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Editorial

The theme put forward for this edition – situated experience – points to an anchored standpoint in time and space from which utterances are made and interactions may take place. Situatedness instills our experiences with emplaced meanings and is captured eloquently in the linguistic term *deixis*, which implies a viewpoint at a specific time and place. If reduced to the banal extreme, it would amount to everything that is provincial, self-obsessed and closed. However, situatedness can also imply centredness, to be in a position to understand and influence a context to some extent.

The subject is approached from a variety of perspectives and different disciplines in this collection of articles. It engendered responses that illustrate the experience of domesticity in housing schemes and the township (Steyn and Bosman), the agency of design and nostalgia in current cultural production (Hawley and Cadle as well as Economou) and the difficulty of gauging users’ perceptions of community facilities (Stoffberg). Du Bruyn and Moodley investigate the meaning that can be derived from performed situations in Pretoria and rituals central to Hindu South Africans. Olivier offers thoughts on the threat that “the space of flows” holds for the ordinary, embodied human life-world and Auret questions the primacy of “lived experience” in our understanding of architectural phenomenology. Without even listing all contributions to the issue, it might be apparent that the research is wide-ranging within the core theme. The guest editors are inspired by the effort and time spent by the selected authors.

Kobus du Preez and Wanda Verster
Contents

Research articles

Bert Olivier
Situated experience, “the space of flows”, and rhizomatic thinking 1

Gerald Steyn
Domestic ritual versus domestic architecture: a review of three Indian projects 15

Ami Jessica Hawley and Bruce Cadle
The space between commerce and culture: design as social agency 34

Inge Economou
‘Remembering’ and imagining: Women’s nostalgic engagement with vintage fashion 56

Gerhard Bosman
Situated neighbourhood safety and fence decoration 74

Nalini Moodley
Exploring the Goddess: Religion and inclusivity within the Hindu community in South Africa 87

Madelein Stoffberg
Situating through representation: two community centres investigated through Lefebvre’s Spatial Production 99

Hendrik Auret
Architectural phenomenology and the tyranny of lived experience 112

Pfunzo Sidogi
Domesticity in select artworks representing the township experience 123

Estelle Alma Maré
In the period prior to and after the First World War German painters expressed a passion for their art 135

Yolanda van der Vyver
Situating Geography and the powers of Law, State and Church in the dynamic of Change that lead to the establishment of Pretoria 151

Willem P. Venter
The in-group/out-group dynamics of Nerdrum’s positioning of Kitsch as a reflection of situatedness within contemporary art 172
John Steele
Sculpting with fire: celebrating ephemerality at AfrikaBurn 2015
in the Tankwa Karoo, South Africa
There are indications that situated experience – in the sense of originary, embodied human experience, in time and space, of a life-world as a given totality within which action is required – is under threat today. More and more what Manuel Castells has dubbed “the space of flows”, engendered by a far-reaching, global technological transformation that is still playing itself out, is encroaching on the spaces where situated experience is, and has been possible, for millennia. This has had unmistakably deleterious effects on humans’ ability to orient themselves experientially according to time-space parameters of emplacement. Moreover, according to Castells this technologically mediated mode of space has become dominant since the end of the previous century. In this paper I therefore examine the architectural work of Hundertwasser in Vienna as a paradigmatic instance of “situated (and situating) architecture”. Then I turn to the conditions of provenance of the “space of flows” as identified by Castells before addressing the question, what mitigating strategy may be possible in the face of its continued hegemonic expansion. To this end I enlist the work of Henri Lefebvre and Gaston Bachelard, as well as, importantly, the poststructuralist thinking of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, which invites one to rethink the idea of situated experience in terms of interweaving different spatial modes, none of which can be avoided in the contemporary context of global “flows”.

