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Contents

Research articles

Rita Swanepoel and Moya Goosen
Afrikaner identity formations in Willem Boshoff’s 32 000 *Darling Little Nuisances* (2003) and Jan van der Merwe’s Wag (2000) 1

Pieter Labuschagne
A hermeneutic analysis of small monuments and memorials: The burgher memorial and black concentration camp in Theunissen 17

Piet Vosloo
Commemorating industrial ruins – the case for the Tswaing salt works 32

Jacques Laubscher and Craig Atkins
The regional identity of the custom-designed South African house 52

Gerald Steyn
Roughness, primitivism and regionalism in contemporary architecture 74

Louis Grundlingh
“Imported intact from Britain and reflecting elements of Empire”: Joubert Park, Johannesburg as a leisure space, c. 1890s-1930s 94

John Steele
Anton and Vale van der Merwe: reinterpreting Afro-Oriental studio ceramics traditions in South Africa 119

Leoni Schmidt
Architecture van Brandenburg in an era of waste crisis 129

Estelle Alma Maré
Depictions of war, five-hundred years apart: Leonardo da Vinci’s *Battle of Anghiari* and paintings of the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki 136

Ulrich van der Heyden and Willem Boshoff
Hermann Theodor Wangemann as illustrating traveller: Holy Land drawings from Egypt and Palestine, 1867 155
Afrikaner identity formations in Willem Boshoff’s *32 000 Darling Little Nuisances* (2003) and Jan van der Merwe’s *Wag* (2000)

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This article explores the ways in which the South African conceptual artists Willem Boshoff in *32 000 Darling Little Nuisances* and Jan van der Merwe in *Wag* [*Waiting*] address complexities of Afrikaner identity informed by unequal power relations during the colonial era of the country. Both the installations take the Anglo-Boer War [Second Freedom War] (1899-1902) as central point of departure. The theoretical framework for the reading and interpretation of the chosen installations is postcolonial critique on the ways in which colonialism and nationalism informed and influenced the displacement, search and repositioning of identity as portrayed in the selected art installations. We argue that Van der Merwe and Boshoff deal with their personal, collective, and historical identity issues in the chosen conceptual art installations through artistic representations of their subjective selves. Inherently, these representations are informed by their individual as well as collective and historical memories of the past.

Key words: Van der Merwe, Boshoff, postcolonial critique, Afrikaners, identity.

This article focuses on the way in which Willem Boshoff (b.1951) and Jan van der Merwe (born 1953), two white Afrikaner male artists, aesthetically concretize views of Afrikaner identity and concomitant historical Afrikaner memories of unequal power relations between British colonizers and Afrikaners during the colonial era in South Africa. For this purpose we chose Boshoff’s language-based conceptual installation *32 000 Darling Little Nuisances* (2003) and Jan van der Merwe’s *Wag* [*Waiting*] (2000). Aesthetic concretization is the way in which the artists conceptually and visually express their artistic interpretations of their personal, as well as collective Afrikaner identities based upon historical memories of power and identity. Both the installations take the Anglo-Boer War’ (11 October 1899 – 31 May 1902) – a seminal event in Afrikaner history – as central point of departure. The term *Boer* was used to refer to Afrikaners because they were mostly farmers. Our methodological approach consists of a postcolonial theoretical framework for the comparative reading and interpretation
of the two chosen art installations. We focus on the ways in which colonialism and nationalism informed and influenced the search and repositioning of identity as portrayed in the selected conceptual art installations. The article argues that the exposé of the memories of Afrikaners of British cultural and political domination, with the Anglo-Boer War as historical narrative as a source, offers a framework for the reading and interpretation of the chosen installations dealing with the formation of the artists identities.

The article sets off with introductory remarks on the colonial history of South Africa followed by a brief overview of the Anglo-Boer War. Thereafter a theoretical exposition of identity from a postcolonial perspective as situated within the South African colonial context is given. The influence of memories of unequal power relations due to colonialism and nationalism on the construction of identity is taken into account. The theoretical framework is followed by a descriptive reading of the aesthetic form elements of each installation. Accordingly, the selected installations are comparatively read and interpreted as informed by the memories of the historical narrative of Afrikaner identity during the colonial era of the country from a postcolonial perspective. The article closes with a summary and conclusion of the main arguments as drawn from the interpretation of the selected installations.

**Introductory remarks on the colonial history of South Africa (1652-1899)**

The first European settlers in South Africa were Jan van Riebeeck and his personnel from a Dutch company, the Generale Vereenigde Nederlandsche Geoctroyeerde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC) in 1652. The company’s goal was to establish a refreshment post at the Cape of Good Hope to provide their ships with fresh food and water on the way to India. Soon the need for farmers to produce food made it necessary for the Company to release servants to become full-time farmers, called free burghers. This freemen consisted of Dutch and Low Germans, Scandinavians, French and even a few English (De Klerk, 1975: 8-9). Within ten years of the founding of the Cape slaves were imported from *inter alia* Angola, Guinee, Batavia and Ceylon to serve the free burghers (De Villiers, 2012:44). In 1688 the French Huguenots, composed mostly of families who fled their country to retain their protestant belief also arrived in the Cape (Giliomee, 2003: 1-5). These first free men – the first burghers – can rightly be said to have formed the nucleus of what would in time become the Afrikaners (De Klerk, 1976: 8-9). These former Europeans soon became attached to their new life style and country, never looked back and decided to stay. Consequently Katzen (1982: 213) states that since the early eighteenth century white settlers in the Cape changed from an European to an African based self-assertive community with no knowledge of any other fatherland. Afrikaners were characterised by their Calvinism. In the Netherlands the Reformed Church, based on the Calvinist doctrine, was, although not the state church, the dominant church which set itself against the Roman Catholic Church. At the Cape, the Dutch Reformed Church was for more than a century the only church. The state kept a close watch on the church, both in the Netherlands and at the Cape. It remunerated some church employees and owned the church buildings. In the Netherlands it instructed the church not to criticise the government. At the Cape, ministers – as paid officials of the Company – were expected to be obedient and respectful towards it (Giliomee, 2003: 4,5; De Klerk, 1975: xiv).

In 1806, the British took possession of the Cape and it became a colony of the British Empire (Thompson 2006: 51-63). The burghers were now British subjects. British colonialism and especially the arrival of the British settlers in 1820 enhanced the Christian religion (De Klerk, 1975: 15-20). As more Europeans, imported slaves, and immigrants gradually inhabited
the country, the borders of the original Cape of Good Hope expanded to the north, south, and east (Giliomee, 2003: 10, 42-43). White Afrikaners, the hybrid descendants from Europeans, slaves and the indigenous Khoikhoi, were mostly farmers on the borders and outskirts of the Cape of Good Hope (Thompson 2006: 33, 44). These farmers were often in battles over land and stock-theft with indigenous people and convinced that the British government in the Cape did not provide them with adequate protection. To add insult to injury, English was declared the official language in the Cape Colony in all government documents, courts, schools, and churches. During the period 1834-1848 organized groups of Afrikaners, consisting of families, friends, and neighbours migrated from the Cape colony in what was known in history as the Great Trek, to flee from British imperial power. They called themselves Voortrekkers. Approximately 9% of the Afrikaner population left the Cape (Welsh & Spence, 2007: 284; Marschall, 2010: 179). They settled in broadly three regions, Natalia, the Trans-Oranje Vrijstaat, and the Transvaal. In 1852 and 1854, the Transvaal and the Oranje Vrijstaat respectively declared themselves as independent Afrikaner Republics, while the Cape and Natal remained part of the British colony. The Transvaal was renamed as the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR) and the Free State as the Republic of the Oranje Vrijstaat (Giliomee, 2012:222).

After the discovery of diamonds (1871) and gold (1886) in the two independent Republics, foreign money and investments flowed in. Transport systems developed and the mining industries expanded (Dubow 2007: 56-57). The British Empire followed an aggressive policy to recolonize the two Republics in what McLeod (2000: 67) refers to as the period of “high imperialism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries”. This aggressive colonization policy formed part of several European states’ “scramble for empire”, specifically in Africa, either to enlarge their interests in the diamond and gold industries, or to maintain their monopoly on the sea route to India (McLeod 2000, 67-69). The independent Afrikaner Republics fiercely resisted these colonization attempts, which resulted in the First Freedom War (1880-1881) and the Second Freedom War (1899-1902), the latter generally known as the Anglo-Boer War. These wars were the first anti-colonial freedom wars on African soil during colonial expansion (Pretorius 1999, 408; Kapp 2002, 276). The First Freedom War ended in defeat for the British Empire, while the Boer Republics lost the Anglo-Boer War. The two former colonies, the Cape Province and Natal was eventually, with the two former republics, incorporated in 1910 as four provinces of the Union of South Africa as a united colony of the British Empire (Worden 1994:32; Giliomee 2003:171-175, 235).

The Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902 was more than the first major military clash of the 20th century. ...The might of the globe-girdling British Empire, backed by international finance, against a small pioneering nation of independent-minded farmers, ranchers and merchants in Southern Africa who lived by the Bible and the rifle, its legacy continues to resonate today. The Boers’ recourse to irregular warfare and Britain’s response in herding a hundred thousand women and children into concentration camps foreshadowed the horrors of guerrilla warfare and mass detention of innocents that have become emblematic of the 20th century.

The Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902)

The Afrikaners fought a bitter and protracted war for their freedom and independence. They adopted a guerrilla style of war mainly because of the vast distances and big territory on which the war was fought. Lord Kitchener (1850-1916), the Commander of the British forces, initiated the “scorched earth policy”. This policy entailed the burning down of Boer homesteads and farms to prevent the Boer forces from resupplying at their homes (Kapp 2002: 273-281; Pretorius 1999: 404-411; Spies 2001). Following Kitchener’s policy many women, children, and black people
were forcibly moved to concentration camps (Spies, 2001: 203-285). This policy drew sharp criticism in a speech in the British Parliament on 18 February 1901, by David Lloyd George, a member of British parliament who would later serve as his country’s prime minister during the First World War (1914-1918). Lloyd George accused the British authorities of pursuing “a policy of extermination” against women and children. He said that although it was not a direct policy, it was one that was having that effect. Lloyd George further quoted from a letter by a British officer, who wrote that the British troops “moved from valley to valley, lifting cattle and sheep, burning and looting, and turning out women and children to weep in despair beside the ruin of their once beautiful homesteads” (Pakenham, 1979: 539-540). Lloyd George further commented: “It is a war not against men, but against women and children” (cf. Weber, 1999). The poor diet, inadequate hygiene, and medical care led to endemic contagious diseases and resulted in the deaths of thousands of Boer women and children under the age of 16. This led Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman (1836-1908), leader of the British Liberal opposition party, to ask in the British Parliament, “When is a war not a war? When it is carried on by methods of barbarism in South Africa” (Spies 2001: 1).

The Afrikaners lost the war and the Republics were subjected to British rule. Afrikaners suffered important losses, their farms, and earthly possessions, their freedom and self-determination. After the War, they were morally and financially bankrupt. On 31 May 1902, the peace treaty at Vereeniging between the Republics and the British Empire was signed. The two Republics, with the Cape and Natal, were absorbed into the British Empire (Thompson 2006: 140). In 1910, the country was united into one colony of the British Empire, and known as the British Union of South Africa, consisting of four provinces, The Cape, Natal, Orange Free State, and the Transvaal (Worden 1994: 32).

Theoretical exploration of memories and postcolonial perspectives on colonial Afrikaner identity

Identity formations in South African have been rooted in socio-political, cultural, religious, and race relationships since the arrival of the first colonials in 1652 and increasingly so during the British colonial era (1806-1961) of the country. The role of the Christian religion in the awakening of national identities and cultures and the establishing of nationalistic formations in Western history are well known, as stipulated by Smith (2004), Hastings (1997), and Grosby (2002). Hastings argues that,

The Bible provided ... the original model of the nation. Without it and its Christian interpretation and implementation, it is arguable that nations and nationalism, as we know them could never have existed (Hastings 1997: 4).

In congruence, Conversi (2007: 20) states that in Western history the Bible and other printed religious literature played a key role in the awakening of nationalistic feelings determined by Jewish-Christian values. These values spread to colonized countries and continents where the Christian religion was unknown, as stated by Smith that during the Anglo-Saxon period, the “biblical and providentialist reading of history provided the framework for a sense of English ethnic chosenness long before the Reformation, as well as a foundation myth” (Smith 2004: 117). Smith (2004: 4-5) accordingly states that the foundation for nationalism and national identities is to be found in the “sense of the sacred and the binding commitments of religion”. Therefore, the source of nationalism and national identities belongs in the sphere of religion in which ethnicity, language and the nation state are embedded. In the development and establishing of
nationalism and national identities, analogies are often drawn with the history of the chosen people of Israel in the Old Testament (Smith 2004: 7; 78-85; 243-245).

With regard to the formation of identities, Parekh (2008: 9) distinguishes three dimensions of a person’s identity, namely a personal or autobiographical identity, a social or collective identity, and a natural or essential identity. In a person’s autobiographical identity the uniqueness of a person as an individual is recognized and supported by a personal and subjective sense of the self. A social or collective identity incorporates an individual’s association with other like-minded individuals within a particular group sharing the same worldviews, nationality, culture, language, and race. The natural or essential dimension of identity is a person’s essential nature as a human being with specific biological and genetic characteristics. These three dimensions are inseparable. MacIntyre (1984: 219) adds a fourth dimension, namely an historical identity. The historical identity includes the sharing of individuals’ historical experiences and reference framework, and the sharing of the same language, culture, ethnicity, and nationality. MacIntyre’s fourth dimension therefore connects partly with Parekh’s second dimension, because the “possession of an historical identity and the possession of a social identity coincide” (MacIntyre 1984: 219). The conclusion drawn from this connection between the social and the historical identity is that that Parekh emphasizes the diachronic social connection. MacIntyre in his turn emphasizes the synchronic dimension that allows for development over time as well as the influence of different historical factors on the formation and content of relationships.

The inquiry into collective memory and how it is socially structured started with the work done by Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945). He distinguished three types of memory, namely autobiographical, historical and collective. Autobiographical memory is personal or individual, while historical memory is known through historical records. Collective memory refers to the active past that informs our identities and stands in contrast to the “dead” past of historical memories (cf. Climo & Cattell, 2002: 4). For Halbwachs (1980: 78) general history starts only when tradition ends and the social memory is fading or breaking up. The need to write the history of a period, a society, or even a person is only aroused when the subject is already too distant in the past to allow for the testimony of those who preserve some remembrance of it. Therefore, history is neither the whole nor even all that remains of the past. In addition to written history – Halbwachs (1980: 64) argued – there is a living history that perpetuates and renews itself through time and permits the recovery of many old currents that have seemingly disappeared. If this were not the case, Halbwachs stated, we have no right to speak of a “collective memory”.

According to Halbwachs (1980: 80) collective memory is a current of continuous thought whose continuity is not at all artificial, for it retains from the past only what still lives or is capable of living in the consciousness of the groups keeping the memory alive. He (Halbwachs, 1992: 38) points out that people normally acquire their memories in society and that it is in society that they recall, recognise, and localise their memories. For him memory is a matter of how minds work together in society and how their operations are structured by social arrangements (cf. Olick & Robbins 1998: 109). Halbwachs (1980: 84, 72) states that the groups to which he belongs vary at different periods in his life and it is “from their viewpoint that I consider the past”. From this it is clear that Halbwachs holds the view that individuals belong to many different social groups, and that a collective memory inheres in each. Therefore collective memory is multiple, not static. An on-going, dynamic process that must allow for lapses of memory, the passing of generations, and the personal developments of individuals characterises maturity of collective memory (Crane 1997: 1376-7). Halbwachs (1980: 55) elaborates:
Every collective memory requires the support of a group delimited in space and time. The totality of past events can be put together in a single record only by separating them from the memory of the groups who preserved them and by serving the bonds that held them close to the psychological life of social milieus where they occurred, while retaining only the group’s chronological and spatial outline of them.

Connerton (2007: 37) sums it up by stating that it is because the same group is interested in those [shared] memories, and is able to evoke them, that they are assembled together in peoples’ minds. Within this context groups provide individuals with frameworks within which their memories are localised by a kind of mapping. Members of a group situate what they recollect within the mental spaces provided by the group. Halbwachs insisted that these mental spaces always receive support from and refer back to the material spaces that particular social groups occupy, and that no collective memory can exist without reference to a socially specific spatial framework. In this way Halbwachs explicitly rejected the separation of the following two questions: “How does the individual preserve and rediscover memories?” and, “How do societies preserve and rediscover memories?” He demonstrated that the idea of an individual memory, absolutely separate from social memory, is an abstraction almost devoid of meaning. He also held that collective memory is always selective. This entails that various groups of people’s collective memories with regard to the same event differ to some or other degree from those of others. This leads to different kinds of behaviour (cf. Connerton 2007: 36).

Stolton (2007: 6-7) in his turn draws attention to the fact that history writing is an important part of a nation state’s collective memory [and identity]. He argues that history is not simply a product of the past, but often an answer to demands of the present. Bellah et al. state in congruence that, Communities ... have a history – in an important sense are constituted by their past – and for this reason we can speak of a real community as a ‘community of memory’, one that does not forget its past. In order not to forget that past, a community is involved in retelling its story, its constitutive narrative (Bellah et al., 1985: 153).

In this article – following Crane (1997) – it is argued that historical memory, always appearing in the form of an historical narrative, is one form of the content of collective memory. However, collective memory is also the framework in which historical remembering occurs (cf. Crane 1997: 1373). One should, however, keep in mind that history gives contradictory signals about the value of remembering in the much longer span of a collective history. Sontag (2003: 103) holds that there is simply too much injustice in the world and that too much remembering embitters. Therefore collective memory constitutes the accepted perceptions of past events in which the collective identity of a nation is mirrored (cf. Adam 2000: 88). But personal identities – in the same way as collective memories – are seen as ongoing processes of construction in narrative form. Therefore emphasis is placed on the role of the family within which a person grows up as part of a specific community in shaping the way that the past is constructed (cf. Olick and Robbins 1998: 122-123; Connerton 2007: 18-19).

Contrary to MacIntyre’s (1984: 219) remarks that an historical identity and a social identity coincide, the Neo-Marxist theorists hold that collective memory embraces individuals as members of a community, a nation or a society. The Neo-Marxists also reflect on the relationship between individuals within that specific community, nation or society, as well as between individuals and the state (cf. McEwan 2003: 740).

From a postcolonial perspective, the concepts hybridity, diaspora, and liminality emphasize the search for new identities due to imperial colonialism and the complexity of relationships
between the dominant self [Western, civilized, Christian, male and of pure blood] and its binary
opposite, the other [barbaric, uncivilized, black or of mixed blood, female (JanMohamed 1995:
20; Marchall 2004: 34). White Afrikaners were hybrid descendants of Europeans, slaves, and
the indigenous Khoikhoi. Their acculturation with the African continent and their process of
becoming sociologically indigenous or “going native” found expression in the term “Afrikaners”
by which the colonists came to call themselves (Leatt et. al. 1986: 70; cf. Steyn 2001: xxiv). By
the end of the eighteenth century the term Afrikaner was generally used as a synonym for Boer;
The Afrikaners (or Boers) were convinced that the British colonizers would never view them
as their equals, and believed that they would always be viewed as white outcasts of the British
Empire (Giliomee 2003: 149-150), or in postcolonial terms the Other. This had a direct influence
on the way they perceived themselves. Prior to British colonisation they embraced their own
foundation myth and saw themselves as indispensable to maintaining the Cape settlement. They
also regarded themselves as the defenders of the country, the Christian religion, and of civilised
culture (cf. Giliomee 2003: 6-7). After British conquest they were seen as backward, unimportant
and inferior to British supremacy. British people called the Afrikaans language Kitchen Dutch, a
minor and bad dialect of Dutch (Kapp 2009: 110). Apart from calling Afrikaans Kitchen Dutch,
they also called it a Hotnoot’s language (Scholtz 1980, 49-55) – Hotnot being an abusive name for
the indigenous KhoiKhoi. Being different and considered white outcasts of the British Empire,
in the imperial view of Afrikaners were, however, still of a higher order than the indigenous
black people, the KhoiKhoi and slaves, due to colonial discourses on race purity and superiority
rooted in the Manichean binary opposition between light and darkness (JanMohamed 2006:
19). Indigenous people and unfamiliar animals on the African continent were scientifically
studied, described and documented (Said 1995: 90; Coombes 2003: 240). Attributes such as
“barbaric, uncivilized, black or of mixed blood, and irrational” were stereotypically ascribed by
the colonial self to anyone who was different in nationality, spoke a different language, or was
culturally of a different origin. Accordingly, the colonial gaze (and inherently the construction of
the binary self and other), as framed by a racially biased, ethnocentric perspective, left no room
for individuality. One way of establishing colonialism as a race-based nationalistic ideology,
was to ignore and negate the pre-colonial history of the country so that it could be manipulated
for colonial interests and purposes (Dubow 2006: 5; Loomba 2005: 20). According to Worden
(1994: 5), the reason for this negation was to justify the claim of the country’s minerals and land
in a white capitalist dominated environment. To come to terms with these past experiences and
memories remains important and has emerged as the grand narrative of the late 20th and early
21st centuries (McEwan 2003: 740; cf. Connerton 2007: 1). Individuals and nations are seeking
to overcome their traumatic legacies and the influence thereof on identity formation inter alia
through the creation of collective memories and material spaces of national memory-archives.
This must be understood in the light of Adam’s (2000: 88) argument that collective memory
constitutes the accepted perceptions of past events in which the collective identity of a nation is
mirrored.

According to Van der Merwe (1995: 179) Afrikaners in the 1830s were described as “a
serious and religious people with strong sentiment of genuine piety” and “there are certainly no
people in the world who are as truly God-fearing as the Afrikaner”. They also came to perceive
themselves as the heirs to European political institutions. These inherited political institutions
became the Western benchmark of a so-called civilised modern state. While white racial groups
had the political power to benefit their particular interest, the other could not claim any rights
according to their values or interests. Typical of a Western imperial perspective, the white people
believed themselves to be ordained by God to be the norm against which other groups were measured as the other, thus deviations from the norm (Smith 2004: 9; Conversi 2007: 20).

Since the late nineteenth century, Afrikaners identified with British colonialism and imperialism and built their apartheid policy (1948-1994) on these colonial identity principles as stated by Joe Slovo (1926-1995), former leader of the South African Communist Party [SACP]. In his posthumous *Unfinished Biography* (1997) he accused the British colonial era of the country of establishing the roots of apartheid, specifically referring to the last half of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries:

If any one group is to blame for the modern foundation of apartheid, it is the non-Afrikaner upper strata, which dominated the seat of power for more than 75 years before 1948. I am not arguing for one Landlord one bullet, but we must get our history straight (Slovo, 1997: 22; see also Arnold, 2005: 331-332; Dubow 2006: 11-12; De Klerk 1991: 68; Welsh 2010).

The perception that only white Afrikaners were responsible for racial discrimination and apartheid and that the white English speaking people were “innocent victims” who gained by apartheid against their will, is misplaced, as stated by Arnold (2005: 330-333), Worden (1994: 66) and Dubow (2006).

Thus, although the English-speaking establishment and its institutions were in reality often highly conservative during the apartheid era, these became indelibly associated with “liberalism”.... Indeed, English-speaking South Africans have long managed the trick of defining everyone else in the country as racially or ethnically “other” – while blithely assuming their own identity to be somehow “normal” and therefore not suitable for deep investigation. In a post-apartheid and post-colonial world, this position is becoming less and less tenable (Dubow 2006: 11-12).

White Afrikaners became the so-called elite group in 1948 when the National Party (NP) government came into power and when the country became a republic in 1961. Alter (1994: 3) identifies four general characteristics during the transition from apartheid to democracy that the new governing power has to deal with. The first is a consciousness of the uniqueness of a group, especially towards ethnicity, language, and religious homogeneity. The second is an emphasis on shared socio-cultural frameworks and historical memory. In this article, specific reference is made to the Afrikaners’ memories of the colonial era of the country and the Anglo-Boer War. Thirdly, Alter identifies a shared mission and fourthly a collective disrespect and adversial relations that may lead to racism, anti-Semitism and or xenophobia, against other cultural groups that are different.

The initial main objective of the NP government was to enhance Afrikaners to become equal to the British in all spheres of society. This objective of the NP gradually shifted from the advancing of Afrikaner interests to keeping the minority white Afrikaans and English population of the country in power, serving their socio-political interests (Arnold 2005: 331, 726; Giliomee 2003: 477-478). Parallel with the historical narrative of the Afrikaners as a Christian and “chosen” people, is the narrative of apartheid when this theological viewpoint was practically and forcefully exerted to justify the apartheid ideology. Slabbert (1999: 18) accused the NP government of “ritualised irrationality” in trying to keep apartheid in place. However, it seems as though the NP during 1970-1980 focussed more on the “national” in their so-called Christian-national policy underlining apartheid. With the focus on “national”, Degenaar (1978: 2) correctly states that apartheid was a nationalistic race-based ideology. According to Du Pisani (2012: 348) and Lambert (2012: 540-546) quite a number of the English speaking communities joined the Afrikaners in support of the NP, the reasons being Afrikaners’ identification with colonial values and their sharing of Afrikaners’ fear of black nationalism.
Descriptive reading of the aesthetic form elements of each installation

Jan van der Merwe’s art installation *Wag* [*Waiting*] (2000) consists of found objects that the artist covered with rust. It consists of a Victorian cast iron single bed, a wardrobe, and clothes. The bed is covered with a blanket made from rusted metal. A rusted pillow and under it a rusted dress are placed on the blanket. The wardrobe is open on all four sides and covered with barbed wire. Two dresses hang in the wardrobe. A bridal veil hangs over the bed’s edge. The setting of the installation in the gallery allows no specific frontal perspective, because viewers can walk between and around the objects to be viewed from different angles and perspectives.

![Figure 1](image)

Van der Merwe, J., 2000. *Wag* [*Waiting*]. Found objects, rusted metal, clothes, wardrobe, dresses, bridal veil, Victorian cast iron single bed, barbed wire. Bed: 125x200 cm; wardrobe 200x100x500cm (Pretoria Art Gallery Collection).

The language-based art installation *32 000 Darling Little Nuisances* (2003) by Willem Boshoff consists of 1 400 nametags of transparent film. On 1 142 of the tags Afrikaans names and surnames are printed. Beneath each name and surname, the artist printed an age between a few months and sixteen years old. On 258 tags, the artist printed only the words baby and child [*baba, kind*] in Afrikaans and in an indigenous language without a specific age beneath the words. The tags are glued at the tilted top [ceiling] of the installation, upside down, and back to front, therefore illegible. At the back of the installation, Boshoff staged enlarged official portraits of the British kings and queens from 1899 to the present, in full colour and in formal apparel: Victoria, Edward VII, George V, George VI and Elizabeth II. Underneath each portrait is a formal label containing information regarding the years of their reign and their birthdates and – in the case of the first four – where they were buried. On three of the photographs, those of Victoria, Edward VII and George V, the kings and queen look directly into the camera lens, and therefore directly into the eyes of the viewers. Only Queen Elizabeth II has a slight smile, looking at her right hand side. On the floor in front of the photographs Boshoff placed large mirror strips. The images of the royal monarchs with their labels, as well as the names on the tags are reflected in the mirror. Because of the reflection, the names on the tags are perfectly readable. However, the reflections of the royals and their labels are now upside down and back to front, therefore it appears to be indecipherable and nonsense.
Figure 2
Boshoff, W., *32 000 Darling Little Nuisances* (2003). Plastic glued on polystyrene, paper and mirror, nametags with print on it, enlarged portraits. 300 x 840 x 200 cm (Courtesy of the artist).

**Comparative reading and interpretation of the chosen art installations**

As stated, both Van der Merwe and Boshoff focus in their installations on memories of collective and historical identity issues informed by one of the most traumatic experiences of the white Afrikaners, namely the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) with its scorched earth policy and British concentration camps for Boer women and children. They utilized readymades such as mirror strips and nametags in which memories, history and identity complexities are embedded. Boshoff utilized officially issued photographs that he enlarged to give a realistic representation of the British monarchy. They seem proud and fully aware of their importance, heritage [they were born royals], and power in formal, official royal apparel. Although they are all middle aged, their images are timeless as though they are not confined to any specific time in history. It seems as though they have been here from the beginning of the earth and as though they would be here until eternity. Van der Merwe also worked with the notion of time in *Wag* in which an ambivalence and dialectic tension exist between the evanescence of memories on the one hand and the preserving of identity and memories on the other. These issues come to the fore in the artist’s covering of the objects with rust as a metal indicating perseverance and evanescence (cf. Kruger & Van der Merwe 2011: 158).

The 32 000 in Boshoff’s title refers to the approximately 32 000 children under the age of 16 who died in all the concentration camps of the War on South African soil. The words *Darling Little Nuisances* are a pun Boshoff made on a statement by Queen Victoria (1819-1901) who was the reigning queen during the first part of the Anglo-Boer War. The artist stated that on a visit to Buckingham Palace he got hold of a pamphlet on the royal family. According to this pamphlet, Queen Victoria – when the War began – said: “Children are such darling little things, but they can be a terrible nuisance” (Siebirts 2007: 86). In this way the 32 000 children
are linked to the well-known statement by Queen Victoria who is said to have been robustly practical about the tiresomeness of small children. Van der Merwe’s title *Wag [Waiting]* tells the narrative of a bride who is waiting on her soldier groom during the war as also represented by the personal items in the installation in the form of a bridal dress and a veil, placed on a bed. *Wag* deals with war as a physical, quantitatively measurable power struggle characterized by a clear distinction between the victor [the British colonials] and the vanquished [the Boers]. Both Boshoff and Van der Merwe represent the personal influence of British colonialism on families. Boshoff’s *32 000 Darling Little Nuisances* consists of the names of 1 142 children who died at the Free State Bethulie concentration camp 60 kilometres from Boshoff’s grandfather’s (1880-1928) family farm. The artist points out that fourteen children on the list of names of the 1 142 children that died in the Bethulie camp situated nearby Colesberg were Boshoffs. Two of them bear the names of the artist, Willem Hendrik Boshoff. One was ten years of age and one six months (Boshoff, 2009). Furthermore, both his grandmothers were in British concentration camps. Boshoff is therefore linked to the historical memories of the War by personal, family ties as well as by being a member of the Afrikaner community. He shares the collective memory of the mourning of the unnecessary and untimely death of these children in both these ways. Van der Merwe’s *Wag [Wait]* also deals with the influence of loss on identity formation within a homely and family context. He utilizes household appliances such as furniture, combined with personal items in the form of dresses and a bridal veil.

At first glance the portraits of the Royalties in *32 000 Darling Little Nuisances* are the focus point because of their size and the use of full colour in contrast to the children’s names and ages at death which are inscribed in black ink on sober white strips. In this installation, the depiction of the British monarchs reflects their position of power in the age of colonialism: big, proud, powerful, in full colour, and formal apparel, with labels which affirm their identities, and as focus points. The photograph of George VI with the crown on his head and a sword [symbols of power and imperialism] in his hand is in profile, which gives the impression of aloofness and indifference. Only queen Elizabeth II has a smile, and she is not looking into the camera lens, but to her right hand side. Nevertheless, she is also in full apparel with a crown on her head, and looks proud and aloof. This portrayal brings to the fore the European colonial belief in their own cultural superiority, with right to govern and divine duties to civilise the non-European world. In contrast to the representation of the European Self, the names of the children printed on small strips and glued on the top of the installation, upside down and back to front in black and white, reflect their marginalised position as powerless objects, as the other. This marginalised position is emphasised by the title of the work, *32 000 Darling Little Nuisances*. Although the word *darling* is a term of endearment, the word nuisance means something or someone annoying or obnoxious; that which is offensive or irritating; a pest. However, the artist, by the crafty way in which he uses the mirror in front of the installation, reverses the power relationship, thus giving the children the focus position and in this way doing away with the inferiority that was forced upon them. In Van der Merwe’s *Wag*, the superiority of the British is implicit in the barbed wire around the wardrobe. This barbed wire attached around the wardrobe in which the women and children clothing is imprisoned symbolizes the British concentration camps for Boer women and children and their marginalised position. *Wag* therefore deals with white Afrikaner women and children’s otherness in a binary opposition to the British self – women and carefree children.

On the other hand, *Wag* also portrays white Afrikaners’ keeping of the so-called superior Western social codes and conventions. In this regard, we consider the wedding dress, veil, and Victorian cast-iron bed in *Wag* as symbols of Western imperial and white social codes and conventions with which the Afrikaners ideologically identified. This identification with
Western social codes and convention is however, not represented in Boshoff’s 32 000 Darling Little Nuisances. According to Adam (2000: 88) collective memory constitutes the accepted perceptions of past events in which the collective identity of a nation is mirrored. The fact that the white Afrikaners had lost everything of importance during this war, namely lives, freedom and their farms, could have played an important part in the forming of a collective Afrikaner national identity based *inter alia* on the Afrikaner’s collective memory of the Anglo-Boer War. Boshoff (*in* Siebrits 2007: 27), for instance recounts that his grandmother refused to speak about the war because the people she knew were still so shocked by what had happened to their communities. The collective memories of this war may be one of the reasons for Afrikaners’ upholding of, and fighting for power that culminated in the apartheid policy. This must not be read as an excuse for what Afrikaners did during apartheid, nor is it a justification of this ideology. Rather it should be read as a perspective on the reasons for the upholding of apartheid as an inhuman ideology that caused much pain and suffering to the people of this country.

Having said that, the collective identity of the Afrikaner has changed dramatically since 1994 when they lost their position of power. Many Afrikaners today struggle with the material spaces of national memory-archive and associated metaphorical spaces of belonging and identity in contemporary South Africa (cf. McEwan 2003: 740). They find themselves on a border between a Eurocentric and an African collective identity due to their feelings of disillusionment and guilt about the immorality of apartheid as exposed by the South African Truth and Reconciliation Committee, as well as their uncertainty as a political minority (Rankin & Mentis 2005: 46; Webb & Kriel 2000: 43). Engelbrecht (2007: 38, 30) postulates that the term *Afrikaner* as well as Afrikaans as language is currently controversial because of its apartheid baggage. The term *Afrikaner* has lost its hegemonic unitary force as Afrikaans is still viewed as the language of the oppressor. It therefore seems as though personal, collective, and historical identity issues are still critically present in a postapartheid South Africa as racial complexities are complicated by the radical political power shift from white to black in a democratic South Africa. Black people are not only in the majority, but they also have the political power in the country (Le Cordeur 2011: ii). On the other hand, whiteness continuous to preserve an inherited privileged hegemonic status, which is still evident in the economical and education sectors (cf. Lopez 2005: 6), but is currently under scrutiny. Especially white Afrikaners experience alienation and enmity because of their past hegemonic and political power identity (Engelbrecht 2007: 39-40).

**Conclusion**

This article dealt with the historical memories of the Anglo-Boer War and the influence it had on the formation of Afrikaners’ personal, collective and historical identities as aesthetically represented in two art installations, *32 000 Darling Little Nuisances* and *Wag* by Afrikaner male artists Willem Boshoff and Jan van der Merwe respectively. It appears that in memories of social, cultural and political oppression there is on the one hand power agents as the dominators and gainers, and on the other hand the oppressed and “deviations” from the norm as the marginalised victims of the system. Such unequal power relations have an influence on the identity formations of both the so-called superior norm as the other from which advantages and rights are withheld. From the reading and interpretation of the installations according to postcolonial critique on colonialism and informed by historical memories, it seems that historical memories of the Anglo-Boer War have played an important and directional role in the formation of Afrikaners’ personal, social and historical identities as represented by the work of the two artists in question.
Notes
1 The Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) is in history also known as the Second Freedom War [die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog], the Anglo-Boer/South African War [die Anglo-Boer/Suid-Afrikaanse Oorlog], and the South African War [die Suid-Afrikaanse Oorlog]. The name of this War constantly changed according to political developments. During the centenary of this War in 2000, the ANC government changed the name to the Anglo-Boer South African War, a clumsy composite of names that had little chance of being generally accepted. (Grundlingh 2007: 198). Because of the Afrikaner identity context of this article, we used the name the Anglo-Boer War. Grundlingh (2007: 198) remarks that the name the Anglo-Boer War, proved difficult to dislodge in the public mind. Most scholars, though, preferred the term ‘South African War’ to indicate that all groupings in the country were affected. Not all authors regard the name as important, as indicated by Nasson (2000: 149, 185; cf. also Nasson 2002: 813-814): “The Anglo-Boer War, or Boer War or South African War of 1899-1902 (readers may take their pick) commenced just over a century ago ... The war was also a peculiar one for dominant white society, involving the disagreeable spectacle of ‘white on white’ violence in the midst of a curious black majority”, hence the Anglo-Boer War.

2 In 1795, the region was under British rule for a short period. From 1803-1806 the Cape was again under Dutch rule, then known as the Batavian Republic (Giliomee 2003; Thompson 2006).

3 After the Battle of Blood River on 16 December 1938 – a combat between the Voortrekkers and the Zulu tribe – the Voortrekkers, who won the battle, declared the Republic of Natalia in 1839. However, in 1943 the British recolonized this Republic (Giliomee 2003).

4 Halbwachs’ landmark work on social memory is Social frameworks of memory; published in 1925 as well as a collection of posthumously published fragments, The collective memory, which survived Halbwachs’ internment and death at Buchenwald. The latter appeared in English in 1950 (Olick & Robbins 1998: 106; Crane 1997: 1376).

5 Lacan (1986) distinguishes between the other and the Other: The other refers to the colonized subjects and the Other to the Grande autre, whose view and perspective defines and determines the subject’s identity. Lacan explains the difference between the other and the Other according to Jung’s mirror phase: a child looking into the mirror and for the first time realizes that it is a separate and different person as its mother/father. In this case, the child is the other and the parent is the Other (Ashcroft et al. 1999: 170-71).

6 Some Afrikaners, in their attempt to rid themselves of this baggage, are of the opinion that the term Afrikaner[s] should be replaced with the term Afrikaanse[s] to include white, coloured and black Afrikaans speaking people (Welsh & Spence 2007: 295). Up to now, this proposal has not been very successful.

