firstly through my own experience of Kempton park as place, as mediated by the DSLR and lens system, and secondly in the way the video material was presented in the exhibition space. The first point of secondary mediation was in preparing the video footage for looped presentation.

Editing of the 'raw' footage is an integral part of video-making and filming. In my practice, the editing entangles the two acts of mediation as the works were edited with a specific kind of presentation context in mind. The videos were looped in the digital editing, as well as by the television looped playback function. As loops that are digitally edited together, the videos have no clear beginning or ending, and as soon as the looped sequence ended (with a momentarily black screen), it was replayed. This means that the beginning and ending were negated, which separates this work from cinema. Looped playback of moving imagery is a standard convention of a gallery display that enables the viewer to enter the space or to start and stop viewing any of the clips at any point in the playback (Walsh, 2003: 2). Looped playback therefore differentiates gallery display from cinema in that it facilitates a

mobile viewer, which foregrounds the location of the viewer's body in the gallery installation space (Unwin, 2008: 144). With all the video works displayed at once on multiple screens, viewers could 'edit' together their own sequence by moving around the space and deciding how long to spend on each work. The viewer therefore engaged in a form of spatial editing (Walsh, 2008: 44) that allowed "for the creation of new narratives on the part of the viewer" (Walsh, 2003: 2).

In the invitation and leaflet texts for *Telling Places*, general reference is made to content represented in the videos, which allude to the nature of Kempton Park as a place structured by human movement and transport systems. In some cases, such as the four videos of which frame grabs in Figure 71, the images relate to flight, or/and were created close to the airport and repeat visual and content elements. Clips related to train travel in Figure 72 were in turn positioned on the opposite wall from the 'flight' cluster. Flight, train, pedestrian, and road travel was, however, layered and intermingled throughout the arrangement within the gallery. Visual links were made on opposite walls (see Figure 73). While watching a clip in which the motion is still for the moment, movement or

sound from an adjacent screen, or a screen's reflection from a perpendicular wall, might have distracted a visitor and cause them to look elsewhere. The works were arranged in such a way that there

would be no centre piece. The viewer was visually drawn from wall to wall across the gallery (past the table with the book) and from screen to screen around the gallery.

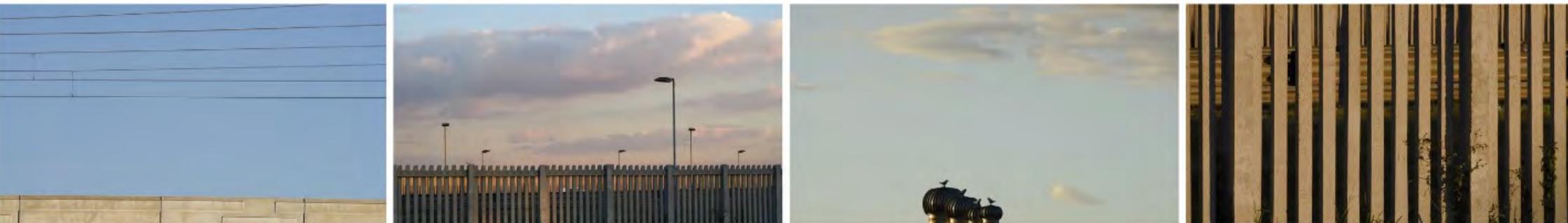


Figure 71: Frame grabs of four clips positioned next to each other, Telling Places Part III.



Figure 72: Frame grabs of video clips of the Gautrain and Van Riebeeck Station, Telling Places Part III.

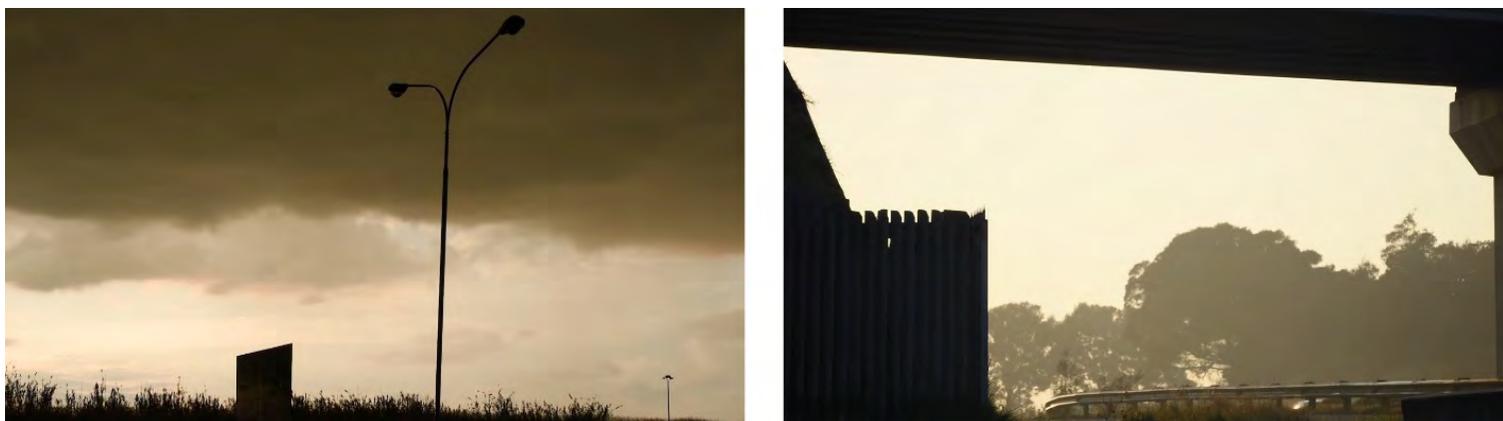


Figure 73: Frame grabs of video clips installed on facing walls, Telling Places Part III.

Richardson (2010: 1) examines screens in terms of the body-technology relations from the starting point that “body-technology relation is our fundamental ontological condition”, as well as the fundamental ontological condition of technology, which must be shaped and designed to fit the human body and its perceptual faculties in order to aid tasks and extend perception (2010: 2). According to Anne Friedberg (2004: 184), if media theorist Paul Virilio does not theorise “the technological differences between film, television and the computer, it is because, for him, the screen remains in a metaphoric register, a virtual surface which overrides any specificities of its media formation”. In terms of body-technology relations, however, different kinds of screens have distinct phenomenal characteristics, whereby experiences are co-shaped. As Richardson (2010: 11) claims, human-technology relations that are at play with media screens are not “uniform, nor linear or continuous, or necessarily determined by the perspectival trope and its demands for a fixed face-to-face relationship”.