**Key words:** experience, situatedness, rhizome, smooth space, space of flows, striated space

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We step into the building, and almost immediately we have to do a double take as we walk forward. Not only is the floor uneven; it positively undulates, like the undulating hills of the Transkei in miniature. We are far north from South Africa, however – to be precise, we are in Vienna and have just entered Friedensreich Hundertwasser’s KunstHaus Wien (adjacent to the Hundertwasser House, so that, from outside, it seems like one building),
redesigned and rebuilt in collaboration with Peter Pelikan between 1989 and 1991. Here we are treated to a first-hand experience of the kind of architectural-spatial modulation that embodies his rejection of straight lines as a basis for architectural design. And as he wished, the brick-inlaid floor of this art museum (cum house) is a concrete reminder of the continuity between humanity and nature (something emphasized by Deleuze and Guattari, too; 1983: 4-5), despite a large part of human cultural history testifying to a different ethos, namely, that culture stands opposed to nature, and can only arise on a field strewn with corpses of nature’s children. Of KunstHaus Wien Hundertwasser has written (quoted in Taschen 2013: 134), that it “…would be a bastion against the dictatorship of the straight line, the ruler and the T-square, a bridgehead against the grid-system and the chaos of the absurd”. He elaborates as follows (Hundertwasser, April, 1991 in Taschen 2013: 136):

The façade is not perfectly straight and flat, but humpy and interrupted by irregular mosaics. A black-and-white, irregular checkerboard pattern signals the disbanding of the grid system, its breakup… The entrance and courtyard were paved with old granite blocks, Dutch clinkers and old bricks from Emperor Franz Joseph’s days – a chance for the craftsmen to be creative themselves, a joy for the visitors. What we urgently need is [sic] barriers of beauty; these barriers of beauty consist of uncontrolled irregularities. Paradises can only be made with our own hands, with our own creativity in harmony with the free creativity of nature.

Hundertwasser brought nature into this building without relinquishing the artistic-cultural contribution to the variegated spaces comprising its interior and exterior. His love of colour, including gold and silver, is everywhere evident, and nature greets one everywhere you go, from the woodgrain of the stairs to the clusters of plants that grow simultaneously inside and outside in the spaces that he created for them. No suggestion of disembodied space here; it has been modulated in diverse ways to draw visitors into its structural clearings and interstitial folds, by inviting their feet to move attentively across uneven surfaces and by luring their eyes into the chromatic miracles of his paintings, graphic works, architectural models and tapestries, where one can get lost if you have an active and responsive imagination. The uniqueness of the spatial situation is conducive to the realisation that, here, one is privy to an experience of the “space of places” (Castells 2010: 409, 453-456) that cannot be replicated exactly elsewhere on the planet as far as its spatio-temporal specificity is concerned.

This may sound like an exaggerated claim, but it is not. Corporate spaces like those experienced in internationally located hotels like Hyatts and Westins are qualitatively the same globally (Castells 2010: 447) – the same kind of lobby, the same kind of bedrooms and dining rooms, with the same kind of colour-scheme. This is why entering KunstHaus Wien is paradigmatic of (uniquely) “situated experience”, and today, more than ever before, it is a therapeutic experience. One might call it an exemplar of “situated (and situating) architecture” in a very specific sense, namely, architecture that proclaims its spatio-temporal singularity through its particular modulation of spaces, and which simultaneously invites embodied human beings to respond to these attributes as a “situation”, that is, a signifying totality within which distinctive actions are called for. The actions in question do not merely include sensory enjoyment of the architectural and artistic qualities of the building and the artworks that are accommodated there, but also, importantly, those which are distinctive of being human in terms of embodiment. After all, only as embodied beings are individuals able to traverse the undulating spaces comprising the KunstHaus, and only as such are they capable of acting in a manner commensurate with the particular spatial character of the place, which is one of inviting individuals to appropriate it through embodied discovery. This is what situated experience entails in this unique spatial...
environment. (Mercifully, there are still many such spaces available to people worldwide – spaces that are distinctive and unique in terms of the specificity of their spatial qualities.)

Something has to be added to this, however. The modulation of space in this place, KunstHaus Wien, displays a different logic compared to traditional spaces, where outside is usually unambiguously outside and inside is usually inside, instead of both together. In the KunstHaus, however, one witnesses the overturning of this spatial logic. One manifestation of this is that, along the side of its façade, there are “tree tenants” that are both inside and outside the house: they grow in soil-containers that, while located largely in interior spaces, open up to the outside in such a way that the “tree tenants” grow “out of” the building, their summer foliage in the open air and their root-systems in the “quasi-internal” containers. They are therefore both inside and outside. The “uncontrolled irregularities” that Hundertwasser mentions in the quotation, above, also mark a deviation from the traditional spatial logic of clearly demarcating outside and inside. As will be seen below in the discussion of Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987: 474-475) distinction between “striated space” and “smooth space” (“nomad space and sedentary space – the space in which the war machine develops and the space instituted by the State apparatus”), Hundertwasser’s notion of such “uncontrolled irregularities”, while not representing something capable of actualizing a “pure” smooth space (which is always encountered in some or other admixture with striated space), nevertheless suggests a spatial strategy that tends towards smooth, nomadic space. One is therefore afforded the experience of “situating” oneself in relation to these “irregularities”, something that contrasts so conspicuously with the experience of the dominant spatial mode today (to be addressed below), that it could potentially instill in you an enduring awareness of its salutary, spatial norm-transgressive qualities, and exhort one to act in the interest of promoting this awareness. This raises the question, why it should be desirable to do so.