Works Cited


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A hermeneutic analysis of small monuments and memorials: the burgher memorial and black concentration camp in Theunissen

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The construction or deconstruction of monuments and memorials is an ongoing process in a transformative society such as South Africa. The majority of the research on monuments and memorials focuses on larger, more prominent monuments and memorials that are constantly in the public eye. The more prominent monuments and memorials are also already well defined in a hermeneutical idiom in relation to context (primary level) and text (secondary level). However, on a different level smaller monuments and memorials are not in the public eye. In many instances the smaller monuments and museums have already simply slipped into oblivion. In most of these cases the text and context of the monument and memorial have been eroded and compromised. The aim of the article is to conduct a case study of two smaller, lesser known monuments and memorials. It will be demonstrated from a hermeneutical perspective how context and text are an essential part of the discourse.

Keywords: monument, memorial, Burgher Memorial, black concentration camp, hermeneutics

The construction of monuments and memorials is essentially an emotional and passionate reaction after a traumatic or adverse experience in a society. The link between adversity and monuments or memorials explains why the construction of this kind of structure in South Africa is characterised by clear patterns or defined time waves, and aligned with global phenomena. It also explains why a large number of monuments and memorials were erected after the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) and the ending of apartheid (1994). The main reason underpinning the erection of such structures is responsive in nature. It is an emotional, political, ideological and rational response to an event that has impacted significantly on a society or a subgroup in society. The event is then symbolically eternalised for current and future generations as an object that is designed to commemorate a person or event and intended to remind onlookers of that person or event.

In the context of a postcolonial, transitional society, the construction or reconstruction of memorials and monuments will always be a contested endeavour. Political change and transformation in a transitional state is an ongoing process that inevitably generates and maintains
a context for perpetual shifts of political allegiance. A transitional state necessarily reflects a range of institutional and dynamic changes. South Africa, with its change from a centralised and authoritarian to a diversified, inclusive democracy, is a transitional state. The ebb and flow of the control over political power in such a relatively fluid context acts as a stimulus for the reconstruction of history and the manner in which past experiences are symbolised in memorials and monuments.

The postcolonial process of construction of new memorials and monuments, and the reconstruction of existing memorials and monuments in South Africa are similarly an ongoing phenomenon with a protracted history that is not restricted to the post-1994 era. South Africa’s history has always functioned within the broader political context of colonialism and post-colonialism, which have influenced and steered its historical and political contours for more than a century.

The occurrence of a memorable moment can be felt to trigger the need for a structure that memorialises and eternalises that event. The erection of monuments normally follows events with a strong emotional impact on society that necessitates its externalisation. This also explains the pattern, that is, why the construction of monuments and memorials occurs in clearly defined waves. The link between memory and the construction of a memorial or monument is important because it represents the concretisation of the emotional experience as a physical presence. The post-apartheid trend of commemorating struggle heroes and renaming of streets is, therefore, not unexpected. It is a typical feature of the change embedded in transformative societies.

However, it is also problematic that the occurrence or event that is to be commemorated is historic and therefore a process that is bound to time. This is especially true in the case of the less prominent or smaller monuments and museums, which are less successful in bridging time and linking generations. The meaning and memory of a monument or memorial can get lost over time if it is not in the public consciousness, which might be said to negate its value as a link to the past. As Jones (2000: 41) indicates, monuments and memorials are historically linked to a specific time and a specific period. Memories may fade in the years that follow. Hermeneutic aspects, such as context and text, then become important in defining the purpose and meaning of monuments and memorials; the context is situated at a first order or primary level and the text on a secondary and deeper hermeneutical level.

The larger, more prominent monuments and memorials, such as the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria and the Women’s Memorial in Bloemfontein, historically radiate on the context (primary) level, but also on the text (hermeneutical) level. There is rarely any doubt why the monuments/memorials were erected, who they were intended to memorialise and what they represent on both the primary (context) and secondary (text) level. The rationale for their erection, which includes their encapsulating historical context and intrinsic memory, is implicit in their symbolic structure and wording. The popularity of the larger, more prominent monuments ensures their commercial viability and that they remain within public awareness.

However, smaller, less conspicuous monuments and memorials may be problematic. A large number of the smaller monuments/memorials are scattered all over South Africa in city
centres, town squares and in the open veld. In the process many have lost their contextual and textual meaning over time. In many instances smaller monuments are slowly slipping into oblivion, and in some cases have been vandalised beyond recognition.

The casual observer of smaller monuments and memorials may also be confronted by a situation in which the associated contextual memory of these structures had been lost (Ware, 2008: 1). The fact that many of the monuments and memorials are seldom visited contributes to the loss of their contextual meaning and their link to the past. In many cases the contextual information may not be carried over to the next generation by way of oral history, and in this way the monument’s or memorial’s symbolic meaning will be drained. This is exacerbated when textual details, such as the inscription on the monument or memorial, is no longer legible or does not contain enough information to explain the reason for its creation. The accumulative problem is that when the historical memory is lost, the monument or memorial may lose its intrinsic meaning and therefore the rationale for its existence.

The aim of the article is to discuss the dynamics affecting the smaller monuments and memorials around the country. The first section will discuss in general terms the difference between monuments and memorials and the underpinning rationale for their construction. The focus will then shift to the inherent challenge faced by smaller monuments and memorials in maintaining their contextual and textual meaning. The investigation will then move to a micro-level to look at two contrasting small monuments and memorials in Theunissen in the Free State of the same time period, namely the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902).

The two monuments or memorials that will be analysed are the following:

(i) The Burgher Memorial in the Theunissen cemetery commemorating the death in 1902 of three Afrikaner burghers at the hand of a black commando under the command of a British officer.
(ii) The cemetery 14 kilometres from Theunissen of black civilians who lost their lives in a concentration camp during the Anglo-Boer War.

The methodology in both case studies will be as follows:

(i) The first step will be to classify the objects according to their physical attributes either as a monument or a memorial.
(ii) The second step will be to conduct a hermeneutical analysis of the text and context of the two objects. The context will be analysed in two layers; firstly, the outer (primary) layer, consisting of written and oral sources and then the inner layer, which is the perception of the object within its spatial environment.
(iii) The last step will be to analyse the text to identify the secondary hermeneutical and embedded meaning that is symbolically contained within the structure.

The methodology will ensure a clearer understanding of the smaller, less conspicuous monuments and memorials. However, it is important for the analysis to explain the difference between the two concepts.

**Monuments and memorials: differences and meaning**

As we have briefly seen, Ware (2008:1) indicates that “monument” and “memorial” are etymologically linked – they both evolved from a root word meaning “to be reminded and to be mindful” . The application and deeper meaning of the root word has forced a distinction between the two concepts. Danto also makes a very vivid distinction between a memorial and a
monument on a deeper level, explaining that the word “memorial” is used to honour the dead, while in the case of a monument the intention is to honour the living (Snyman, 1996:182).

According to Snyman (1996: 181), a set of distinct rules governs the distinction between monuments and war memorials. He quotes Danto (1987: 115) who explains that “…we erect monuments that we shall always remember and build memorials so that we shall never forget… Monuments commemorate the memorable and embody the myths of beginning. Memorials ritualize remembrance and mark the reality of ends… Very few nations erect monuments to their defeats, but many set up memorials to the defeated dead.”

Danto (1987: 115), as cited by Snyman (1996: 181) makes a further important distinction between memorials and monuments: “… monuments make heroes, triumphs, victories, conquests perpetually present and part of life. Contrary to that a memorial is a special precinct extruded from life, a segregated enclave where we honour the dead. With monuments we honour ourselves.”

When the building of the Voortrekker Monument and indeed its raison d’etre were challenged, MC Botha (1952: 15) explained that the monument would “force” Voortrekker descendants to think about the sacrifices made by their forebears in order to create an independent nation. “When entering the Monument the visitor should be overwhelmed with gratitude towards God.” He emphasised that the intention of the monument was to remind descendants that they should be mindful and thankful of the sacrifices made in the past that made the present possible. The Voortrekker Monument is therefore a memorial and not a monument. However, both the Women’s Memorial and the Voortrekker Monument have over the years blurred the intended meaning of the word.

If the differences between a memorial and a monument are put next to each other, they could be tabled as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MONUMENTS</th>
<th>MEMORIALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To remember heroes and render them and their triumphs perpetually present</td>
<td>Not to forget – memorials are erected in honour of the dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To commemorate the memorable and embody beginnings</td>
<td>To ritualise remembrance and mark the reality of ends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To celebrate past triumphs</td>
<td>To cast mediation in stone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very few monuments “celebrate” defeat</td>
<td>Memorials are set up after deaths and defeats</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To take another example, in the post-colonial epoch the story of the Blood River/Ncome monument is an interesting combination of a memorial and a monument on one site. In general terms the initial building and expansion of the Blood River Monument were carried out for the purposes outlined above, namely to remember and to commemorate; more specifically, the remembering and commemoration concerned the beginning of white political domination.

That is, the structure celebrated the military triumph of the Battle of Blood River and the heroes that emerged from the battle. However, more recently a newly erected Ncome complex was built in the shadow of the Blood River Monument as a memorial to represent the Zulu experience of the battle. It was set up after defeat and death to honour those who perished in their fight for freedom.
The construction and reconstruction of monuments and memorials

The construction of monuments and memorial relates directly to one of the core dynamics in society. It responds *ex post facto* to a situation of conflict, which is felt to need eternalisation for the benefit for the current generation, but also in order that future generations remember the person or event commemorated (Snyman, 1996: 181).

The discourse on and the reconstruction of monuments and memorials and its role in reconciliation has been the topic of many publications in the discipline of arts history [Snyman (1996), Doxtader & Salazar (2007), Maré (2007), Ware (2008)]. The analytical approach to the construction and deconstruction of monuments and memorials remains a contemporary and topical endeavour, because it is located at the cutting edge of a changing transformative society.

Marschall (2014: 78) argues that the majority of the apartheid monuments can be considered as cultural symbols, given South Africa’s vibrant and dynamic transformative society. The reason is that they respond to situation(s) of conflict, such as resistance against colonial oppression and the anti-apartheid struggle.

However, this statement is equally true for South African society since its earliest origins. Recalling the past is a phenomenon that perpetuates memory in the next generation and transports and impacts on the current, as well as the future society. This perpetuation is a process of socialisation and is achieved in material terms and also in relation to the concepts of identity and consciousness. As Marschall (2014: 79) indicates, “the memory of these conflicts is particularly harnessed to foster the creation of a particular historical consciousness and to ensure that it is engraved in the minds of the next generation.”

In a transitional society the construction or the reconstruction of memorials and monuments will always be a contested endeavour. Shifting political allegiances and transfers of political power shape the ways in which the conflict will be represented and institutionalised in monuments and memorials.

However, the historical and political shifts in emphasis that occur in transformative societies over time introduce a problematic aspect: they can remove the overarching context that motivated the construction of an earlier monument or memorial in the first place. As Jones (2000:41) observes, the intended meaning normally arises from specific situations and must always have meaning for a specific person, at a specific time, in a specific place and within a specific context. A monument or a memorial represents, on the surface, a historical period to which is linked by specific ideological predispositions and political goals.

The meaning of a monument or memorial is specific and requires strong grounding if it is to be meaningful. In situations of change, the meaning gravitates into another specific context and a different text within a broader political and historical context (Tarpey & Delprete, 2010:1). If the historical context is removed or if it erodes over time then very little remains to explain the broader intrinsic historical or political motives that initially framed the memorial or monument. On a primary level (non-hermeneutic level) the context is important in that it provides a broader historical and inclusive reality. (The hermeneutical dimension will be discussed under a separate heading.)

In South Africa, the more prominent memorials and monuments that reflect the country’s turbulent past have not encountered much difficulty in preserving their specific contexts. The
underpinning memory of the events or people that they recall helps to harness the creation of a particular historical consciousness and to pass it on to the next generation (Marschall, 2014: 78). The context that frames major monuments and memorials is overpowering and leaves very little room for uncertainties.

We can cite a number of examples: the Voortrekker Monument and Freedom Park near Pretoria, the Old Fort in Johannesburg, the Women’s Memorial in Bloemfontein, the Blood River/Ncome Monument near Vryheid/Dundee and the Robben Island Prison near Cape Town. All of these are widely known and acknowledged. In each case, too, the appearance of the specific monuments or memorials is clear and unambiguous, especially as regards their functioning on a concrete primary level. The fortress-like appearance of the Voortrekker Monument reflects the solid outer image of a Voortrekker laager, while Freedom Park’s flowing openness relates to the open flow of freedom (see my article on Freedom Park in the *South African Journal of Art History*, 25 (2), 2010).

In the post-apartheid phase, after the democratisation of South Africa a strong desire was articulated to redress the imbalances that had existed in terms of the number of monuments/memorials that honoured and recalled a new generation of political heroes and their triumphs. Ware (2008:1) draws attention to the intrinsic value of memorialisation: it is a reminder of something or someone, that is, it involves being reminded of something or being caused to be mindful. This aspect of the post-apartheid process is, therefore, nothing new. It reflects the typical dynamics of a changing epoch embedded in a transformative society.

Maré (2007: 37) points out how new emerging societies with their own cultural and ideological identities establish monuments and memorials to create their own rallying points from a post-colonial vantage. It was, therefore, no surprise when a number of memorials/monuments appeared in urban centres or on hilltops around South African cities during the post-1994 era. In Pretoria, Freedom Park appeared on a hilltop within sight of the Voortrekker Monument, and in the city centre the statue of Chief Tshwane now stands alongside Andries Pretorius near the city hall.

However, the wave of monuments and memorials that washed over the country on the back of the political change is only a part of a cyclical process. In South Africa, the process has appeared in defined political waves and has always been linked to the history of the country. As Marschall (2014: 78) puts it, in South Africa’s vibrant and dynamic transformative society, monuments and memorials respond to situation(s) of conflict or memorable occasions. However, it does not follow that specific monuments or memorials are always constructed at the time of a particular event. In most instances the event takes place years before it is possible to erect such a monument or memorial. An example is the Hector Pietersen Memorial commemorating the death of a young man of that name during the 1976 Soweto uprising. It was of course only possible to erect this memorial after apartheid had been abolished. The Jan and Maria van Riebeeck statues in Cape Town were also erected centuries later, when an upsurge of Afrikaner nationalism sought a founding father and mother.

One of the most noteworthy waves of memorial and monument construction occurred with the centennial commemoration of the Great Trek in 1938, when a number of groups in ox-wagons pulled by spans of oxen trekked from different locations to Pretoria. The various treks moved through many cities and towns in the different provinces. In most towns large and small monuments were erected to commemorate the trek (De Witte, 1938: 115). The symbolic 1938 ox-wagon trek was probably the reason for most of the monuments/memorials erected in
South Africa in a short period of time. The next wave was in 1961, when South Africa became a republic. That event was more muted and a limited number of monuments/memorials were erected.

The most identifiable waves or periods when the creation of monuments and memorials was felt to be warranted in South Africa are the following:

(i) The foundation of the Afrikaner nation in South Africa in 1652, which was immortalised by statues of the founding father and mother, Jan and Maria van Riebeeck in Cape Town.
(ii) The settlers/immigrants to South Africa: The British Settlers Monument in Grahamstown, the Huguenots in Franschoek, and the German Settler monument in East London.
(iii) Memorials and monuments to commemorate the battles that took place during the Great Trek, such as the Blood River/Ncome monument/memorial and the monument at Vegkop.
(iv) Commemorations Boer leaders in the build-up to the Anglo-Boer War with statues and monuments for Presidents Pretorius, Kruger and Burgers from the Transvaal, and Brand, Reitz and Steyn from the Free State. A statue of the three prominent leaders of the old Transvaal, Paul Kruger, Piet Joubert and MW Pretorius was erected in Heidelberg.
(v) The role of women in Afrikaner history as symbolised in the Women’s Memorial in Bloemfontein, the Voortrekker Girl at the Oranje Secondary School in Bloemfontein, Young Women at the former Teachers Training College in Pretoria. (The latter has disappeared and its whereabouts is unknown.)
(vi) The Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), which was resulted in an undetermined number of statues, large and small in scale. A common theme was the erection of statues of Boer leaders, including Generals De Wet, Botha, De la Rey, Beyers and Smuts, to mention a few.
(vii) The symbolic ox wagon trek of 1938, with monuments and memorials erected along some of the main movement arteries of South Africa. It culminated in the Voortrekker Monument.
(viii) Memorials to commemorate soldiers who died in the two World Wars.
(ix) The upsurge of Afrikaner nationalism with the Hendrik Verwoerd statue in front of the Free State Provincial building (Van Tonder, 1977 & Nienaber, 1980).
(x) The post-apartheid phase, memorialising the heroes of the anti-apartheid struggle.

The challenge of smaller, less prominent monuments and memorials

South Africa’s disjunctive history has seen the country’s larger, more prominent monuments and memorials most often constructed near city centres, such as the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria and the Women’s Memorial in Bloemfontein. The smaller, less conspicuous monuments and memorials are in many instances erected on-site and at some distance from city centres, which has contributed to their lesser-known status.

Many of the memorials/monuments that were erected were linked to a specific political and historical context that framed its relevance, symbolism and meaning. However, many lesser-known monuments/memorials were also erected that have since lost their primary level context over time as objects to be perceived. The difference between the primary level, as objects to be perceived, and the secondary hermeneutical level, in which the embedded symbolism is relevant is an important distinction, which will be explored in the next subsection.
Hermeneutics and monuments and memorials

Hermeneutics is a theory of the interpretation of linguistic and non-linguistic expressions that includes a number of complicated concepts with a broad spectrum of related meanings attached to them. In one account, hermeneutic theory is, or involves all of the following:

(a) a theory for all linguistic understanding;
(b) a methodology that underlies all social sciences;
(c) a phenomenology of the processes of tradition;
(d) a theory of the processes of understanding and how they relate to the interpretation of text; and
(e) a constructive philosophical text (Faure, 2010:39).

For our purposes, which aim at a consideration of monuments and statues in South Africa, the primary level applies when consider a monument or memorial as an object that is observed in its spatial environment. This level does not involve an effort to evoke deeper meanings; the monument or memorial is simply observed or perceived as an object.

Two sub-levels can be distinguished at the primary level: an outer “layer”, which is concerned with the information on the monument or memorial itself, which may also appear in primary and secondary sources. Such information can be supplemented by oral history, which could either support or contradict it. The inner “layer” at the primary level is concerned with the observable physical appearance of the monument or memorial as an object.

In hermeneutics the second level of investigation is concerned with the possibility of hidden meanings that may not be directly observable in the perceivable object itself. A hermeneutic interpretation is only possible if an object contains some symbolic features, or represents something more than just a depiction of a particular person or event. This level of meaning requires that the interpretation take account of the possibility of a deeper, symbolic message contained in the object to be analysed. It is, therefore, not merely a description of the physical form of the object, but an account of the intentions behind it as these are reflected in the arrangement of its symbols, and can be regarded as a medium of access to its meaning (Maré, 2009: 133).

The French hermeneuticist Paul Ricoeur was an important exponent of the theory of the processes of understanding and how objects or artefacts relate to the interpretation of text (see point d above) and to hermeneutic rationality. Rather simply put, the aim of hermeneutic rationality is to seek meaning in an object. The discovery of meaning should then, as a third step, be augmented by an explanation. The confirmation of the original conjectures becomes clearer (or perhaps less clear in some case) as the interpretation of the text proceeds (Faure, 2010:39).

Towards an integrated methodology: The written text and the oral history

We turn now to an application of these ideas to our area of focus, memorials and monuments in South Africa. Often, the reason for the erection of a memorial or monument can be inferred from the written text that accompanies it, supplemented by its outer appearance and other. In the absence of a written text, the observer may engage in primary research, but the average person will depend on this first order, that is the object’s primary appearance, as a guide to its meaning.
However, in the case of smaller monuments or memorials the underpinning reasons for the erection of the structure are often regional or local. Information about this may often only be available in the form of personal reminiscences that have been carried forward as oral history. As the oral historian, Jan Vasina (1985: 12) reminds us: “The sources of the oral historians are reminiscences, hearsay, or eye witness accounts about events and situations, which are contemporary, that is what occurred during the life of the informants.”

In the case of the two monuments and memorials in Theunissen, the Burgher Memorial and the black concentration camp graves, primary level information will be found in the inscriptions on the monument, in written sources and supplemented by such oral history as is available. A contextual layer would then substantiate the basic facts of their respective histories.

**The Burgher Memorial in the Theunissen cemetery**

Theunissen is a country town in the central Free State not far from the historically important town of Winburg, and located between the Goldfields towns of Welkom and Virginia and the provincial capital, Bloemfontein. Initially a small station settlement known as Smaldeel, it included a number of houses, shops and a school well before the Anglo-Boer War, but gained its status as a town officially in 1907. During the war the station settlement was officially part of the Winburg district (Henning 1957: 21) and is treated as such in the sources.

![Figure 1](theunissen-burgher.jpg)

**Figure 1**

*The Burgher Memorial in the new cemetery in Theunissen (photograph: Pieter Labuschagne).*

The Burgher Memorial is a small sandstone needle-shaped obelisk located close to the edge of the cemetery in Theunissen that was first opened in the 1960s (the older one is located closer to town). Its primary appearance is of an obelisk with a needle-like structure; one might say that it is simplicity cast in stone. The memorial further consists of three rectangular sandstone
blocks, which serve as a base for the obelisk. The reason for erection of the memorial is clearly stated on the obelisk: it is identified as a commemoration of the death of three burghers who died at the hands of armed blacks under the command of a Boer traitor.

The inscription on the obelisk indicates that it was erected in 1927, but no information is provided about the people erected it and where it was originally located. The obelisk was certainly relocated to the newer cemetery, probably for political reasons; the oldest graves in the cemetery date from the early 1960s. Despite some considerable effort, further basic information about the origin of the obelisk could not be ascertained. A number of the older inhabitants in the town were ignorant of the history behind its construction and initial whereabouts.

However, the available sources in the general historiography on black soldiers under the command of British officers or joiners in the Anglo-Boer War provided some insight into the origin of the obelisk. Grundlingh (1989: 217) provides some information on a black commando that operated in the Winburg district. The black commando was under the command of a Captain O.M. Bergh, a Free Stater; they attacked small groups of burghers, burned farm houses and molested women and children. The black commando operated at the same time as the Farmers Guard, a group of ‘joiners’ that consisted of local farmers, among them Hendrik Jeremia du Bruyn from the farm Taibosspruit (Blake, 2010: 160).

![Figure 2](image)

*The inscriptions on the Burgher Memorial in the Theunissen cemetery engraved in the base of the sandstone obelisk (photograph: Pieter Labuschagne).*

The black commando under Bergh totalled 300 men and they appear to have had a strong relationship with the “joiners”, although General De Wet refers to them as National Scouts (De Wet, 1903: 93). The black commando was responsible for many deaths, and its atrocities against the burghers of under Commandant Haasbroek’s command especially made De Wet very angry. Haasbroek’s commando was attacked by the black unit in September 1901; four burghers who were arrested and then summarily executed. Haasbroek’s commando later captured 18 of the
black soldiers who were then themselves summarily executed (Grundlingh 1999: 217). There are indications that these four burghers were from Haasbroek’s commando and that it is they who are commemorated by the small monument or memorial.

The Burgher Memorial was erected after the Anglo-Boer War and was probably initially located in the town. The specific date is reflected on the structure, which makes it possible to determine the date but not any other additional information. The forthright text on the monument was probably the reason it was moved out of the public eye and ended up on the edge of the cemetery. As Marschall (2014: 78) indicates, monuments and memorials are emotional responses to traumatic (historical) experiences and the bitterness and emotion contained in the Burgher Memorial would certainly have needed an outlet after the end of the war.

**A textual and contextual analysis of the Burgher Memorial**

To analyse the Burgher Memorial, we must establish its status as either a monument or memorial. On that basis, we move to a textual and contextual analysis that will be supplemented by some oral history to complete the picture.

Using the distinction offered by Snyman (1996: 181), we can see that the Burgher Memorial is clearly, indeed, a memorial and not a monument. The object was certainly erected with the purpose of placing a responsibility on the descendants of the people who it recalls not to forget the atrocities that were committed by the black commando. It is a meditation cast in stone and was set up after the Boer defeat to emphasise the atrocities of “joiners” and black soldiers.

The next step in the investigation is to consider the contextual or primary appearance of the memorial as an “object of perception”. The lack of supporting information is painfully obvious when the Burgher Memorial is examined on a broader contextual level, that is, the level which frames its physical appearance. Normally a memorial would be supported by both written and oral history to explain its existence, yet on both fronts there is a lack of supporting local information, and facts about the memorial are difficult to find. Henning (1957) published a comprehensive, detailed book on the history of the town when its fifty years of existence were celebrated. However, Henning made no mention of the memorial in his book.

The written history would usually be supported by local reminiscences, hearsay, or eye witness accounts (Vasina 1985: 112). A substantial number of older people in Theunissen were questioned, but most were not even aware of the existence of the memorial. The few who did know of the existence pf the memorial were equally in the dark about its purpose and history. The history of the memorial had clearly not been preserved or carried over to the next generation in the oral history of the town and the district.

The next step in analysing the memorial is to scrutinise the inscriptions on the structure. The memorial was clearly erected to honour burghers who were murdered by a black commando under the leadership of a ‘joiner’. The contextual information, although somewhat sketchy, allows for an understanding of the events that motivated its construction. It supports our observation that memorials are objects whose purpose is to create understanding of a particular event or person for future generations.

The removal of the memorial from town and its placement amongst long rows of gravestones in a more distant cemetery has apparently diminished its symbolic role in its surroundings.
The small obelisk would have been more prominent and effective in an open area. Even in its currently restricted space, however, the needle of the obelisk, which points skywards, seems to carry an embedded message: it is directed to the sky as a permanent symbol of what has happened with the burghers.

The structure’s simplicity, with its use of an iconic sculptural form and rectangular blocks as a pedestal representing stability and its use of local sandstone as material, is hermeneutically successful on the secondary level, in spite of the erosion of its context.

**The black concentration camp cemetery: The unintended memorial**

During the Anglo-Boer War, multiple black concentration camps were built next to the railway line. By the end of the war a total of 115 000 black people had been interned in camps where the conditions were even worse than in white concentration camps. Warwick (1980: 204) mentions that 14 154 deaths of black civilians were recorded and that 81% of those deaths were children. Half of the deaths occurred during the three months between December 1901 and January 1902.

![Figure 3](source: Images, Google- www.google.co.za).

The black concentration camp near Paardenvallei, about 14 kilometres south of Theunissen, was constructed in early 1901 and held 200 families, with a total of more than a 1 000 inhabitants (Ploeger 1980: 36). The proportion of deaths, especially the children, was horrendous in a relatively small camp, with more than a hundred in less than two years. The graves consisted of large heaps of earth with a top layer of stones without headstones, and are clearly visible after 100 years.

**A textual and contextual analysis of the Paardenvallei concentration camp**

The Paardenvallei concentration camp cemetery was earlier described as an unintended memorial. The interesting question is: is it a defining characteristic of a memorial that it be specifically intended as such? In this case, we might argue the hermeneutic secondary level with
its embedded message is so persuasive that these graves constitute a memorial, though there was no intention to construct a memorial in the defined sense on the part of mourning families.

In the light of Snyman's distinction (1996: 181), we can say that these concentration camp graves are indeed a memorial, in spite of their lack of an official status. The mere presence of the more than 100 graves suggests the transmission of an obligation to future generation not to forget the atrocities that were inflicted on black civilians caught up in the crossfire of the war. The concentration camp is ‘mediation cast in stone’ and the fact that it has been neglected does not detract from its strong, embedded meaning.

The next step is to look at the outer layer of the contextual level, namely the written and oral history of the black concentration camp at Paardenvallei. The history of the camp is in fact rather well documented. Publications by Ploeger (1980), Kessels (2013) and Warwick (1980) contain a plethora of information about it. These sources include basic facts about black concentration camps in general and some detail about this concentration camp in particular.

The oral history, consisting of reminiscences, hearsay, or eye witness accounts (Vasina 1985: 112) supports the written history to a certain extent. Andries Semane, the grandson of Johannes Semane, who was in the camp, was located and interviewed. He was able to relate information about the black concentration camp that was a part of his personal memory, but which had also clearly become an element of local folklore as well. However, one of the owners of the land on which the graves were situated, whose homestead was a mere 100 metres of the site and who ahd resided on the farm for two decades, and had no information at all on the existence or the history of the black concentration camp.
However, the documented history is complicated by what Vasina (1985: 112) refers to as a tendency for oral history to be “tainted by emotion and perception in view of its biographical nature … [influenced] by memorised historical gossip, personal tradition and group accounts.” In the case of the Paardenveli concentration camp, political perception could be added as an additional factor that influenced the transmission of knowledge about it. Meanwhile, the local white oral history of the area had apparently also been tainted by political perceptions that denied the existence of black concentration camps. The background here was a preconceived notion that the Anglo-Boer War was a “white man’s” war. This perception persists in spite of overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

Gutter (2000: 126) writes that members of a black commando that terrorised women and children in the Smaldeel area were executed by General de Wet. He claimed that the graves at Paardenvallei were those of people who had died in the concentration camp there, but those of the black soldiers who were executed. Here Gutter may be working within a tainted oral tradition which confuse more than what it explains. At any rate, he contradicts De Wet, who did not mention any such incident in any of his books on the war, Three Years War and The Battle between Boer and Brit.

Grundlingh (1999: 217) refer to an incident in which Commandant Haasbroek’s men shot 18 men of the black commando that operated in the area. The total number of graves at the current site exceeds 100 and the graves are constructed in neat rows. It is unlikely that Haasbroek’s commando would have buried the black commando members in such a way. This is perhaps an example of how oral history can be tainted by ideological, or indeed, personal interests.

The example serves to demonstrate that contradictions within the contextual aspects of a memorial or monument can erode its. Yet despite this, on the second level of hermeneutic analysis, the graves radiate a sense of the embedded impact of the black concentration camp cemetery on the local black community.

The row upon row of heaps of ground covered by flat stones in the veld, with a small cluster of hills in the background, functions very strongly on the secondary level. The desolate open area, devoid of vegetation apart from hardened scrubland, symbolises the hardship of the black concentration camp inmates. On this view, that concentration camp, although largely forgotten, in the open veld, functions as a memorial.

Certainly a number of authoritative sources exist to substantiate the existence of the camp. These sources negate the political perceptions that exist in a part of the oral memory. The site’s physical spatial appearance is very affecting, and is supplemented by the hermeneutical level of embedded symbolism. The black concentration camp, therefore, radiates an identifiable presence as a memorial in its spatial environment.

Conclusion

We have seen that the more prominent monuments and memorials of South Africa’s history are well defined on both the primary and secondary levels. However, this is not always the case with the country’s smaller monuments and memorials, which are not well represented in the public consciousness and are not well defined on either the primary and secondary hermeneutic levels.
These problems associated with the smaller monuments and memorials are compounded by other factors, such as the physical damage and erosion caused by neglect and the passing of time. As in the case of both the Burgher Memorial and the Paardenvallei site, indeed, their meaning and purpose are in the process of being lost. It would appear that this can only be reversed local populations take on the task of restoring these sites, and their first and second-level meanings.

Work cited

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Commemorating industrial ruins – the case for the Tswaing salt works

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The article investigates the cultural and industrial history of the Tswaing salt works which were established and operated for a period of 50 years at the Tswaing (seTswana for ‘place of salt’) meteorite crater 40km north of the Pretoria CBD. After the 1960s the industrial activities ceased and the site was abandoned, leading to decay and vandalism of the remaining buildings. Whereas the meteorite crater as a natural phenomenon remains a tourist attraction, the socio-cultural heritage of the industrial ruins has been neglected and the question is put whether these industrial ruins warrant commemoration in some way or another. The argument is made that to commemorate the Tswaing crater, commemorating the Tswaing salt works’ industrial ruined remains becomes a necessary complementary approach. Various memorialisation options are explored and illustrated with case studies; ranging from demolishing any remains of the industrial ruins and perhaps allowing only a palimpsest, to leaving the ruin to further decay, to a range of conservation interventions and to a restoration, alteration and re-use option. The potential value of partly restored, conserved or re-used industrial ruins is discussed, i.e. ruins as nature reserves, heterotopias, tourist destinations, museums or places of recreation. The commemoration of these ruins however remains a disputed issue, with opinions ranging from removing all traces of industrial activities from the site of this natural phenomenon to recognising the importance of the socio-cultural influences on the natural environment and to allocating new values and uses to the now abandoned human activities, thus allowing the complete narrative.

Key words: Tswaing meteorite crater, Tswaing salt and soda works, industrial ruins, commemoration

As place is sensed, senses are placed; as places make sense, senses make place.

Feld 1996: 91
Tswana (seTswana for ‘place of salt’), a meteorite crater, lies 40km northwest of the Pretoria CBD, adjacent to the Winterveld and Soshanguve informal and formal settlements on land owned by the National Department of Public Works. The crater and the Tswana Nature Reserve have since 1992 been managed by the Ditsong: National Museum of Cultural History which forms part of an amalgamation of national museums collectively called Ditsong: National Museums of South Africa, a governmental heritage conservation body which was established in terms of the Cultural Institutions Act (Act 119 of 1998).

The Tswana astrobleme occurred approximately 220 000 years ago and left a well preserved crater with a rim diameter of 1.13km. Over time brine-rich water accumulated in the lake in the centre of the crater. Local folklore considers the water in the lake spiritually significant and it is has been used for certain rituals and visited by local peoples for hunting and salt collection since the Middle Stone Age 159 000 years ago (Reimold et al. 1999; Tswana Crater 2015; Eales 2007; Bonner et al. 2007). Bredell (2009) and Reimold et al. (1999) find that local tribes have strong associations with storytelling and mythological beliefs associated with the crater’s unique topographical features, however Bredell (2009) suggests that there is limited written history of this aspect and expresses the concern that related oral traditions are rapidly being lost.

Up to the end of the 19th century the Tswana crater served as the main source of salt for the greater Tshwane area (Reimold et al. 1999). The mineral rich brine and underlying trona (a solid layered form of soda ash), were exploited commercially between 1912 and 1956 during which the SA Alkali Ltd company was granted a mineral mining permit to extract the brine for the production of salt and soda-ash. Reimold et al. (1999: 96-106) describe the history of the factory and the refinery process in detail: Brine was pumped from the lake, temporarily stored in a large reservoir on the crater rim before flowing downhill, through the so-called Mauss’s Cutting to the salt refinery works about a kilometre south of the crater. There it was stored in large shallow open concrete storage tanks (still clearly visible today) to allow warming of the brine before being refined. In figure 1, a model of the surveyed ruins, the extent of the refinery works can be seen.

Figure 1
A model of the Tswana salt works ruins as surveyed in 2012, viewed from the south, northwards to the crater (source: Tenea & Viljoen 2012).
Trona was manually mined and hauled by ox wagon on a cart track which was constructed down the inner rim to the lake and which currently still remains the only vehicular access. For the production of calcined trona, furnaces were constructed and the remains of steel rails for a steam powered hauling engine can still be seen amongst the ruins of the now abandoned factory. As the trona deposits became exhausted, new technologies for the extraction of soda-ash from the mud layer covering the crater’s lake allowed the soda-ash production to continue. These improved technologies and better extraction processes were developed over more than 40 years and led to the addition of many factory structures, refer to figure 2 which shows a section of the factory circa 1921.

Figure 2
The Tswaing soda ash and salt factory in 1921 (source: P.A. Wagner, in Reimold et al. 1999).

Today the corroded remains of the pumping equipment in the lake and decayed concrete structures at the factory site remain mute reminders of the industrial activities which were abandoned in 1956 when the company ceased operations due to financial constraints. Cheaper imports of soda-ash from abroad led the company to shift its focus from producing soda-ash, much of it used in the tanning of leather, to the leather industry itself. In 1954 the company acquired the Silverton Tannery and soon after leather tanning became SA Alkali Ltd.’s main business, it changed its name to the Silverton Tannery Ltd. Parts of the old factory were briefly used from 1958-1961 by another company which attempted to produce salt, but the only remains thereof can be found in a huge stockpile of whitewash (Reimold et al. 1999).

Housing for the workers were built in two areas east of the factory and along the southern crater rim, and ancillary accommodation such as a school, offices and laboratories was also provided. Most were demolished in the early 1970s (Reimold et al. 1999) and only foundations and floor slabs still remain.

The despoliation of the natural area surrounding the crater from continued industrial activities over a period of 49 years only ended in the early 1960s when the government cancelled the mining lease, took back control of the site and declared Tswaing a national museum within a proclaimed nature reserve.
The ruins of the abandoned salt works were picked clean of any valuable remains such as steel roof sheeting, timber, mechanical equipment, so that what remains today are mostly the corroded reinforced concrete structures which continue to decay rapidly due to the corrosive action of the salts on the reinforcing steel (see figures 3 and 4), and creating, what Reimold *et al.* (1999: 105) term “a picturesque ruin”.

![Figure 3](image-url-1)

**Figure 3**
Ruined concrete structures at the Tswaing salt works ruins. Refer to figure 1 to position image (source: Tenea & Viljoen 2012).

![Figure 4](image-url-2)

**Figure 4**
Tswaing salt works ruins now overgrown with grasses and woody species. Refer to figure 1 to position image (source: Tenea & Viljoen 2012).

Except for the area occupied by the salt works, the natural vegetation around, in and on the crater rim has remained largely unspoilt by human activities and as a result constitutes a good example of sour-mixed bushveld (Reimold *et al.* 1999). This portion of natural veld offers a popular reason for nature lovers and hikers to visit the Tswaing Crater conservation area, and
who, according to the curator, make up the majority of the annual visitors (Roelofse 2015 pers. comm.).

Whereas visitors currently mainly focus on the meteorite crater, their hiking trail there takes them past and through the industrial ruins, creating an opportunity to commemorate the socio-economic and cultural history of Tswaing together with its natural history.

The current commemoration dilemma: the crater as a natural vs the salt works as a cultural phenomenon

The meteorite crater, an astronomical and geological natural phenomenon, and the long cultural history of salt collection and which includes the commercial salt production of the now abandoned industrial ruins are inextricably linked, both geographically and functionally, although it can be argued that the crater doesn’t ‘need’ the salt works whereas the latter depended on the extraction of brine from the crater. Visitors to the Tswaing Crater Museum today do so primarily to view the meteorite crater in its natural surrounds, whereas the history of salt collection and commercial extraction remains largely untold.