As mentioned earlier in Section 8.5, the various screen-based media used in the gallery for this exhibition require different modes of engagement, which range between totally inactive bodies (and

active eyes) and full-body lean-forward interaction that allows for various kinds of choices to be made. In relation to the Morgenster (Part I) section of the exhibition, this active engagement extended to verbal storytelling and conversations about the images. With mobile devices, screens have, for example, entered into our involvement with the world as we move around, as opposed to the fixed screen that asks us to step out of our worldly involvement and turn to face the screen in order to focus our attention on whatever we choose to have displayed (Richardson, 2010: 9).

Fixed screens form part of our architectonic environment and, as such, are often discussed in terms of the trope of the window, thus emphasising the visual over the audible that more often than not accompanies screen viewing. The screen, with its frame and glass structure, resembles a window, with the glass functioning as a separating membrane between the inside and outside, which is especially applicable to “realistic depictions of a place/event” (Richardson, 2010: 6). Richardson (2010: 7) further argues that the “tele-active” eye-body and stationary physical body association with screen interactions is based on the screen-as-window metaphor, where the “eyes alone remain mobile to traverse and visually

'handle' the surface space of the screen, while the face and body are held captive by the eyes' attachment".

Although Galit Wellner (2016: 94-95) agrees with Richardson (2010: 8) that the television screen differs significantly from the cinema screen by virtue of the context of use, where television screens are "always-already surrounded by other domestic objects and zones of practice within the collectively realised domestic spaces and spatial topography of the home", Wellner (2016: 95) suggests that a screen functions as a window and a wall: as the screen is switched on, 'walls' emerge to isolate its audience. Depending on the actual content being interacted-with/listened-to/viewed, the surrounding environment and the task orientation of the person involved, such 'walls' can vary in thickness and transparency (Wellner, 2016: 95). "Virtual window-walls" screens therefore fluctuate between foreground and background; between being integrated with the environment or isolating us from the environment (Wellner, 2016: 95).

As shown in the discussion of my photography in Kempton Park in Phase 1, the viewing screen of the video camera could also be seen to function as a 'window' and a 'wall'. Although the wall in this

situation was thin and penetrated by distractions of sounds, smells, sights, and the "weather-world", as Ingold (2011) calls it, the pull of the 'window' is often strong, especially while first setting up the shot – the focus is on the world as perceived through the window of the camera screen, rather than the world around me.

A similar dynamic happened with the work shown on multiple screens in the gallery space. According to the analyses by Richardson (2010) and Wellner (2016) respectively, if exhibition visitors are allowed to view a single screen in a dark room, with no other items or 'distractions' in this room, they can likely become captive static bodies, even though the content would provide the movement (if present) to activate the eyes and keep the eyes 'glued to the screen'. Elwes (2015: 1) writes that "[i]f artists hope to induce in their audiences an embodied knowledge of their situated place within a gallery, then the medium of the moving image would appear to be the natural enemy of the installation. If installed in a space with other works and elements of the exhibition, however, the visitors would be likely to move around more and not be entirely focused on one screen for long. Multi-screen installations or the inclusion of other artworks in the same space prevents the viewer from losing a sense

of their bodily presence in the gallery space and, according to Kate Mondloch (2010: 19), reminds the viewer “of the necessarily embodied and material nature of all media viewing”, which included in this case the book and slide displays.

No seating was provided in the gallery space in order to encourage viewers to move around rather than to stay for long periods in one spot looking at one screen. Nash (2007: 150) explains that viewers must make

choices as to how to spend their time, especially where moving image media are involved. Through the decision to provide seating or not, to ease or direct movement through the exhibition space, the curator can signal different modalities of engagement.

By not providing seating, all the clips were also presented as equal, with no single video made more important than another.

In relation to the Kempton Park installation, the visitors’ movement alluded to my experience as a photographer in the place: standing still to view a scene, but then being distracted from that specific ‘view’ and allowing the video camera to keep on recording while I looked around, then moving the camera to record another scene, or

walking away. In this installation the viewer did not perceive the movement of the photographer as ‘active perceiver’ but was rather encouraged to move themselves. The installation of multiple screens, together with the content of the video works, conveyed a sense of the complex rhythms of movement of Kempton Park. Although I did not provide evidence of my own movement with the video footage, it was suggested in the content and form of the videos. My movement as photographer was to some extent revealed as mediated by the use of a variety of lenses, which allowed me to obtain points of view I would not otherwise be able to achieve.

For this kind of mediation to become part of the viewing experience of the visitor, the visitor needed to have prior experience with how various lenses render space. For this reason, I used the invitation text to point to this element of the work by referring to how the use of lenses with different focal lengths extended my point of view and mediated my movement as photographer. Although the way lenses render space is a highly visible aspect of photographic imagery, it is perhaps one of the more transparent aspects of the photographic medium. With this subtle reference in the text, I hoped to point to the mediation without deconstructing it too literally, as literal

deconstruction “merely” challenges the intellect and “conscious identifications” and does not facilitate embodied engagement with the work (Silverman, 1996, as cited by Walsh, 2003: 2-3).

The experience of double mediation is based in part on the notion that the exhibition visitor experiences the work as the mediated expression of the photographer’s perception, mediated again in how it is displayed and presented in the gallery space. For this to happen, the viewer must experience a sense of being positioned in a specific relation to the photographed view of objects. In Part I, for instance, the work was curated to create the sense that the viewer was looking with the photographer, through the viewfinder of the camera, which is presented as an augmentation (and reduction) of the photographer’s eye.

Photographic technologies, however, can extend perception beyond the reach, faculties, and presence of the human body, as shown in Phase 1. In this way, the point of view of an ‘other’ can be presented as photographically mediated. The camera does not have to represent a human-embodied viewpoint. In this body of work, where I placed the camera, started the recording, and walked away,

or looked away, the video also represents the camera viewpoint, its own location in the place, in relation to other things. In this interaction between things in an environment, as discussed in Phase 1 regarding the ideas of Ash and Simpson, specific space times are generated in this interaction between objects, people and spaces, which results in an ‘atmosphere’ (Ash, 2013: 23-24). This atmosphere in which distinctions between body and world are crossed (Anderson, 2009: 78) extends into the gallery space where it includes exhibition visitors. As part of this atmosphere, visitors were in turn drawn into the place through the windows of the ‘thinly walled’ screens. Being thinly walled, viewers were able to be distracted from individual screens, into another screen.

The camera, of course, can be affected by (and affect) other objects only selectively, based on the materiality of each. One of the ways it can be affected allows light and sound reflected or emanating from the environment to be translated via complex electronic and digital processes into video footage that can be displayed on television screens. In this way, the viewer experiences a ‘screened photographic emplacement’, and the place itself is experienced photographically or ‘en-photographed’, for lack of a better word,

while the photographic technology in turn is also embodied in that it becomes a remote extension of human bodily perception, and 'emplaced' in that it becomes an extension of that specific location. In this way I aim to create a sense of a decentralised human agency in the human-technology-world triad – to allow the balance of agency between the place and its objects, the photographic technology, and the photographer and viewers to be experienced as evened out to some extent. Although human agency is decentralised in this 'assemblage', there is no pretence at objectivity, or representing the 'essence' of the place. Each 'window' generates a distinct atmosphere. The 15 screens in combination, rather than providing a more complete sense of Kempton Park, highlighted the essential sense of incompleteness of perception and expression of perception.

The decentralised experience and the atmosphere of motion and transience in stillness that were generated through this representation of Kempton Park came across as somewhat impersonal. Although television screens are associated with home viewing, the lack of seating and the greater viewing distance, as compared to the slide viewers of Part I and the book in Part II,

reduced intimacy. This reduced sense of intimacy, as set in relation to the sound of the voice recording and changing slides of Part I and the folding and unfolding of the book of Part II, corresponded to my current experience of the place, even though the specific locations for each 'view' represented places that formed part of my comings and goings in Kempton Park, where I lived at the time of writing.

8.6. Conclusion and Exhibition Documentation

The *Telling Places* exhibition was curated in such a way that a great deal of space was left for each viewer to map their own path through the exhibition, and to construct their own narrative. In the process of creating the work and curating *Telling Places*, I was constantly aware of the 'weight' of landscape and land, and tensions between what felt like a 'natural' pull of places to become beautiful and decorative landscape photographs on the one hand, and the need to undermine this depoliticised way of looking and engaging with landscape on the other hand. By reflecting on my personal history with looking at landscape, through curating my father's photography together with my own, photographing in the same place with a similar photographic system, I was able to gain a deeper understanding of my father's way of looking, which belonged to a

specific era and social, religious, and political context, but was also his own. My father's photographs are an engagement with the place and its people, which are exemplified by and contradicted Hughes' description of Zimbabwean landscape art as characterised by a 'disregarding of the Other'. Although there is evidence in my father's work of landscape tropes associated with colonial looking, such as people at leisure, enjoying the 'view' as described by Van Eeden (2011), his work also includes examples that contradict these supposedly 'entrenched' ways of looking. Through multiple images, such contradictions can become evident and the complexity of place can be represented.

Through this process I could start to articulate an ambivalence in my own attitudes towards landscape while 'being in' places, as well towards my own landscape photography practice. For this ambivalence in my experience to be communicated, I had to maintain a careful balance between landscape as an aesthetically pleasing experience and a complete deconstruction of landscape photography as ideology. Neither of these approaches would be an honest portrayal of my experience of place or of the places themselves.

The practitioner's framework outlined in Section 8.1 is developed with this tension in mind, as well as with the recommendations from theories on curatorship that a successful exhibition would 'tell' by showing. Also, that it would suggest and encourage interpretive frameworks and ways of engaging with the work rather than being prescriptive and rigid in directing the viewer on a linear path. The strategies used in the *Telling Places* exhibition to 'suggest' and 'encourage' the viewer to be drawn into a photographically emplaced experience of landscape photography might, however, have failed on account of either being too gentle and subtle on the one hand, or too strong and literal on the other.

On the one hand, the strategy of using three different photographic systems and three different display systems might have been too strong, and served to deconstruct the viewing experience in such a way that viewers engaged only intellectually and cognitively with the work. On the other hand, the limited information provided by the texts, and the absence of captions, might not have been prominent enough, and served to de-politicise and aestheticise the land. In making the decisions described in this section, I was guided by theories relevant to curating and representing landscape through

different media in a gallery space. My curatorial decisions were, however, also influenced by the interaction of theory and practice of engaging photographically with places, which I reflected on in Phase 1. With this practice-based methodology, I hoped to represent places in such a way that the exhibition visitors felt themselves as thinking, perceiving, remembering, and imagining bodies in time and place³⁰.

By drawing the viewer into the mediating processes (the photographing, displaying, and curating of the work) through their interaction with the various media – my questioning of my own ‘view’ and photographic engagement with place could indirectly become the viewers’ view and experiences as well, which they could question with me.

The process of questioning is an important attitude in PbR, as well as in phenomenological enquiry. Questioning is an important aspect of ‘being in’ places, and of ‘dwelling and claiming’, of which

³⁰ Informal observation of visitors and discussions during ‘walkabout’ sessions and at the opening event indicated that on a very basic level at least, most visitors reconsidered their own memories of, and imagination about, places and

landscape photography can be an example. The main way in which this attitude of questioning was made visible in this exhibition was through creating an intermedial context. By exhibiting different media together existing assumptions about each could be questioned.

In *Telling Places* the viewer was ‘emplaced’ differently in each part. Because they were mediated differently, each part had a different relation to space and time. Rather than being ‘fixed in time’, the photographic works in each part linked past and future in different ways, and with different emphases although they also referred to one another. The use of long exposures that recorded moving elements in Part I referred to the figures and things in motion in Part II, which described paths of motion by combining frames. In Part III the motion was described in 24 frames per second, but looped, so that the motion continued. The three parts of the exhibition also required different physical actions (picking up and viewing against the light in Part I; paging, folding, repositioning, and walking in Part II; and

how these were represented (or not represented) in photographs, thus shaping their own experience of places and landscape.

walking around, from interest to distraction in Part III, from the viewer in order to view the work, which placed the viewer in different relations to the work and indirectly to the places.