In order to develop an approach that addresses the question of what, if anything, deserves to be commemorated in the case of Tswaing, the concepts of cultural heritage, heritage sites, museums and ruins need to be investigated. Heritage in this context is seen as the cultural ancestry, legacy or inheritance specific to the Tswaing site; a heritage site can therefore be described as being or containing artefacts of special cultural and/or physical significance. Since museums are generally defined as institutions where artefacts of cultural, historic and scientific interest are housed and displayed, the buildings that remain at Tswaing, although ruined, are themselves the artefacts of a historical and cultural past, thus the whole site, being a heritage site should be described as a museum and not only the crater as a geological natural phenomenon.

The only difference between the traditional museum where the displayed artefacts are often dislocated from their context, and what is proposed for Tswaing, is that the latter should be a living museum, where artefacts are displayed in their context thus allowing a narrative that tells the story of both a natural and a cultural phenomenon.

The Tswaing crater currently attracts on average only 14 000 visitors per year (Roelofse 2015 pers. comm.). These relatively low figures can be ascribed to:

- Very limited visitor oriented facilities such as a museum for smaller or loose artefacts, displays, restaurants and information kiosks. In this regard Stone (cited in Stone & Molyneaux 1994: 16) points out that there is no empirical evidence that proves that a greater understanding of the archaeological (in this case more geological) history of a given site alone will ensure any greater level of protection and support for that site or for any other site, thus confirming that such sites require additional and supporting facilities to attract visitors.

- Limited directional signage to the crater itself for visitors after parking their cars.

- The public safety hazard that the salt works ruins currently pose (visitors are warned away).

- The close proximity of informal settlements and a tortuous and inadequate sign-posted vehicular access road from the nearby N1 highway to the Tswaing Nature Reserve.

One could argue that the crater should have far more visitors bearing in mind that the geologically well conserved Tswaing crater is the only meteorite crater within a radius of 200km and the site is relatively close to the large urban populations of Gauteng. The closest other meteorite crater
can be found in the largely eroded 300km diameter Vredefort Dome impact structure to the south. This is believed to be the world’s oldest and largest known crater and was caused by a huge meteorite some 2020 million years ago (NRF-HRAO 2015; Eales 2007). The crater rim has however been eroded to such an extent that it is only discernible to the trained eye.

**Goal**

Bredell’s (2009) aim in her dissertation was to investigate the potential integration of the intangible dimension of meaning, memory and lived experience of the industrial ruins into the tangible components of landscape architecture and architecture, and as she states (2009: 3/01) it was “To investigate the potential of re-utilising existing structures to retain both the physical and metaphysical memory related to the site by means of an analysis based on the principles of the Burra Charter”. This cultural heritage conservation charter, developed by the Australian ICOMOS Chapter, proposes three levels of repair for heritage structures (Government of South Australia s.a.), i.e.:

- **Preservation** - Conserving a historical site in its existing state and preventing further decay or deterioration.
- **Restoration** - To restore a site to a pre-determined earlier state or era by removing all additions built after the elected era or to reassemble existing elements without adding new materials.
- **Reconstruction** - essentially the same as for restoration but allowing new materials to be introduced.

If we accept that the industrial ruins are intrinsically part of the Tswaing site and its cultural history, should they then be either demolished and only a palimpsest kept, or their further decay halted (i.e. preserved), or conserved and restored, or recycled, i.e. given a new function and lease of life? It is proposed that a structuralist mode of reasoning be followed in responding to this question, where structuralism is described by Phillips (s.a.) as the theory or discourse that studies the underlying structures of signification and suggests that elements of human culture can only be understood in terms of their relationship to the larger, overarching system.

The goal of this article will therefore be to determine if and how the ruins of the Tswaing salt works should play a role in the commemoration of the natural and cultural heritage of the Tswaing meteorite crater.

To commemorate Tswaing as a place of memory today will require an approach that accepts the plurality of the natural and man-made histories of the site. By way of contrast and as an example of how memory of a cultural landscape can be deleted, Nadenicek (1999: 72) discusses the naturalistic approach which was taken at the picturesque and well known Minnehaha Falls in Minneapolis in the US where, while “…in truth it has been pretty difficult for poetic fiction to cover up all the disfiguring traces of man…”, all remnants of old structures and ruins were removed in order to re-establish a ‘wild, natural landscape undisturbed by man’.

**The nature of industrial ruins**

The existence of industrial ruins and abandoned industrial sites are the unavoidable results of a capitalist system whose sole motive is the search for profit; abandoned factories lose their purpose and meaning in the wider socio-economic network of the time (Edensor 2005: 4, 64; Scott 2008: 17). Edensor (2005: 21, 68, 166) finds that industrial ruins are most often classified as ‘scars on the landscape’ or ‘wastelands’ of no value and are thus considered worthless by their
association with the economic decline of the erstwhile industrial activities and since they cannot
now be accommodated in a new economic order.

He nevertheless contests the notion that “…ruins are spaces of waste, that contain nothing
of value, and that they are saturated with negativity as spaces of danger, delinquency, ugliness

When an account of an industrial ruin is to be made, it could focus purely on the history
of the place, what was produced, by whom and why it was abandoned. An alternative and
sometimes supplementary account would be to analyse and describe the ruin in a wider socio-
cultural context and to capture the sensual immanence of the experience of moving through
the ruin (Edensor 2005: 15). One such sense stimulated by being within a ruin is the muted
soundscape, “…the peculiar quiescence of the ruined factory causes one to pay attention, and
thereby the soundscape is haunted by an absence of noise” (ibid. 2005: 149). The olfactory
sense is stimulated by the rich mixed aroma of mouldering decay, wild flowers and grasses and
of specific previous manufacturing processes, contrasting with the deodorised smell-scape of
contemporary buildings (ibid. 2005: 91, 92).

Depending on what level of conservation, restoration or re-use they are subjected to,
industrial ruins can find new expression in many ways. Ruins as nature reserves, heterotopias,
tourist destinations, and places of recreation or museums will be briefly discussed.

**Ruins as nature reserves**

Where ruins occur on large abandoned sites, whether they are urban, peri-urban or rural, Edensor
(2005: 42) finds that these are also sites which teem with life forms and since such spaces are
no longer policed or cleansed to minimise non-human intrusions, fauna and flora show their
resilience by colonising abandoned spaces (refer to figures 3 and 4). Cloke and Jones (2002)
point out that the agency of insects, birds, mammals, fungi, shrubs, flowering plants and trees are
showcased in the constitution of the urban and its ruinous remains, despite their often wrongly
assumed absence. Edensor (2005: 44) observes that:

...factories, which were devoted to the transformation of nature in the form of raw materials into
manufactured goods, when ruined, return to nature once more, and are subject to its temporalities as
the illusion of permanence dissolves.

He (ibid. 2005: 50) suggests that as a result of the foregoing, the ecological value of such
post-industrial abandoned sites can be high. At intensively ‘policed’ sites where herbicides and
pesticides are applied to discourage weeds and problematic fauna, the ecological diversity is
often low, whereas at abandoned ruins the opposite holds. Plant succession is very obvious in
ruins; weeds and grasses first colonise an abandoned place, preparing the environment for larger
perennials and lastly woody species (see figures 3 and 4). With each succession stage comes an
increased number of faunal species that can inhabit the ruins.

**Ruins as heterotopias**

The philosopher Michel Foucault perceived places like museums or cemeteries as heterotopias
(from the Greek héteros: other, another, different and topos: place): spaces that have multiple
layers of meaning or different relationships that are not always obvious at a first glance. He
(1967: 6-7) refers to the heterotopia of place as being capable of “juxtaposing in a single real
place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible” and he uses a cemetery as an example of a heterotopia of time (or the “otherness” of time), where for the individual the cemetery is a manifestation of this strange heterochrony of the loss of life but also the beginning of the quasi-eternity of the tombstone. He also refers to museums, where objects from different places and times are enclosed in one space. These objects existed in their own time, but now also outside of time since they are kept and preserved from the ravages of time.

The question may well be put whether the Tswaing salt works ruins can be conserved, restored or redeveloped into a heterotopia of time and place; a place (a museum) where historical, functional and chronologically disjunctive characteristics are juxtaposed?

Edensor (2005: 42) argues that while in romantic times classical and rural ruins were typically represented in the work of painters and poets, the imagery and aesthetics of contemporary industrial ruins are mainly portrayed through cinema, albeit often in a negative sense as places where criminal activities prevail or as a glimpse into a dystopian future; thus an altered, restored and re-used ruin can serve as a heterotopia, juxtaposing past with future, old functions with new uses, failed enterprises with new endeavours.

**Ruins as tourist destinations and places of recreation and leisure**

Edensor (2005: 50) suggests that far from being vacant waste spaces, industrial ruins could be well woven into leisure practices, ranging from the carnivalesque to the experimental to the mundane, and he finds it (ibid. 2005: 10) ironic that the possible multiple uses of ruins and derelict land as playgrounds are not more often considered when land is identified for spaces of play. He shows that ruins often serve as alternative play spaces for children and adults and suggests (ibid. 2005: 82) that industrial ruins harbour a wealth of “possible niches, paths, stairs, openings tactile surfaces which invite physical exploration”. Such play or recreational activities attract the ‘urban explorers’ to the physicality and thrill of exploring ‘dangerous and unknown’ spaces such as tunnels, basement, shafts, drains, disused quarries, etc. Stanley (1996) suggests that the disordered movement of a *flâneur* in an abandoned ruined building also creates alternative spatial networks to evolve in the interstitial spaces between the dominant previous orderings and Edensor (2005: 87, 95) finds that ruins degenerate into labyrinthine structures which offer the visitor many paths to choose from; this in contrast with more formal tourism, which is typically staged, disciplined, regulated and focussed around familiar and famous sights and which provides the tourist with pre-packaged information along a pre-determined route.

**Ruins as museums**

Edensor (2005: 133) argues that:

> The heritage industry tends to mobilise specific ways of remembering the pasts of places. In servicing the requirements of commodification and the need to tell a coherent, seamless story about the way things were, heritage banishes ambiguity and innumerable ways of interpreting the past to compile a series of potted stories and spatially regulated displays. Thus there is an associative imperative to arrest decay, hence to freeze time, best exemplified in the preservation of buildings and forms of urbanity or rurality which are believed to capture a specific and aesthetically championed period.

He then adds (ibid. 2005: 136) that “In the same way that visitors are expected to comport themselves ‘appropriately’ around ‘memoryscapes’, the museum encourages visitors ‘to comply with a programme of organised walking’”.

39
Should the Tswaing salt works become a museum, restored to the ‘golden age’ of its industrial past activities? Apart from the fact that so much of the built fabric has either been removed or in an advanced state of decay, one might argue that, seen in the context of the whole site, the importance of the meteorite event overshadows a mere 49 years of man’s interventions and thus the focus should be on commemorating the natural event, as is proposed by Naude (2014 pers. comm.). On the other hand a recognition, through a commemoration of the remainders of a cultural history and perhaps by means of preserving the ruins and providing a display of selected fragments of the industrial past would seem the most appropriate approach in the case of Tswaing.

**The continuum of dealing with ruins – from demolition to conservation to restoration, reuse and recycle**

Scott (2008: 47) suggests that the often contested views of how to deal with ruins can be traced back to the 19th century when contrasting approaches regarding restoration emerged, “The first appears to be an argument for license to alter, and the other is an opposite admonition against meddling”.

When dealing with ruins with the aim to commemorate the tangible and intangibles of the place, the approach needs to consider the options in a continuum of possible interventions that range from total demolition and removal, to conservation, or to varying extents of restoration, alteration and re-use; in Figure 5 this range of possible interventions is graphically illustrated. This continuum of options differs from the Burra Charter’s three level approach which neither considers total demolition and removal, nor restoration, alteration and re-use as possibilities.

As some of the precedents will later show, the approaches followed to commemorate ruins are often a combination of the above interventions, or they lie somewhere in between on the continuum.

**Remove all traces of the ruin**

The most extreme way of dealing with a ruin, that of total removal and demolition, often also denies even a palimpsest of a previous order to remain. In the case of the Tswaing salt works there is compelling reason to remove, what is consider by some, a man-made blight on a unique natural phenomenon.

Naude (2014 pers. comm.) contends that the Tswaing crater is primarily a geological occurrence and not a manmade site and that this should guide the various approaches at the disposal of the designers and planners for any appropriate commemoration. He maintains that
any proposed “new work” or human interventions must remain sympathetic to the geological event and its physical and visual remains, “The crater remains the monumental element to be celebrated and not the manmade features”. However, should this approach be implemented, it may well lead to the disappearance of all traces of the socio-industrial legacy of Tswaing.

**Do nothing – allow decay**

The second option of no intervention and which leads to gradual (or accelerated) decay, holds the risk that the tangible aspects worthy of commemoration are gradually destroyed through weathering, corrosion or vandalism, losing its context and often becoming a public safety hazard. As can be seen from figure 6, the extent of decay at Tswaing’s ruins is severe.

![Figure 6](source: Tenea & Viljoen 2012)

*Decaying concrete structures at the Tswaing salt works ruins. Refer to figure 1 to position image*

Edensor (2005: 114, 4) finds that “Things give up their solidity, their form, yielding to the processes which reveal them as aggregations of matter, erasing their objective boundaries…” and adds:

Some [ruins] are left to linger and decay for decades, turning into heaps of rubble over the years, whilst others stay for a while until the first signs of decay take hold and are then demolished, and some are eradicated shortly after abandonment. Often a ruined space is marked only by a vast expanse of concrete flooring…

The current conditions of the Tswaing industrial ruins reflect this, perhaps unintended, approach to conservation of the authorities. As can be seen from Figures 3, 4 and 6 only decayed ruins of concrete structures remain.

Edensor (2005: 24) cautions that as soon as entry is gained into an industrial ruin, the denizens of the informal economy go to work, removing anything of value such as metal and timber components; windows, doors and roofing, often leaving only the low value, difficult to extract components such as reinforced concrete. This selective ‘picking’ leaves the buildings vulnerable to accelerated weathering and decay, as may currently be seen at the Tswaing salt works ruins.
**Halt decay**

The third approach, that of stopping further decay by limited intervention, leaves the ruin as a partial recollection of a previous era, at best containing enough artefacts that can narrate the history in an understandable way and to later generations for whom the context may already be lost. At worst the partially preserved ruin becomes a meaningless museum conveying no history.

Scott (2008: 96) in citing Kahn, suggests that a ruin is a building “able to speak, to say how it is made. The common result of ruination is loss of enclosure. A ruin then has qualities of transparency…” and he then adds that “The ruin allows privileged views from previously inaccessible viewpoints, and from these it offers a fresh explanation of itself”.

In a cautionary note Edensor (2005: 141) however warns against allocating too much value to a ruin and he suggests that a ruin, as an allegory of memory, is at best “…fragmentary, imperfect, partial and thoroughly incomplete”. This view is contested by Venter (2015 pers. comm.) who suggests that the free attribution of meaning is more possible when some of the prescriptive meaning which goes with structure is absent; a visitor will not necessarily want to understand how the industry functioned, but will assign meaning to what remains.

Scott (2008: 58), ironically and somewhat provocatively, states that preserving a ruin is a very peculiar practice and asks “if the process of ruination should have produced such a valuable result, why would further ruination not increase the value?”

**Restore the ruin**

The fourth level of commemoration, that of restoring the ruin to a pre-determined previous era (often representative of the heyday of the site’s industrial activities) can be seen as the ultimate form of conservation; resulting in a physical recreation of a past era, frozen in time and contextually often now inappropriate. Scott (2008: 10) argues that the motivation for the conservation of a building is based as much upon “…commemorating lost social and political aspirations as upon the material preservation of architectonic form” and finds that in order to maintain the rituals of function after a building has become obsolete, would merely “promote the farce of repeated history, behaviour without conviction…”. Orbasli (2000: 1) contests this view and when emphasising that conservation is not merely an architectural deliberation but also an economic and social issue, cites Rogers (1982) who points out “we must realise that maintaining structures means maintaining the desirability or continuity of a culture – we are in fact conserving cultures not buildings”.

To illustrate the contested difference between conservation and restoration, Scott (2008: 63) postulates that the often encountered term in architecture of ‘making good’ is well thought to equate to conservation as a common-place procedure, both innocuous and unassuming, but cautions that “any attempt to return a building, if only a part, to any previous condition is not conservation but restoration”. He cites the continuous maintenance of an iconic building such as Le Corbusier’s Villa Savoye as continuous restoration.

**Restoration, alteration, recycle and re-use**

The opposite end of the commemoration continuum is occupied by an approach of restoration, not for the purposes of conserving a specific past era but of altering and recycling the site or building to a new function and retaining only selected reminders of the past.
Scott (2008: 124) suggests that restoration work requires an interpretation of the historical value and consequent judgement on what should be done and he finds that in all approaches to ‘making good’ “the delusion of the difference between conservation and restoration should be borne in mind. There is no difference.” He furthermore (ibid. 2008: 11) suggests that alterations to an abandoned building constitute an alternative to preservation or demolition and will allow a building an extended life beyond their time; at the same time he cautions that the “…process of change to facilitate re-colonization will tend to usurp a building’s initial integrity and create mongrel buildings.” In this regard Edensor (2005: 131) suggests that in recent times the traditional imprinting of memory on space has been expanded latterly by the evolution of a politics of conservation…where status is expressed through the possession and occupation of renovated offices, or formerly industrial or commercial buildings converted into upmarket accommodation. With signatures of the past encoded into lamp-posts, signs and other street furniture, the apparent age-value of location is central to the rehabilitation of such places and the cities in which they occur.

Following on this he (ibid. 2005: 131-132) questions how decisions are made about which fragments or artefacts from the ruin are kept, refurbished, re-used or commodified versus which spatial and material debris is neglected, dumped or buried. He believes the answer lies in for whom (the new users) the ruin is refurbished or the memory manufactured but cautions that this approach may lead to the removal of so many fragments that that the landscape as palimpsest can be difficult to decode in its remanufactured appearance.

Scott (2008: 79) postulates that introducing new life into an old building is in many ways like translation, the carrying over of the host building from one age to another. As suggested before, the undertaking of making good and new works, including the inevitable incipient restoration, may be thought of as akin to transcription or translation, the carrying across of a building …from the past to the present.

However, as he points out (ibid. 2008: 81), the obvious difference between translation and rehabilitation is that with translation the original literary work can be left behind entirely untouched, whereas with rehabilitation the interventionist works directly on the original and possibly alters it irrevocably. William Morris (cited in Scott 2008: 17) maintained that if new work was to be done in an old building, then it should be in a contemporary style; nevertheless he insisted that all insertions were to be reversible, that is, could be removed without leaving a trace. Edensor (2005: 98) advances the notion of while recognising the need for redevelopment of an industrial ruin, the history of the site should be respected and emphasised.

To preserve some or to restore and re-use other of Ts'waaing’s industrial ruins will require a major architectural and structural intervention due to the extent of decay and vandalism. Some of the concrete components will probably require supports or props. In this regard Scott (2008: 118), in referring to the writings of Ruskin and Morris on the legitimacy of a prop or a crutch to conserve the structural integrity of a building, and who suggested that the prop should merely maintain a spatial relationship of the parts under threat of collapse in a straight forward and honest manner, nevertheless suggests that the prop or support should have an integrity and distinction of its own that is separate from the parts it supports.

Scott (2008: 144) cautions on the scale of intervention or restoration, referring to the significance of context in an urban scale or in a collection of ruined buildings of which only one survives in a restored state; as an example he refers to the incongruity of a restored St. Giles and the Barbican in London now surrounded by modern high-rises.
Scott (2008: 153) finds that “Buildings are taken over in the recurrent victory of the living over the dead, new ways of life replacing the old. The object of alteration is to translate a building into the present, in so doing making it suit a modern way of life.” In the same vein he finds that restoration projects which attempt to reinstate the life once lived there, or make good industrial processes once followed there, are delusional, seen in the light of alteration being a form of translation. He holds (ibid. 2008: 153) that:

In the pursuit of the recolonization of an altered building, it is easier to understand that, within limits, function will fit to space in a way that is an inversion of the founding law of functionalism, of form following function. The imprecision of fitting space to use is of course a necessary condition of any change of use being visited upon the built environment.

If the ruin can be restored, altered and re-used in a manner that neither clings to a past that has no current context, nor takes on a new form that offers only tokenism to its past, Scott (2008: 126) suggests that the ruin should then be seen as the means by which a building addresses its past, recognises the present and guides future uses.

**Precedents**

Five case studies are discussed to illustrate some of the interventions that can be made to commemorate industrial ruins.

**Do nothing, allow decay**

The Santa Laura nitrate refining works (established in 1872) lie 48km east of the town of Iquique in the Atacama desert in northern Chile and is a telling example of an approach where the main architectural features, i.e. the sheds which housed the saltpeter refinement and packaging works are left to decay, albeit in an environment where the wind and sun are the only weathering factors; rain is effectively non-existent (see figure 7). Loose artefacts remaining from its operational life, such as furniture, small tools and appliances are however kept in a partly restored office building which now serves as a museum. The nitrate refinery ceased operations in 1929 when the development of synthetic ammonia in Germany led to the collapse of the natural nitrates industry which, up to that stage had supplied most of the world’s nitrates used in fertilisers and explosives. By 1960 Santa Laura had become a ghost town but was declared a National Monument in 1970 to protect the buildings from further looting, demolition and decay and in 2005 the site was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

A more recent example of the ‘do nothing, allow decay’ approach can be found in Motor City in Detroit in the USA. These, now 60 years old abandoned ruins of the erstwhile hub of the American automotive industry, tell the story of an industry which collapsed due to changing world markets and new technologies. The production of automotive parts for a world market shifted to other countries, mainly in the Far East and developing countries where the cost of labour was more affordable and the USA’s dominance in this industry was thus challenged.
Halt decay through limited conservation

Humberstone, the nitrate refinery village established in 1862 and adjoining Santa Laura was also declared a National Monument in 1970 and a World Heritage Site in 2005 (see figure 8). It served as the centre from where refined nitrates, sourced from nitrate works such as Santa Laura and many others, were taken by rail to the export harbour of Iquique, and is an example of an approach where the main architectural features, i.e. the civic and commercial buildings, including schools, hospital, market, swimming pool and town theatre were restored to a specific era of its history and which now serves as a museum town (see figure 9). Humberstone’s decline is linked to that of Santa Laura in terms of chronology and causal effects.
Restoration, alteration and re-use

Pilgrim’s Rest is a village in Mpumalanga, South Africa which developed during the gold rush of 1873 and, when the gold reserves were economically depleted by the late 1960s, the village faced the risk of falling into a ruinous state; only for the then provincial government to take ownership and restore the rich architectural and industrial heritage. The village was declared a National Monument in 1986 and in 2004 was added to the UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List. However, in order for the historical village to remain economically viable, many of the buildings were recycled to house new functions such as shops, museums, tourist information centres and the like. Pilgrim’s Rest has now become a popular tourist destination; thus an example of total restoration, alteration and re-use. Gold mining commenced again in 1998 in the hilly area around the village.

Edensor (2005: 35) describes the Duisberg Nord landscape park, part of the Emscher Exhibition Park development in the Ruhr valley in Germany (designed by landscape architects Peter and Michael Latz and completed in 2002) as an impressive example of the commemoration of an abandoned industrial landscape where steel coke plants, blast furnaces and ore bunkers have been transformed into giant sculptures, usable spaces, play equipment and recreational areas (see figure 10). He quotes the brothers Latz (2005: 35) who said “fantasy should allow us to use the abstraction of the existing structures in new ways, and so adapt the present system of organization to the appearance of chaos” This case study is an example of partial restoration and alteration with many new interventions which enabled the ruins to be re-used in a new context. Edensor (2005: 35) concludes his critique of the Duisberg Nord landscape park by finding that:

By allowing the reclamation of ruined space by plants and animals to simply occur in certain areas, by decontaminating blighted spots, and through the deliberate fabrication of ponds, meadows and spectacular gardens, the designers have created a hybrid melange in which some places have been creatively transformed whilst others have been left alone.
Future options for Tswaing

To commemorate the Tswaing crater, commemorating the industrial ruins becomes a necessary complementary approach. Various options exist for this approach; ranging from demolishing any remains of the industrial ruins and perhaps allowing only a palimpsest, to leaving the ruin to further decay in-situ, to a range of conservation interventions and to a restoration, alteration and re-use option. Hunt (1999: 21) calls the *genius loci* of a place, or telling the story of some place, a fundamental element of all design interventions, ranging from conservation to alteration, restoration and re-use, “If the designer draws out, reaffirms the meaning of a site – whether that theme or narrative is ideological or geomorphological, general or site-specific – he celebrates a site’s identity.”

Treib (1999: 82) argues that:

Humans imbue landscape with memory using several vehicles…The most direct action maintains the historical form of the land: preservation… . A second means of commemoration retains the noteworthy elements of the original landscape, … perhaps a building typology…. 

Wolschke-Bulmahn (1999: 5) asks: “Might new generations that have no personal experience of the events commemorated need a more distinctive, more clearly explanatory, and perhaps more provocative design” to understand or experience the commemorative qualities of the site? When this question is directed at Tswaing the answer should be affirmative: the Tswaing meteorite crater, set in the mostly natural landscape of its own conservation reserve but also impacted on by the man-made interventions of the abandoned salt works, constitutes a worthy case for commemoration. A well-considered and sympathetic conversion of the derelict industrial ruined spaces into a viable tourist destination will assist in the commemoration of a natural event and the associated human activities that benefitted from this event. Commemoration of the crater as such is ostensibly clear-cut due to its size and extent of the crater rim which has survived centuries of natural erosion. The commemoration of the cultural landscape can be enhanced by making access to the crater easier through interventions such as dedicated walkways, footpaths, viewpoints, appropriate signage, displays and visitors’ infrastructure such as toilets, refreshment centres and overnight accommodation for hikers. However, in any approach to
the commemoration of Tswaing as a living museum, the three core functions of a museum or heritage site should be achieved:

- Research, to determine the site’s cultural significance,
- Conservation, to determine the most appropriate strategy to retain and manage the site, and
- Communication, to determine the best ways the site is presented to the visitor.

The spectacular cantilevered Grand Canyon Skywalk in the USA, commissioned and owned by the local Hualapai Indian tribe comes to mind as a good precedent of a natural phenomenon conversion and reuse. The fact that the tribe benefits financially hugely from this project can furthermore motivate the development of the Tswaing crater and the surrounding cultural landscape. Some efforts have been made by the National Cultural History Museum to engage with the surrounding settlements; this has resulted in the establishment of the Tswaing Forum in 1993 and whose mission statement reads (Reimold et al. 1999: 117):

The Tswaing Crater museum is a non-aligned independent people’s project for the conservation and sustainable utilisation of the environmental (natural, cultural, human) resources of the Tswaing area. Resources will be provided for environmental management and education, training, research, tourism, and recreation. This is done in a democratic, participatory manner to enrich the quality of life of people in a healthy environment.

Whereas many initiatives have since then been taken to achieve these lofty ideals, a visit to the site indicated that the local surrounding communities seem to be indifferent to this tourist resource; this is despite their historical connection to the crater. The Gauteng Provincial Government has nominated Tswaing as a possible UNESCO World Heritage Site and it is hoped that should this be awarded, more resources will be made available to fully realise the potential of this natural and cultural phenomenon. Nadenicek (1999: 55) finds that the commemoration of landscapes, in its broadest sense, is made easier on sites such as conservation areas or reserves which have been secured, protected by legislation and thereby made accessible to future visitors.

Another approach to the sustainable commemoration of Tswaing’s natural and cultural heritage would be to consider the concept of culture houses, or in a South African context referred to as cultural villages as a means to attract more visitors. Janse van Veuren (2004: 139) finds that ‘cultural tourism’ constitutes a significant portion of the tourism market but points out that despite the assumption that local peoples that originate and maintain a culture should derive the most benefit from cultural tourism, a number of international studies have noted the trend of outsiders capitalising on indigenous cultural resources. This holds true particularly where the local communities are marginalised as is the case with Tswaing surrounded by informal settlements.

Ucko (1994: 244-256) describes the establishment and success of culture houses in Zimbabwe since 1980. These centres, established or supposedly in the process of being established in each of Zimbabwe’s local administrative districts, will provide a focal setting for a local museum, library, arts and crafts and multi-functional activities. Material and other artefacts of local interest are to be gathered and displayed in these culture houses by local people who will then become the custodians of their historical and traditional heritage. Ucko (1994: 246, 248, 250) finds that while in all but one of the 55 local administrative districts the support for the concept of a culture house was originally overwhelmingly positive, the implementation of the programme had by 1994 however only resulted in the establishment of the Murewa culture house near Harare. This project, at first criticized for its lack of sufficient consultation with the local populace, is however now described as being successful in many aspects; the lack of adequate
quantities of locally relevant artefacts in the museum and the absence of commercial activities such as restaurants and craft shops are still seen as restraints in achieving original goals. Insofar as ‘cultural villages’, which have much the same objectives as those in Zimbabwe, have been established in South Africa, Jansen van Veuren (2004: 140) found that by 2004 there were 27 such cultural villages and she suggests that apart from township tours, tourism to these cultural villages constitute the main form of cultural tourism in South Africa. Whereas few would argue that the *raison d’être* for cultural villages or culture houses is the conservation of indigenous culture, the success and long term sustainability of these enterprises are determined by other factors such as access to funding, financial profitability, job creation, skill sets of the local community employed at such sites and which includes their ability to communicate in English and their knowledge of the history commemorated. Tswaing’s history of salt collection, first by local indigenous people since the Middle Stone Age 159 000 years ago to the commercial salt and soda-ash production of the 20th century could well be best preserved and displayed in a local museum as a supplementary attraction in such a cultural village.

Andah (1990: 152) looks forward to time when “The museum can begin to be transformed from a reservoir of folklore for tourists thirsting for exotics, to a living image of the past, a source of culture, crossroad for ethnic culture, a symbol of national unity”. In this regard he envisages a museum to serve the function of the traditional African market where informal and formal education and indabas can be hosted, and where commerce, the production of arts and crafts and recreational activities are encouraged.

The commemoration of the industrial ruins however will remain a disputed issue, with strong opinions ranging from removing all traces of human activities to recognising the complementing importance of the socio-cultural influences on the natural phenomenon and to allocating new values and uses to the now abandoned human interventions, thus allowing a complete narrative. This latter approach, and which is described in figure 5 as “Various levels of restoration, alteration and re-use” is therefore proposed when an appropriate form of commemoration of the Tswaing salt works is contemplated. This approach can also be termed structuralist; in that the designers of any commemorative works at Tswaing should identify the relationship between tangible and intangible elements and consider the social structures that can contribute to the design. The following quote from Damisch (1980: 86) supports such an approach:

> One of the clearest tenets of Structuralism is that it is possible to recognize a philosophical system – or at least the main elements of its structure – from any one part and the way that part reacts to the other constituent unities and defines itself in relation to them…A single expression, one element of [a] narrative, has no intrinsic value – or even meaning unless it is in its rightful position in the system.

Museums are important vehicles to represent the past, not only from the parochial view of only one aspect of history or of the dominant society’s values, beliefs and norms, but rather to record and display a full and comprehensive narrative of the biophysical and socio-cultural history. Museum displays can influence the public perceptions of history (Mazel & Ritchie 1994) and the use of realistic ‘reconstructions’ and ‘living’ history museums will make history ‘come alive’.

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In this article South African architecture is currently searching for a unique identity and character. Globalisation, amongst others, contributed directly to an absence of architectural character. The result is a degree of placelessness in the South African built environment. In contrast, the Critical Regionalist theory resists the homogenisation in the built environment. This is frequently achieved by acknowledging the region’s potential, while re-interpreting external cultural influences. The resultant building design aims to be appropriate to its specific time and place. This notion promotes a design method focusing on analysing architecture. This paper graphically analyses four custom-designed South African houses at the hand of the characteristics and principles of Critical Regionalism in an attempt to identify the underlying traits of local architectural identity. Although only four case studies were analysed, the research confirms the existence of an architectural response that meets the criteria of Critical Regionalism, within the selected population. Consequently, it is argued that South African architecture could hold a regional and global relevance that extends beyond imagery only. This paper briefly reviews the requirements of Critical Regionalism by referring to pertinent theoretical contributors and advancing a new model for South Africa. This is translated into the graphic matrix used for analysing four custom-designed South African houses. As part of any design process, the architectural practitioner could follow this analytical attempt at analysing relevant South African architecture.

**Key words:** Critical Regionalism, local identity, custom-designed house, analysis

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**Die plaaslike identiteit van die doelgemaakte Suid-Afrikaanse huis**

In hierdie artikel bestaan daar tans ’n soeke in Suid-Afrikaanse argitektuur na ’n unieke identiteit en karakter. Tesame met ander faktore het globalisering bygedra tot die verlies aan argitektoniese kenmerke. Die gevolg is ’n mate van plekloosheid in die Suid-Afrikaansebeboude omgewing. In ’n sekere sin kritiseer die benadering van Kritiese Regionalisme in argitektuur die wêreldwye homogene karakter van geboue. Die ideale van kritiese regionalisme word meestal bereik deur die erkenning van ’n bepaalde strek strekpotensiaal tydens die herinterpretasie van eksterne kulturele invloede. Die ontwerpte en/of doelgemaakte gebou word toepaslik tot ’n spesifieke tyd en plek. Hierdie ontwerp benadering is dikwels gefokus op die herinterpretasie van argitektuur. Hierdie artikel gebruik die voorafgemelde grafiiese metodes en analiseer vier Suid-Afrikaanse huise aan die hand van die beginsels van Kritiese Regionalisme. Hereur poog die auteurs om die voorkoms van ’n onderliggende plaaslike argitektoniese identiteit te identifiseer binne die geselekteerde populasie. Alhoewel slegs vier doelgemaakte Suid-Afrikaanse huise ontleed is, bevestig die studie ’n argitektoniese reaksie wat voldoen aan die kriteria van Kritiese Regionalisme. Die ideaal is ’n Suid-Afrikaanse argitektuur wat oor beide ’n plaaslike en universele toepassing beskik, wat meer verteenwoordig as slegs die oppervlakkige beeld. As deel van die inleiding tot hierdie artikel word die vereistes van Kritiese Regionalisme kortliks bespreek met verwysing na verskillende medewerkers en die daarstelling van ’n Suid-Afrikaanse model. Hierdie model word vertaal en gebruik tydens die grafiiese ontleiding van die vier doelgemaakte Suid-Afrikaanse huise. Die student in argitektuur en die praktisyn van argitektuur kan insgeliks hierdie analitiessie pogings gebruik tydens die ontwerp proses wat poog om ’n relevante Suid-Afrikaanse argitektuur tot gevolg te hê.

**Sleutelwoorde:** Kritiese Regionalisme, plaaslike identiteit, doelgemaakte huis, dekodering
According to Aldo Van Eyck, as quoted in Pallasmaa, “architecture must facilitate man’s homecoming” (2007: 130). Although the origin of this statement is unsure, it presents the reader with a number of questions, namely:

- What is the context from where the person is coming?
- What are the character traits of the architecture that serve as destination?

With the aforementioned quotation as premise, it could be argued that the variations in the South African landscape, its diverse mixture of cultures and the nuanced range of its languages, among others, should serve as basis for the homecoming of its inhabitants. The intention of the research undertaken was to identify the epistemological roots of architecture that mediate between local and international influences. At times, the two influencing forces could be described as opposing in its attempt to create a functional, humane and expressive built environment.

Afrikaners must find their own Nkandla,” said Jacob Zuma in an interview with Beeld (February 2011). He was referring, of course, not to a physical location but a psychological home – “where he’s safe and has the freedom and confidence to live and express the things that are important to him. [...] For example,” says Zuma, “I work in Cape Town and Pretoria, but then I want to go to Nkandla [in rural Kwazulu-Natal]. That’s where I belong. I feel at home when I’m there…” (du Toit and Steenkamp 2011).

During the last millennium, South African architecture often relied on the irregular appropriation of imported traditions to shape the built environment. During this period, indigenous building and living traditions were displaced by successive waves of colonising forces. During the era of Apartheid, the official policy of segregation contributed directly to spatial dissonance. This could serve as a partial explanation for the current lack of cohesive and recognisable architectural identity.

This research explores multivalent practices and theories relating to regionalism. Specifically, the idea of Critical Regionalism, as manifested in the custom–designed South African house, is investigated. This exploration of the built form is based on the premise that
local identity, culture and place are essential components for the creation of relevant architectural expressions. The aim of this investigation is to demonstrate how regionalist principles could be transferred between different places and generations while remaining contextual, contemporary and relevant.

The house as experiment

Although the idea of using the house as a laboratory for architectural ideas is almost clichéd, it could be argued that this building typology has sparked inventive paradigm shifts in architectural theory and practice. Villa Fallet (1906), the Farnsworth house (1951) and House Gehry in Santa Monica (with its staged completion of in 1978, 1979 and 1988) serve as example of individual houses acting as prelude to the development of theoretical expressions and changes in architectural identity. Other examples include the Robie house (1910) and villa Savoye (1931). “As singular entities, each [house] not only summarises and encapsulates the preoccupations of their authors, but also serves as polemic manifestos for other traditions” (Gregory 2007: 37). Gregory further argues that the house as building typology represents a consistent scale where patterns could be discerned without difficulty.

The projects selected for the research were limited to the custom–designed house. It is argued that the house as artefact represents the designer’s relationship with local culture, building techniques, and site. By analysing the architect’s design response to the specific characteristics of the site, it is possible to reveal the custom–designed house as demonstration of local identity. The population studied reveal structures that are regionally unique and culturally appropriate to a large extent.

Figure 3
Prospects for Critical Regionalism

In 1941, Lewis Mumford stated “the development of a true regional expression is a time consuming process in which the most appropriate expression for that moment is often the last to emerge after a series of experiments” (2007: 100–101).

“We have not made a checklist of physical design criteria of how to be a Critical Regionalist... its general poetics become specific drawing from the regional, circumscribed constraints which have produced places and collective representations in given bound areas” (Tzonis and Lefaivre 1996: 490). The issue of identity remains central in any discussion on regionalism. Within this approach, attempts to reconcile regional differences are paramount. It serves to liberate indigenous and/or suppressed cultures. Critical Regionalism specifically allows difference and pluralism in architecture and societies alike. The practice is based on inclusivity with resultant evolutionary forms that are aware of local life, culture and the environment. This fluid nature necessitates a multitude of regionalisms. According to Pavlides, “the same regional vernacular results in divergent and even contradictory regionalism” (2007: 157).

Different approaches to identity

In 1989, during an international seminar on Critical Regionalism, Elefthrios Pavlides presented a paper titled the Four Approaches to Regionalism in Architecture. The four approaches are the folkloric, ideological, experiential and anthropological (Pavlides 2007: 157-166). Having relevance to both the practise and research of architecture, the origin of the different regionalist approaches are summarised in table 1.
Establishing identity in the built environment of developed nations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Folklore</td>
<td>The folkloric method examines the history of a particular region to identify the archetypal forms of expression. This revivalist form of regionalism often generates neo-vernacular architectures. In its extreme application, the local historical character is preserved by freezing architectural expression.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Ideology</td>
<td>The ideological method examines the local vernacular, attempting to find a correlation between regional forms and the tenets of modernism. This procedure is sometimes used to justify emulation. During the process, modernist ideology is often used as a filter, albeit a subjective one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Experience</td>
<td>The experiential method is a response to the increased vernacular interest, following the publication of Bernard Rudolfsky’s <em>Architecture without Architects</em>, among others. With this approach, traditional or natural materials are regarded as equal to their modern counterparts. The same applies to form and technology. This technique could be described as a practical and aesthetic evaluation of local vernaculars in terms of environmental and architectural design factors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Anthropology</td>
<td>The anthropological method examines the cultural context of vernacular architecture while questioning legibility and meaning. It could be described as an extension of the humanistic approach explored as part of the experiential method. The publication of books by Amos Rapport, <em>House, Form and Culture</em> and Labelle Prussin, <em>Architecture in Northern Ghana</em>, contributed to the method. This visual approach uses ethnographic studies to collect data, which meaning later emerge by understanding the local inhabitant’s social life and aspirations. The existential ideas could be linked to the sense of dwelling as described by Kenneth Frampton.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1
Summary of Pavlides’ four approaches to Critical Regionalism (source: the authors).

According to Pavlides, “The experiential approach would look at hybrid forms … It provides a liveable environment responsive to climate and site” (2007: 163). The experiential method finds a middle ground between the folkloric and ideological approaches. For the purposes of this article, experiential regionalism emulates the characteristic tenants of Critical Regionalism. It seeks to reintroduce a humane and poetic quality into modern architecture while addressing environmental needs. The form of the building is not as important as the consequence of its design in its particular environment.

Although the approaches defined by Pavlides are valuable, they are polarised between regressive – revivalist regionalism and restrictive regionalism. The former is prejudiced towards the past and tradition while the latter is biased towards modernism.

Third World approaches to identity in Regionalism

Among other topics, Balkrishna Doshi’s publication *Cultural Continuum and Regional Identity in Architecture* explores the possible synthesis of folk culture and history of a particular society with modernism. Doshi proposes the creation of regional buildings maintaining a cultural
continent between the past, present and future without depleting available natural resources (2007: 110-118). In *Regionalism: Lessons from Algeria and the Middle East*, Kenza Boussora proposes detailed surveys of the existing building stock in a region to determine the best local spatial (societal) and construction patterns “and then fusing these with the contemporary needs of people and modern technology (2007: 125).

Suha Özkan, a former general secretary for the Aga Khan Awards, writes that “[t]he regionalist approach recognises the vernacular modes of building at the one extreme, and abstract regionalism at the other. Even though it covers such a wide array of attitudes, Regionalism has respect for the local culture, to climate, and at times technology, at its core” (2007: 103). The publication *Regionalism within Modernism* by Özkan identifies vernacularism and modern–regionalism as different approaches when establishing identity An essential component to vernacularism is evolutionary development as a consequence of change and modernity. According to Suha Özkan, the modern–regionalist approach criticises the universality of modernism (2007). The aforementioned methods are summarised in tables 2, 3 and 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Establishing identity in the built environment of developing nations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1 Vernacular approach</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 <em>Conservative vernacularism</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 <em>Interpretative or Neo-vernacularism</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2 Modern-regionalist approach</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 <em>Concrete regionalism</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 <em>Abstract regionalism</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2
Summary of Özkan’s two methods and four approaches to Critical Regionalism (source: the authors).

It is argued that the interpretative or neo–vernacular approach finds a middle ground between conservative vernacularism and concrete regionalism. Using a modernist filter to reinterpret architectural elements, the functional, technological, material, climatic, construction and economic prerogatives of the globalised world are synthesised with the traditional approach to building. It is the authors’ opinion that the interpretative or neo–vernacular approach resembles certain characteristic traits of Critical Regionalism.
It is argued that the interpretative or neo-vernacular approach finds a middle ground between conservative vernacularism and concrete regionalism. Using a modernist filter to reinterpret architectural elements, the functional, technological, material, climatic, construction and economic prerogatives of the globalised world are synthesised with the traditional approach to building. It is the authors' opinion that the interpretative or neo-vernacular approach resembles certain characteristic traits of Critical Regionalism.

Table 3
Contextualisation of Pavlides, Özkân, Doshi and Boussora’s methods as compared to the methods developed for South Africa (source: the authors).

Table 4
Contextualisation of the various approaches by Pavlides, Özkân, Doshi and Boussora in comparison with the approaches developed for South Africa (source: the authors).

**Working methods – Critical Regionalism as a source for South African architectural identities**

The built artefact often exhibits characteristics of more than one of the aforementioned methods; but it is often anchored in place and space. Critical Regionalism finds its premise in the fixed point, acknowledging that no two places are identical. Simultaneously, the variety of changes a single location could undergo over time (resulting in spatial changes) is acknowledged. The diverse forms of architectural expression in the South African built environment warrants further exploration and it is the authors opinion that the Critical Regionalist approach could serve as the dynamic basis for this investigation.

**Development of the working methods and approaches to identity**

In a separate study, an extensive literature survey of South African architecture between 1948 and 2008 was completed. The purpose of this desk review was to establish whether it was
possible to recognise identity within the South African built environment at the hand of first world or third world approaches.

It was evident that the stated methods could not be used in isolation because the buildings represented an amalgam of the different methods. The specificity of the aforementioned approaches warranted a degree of amalgamation and evolution to suit the conditions of contemporary South African architectural production. According to Canizaro (2007: 140), “Regionalism must constantly adapt to our changing circumstances or else become so specific to each culture that it disappears within normative practice and critical appreciation”.

Critically Regionalist working method 1: culture and environment

Contemporary architects in South Africa willingly acknowledge the contribution of the site; local climate; local materials; local traditions and local culture in the creation of their works, but deny that they are influenced by something as archaic as Regionalist Theory. The versions of Critical Regionalism as described in the authors’ view as forging local South African identities are not intended to marginalise or venerate the case study architects or their works as iconic images of a universal set of solutions, rather they are envisaged as catalysts to introduce alternative solutions representing identity in architecture to a wider audience.

Due to underlying flaws and the specificity of these approaches to the regions in the first and third world as well as the authors they originated from, their processes could not be appropriated completely. These formative processes had to undergo a series of discrete manipulations and an evolution to suit the current conditions of contemporary South African architectural production. Each method and approach seeks to address the multiplicity of possibilities for built expression in South Africa’s varied landscapes and cultures, while the composite nature of the structures allow for a diversity of built expression in South Africa.

For the purposes of this article, the critically regionalist working method for South Africa distinguishes between

- Culture and environment, and
- Technology and environment.

Titled culture and environment, the first working method shows similarities to writings of Pavildes and Özkan. Although complex, in the built environment (and indeed within the context of this paper), the concept of culture could refer to the specific, history, traditions, beliefs, living patterns and technology of a group of people belonging to a specific society and/or region. Simultaneously, the building design should respond to the local environment (nature, climate, topography and materials). This design engagement mostly originates from either the supplanted Western tradition or the indigenous African tradition. This working method is further divided into two components, namely heritage transformations and cultural synthesis.

Approach 1: heritage transformations

The term heritage is used to describe the continuum between the past and the present. The transformative approach links Frampton’s notions of analogical forms with Tzonis and Lefaivre’s proposition of de-familiarisation. During the phase of design transformation,
architectural elements, forms and typologies from the past are critically examined. The criteria of existential content, practical application and relevance determine the inclusion, or not, of a specific component or element. Although abstracted or evolved, the component or element is often used in rational and conventional manner.

Should the spatial and functional types of the region be suitable, it is often incorporated in the resultant building. Proportional and organisational systems derived from material and cultural limits are examined. When appropriate, these systems are retained to enrich and compliment modern, standardised or mass–produced elements. The same applies to local materials, construction techniques, local skills, durability etc. The buildings that resort under the category 1, heritage transformations, frequently employ inherited climatic control devices. As the oldest bastion of European identity in South Africa, Cape Town and its surrounding hinterland, display significant examples of heritage transformation.

**Approach 2: cultural synthesis**

The cultural synthesis approach emphasises the marginalised heritage of non–European and indigenous African peoples. This is achieved through the hybridisation of local architecture with modern principles resulting in a complex whole. There are few architects committed to the research and production of this archetype. Doshi (2007) and Lipman (2003: 4) argue that the younger generation mostly undervalue their own architectural traditions, favouring international influences as more progressive. When an architect “care about struggling for regional expression [it] is a tribute to their sensitivity…”.

According to architect Dumisani Mhlaba (2008), the loss of technical innovation and traditions serve undermining factors to the development of an authentic African architecture. Mhlaba urges for the further exploration of the complex spatial planning derived from different cultures. African space could be described as rich, complex, fluid, diverse, adaptive and meaningful. African space often shows a direct relationship to its environment, including among others climate, topography and genius loci.

This approach examines the culturally generated spatial and functional types available in a region. Should these be relevant, the conditions of dwelling are abstracted prior to its incorporation as part of the building’s design. “Out of necessity, architects have produced a ‘new’ or at least a previously unknown architecture that not only participates in a global discourse but also simultaneously captures the human imagination and contributes to the evolution of local cultures” (Low 2003: 34).

![Figure 5](image)

Critically Regionalist working method 2: technology and environment

“Technology and place should be understood as the suppressed core concepts that are contained within regionalist architectural production” (Moore 2007: 433). As a working method, technology and environment show similarities to the approaches of Doshi and Boussora. With this process, the architect often explores ideas surrounding site and place.

Frequently, an extremist approach to technology exists. Technology is either idolised as emancipator, or distrusted as an alienating force. Frampton called for finding a middle road that blends hi– and low–technologies together (Frampton 1995). According to Barbara Jekot (2007: 69), “the inclusion of ‘underdeveloped’ in ‘developed’ technologies can often be seen in South African architecture”.

Approach 1: landcrapers (stereotomic)

The landcraiper approach has its genesis in early human’s troglodytic existence and the later developments of this form of dwelling. Gottfried Semper’s seminal work *The Four Elements of Architecture* differentiates architecture as earthbound (stereotomic) or lightweight framework (tectonic). In 2002, Aaron Betsky, defined the term landcraiper in the book titled *Landcrapers: Building with the Land*. Initially the landscape is scarred in preparation of the building being inserted into the landscape. The resultant design allows a dialogue between landscape and building.

Technology is employed as an analytical tool, assisting in realising the building. Proportional and organisational systems are often derived from standardised mass–produced elements, material limits and pragmatic structural design. This approach addresses ecological issues directly by restoring indigenous vegetation, integrating the building and the site.

The landcraiper approach rarely refers to historical elements, relying rather on the liberative qualities of empirical design. The paradigm has similarities to Pavlides’ experiential and anthropological approach as well as to Ozkan’s concrete and abstract regionalism.
Approach 2: imbrication (tectonic)

This approach towards the landscape is less confrontational than the aforementioned landscraper approach. It finds its origin in the nomadic existence of early humans. The migratory patterns required ephemeral, lightweight, structures responding to ever changing environments. It is linked with Frampton’s notions of the Tectonic and the role of structure as architectural generator. The paradigm has similarities to Pavlides’ experiential, ideological and anthropological approach as well as to Ozkan’s concrete and abstract regionalism. The Imbrication approach refers to historical elements in an almost abstract manner.

The term imbrication could be traced back to ancient Rome and Greece, where it refers to the act (or fact) of overlapping (Zeleny 1991: 1054) and (Curl 2006: 382). In the publication David Adjaye Making Public Buildings: Specificity, Customization, Imbrication, the term has been appropriated to reveal the judicious, rational and complimentary insertion of buildings into rich, diverse contexts (Allison 2006).

The products of this paradigm often employ symbolic forms or enclosing skins attempting to reconcile it with the immediate context. The analogical or allegorical forms often refer to
flora and topographical elements from the context. The buildings address the use of technology as an analytical process, where experimentation and testing occur. Frequently, the buildings are porous or permeable structures that connect with the surrounding environment.

### Critically Regionalist working methods (and approaches to identity)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>Culture and environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td><strong>Heritage transformations</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|       | “We have learned to admire the unique and authentic forms of indigenous and vernacular traditions which were earlier hardly considered part of the realm of architecture. We admire the tangible integration of natural and material conditions, patterns of life and forms of building in traditional societies” (Pallasmaa 2007: 129, 134).
| 1.2 | **Cultural synthesis** |
|       | “Cultural heritage does not appeal to the heart of the younger generations – they do not wish to retain it since it does not symbolically or culturally belong to them. They look towards the new world, which they witness through the ever-expanding communication media. The young generation’s image is that of the outside world, because they do not have any clue of our own heritage” (Doshi 2007: 113).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2</th>
<th>Technology and environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td><strong>Landscrapers</strong> (stereotomic)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|       | “Landscrapers are buildings that make us aware of who we are by where we are on the land. They take many forms, but in all cases they unfold the land” (Betsky 2002: 13). “By making us aware of the ground we inhabit, we can regain a sense of reality of place in a culture” (Betsky 2002: 192).
| 2.2 | **Imbrication** (tectonic) |
|       | “… hybridisation is the word I have been using for a while and I have only recently moved it to ‘imbrication’. Hybridisation somehow implies that I am making something new whereas what I am talking about is much more to do with overlapping, reliance by overlapping – almost like tiles” (Allison 2006: 128).

### Table 5
**Summary of the proposed methods and approaches to identity through the application of Regionalist and Critically Regionalist theory (source: the authors).**

The genre allows for difference while blending idiosyncratic local and universal global to create identities for people. Definite attempts are made to maintain a continuum with a shared past while participating in the global present. It penetrates beyond superficial regional features to draw on local wisdom, traditions and identities. The resultant architecture is rooted in the epistemological response and resonates with the landscape and society.

**Case Studies**

A number of buildings were selected as case studies. Houses built after 1994 and having won either a South African Institute of Architects Merit Award or an Award for excellence, were
collated. The result was a selection list of seventy possible case studies. A scoring system based on the principles of Critical Regionalism was formulated and the houses were rated accordingly. Buildings scoring in excess of sixty five percent were shortlisted. These twenty–five buildings were vetted by the authors for possible inclusion based on their clarity in illustrating the methods and approaches outlined as part of the theoretical framework. The result of this process is communicated in table 6 as fourteen case studies analysed.

The selected buildings reflect a variety of South African architectural vocabularies. It is however important to note that the case studies (and subsequent identified typologies) do not necessarily represent predetermined schools of thought on the part of the respective designers and/or authors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Studies Analysed</th>
<th>1 Culture and environment</th>
<th>2 Technology and environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Heritage transformations</td>
<td>Noero Wolff Architects, House Sapieka, Hout Bay 2002</td>
<td>Van der Merwe Miszewski Architects, Tree House, Cape Town, 1997.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dean Jay Architects, House Sheffield Beach, Salt Rock, 2004.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Cultural synthesis</td>
<td>Kate Otten Architects, House Bruns, Misty Cliffs House, 1999.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kate Otten Architects, Pringle Bay House, Pringle Bay, 1999.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Landscrapers (Stereotomic)</td>
<td>Van der Merwe Miszewski Architects, Cliff House, Cape Town, 1997.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Imbrication (Tectonic)</td>
<td>Van der Merwe Miszewski Architects, Tree House, Cape Town, 1997.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6
Summary of the analysis of fourteen case studies, and their assignment to specific categories based on the dominant method and approach visible in the building (source: the authors).

In the culture and environment method, the design often reacts to the cultural, social, historic and tradition while responding to unique identities, in a modern manner without resorting to pastiche. The heritage transformations approach, predominantly engages with European history and culture, while the cultural synthesis approach, seeks connections with indigenous African and other non–European histories and cultures. The method tends to reflect and represent local history, cultural traditions and contemporary architecture well.
The typology called heritage transformations has its roots in European history and culture. The second approach, cultural synthesis, seeks connections with indigenous African and other non–European histories and cultures. The use of transformation is specific to the South African context. The buildings and architects of the heritage transformation approach, represent two alternative European identities (Teutonic–Anglo), used to mitigate the feeling of anomie in a hybrid culture, which forms part of a globalised society.

Technology and environment establish the utilisation of modern technology and addresses ecological issues by respecting and restoring the environment. The designs mostly explore alternative spatial and functional types as an expression of the regions current lifestyle patterns. The utilisation of modern technology and respect for the environment as central concepts to the genre of Critical Regionalism, yet this approach also incorporates culturally generated concerns.

The landscaper (stereotomic) approach scars the land as part of a reciprocal process. The resultant relationship between the landscape and the building explore the limits of structural systems, technology and passive climate control systems. The imbrication (tectonic) approach is the judicious, rational and complimentary insertion of a building into a rich, diverse context. The paradigm uses analogical forms in the building’s structure or enclosing skin to reconcile the building with its immediate context.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Studies Presented</th>
<th>1. Culture and environment</th>
<th>2. Technology and environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Cultural synthesis</td>
<td>Kate Otten Architects, Pringle Bay House, Pringle Bay, 1999.</td>
<td>2.2 Imbrication (tectonic)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7
Four representative case studies described in this paper (source: the authors).

The following evaluations encapsulate the process followed in each method as an approach specific to the architect, site and client. The Nieuwe Sion manor house is the most traditional of the buildings analysed as part of the approaches to identity. It responds to the landscape and local culture through the application of updated Cape place making that is specific to the region, while following a formal modern method for the building’s morphology, composition and detailing. A continuum with the past is established while engaging with present and future concerns.

In the cultural synthesis approach, the specificity of the natural landscape has informed the design of the Pringle Bay House. The house references alternative cultural identities from the past in a more direct, less abstract idiom. Spatiality, typology, existentialism and living patterns from indigenous settlements were synthesised with modern elements to create a cohesive whole. The organic, neo–plastic forms and spaces are derived from indigenous African and other non–European sources, which have been a longstanding preoccupation of the architect.

The construction processes of the Fynbos House has scarred its landscape, this negative action is reconciled by integrating the buildings into its immediate context. The inhabitant’s
experience of the landscape is thus amplified. The design addressed ecological issues by introducing indigenous vegetation and rehabilitating the landscape after construction through the emblematic act of burying the built form into the land. As a product of the Landscraper approach it is freed from reliance on history as a source for architectural expression. The approach provides a base from which to address the wider narrative of sustainability.

In the Tree House, the preoccupation of the imbrication (tectonic) approach with the environment, structure and technology is expressed in the five tree–like structures at the building’s core. These structures together with the sinuous wall of the triple volume space, anchor the building to its context. It provides a poetic tectonic gesture that contrasts with the classically inspired tri–part arrangement of the exterior. This is achieved by contextual reference to a natural element, the trees, in an abstract manner. The building becomes a set of verandahs (or nests) that are used as platforms for living, situated between the views and the built fabric.

The case studies explore contemporary design and theory, as part of a deep commitment to place and identity. The buildings are resolutely contemporary, yet local. The works vary across a broad spectrum but demonstrate the gradual development of robust approaches to regional architectural production. These architectural responses have developed and represented local identities have been successfully modernised through transformation and are set within varying landscapes to create unique South African built forms. The resulting architecture creates a platform for integration into a wider society while maintaining a continuum with the past while addressing technological and ecological issues. The genre must be constantly reinvented in ingenious ways to serve the people of the region in developing local architecture and collective identities.

Figure 9
Ground floor plan, elevation and typical section of Nieuwe Sion, Paarl District, 2002 (source: courtesy of the architects, redrawn by the authors).
Figure 10
Nieuwe Sion in the Paarl District by Studio KrugerRoos Architects and Urban Designers, 2002 (source: courtesy of the architects).

Figure 11
Pringle Bay House in Pringle Bay by Kate Otten Architects, 1999 (source: courtesy of the architects).

Figure 12
Ground floor plan, elevation and typical section of Pringle Bay House, Pringle Bay, 1999 (source: courtesy of the architects, redrawn by the authors).
Figure 13
Fynbos House in Betty’s Bay by Sarah Calburn Architects, 2006 (source: courtesy of the architects).

Figure 14
Tree House in Cape Town by van der Merwe Miszewski Architects, 1997 (source: courtesy of the architects).
Figure 15
Ground floor plan, elevation and typical section of Fynbos House, Betty’s Bay, 2006 (source: courtesy of the architects, redrawn by the authors).

Figure 16
Ground floor plan, elevation and typical section of Tree House, Cape Town, 1997 (source: courtesy of the architects, redrawn by the authors).
Further studies

The series of approaches outlined should be read collectively as they represent the germination of diverse, idiosyncratic schools of local Critical Regionalism. Tradition could be utilised as a stepping-stone towards the hybridisation of the local.

This landscape remains alien, impenetrable, until a language is found in which to win it, speak it, represent it. It is no oversimplification to say that [architecture,] landscape art and landscape writing in South Africa from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth revolved around the question of finding a language to fit Africa, a language that will be authentically African (Coetzee 1988: 7).

The transformation of South African architectural elements, forms and typologies should be critically examined on an ongoing basis. Future approaches are almost certain to include a more comprehensive form of conservation and sustainable design that interlock dwelling with environmental responsibility.6

We are only beginning to know enough about ourselves and about our environment to create a regional architecture. Regionalism is not a matter of using the most available local material, or of copying some simple form of construction that our ancestors used for want of something better, a century or two ago. Regional forms are those which most closely meet the conditions of life and which most fully succeed in making people feel at home in their own environment: they do not merely utilise the soil but they reflect the current conditions of culture in the region (Mumford 2007: 100).

It is argued that the interaction of the architect or designer with the client, local culture, the environment, the regional history and available technologies should over time aid in creating an objective, rational and expressive architecture with multiple opportunities and possibilities for advancement (Pavlides 2007: 166–167).

Conclusion

The establishment of two working methods and four approaches to identity serves as foundation to compare different built works. Inevitably, buildings are hybrids of the two methods and the four subsidiary approaches to identity. Simultaneously, there is diversity of built expression in South Africa. However, the specific approach of different South African architects to regional architectural production is distinct. The case studies explore contemporary design and theory, as part of a commitment to place and identity. The buildings respond skillfully to the broader environment, while representing a shift in regional indemnity.

Notes

1 The exact syntax used is derived from Pallasmaa as the original Van Eyck quotation differs to a certain extent.

2 The Pomona Proceedings, representing the first international seminar on Critical Regionalism, was held in January 1989 at the Pomona College of Environmental Design, California State Polytechnic University. Further meetings over the next two years were held in Delft and Milan.

3 For the purposes of this article, a method is defined as a systematic process that can be applied in multiple situations, remaining non-prescriptive. An approach is defined as a specific reaction to existing constraints that deploys the process described as part of the method.

4 The authors used the term modernism as derived by Congrès Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne (CIAM).
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The article is based on research carried out between 2005 and 2009 by Craig Atkins as part of his master’s dissertation in architecture, at the University of the Free State. The dissertation is titled “Towards a Critical Regionalism: an analysis of regionalist theory and practice in South African Architecture”. The research is being developed further with Dr Jacques Laubscher, formerly of the University of the Free State and now an associate professor at the Tshwane University of Technology.

Works cited


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Roughness, primitivism and regionalism in contemporary architecture

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Roughness, primitivism and regionalism first emerged in Roman architectural theory more than 2,000 years ago. The universality and smooth, stretched whiteness of Purism and the placelessness of the International Style suppressed these aspects. Nonetheless, they reappeared with Brutalism, Post-Modernism and most recently, Critical Regionalism. The present review of six projects lauded as exemplary examples of the latter reveals a number of anomalies. It is concluded that positioning it as a separate movement narrows its applicability compared to the much more inclusive scope of Post-Modernism. Critical Regionalism should in fact be proposed simply as a desirable characteristic of contemporary Modernism.

Key words: Critical Regionalism, Modernism, Postmodernism, primitivism, roughness

Roughness, primitivism and regionalism have been issues in architectural theory since the first treatise, The Ten Books on Architecture, by the Roman architect-engineer Marcus Vitruvius Pollio in the first century CE, during the reign of the Emperor Augustus. Vitruvius (1960: 51) described the rough, irregular and random rubble stone walling, Opus incertum, “the ancient style”, as less beautiful, but stronger and less likely to crack than Opus reticulatum (small stone blocks placed diagonally) that superseded it during the first half of the 2nd century BCE. The Ten Books on Architecture also contains several sections on regionalism; Vitruvius (1960: 16) notes that resources for building are place specific and (1960: 39-40) that housing typologies have been determined not only by the climate of the region, the availability of materials and the status of the inhabitants, but also significantly by the temperament and “peculiarities of nations and races” (1960: 173-4). In addition, Vitruvius (1960: 39) introduces an element that has remained controversial to this day: the concept of the vernacular and primitivism as forces influencing formal architectural design, a view revived in 1755 by Abbé Laugier (figure 1).

This article explores the relevance of these three issues, namely roughness, primitivism and regionalism, in the current architectural discourse.
Mid-20th-century regionalism

Roughness, primitivism and regionalism certainly did not initially feature in the Modernist debate, although it is widely accepted that the Mediterranean vernacular inspired Le Corbusier’s Purism in a number of ways. Even before the destruction of historic city centres by Modernist-inspired post-World War II reconstruction, Lewis Mumford (1895-1990), the renowned American historian and philosopher, questioned the universality of Modernism and tried to balance ideas regarding the International Style with his views on regionalism (1941/2007: 97-101). First, he advised that good climatic responsiveness needs the “regional insight” that some vernacular models could provide. Second, that the vernacular forms of a region “reflect the degree of social discovery and self-awareness that prevails there.” But, third, he cautions in very strong terms against “copying some simple form of construction that our ancestors used, for want of anything better”, adding that it would be a “serious mistake” to identify the regional “with the rough, the primitive, the purely local.” His reference was the Arts and Crafts work of H.H. Richardson (1838-1886) on the East Coast of the United States.

Martin Heidegger also admired the vernacular (Norberg-Schulz 1985: 94). However, Mumford, writing in 1941 during World War II, was diametrically opposed to Heidegger’s version of the vernacular; the latter being a proponent of the tribal, folkloristic Heimatsarchitektur supported by the Nazis, whereas Mumford’s regionalism was ostensibly influenced by his preference for democracy and multiculturalism (Lefaivre & Tzonis 2003: 35). Mumford’s (1941/2007: 98-9) terms of reference were not the “Old World precedent” (including Indian
pueblos) but rather the North American clapboard house with its adjustable shutters, “which has formed a stable continuous tradition for three centuries in America”.

**Brutalism**

By the end of World War II, Le Corbusier boasted an extensive portfolio of built and unbuilt designs with unquestionable regional and vernacular affinities. His concept was extremely simple and responsive: a structural concrete frame that could be filled in with locally available materials. The two Maisons Jaoul (completed in 1954) not only had grass-covered vaulted roofs, but also featured off-shutter concrete (*béton brut*) and walls consisting of rough, broken, flush-jointed brickwork (figure 2). Maisons Jaoul was enormously influential in the post-World War II era and together with the Unité d’Habitation in Marseille (completed in 1952) was directly responsible for inspiring the Brutalism movement in the early 1950s. Reyner Banham (1966: 85) equates these projects with an “archaizing tendency”, describing their construction as “crude and primitivistic”. He (1966: 86) insists that, “one might convincingly argue that Jaoul also showed Le Corbusier rejecting the diagrammatic, formalistic and legalistic categories of the Athens Charter, and trying to create the ideal habitat for a particular place (Neuilly) at that particular time (the mid-fifties)”. Archaizing and responding to regional peculiarities are not the same; while the former constitutes Neo-Vernacularism, a Post-Modern derivative, the latter constitutes the agenda of the movement later labelled as Critical Regionalism.

![Figure 2](image)


James Stirling (1957/2007: 328) maintains that Le Corbusier and Alvar Aalto were the “innovators” of regionalism in post-war Europe. Aalto’s Säynätsalo Town Hall (1951) also had brick walls and a clustered plan (figure 3). There can be no doubt these projects stunned the architectural establishment and forced it to rethink its position on universality vis-à-vis regionalism. Goldhagen and Legault (2002: 15) suggest that Le Corbusier and his peers responded to “issues and concerns” that emerged after the war, responding to changing social, cultural and political developments. These concerns and issues include “a return to essentials, and contextualism in both time and space”.

76
Harwell Harris (1958/2007: 57-64), a practicing architect and scholar, was one of the first to comment on this trend, identifying two kinds of regionalism. The regionalism of restriction he considered a constraining provincial, ethnically exclusive attitude, while he opined that the regionalism of liberation: “moderates or supplements its regional outlook with a global knowledge of modernism”. His references for the latter were the early 20th century Californian works of Bernard Maybeck and Charles and Henry Greene. Ironically, he makes no mention of either Le Corbusier or Aalto. Like Mumford, he also ignores the indigenous vernacular tradition (figure 4). In fact, these writers both disregard a prominent regionalist such as Wallace Neff, known for his Spanish and Mexican California eclecticism (Belloli 1989) and Pueblo style that is so characteristic of America’s desert region.

![Figure 3](image1.png)

*Figure 3*

![Figure 4](image2.png)

*Figure 4*
However, Sibyl Moholy-Nagy (wife of Bauhaus lecturer László who both emigrated to the USA because of Nazi persecution) in a little known book from 1957, that predates Bernard Rudofsky’s by nearly a decade, celebrated the rough Spanish and Indian adobe and stone vernacular which, according to Michelangelo Sabatino (2008: 362), “displayed a sense of quality that has been sacrificed to cheapness in contemporary property development and construction” (figure 5).

![Figure 5](image.png)

**Figure 5**
The indigenous Indian Pueblo (source: Moholy-Nagy 1957: 125).

**Failure of the International Style and the emergence of Postmodernism**

The International Style had a devastating stranglehold on schools and the architectural profession. Consequently, after the so-called failure of Modernism in the late 1960s, which was in fact the failure of the International Style (Özkan 1985/2007: 107), academia became utterly confused and adopted the writings of philosophers, including Heidegger, Foucault, Merleau-Ponty, Lefebvre, Deleuze and Guattari as well as others, as its intellectual scaffolding. These philosophical infatuations were not helpful to practicing architects. Brutalism also had its limitations and the rough, unfinished, texturality was not universally appreciated. As a result, practice embraced Robert Venturi’s everyday symbolism and Charles Jencks’ historical revivalism, which evolved almost immediately into Postmodernism. Indeed, Venturi’s book entitled *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1966) became “the first textbook of Post-Modernism” (Jencks 2011: 43).

Venturi’s book, complementing Rudofsky’s *Architecture without Architects* (1964) and followed by Amos Rappaport’s *House Form and Culture* (1969), set the stage for new initiatives, most notably an interest in vernacular forms. We concur with Jencks’ (2011: 240) insight that “Among the undoubted successes is today’s pluralism. The Post-Modern Movement liberated a vast potential of creativity and legitimised many small traditions of heretofore suppressed architecture”. And he adds: “Last but not least a primitive cosmic landscape framed by architecture is back on the agenda.”
Critical Regionalism

Critical Regionalism emerged during the early 1980s as a response to the inevitable placelessness of the International Style, epitomised by “Gropius’s ideal of an impersonal anonymous architecture” (Lefaivre & Tzonis 2012: 126) on the one hand and the clumsy imitation vernacular posing as Postmodern historicism, on the other. It was introduced into the realm of contemporary architecture in 1985 with the publication of *Atelier 66: The Architecture of Dimitris and Suzana Antonakakis*, edited by Kenneth Frampton. This work includes a chapter by Liane Lefaivre and Alexander Tzonis, entitled “The grid and the pathway: an introduction to the work of Dimitris and Suzana Antonakakis in the context of Greek architectural culture”, in which the term, originally published four years previously in a little-known journal, *Architecture in Greece*, appeared. Frampton responded again in 1983 with a chapter, “Towards a Critical Regionalism: six points for an architecture of resistance” in a book entitled *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Post-Modern Culture*, even though Critical Regionalism was conceptualised by Lefaivre, Tzonis and Frampton as a Modernist, rather than a Postmodernist, position.

Greek architects readily accepted Modernism in the 1920s because Le Corbusier’s Purism was inspired by the “spare”, whitewashed, cuboid forms of their coastal vernacular (see Frampton 1985: 4). While Dimitris and Suzana Antonakakis are described as “typically” Greek modernists, Frampton notes not only the close affinity of their work to that of the “regional dissenters”, Dimitris Pikionis and Aris Konstantinidis, but also the influence of Le Corbusier’s béton brut so clearly represented by Maisons Jaoul (figure 6). What all of these early references to Critical Regionalism shared were rough surface textures and some resemblance to pre-industrial vernacular, utilising simple orthogonal forms.

![Konstantinidis, Vacation House at Anavyssos, Attica, Greece, 1961-62](image1)

![Pikionis, pathway for Akropolis, Athens, Greece, 1951](image2)

![Antonakakis, Vacation House at Porto-Heli, Peloponese, Greece, 1967](image3)

![Le Corbusier, Maisons Jaoul, Paris, France, 1954](image4)

**Figure 6**

Both the Lefaivre and Tzonis team and Frampton have since unceasingly (even relentlessly) pursued the theme, but despite their prolific writings they have not offered any normative criteria for creating Critical Regionalism. In fact, Vincent Canizaro (2007: 11) actually seems frustrated by Frampton’s “many variations on critical regionalism”, while William Hunter (2009: 14) asserts that “there are contradictions in his many arguments”. In reality I found fewer anomalies in Frampton’s work than in the body of literature representing the knowledge of regionalism as a whole (see Appendix). Six anomalies are discussed below.

Whereas Frampton propagated his views in several articles, Lefaivre and Tzonis produced a string of well-illustrated books in full-colour on the topic. Hence, while these authors were all instrumental in shaping the ideas associated with Critical Regionalism, it is probably the latter’s imagery that is imprinted on the profession’s perception as the essence of Critical Regionalism.

**Anomaly number 1: Similar vernacular typologies, different materials**

Christian Norberg-Schulz (1985: 94) reminds us that Martin Heidegger wrote: “[vernacular houses] bring the inhabited landscape close to man”, adding, “this does not mean that the houses look like their surroundings. The principal means which are used are the shaping of the roof and the articulation of the walls”.

Lewis Mumford’s writings and lectures on regionalism are widely considered precursors to those of Lefaivre and Tzonis and Frampton (Canizaro 2007: 96). But while Mumford rejected the official Third Reich housing style, Lefaivre and Tzonis (2003: 123) would publish a Dutch project by MVRDV that indeed uses “the shaping of the roof and the articulation of the walls” (figure 7). Since they are based on the same Black Forest cottage typology as the Nazis’ schemes, are they to be considered Critical Regionalist, simply because they are clad in industrial materials in spite of their typological similarity to what Mumford perceived to be a Nazi model?

![Figure 7](image-url)

**Figure 7**

The housing schemes of the Nazis were actually initiated by the Weimar government that preceded it (see Wirth 1993). They indeed adopted designs based on German vernacular archetypes, but these were not nostalgic revivals; the basic form with its attic and high pitched roof was (and still is) popular with Germans. Heinrich Tessenow (1876-1950) redefined the so-called Black Forest cottage types in the early 1900s (De Michelis 1991: 54), and although Tessenow was an Arts-and-Crafts proponent, he is also widely considered a modern architect by for example Rob Krier (1991: 16), because of his use of simple, undecorated forms (figure 8). This anomaly is also fundamentally a paradox; Lefaivre and Tzonis did not classify the MVRDV scheme incorrectly, it was Mumford who – in his distaste for Fascism and the Nazis – seemingly failed to appreciate the critical, modernistic reinterpretation of the German urtype. The pointed roof may of course remind of Hansen and Gretel, but with the heavy snowfall in that region, there were no practical alternatives (see Montaner 2010).

Anomaly number 2: Same composition, different textures, colours

Alberto Campo Baeza’s Casa Gaspar (completed 1991) has been described variously as comprising purist and minimalist volumes (Australian Design Review). John Welsh (1995: 56) describes Baeza’s work as “re-editing the international style of pure white modernism”. He adds that Baeza’s houses are clearly inspired by Le Corbusier’s “purist villas”. The architecture of Luis Barragán, on the other hand, is widely considered regionalist (Ambasz 1976; Frampton 2007: 318; Lefaivre & Tzonis 2012: 126; Speck 1987/2007:77; Pallasmaa 1988/2007). Illustrated in the figure below, the same composition of courtyards and enclosures, and the same emphasis on the wall and water, are encountered (figure 9). One is considered Purist and the other Regionalist. Would Casa Gaspar have been labelled Regionalist if Baeza had applied rough plaster and dark, earthy colours?
Anomaly number 3: Regionalism and urbanism vs. rurality

The Public Works Department, Amsterdam (designed by Felix Claus and Kees Kaan in 1990, built), “blends together an optimistic feel of the post war modern era with a lacquered [sic: layered?] taste. The function and external appearance of the building contradict one another”, according to the architects.

Balkrishna Doshi (1985/2007: 111) writes about the realisation in the developing countries of the Third World that: “Western models of architecture and urban planning introduced by the colonizing agencies, as well as subsequent developments in the West, were not very suitable to their own resources and climatic circumstances and socio-cultural well-being [which has] has led to a lot of healthy questioning.” This obviously encouraged a search for what Doshi describes as a Postmodern regional architecture.

The Mahindra United World College in Pune, India (completed 2000) by the American expatriate architect, Christopher Benninger, uses local stone and exposed concrete, and the various buildings are fragmented into a layout reminiscent of the surrounding villages, complete with a jagged profile supposedly reflecting the surrounding mountains (Lefaivre & Tzonis 2003: 87) (figure 10).

Doshi’s use of the term Postmodern is not accidental. Kenneth Frampton (1983: 21) stresses: “But it is necessary … to distinguish between Critical Regionalism and simple-minded attempts to revive the hypothetical forms of a lost vernacular.” On the other hand, Jencks (1977: 8) claims that Postmodernism extends “into the vernacular”. Owing to the long uninterrupted
history of vernacular traditions and urban forms in India, Indian architects can afford to be less pedantic about vernacularism by blurring the critical regionalist/postmodern divide.