The active viewing required from the visitors contributed to moving the experience of landscape photography out of a fixed state of affairs into a state of continual becoming, which is future orientated rather than stuck in the past. The work presented change, even though most still photography is normally associated with freezing time. Change, however, does not equate to progress. The trajectory of the change shown to be part of the places is unknown and left open to the imagination of the viewer. This imagination becomes part of the narrative that each visitor will shape for themselves.

The book that constituted Part II is associated with narrative, but also introduced the idea of landscape as knowledge into the exhibition because of the historical context of the codex-form book as a container of knowledge. This in turn relates to the documentary capabilities of photography. By restructuring the form of the book into something that is not fixed, and displaying digitally manipulated photographs in this form, I hope to encourage a shift in understanding of the kind of knowledge landscape represents, which

would influence how the representation of each place in the exhibition was experienced.

As mentioned earlier, curating an exhibition is a continuation of the photographic practice, as is this reflection within the PbR study. A further continuation of the practice also lies in documenting the creative work as research results and part of the contribution to knowledge. This documentation constitutes a third mediation in the form of an interactive online platform. Digital media are often used to “remediate” in a way that “tends to obscure a specificity of digital media as opposed to any non-digital medium” (Rajewski, 2005: 62). While digital media can in a sense serve to display other media without a clear difference in the meaning that is communicated, there are certain aspects of an exhibition display that would necessarily be different.

For this exhibition to be documented effectively, the physical actions and the spatial experience of the viewers would have to be simulated and would require an interactive element that introduces another kind of bodily action to the viewing of the work; as Ryan (2014) contends, “as a meta-medium that encodes all other media, digital

technology would be a pure conduit, but by adding interactivity to these media, it reaches the status of 'language'".

Digital media make this simulation possible, and it is hopefully achieved to some extent in the website that accompanies this exhibition but the materiality and visceral qualities of the objects in the space cannot be simulated. Full documentation and high-end visuals of the exhibition can be viewed at: www.annekedeklerkphotography/telling_places.co.za.

9. CONCLUSION TO BEING-IN AND TELLING-OF

The main purpose of this study as a whole is to explore how the representational construction and interpretation of place in South Africa through photography could contribute to the existing body of ideas and practices that engage this theme. This aim is achieved through a practice-based methodology that involves the review of theories pertaining to the experience of place and landscape and reflecting on my own photographic and curatorial practices in relation to the theory.

A secondary purpose, which is intertwined with the first, is to explore the nature of the contribution that could be generated by means of the PbR method, which involves processes of reviewing my own practice and representing this practice in the form of a written thesis. As such, the intended contributions of this study are thematic, practical, and methodological. The methodological aspects of the study are, however, consolidated in the final chapter of the study (Chapter 10), while this present section focuses on drawing together conclusions from both Phases 1 and 2, pertaining to the theme of place and the practice of landscape photography.

In Phase 2, my aim is to shift attention from investigating the experience of place (as mediated by technology), to the process of representing experience as the next phase in the creative process. Whereas Phase 1 examines the aesthetic, emotional, and physical experience of place, Phase 2 examines how an artist or philosopher might recollect, narrate, or tell about an experience as a way of introducing an audience to a place. I explore this notion of telling through two particular forms: 1) photographic recollection or representation and 2) the curation of a photographic body of work.

I use two illustrative examples; that of a photographic collection by Nunn and my own body of photographic work developed through this research project. These are similar enough in intention and format that I could easily compare them but also different enough that this comparison proffers textured fissures and generates new complex understandings of place. Both myself and Nunn, for instance, according to my argument, work in a practice-based way, meaning that we research, photograph, reflect, curate, and document simultaneously and in an intermedial manner. Whereas Nunn's exhibitions contain only his photographs and a book, my exhibition includes work by my father and includes moving imagery.

In both projects, memory and imagination are important factors, but where Nunn's *Unsettled* documents historical memory, my work documents personal memory. Where Nunn's exhibitions are often accompanied by formalised public discussions, visitors' discussions around my work were informal and spontaneous, and centred around telling stories and sharing memories about places.

South Africa has a long history of dispossession and redistribution of land in which landscape photography has been implicated. Within this context, the role played by the conceptualisation of place is unmistakable. How we understand place as a concept and places as physical environments is inherently political because it influences relations to people and relations to land. By developing, reviewing, and reworking my own way of engaging with landscape, I bring the politics of landscape closer to home and make it part of my own being-in, in ways that are not centred around the dominant theoretical frames of landscape as power relations and as trauma. In this concluding section to Phase 2, I articulate the political implications of a particular way of engaging photographically with land and places that I develop throughout this study, and eventually presented in the form of an exhibition.

In Phase 2, I interpret the representation of 'place' as 'landscape' in terms of the insights developed in Phase 1 through the reflection on theories that relate to the being-in and 'photographing in' places, intertwined with my own practice of photographing places. In the theoretical discussions, I follow a trajectory from classical phenomenology through to how phenomenological approaches have been applied; on the one hand to the understanding of place in the work of Casey (2001) and those influenced by his work, such as Malpas (2011a); on the other hand, I consider Ihde's influential postphenomenology in the understanding of technologically mediated existence. A central contribution that I make in this study is to describe the entanglement of technology in experience of place (in terms of Casey's, 2001, understanding of place) as involving physical perception, movement, memory, and imagination on an individual level and on a social level.

The main shift from Phase 1 to Phase 2 is from the process of photographing to the space within which the photographic work becomes visible to others, and can therefore contribute to public discourses on landscape, as well as on landscape photography as representational practice. In the first three sections of Phase 2, I

develop the notion that landscape inherently implies relations between the place and the viewer. In South Africa, actual contact between photographer and place is shown to be particularly relevant. Photographing landscapes is in part a process of documentation and authentication. I examine the influence of documentary photography and engaged photography on the work of prominent South African photographers who work with land and landscape.