The contradiction Claus and Kaan designed into their building is a postmodernist strategy, the dual coding encouraged by Jencks (1977); only other architects would appreciate the contradiction. Therefore, some rhetorical questions are relevant: Do students notice that the jagged profile of the Mahindra College reflects the mountains and the cluster layout emulates traditional villages and do they care? Would the Claus and Kaan building also have been classified as regionalist if it had been built on the foothills of the Himalayas? And considering the acrimony and lack of common ground between Critical Regionalists and Postmodernists, has the Mahindra College been correctly labelled? Should it not have been a Postmodern example?

**Anomaly number 4: Critical Regionalism as a Third World imperative**

Frampton often includes excerpts of Paul Ricoeur’s famous essay entitled “Universal civilization and national cultures” in his own work, plainly considering him an intellectual authority. Ricoeur (1965/2007: 47-49) considers European colonisation as a cause of underdevelopment in the Third World and emphasised the need to revive the “personality” or “national spirit” of a previously oppressed country. His fundamental tenet relates to the problem “How to revive an old dormant civilization and take part in universal civilization”.

Diébédo Francis Kéré, an up-and-coming architect from Burkina Faso (quoted in Trangoš 2014: 54), affirms his own position: “Critical regionalism is the use of innovative approaches to create an environmentally responsible, climatically sensitive and culturally embedded building” (figure 11). Kéré defines four key elements: (1) limit the use of steel and concrete but maximize their effect, (2) value the role of local economics, history and sociology in informing designs and decisions, (3) create designs that are regionally specific, and (4) develop building practices in line with traditional techniques and local materials.
It is because of scarcity of resources and lack of funding that NGOs and European architectural students apply such principles in their Africa outreach projects. There is indisputably a tendency to consider building standards in rural Africa as being at a lower level in every respect than in Europe and North America. It is needless to ask if classrooms and clinics of mud and bamboo would have been accepted in the First World. This derogatory tendency has been called “post-colonial karma” by some and is a condescending form of top-down interventionism, albeit often well-intentioned. However, is it truly Critical Regionalist in the intellectually reflective sense, or simply innovation using what is available?

Anomaly number 5: Primitivism as an intrinsic characteristic

Sabatino (2008: 355) stresses that the term primitive is not stigmatised in architecture, unlike anthropology and the social sciences; in architecture the word primitive is associated with the origins of “building itself, tectonics and typologies”. Enrico Guidoni’s *Primitive Architecture* (1987) is a classic in this field. Goldhagen and Legault (2002: 15), mentioned earlier, suggested a return to essentials after World War II and added that it “encouraged a kind of infatuation with so-called primitivism” [authors’ emphasis]. Tom Avermaete (2010: 251) in “CIAM, Team X and the Rediscovery of African Settlements: between Dogon and Bidonville” explains the extent of this interest very comprehensively and adds that the many trips by architects and students to Africa had “major repercussions for architectural and urban design strategies.” Significantly, for Sabatino (2008: 363) this “return to primitive origins meant a return to an idealised, ‘invented’ past that could infuse the present with an anthropological dimension absent from architectures in thrall to the machine-age aesthetics” – exactly what Frampton warned against.

It was mentioned earlier that Mumford (whose ideas guided Lefaivre and Tzonis) cautioned that it would be a “serious mistake” to identify the regional “with the rough, the primitive, the purely local”. It is interesting therefore that both Chinese buildings below, the Tiantai Museum and the Niyang River Visitor Centre (figure 12), featured in these authors’ most recent book entitled *Architecture of Regionalism in the Age of Globalization* (2012: 193, 196), reflect a nearly unprecedented level of primitivism in materiality as well as form. Since buildings in the
region do not actually look like that – and perhaps never did – do they really represent Critical Regionalism or are they actually Postmodern projects employing roughness and primitivism (in the morphological sense) to achieve timelessness? Maybe the answer will remain elusive.

Figure 12
Tiantai Museum, Zhejiang, China, Wang Lu, 2003, built;
Niyang River Visitor Center, Linzhi, Tibet, Standardarchitecture, 2011, built

Anomaly number 6: Roughness as a design principle

Primitivism and roughness are arguably synonymous, but have been separated here in order to focus on Frampton’s precept of tactility. In spite of Mumford’s advice, Frampton (1983: 29; 1987/2007: 384; 2007: 327; 2015:166) has tirelessly propagated the dialectic of the visual and the tactile; that materials and surfaces are, apart from visual form, part of the way architecture is experienced. Reza Shirazi (2013) established an indelible link with her article entitled “Critical Regionalism, Raum, and tactility: Kenneth Frampton’s contribution to phenomenological discourse”. The question is: how rough is rough enough, since most of the examples above are very rough by any standard. In fact, perhaps unintentionally, nearly all buildings recognised as Critically Regional tend to be tactile; or, simply put, to have surfaces that are rough to the touch. Collins (1998: 217) remarks that rough surfaces “delight”. He believes that “the taste for crude surfaces is to some extent a momentary reaction against the plastered surfaces associated with the international style of the 1930s”.

Roughness is one of the fifteen properties “of a geometrical nature” that Christopher Alexander identified in beautiful and functional objects (Quillien 2008:44-47; Salingaros 2010: 116) (figure 13). There seem to be two issues here. The first is simply that good architecture
offers variation in colour and texture (Dale & Burrell 2003: 171). The second is, as Giuliana Bruno (2014) proposes, that materiality is “the substance of material relations”, adding that “The surface, is a site in which different forms of mediation, memory, and transformation can take place”. Does the roughness not represent an attempt to recreate an image of an idealised, “invented” past as Sabatino (2008: 363) puts it? Is this not a Postmodern, rather than Critical Regionalist, tactic?

The boundaries of Critical Regionalism

Kenneth Frampton (1983: 21) famously stated: “The fundamental strategy of Critical Regionalism is to mediate the impact of universal civilization with elements derived indirectly from the peculiarities of a particular place. It is clear from the above that Critical Regionalism depends upon maintaining a high level of critical self-consciousness. It may find its governing inspiration in such things as the local light or in a tectonic derived from a peculiar structural mode, or in the topography of a given site” [emphasis by the author]. Frampton (1987/2007: 378) is adamant that “Regionalism should not be sentimentally identified with the vernacular”.

It is precisely this pathological aversion to the vernacular that caused the anomalies discussed above. In most parts of the world it is very difficult to consider regionalism in any form without acknowledging the vernacular, simply because the particularities and psyche of the place are already embedded in the latter.

As intimated, Postmodernism and Critical Regionalism constitute two opposing positions. Frampton (1983: 19) accuses Charles Jencks of the commodification of architecture and of promoting postmodern architecture as “pure technique or pure scenography”. Lefaivre and Tzonis (2012: 178) regard Postmodernism as “indifferent to regionalism”. Jencks (2011: 150) accuses the Critical Regionalists of being “uncritical in a social and economic sense”.

It is interesting that both camps claim Le Corbusier as a precursor. Jencks (2011: 37) proposes that Le Corbusier produced the first postmodern architecture with his “highly symbolic buildings in Chandigarh, India and Ronchamp, France…, they remain the touchstone for an
architecture committed to communication and local culture.” On the other hand, Lefaivre and Tzonis (2012: 150) refer to Le Corbusier’s regionalist origins and contend that “his thinking remained deeply attached to the environmental and cultural particularities of the regions he built in”.

It can be argued that Critical Regionalism essentially means the contextualisation of a modernist design – with or without ideas from the vernacular – whereas the modification of a vernacular archetype represents neo-Vernacularism, which is a postmodern position. Le Corbusier applied both methods (figure 14). In the Citrohan House (1922), he reinterpreted the Greek coastal vernacular in a relatively abstract way; the precursor to his Purist designs that would shortly follow.

![Mykonos vernacular, Greece](image)

![Citrohan House, 1922](image)

![Algerian desert vernacular](image)

![Agricultural compound, Algeria, 1942](image)

**Figure 14**
**Le Corbusier’s interpretations of the vernacular**

Twenty years later he translated the morphology of a typical vernacular Algerian village model quite literally into the design of an Algerian agricultural estate, producing a design that in fact signalled his brand of vernacularism which followed after World War II.

Packaging Critical Regionalism as a separate stream from Modernism was a fundamental mistake. Corbusian Modernism (as opposed to International Style and Deconstructivism) evolved from Purism into a responsive and resilient paradigm as illustrated by his oeuvre. In fact, Suha Özkan (2006: 102-3) avers that “Le Corbusier and his simple and sublime expressions, explained by his affinity for the Mediterranean” inspired a host of architects to “explore a valid Modernism for different cultural and specific climate settings”. His list includes Alvar Aalto, Luis Barragán, Geoffrey Bawa, Tadao Ando, Charles Correa, Balkrishna Doshi and Álvaro Siza. These are all thoroughly modernist architects, but they are also all associated, to various degrees, with Critical Regionalism.
The most prominent advocates of Critical Regionalism have always claimed to represent Modernism, but never managed to produce a coherent normative theory, as Le Corbusier had done in the 1920s. Their focus was perhaps too much on trouncing the vernacular. The result is actually a very narrow and restrictive approach. Many architects would certainly find Frampton’s insistence on a “high level of critical self-consciousness” just too daunting and rather choose a neutral solution, succumbing to Jencks’ (2011: 243) exasperated comment: “Are the architects … too cowed by the Modernist taboo, of being pilloried as pasticheurs?” It is necessary to recognise the flexibility and inclusiveness in Jencks’ argumentation.

Suha Özkân, onetime secretary general of the prestigious Aga Khan Award for Architecture (1985/2007: 103), arguably offers a broad-based and comprehensible definition that reconciles the two opposites: “The regionalist approach recognizes the vernacular modes of building at the one extreme, and abstract regionalism at the other. Even though it covers such a wide array of attitudes, regionalism has respect to the local culture, to climate, and at times technology, at its core.” Özkân’s continuum resonates with the two Corbusian approaches, ranging from Conservative Vernacularism, which he associates with Hassan Fathy, and Abstract Modern Regionalism, which he associates with Charles Correa and Rasem Badran. Correa and Badran are of course well-known for underpinning their work by historical and vernacular logic. It makes sense to consider this duality as comprised not by opposing poles, but as alternatives depending on the degree of vernacular logic required by a design.

With “starchitects” still designing iconic Deconstructivist edifices for sensation-seeking clients and various forms of International Styles possessing universal/global characteristics prevailing for commercial, retail, transport and some institutional projects, there remain two options: Modernism or Postmodernism, with the vernacular mediating between the two. It should be possible to associate any project with a space in the matrix below (figure 15).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROponent</th>
<th>LITERAL/EXACT</th>
<th>NEo-Vernacular</th>
<th>CONTEXTual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Figure 15**
A matrix classifying degrees of vernacular and regional focus (source: the author).

Furthermore, it would be patently irresponsible to ignore the vernacular, which can be derived from pre-industrial as well as industrial sources (figure 16). As Rapoport (2006: 183) maintains: “There can also be lessons [from the study of vernacular design] about responses to climate and energy use, sustainability, the variability of standards and the notion of environmental quality, the nature and attributes of distinctive ambience, preferences for various product characteristics and many other topics.”
In spite of the media being dominated by strange, Deconstructivist architecture, Critical Regionalism is very much on the agenda. In an article entitled “Dirty Regionalism” Roemer van Toorn (2007: 4) describes the work of the Dutch practice, Onix, as follows: “Unlike Critical Regionalism, that mainly presents intact, tidy Modernist buildings, Onix opts for rough, unfinished materials. Their buildings are … unfinished, grubby and dirty.” Considering the nature of primitivism and roughness described above, none of the projects dealt with can be described as “intact, tidy Modernist buildings”! It seems, nevertheless, as if a younger generation of architects is injecting new energy, ideas and creative freedom into regionalist ideals.

**Conclusion**

Critical Regionalism is essentially post-World War II Corbusian Modernism by another name. It is the manifestation of how Modernism should have developed, and did in fact develop, after an initial incubation period, through Aalto, Barragán, Bawa, Ando, Correa, Doshi, Siza and many others. Whereas the vernacular was clumsily applied in early postmodern architecture, it became more subtle towards the end of the 20th century. Mumford and Harris regrettably set the tone for an ideology that seems to envisage a high level of intellectual engagement, favouring the Anglo-Saxon situation, and is not particularly democratic at all.

The primitivism and associated roughness made possible by Le Corbusier and disseminated through Postmodern licence, perhaps unconsciously, became a defining element in Critical Regionalism. But Critical Regionalism is an unfortunate term; the alternative is the placelessness of an International Style, exactly the phenomenon that has hurt architecture to a degree from which it has not yet recovered. *Ersatz* vernacular is still found in estate, resort, casino and retail architecture and remains popular among the public. Design studios in academia seem to encourage Deconstructivist projects with smooth curved or crystalline forms. Most exemplary practices, however, simply try to avoid bland placelessness and aesthetic homogeneity. They most certainly learn from the vernacular, the culture and geography and attempt to produce appropriate architecture with which people can associate and that fits the specific context. They really do not care whether it is termed Critical Regionalist or Post-Modernist. After all of this,
one cannot help but feel that Critical Regionalism is, in spite of the rhetoric, a formalist approach primarily concerned with the visual dimension. It should, rather, have been formulated as a desirable attribute of Modernist architecture.

Appendix: Making sense of Frampton

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Frampton 1983</th>
<th>Frampton 2007</th>
<th>Frampton 1987/2007</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<td></td>
<td>May reinterpret vernacular “occasionally” [6]</td>
<td>Critical Regionalism and vernacular form</td>
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<td>Intrinsic part of Modern Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
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<td>Emphasize territory [2]</td>
<td>Myth and reality of the region</td>
<td>Not only locality and climate; also culture &amp; sub-cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Information and experience</td>
<td>Conditioning by media (commodification) versus reality (corporeal experience)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Place-form</td>
<td>Opposed to “universal civilization” [7]</td>
<td>Space/place</td>
<td>Placelessness versus Heideggerian domain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Topography</td>
<td></td>
<td>Typology/topography</td>
<td>Fusion of typologies, (universal or vernacular) with site particularities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Climate &amp; light</td>
<td></td>
<td>Artificial/natural</td>
<td>Environmentally responsive rather than artificial environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Visual/tactile</td>
<td>Emphasise both visual and tactile [5]</td>
<td>Visual/tactile</td>
<td>Materials and surfaces are, apart from visual form, part of the perception of architecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Post-Modernism and Regionalism</td>
<td>Situated between Neo-Historicists and Neo-Avant-Gardists</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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This article contextualises the earliest development of a planned open space in Johannesburg – the erstwhile premier municipal public park, Joubert Park. It explores the function, features and design of the park and how these displayed middle and upper class social, moral and cultural values, enshrined in practices of respectability. The premise is that the layout and features reflected British views on the usage and exclusivity of urban open spaces.

Key words: British, respectability, design, features, culture, control

The Industrial Revolution was the key contributor to the rapid development of cities in the Western World with concomitant social changes of which public health and overcrowding of the inner city were some of the major concerns. The development and use of the public parks in the 19th century were driven by an attempt to address these concerns. It was mostly as a result of these new factors that a much broader perception of parks, as part of the everyday landscape, prevailed at the turn of the century.1

These perceptions were influenced by the Victorians’ great faith in the idea of progress and specifically of science as a route to understand nature. This created the context for the landscape garden to emerge.2 As a consequence, most forms of public parks were initially the botanic garden and arboretum where opportunities could be found for self-education in botany and horticulture.3 In the Anglo-American world, “the park became a symbol of “paradise”, an idealisation of nature, and a place for the display of civic virtues and for the upliftment of the morale of city dwellers.”4

Civic leadership indeed realized that parks served an important social role in the community. In the minds of their promoters parks were regarded as something essential for the well-being of the community. Thus parks could become places of betterment for the lower levels of society and symbols of civic pride providing open spaces for the city’s residents in which to enjoy their leisure time.

Whilst municipalities and town councils supported this function of the park, the financial backing for the development of parks during the height of the parks movement coincided with a fashion for munificent philanthropic gestures. The gift of a park from a wealthy citizen became a common occurrence.5

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Johannesburg did not escape this vortex of rapid development. Hence the critical period of the early growth of Johannesburg presents the context and the opportunity to explore the nature, purpose, function, characteristics, meaning and design of Johannesburg’s erstwhile premier municipal public park, Joubert Park.6

The article argues that Joubert Park became an important spatial marker of the political, economic and cultural transition of a fast-growing Johannesburg from a rustic milieu to a post Anglo-Boer War world, now imbedded in a powerful political, economic and socially British environment. In addition, the article is based on the premise that the layout, design and features such as areas for promenading, a bandstand, conservatory and art gallery combined to create and give material form to Victorian and Edwardian concepts of identity, and class7 and respectability, as interpreted and reflected by Johannesburg’s town fathers. Furthermore, the article addresses the question how the park become an integral part of the civic and cultural life of a class and racially divided city.

Although the history of 19th and early 20th century parks have been the subject of considerable research in Britain and the United States8, the history of Johannesburg’s public parks of this period and specifically of Joubert Park have not received serious academic attention.9 The article aims to fill this void.

Finally, this article attempts to achieve what Cremin described so aptly:“ by looking at some events in detail, it is possible to examine some of the larger trends in urban and cultural history. After all, by looking at anyone’s front yard you can tell a great deal about those who live in the house.10

Town planning

Initially, there was no proper town planning in Johannesburg after the discovery of gold in 1886. The site had originally been laid out in what was by design and intention based on the assumption that Johannesburg would never be anything more populous and permanent than a temporary but organised mining camp.11 Carman neatly contrasted Johannesburg with Pretoria. The latter had “good basic planning” while the former’s planning was “less sober.”12 Consequently, the expansion was rather haphazard13 and the product of predominantly secular forces. Thus it is very significant that a trading square – and not a church - was the centre of town.14

The distinctive physical feature of the town - the central grid-line plan – was likewise driven by financial considerations. The layout made it possible to make more money from stand leases.15 In addition, it was “relatively easy to lay-out, survey and administer”.16 As a consequence and true to its character as a profit-driven economy, the first four years of Johannesburg’s existence was characterised by a spate of surveying, laying out and selling of land.17 Open spaces were generally viewed by the government as potential building sites rather than as communal leisure areas The necessary insight and inspiration to provide open spaces and acquire land for parks was lacking. Within this context, it might have been seen as a luxury or not even thought about.18

The intention of the surveyor, Josias E de Villiers, to plan large property blocks and generous open spaces, was thus thwarted by this policy. He was only allowed to make provision for a fairly large market square.19 Later, however, he managed to fit in two more squares and also provide for a cemetery.20 So by May 1887 there were only a number of modest public spaces scattered throughout the town.21 The three main squares were: Market Square (which became
the functional centre of Johannesburg even though it was not at the geographical centre of the settlement), Von Brandis Square and Government Square.22

However, when the rest of the farm Randjeslaagte was surveyed, an open area remained far from the centre of the town. In 1888, the Diggers’ Committee was successful in persuading the ZAR government to set aside two portions of this land to be developed as parks – Kruger Park23 and Joubert Park. Prior to the development of Joubert Park the site was well frequented for picnics along the spruit which bisected the park.

The far-sighted and enthusiastic Mining Commissioner, Jan Eloff, was a fine example of where the gift of philanthropic entrepreneurs blended with an eye for profits from rising land values. This was in line with the general trend that it was usually the prosperous and the powerful that were instrumental in the creation of public parks.24

Shortly after the proclamation of the diggings, being the driving force of the Diggers’ Committee, he almost immediately decided that the inhabitants of the fast growing mine camp should enjoy a “public park or garden to be planted with trees.”26 For this purpose, and while frankly admitting ulterior motives, namely that he intended to build his house on adjoining ground, he recommended to the ZAR government a site for a park to the north of the present railway lines. Joubert Park was thus laid out as an upmarket recreation area.

The Minister of Mines, CJ Joubert, supported the proposal. On 15 November 1887, the ZAR government granted Johannesburg sixteen acres (6.5 hectare) of marshy ground.28 However, not much happened with the grounds for the next four years.

By the mid-1890s Johannesburg had grown beyond its mining camp origins. It was a new and developing town ruled by the then Transvaal government that was reluctant to give it a sense of permanence. Consequently, it did not invest in its institutional culture while the educational and cultural needs of Johannesburg inhabitants were also not adequately addressed. There were no state-funded museums, theatres, concert halls or libraries. The only library was a private subscription library, funded by private enterprise starting in 1889. In addition, the Transvaal government did not invest in an image of authority. There was no imposing town hall, the prerequisite of other early settlements. All of this sent out a clear statement that the centre of Transvaal authority and culture was centred in Pretoria. As a result, “While one noticed the presence of authorities here and there, one was never aware of a central overriding government role in the community.”29 The void left by the apparently indifferent Transvaal government was filled by wealthy private citizens, i.e. those who controlled the mines who would invest in and shape the white culture of Johannesburg society.

The lack of cultural investment can partly be explained by the nature of the local authority, which, for the first ten years of its life, was termed a Sanitary Board.31 Carman states that “Its functions were ‘preventive rather than creative in character’ it was concerned with the health rather than ‘the wealth or happiness of the inhabitants.’”32 However, this is not entirely true.

The Sanitary Board was actually determined to be seen as responsive to community needs. An opportunity to put the Board’s intentions into practice occurred in July 1891 when the Pirates Sporting Club requested the use of this “derelict piece of land that was virtually the only swampy ground within the town boundaries”. At the same time the Horticultural Society, formed on 26 September 1891, pressed for a botanical garden “in the land known as Joubert Park.” The Society notified the Board that it was prepared to co-operate with the Pirates Sporting Club with a view to “exploiting the Joubert Park area.”33
Consequently, in 1892, faced with this growing demand to improve the grounds and turn it into a park in more than name, the Sanitary Board upgraded the Parks Sub-Committee to the status of a full committee within the Town Engineers’ Department and appointed a full time gardener.

After the Anglo-Boer War, Lord Alfred Milner, High Commissioner for the Transvaal and Free State, decided to make his headquarters in Johannesburg instead of Pretoria. This changed the political, cultural and intellectual fabric of local government in Johannesburg. He understood that the stability of civil society and the prosperity of the mines were fundamental for the future. This had important repercussions for Johannesburg’s local government and specifically for the further development of Joubert Park.

Contrary to The suspicion and lack of sympathy of the Pretoria authorities, Johannesburg had a sympathetic and powerful administration, based in the town itself and investing in its prosperity. At the heart of Milner’s reconstruction was the wish to change the negative image of a lack of culture and education so that British families could be lured to settle in Johannesburg. This would make it possible “for imperial political allegiances to be secured in a ‘British Transvaal’ that would ‘go a long way to consolidate the British Empire.’” The further development of Joubert Park, in the interim between the Anglo-Boer War and the establishment of Union, was thus an important kingpin in Milner’s Imperial project.

A member of Milner’s “Kindergarden,” Lionel Curtis, was appointed acting town clerk, and tasked to draw up a plan for the new Johannesburg municipality. In April 1901 the first town Council of Johannesburg replaced the Sanitary Board and started planning the town’s development, providing an infrastructure, inter alia making provision for open spaces. By 1904 the geographical foundations of modern Johannesburg were complete. “The urban anatomy, of Johannesburg in respect of its overall and sectorial patterns would henceforth differ in degree rather than in kind from what existed in 1904.” The Council chose to favour low density suburban development. Consequently, most parks were laid out in the more well-to-do upmarket areas north and east of the city centre.

From early on then, Joubert Park, by the very nature of its position, formed an essential part of this pattern and a central pillar of the “Imperial project”. The Park henceforth reflected the values and culture of middle and upper class Johannesburgers. It thus provided a context for a particular kind of identity construction.

Health

The sanitary reform rhetoric with its heavy reliance on middle-class fears of contagion from working-class pollution persisted throughout 19th century Britain. Open recreational spaces to experience “purifying sunlight and air, dissipating the airborne contagion” would solve many societal ills: “by providing the working classes with clean air, recreational facilities and the uplifting example of their betters, they might be rendered healthy, industrious, thrifty and docile.” Parks were seen to be “as much of a necessity in town development as a proper drainage scheme.” It was indeed because of health consideration that the body that replaced the Diggers Committee was called the Sanitary Board. Health was important and parks - as healthy open spaces – provided the ideal environment to achieve it.
Social and moral control

Hoskins point out the manifold roles of parks: “They contributed to the ‘moral enlightenment’ of the population. Like museums and expositions, which indeed they often accommodated, parks were public spaces that operated as ‘exhibitionary complexes’ communicating social codes and gaining popular acquiescence to these codes.”

On the surface they were seen as areas for relaxation and calm but, underneath they were places of potential disorder and an ever-present risk of danger, or at least affront. By their very definition as public places and being surrounded by the reality of the sights, sounds and smells of the city streets and environment, they facilitated the mingling of people.

So, in addition to providing a space for exercise and improve hygiene and health, parks had another important function. They were emblematic of the Victorian project of providing an alternative space for leisure time activities. Rather than visiting drinking and gambling houses — viewed as the seed-bed of moral degradation — visiting a park was the more virtuous thing to do.

The process of urbanization in Johannesburg was rapid, its population diverse and life fast, everyone trying to make a quick buck. Alcoholism, violence and prostitution as well as the breakdown of conservative values was common. Charles van Onselen provided vivid accounts of life in Johannesburg reflecting this lifestyle. Overcrowding, immorality and disease were seen as intrinsically linked.

Given the demography of Johannesburg, racial issues – and consequent efforts of control - were unavoidable. This specifically played out in the occupancy of spaces, defined by whites as “their” spaces. In particular, occupancy of seats was a thorny issue. In 1907, one “Visitor” complained about a matter, calling it “not only wrong, but a great shame”. He and a few ladies visited Joubert Park on a Sunday afternoon and strolled through the park. After a while they tried to find a seat but all were occupied. Eventually they found a spot but about six benches at the spot were occupied by Kaffir girls, who in spite of the entreaties of the ladies in a most impudent manner flatly refused to move and make room for them, stating they had as much a right to the benches as white people. Incidents of this nature were never allowed… and I think something ought to be done to put a stop to this state of affairs which I consider an injustice to them who go to the park for an afternoon’s pleasure….

Johannesburg’s demography had the potential to enable the mingling of different classes, races and genders. However, for the respectable white middle class Johannesburger – who wanted to get away from the hustle and bustle of town – being inevitably exposed to the very people they wanted to avoid, was intolerable. Physically, as envisioned since its establishment, Joubert Park had to be kept as an exclusive beauty spot. Hence, any person or behaviour threatening the middle class and their values should be controlled.

Soon after the City Council was put in charge of running the city, there was already a determined effort to control access to and behaviour in Joubert Park. The following ironic article aptly indicates and summarises what was not permissible in the park, appeared in the Leader entitled: “Joubert Park. Rules for visitors”:

Nurses are informed that attendants will be in waiting at every gate to relieve them of their charges, thus allowing them to do nothing more agreeably. Coloured nurses, in being more intelligent, are especially welcome.
Children are requested to climb trees and break all the branches they find. Footballs will be provided for them free of charge.
Every Sunday a dog show is held. All are welcome. No entrance fee
Visitors are requested to pick all the flowers in bloom..., bring a drink, smash bottles, throw paper around, make dirty calls at the ladies and generally make themselves at home.
Cycling is also allowed when the walks are crowded with children. The youth at both sides are requested to yell and run about as much as possible.53

It is telling that there seems to have been a lull of about 25 years before a racial matter was again raised – this time specifically focused on the presence of Black and Coloured nurses. This can perhaps be ascribed to the fact that racial urban policies became tougher, limiting the mobility and access to parks/open spaces. There were complaints that control in Joubert Park was being neglected and that white visitors to the park had to give up their specific seats which they claimed they used for years.54

“Hancock Street Daily Visitor”’s disapproval was even more blatant, unashamedly claiming that Joubert Park – and its seats - were reserved for white people only. “We do not use the same seats in private houses, public halls or churches, then why are we expected to use them in… our parks? Is it not plainly stated at the entrance that it is the ‘Citizens Park’. And is there not a special notice inside saying “this space is reserved for coloured nurses.”55

In addition, there were objections to nurses who “amuse themselves on the various attractions such as the swings. If, however, any white nurse ventured to do this they would be stopped without delay.”56 L Rogers pointed out similar behaviour amongst “kaffir nurses, though a special notice forbids their use by nurses”.57

It is noteworthy that the editor vehemently responded to this obviously racial remark: “Does our correspondent suggest that coloured nurses in charge on any of European children and consequently in close association with them both at home and in the park, should be prohibited from sitting on any public benches. If so - why?”58

Similar complaints were raised at the beginning of 1938 when a growing unease about “natives in the parks” was raised. “Flat dweller” was upset that the “native and coloured community encroached on the Europeans’ preserves in our one and only central park…” and had the “free access to this beauty spot by non-Europeans”. Their numbers, “combined with their raucous laughter and ceaseless chatter, contributes in no small measure to turn this refuge from the hustle of city life, into anything but a haven of rest and peacefulness.”59

In addition, their respectability was challenged when he and his wife walked though Joubert Park one evening and discovered “coloured girls in shorts together with their respective beaux, doing their courting in their own particular way… and their attitude to passers-by anything but respectful.” On another evening “a drunken buck native, staggering from side to side, wended his way through the central portion of the park… It is high time something was done to safeguard the interests of the large white population in this vicinity, otherwise… the place will become a native recreation ground.”60

It is clear that it was not only a racial unease but also a cultural one. Complaints of “natives” being a “nuisance” continued. Captain D Smith reported that each year more and more “natives” were making use of the park. Hence numerous complaints were being received from the “white” public about “the noise, impertinence and annoying behaviour of these natives.” Consequently, a proposal “to prohibit natives – other than nurses accompanied by Europeans - from entering Joubert Park” was discussed at a meeting of the Non-European and Native Affairs Committee.61
The proposal met with considerable criticism. Any further action was postponed pending a report by Mr Graham Ballenden. He had to appoint an inspector on a daily basis in the park to observe “whether natives using the park are the nuisance they have been alleged to be by officials of the Parks and Estates Department and by members of the public. If it is found that natives are quite orderly, it is unlikely that a suggestion to close the park to all natives except nurse girls will be adopted.”

An article in The Star considered this a backward step and an unfair way of “solving the problem.” It was conceded that there were “gangs of natives who have been using the park as a thoroughfare, and their behaviour is such that it had been found necessary to have two extra attendants on duty to control them.” However, “it would be unjust to punish all law-abiding natives who have made use of the park for many years because of the unruly conduct of a few whose excesses are recent”. It continued pointing out that there was likewise also “a certain type of European… who is an equal incongruity in what Captain D. Smith calls a ‘restful beauty spot’… a case can be made out that this type should be excluded…”

The layout of and features in the park was a deliberate attempt to control the movement and behaviour of visitors: the creation of paths, terraces and steps, as well as the placement of features to which visitors might be drawn or had to circumvent, such as the bandstand, fountains or rockeries.

Thus parks became spaces for social control where upper and middle class values could be instilled, for example, the appreciation of nature, music and the arts in the park environment as appropriate. Johannesburg’s early parks, and specifically Joubert Park, were likewise a response to particular social and political conditions.

**Design and layout**

The designs of 19th century English parks were strongly influenced by either scientific or educational needs or for stimulating land values. Parks of this period often focused on especially monumental architectural and eye-catching features, usually a bandstand, pavilion, shelter and fountains. There would be some form of horticultural display, be it a patch of bedding, a rose garden, or an ‘old English garden’ planted with hardy herbaceous perennials and flowering shrubs. In terms of layout, the aim was to design a place of relaxation, contemplation and varied a landscape, whilst also accommodating the often-competing demands of providing sufficient amenities for large numbers of visitors.

In this way, public parks generated an idealised, chaste, simple, nostalgic, and conservative vision of the natural world – a moral counterpoint to the perceived dangers, dirt and disorder of city life. Rosenzweig and Blackmar aptly wrote: “These landscapes conformed to middle and upper class notions of what was visually pleasing: the contemplation of beauty and tranquillity harmoniously expressed by the hand of God in nature would, it was hoped, inspire spiritual and moral improvement.”

The creation of such overtly designed landscapes acted as a form of civic display, demonstrating the ability of the political establishment to make the world an ordered and predictable place both in spatial and social terms.
The most striking feature of British parks designed during the second half of the 19th century, was that they were conceived and handled as being something rather precious. Hence, they were separated from their environment by fences, hedges or avenues of trees. Access was gained by only a few gates. “In the midst of the untended streets, small houses, the dirt from the mines and a town strictly laid out according to a grid plan, the parks were conceived as units with a specific form, which differed markedly from that of the town lay-out. Circles, cruciflers and meanders abounded in the walk-ways of the parks…”

Features

In October 1892 Joubert Park was ploughed and the next year shelter beds for trees were put in and lawns were laid out. The basic design and layout of Joubert Park mirrored the philosophy of British garden design in accordance with the most basic ‘natural’ geometric patterns. In a letter to the editor of the Leader, “Parkite” described it thus: “The circular promenade running midway round the park divided it into an inner circle and an outer belt of trees (for shade) extending to the park’s boundaries. Flower-beds and large evergreens were planted in the inner circle.”

More specifically, the layout of Joubert Park contained “a mixture of grand scale and intimate elements, related to major, minor and converging axes.” Most formal were the broad forecourt in the north, treated as a cour d’honneur, consisting of a geometrically curved wrought-iron screen, with a central gateway that opened into a deep-lined park with formal lawns, edged with strongly profiled stone curbs. At the southern end a semi-circular long curved outdoor benches were placed, framed and lined with trees. The cour d’honneur terminated in a wrought-iron screen and gateways, with two small square gate lodges fronting Noord Street.

The British garden design was confirmed by the predominant role played by water. In 1895, a large centrally-placed cast iron ornamental fountain (a MacFarlane product) with a pond was erected whilst a rockery was given its final shape. The water feature was redesigned in 1906. “One from afar”, was clearly very dismayed, as he/she had high hopes that the manager of Sheba Mines would supply quarts and the manager of the Railways would freely convey the quartz to Johannesburg. “Then we should have an attractive fountain for all time.”

This did not transpire but it was remodelled with natural boulders from the local kopjes. The council approved £160 for repairs. In addition, six islets (with goldfish) were planted with bamboo, the centre island with native caladiums, and the miniature lake a selection of water lilies whilst the outside was planted with forget-me-nots. The natural and soothing elements of plants (earth) and water (fountain) could therefore be enjoyed.

Due to the richness of the soil shrubs and flowers were well settled within two years. By mid-decade the park looked, to quote Clark, “as if it had been imported intact from Britain with its features reflecting elements of Empire.”

After the Anglo-Boer War, the park was in a terrible state. The water was silted up and the borders and walks were overgrown. “the arts of peace had suffered with others under the devastating influence of war.” However, restoration to its former splendour started shortly afterwards.
There was no shortage of seeds and plants as many donations were received from all over the country. This included hundreds of roses from Natal and even from the Royal Botanical Gardens in Kew. Mostly, however, indigenous plants, giving it a natural flavour, thousands of shrubs and even fruit trees, all with labels, were planted.

Restored to its original splendour, “Parkite” expressed what must have been the general satisfaction of the Johannesburgers with the design of the park: “Now, as originally designed, we have precisely what the hot and dusty Johannesburg needs, viz., the beauty of a flower garden on the one hand and the freedom of a shady park on the other, a combination which… shows the sound judgement and perfect climate knowledge of the original designers…”
The Council’s role and investment to renovate and restore Joubert Park, especially between 1904 and 1906 was appreciated. The editor of the *Leader* wrote: “… we are… pleased to express out admiration of the manner in which it [the City] is treating the open spaces under its charge…. the popular resort has been very greatly improved…”86 The swift restoration is a clear signifier of how important Joubert Park was considered for the city.

The Park became a pleasure to many of Johannesburg’s white citizens. “A friend of a Garden” was convinced that “in time it will be equal to any other park in South Africa… giving the impression of a proper country park”87, albeit in the city. In an article in *The Leader* the author praised Joubert Park as it “holds the palm” of all the parks in the city and for having “a stillness which appeals to those glad to get away for a short spell from the bustle of the town.”88 The park was even described as a “pleasure resort”.89

Even the more “functional” park furniture such as drinking fountains, lamp standards and benches were highly decorative and visually striking objects that created an almost theatrical setting in which particular performances of sociability could be enacted.90 In Joubert Park the Health Committee placed ‘rustic seats’ at strategic points.91 These features symbolised upper-class values.92 Nurse Adelaide, with obvious pride, wrote:

“The park really looks a marvel of beauty now, the flowers and shrubs are smelling so sweetly and the chairs are in plenty. Nothing more is needed… Johannesburg is very blessed with wealth and the good things of life, so we feel we are not asking too much of it – only a place to sit and rest in of an evening after a day’s hard work in offices, workrooms and shops… where we could breathe the fresh pure air of heaven.”93

Rosenzweig and Blackmar remarked that “…the creation of such overtly designed landscapes acted as a form of civic display”94 and Bruck added that it “… demonstrated the ability of the political and business establishment to make the world an ordered and predictable place both in spatial and social terms.”95 Joubert Park’s layout echoed these observations.
Noteworthy in the layout was the promenade that carried an important social significance. Parks functioned as social arenas where models of good behaviour and citizenship could be observed and imitated. The foremost activity for which parks were designed was, of course, for leisurely walking, an eminently respectable activity, “to construct a personal mythos.”

The promenade became a theatre where decorum could be displayed in dress, behaviour and knowledge of proper etiquette which signified wealth, taste, and refinement - in short, middle class respectability.

Figure 3
Picture of the main promenade in Joubert Park leading to the kiosk (source: Museum Africa photo collection PH 2002-227).

They were places in which to see and be seen. This manifested in three ways. First there were the rituals of recognition to distinguish those considered to be social equals. Once this had taken place, the elite could exercise a further crucial need: “the ability to distinguish themselves from the nouveaux rich and indeed from the demi-monde.” Lastly it enabled the middle classes to ape the genteel life style of the elite.

It was the City Council that drove this civilising project, providing an escape from the crowded city life and reinforcing class differences. That “escape” was Joubert Park which provided a perfect setting for all the signifiers of respectability: a promenade, well-lit park, with a conservatory, art gallery, organised entertainment, clean seats and flowerbeds. This well-ordered space encouraged the presence of neat, well-behaved men, women and children and contrasted sharply with the urban environment of the lower classes not too far removed. One can imagine an elite evening in Joubert Park when reading Sidney S Graumann’s letter to the editor of The Star in 1930: “Of the many thousand people attending each evening concert large numbers enjoy promenading during the performance.”