The photographic medium, due to the necessity for the camera (at least) to be physically present in the actual place where light emanating from the environment can enter the lens opening, serves to facilitate a relationship between the viewer and places as it also mediates the relations between the photographer and the place photographed. Within this double mediation, 'places' are represented as 'landscape', which functions within the art historical context. Art historical conventions in themselves (or their negation or subversion), serve to 'emplace' the viewer in infinitely varying modes. Emplacement here refers inherently to an embodied response, which, as I discuss in Phase 1, involves both memory and imagination with direct perception. A key insight that guides much of the

exploration in this study is Casey's (2001) understanding of place as a relational concept that involves an embodied presence of people in their environments and their histories.

Contemporary theories on technological mediation suggest that the nature or character of this relationality is, however, not only constituted in the relation, but also through the materiality of the things involved, namely the triad of human, technology, and place. When photographed, the relations between the material aspects of these three elements result in a particular visual representation. A postphenomenological understanding of photography as a mediating technology suggests that the nature of relations that constitute places are therefore not merely described by photographic media but also shaped by the technologies. In this sense, landscape photography can be seen as a dialectical process (Dubow, 2000: 98) of place-making, which is not merely an imposition of the artist's aesthetic conventions onto places.

By entangling technologies in this place-making process, I take Dubow's (2000) notion of landscape representation as a dialectic process further by considering it as a dialogic process in that it involves more than two 'voices' or agencies. In the reflections on my

photography in the three places (Morgenster, Nietverdiend and Mochudi, and Kempton Park), I analyse the ways in which the photographic technologies actively mediate my experiences and understanding of the places and thereby describe the agency of the various photographic systems I used. I continue this analysis by considering the technologies used to display the work in the same way. As such, I show how the photographic technology participates in the active-passive perception of the environment, whether it is in the place being photographed or in the spaces in which the photographic work is shown. As the photographer's 'being in place' happens through active and passive perception simultaneously, so too does the viewer's being-in and sense-making happen through active-passive perception in which the use of words together with images is a productive curatorial tool.

Perception is active-passive because it is a complex of processes that involve the perceiver as an embodied being, of which memory and imagination are an integral part, which I explore in different ways in the journeying from place to place in Phase 1. The way memory and imagination interact with the perception of places is mediated in that the photographic technologies and the display technologies

engender particular kinds of relations between the photographer/viewer and places, according to their materiality and functionality.

My examination of the ways in which photographic technologies are entangled in the "strife" between "earth" and "world" – in the strife between the revealing and concealing of truth in Heidegger's terms – as described in Phase 1, motivates a further examination of the nature of this entanglement in the curatorship of landscape photography and thereby responds to Aydin and Verbeek's (2015: 8) statement regarding the need to investigate how the interactions between humans, technologies, and the world shape our world, without lapsing into a determinist understanding of technology. In Phase 2, I therefore further examine the nuanced ways in which photographic technologies and display technologies transform, augment, and reduce aspects of perception and experience. An understanding of the nuances of technological mediation in a landscape photography context serves to further question generalised attitudes towards technology that sees it as necessarily serving to 'uproot' people from place (Gauthier, 2004: 253). Through this process of reflection on my curatorial practice as continuation of

my photographic practice, I articulate how it can in fact serve to 'emplace' in different, more dynamic ways.

A central problem that I respond to throughout this thesis is that the notion of place, which is too easily associated with a 'rooted' mode of emplacement, brings with it problematic notions of fixity in time and space. As such, the valorisation of place is characterised as backward looking (Malpas, 2014: 17). A focus on place in this mode also implies a politics of turning away from others, and by implication, turning away from the ethical responsibility of hospitality and care for others, according to Levinasian argumentation (Malpas, 2014: 17; Gauthier, 2004: 197). The boundedness of such a fixed notion of place further also leads to exclusions and divisions of people into categories such as locals and foreigners, and inhabitants and exiles (Gauthier, 2004: 186) (and in the South African context also settlers, colonisers, and colonised).

The problematics associated with the metaphor of rootedness also transfer to landscape photography, which, I argue by drawing on Malpas's (2014) understanding of landscape, should be considered as the representation of *modes of emplacement*. The classic, 'timeless' representation of landscape is particularly problematic in

the context of the representation of African land, as this plays to popular myths of Africa as a-historical. This problem is compounded in relation to photographic representation of landscape specifically, especially if the photograph is understood as 'freezing' a moment in time rather than representing a dynamic interrelation between viewer and viewed.

A relational understanding of place implies a fluidity in time and space that also extends to human identity and allows for a variety of modes of emplacement. As illustrated by the overview of South African landscape photography provided in Phase 2, however, the limitations of the single photograph to tell of places as complex, dynamic modes of emplacement become apparent. From the discussion of South African landscape photography as a critical and engaged arts practice, the use of image series and additional written texts emerge as strategies with which to engage with landscape in greater complexity and dynamism than the single, unified photographic work permits. With the use of such strategies, a documentary influence that relies on the nature of the documenting capabilities of photographic medium does not predetermine the mode of emplacement represented.

As an example of a South African photographer that engages with land and landscape through a documentary approach and style, I discuss the work of Nunn, focusing particularly on his latest project, which is curated as a traveling exhibition accompanied by a book publication. In order to gain insight into Nunn's photographic practice and the way he uses photography to engage with places, I conducted an email interview with initial and follow-up questions. Through my discussion of *Unsettled*, I demonstrated the political implications of Nunn's specific and deliberate way of relating to the photographic technology and to place and how the curation of the project continues his practice as activist photographer in light of the current crisis of land redistribution and restitution in South Africa.

The role of memory and imagination is prominent in Nunn's experiences of photographing in the Eastern Cape for the *Unsettled* project. Nunn had to imagine the distant past in order to counter the politically motivated, 'organised forgetting' of important events in South African history. Nunn's particular way of relating to the place through his photographic technology as transparent, yet productively limiting, allows him to link the imagined past to the present moment of perceiving, while also anticipating and

questioning the future. Supported by the contexts of texts and conversations, his work contributes critically to the practice of history 'writing'.

Through his photographs, Nunn represents people in relation to places in a way that acknowledges their agency without repeating problematic landscape tropes, yet by excluding white people from the entire project, he ironically reinforces divisions along racial lines, thereby purposefully inverting much theorised strategies of landscape representation in service of colonial and imperial projects. The complex historical narratives that Nunn traces and explores through the text in relation to the visuals, also subversively complicate and question the basis upon which divisions between 'inhabitants' and 'intruders' can be made. As a curated project, the *Unsettled* work creates a platform for continuing discourse and initiates movement of thought on the problematic politics of landscape and place in relation to issues of land possession and belonging. According to my analysis, the *Unsettled* project did so by emplacing the viewer in relation to the land in such a way that Nunn's experiences of photographing – the physical effort and the frustrations of getting lost – are transferred to the viewer through the

double mediation of photographing and then displaying the work. These mediating processes, however, operate in the background of the visual experience of Nunn's work, allowing him to navigate tensions between the aesthetic pleasure and the politics of viewing landscape.

In the curation of my own work, the mediating processes become a more integral, foregrounded part of the telling of landscape in terms of how it is told, which in turn shape what is told, or the meanings and understandings conveyed. By reviewing my own ways of engaging with landscape in relation to ideas about how we experience and make sense of the world throughout Phase 1, I wrestle with the push and pull of active and passive perception, control, and vulnerability in the interactions between myself as photographer, the camera, and the places. I struggle through the entanglements of perceiving together with, and by means of, people and things. In Phase 2, these struggles are made part of the viewer's experience of the work and are articulated in this thesis as tensions between telling and showing within the curatorial context, which involves visual, verbal, textual, spatial, and temporal variables.

In the two phases of my practice, I build on Unwin's agenda of emphasising the importance of paying attention to "ideas of movement and to the mediation of technology ... when considering notions of landscape experience and its representation in art practice" (Unwin, 2008: 195). While Unwin's work, which I discuss briefly in Chapter 1, provides the viewer "with imagery that reveals the dynamic relationship between a perceiver and their environment" (Unwin, 2008: 195), it is important to also draw the viewer into this dynamic relationship, not only by requiring certain physical actions from the viewer in order to perceive the work, but also by encouraging the viewer to create links with their own memories and imaginings about places.

Through a process of reflection on my own curatorial practice and relevant theories, I explore ways in which I could not only point to the triadic relationality of place but also to create a relational experience within the gallery space as place. Through the development of a practitioner framework and a reflection on decisions in relation to theories of curatorship and technological mediation, I respond to the question of how I can tell landscape as manifested in the interaction between photographer and place, but

also the ways in which the photographic medium becomes part of this fluid interaction. In this fluid interaction, both 'place' and the photographic medium is 'unfixed' and presented and experienced as a continual 'becoming'.

By making the complexities of how the technologies mediate the photographer's experience – and then how this is mediated again in the curation of photographic media part of the viewing experience – the viewer is drawn into the places and is thereby included in the network of relations, and further complicates this network. The triad of photographer-camera-place is extended to interrelations between the display technology, the viewer, and the exhibition space. This in turn implies that landscape photography, even though located in a specific place and time, can still be experienced as 'becoming'. The way that the work is curated can position the photograph as 'in-between' past and future.

Besides situating the photographed landscape within the flow of time, framing my landscape photography as part of a process of 'becoming' also questions the notion that the act of photographing a place is a possessive and controlling act. Because it is ever-becoming, it is not fixed enough to possess it as knowledge. As with

the lane created by the electric wires of the Gautrain rail in one of the Kempton Park (Part III) video clips as a result of the camera being placed in a specific relation to time and space, the kind of knowledge offered by landscape photography is mediated, relational, and ever-changing. Within this fluidity and the relations that operate outside of and despite the human will to control, technological interactions offer possibilities that can serve to re-enchant landscape photography.

The value of this fluid kind of knowledge lies in building up multiple layers of understanding and deepening the questioning of ways of engaging with places in relation to others by virtue of and despite technological mediation. In the following, concluding chapter, I review the project as a whole in terms of the nature of the contribution to knowledge that the PbR methodology offers. I also then review the research in terms of its limitations and future research possibilities.

10. CONCLUSION TO *TELLING PLACES*

The practice-based research methodology quite specifically puts the case for how the creative work develops and extends knowledge *of* and *about* the particular discipline/field of creative practice (Dallow, 2003: 54).

[P]ractitioner knowledge differs from other forms of knowledge such as that arising from scientific experimentation. The process of generating practitioner knowledge arises from sources that are often unique to the individual and are embedded in tacit understandings that require externalization and these understandings evolve over time as part of the practitioner's everyday creative process. (Candy & Edmonds, 2011b: 126).

Prior to the present study, when I started contemplating possible areas of research, a key factor that influenced my decision-making was to consider what kind of research would add value to my role as lecturer in a photography course that focuses on practice. The practice-based methodology presented the best way to contribute to the field in which I teach and work, namely photography practice, because it offers an intermedial and more multidimensional approach to an artist's engagement with her

theoretical knowledge, aesthetic sensitivity and technological mastery. I subsequently looked for a problem and research questions within my own experiences as practitioner, which are mainly concerned with landscape photography.

In my experience I found that theoretical perspectives on South African landscape photography left a gap in its preoccupation with trauma and power structures as framework for thinking about landscape photography in that such theorising did not consider it as a form of telling of the photographer's 'emplacedness'. This gap could best be addressed and questioned further through PbR which makes creative practice an integral part of the research process and results, and in this study involves interweaving of theory and practice through writing, photographing and curating. In this final chapter I consolidate the results of this study in terms of how it addresses the question of whether PbR adds distinctive value to the study and if so, what the present study shows this value to be.

Michael Biggs and Daniela Büchler (2007) argue that PbR is not a separate, different type of research, but is a sub category of

research or a research paradigm within academic research. In line with Biggs and Büchler, Bolt (2016) argues for its inclusion into the performative paradigm for which the existing research criteria and values need to be rearticulated and reinterpreted rather than positioning PbR as a different kind of research that operates outside of traditional research norms.