Cultural structures

Middle class refinement at the turn of the century included admiration for music, nature, art, a library, a museum, facilities for horticultural displays and “civilised” sporting activities.
Citizenship was, after all, intimately associated with cultural presumptions. So was respectability.¹⁰¹

In many ways Joubert Park reflected these requirements. It was meant to be more than a ‘beautiful garden’¹⁰², catering for the various lifestyles of the Johannesburg middle classes. The Park shared – in an integrated way - its landscape with a bandstand, conservatory, the art gallery and even included plans for a memorial site and amphitheatre – all to become a showcase for the city.

Thus Joubert Park was not only a visual delight but also performed an important cultural and recreational function.¹⁰³ Within an area of 700x400m all their needs were met. It could boast a park (with all the middle class accoutrements), sporting grounds in Kruger Park, a library, a hospital, a railway station and, but not least, the official residence of the mining commissioner, Jan Eloff on the corner of Bok and Wanderers Streets.¹⁰⁴ This space thus fitted in perfectly with a middle class city plan, accommodating their needs within this up-marked space.

The architectural style of parks was another element of the way parks were drawn into narratives of imperialism.¹⁰⁵ Layering Joubert Park with Imperial markers started in 1906 when the City Council put out a contract for a band stand¹⁰⁶, conservatory, new palm house and wrought iron entrance gates.¹⁰⁷ All these features not only provided a powerful visual impact but also asserted British presence.

Despite the fact that there was no proper band stand at first, Joubert Park nevertheless became a popular site for weekly band performances since 1898.¹⁰⁸ However, by 1905, the City Council budgeted to erect a band stand, which almost inevitably followed similar British designs,¹⁰⁹ accommodating 50 players.¹¹⁰ This made it possible to have regular band performances by, inter alia the Town Police Band,¹¹¹ the Volunteer Band¹¹² and British Regimental Bands.¹¹³

![Figure 4](source: Museum Africa photo collection MA 2006-5090).

It became practice to have band performances on Wednesday and Sunday afternoons.¹¹⁴ Although concerts also took place in Hermann-Eckstein Park, Joubert Park was still recognised as the “in-town” resort on Sunday afternoons.¹¹⁵ These park concerts were extremely popular with up to 4000 people attending per Sunday by 1923.¹¹⁶
In 1910 the City Council authorised the building of a kiosk at £ 1850.117 This was a welcome addition for the hungry and thirsty, especially in the summer months.118 Electric lights were installed in 1914 making the Sunday evening concerts, in addition to the afternoon band performances, were now possible.119 As a city space, Joubert Park thus turned out to be a visual and aural delight.

These concerts performed an important educational and recreational function.120 In this way, Joubert Park was in line with Conway’s pertinent observation that “music was perceived to have an important moral influence but it also leant another element to the cultural education of the people and complemented art galleries and museums”.121
The building of a conservatory in the Park was another important symbol of middle class respectability. Already in 1898 the City Council had purchased the south-west region of the Park from the nearby Wanderers sports club. However, it was only at the end of 1905 that the City Council asked for tenders for a conservatory. It was built during 1906 and opened on 30 January 1907.

Inside the large glass hot house were particularly fine collections of indigenous plants and flowers. The following description tells the story of a splendid place:

“Former dry bare patches are now respondent with green and variegated flowers, and the tall white pampas grass crown the view with a halo… There can be no pleasanter spot in which to stroll after the heat of the day, and a few lights set up might convert it into a second Devonshire Park… The new greenhouse is the largest in the country…it is fringed all around by rockery…”

The aim of the new conservatory was to be instructive and educational, apropos current philanthropic thinking. Hence enamel labels were attached to all the diverse varieties of plants, bearing their botanical and common names and detailing the various countries to which the varieties belong.

In line with the trimmings of Empire and respectability, Joubert Park provided the setting for another essential requirement to achieve British notions of “respectability” – that being an art gallery. This impulse was linked to the wider ambition, prompted by the Milner government, to generate the reconstruction of Johannesburg, thereby asserting the superiority of British culture. The idea of the gallery was part of the wider scheme that sought to encourage a particular type of settler to Johannesburg and to consolidate the cultural infrastructure of an emerging civil society.

The thinking behind this can be linked to the typically British tradition of philanthropy. A project like the Johannesburg Art Gallery was another example where a British prototype was
applied to the South African context as “part of a grand social-engineering plan.” A cultural institution like an art gallery fitted in with the view that “the ‘haves’, the mining elite, must be seen to be offering something to the ‘have-nots’.”

The driving force behind this project was Florence Phillips, wife of the mining magnate Sir Lionel Phillips. Both were leading cultural figures in Johannesburg’s upper circles and were determined “to create an urban environment in which their social and cultural comforts could be accommodated, to provide ‘the amenities of life in Europe, which are almost entirely missing here.’”

Lady Florence persuaded the mining magnates to financially support the proposed establishment of an art gallery. On 11 October 1911 the Mayor of Johannesburg, H.J. Hofmeyer, laid the foundation stone. Four years later the classically styled, stone-built gallery, designed by the distinguished British architect, Sir Edwin Lutyens, despite being incomplete, opened its doors to the public.

However, the selected site – the southern border of the park - was an unfortunate choice as the Gallery faced onto the railway line. Not only were the soot and noise generated by the trains extremely unpleasant but the Gallery also faced away from the Park disassociating itself, as it were, from visitors to the Park.

Another trapping of Empire and respectability was a memorial, honouring only British soldiers who fell during the Anglo-Boer War. This suggestion was made by members of the English-speaking community and was in line with similar actions in Britain. Subsequently the Parks and Estates Committee submitted a report to the City Council on 31 January 1906 suggesting a site for the proposed “Rand Regiment Memorial” at the north-west corner of Joubert Park. However, it was turned down. The editor of The Leader to a certain extent threw some light on the decision. Keeping in mind that the Afrikaans and English relationship were for the most still tenuous, erecting such a memorial excluding the Afrikaans people who died in the Anglo-Boer War might have made matters worse. The upshot was that the memorial was not built in Joubert Park. Chipkin aptly described it as “a typically deadpan Johannesburg response to attempts to achieve civic grandeur.”

A further attempt to add to Joubert Park’s list of essential buildings proceeded afoot late in 1927 and 1928 with an elaborate proposal to build an amphitheatre in Joubert Park as there were “only a few facilities for the music loving public.” Once this was in place, it was imagined that “open-air opera performances and concerts, amid surroundings similar to those in the great cities of Europe and America” would become possible. Clearly it was assumed that an amphitheatre in Joubert Park could place Johannesburg on a par with world cities. The suggestion was, however, stillborn and this project was eventually turned down.

Nevertheless, a similar suggestion was again raised in March 1930 as it had become “almost essential if good music is to be presented successfully at the Sunday night concerts.” Some condemned the scheme, mainly because the sinking of a basin for the amphitheatre would spoil the park. Sidney S Graumann rather chose “to enjoy the fresh air and picturesque surroundings in preference to being dumped down below the surface.” Enjoying a pristine local park was apparently valued more than competing with the trappings of parks in major international cities.

Although these two attempts did not come to fruition, they are an indication of the City’s drive to further add to Joubert Park’s status as Johannesburg’s premier park and, given the
upbeat prosperity of the time, and, as the new kid on the block, comparing itself with world-renowned cities.

Other striking features of Joubert Park were its expensive, highly decorative, eye-catching and elaborate railings, iron fences, and ornamental cast-iron gate – the latter being the Park’s only point of entrance which ensured that the Park was thus insulated from its environment. Physically and mentally they enforced the transition from the busy streets to a space of calm and order.

![Figure 8](image)

Figure 8

Post card of the entrance to Joubert Park


The use of iron was significant as it represented the very heart of Western ideals of progress. Iron symbolised Britain’s industrial might and its use in municipal parks was another way of legitimating an industrialised empire and the class structure that underpinned it.

Moreover, the entranceways marked socially significant spaces and functioned as symbols of civic authority and control. They provided ample restrictions, making the park inaccessible at particular times, ensured the exclusion of all “improper characters” and reminded those who entered that they should behave appropriately and respectfully. A resident advised thus: “In order that the rough element might be kept out, it might be advisable to charge threepence for admission… and this would go towards defraying any small incidental expenses.” The *quid pro quo* for admission to enter the park was thus the expectation to behave in a proper manner. Concerns over access and the regulation of behaviour of especially “lower classes” and other races were given material form in the enclosures of Joubert Park. Consequently, the original purpose of the founders of Joubert Park, that the park should be for the entire community, was effectively negated.

Over the years their effectiveness and control in Joubert Park generally diminished as the city’s demography rapidly changed. “Ratepayer” wrote in 1932:
There are many who would willingly pay one shilling for admission and enjoy the evening’s music in an atmosphere of appreciation and silence, which is now impossible on account of a bad mannered class, who, because admission is free, make it a meeting place… converse and laugh at the top of their voices with the slightest regard for what is being played or sung, or that there are others who would like to listen undisturbed.\textsuperscript{153}

**Popularity**

Until the 1930’s Joubert Park continued to be the main park of the town\textsuperscript{154} and a very popular venue for the white inhabitants of the mining town\textsuperscript{155} and later of the city. By 1907 the conservatory together with the band performances, regularly attracted thousands of visitors.\textsuperscript{156} On hot evenings it was often difficult to find an unoccupied bench.\textsuperscript{157} The popularity of the Park was confirmed by the requests to open the Park in the summer evenings.\textsuperscript{158}

One citizen, praising the advantages of Johannesburg’s weather, called for the opening of Joubert Park at night. On Sunday nights they could go to the Wanderer’s Club but “on ordinary evenings there is nothing but the theatres and music halls, and an occasional concert or lecture, neither of which are properly appreciated.” The writer stated that he does not want to go to the theatre every night and that entertainment “is expensive in these days when one counts every sovereign.”\textsuperscript{159} His suggestion was supported with enthusiasm by various other white correspondents.

For “A Woman Worker” opening the park in the evenings “would not only be a source of great pleasure but a good restorative to have a place in which we could enjoy the fresh air and the music of a good band for an hour or two during the long summer evenings.”\textsuperscript{160} “Long felt want” reminiscing about and comparing to Britain wrote: “In the great cities at Home the parks are not closed at dusk, and why should they be here?” The correspondent pointed out that in a large town in the “Old Country” a band, paid for by the municipality, played during the summer months from 7:30 pm to 10pm and “thousands avail themselves of the privilege.”\textsuperscript{161}

The closing times of Joubert Park remained a contentious issues. In 1920 “A lover of nature” complained that the Park closed at 6 pm Sunday evenings after the band’s performance: “It seems wicked to close such a beautiful park at 6 pm even in the winter, when so many people enjoy the beautiful fresh air and solitude.”\textsuperscript{162} “PAX” requested to keep the park open until 10:30 pm throughout the year. South Africa never actually experiences winter. This explains why it is known as “sunny South Africa.”\textsuperscript{163}

It was not only the summer weather that enticed people to visit the park in the evenings. In 1938 there was a request to extend the closing hours of “the paradise” during the winter months to 8 pm as it was “a rendezvous continually patronised by large numbers after the evening meal, where one can roam without fear… after the toll of the day.”\textsuperscript{164} The beauty of the park, layout, facilities, and entertainment and Johannesburg’s summer weather attracted people. In its first 30 years Joubert Park succeeded in providing white citizens with ample opportunities for outdoor recreation.\textsuperscript{165}

**Conclusion**

The story that emerges is one of a city that had a meteoric rise with a park creating a distinctive civic and cultural space and significantly changing the city landscape. Joubert Park was a physical symbol of the confidence and political and financial power of the city’s white elite,
keen to display their cultural power. This was strongly influenced by the social and cultural values and tastes of the British middle class as reflected in the reasons for the park, its features, design and amenities. Moreover, the history of Joubert Park provides insight into how the city viewed itself and how it wanted to represent itself to outsiders. In this way the Park provides an effective cultural mirror of some of the city’s citizens of that time.

Furthermore, it is no co-incidence that much of these developments happened in the first decade of the 20th century, i.e. before Union and exactly when Milner and well-to-do anglophile Randlords were keen to impress South Africans with British power. Ultimately the park – with all its ‘trimmings’ – became another symbol of British power, civilisation and prestige. It demonstrated clearly – in a powerful visual way – that Johannesburg was part of the British Empire.

Notes

3 Clark (2006: 35).
6 The park, marked Joubert’s Plein on a stand map of Johannesburg dated January 1889, was named after General Piet J. Joubert, Commander-in-Chief of the Transvaal military forces at the time of the outbreak of the Second Anglo-Boer War. (Bruwer (2006: 105).
8 See for example, Conway (1991); Cranz (1982); Rosenzweig and Blackmar (1992); Jordan (1994); Taylor (1995) and O’Reilly (2009).
9 The most recent academic work on Joubert Park is an anthropological study by Ingrid Marais.
10 Cremin (1999: 363).
13 Neame (undated: 102).
17 Leyds (1964: 150).
18 Shorten (1970: 645). This was in sharp contrast to the needs of a city like Chicago as Cremin explains: “Even before the turn of the century, the city called for more ‘parks, both large and small, and providing for a systematic study of the present and future needs of the city in the matter of parks and recreation grounds.” (Cremin (1999: 282).
19 Neame (undated: 102).
21 Whilst space was set aside for squares in the town centre, land was made available for parks in the suburbs after 1890. Squares, it was decided, belonged in the business district and parks in the suburbs, where they would be used for recreation. Van der Waal (1987: 82). The Transvaal government in 1903 made some amends for the omission by presenting as a free gift - the large open space which was subsequently named Milner Park.
22 Market Square extended from Rissik Street to Sauer Street, flanked by President and Market Streets and Von Brandis Square was bounded by Von Brandis, Pritchard, Jeppe and Small Streets. Government Square was bounded by Eloff Street, Rissik, Fox and Marshall Streets. It was, however, never laid out as a square. Leyds (1974: 143-144). Also see Beavon (2004: 43) and Maud (1938: 148).
23 The former was a piece of vacant land specifically donated by the government as a public park to the residents of Johannesburg in 1888. Van der Waal (1987: 31) and Leyds (1974: 146). However, it never really
materialised due to the railway station that was established and developed on a part of the site. The remaining extent of Kruger Park, however, was developed as a sports ground and became the first site for the Wanderers Club. Buff (undated: 2) and Beavon (2004: 50).


Johannesburg’s earliest local government.


A similar example was the Union Ground, granted to the Town Council by the Chief Government Land Surveyor, Johan Rissik on condition that it: “should remain dedicated for the purpose of… the recreation and amusement of the inhabitants of the municipality of Johannesburg and shall at all times be held available for the use of any volunteer corps for drill, parade or any such other military uses or purposes as the Commandant of Volunteers for the time being may sanction.” Neame, (undated: 103). Leyds added that it was also to be used as a playground for children. Leyds (1974: 146). Other areas that were set aside for recreation were End Park and Union Grounds. Soccer and cricket games were played on these grounds. Bruwer (2006: 106).

Shorten (1970: 647) and Van Rensburg (c1987: 177). In 1906, Joubert Park expanded with 8 morgen, 253 sq roods, 18 sq ft when the Government donated Joubert Park to the Johannesburg Municipality in terms of Crown Grant No. 268/1906. Municipal Offices, (hereafter MO), Johannesburg, Law Library (hereafter JLL), Minutes of Town Council (hereafter Minutes), 22 February 1904, 192 and MO, JLL, Minutes of a Special Meeting, 9 July, 1906, 785). Also see Bruwer (2006: 107). From a site plan showing the proposed original layout and extent of the Park, the synergetic relationship between the historic development of both the Wanderers’ Club and Joubert Park on the one hand, and the railway authorities’ ever-increasing demand for additional land on the other hand, is obvious. The park was not extended to the south bordering the railway line. Bruwer (2006: 102). This is another example of how Johannesburg had to forfeit an open space for commercial activities.


31 The Sanitary Board replaced the Diggers’ Committee in 1887.


35 The full staff is mentioned for the first time in 1909. Joubert Park had 1 Head Gardener, 1 Botanical Assistant, 1 Assistant Gardener, 1 Improver Gardener and 13 Labourers. Buff (undated: 11). Carman quotes Maud who claimed that Milner Park and the Hermann Eckstein Park were the “first significant open communal spaces” which necessitated the formation of a separate parks department and that this only happened under British rule after the war. Carman (2006: 39).


41 See similar examples in Orum and Neal (2009: 179).


45 Cremin, for example, pointed out that the central focus of the design for Grant Park’s future, was finding a way to unify the existing Art Institute of Chicago with the proposed Field Museum of Natural History and Crerar Library within the landscape. (Cremin (1999: 244-245).


47 Hoskins (2004: 10).


50 Van Onselen (1982).
51 University of the Witwatersrand (hereafter Wits), William Cullen Library (hereafter WCL), Historical Papers (hereafter HP), AF 1913 Johannesburg Public Library Press Cuttings (hereafter AF 1913, JPLPC), File 502, “Visitor” to Editor, Rand Daily Mail, 25 July 1907.

52 “Nurses” in this context relates to the current term of ‘carers’ and not to medical nurses.

53 Wits, WCL, HP, AF 1913, JPLPC, File 502, Article, Leader, 25 August 1902.

54 In March 1932 O le Roux complained that the control in Joubert Park was being neglected, one being that the “coloured nurses are allowed to occupy seats intended for Europeans” and “if this is not checked they will only, in the course of time, take further liberties”. Wits, WCL, HP, AF 1913, JPLPC, File 294, “O le Roux” to Editor, The Star, 25 March 1932. See also Complaint that coloured servants were using “our park” seats. “I think this difficulty could be overcome by setting a few seats aside, and labelling them as is done on the railways.” (Wits, WCL, HP, AF 1913, JPLPC, File 294, CF Whichelo to Editor, The Star, 30 March 1932; Wits, WCL, HP, AF 1913, JPLPC, File 294, 23 March 1932. and Wits, WCL, HP, AF 1913, JPLPC, File 294, Editor comments on letter by “L Rogers” The Star, 25 March 1932.


57 Wits, WCL, HP, AF 1913, JPLPC, File 294, “L Rogers” to Editor, The Star, 25 March 1932. Also see Wits, WCL, HP, AF 1913, JPLPC, File 294, “BAW” to Editor, Rand Daily Mail, 16 February 1939 and Wits, WCL, HP, AF 1913, JPLPC, File 498, Article, The Star, 14 February 1939. See discussion on the facilities for these activities below.

58 See discussion on the facilities for these activities below.

59 Wits, WCL, HP, AF 1913, JPLPC, File 498, Article, Rand Daily Mail, 10 March 1939.

60 Wits, WCL, HP, AF 1913, JPLPC, File 498, Article, The Star, 17 February 1939. Also see Wits, WCL, HP, AF 1913, JPLPC, File 498, Article, Rand Daily Mail, 16 February 1939

61 Manager of the Native Affairs Department.

62 Wits, WCL, HP, AF 1913, JPLPC, File 498, Article, The Star, 10 March 1939.

63 Wits, WCL, HP, AF 1913, JPLPC, File 498, Article, The Star, 10 March 1939.

64 Wits, WCL, HP, AF 1913, JPLPC, File 498, Article, The Star, 10 March 1939.

65 Wits, WCL, HP, AF 1913, JPLPC, File 498, Article, The Star, 10 March 1939.


69 Bluestone (1987: 534) and Rosenzweig and Blackmar (1992: 144).

70 Brück (2013: 203).


72 Wits, WCL, HP, AF 1913, JPLPC, File 502, “Parkite” to Editor, Leader, 21 December 1904.


76 Shorten (1970: 647); Buff (undated: 4) and Bruwer (2006: 105). When one takes into account that it is only in the last few years that the major part of that fountain had to be abandoned it does seem that these extensive repairs were effective and the original fountain was indeed well constructed. MO, Minutes, 9 May 1906, 473.

77 Wits, WCL, HP, AF 1913, JPLPC, File 502, “One from afar” to Editor, Leader, 20 June 1906.

78 MO, JLL, Minutes, 9 May 1906, 473.

79 Wits, WCL, HP, AF 1913, JPLPC, File 502, Report, Leader, 21 August 1906. The City Council even issued tender applications for the
erection of a windmill and water storage tanks in 1903. Buff (undated:2).

80 Clark (1981: 19).

81 Wits, WCL, HP, AF 1913, JPLPC, File 502, Report, Leader, 22 November 1902.

82 Van Rensburg (circa 1986: 77).

83 Buff (undated: 4).

84 Wits, WCL, HP, AF 1913, JPLPC, File 502, article Leader, 17 July 1902.

85 Wits, WCL, HP, AF 1913, JPLPC, File 502, “Parkite” to Editor, Leader, 21 December 1904.

86 Wits, WCL, HP, AF 1913, JPLPC, File 502, Editor, Leader, 28 May 1906.

87 Wits, WCL, HP, AF 1913, JPLPC, File 502, “A friend of a Garden” to Editor, Leader, 5 November 1903. Also see Wits, WCL, HP, AF 1913, JPLPC, File 502, “Horticulturist” to Editor, Rand Daily Mail, 29 August 1906.


89 Wits, WCL, HP, AF 1913, JPLPC, File 502, No name to the Editor, Leader, 10/10/1906.

90 Brück (2013: 196-197).

91 and MO, JLL, Minutes 11 February 1903, 1352; and MO, JLL, Minutes 27 May 1903, 1713; 12 July 1905, 794 and 18 March 1908, 1003. Also see Van der Waal (1987: 83).


93 Wits, WCL, HP, AF 1913, JPLPC, File 502, “Nurse Adelaide” to Editor, The Star, 31 December 1906. Joubert Park was still a splendid place fulfilling its function in the 1930’s. An article in the Rand Daily Mail described it thus: “Trim lawns, carpet beds, choice taste in flower colour schemes, tall and shade offering trees, tropical growths and wide, clean paths make the Park a haven in a city of money-makers.” (Wits, WCL, HP, AF 1913, JPLPC, File 452, Article, Rand Daily Mail, 18 January 1930. Also see Wits, WCL, HP, AF 1913, JPLPC, File 502, “Rand Pioneer” to Editor, The Star, 23 January 1932; Wits, WCL, HP, AF 1913, JPLPC, File 294, “RG” to Editor, The Star, 22 April 1933 and Wits, WCL, HP, AF 1913, JPLPC, File 294, “Flower Lover” to Editor, The Star, 25 September 1934.

94 Rosenzweig and Blackmar (1992: 144).

95 Brück (2013: 203).

96 Brill (2001: 6).


100 Wits, WCL, HP, AF 1913, JPLPC, File 404, Sidney S Graumann to the editor, The Star, 6 March 1930. Also see Hoskins (2003: 17).

101 Hoskins (2003: 8).

102 Cremin described the multiple use of Grant Park. (Cremin (1999: 332).


106 It was also called a “music pavilion”.

107 Buff (undated: 4).

108 Shorten (1970: 648). Sunday afternoon promenade concerts were also given at the Wanderers Club.

109 Buff (undated: 3) and MO, JLL, Minutes, 9 May 1906: 474.

110 Buff (undated: 3).

111 MO, JLL, Minutes, 9 May, 1906, 474; MO, JLL, Minutes, 3 October 1906, 1047 and MO, JLL, Minutes, 7 July 1907, 375.

112 Norwich (1986: 76)

113 Band performances were by 1909 also given in Joubert Park, Jeppe park, Rotunda Park, Market Square, Fordsburg Market Square, Milner park, Belgravia Park, Vrededorp Government Ground and the swimming baths. (Buff (undated:12,14).
Wits, WCL, HP, AF 1913, JPLPC, File 502, article Leader, 8 January 1907.

Wits, WCL, HP, AF 1913, JPLPC, File 429, C.H. Brooks to the Editor, The Star, 9 October, 1923. In 1922 the City Council spent £500 on performances in Joubert Park. This was only a loan from the Finance Committee as these concerts always paid for themselves. (Wits, WCL, HP, AF 1913, JPLPC, File 429, Article, Rand Daily Mail, 29 September, 1922.

MO, JLL, Minutes 31 March 1910, 1087.

Norwich (c1986:76).

MO, JLL, Minutes 9 May, 1906, 474; MO, JLL, Minutes 10 March 1914; MO, JLL, Minutes 24 September 1914, 515; MO, JLL, Minutes 24 November 1914, 590 and MO, JLL, Minutes 30 March 1915, 150 and 151. The average revenue for each concert was £40 while the average expenditure £45. A charge of 3 pence per seat being made for visitors to the Park. (Buff (undated:16,20) and MO, JLL, Minutes 20 September 1921, 619.

Bruwer (2006:105). In 1921 the bands of the South African Industrial Federation and the Comrades of the Great War performed on Sunday evenings at 30 pounds per concert. (Wits, WCL, HP, AF 1913, JPLPC, File 429, Article, Rand Daily Mail, 9 March, 1921.

Conway as quoted in O’Reilly (undated: 11).

MO, JLL, Minutes 22/11/1905 p. 1298.

MO, JLL, Minutes 28 February, 1906, 228; MO, JLL, Minutes 2 August 1906, 868 and MO, JLL, Minutes 24 October 1906, 1099.

MO, JLL, Minutes 30 January 1907, 15.


The Devonshire Park was a central feature in the original plans for Eastbourne and opened its gates to the public on July 1, 1874. The construction of the Winter Garden started the following year and progressed with the creation of the Devonshire Park Theatre in 1884. A guide dated 1893 describes a music garden with facilities for cricket, tennis, racquets and roller skating. The first major tennis championships were held here in 1881.

£50 was earlier voted for the preparation of working drawings and estimates of the total cost drawn up. These amounted to £7500.

The proposal was again raised in 1933 at a preliminary sum of £10,000. (Wits, WCL, HP, AF 1913, JPLPC, File 294, Article, The Star, 30 June 1933.

Sidney S. Graumann to the editor, The Star, 6 March 1930.


Cossons and Trinder (1979).

Brück (2013: 206).

This was not something strange to Joubert Park. The same happened in many British parks. See Brück (2013: 200).

Wits, WCL, HP, AF 1913, JPLPC, File 404, “Ratepayer” to Editor, The Star, 16 December 1932.

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Growing awareness of ancient Chinese Song and Yuan ceramics, amongst other Oriental traditions, by people with western connections such as Bernard Leach and Michael Cardew, in conjunction with influences from Japanese associates such as Soyetsu Yanagi, Kenkichi Tomimoto, and Shoji Hamada, has had many consequences. It spread a consciousness idealizing self-sufficient pottery studios where potters were in touch with all aspects of creating utilityware, largely from local materials for local use. Out of this emerged an Anglo-Oriental studio ceramic philosophy of form and practice, associated mainly with hand-made high temperature reduction fired ceramics. These ideas spread to South Africa in the late 1950s, and by the early 1960s local studios were being established along these lines. This studio ceramics movement grew exponentially in South Africa, initiating a phase of Afro-Oriental ceramics that remains a powerful way of life and visual arts influence. This paper seeks to explore aspects of Afro-Oriental studio ceramics in South Africa, with particular reference to the Leach/Hamada/Cardew to Rabinowitz, and Van der Merwe lineage.

Key words: Anglo-Oriental ceramics traditions, Anton van der Merwe, Bernard Leach, Hyme Rabinowitz, Michael Cardew, South African ceramics, studio ceramic traditions

Ceramic traditions worldwide have influenced trends in materials usage, form, and practice, thereby asserting situatedness of specific viewpoints and expressing singularities of experience, imbued with emplaced meaning arising from those heritages. There is a long history of implementation of some Oriental ethos embodied in what is becoming known as the Afro-Oriental studio ceramics lineage in Southern Africa. This is such a strong movement in South Africa, that in 2014 an exhibition dedicated to the works of 17 master potters creating ceramics in this mode was held at the prestigious Rust-en-Vrede Gallery in Durbanville. This exhibition featured works by Anton van der Merwe, Graham Bolland, Yogi de Beer, Paul de Jongh, John Ellis, Christo Giles, Ian Glenny, Digby Hoets, Nico Liebenberg, Garth Meyer, Chris Patton, Lindsay Scott, Steve Shapiro, David Schlapobersky & Felicity Potter, Andrew Walford, and David Walters.

A concurrent exhibition of works, in the adjacent Clay Museum, by early South African Anglo-Oriental exponents Bryan Haden (1930 -), Esias Bosch (1923 – 2010), Tim Morris (1941...
– 1990) and Hyme Rabinowitz (1920 – 2009) (http://www.rust-en-vrede.com/anglo-oriental/, retrieved on 28th February 2014), ably served to encapsulate and display a cross-section of works created by most of the main potters of this tradition into one large show.

Ceramics by these 21 South African potters were brought together into a comprehensive exhibition because, in unique ways, they have worked in an Anglo-Oriental tradition that has become transformed into a local Afro-Oriental blend, usually based on the following main characteristics: Their ceramics are mainly subtly glazed, minimally decorated high temperature reduction fired utilityware, with an emphasis on understated but quality form (Watt 2012: 13). Other factors include that “materials were … [sometimes] sourced and blended by the potter, and forms were [mostly] achieved through repetitive throwing … and appreciation of the intrinsic qualities of a pot [usually] came via its utilitarian value” (Watt 2012: 13).

**Emergence and main principles of Anglo-Oriental ceramics traditions**

This way of thinking and creating ceramics in South Africa was founded upon early appreciation of some Oriental ceramics by British studio potters Bernard Leach (1887-1979) who had taken in Michael Cardew (1901-1983) as an apprentice. They, along with Leach’s Japanese associate Shōji Hamada (1884-1978) (figure 1), brought wider attention to “specific approaches to materials, processes, forms, ethics and aesthetics” embodied in the largely “harmonious shapes and monochrome glazes” (Watt: Opening address on 11th November 2014) and restrained brushwork and shapes seen in some Chinese porcelain of the Song and Yuan (figure 2) Dynasties, 960-1279 (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_ceramics, retrieved 28th February 2015). In this regard, Leach (1976: 24) proposed a yardstick for studio ceramics creation and appreciation based on truth to materials, processes and human input, which was in direct contrast to “symmetries and microscopic precision of mass production” evident in western ceramics at the time when he set up his St Ives studio in Cornwall in the 1920s. In the iconic “The Potter’s Book”, originally published in 1940, Leach wrote (1976: 24) that:

> In all the greatest pottery of the world the natural limitations of both the material and the maker are accepted without question. In China the clays are often coarse and usually exposed, the glazes are thick, and crackled, and run, and occasionally skip, the brushwork is vigorous and calligraphic, not realistic and ‘finished’, the throwing and moulding are frank, and accidental kiln effects are frequent.

Appreciation of such principles was echoed by the likes of Sōetsu Yanagi (1889-1961) who was a close associate of Leach in Japan, and became the Director of the National Folk Museum in Tokyo. He extolled “working with one’s hands, naturally and unselfconsciously, using local materials and traditional techniques to produce meaningful work for one’s fellow human beings” (cited by Watt 2012: 12).

Yanagi also promoted what has become known as part of a *mingei* (De Waal 1997, Kikuchi 1977) philosophy of ceramics practice that promoted “involvement and control by the potter in every stage of production. The potter conceptualised the work, dug the clay, formed and glazed and decorated [and fired] the shapes, and sold them mostly direct to buyers” (Watt: Opening address on 11th November 2014). This way of thinking became influential, and was given further substance with Leach’s (1976: 23, 24) eight “constructional ideas”:

The ends of lines are important; the middles take care of themselves.
Lines are forces, and the points at which they change or cross are significant and call for emphasis.
Vertical lines are of growth, horizontal lines are of rest, diagonal lines are of change.
Straight line and curve, square and circle, cube and sphere are the potter’s polarities, which … [are
worked] into a rhythm of form under one clear concept. Curves for beauty, angles for strength. A small foot for grace, a broad one for stability. Enduring forms are full of quiet assurance. Overstatement is worse than understatement. Technique is a means to an end.

Figure 1
Left: Bernard Leach, bottle; centre: Shoji Hamada, tea bowls; right: Michael Cardew, vessels
(source: Leach 1976: figure 71, figure 70, figure 24).

Figure 2
Left: Cover of this influential book features a Song Dynasty work (Photo: The author, of his own copy of the book, purchased in 1976). Centre: Stoneware jar of Song Dynasty; right: Stoneware bowl of Yuan Dynasty (source: Leach 1976: figure 67, figure 8).

Thus the Anglo-Oriental studio pottery movement emerged in the United Kingdom, had influential practitioners, an underlying philosophy, and a plan of action aiming to produce “hand-made pottery” created “individually on a small scale by a single person or a small studio team, whether for the express purpose of function or as aesthetic statement” (Watt: Opening address on 11 November 2014).

Emergence of Afro-Oriental ceramics traditions in South Africa

The first studio potters to properly establish themselves in South Africa as reinterpereters of Anglo-Oriental principles were Esias Bosch, Hyme Rabinowitz and Bryan Haden (figure 3), all of whom were influenced by Leach and Hamada, as well as by differing contact occasions with British studio potters Cardew (Harrod 2012), Finch, Harry Davis and Kenneth Quick (Watt 2012: 13), amongst others. Bosch, Rabinowitz and Haden set up their final studios – making high temperature reduction-fired stoneware and porcelain initially in wood fired kilns – respectively in White River in 1961, Cape Town in 1962, and Gordon’s Bay in 1966 (Watt 2012: 13; and Watt
To the influential threesome of Bosch, Rabinowitz and Haden must be added Tim Morris (1941-1990) and Andrew Walford (1942- ) (figure 4) as being amongst the founding fathers of reinterpretation of Anglo-Oriental principles in South African studio ceramics. They had both met with Hamada (Watt 2012: 13), on different occasions, while abroad. Tim Morris also came into encouraging contact with Rabinowitz in 1965 (Watt http://www.artatworktoday.com/the-artists/tim-morris/, retrieved on 4th March 2015) and eventually set up his Ngwenya Studio in Muldersdrift in 1970. Walford had built his studio at Shongweni in 1968 (Wright 2009: 40) on a hilltop site overlooking the Shongweni dam and a valley “dotted with thornscrub, strelitzia and acacia trees, with a steep koppie rising straight out of the landscape” (Basckin in Wright 2009: 7). Of these Big Five South African pioneer studio potters, it is only Walford who is still actively creating and exhibiting his high temperature reduction oil-fired ceramics. He recently, for example, exhibited in 2012 with Phil Rogers in Oxford, and also won a Gold award for a teabowl at the 2012 Mungyeong Chasabal Festival in South Korea, and exhibited there again in 2013 (Walford 2013: 17).
My own experience of Walford’s way of working is that he brings a quiet, meditative confidence, underpinned by a wry sense of humour, to all clayworking tasks on hand, be they clay collection and preparation, throwing on a largely self-designed wheel, decorating with oxides and self-made glazes, and firing in a self-built kiln, through to unpacking the kiln, then marketing. When I first met him at his Shongweni studio in 1989 he commented, while watching me throwing, that I should stay calm and work slowly: sound advice which I have heard resonating throughout the intervening decades. All elements of his studio practice are under his personal control, underpinned by an ethos that combines quick and direct throwing and turning methods with rapid yet finely nuanced brushwork decoration motifs that, for example, “combine the carp and bamboo motifs of Japan with botanical references to Africa, his home” (Basckin in Wright 2009: 7). Furthermore, Baskin (in Wright 2009: 7) has observed that “while Leach and Hamada constructed the Anglo-Oriental tradition, Walford has invented a synthesis that is uniquely his own, in which elements of Far Eastern ceramic production methods and decoration, meld serenely with the natural presences of Southern Africa”. This sentiment is expressed most clearly by Walford himself, who said that his works are decorated with gigantic Japanese brushes and often include splodges of indigenous wood ash glaze and evanescent celadons or Chinese chuns which change with variations in light and season, echoing the ever changing light on the sandstone krantzes and fields of burnt sugar cane surrounding … [my] workplace. The natural colours on the pots are reminiscent of reflecting afternoon sun and shadows on the cliffs rising steeply next to my home (http://www.studiopottery.co.uk/profile/Andrew/Walford, retrieved on 4th March 2015).

The Big Five pioneer South African studio potters continually worked towards reinterpretations of what had come before, finding out about local raw materials, and figuring out methods and techniques suitable for local conditions. Many of the mingei tenets remained as grounding philosophy, yet “South African potters specifically identified themselves with South Africa, and Africa, and expressed that identity in generous visual and tactile experiences springing from a reference world with a unique physical environment and a multi-cultural footprint” (Watt: Opening address on 11th November 2014). These pioneer South African potters thus “distilled what came before, subtracting and adding” to the “ways in which they developed their materials, techniques, forms and decorations [and firing styles, thereby resulting] in a distinct South African identity and visual vocabulary” (Watt: Opening address on 11 November 2014, citing Ian Calder).

**Hymie Rabinowitz and Anton van der Merwe**

Of these Big Five pioneer potters, it is Rabinowitz (figure 5) who has had the most significant influence on the lifestyle and work of Anton van der Merwe (Steele 2014a and b). Van der Merwe met good friends Rabinowitz and Bosch in 1976 at a Potter’s Association workshop in Cape Town. From that day onwards Rabinowitz became an “unobtrusive mentor, suggesting places to sell, making comments, instinctively understanding next steps, including the design for the woodfired kiln which is currently in use” at Starways Arts, in Hogsback, Eastern Cape (Van der Merwe interview, 5 November 2013). This relationship strikes a chord for me. When I first met Rabinowitz in about 1979 at his Eagle’s Nest studio he was immediately ready to share technical information, and advised me to welcome repetitive tasks as a means to connecting with my intuition, and to always keep shapes and glazes simple.
Other factors to have influenced Van der Merwe include Rabinowitz’s preference for a semi-open air studio in a country setting, and his “signature style … [which] features mainly functional domestic ware, mostly thrown on a [kick] wheel and [finished] in high fired reduction glazes with … nature based or abstract [brushed or poured] decorative designs” (Ann Marais in comments on the Hyme Rabinowitz 86th Birthday Retrospective Exhibition at the Clay Museum, Cape Town, in 2006). In an interview with Gail de Klerk (2000: 15) Rabinowitz said that he likes “to ladle one glaze over the other which creates interesting abstract patterns”, and that in every firing he includes some “test glazes” which reflect his lifelong quest to experiment and find new effects.

Anton van der Merwe has internalized these and other influences, reinterpreting aspects of Afro-Oriental traditions in unique ways that have led to the establishment, since 1992, of a self-built semi-enclosed studio in the rural area of Hogsback. During the intervening years he has developed powerful throwing and glazing characteristics which are brought to fruition in his high temperature woodburn reduction-fired ceramics. In the early days at Starways there was no electricity, so he started out on a kick wheel and fired in a gas kiln. Now, through a process of slow growth, the studio incorporates two electric wheels and encompasses about 200 square metres of mostly enclosed space, and glaze firings are conducted in a two firebox downdraft 40 cubic foot woodburn kiln with a huge nine meter tall chimney, which facilitates excellent draught.

**Playing with fire**

Van der Merwe’s utilityware (figure 6) is usually rapidly thrown using very coarse clay that is quite short because of the need for stand-up strength in the kiln. Handles and other functional additions grow organically from the forms, and do not dominate. As observed in a recent review (Steele 2014c) of his 2013 “Changing lifestyles” exhibition, Van der Merwe’s works often reveal an architectural quality that simultaneously urges pleasure both in use and as an item for contemplation. His works also convey a sense of having been created under circumstances recommended by William Morris, who believed that “good and beautiful art could only come through joyful labour” (Stevens 2008: 100). His shapes reveal strong design elements composed of multiple features which frequently reference and relate to softnesses and roundnesses apparent in the human form, while also staying true to a utilityware principle that such items be functionally efficient in domestic and other settings.
His forms are usually well balanced, quite flat, or upright and stable, with a clear centre of gravity, without extraneous embellishments and appendages. This structural style is in some-ways a requirement for high temperature Cone 12 woodburn because the works are fired to the cusp of clay body melt and warpage that can happen because of clay softness achieved at top firing temperature. He also pushes the glazes deeply into liquidity and flow, usually way past the point where they merely melt and adhere to the clay body. One can see and feel that excessive melt of body and glazes are usually only a few short moments away. In fact, one of the defining characteristics of Van der Merwe’s reinterpretation of Afro-Oriental ethos is his encouragement of sometimes extraordinarily beautiful torrential and cascading glaze flow, often contrasted with bare clay that has been toasted by licking flames, thereby capitalizing on evidence of solid-fuel firing heat-work achieved. Woodash in some of the glazes, and also arising during the firing process itself, become incorporated into the clay body and glazes, creating random flashes of colour and texture.

Like Rabinowitz, Hamada, and many other potters before them, van der Merwe enjoys ladling, splashing and layering glazes, thereby achieving abstract colour zones that break away as well as blend and yield back into each other. When on their own, or combined with areas of deft brushwork or engravings usually inspired by interpretations of the natural environment, these sometimes riotously colourful parts stand out as purely exuberant celebrations of metal oxides and other earthy materials combining to create unprecedented ceramic surfaces (figure 7).
As was seen in the “Changing lifestyles” (Steele 2014c) exhibition in East London, Van der Merwe also manages to achieve silky fat white glazes, as well as deep bluish chuns, vibrant copper reds, gentle greenish celadons, and glowing black/deep brown tenmokus. He seeks out interplays between darkly strong iron tones and sharper, more brilliant colours achievable with copper, sometimes mediated by cobalt blue and other oxide colours, such as strong green from chrome. My current favourite ceramics are his “forest vases”, which are mainly fairly simple upright shapes that were altered while wet. These surface manipulations serve to highlight, amongst other features, the delightful qualities of soft malleability and on-the-brink-of-collapse characteristics of wet clay just prior to being taken off the wheel. The pushings and pullings exerted on these vessels reveal tool marks and surfaces that juxtapose spaces and angles in unusual ways, and create channels for glazes to accumulate and eventually run down.

Anton van der Merwe’s daughter, Vale (figure 8), literally grew up inside her father’s various ceramics studios in Cape Town, and Gauteng. Despite this familiarity with clay she barely handled the medium for more than a decade after moving to Italy to complete her schooling and engage with tertiary education, partly in the field of History of Art. Upon her return to South Africa in 2008 she began working with clay at Starways Arts both as a way of life and means of earning an income (Steele 2015: 48). Vale van der Merwe takes delight in the Afro-Oriental principles of being part of processes that include sourcing and preparation of own clay, and rates the value of repetition throwing of utilityware very highly, and revels in high temperature woodburn and the qualities that this reduction firing method impart to the ceramics. She is, in turn, nonetheless reinterpreting inherited Afro-Oriental legacies to suit her own interests, and is also actively engaged in handbuilding of items such as large floor vases, washbasins, and conceptual sculptures such as were featured in the 2011 “Lost Forest” exhibition (Steele 2015: 53). Furthermore, she is largely avoiding brushwork as a means of decoration, and is leaning towards simplicity of single-tone glazing contrasted with unglazed surfaces, thereby contributing to the establishment of her own identity within this vast ever-changing field of Afro-Oriental ceramics in South Africa.

Figure 8
Vale van der Merwe utilityware, and group photo from left to right: Vale van der Merwe, Gwyneth Lloyd, and Anton van der Merwe, Hogsback, Eastern Cape, South Africa, 2014 (photos: Top left: Vale van der Merwe 2013; all others John Steele 2014 and 2015).
Conclusion

The idea that studio ceramics created in South Africa under specifically Southern African conditions using local materials take on characteristics unique to the region, is not new. Furthermore, the Big Five South African Afro-Oriental studio potters not only needed to establish viable clayworking skills and ceramics workshops from scratch, they also needed to come to grips with using local clays and raw materials. Early trial and error experiments led very quickly to successful name branded potteries being established. Groundwork laid by the Big Five Afro-Oriental studio potters led to widespread interest and further significant developments in a process of localizing ceramics practice and growing knowledge of raw materials.

One of the most important early studies of local raw materials that enabled South African studio potters to work effectively using these materials was Karin Boyum’s 1984 “Study of clay bodies and glazes for the South African Potter”. In my own glazemaking efforts, for example, I could now refer to Boyum (1984: 7-18) and understand, by means of chemical analysis, ways in which Edgar Plastic Kaolin from America, China Clay from the United Kingdom, and Serina Kaolin from South Africa differed, and make appropriate substitutions where necessary. Thus, a recipe that called for China Clay, or Cornish Stone, for that matter, no longer required those imported ingredients because local substitutions could be made from a well-informed point of view. Boyum’s (1984: 7-38) study also gave extensive coverage of local clays, and glaze recipes using South African materials. This information encouraged studio potters to localize their knowledge, as well as to go out and, for instance, establish their own clay sources, and even collect raw components such as feldspar and dolomite (Boyum 1984: 39-46) that could help flux glazes, in particular ways, depending on desired results.

Development of local knowledge about South African raw materials went hand in hand with establishment of individual stylistic traits. The ceramics tradition loosely expressed by the likes of Bosch, Rabinowitz, Hayden, Morris, Walford, and others after them, initially became known as the Anglo-Oriental tradition in South Africa, in recognition of the Song/Yuan and Leach/Hamada/Cardew connection. This descriptor has been in general use for decades, to the extent that the 2014 Rust-en-Vrede Gallery Exhibition featured in this paper was billed as “Anglo-Oriental: connecting past to present” (http://www.rust-en-vrede.com/anglo-oriental/, retrieved on 23rd September 2015).

Yet, in informal discussions, and more lately in the media [see, for example http://capeinsights.com/south-african-craft-art-tours-holidays/ceramics-tour/ which, on 3rd October 2015, refers to an “Afro-Oriental ceramics master class with David Walters in Franschoek’’] there has been a trend towards taking greater ownership of our South African locality and characteristics for this strand of studio ceramics. This trend has resulted in the dropping of the Anglo part of Anglo-Oriental in favour of Afro-Oriental. Ronnie Watt, in his opening address for the 2014 Rust-en-Vrede “Connecting the past to the present” exhibition actively promoted the idea of Afro-Oriental as a more accurate and appropriate descriptor of this genre of South African ceramics. I wholeheartedly support this trend towards naming clarification, and hope that both the descriptor and potters currently engaged in creating such works will continue to gain Afro-Oriental traction.

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John Steele first worked with clay as a studio potter in Rhodes Village in the Witteberge Mountains of the Eastern Cape in the 1970s, and then as a pottery manager in Mthatha, prior to taking up his present post as Senior Lecturer in the Visual Art Department at Walter Sisulu University in East London, South Africa. Although he now oxidation fires in an electric kiln, his ceramics ethos was strongly influenced by both Rabinowitz and Walford, as well as by Hayden, through David Potter, who now creates works on a smallholding in Norfolk, UK.
This article reports on a specific architectural practice situated in New Zealand but working in the global arena. Architecture van Brandenburg is interested in current notions around “biomimicry” or the referencing of natural forms in building or other art forms. Their practice is set up as a kind of “ecology” wherein participants move organically between the different arts: architecture, sculpture, painting, and ceramics. They identify with the work of Antoni Gaudí (1852-1926) in his use of organic forms and also in his use of waste materials for the finishing of form. Their interest in the use of recycled materials plays out within the current context of an era of waste crisis. As was the case with Gaudí, their finishes are highly ornamental and do not adhere to modernist ideas around the simplification of surfaces, as, for example, expounded by Adolf Loos in the 1920s. In the current climate of awareness around issues of sustainability, Architecture van Brandenburg finds a community of practice in the work of many other architects focusing on recycling of waste, examples being McDowell Espinosa in the USA and Superuse in the Netherlands.

**Key words:** biomimicry, waste, recycling, ornamentation

**Architectuur van Brandenburg in ’n afvalkrisis-tydperk**

Hierdie artikel rapporteer oor ’n spesifieke argitektuurpraktyk gebaseer in Nieu-Zeeland en werkende in die internasionale konteks. Argitektuur van Brandenburg stel belang in die huidige diskoers rondom “biomimiek” of die verwysing na natuurlike vorms in die bou- en ander kunste. Hul praktyk is georganiseer as ’n soort “ekologie” waarin bydraers organies beweeg tussen verskillende kunsvorme: argitektuur, beeldhoukuns, skilderkuns, en keramiek. Hul praktyk identifiseer met die werk van Antoni Gaudí (1852-1926) in sy gebruik van organiese vorms en afvalmateriaal vir die afronding van vorms. Die belangstelling in afvalmateriaal speel af binne die konteks van die hedendaagse era van krisis rondom afvalmateriaal. Soos in die geval van Gaudí, is die praktyk se afrondings hoogs ornamenteel en in hierdie opsig vêr verwys na die modernistiese aandrang op vereenvoudigde oppervlaktes, soos, onder andere, deur Adolf Loos in die twintigerjare verwoord. In die huidige klimaat van behoudbaarheid, bevind Argitektuur van Brandenburg hul in die geselskap van vele ander argitekte met ’n fokus op die hersirkulasie van afvalmateriaal, voorbeeldde syne McDowell Espinosa in die VSA en Superuse in Nederland.

**Sleutelwoorde:** biomimiek, afvalmateriaal, hersirkulasie, ornamentering

**Architecture van Brandenburg has a studio in Dunedin, New Zealand, from where they participate in some of the major architectural discourses of our time. One of these revolves around “biomimicry” or the ways in which architecture can reference the natural world to find alternatives for its Eurocentric reliance on geometrical structure and the single façade. This is evidenced in the design for the Chinese Marisfrolg Apparel Headquarters in Shenzhen. Following a tactile epistemology that favours haptic experience of matter over privileging the ocular view, their work displays an intimate knowledge of the structural particularities of natural forms. A hand has held and touched a leaf, a frond, a shell, and this shows as a sense of haptic unfurling in the work. Johani Pallasmaa has brought this kind of thinking into the fore with his publications titled *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses* (2005) and “Hapticity and time: notes on fragile architecture” where he quotes Maurice Merleau-Ponty to argue for the primacy of touch “in the task of architecture to make visible ‘how the world touches us’” (2000: 78).**
In an era of heightened awareness around issues of sustainability, researchers at Eindhoven University have written: “Why biomimicry? The more our world functions like the natural world the more likely we are to endure in this home that is ours, but not ours alone” (Pronk Blacha and Bots, 2008: s.p.), Michael Pawlyn concurs where he studies biomimicry as “ways of translating adaptations in biology to solutions in architecture…mimicking the functional basis of biological forms, processes and systems to produce sustainable solutions”(Pawlyn 2011: 1-2). Architecture van Brandenburg positions their practice firmly within this discourse. Not only do they do this; they also extend an involvement with the organic into the way they work as a kind of ‘ecology’ wherein they are sculptors, designers, architects, builders, painters, ceramicists – whatever the Marisfrolg project needs is paramount at any given time in their process. In an age of digital fusion in integrative design, they maintain the handmade, the tactile epistemology of the crafts, and the sculptor’s sense of the weight and volume of materials, whilst embracing the digital in all its aspects. Inspired by the work of Spanish architect Antoni Gaudí (1852-1926), the team set out to research geometric codices to enable nature-inspired forms to be built in practical ways. Most recently, the finishing of these forms has moved into central focus and, again, an ecological approach is proving productive while positioning Architecture van Brandenburg within another topical discourse: material sustainability in a post-industrial era of waste crisis.

**Scarcity and waste**

In times of materials scarcity, architecture gained and bestowed prestige through the use of scarce materials: marble, lapis luzuli, and gold foil for example. It also gained prestige through highly worked materials: tooled stone, ornamented cornices, intarsia patterns, for example. Craftspersons contributed to long histories of material manipulation and used their special skills learnt in guilds to produce goods made from scarce materials through skilled labour for the rich and powerful. The guilds led to the emergence of the figure of the architect-artisan and extended the material genealogies integral to their craft. Despite the rise of the cult of the individual – Brunelleschi, Alberti, Michelangelo, Palladio – during the Renaissance, the architect retained oversight of projects on the ground as, for example, the level of structural calculations remained within their scope. However, with the rise and extension of the Industrial Revolution, the relationship between architect, materialities, and production processes underwent a major change. The architect became more specialized and lost in part the oversight of an integrated project; machines produced building and other materials en masse; the seeds were sown for over-production and concomitant over-consumption: subsequently waste has become one of the largest problems of our time. Architecture van Brandenburg responds to these shifts from a 21st Century perspective.

**Recycling and ornamentation**

Now that Marisfrolg Apparel Headquarters is in the finishing stage, a cross-disciplinary integrated design approach is paying off. Again, there is a respectful nod to Gaudi. On the one hand, he commissioned artists to provide ceramics, stained glass, carpentry and wrought iron forged work for integration into his buildings. On the other hand, he also used waste ceramic pieces in his *trencadís*, which is a type of Catalan mosaic made from ceramic shards sourced from broken tiles or plates, an example being the finish of the lizard in Guell Park, Barcelona. Architecture van Brandenburg goes much further: they refuse to use any new materials in their finish – all are recycled. Fred van Brandenburg writes: “using only recycled material [for finishes]. The source is waste from factories in China – especially off-cuts of imported marble,
granite, etc. where suppliers to the building industry cut their quarried material into precision shapes and therefore generate waste from the irregular shapes that come from the quarries. The other source is broken earthenware: terracotta pipes, pots, roof tiles, etc. – all rejects. Similarly, the glass blowing industry produce giant balls of beautiful coloured slag. In short: all waste products that factories and suppliers have on their site are transported to and stockpiled on our site” (Van Brandenburg 2015: s.p.).

Figure 1
Examples of waste materials used for the finishing of Marisfrolg Apparel Headquarters in Shenzhen, China (images courtesy of Architecture van Brandenburg).

What one now sees emerging in the finishing of Marisfrolg Apparel Headquarters is a circulation of existing waste rather than the creation of new products in an already over-saturated field of production and consumption. One also sees an explosion of texture and tone. These are simultaneously exuberant and carefully composed within structural boundaries. Some areas are highlighted through the use of bright colours referencing attraction in nature; other areas are toned down referencing camouflage in nature. Gaudi wrote: “Ornamentation has been, is, and will [always] be [in] polychrome. Nature does not present us with an object in monochrome,
totally uniform with respect to colour – not in vegetation, not in geology, not in topography, not in the animal kingdom. Always the contrast of colour is more or less lively, and for this reason we must colour wholly or in part every architectural element” (quoted in Iglesias 2014: 63).

Roughly a century after Adolf Loos’s famous lecture titled “Ornament and Crime” (1910), Architecture van Brandenburg participates in current architectural discourse via their practice in freeing us from the dictums of an aspiring – and even aggressive – modernism which proclaimed that the “evolution of culture marches with the elimination of ornament from useful objects” (quoted in Moffett and Fazio 2013: 5). Read in the context of an exclusionary progressionism, Loos’s dictum in relation to its current ‘overturning’ brings to the fore a range of serious concerns: ‘ornament as crime’ had a subtext: ornament was for women and ‘savages’, for ‘gays’ and children; for those marginalized by a progression-obsessed society. Architecture van Brandenburg’s celebration of ornament participates in the recuperation and restoration of something that was lost or hidden away during the long reign of modernist architecture and its underlying philosophies that now seem outmoded in our Anthropocene with its understanding of what that world left us with: waste.

The team’s celebration of a relatively new-found freedom in the use of materialities and a concomitant recycling purpose is evident from an exuberance in the use of a range of waste products: variously coloured marble offcuts, green, blue and ochre ceramic shards; recycled red brick; blue stone and brown rock; glazing bricks and plates from ceramic kilns; gold and silver glazed ceramic pieces; and oyster shells. All these fragments are reconfigured into densely patterned surfaces rich with the combined material references and associations of its parts. In Building from Waste: Recovered Materials in Architecture and Construction (2014), Dirk E. Hebel, Marta H. Wisniewska, and Felix Heisel write critically about linear views on waste: “Instead of being included in a metabolic cycle and flow model of goods and resources, waste is considered within a dead-end scenario of a linear process; to be literally buried from view – out of sight, out of mind – as a formless substance that has no value…It is the story of a resource being wasted” (2014: 7). Waste can be a renewable resource. Waste is densified, reconfigured, transformed, designed and cultivated innovatively as a choice over newly manufactured alternatives. In “Going Around in Circles: Regimes of Waste”, Marc Angélil and Cary Siress write: “Waste and its meticulous handling are valued as gifts, offered by society to itself. Where we turn the parable’s missed opportunity to our advantage, a modified economy would be set into motion” (2010: 101). They in turn refer to the ideas of French philosopher Georges Bataille (1897-1962) on waste as a “gift” rather than the “dirty secret” it is called by Mira Engler (2004: 11). Bataille presaged much of later 21st Century thinking about waste (see Stoekl 2007: 115-149). He argued for a new understanding of “refuse in all its heterogeneity as wealth to be mined, as a material endowment to be recycled, re-processed, and re-circulated. Framed as an economic principle, waste is expenditure with return” (112, endnote 9). Architecture van Brandenburg is currently participating in the sustainability discourse in our era of waste crisis. In this respect they are joining a growing global community of architectural practice looking back to Bataille and looking hard at the future.

Community of practice

Currently the smooth white surfaces of Marisfrolg Apparel Headquarters are being finished with waste produced in China, a country fast becoming one of the major waste accumulators in the world. “In 2004, China surpassed the US as the world’s largest waste generator. In 2030, China
will likely produce twice as much municipal solid waste as the United States” (Hoornweg & Bhada-Tata, 2012: 1). In recycling some of this waste, Architecture van Brandenburg is part of a community of concerned architects worldwide. Some of the writers who have joined this brigade are mentioned above. Many practitioners are also working on the ground to either diminish waste or to transform it into a new productive life. The New York-based firm of McDowell Espinosa has created a new term for this kind of endeavour: “Trash Tectonics”.

Another firm that comes to mind is the Dutch group called “Superuse”. Led by Jan Jongert and previously called “2012 Architecten”, this team recycles metal offcuts, fragments of timber cable reels, bits of car windscreens and even coffee grounds. In the Villa Welpeloo they used only waste materials and currently they are taking ideas developed for that project on the road in a materials library aimed at educating students and potential clients about an economy wherein nothing goes to waste. Dutch architect Chris Collaris agrees and is now involved with a project called “Black Gold” aimed at finding new housing uses for obsolete oil tankers along the Arabian Peninsula.

It seems that the Dutch are at the forefront of such developments, possibly due to their tradition of innovative hydro engineering. In this regard it is interesting to note that Architecture van Brandenburg has itself got Dutch roots.

Figure 2
Examples of waste materials used for the finishing of Marisfrolg Apparel Headquarters in Shenzhen, China (images courtesy of Architecture van Brandenburg).
Their practice actively contributes to what has been called the “circular economy”, one that replaces a “linear economy”. Harking back to Bataille’s ideas, these terms came into use in 1966 when Kenneth E. Boulding used them in relation to potential futures ⁶ and in 1976 when Walter Stahel and Genevieve Reday wrote a report for the European Commission sketching their ideas about an economy that would work in loops rather than in straight lines. ⁷ “The circular approach is a framework that takes insights from living systems. It considers that our systems should work like organisms, processing nutrients that can be fed back into the cycle – whether biological or technical – hence the ‘closed loop’ or ‘regenerative’ terms usually associated with it.” ⁸ The 1960s and 1970s texts looked to the future in an almost apocalyptic fashion, imagining the advent of a diseased world, which would need new ways of managing. That world has arrived with our current waste crisis being one of its symptoms. In the context of China – where Marisfrolg Apparel Headquarters is situated – it is important to note that this crisis is acknowledged with a circular economy identified as national policy in that country’s eleventh five-year plan starting in 2006. Architecture van Brandenburg eschews the traditional linear economy of technologies and materials in favour of the transformation of waste in a circular economy: a fitting strategic complement to the absence of straight lines in their aesthetic.

Notes
1 Quoted from an email correspondence between the author and Fred van Brandenburg dated 4 September 2015.
2 Adolf Loos wrote this lecture in 1908 and delivered it in 1910; first published in French in 1913 and in German 1929. Now available at www2.gwu.edu/~art/Temporary_SL/177/pdfs/Loos.pdf Accessed 26 September 2015.
7 This material can be retrieved from www.uh.edu/prometheus21/articulos/obsprometheus/BOULDING.pdf Accessed 26 September 2015.

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The evocation of the destructive forces of nature, humans and animals in various of Leonardo da Vinci’s depictions characterises his unique oeuvre as an artist and designer. As a self-confessed pacifist Leonardo described a pitched battle as “beastly madness”, in view of the fact that he was well acquainted with the violence of close combat, as depicted in his lost *Battle of Anghiari* mural with its vortex-like composition. As a military engineer he designed machines capable of slaughtering the enemy, but he also designed defences for towns to protect soldiers and civilians from assault. These designs may be considered to be the thought experiments of an inventor who explored the limits of human ingenuity in relation to war. Since the middle of the twentieth century, however, the calamitous forces of nature can actually be equalled or even surpassed by nuclear explosions. A case parallel to Leonardo’s pacifism is found in J. Robert Oppenheimer’s ethical misgivings about war, even though as a scientist Oppenheimer was involved in the Manhattan nuclear project which resulted in the development of the bombs dropped on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki seventy years ago. Selected paintings by observer-artists who survived the destruction of those nuclear blasts are reproduced and discussed to evoke the horror of the destruction of the cities and the suffering of the victims.

**Key words:** Leonardo da Vinci, *Battle of Anghiari*, J. Robert Oppenheimer, Hiroshima, Nagasaki

Qui non estima la vita non la merita (Leonardo da Vinci, Ms I, folio 15r).

The arts … are weapons in our struggle for existence… (Arnold Hauser 1978: 112).

For art is the *modus vivendi of a civilised human animal, not of a marauding horde of killers* (Jürgen Lawrentz 2011: 197; author’s emphasis).
This article deals with the contexts and meaning of works of art related to war, produced five hundred years apart, by Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) and various artists who experienced and survived the nuclear destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki seventy years ago. During the time span that separates the wars and works of art dealt with in this article, war changed from combat with an identifiable enemy, as represented in Leonardo’s Battle of Anghiari, to the killing of invisible masses of Japanese civilians and the destruction of their habitats.

**The context of Leonardo da Vinci’s Battle of Anghiari**

In a letter of self-recommendation to Lodovico Sforza, the Duke of Milan, written at the age of thirty, Leonardo lists the instruments of war and other devices that he was capable of constructing:

An extremely light and strong bridge. An endless variety of battering rams. A method of demolishing fortresses built on rock. A kind of bombard, which hurls showers of small stones and the smoke of which strikes terror into the enemy. A secret winding passage constructed without noise. Covered wagons, behind which whole armies can hide and advance.

In six lines of the next paragraph Leonardo mentions that in time of peace his skills as an architect, an irrigation engineer, a sculptor and painter – in that order of professional expertise – may also be of value to the Duke.

The *Codex Atlanticus* contains twenty-five sheets of drawings depicting war machines and weapons that Leonardo probably produced during his sojourn in Florence until 1481. Over a period of more than two decades after that date until 1503, he filled forty more pages with designs resembling those mentioned in the letter to Lodovico (figures 1-2). Obviously, Leonardo made some vain promises to the Duke, as Kenneth Clark (1988: 85) observes: Leonardo’s later designs of war machines “become much more ambitious and so elaborate that it seems doubtful if they could ever have been constructed”. However, Leonardo must have been aware of the problem since he illustrated methods of canon production in a foundry (figure 3). Therefore, it may be postulated that Leonardo’s inventions of military machines for attack and defence are the mind experiments of a scientist who explored the limits of human ingenuity in relation to war, even though he actually referred to a battle in which the combatants make carnage of each other as “pazzia bestialissima” (beastly madness).

Besides battles in an open field, warfare in the fifteenth century mainly involved the attack and defence of cities. Like most Medieval European cities, Italian Renaissance cities were circumscribed by a wall with watchtowers and security gates. In Leonardo’s designs for the defence and attack of such cities he responded to contemporary military engineering practices which involved fortifications and artillery, including mechanical devices such as catapults, while he explosive force of gunpowder enhanced the attackers’ capacity to destroy fortifications and killing the enemy at a distance. At the time, ladders were used to scale city walls, against which Leonardo designed a device to overturn them. Furthermore, his designs for fortifications are as ingenious as his instruments of destruction since he most probably had the potency of his own imaginary machines in mind when he designed defence mechanisms and bastions.
Figure 1

Figure 2
In the employ of Cesare Borgia (1475-1507) who was backed by his father Pope Alexander VI (1431-1503) to lead a military campaign in the region of Romagna in north-eastern Italy with the purpose of securing a princedom for himself, Leonardo acted as the warlord’s chief military engineer. Leonardo’s brief was to reinforce the castles and defences in the region as well as construct some of the military machines that he had conceived on paper. There is no factual evidence about the actual services Leonardo rendered to Borgia’s campaign, but he most certainly witnessed his employer’s psychopathic passion for slaughter and his “duplicitous ruthlessness”. According to Paul Strathern (2009: 19): “We can only imagine how this [the destruction and death caused by Borgia’s rampaging soldiers] affected the sensitive mind of Leonardo…”. It could well be that Leonardo was traumatised by the horrors he witnessed during the time he was in Borgia’s employ. Even though he never described his experiences during the Romagna campaign in his notebooks, he later confessed that he was affected by “the evil nature of man”.

Figure 3
Leonardo da Vinci, a cannon foundry, 1487, pen and ink on paper, Royal Library, Windsor
One of Leonardo’s travelling companions on the Borgia expedition was Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527), a Florentine emissary at the time. One may only guess that Leonardo and Machiavelli’s conversations converged on nature, human nature, and – inevitably – war and peace. The companions later collaborated on a failed scheme to divert the course of the Arno River with the purpose of taming its seasonal inundations. The outcome may have convinced Leonardo that human countermeasures cannot control nature’s fury (figure 4). Machiavelli later described the purpose of the attempted undertaking to discipline the river’s periodic onslaught that caused the destruction of human life and property in humanistic terms: the need to control natural forces may be interpreted as a veiled symbolic reference to the need to discipline aggressive elements in human nature to ensure stable and harmonious societal existence that characterises civilised life. Roger Masters (1996: 57-62) suggests that Machiavelli may actually have derived his peace-loving imagery related to the river project from Leonardo. As a coincidence and most ironically, centuries later Albert Einstein (1960: 469) formulated a contradiction to Machiavelli’s hopeful ideal for human betterment: “The tendency toward war is as much a part of man’s nature as it is part of the nature of rivers to inundate their banks from time to time…”

Figure 4
Leonardo da Vinci, depiction of a natural disaster, 1517-18, black chalk, pen and ink on paper, 162x203 mm, Royal Library, Windsor Castle (retrieved from the public domain: http://www.wga.hu/html_m/l/leonardo/11nature/06disast.html).
As Leonardo’s friend it was Machiavelli who secured the commission from the Florentine Signoria for him to paint a fresco on a wall in the Sala Consiglio of the Palazzo Vecchio. The subject chosen was the victory of the Florentines over the Milanese at the pitched Battle of Anghiari which took place in 1440. This battle involved several thousand troops and lasted all day, but only one combatant died, apparently because he fell of his horse after four hours of skirmishing. Work on the fresco was begun in 1503 with the sketching of an enormous cartoon of 16.7 x 6 metres, showing the larger than life-size action of men and horses in detail. Three phases of the battle, the beginning, the middle and the end were supposed to be depicted, but Leonardo finished only the central part, showing the battle for the flag. Unfortunately the fresco was technically flawed and deteriorated rapidly, but copies were made, the best known being by Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640), based on a 1553 engraving by Lorenzo Zacchia (1524-87), which was probably derived from Leonardo’s cartoon (figure 5).

![Figure 5](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Anghiari#/media/File:Peter_Paul_Rubens%27s_copy_of_the_lost_Battle_of_Anghiari.jpg)

The remains of Leonardo’s representation later disappeared completely underneath a fresco by Giorgio Vasari (1511-73). We do not know what the three-part composition of the *Battle of Anghiari* was intended to look like, but in Leonardo’s notes in his *Trattato della pittura* (*Treatise on Painting*) there are descriptions of how a painter should approach the fury of a fifteenth century battle:
Paint first the smoke of the artillery mixed in the air with the dust raised by the movement of the horses of the combatants. [...] As for the combatants, the farther they are within this turbulent scene, the less they will be seen, and the less difference will there be between their lights and shadows. [...] And if you depict horses running away from the crowd, paint them with little clouds of dust [...]. [...] The air should be full of arrows pointing in different directions, some rising and others falling, with some in a straight line. The balls from fire-arms should be followed in their course by smoke (McMahon 1956: 115).

In this text and various preparatory sketches of men and horses engaged in battle Leonardo proved that he was well acquainted with the extreme emotion and physical energy displayed by muscular men and horses engaging in close combat (figures 6-7). In Rubens’s copy of the lost fresco demented mounted soldiers exhibit excessive aggression in a vortex-like composition. Their destructive fury rightly proves that they are involved in “beastly madness”.

Figure 6
Leonardo’s awareness that human violence, which is gruesomely evoked in combat, cannot equal nature’s cataclysms became untrue when scientists in the mid-twentieth century unleashed nuclear power, as discussed in the next section. Also his vision that cities may be attacked at a distance paled into insignificance when nuclear bombs were dropped from a high altitude on two Japanese cities in August 1945.

The context of the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and artists’ views of the events

J. Robert Oppenheimer (1904-1967), often referred to as the “Father of the atom bomb”, was born four and a half centuries after Leonardo, during which period countless wars continued to be fought globally, many of them represented in art with various intentions – mostly to celebrate the victor. The two world wars that happened during Oppenheimer’s lifetime caused such extreme physical destruction and loss of life that the resourceful Leonardo could not have imagined.

In 1942 Oppenheimer was recruited from the University of California, Berkeley, to administer the Manhattan Project at Los Alamos, USA, where scientists such as Enrico Fermi, Richard Feynman, Hans Bethe and Edward Teller, were employed by the United States of America government. Under supervision of the military, they produced the first fission bomb, nicknamed “Jumbo”, which was tested at the spectacular event, called the “Trinity test”, shortly
before dawn on 16 July 1945, at Alamagordo, New Mexico. The successful test of the world’s first atomic bomb detonated with a blast equivalent to 19 kilotons of high explosive was so powerful that it turned the surrounding desert sand into glass and shattered windows more than 100 miles away. This event ushered in the atomic age (figure 8).

![Image of atomic bomb explosion]

**Figure 8**

Explosion of the first fission bomb, 16 July 1945, Alamagordo, New Mexico (retrieved from the public domain: http://www.minresco.com/trinitite/trin.htm).

Witnessing the great violet coloured fire and dust cloud representing the greatest man-made explosion of all times unfurling in the New Mexico desert was an emotional experience for Oppenheimer: “Later, he would claim he remembered at that moment a passage from the Hindu spiritual epic *Bhagavad-gita*: ‘Now I am become death, the destroyer of worlds’” (Walsh 2013: 102). Some weeks after the Trinity test, death, the destroyer of worlds, struck with focussed intent at the Japanese cities Hiroshima and Nagasaki, respectively on 6 and 9 August 1945. These nuclear disasters turned Oppenheimer “into a ‘nervous wreck’, according to FBI agents monitoring the bugs at his home” (Walsh 2013: 103). Oppenheimer’s sense of doom is explained by James Lane (2013: 258):

> Because of his submission to the military, Oppenheimer was able to achieve tremendous power over nature. Here we see the face of Prometheus, the first aspect of primordial man symbolism. However, because of this same submission, he found he had no control over his own creation. He had opened the Pandora’s box of nuclear proliferation. As he realised the illusory nature of his power, he became a truly tragic figure.

Oppenheimer had misgivings about his government’s intention of obliterating undisclosed cities in Japan as a way of stopping the Second World War: “He pleaded with his military supervisors to give some advance warning about the planned attack – if not to the Japanese themselves,
at least to the United States’ Russian allies – but to no avail” (Walsh 2013: 102). Except for a possibility of evacuating citizens, no fortifications or subterranean shelters could, at that time, be built to safeguard civilians against nuclear explosions.

As an act of revenge for the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbour some years previously and a way of proving their supremacy and intent to end the war, the US military’s attack on Hiroshima and Nagasaki was a violent monologue in which its superior fire power was asserted. At Hiroshima the detonation of “Little Boy”, a uranium titan, timed to happen 500 to 600 metres above the ground, resulted in the instantaneous death of 90,000 people and thousands of later agonising deaths from severe burns and radiation. At Nagasaki “Fat Man”, a plutonium device, killed approximately 80,000 within seconds, while thousands more died after intense suffering. The fatal casualties in the two cities added up to an estimated total of 300,000.

The explosions caused the formation of so-called mushroom clouds consisting of columns of smoke, dust and fire that shot up 11,160 metres into the air, which victims could not actually witness, but stunned those who were at a safe viewing distance (figure 9). The bombers who took photographs of the mushroom clouds later described what they witnessed as sublime to behold. This testimony is interpreted to express “a paradoxical ‘painful’ pleasure” (Brockelman 2001: 96). However, it is not humanly possible to understand how the bombs’ destructive effects on the ground could be warded off from the executioners’ conscience by an experience of sublimity.

Figure 9
The nuclear explosion that destroyed Hiroshima (retrieved from the public domain: https://www.google.co.za/search?hl=en&site=imghp&tbnid=isch&source=hp&biw=1080&bih=441&q=bomb+hiroshima&oq=bomb+hiroshima&gs_l=img.3...1760.7147.0.8053.14.14.0.0.0.0.0.899.2663.3-1j3j0j1.5.0....0...1ac.1.64.img..10.4.1760.yz-kwGNSUk#imgres=b7TN0baCmOWNAM%3A).
Japan was obliged to surrender the day after the bombing of Nagasaki and submit to the terms of the Potsdam Declaration.

As an understatement one may note that the explosive force of the bombs that hit their targets in Japan reduces the dust kicked up by Leonardo’s battling men and horses to kindergarten play. It is nevertheless surprising that after his campaign with Cesare Borgia Leonardo could portray in the *Battle of Anghiari* a fascination with the aggressive vitality of men and horses assaulting each other in combat. Even the copy made of Leonardo’s composition “provokes in the beholder ambivalent feelings of terror and delight” (Poland 1992: 177). However, there is little delight in viewing the works of art produced by Japanese survivors of the Second World War nuclear tragedies. Artists who experienced or witnessed conditions of destruction and mass trauma recreated ghastly visions that are vastly different from Leonardo’s and do not attempt to exult the fury of the combatants’ physical movement in destructive action.

Most famous of all the depictions of the nuclear holocaust are the Hiroshima Panels in the Maruki Gallery, Hiroshima, created by a Japanese style painter, Iri Maruki who was born in Hiroshima, and a Western style painter, Toshi Maruki, a husband and wife team. They felt the need to depict the truth of war in general, to emphasise the guilt of all aggressors during the Second World War, and account for the suffering of countless victims. The Marukis went into Hiroshima city three days after the bombing. Shocked by the devastation they witnessed, they decided to make the need to come to grips with the truth of war and the victims’ agony and known to the world by means of their art. This decision inspired them to spend thirty years painting the Hiroshima Panels which, besides scenes of the nuclear destruction, include depictions of the Nanking Massacre, Auschwitz and other atrocities committed by all involved during the Second World War (figure 10).

![Figure 10](http://www.aya.or.jp/~marukimsn/English/indexE.htm)

The Hiroshima Panels, circa 1975, Maruki Gallery, Hiroshima

Other depictions of the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that are included in this discussion are threefold: first, images of the mushroom clouds released by the bombs; second, destroyed buildings and environmental devastation; and third, the death and suffering of victims. Since many of the depictions, mainly paintings, are dated years after the events of August 1945, it should be remembered that “Beginning in mid-September 1945, U.S. authorities in occupied Japan censored virtually all discussion of the bombs” (Dower 1995: 275). However, the commemoration of the destruction is now entrenched in Hiroshima that reconstructed itself as the “City of Bright Peace”. Besides the testimony of the Japanese cities that rose from the ashes, the testimony of local artists who survived can never be censored.
The representation of the nuclear explosion by Satoshi Furui, entitled *Mushroom Cloud*, is a memory image of the Hiroshima explosion (figure 11). In a different vein, however, Makoto Aida’s *Mokomoko* is a surrealistic image (figure 12). It is reminiscent of the mushroom cloud of the explosion, but incorporates strange metaphoric references: the cloud is shaped like a penis, adorned with a mouse-like face – a combination explained by Ashley Rawlings (2008: 98):

> [T]he *mokomoko* of the title is an onomatopoeia – meaning “fluffy”. In an email interview with *ArtAsiaPacific* in July, Aida wrote: “I intended it to be a fusion of three images: the postwar cuteness of Japanese pop culture […]; an erect penis; and the atomic bomb’s capacity for mass slaughter.”