PbR on masters and doctoral level, has been conducted at academic institutions around the world for more than two decades, in spite of the variations in specific research designs and variations in the nature of research results that successful studies exhibit. This means that I could draw from, and build on, the frameworks for engaging with landscape photographically as exemplified in the practice that formed part of such studies. I am therefore able to build on prior PbR studies because other

practitioners struggled with similar problems. Through a similar, yet customised, research design, I push my understanding of the photographic representation of place and landscape photography practice beyond dominant theoretical frames that did not adequately account for my own experiences as practitioner. The insights and knowledge generated through such studies are therefore transferable in my own practice and theorisation of said practice. The notion of *transferability*³¹ of knowledge and insights as opposed to *generalisability*³² is important in the context of the present study, throughout which I argue and demonstrate that theoretical and philosophical abstractions that relate to the photographic representation of landscape, often misrepresent the specificities of contexts of use that postphenomenology discovers in the interaction between

³¹ As an attribute of good research, Gaede defines transferability as “the ability to transfer the findings of a study into contexts outside the study that are sufficiently similar or ‘fit’ the study context sufficiently well, suggesting that sufficient descriptive data (i.e. a sufficiently ‘thick’ description) needs to be supplied in the original study in order to allow for a meaningful comparison with other settings at a later stage” (Gaede, 2004: 29).

³² Generalisability is a term associated with a positivist research context in which it refers to the “extent to which it is possible to generalise from the study population sample to a larger population and threats to external validity are typically linked to sampling technique” (Gaede, 2004: 29).

human, technologies and world. These specificities are also highlighted through my usage of an auto-ethnographic approach that treats my narrative recollection of place as equally relevant to the theorisation of place.

Biggs and Henrik Karlsson (2010: 423), however, argue that professional arts practice and academic research represent two separate communities whose values and interests overlap only partially. PbR represents an amalgam of the two, as a third category of sorts, which constitutes its own criteria and values, and not merely a combination of professional practice and academic research. Trying to fulfill the requirements of both in a single study, according to Biggs and Büchler, is doomed to failure due to the mismatch of values and criteria, on the one hand possibly producing art that operates parallel to, rather than integrated in the art 'mainstream' (Jewesbury, 2009: 3). On the other hand, the openness of that part of the research outputs or results that is embodied in the artwork itself and not translatable into words seems inadequate in terms of traditional academic

research values, where the notion of transferability as opposed to generalisability is not fully accepted, for example.

A particular issue debated in PbR literature is the nature of knowledge and the expansion of what knowledge constitutes. Authors such as Johnson (2010) claim that certain kinds of epistemologies are valued more than others in the academic context. According to Biggs and Karlsson (2010: 408), PbR methodologies are continuing the project that was begun in the 1980's with the move towards qualitative research, of including diverse kinds of epistemes such as Johnson's (2010:141) notion of 'embodied knowing' into the mainstream of academic research. A phenomenological epistemology is therefore useful within PbR because it acknowledges the role of the visceral as well as the cerebral in knowledge creation.

Research is most commonly conducted with specific communities of interest in mind (Biggs *et al*, 2010). According to Peter Dallow (2003: 54), what drives PbR is the need to develop an argument for how creative research develops and extends the particular field or discipline of creative practice. In response to this need,

the task of this thesis is to put forward the case for how the creative work that I produced for *Telling Places* extends knowledge and understanding of landscape photography practice in that it explores the intricacies of technological mediation and the political implications thereof. The criteria and values of PbR are still being developed and refined by each newly completed PbR study.

As mentioned in the first chapter, many claims are made for what a PbR study is able to and should contribute. Authors who regularly supervise and direct creative research projects, such as Scrivener (2002) and Dallow (2003), suggest that the contribution of such projects lie in deepening understanding and insights into experiential aspects of life and generating new ways of apprehending the world that opens it to questioning as much as, or perhaps more than, it provides answers, which aligns with the aims and methods of phenomenology.

Within the various forms of phenomenological thought there is a strong tradition of the philosopher developing phenomenological understanding through the examination of

artworks – trying to articulate in words the phenomenological understanding of the artist, or building their own ideas on what the artist articulated visually (Schmidt, 2013). This dialogical interaction between ideas, practice, writing and making with the aim of developing understanding of life, humanity and the world, is an intuitive aspect of progressive art-making and therefore not a new thing. As such, art has played an important part in the development of philosophical understanding in numerous ways. In some cases the artist would articulate those ideas verbally (as for example Paul Klee's writing), and in other cases, that task is taken up by another, such as Merleau-Ponty (1945) writing about the work of Cezanne.

The value of conducting such research consciously, in my experience of the present study, is that the act of forcing myself to articulate in words, the thinking processes of photographing, developed what I did as a photographer-curator into a practice of emplacement.

This study, although focused on place, does not attempt a detailed and comprehensive document of the historical or current politics of

each place and is thus also guilty of a measure of abstraction. Yet my usage of phenomenology and my artistic representation of specific places that are important to me, placed a great deal of emphasis on the bodily or visceral experience of land. In very direct ways I demonstrate how PbR artists can tell of the land (through intermedial processes and technologies) in ways that traditional artists cannot. With this research I recreate an experience of place that openly attests to technological mediation and makes this mediation a new means of complicating and encountering place. Thus I make place tangible and the recollection thereof relevant for the moment.

The PbR process allows me to review and revise my own ways of engaging with landscape and then, importantly, also to articulate these processes in such a way that the viewer/reader would understand what to look for in the work – allow the viewer to notice and experience the conceptual shifts that took place in such a way that these shifts would transfer to their own ways of engaging with land and with places, and almost allowing the viewer to look through my viewfinder. As Bolt (2016: 141)

explains, the artist is sometimes too involved and too close to the processes to see the patterns and shifts that evolve and the PbR or creative research processes provides ways for the artists to gain perspective on their own work, thus enabling them to point out the disruptions in the status quo. In section 9 I am therefore able to tease out these disruptions in terms of new ways in which photographic representation politicises landscape.

With this ‘teasing-out’, the linearity of writing, and the need to weave ideas and arguments together, gradually helped me to map the movement in concepts, as I could go back to my earlier writing and track developments that I might not have noticed at first. Writing a thesis is not a linear process, but the act of writing and reading does unfold word for word, over time. As Van Manen (2014: 409) points out, the writing *is* the research and as such it is a vastly different way of thinking and knowing from the act of photographing. Yet, I argue and demonstrate in this thesis that the photographing is also a way of thinking and of researching, although photographing and experiencing visually is a more spatial and instantaneous experience (an issue which I also

explore in the reflection on curatorial practice). The one mode can never replace or merge fully with the other, but the dialogic interaction (Dallow 2003: 61) between these vastly different modes of representation/presentation is productive in developing insights about practice and also allows these insights to spill over into the broader themes, such as the telling of specific places.

Effective results within the performative research paradigm, relies on the transformative power of art and its function as catalyst for “movement in thought”: doing something in the world, rather than just providing an exegesis of existing works (Bolt 2016: 142). As Bolt confirms, “these shifts or movements are not confined to, or unique to, artistic research, however, it is imperative that artistic research is able to argue its claim to new knowledge, or rather new ways of knowing” (2002:141). The methods and

strategies of PbR can, however, not guarantee sufficient conceptual shifts or change, which is often only realised over time. For this reason, the mapping of the research process and *potential* impact is essential, and the development of a practitioner framework plays a central role in this mapping process. It is also through the development of such a framework that values and criteria for evaluation of the project is identified and refined.

The present study serves to confirm Candy and Edmonds’ (2011) statement that the practitioner’s framework and the practice develop together. In this sense the making process functions as method, data, and result as it evolved through various stages of the study. In an earlier (2010) article on PbR³³ that I co-authored with fellow lecturer in photography, Jakob Doman, we wanted to develop a framework which was to provide structure for our own

³³ In that article, we used the term ‘practice-based arts research’ (PbAR). This article was written at a time in South Africa when there was a lot of uncertainty around practice-based studies which resulted in PhD studies in visual arts and design taking inordinate amounts of time to complete, and many photographer-

academics opted for methodologies that related more to the social sciences or art history than to photographic practice.

future studies. This framework was also developed to ensure rigorous research that would address concerns over the validity and credibility of this kind of research. As such, we worked with a definition of PbR as research in which the making of the creative artefact is central to the research process, and in which the creative artefact is an essential aspect of the outcomes of the research, and not only 'data' to be analyzed (Doman & Laurie, 2010: 42).

Although Doman and myself acknowledged the dynamic nature of the PbR research design in this 2010 article, we felt that some structure was needed to initiate the PbR project (Doman & Laurie, 2010: 44). Even though this early framework was initially helpful to me in this present study, I found (quite early on) that the actual research process started to unravel the structured approach. I found that, as my understanding of landscape and phenomenology deepened and as I engaged with each specific place and each technological system, these contexts pulled my thinking and making in new directions. By reviewing theoretical perspectives, photographing, and reviewing the photographing

and theory in relation to each other, the development of a customised practitioner's framework was the result of a discursive process between theory and practice. The framework for this study was developed with the purpose of applying it in the curation of the work which in turn contributed to its development and in turn then became the evaluative framework. This framework can also now be implemented in initiating future landscape photography practice and through further PbR, become modified and more refined.

The evaluative approach that Candy and Edmonds (2011) propose does not merely ask whether the artwork produced is good or bad art, but this does not mean that the categories of 'good' or 'bad' art are irrelevant. It merely means that the criteria used to evaluate art is more concerned with categories like open-endedness, inclusivity, multimodality, self-awareness than 'mere' form or content. Within PbR, art becomes part of a continuous discursive process. The research processes that are not normally part of the artist's processes now become part of the making process and therefore change the results.

Dennis Schmidt's argument is that even though art is made for its own sake, it does something: "reflection upon [...] art and aesthetic experience takes us to the deepest center of being human" (2013: 27). Within the performative paradigm, and the discursive turn, the value of the research and creative work lies in what it does and how it achieves this. I argue in this thesis that the work I produce for this study 'emplaces' the viewer by creating a situation in which embodied relations between viewer, place and technologies are shaped in such a way that landscape is re-politicised differently, as explained in more detail in the previous section. But also, in a way that preserves the wonder and enchantment of place and the gift of photographic engagement with places in all their complexity.

The ideal is that principles and understanding would evolve from 'within' the work and develop a "dialogical relationship between philosophy and art, between knowledge and artistic representation" (George Smith in response to Kaila, 2009:4). In my research process I built on established philosophical and theoretical principles as well as principles that have evolved from

within existing works and images, such as that of my father, and that of Nunn and other South African photographers such as Jabulani Dhlamini. Through this reflexive practice I also develop theoretical perspectives, or rather, 'shift' ways of thinking and engaging with photography. Even though the photographic processes that I used are not new, their application within the context of this research shows PbR into landscape photography practice to be postphenomenological in that it involves thick description of the visceral and conceptual ways in which the technology mediates the photographer's being-in and therefore also the telling-of landscape.

Although I could not test whether the Telling-Places exhibition did shift the thinking and experience of visitors in terms of land in Southern African and landscape photography, a postphenomenological reflection on the making and curating processes suggests that this was achieved by constructing a curatorial gateway into an auto-ethnographic recollection, documentation and interpretation of places dear to me.

In terms of Bolt's (2016: 141) questions that an artist-researcher can ask of the research project, I discuss in the previous two sections what is revealed through the work, what it does, and how it affected the audience. I am now left with the question of whether there was a methodological shift that occurs through this process. The shift, if at all, is subtle, as I have based my methodology on existing structures and guidelines. Yet, the structuring of the study into two phases is significant in that it emphasises the mediated nature of being-in, as it also emphasises the importance of being-in for the telling-of land and place. A further methodological contribution of this study is the greater focus placed on (post)phenomenology as part of the making as well as thinking processes which entangles technologies in these making and thinking processes as mediating our perception and understanding of the world. I further also suggest that the making, curating (as double mediation) and writing processes are part of the discursive process that brings the art and the articulation of the research contribution into the public domain; as the continuation or

expansion of practice in that it catalyses further dialogue, through whichever form; between forms; and between media. I therefore demonstrate how the dialogical relations between the elements of the triad of self-technology-environment continues to become as the discourse continues the emplacement process.

The research remains essentially and importantly unfinished, as does the discussions around our relationship with land and landscape in South Africa. This research, however, serves to reinvigorate ethical responsibility in our engagement with specific places in Southern Africa; each unique and significant, even though they might be viewed as unimportant and unremarkable upon first glance.

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