![Figure 11](http://artasiapacific.com/image_columns/0000/4444/02.-furui.jpg)

*Satoshi Furui, Mushroom Cloud, 1997, Gallery Koyanagi, Tokyo, oil on wood, 30x30 cm (retrieved from the public domain: http://artasiapacific.com/image_columns/0000/4444/02.-furui.jpg).*
From the outskirts of Hiroshima as young boy, Susumo Horikoshi, who was six years old in August 1945, witnessed the mushroomed-shaped cloud rising from the bomb’s explosion, but only painted his impression six years later in a stylised way (figure 13). One gathers from the depiction that the young artist experienced the unusual sight of the explosion as a monstrous tree-like light dwarfing the low hills of the foreground landscape.
It is said that an awed American observer described the explosion in New Mexico as “brighter than a thousand suns”. In this regard John Dower remarks that “In Japanese, the well-known phrase for the extraordinary light of the nuclear explosion, and the thunderous blast that followed, is pica-don – literally (and prosaically) ‘flash-bang’.” Sumako Yamada was twenty years old when he witnessed the Hiroshima blast, but only at the age of 49 did he create an image depicting the rings of light like the rising of a series of suns that he saw spreading overhead in August 1945 (figure 14).
In order to understand the image by Asai Kiyoshi, entitled *Evening Glow over Hiroshima*, it is necessary to know how people and buildings were affected by the nuclear blast (figure 15). The temperature at the centre of the explosion was between 3,000 and 4,000 degrees centigrade, causing unshielded people within a radius of almost five kilometres to suffer flash burns. All wooden structures within two kilometres were obliterated, causing fire-storms that completed the devastation. The depicted ruin of the Prefectural Industry Promotion Building, completed in 1915, was at the epicentre of the atomic blast. Its structural skeleton that remained standing is centrally placed in the composition, but beyond the ruined building the background landscape is like a macabre wasteland, strewn with corpses. This woodblock print is probably the most truthful depiction of the physical devastation that Hiroshima suffered. The ruined building that has been left standing has acquired the status of an icon embodying a message against war.

![Figure 15](http://www.art-for-a-change.com/Atomic/atomic13.htm)

**Figure 15**
Asai Kiyoshi, *Evening Glow over Hiroshima*, 1945, woodblock print, 211x156 cm (retrieved from the public domain: [http://www.art-for-a-change.com/Atomic/atomic13.htm](http://www.art-for-a-change.com/Atomic/atomic13.htm)).

![Figure 16](http://www.afsc.org/sites/afsc.civicactions.net/files/images/hiroshima-art.jpg)

**Figure 16**
Artist unknown, Victims of the Hiroshima atomic bombing (retrieved from the public domain: [http://www.afsc.org/sites/afsc.civicactions.net/files/images/hiroshima-art.jpg](http://www.afsc.org/sites/afsc.civicactions.net/files/images/hiroshima-art.jpg)).
Conclusion

After the assaults on the Japanese cities Oppenheimer opposed the creation of an H-bomb. Was this scientist a pacifists, committed to peace and opposed to war? This question is difficult to answer in his case and also in the case of other designers of weapons, amongst whom Leonardo has a place. Both Oppenheimer and Leonardo suffered trauma because of their corroboration in war, and one may surmise that they were naïve in the sense that Desiderius Erasmus so succinctly stated: *Dulce bellum inexpertis*.

Is it true that to achieve peace the design of weapons to wage war is inevitable? The question remains: what would the attitude of a true pacifist be? Leonardo and Oppenheimer’s attitudes were certainly ambiguous. According to Ray Monk (2012: 660) Oppenheimer never confessed to or apologised for “his ‘sin’ in having been responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands of people. But, as he said over and over again, he did not regret his work at Los Alamos, nor did he think he and his colleagues had done something unjustifiable in building the bomb.”

Leonardo would also have defended his designs for weapons, even though he abhorred war.

It is appropriate that the last word on the “commitment to peace and opposition to war” be given to Albert Einstein (1879-1955), without whose theories of relativity scientists could not have designed nuclear weapons. On various occasions he insisted on his pacifist attitude. However, Einstein also stated that resistance to aggression and violence is occasionally necessary, and pertinently believed that armed resistance against Nazi aggression was necessary.
Perhaps the generals who fight wars with deadly weapons have an answer about the achievement of peace. Major General Custis LeMay, who was in charge of the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is reputed to have said: “I’ll tell you what war is about. You’ve got to kill people, and when you’ve killed enough, they stop fighting” (quoted from Chua-Eoan 1995: 35). Cesare Borgia would have concurred.

Actually, artists have a better answer to promote peace. When the fighting stopped Japanese artists who have viewed the violence responded in a creative way to attest to the “beastly madness” of war. War had become such that artists could no longer idealise the male body in action, like in the Battle of Anghiari. On the contrary, the scenes of the Hiroshima Panels and the other works discussed above empathise with the death and suffering of victims.

**Notes**

1. The letter has been collected in the *Codex Atlanticus*. See note 2.

2. The *Codex Atlanticus*, a twelve-volume set of Leonardo da Vinci’s drawings and writings, comprising 1,119 leaves, dating from 1478-1519, is preserved in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan.

3. For extensive discussions of Leonardo as a military engineer, see Parsons (1939), Calvi (1956) and Zollner (2007).

4. The term “pazzia bestialissima” (beastly madness) occurs in Leonardo’s *Trattato della pittura* where he speaks about a battle as “tale discordia, o ou dire pazzia bestialissima”. Quoted from Ludwig (1882: 214).

5. Illustrated in the *Codex Atlanticus*, 57v-a.

6. Illustrated in the *Codex Atlanticus*, 40v-b.


9. Leonardo wrote extensive passages about the destruction that natural forces can wreak upon the earth. In drawings identified as the Deluge the depicted disasters seem to be generated by a combination of different elements, not only water. In *Codex Atlanticus* (folio 212v) he describes “winds that make war upon the earth’s surface” and “exert violence”. These winds “put clouds to flight” and “send out vanguards” until they eventually transform into fire. In a passage in *Codex Arundel* (folio 155v) Leonardo predicts that this kind of violence will eventually destroy the earth: “The watery element will be pent up; … [until] the cold and rarified air has disappeared. Then the earth will be forced to close with the element of fire and its surface will be burnt to cinders, and this will be the end of all terrestrial nature.”

10. Leonardo’s contemporary, Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564) was commissioned to simultaneously paint a scene recalling the Battle of Cascina, on another wall of the Sala Consiglio. This rivalry, an “artistic duel”, between the greatests geniuses of the Renaissance is described by Jones (2010).

11. Whitman (2012: 4) explains the rules of a historical pitched battle: “Fought on a defined field, it was supposed to last one day and no more, beginning in tension at dawn, ending in exhaustion at dusk, and so (in the best circumstances) terminating the war by the time night fell. A limited, circumscribed engagement, it was supposed to leave the rest of society untouched.”

12. This fact was reported by Niccolò Machiavelli. See: http://www.anghiari.it/new-english/english_anghiari.asp.

13. Oppenheimer has also been compared to Prometheus by Bird and Sherwin (2005).

14. After the Second World War new technology make it possible to build atomic bunkers, but in response bunker buster bombs have been invented.

15. Brockleman (2001: 96) states: “The sublime exists where the subject cannot find a form, cannot find the ‘natural’ unity of beauty. The result is a paradoxical ‘painful’ pleasure.” See also Poland (1992) for a discussion of the sublime.
16 The Potsdam Declaration was issued on 26 July 1945 by the President of the United States, the President of the National Government of the Republic of China and the Prime Minister of Great Britain.


18 Zwigenberg (2014) deals with Hiroshima as the place that explicates the tensions between messages of peace and the memory of the 1945 nuclear atrocity.

19 “War is sweet to those who have no experience of it”, is a quote from Pindar (522-443 BCE), made famous by Desiderius Erasmus (1467-1536) as the title for his meditation on the subject of war.

20 This definition of pacifism is by Fiala (2010: 1).

21 Oppenheimer, who knew Einstein for almost three decades, recalls that “Late in life, in connection with his despair over weapons and wars, Einstein said that if he had to live it over again he would be a plumber”. Quoted from Oppenheimer (1979: 36).

22 Einstein’s statements regarding armed resistance to the Nazi regime are quoted by Calaprice (2005: 162). On 18 May 1954, for example, Einstein said to Herbert J. Fox: “I have always been a pacifist, i.e. I have declined to recognize brute force as a means for the solution of international conflicts. Nevertheless, it is in my opinion, not reasonable to cling to that principle unconditionally. An exception has necessarily to be made if a hostile power threatens wholesale destruction of one’s own group.”

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Berlin Mission Director, Hermann Theodor Wangemann recorded his travels in diary inscriptions and with sketches that he made of places that he visited. He travelled before photography became the standard means of recording images. A collection of 106 drawings made by Wangemann was acquired from a German art dealer by a South African museum in 1954. The drawings were made during two visits to the mission fields in Southern Africa during 1866-1867 and 1884-1885. The themes vary from South African landscapes to six drawings of places in the Middle East. Time spent in the Middle East as part of an impromptu pilgrimage to the Holy Land at the end of his first trip, resulted in the drawings of places in the Egypt and Israel/Palestine. The drawings have significant cultural-historical value as they are accompanied by extensive written travelogues. The Wangemann collection is currently curated by the Ditsong National Museum of Cultural History in Pretoria.

Key words: Wangemann, Berlin Missionary Society, 19th century travelogues, historical drawings, Palestine

European travellers and explorers wanted to visually communicate the foreign and strange that they encountered to their audiences at home. Photography developed in the second half of the 19th century. Earlier reporters and commentators in the non-European world had to rely on a wide variety of hand-drawn pictures. This era of travelling and illustration is depicted in the book *Famous Travellers to the Holy Land*, compiled by Linda Osband (1989). The European travellers either had both the ability and skill themselves to commit to paper, directly and on-site, what they saw in foreign countries, or, if they wanted to publish their reports upon their return, the publishers usually provided professional illustrators to produce these drawings. This was usually done according to the specific instructions of the eye witness. The authenticity of the illustrations created by the travellers themselves is nonetheless far greater. Up to the
end of the 19th century it cannot be assumed that all illustrations that were created for a travel account were also used in the printed works. It must in fact rather be assumed that many of these more or less authentic illustrations of European explorers covering a wide variety of genres are still slumbering in the basements of publishing houses, museums and archives. Every now and then such book illustrations – some of which were never used – would be made public by sheer coincidence.

The academic study of visual, historical testimonies of what constituted completely alien content for the Europeans is – at least as far as German-language literature is concerned – only in its infancy. In origin the visual was varied, in that they were produced by scientifically curious travellers, researchers, artists, seafarers, missionaries, foreign military personnel or employees of colonial administration.

**The travelling artist: Hermann Theodor Wangemann**

One of these 18th century travelling artists was Doctor H. Th. Wangemann, erstwhile director of the Berlin Mission Society. It is apparent that he only carried out his artistic activities *en passant*. There is no evidence that he also occupied himself with drawing in his capacity as director of the Berlin Mission Society, or that he illustrated his publications in any way. His numerous drawings served to testify to places and landscapes that he encountered during his travels.

Hermann Theodor Wangemann was born on 27 May 1818 in Wilsnack and died in Berlin on 18 June 1894. After his theological studies he assumed the office of director of the Berlin Mission Society from 1865. Previously he served on various educational bodies of authority such as director of the seminary in Cammin, Pomerania (present-day Poland) from 1849. He also published a number of significant theological books on German church history. He was shaped in his youth by the revivalist movement that had also taken hold of Pomerania. He championed the Lutheran doctrine with great resoluteness. Under his leadership the missionary activity in South Africa was consolidated; he was responsible for the Berlin Mission Society’s expansion into China in 1882 and into Tanzania in 1891. Through his firm leadership of the Society he established a broad impact by the Berlin Mission Society, not only in Germany but also in the mission field. This was effected by developing a mission constitution in order to build up and expand the parent organisation in Germany. He also established rules pertaining to the mission work done in the various fields of operation, particularly with a view to promote publication activity amongst the missionaries.

He himself was not only the administrative leader of the Mission House but also taught at the mission seminary and continued to be very active in his publishing endeavours. He documented his travels in two travel accounts on South Africa (Wangemann 1868; 1886) and a third on his voyages to and from South Africa (Wangemann 1869). He also contributed towards the German and European understanding of Africa in those days by publishing numerous popular texts that were not distinctly missiological in nature. During the last years of his life he lent his support to the emancipation of African Christianity. As a result he espoused the ordination of indigenous South African Christians. It is here that he made his mark with regards to scientific religious studies.

In the catalogue of the collection of Wangemann drawings in Pretoria, Petra van Zyl made the following appropriate observation concerning his artistry: “He was no artist in the true sense of the word – his drawings served to illustrate his experiences so that he could share them
with his family, friends and colleagues” (Botha 1992: 9). The significance of his illustrations does however extend far beyond the narrow scope of his social circle as circumscribed by Van Zyl. The drawings are historical testimonies of the situation in South Africa during the second half of the 19th century and in a few cases also of sites in the Middle East. They provide authentic insights into the geographic realities of the time and deserve to be considered from an art- and cultural-historical perspective.

For Wangemann, making illustrations during his travels constituted an important addition to the written accounts in his journals. He devoted a considerable amount of attention to his notes and sketches (Wangemann 1869: 40, 113). He occasionally makes reference to the artistic activities on his easel in his travel notes, according to which he utilised these times as a good opportunity to relax and recuperate. He probably also quite readily let himself be persuaded to draw, or else tried to impress the inhabitants of foreign lands with his drawing techniques (Wangemann 1869: 124). He did not always finish the illustrations on the spot. He frequently completed them during a later period of repose, which makes his photographic memory of the landscapes he observed all the more admirable. It is undeniable that Wangemann possessed a certain natural artistic painting talent. That his landscape drawings are very realistic can be verified by visiting the sites and perusing the landscapes that he depicted (Boshoff 2008: 110).

Before he embarked on his journey to Southern Africa Wangemann took drawing lessons with a painter. One can make the reasonable assumption that he had, before his embarkation, received specific instruction in the use of a camera obscura. Since it was a wide-spread practise to utilise a camera obscura as a drawing aid before the camera was invented, it can be assumed that Wangemann made use of it in this way too. With it he was able to hand copy landscapes onto paper, thereby rendering all proportions correctly. This becomes particularly apparent when one compares the figures of humans and animals or implements – which were probably inserted at a later stage – with the landscapes. It is also possible that Wangemann utilised a camera lucida rather than a camera obscura, the former having gained increasing popularity as a drawing aid over the camera obscura during the early 19th century.

The assumption can be made that Wangemann carried either the one or the other camera with him on his first journey. In spite of all drawing aids utilised by Wangemann, he must nonetheless have possessed a certain natural talent for drawing. In a portrait of the Berlin mission director, Hermann Petrick writes that he apparently had “still acquired this skill during his last years” (Petrick 1895: 38). In a copy of this book that belonged to the mission director’s son Hans, this statement is underlined and accompanied by a handwritten marginal note in which the son refutes that statement. It says: “He practised it since his youth”.

The Wangemann collection at the Ditsong National Museum of Cultural History

The Wangemann collection of drawings consist of 48 watercolours and six large sepia watercolour studies, a smaller full-colour aquarelle, as well as 48 lead pencil graphic sketches and three ordinary pencil sketches, normally on cardboard roughly measuring 320 to 330mm x 490 to
500mm (Botha 1992:1). The collection is housed in the Ditsong National Museum of Cultural History in Pretoria, which forms a part of the Ditsong Museums of South Africa.4

These art works cannot be deemed to have been completely hidden from public view, as a catalogue of the drawings was published by the Museum in 1992 (Botha 1992), while a number of select images have been published and discussed in an article on the cultural historical contribution of Germans in South Africa (Van Zyl 1992: 158-72). This article was also published by the National Cultural Historical Museum in Pretoria. A section deals with a short introduction to the Wangemann illustrations, while fourteen of his drawings were included to illustrate the article. None of the drawings used in the article exhibit a non-South African motif. The catalogue and article apparently provided no inspiration for further research. Therefore, as both these publications have probably not found a broad level of distribution due to their relatively low circulation, the illustrations of Hermann Theodor Wangemann can be viewed as being hitherto virtually unknown. In fact his 19th-century drawings have hardly been utilised in any way in South Africa or in mission literature.5

How did these illustrations, which had been stored in the Berlin mission house in the East Berlin borough of Friedrichshain until after the Second World War, find their way to South Africa?

The publications of the National Cultural History Museum only provide scant information on the subject. They reveal that, in 1954, the then Transvaal Museum in Pretoria purchased a collection of pictures, comprising 106 drawings, from W.A. Lutz (1891-1959), an art dealer from the Western sector of Berlin, for the sum of 130 Rand (sic Botha 1992: 1). The purchase was concluded through the mediation of Mrs Kotie Roodt-Coetzee, later Director of the National Cultural History and Open-air Museum. Apparently she failed to do any background checks on Lutz to establish exactly how this art dealer had come into the possession of artworks belonging to the Berlin Mission Society. During the period directly after the Second World War it was not an uncommon occurrence that artworks in Eastern Germany, being occupied by the Red Army, were relocated to West Germany or West Berlin, which was occupied by the Allied forces of the West. It is possible that the Wangemann Collection was sold to South Africa from here.

The preface to the catalogue contains a rather naïve statement in this regard, namely that South African attempts in 1978 to purchase further Wangemann drawings in East Berlin to “bring these drawings out to South Africa” had failed (Botha 1992: 1). Such an illegal acquisition or sale of art works would have been a punishable offence in every country in the world.

At the time during which the Wangemann artworks that are now lying in the Pretoria warehouse of the Ditsong National Museum of Cultural History came to South Africa, a number of peculiar discussions took place amongst the Germans in South Africa and within the communities of descendants of German missionaries. After the end of World War II they demanded that the Soviets return all German works of art confiscated by them. And they did this so brazenly as if the German armed forces hadn’t just recently destroyed and looted hundreds of thousands of art works in Eastern Europe (Schatten 1955: 94). It was against this background that Wangemann’s drawings of art historical significance came to South Africa.

While researching this issue the authors came across an exchange of letters, kept in the archives of the library of the University of South Africa.7 According to these letters, correspondence about drawings was still ongoing as late as 1982 and 1983 between the Berlin Mission Society in East Berlin and the director of the then National Cultural Historical and Open Air Museum in Pretoria. During February 1983 the South African side asked the Berlin
Mission director, Heinz Blauert, whether an exchange of copies of the Wangemann Collection against copies of the remaining drawings still being kept in the archive in Berlin would not be possible. In doing so, the South Africans suggested an across-the-board exchange of copies existing in the two inventories, ultimately amounting to a ratio of 2:5, after having discussed other possibilities for equivalence and having dismissed a solution by those means as being too complicated. Since copies of files were moreover earmarked for this exchange, the Berlin Mission Society eventually declined a “comprehensive exchange of copies”, one reason being that a company in West Berlin was to be assigned the task of making these copies. In the end the South Africans’ attempt to obtain the remaining pictures by Wangemann that still resided in Berlin was to remain unsuccessful, despite intensified interventions by the Africa consultant of the Berlin Mission in West Berlin. Presumably encouraged by the correspondence between the Cultural Museum in Pretoria and the Berlin Mission Society, copies of the drawings in the possession of the Museum have subsequently been submitted to the archives of the University of South Africa in Pretoria. It is worth noting that the ultimately unsuccessful attempts to exchange documents and illustrations was one of only a few communications that existed between an – ecclesiastical – institution of the GDR and a South African state institution, which indeed the Cultural History Museum and UNISA constituted (Van der Heyden 2005). It should be possible nowadays to determine what the circumstances were under which the pictures came to South Africa in the 1950s. The suspicion seems to be not entirely unfounded that the Wangemann Collection reached South Africa in an unlawful manner.

In the literary estate of Wangemann, which is kept in the file records of the Berlin Mission and housed in the archives of the Landeskirche in the capital of Germany, there exists another sketchbook of Wangemann, albeit from his second visitation trip, containing, with one exception, South African motifs. What is striking in these pictures, compared to those in the collection of the Ditsong National Museum of Cultural History, is that Wangemann drew more people and cultural objects. Examples include children on the mission station of Emmaus, a boat on the banks of a river near Botshabelo, buildings, together with seven men (presumably missionaries) in a house at the mission station Stendal. Another sketch that catches one’s eye is that of “Bushman paintings on the rock” originating from the Northern Transvaal (today Limpopo Province). One can assume that these sketches were not used to illustrate publications.

Wangemann’s travels: the first visitation trip to South Africa 1866-1867

From 1866 to 1867 Wangemann undertook his first visitation trip to South Africa, the Berlin Mission Society’s most important and largest area of operation. A year after his return to Germany the travel account of this journey was already published by the publishing house of the mission in Berlin (Wangemann 1868a). His second travel report, on his second trip during 1884-1885, was also published in-house (Wangemann 1886). The third travel account deals with the outward and return journey of the first visitation trip (1866-1867) (Wangemann 1869). This report contains those sections of his notes that do not directly pertain to his experiences in and reflections on South Africa. It tells the story of his trip to South Africa via St. Helena and back to Germany via Durban, Mauritius and the Middle East. This already becomes apparent in the rather long title of the book: Reise durch das gelobte Land. Ein ausführliches Tagebuch über eine in den Jahren 1866 und 1867 unternommene Reise von England nach St. Helena und dem Cap der guten Hoffnung und die Rückreise von Natal über Mauritius, Aegypten und Palästina. Just like the other two books it appeared as an in-house publication of the Berlin Mission Society.
Upon an analysis of the scientific history of geography, especially with regards to the academic analysis of historical travel literature about South Africa, it transpires that these books have for the most part not been considered, and the book penned by Wangemann about his trip to the Orient is mentioned to an even lesser extent in corresponding academic papers and bibliographies. This may be due to the limited circulation of these books, which were apparently not perceived as being classic “travel literature”. Wangemann’s first trip to South Africa did, however, attract the somewhat modest attention of “Petermanns Geographische Mitteilungen”, the most important German geography and discovery magazine in those days (Jeppe 1868: 15-24). In contrast, the famous German missiologist Gustav Warneck, in a review, praised Wangemann’s first travel report as being a work that “must be seen as a kind of overview of the entire operational area of the Berlin Mission Society”, and which furthermore constituted “one of Wangemann’s most precious gifts of mission literature” (Warneck 1875: 420).

Even if Wangemann’s South African travel accounts were not accorded the significance they deserve in the “discovery literature”, his first travel account of South Africa has nonetheless more recently become the subject of literary history studies, in which the illustrations he produced during his travels were however only mentioned in passing (Hemme 2000; Hemme 1998/1999: 135-49). The texts of his three travel books are decorated with illustrative vignettes that were rarely published anywhere else, as well as with several of his larger drawings, rendered in scaled-down size. It is worth mentioning that Wangemann, during his second visitation trip in 1884/85, also produced what were mostly landscape graphics from almost all the regions of South Africa. These illustrations also form a part of the Wangemann Collection in Pretoria.

During his second visitation trip Wangemann does admittedly seem to have spent less time in explicit artistic pursuit; be that as it may, the Wangemann Collection in the Cultural History Museum in Pretoria contains fewer illustrations of this trip. Moreover it is not known as to whether additional pictures made by Wangemann are kept in other places outside of the Berlin Mission Society archives. This appears to be rather unlikely (but see Van Zyl 1992: 159).

**En route to the Orient**

On 26 September 1867, after the conclusion of his first visitation trip to South Africa, Wangemann boarded a ship in Durban to embark on his voyage back home to Germany. The steamer he had chosen initially took him to the island of Mauritius, from where he hoped to obtain direct passage to Aden. Severe storms had however prevented him from arriving in Port Louis, the capital of Mauritius, in time to continue on his journey northwards. He missed the ship he was supposed to board, thus providing him with ample leisure time to acquaint himself with the landscape of Mauritius and to make drawings of its fascinating natural features as well as the harbour. In doing so he became one of the few German travellers who, in his reports to Germany, commented in written as well as visual form on this island in the Indian Ocean during the 19th century (Van der Heyden & Beyer 2015).

Wangemann remained on the island of Mauritius for fourteen days, which he used to recuperate from his strenuous journey through Southern Africa. He was travel-weary by now (Wangemann 1899: 296), boarded the next available ship that left Port Louis for Aden, planning to journey from there via Suez to Berlin. With the lighthouse of Suez in his field of vision, he informed the mission society in Berlin and his family by telegraph, that he harboured the hitherto unplanned intention, “after a short sojourn in Egypt, to embark on a visit to the Promised Land”
After this deviation from his direct travel route, his plans were to travel by ship to a southern European port and then travel on to Berlin by train. He planned to be home by Christmas. This plan was executed, almost to the letter (Wangemann 1867: 389).

It was probably Dr. Julius Hardeland (1828-1903), the director of the Leipzig Mission Society who was on his way to India and whom Wangemann met by chance in Suez, who strengthened his intention to not return to Europe immediately but to rather avail himself of the opportunity to go on a detour to Palestine to view the cultural-historical landmarks.

Wangemann initially travelled by train from Suez to Cairo, from where he visited the Pyramids (Wangemann 1869: 75-80). From Cairo he travelled to Alexandria where he boarded a steamer that was sailing under the Russian flag, onwards to Port Said (Wangemann 1869: 80-87). In a biography of Wangemann by Hermann Petrick (1895: 40), whom Wangemann described as a “windbag”, it is stated that Wangemann sailed “through the canal at Suez”. This was not possible, however, since the Suez Canal was only opened on 17 November 1869. Hans Wangemann subsequently marked this faux pas in his copy of the biography, adding in a marginal note that neither did his father drive “through the excavation works”. Wangemann himself reported that he visited the construction works at Port Said on a small boat with the captain of the Russian ship (Wangemann 1869: 86).

From Port Said Wangemann travelled to Jaffa, which was the starting point of his nearly three-week-long journey through Palestine. From Jaffa onwards his main mode of transport was on horseback (Wangemann 1869: 88). In this way he travelled to and visited Jerusalem, Bethlehem and the shores of the Dead Sea as well as the banks of the River Jordan, Mount Tabor, Galilee and other historical sites that were familiar to him from the Bible. His son later commented in the biography of his father: “There is probably no visitor to these holy places who has entered them with greater and more deep-felt emotion and elatedness than Wangemann!” (Wangemann 1899: 300).

Beirut was the last place he visited on his “educational journey”, during which he also made the drawings depicted below. On 8 December 1867 he boarded a ship in Beirut, the present-day capital of Lebanon, travelling – via Smyrna and within eyeshot of several Ionian Islands – to Trieste, reaching its port on 20 December 1867.

Wangemann’s impressions of the Holy Land

The visit to the Holy Land was not part of Wangemann’s original itinerary, but he reports in vivid terms of his experiences at Aden “in Arabien” and along the Sinai coast of the Red Sea (Wangemann 1869: 66, 71). Much of his description reflects a keen imagination as he, for example, seeks out what he imagines to be “the real Sinai”, the Mountain of God, where the law was given, as they sailed past the coast of the Sinai Peninsula (Wangemann 1869: 71). Valuable eye witness reports exist of his experiences at Suez, Cairo, and the pyramids, Alexandria, Port Said and Jaffa, where he set foot on the soil of the Holy Land, for “a pilgrim’s journey”, as he describes it himself (Wangemann 1869: 73-87). He travelled through the Holy Land on horseback with a guide and guard, appointed to him by a friend in Jaffa (Wangemann 1869: 87-95).
The journey took Wangemann through the Plains of Sharon and the Philistines and the valley of Ela to Jerusalem, passing through areas so dangerous that they had to sleep with one eye open. He spent some time in Jerusalem before traveling to Jericho through the Judean Wilderness. His descriptions give vivid images of Jerusalem in 1867. In Jerusalem he was particularly intrigued by the ruins of the Johanniter Inn, originally a German institution. He describes the site and reflects on his impressions of the obviously superimposed structures that he could recognise in the rubble. Much digging has taken place in the area of the ruins and he remarks that the foundations of houses could be seen in the area excavated around the Inn. It was clear to him that the Tyropean valley was filled up complete over the years, a keen archaeological observation. Archaeological excavations that took into account the superimposed strata of cultural material, would only dawn some twenty years later with the work of Sir W.M. Flinders Petri in 1890 at Tel el-Hesi (Wangemann 1869: 98; Mazar 1992: 11).

Wangemann’s trip through the Judean Wilderness to Jericho reminded him of the parable of the Good Samaritan and he associated with the danger of being mugged narrated in the parable (Wangemann 1869: 108-114). Jericho is described as nothing more than a water source and a tower – not realising that the hill on which he stood to look over the area was the tell where millennia old remains of the most ancient city of Jericho were buried (Wangemann 1869: 115). In his descriptions a constant fear of the “rapacious Beduins” (räuberischen Beduinen) is expressed. At one stage towards the end of his journey through the Holy Land Wangemann remarked that three weeks travelling in the Holy Land was more tiresome than almost two years on horseback in Africa (Wangemann 1869:172).
From Jericho they went to the river Jordan, the Dead Sea and the Mar Saba Monastery in the Judean Wilderness. Then followed Bethlehem, Hebron, Jerusalem (i.a. the Omar and el-Aqsa mosques), the graves to the east of the city and Mount Scopus, far outside the city. They had to haste back to the city to be inside before the gates were locked, because outside their lives would be threatened. While revisiting Jerusalem, he made further sketches of the Johanniter Inn and Gehenna (the Hinnom Valley) that reminded him of Hell.
Wangemann left Jerusalem to the north and travelled to Shechem, with visits to the mountains Ebal and Gerisim and the small Samaritan community. The plants of the area reminded him of the fable of Jotham in Judges 9:7vv (Wangemann 1869: 125-147).
In the central Highlands they also visited Samaria, before heading towards the Sea of Galilee via Mont Tabor. Under way he visited Jezreel and saw Megiddo at some distance, Sunem, Gilboa mountain, Nain and Endor all reminded him of biblical narratives from the Old and the New Testament. Then he reached Mount Tabor (Wangemann 1869: 147-154).

From Tabor Wangemann describes something that became a recurring theme: that of the ability to see almost the entire country from a high lying site. This is partly explained by the fact that he was travelling during November, when the skies are mostly clear with the advent of winter. Tiberias was his goal, but all the biblical sites stirred his emotions and imagination.

At the Sea of Galilee he felt that he could almost experience the presence of Jesus, because so little has changed over the centuries. Nazareth was also a moving experience before he travelled towards the sea at the Carmel Range. At the small town of Haifa he was amazed at, but also critical of the Carmelites’ hospitality at their monastery – it was all too luxurious (Wangemann 1869: 154-167). From Haifa he travelled to Akko and marvelled at the Roman aqueducts. From there he visited the Phoenician cities of Tyre, Sidon and eventually Beirut that marked the site of his leaving the Middle East (Wangemann 1869: 171).

No evidence exists of further drawings that Wangemann might have made during his sea voyage or on his journey back to Germany. Neither did he make mention of any such drawings in his letters or his subsequently published journal.

Wangemann’s illustrative recordings

Back in Berlin Wangemann not only began preparing his two travel accounts for publishing, but he also illustrated them with some of his larger drawings. He broke up the text with smaller
illustrations which he seems to have made specifically for this purpose when he was back in Germany. Some copies of his travel accounts had large-format, fold-out illustrations attached to them. It can no longer be ascertained, however, whether such large-format illustrations were also attached to the book on his travels to the Orient. Corresponding to the technical capabilities of the time, some images were rendered as woodcuts beforehand and sold separately.

Wangemann wanted to convey a “depiction, as precisely as possible, of our mission stations and their surroundings”. Such endeavours, namely to also employ visual means to present his travel experiences for the mission work back home, were not only acknowledged by his fellow campaigners but also by his superior – if one can use that term –, the President of the Berlin Mission Society, state secretary Dr Karl Rudolf von Jacobi, who once praised Wangemann: “He was able to record much of what he saw, not only in words but also in pictures” (Von Jacobi 1894: 398).21

Wangemann’s drawings were used to illustrate the three travel reports, mentioned previously. They were also occasionally used to illustrate the monthly newsletter of the Berlin Mission Society, *Berliner Missionsberichte* (Von Jacobi 1894: 395), and other independent publications of the Society. In order for the illustrations from his South Africa journey to find further utilisation, the mission director declared in the *Berliner Missionsberichte*, that he intended to have them “printed onto ordinary paper from the already existing woodcuts … These comprise eight sheets that make them convenient to be used as illustrated sheets for children to colour in” (Wangemann 1868b: 375).22 In this communication he also announced a selection of high-quality pictures with elucidations. It can however no longer be determined with certainty as to whether these pictures were actually printed and if the Mission House was able to sell them.

Most of the artworks in the Wangemann Collection have South African landscapes, especially mission-related structures like churches and missionary housing as their theme. Very few illustrations feature living beings like humans and animals. Where they do occur they were depicted rather stiffly by the illustrator. They appear clumsily superimposed; indeed they give the impression of a child’s drawing experiments. Whereas the landscape drawings are characterised by a virtually unrivalled authenticity, the quality of depictions of humans, animals and even ox wagons stand in no comparable relation to the illustrated surroundings.

**Concluding remarks**

The rather small number of images of the Holy Land drawn by Wangemann may have to be regarded as an insignificant contribution towards the “Golden Age of Orientalism” in European art at that time (Lemaire 2005; Gérard 1963). Travellers excelled in depicting the exotic and romantic landscapes and people of the Orient (Osband 1989). It is not known whether there are more Wangemann drawings of the Middle East. The probability does exit.

The inspiration for Wangemann’s search for motifs did not merely come from a tourist’s take on places of biblical interest, but was also informed by his interest in Islam, at least in this region where Christianity offered fierce competition, an interest that had been sharpened during his tenure as director of the Berlin Mission Society. He was probably amongst those travellers to the Orient at that time upon whom a certain perception had been impressed, as Bertram Turner puts it, “starting with the notion of the brutal threat to Christian culture, up to the perception of a picturesquely appealing, exotic world” (Turner 1989: 205). He had, to a certain extent, allowed himself to be infected by the “fascination of the Orient”, which led to an increase in travel to

There were no official matters relating to the Berlin Mission Society that Wangemann had to attend to on this “educational trip” to the Holy Land. Neither does this trip seem to have been planned or coordinated with others prior his departure to Africa. For Wangemann his travels through the Holy Land were a “pilgrimage”, motivated and given meaning by his deep knowledge of the Bible and interest in the sites and landscapes of the land.

Even though a small number of the drawings in the Wangemann collection depict scenes from the Middle East, they represent a significant theme in his artistic legacy.

Notes


2 He writes of an incident, for instance, where a group of Muslims “beguiled” him draw and, when he obliged, “everybody stood about me inquisitively”, watching “in astonishment as the picture emerged” (Wangemann 1869: 124).

3 Petrick 1895: 38 wrote: “diese Kunst in den letzten Jahren noch erlernt”. In Hans Wangemann’s copy of Petrick’s book in the possession of Ulrich van der Heyden, the following is written: “Hat er von Jugend an betrieben.”

4 “Ditsong Museums of South Africa is an amalgamation of eight national museums, seven in Tshwane and one in Johannesburg. These museums have diverse collections covering the fields of fauna and flora, palaeontology, military history, cultural history, geology, anthropology and archaeology. The target audience of these museums are children, youth, adults, students, tourists (foreign and local), researchers and the public in general.

• The mandate of ‘Ditsong’ in terms of the Cultural Institutions Act is as follows:
• Collection, conservation and safe management of national heritage collections on behalf of the South African nation.
• Carry out research and publish such information for the cultural, social and economic use locally and internationally.
• Design, implement and manage exhibitions and public programmes with a view to supporting the national educational curriculum, economic development and other socio-economic objectives of the Government.
• Render heritage-based service to other museums (national, provincial, local and private) as well as to individuals and tertiary institutions.” (According to the official website http://www.ditsong.org.za/aboutus.htm).

Even the “Standard Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa”, which contains a keyword relating to Hermann Theodor Wangemann and his trip to South Africa, p. 316, makes no mention of the drawings that exist in South Africa.

Based on the date of the purchase (1954) the sum of £130 seems to be more realistic (cf. van Zyl 1992: 158; Botha 1992: 1).


Wangemann Sketches, in: Unisa Library, Archives, Hesse Collection, Acc. 29.

Cf. Wangemann literary estate, in: Kirchliches Archivzentrum Berlin/Evangelisches Landeskirchliches Archiv, A. I. 1901; here especially Wangemann’s sketchbook with 43 hand-drawn sketches with illustrations of various mission stations and South African landscapes. There are 41 pencil drawings as well as two ink drawings, all on 42 pieces of paper. They all originate from his second visitation trip.

“Journey through the Promised Land. A detailed journal of a journey undertaken between 1866 and 1867 from England to St. Helena and the Cape of Good Hope, and the return journey from Natal via Mauritius, Egypt and Palestine.”

Warneck 1875: 420. - „...als eine Art Kehrsicht über das gesamte Berliner Missionsgebiet angesehen werden muss“ – „eine der werthvollsten missions-literarischen Gaben Dr. Wangemanns...“

16 Kirchliches Archivzentrum Berlin, 4.1.: Archive of the Berliner Missionswerk: bmw 1/12189: „Skizzenbuch Wangemann“.

Speculation is made in Petra van Zyl’s essay that, before the fall of the Berlin Wall, further pictures by Wangemann might have existed in the former West Berlin (Van Zyl 1992: 159).

Wangemann 1867: 326. - „... nach einem kurzen Aufenthalte in Aegypten zu einem Besuche des gelobten Landes abzureisen“.


Wangemann 1899: 300. – „Kein Besucher der heiligen Stätten hat sie wohl mit größerer innerer Ergriffenheit und Erhebung betreten, als Wangemann!”

Von Jacobi 1894: 398. – „Vieles, was er geschaut, hat er nicht nur in Worten, sondern auch im Bilde zu fixieren vermocht.”

Wangemann 1868b: 375. – „... dieselben von den ohnehin schon vorhandenen Holzblöcken auf ordinaires Papier abdrucken... Dieselben umfassen acht Bogen, die sehr füglich auch als Bilderbogen zum Coloriren für Kinder benutzt werden können.”

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