The advent of “the space of flows”

To answer the question, above, one has to ask another: Isn’t architecture faced, today, by the same task that it has faced for millennia, namely (broadly) to provide human beings with durable shelter and, perhaps more importantly, with a sense of “place” wrested from space?
If the answer to this last question is in the affirmative, it should immediately be added that, given specific contemporary cultural-historical and technological developments, it should be amplified by specifying the contingent factors which make this archetypal task of architecture more imperative today than ever before. These “contingent factors”, unique to our time, are nowhere more conspicuous than in the oft-witnessed phenomenon of a group of teenagers (and sometimes even older people) sitting together in a restaurant or coffee shop, staring at their smartphones’ screens while busily “texting” away with thumbs and/or fingers. What is being enacted before one’s eyes in such cases is nothing less than a demonstration of the force of the currently dominant spatial mode, accessible by means of (among other things) smartphones, tablets and laptops. Moreover, this newly hegemonic mode of space is not restricted to place – in fact, it surpasses place(s) – and forces one to rethink the meaning of an architecture of place and of “situated experience” in relation to its increasing ubiquity.

What I am thinking of is what Manuel Castells (2010; see also Olivier 2013, 2013a and 2013b) has described in *The Rise of the Network Society*, a thoroughgoing study which details, in empirical-investigative as well as interpretive-theoretical terms the astonishing, technologically driven transformation of global society which culminates in the delineation of the most fundamental transformation of all, namely that of time and space. In the course of a mere four decades one has witnessed a technological transformation, from societies where personal and (inter-)national communication depended on telephonic and what is quaintly described as “snail mail” communications, to a globalized society where, after a series of developmental stages beginning with the invention of the personal computer and television, through interactive media to multimedia and the internet, a fully “(inter-)connected” social structure has emerged at various levels. These include, most conspicuously, the technological level, where the invention of the internet has been decisive, and contingent upon this, economic, social, cultural, spatial and temporal transformations which are of such far-reaching importance that the very experience of time and space in relation to historically shaped places has been fundamentally modified. This is evident in what Castells (2010: 440-493) has graphically identified as the newly dominant modes of space and time, namely “the space of flows” and “timeless time” (the latter of which will not concern me here) – both of which are inimical to “situated experience”, where the latter is understood as the distinctively human mode of experience, at least in a “primary” sense.

A brief elaboration on the reasons for claiming that the “space of flows” threatens embodied experience of a historically situated place is called for here. Castells’s (2010: 448-453) interpretation of contemporary, “postmodern” architecture as the “architecture of the end of history” is pertinent in this regard. He sees it as an architecture that has been redefined by the space of flows as dominant spatial form of the network society, resulting in architecture of a particularly “disconnected” kind compared to earlier forms, where a tacit connection was always visible between architecture and historically diverse societies. “Not any more”, he observes (Castells 2010: 449):

> My hypothesis is that the coming of the space of flows is blurring the meaningful relationship between architecture and society. Because the spatial manifestation of the dominant interests takes place around the world, and across cultures, the uprooting of experience, history, and specific culture as the background of meaning is leading to the generalization of ahistorical, acultural architecture… postmodern architecture declares the end of all systems of meaning. It creates a mixture of elements that searches formal harmony out of transhistorical, stylistic provocation. Irony becomes the preferred mode of expression. Yet, in fact what most postmodernism does is to express, in almost direct terms, the new dominant ideology: the end of history and the supersession of places in the space of flows… postmodernism could be considered the architecture of the space of flows.
Needless to stress, with the incremental “supersession of places” the possibility of experiencing places in a “situated” manner is also threatened. In Castells’s view, postmodern architecture’s (the “architecture of the end of history’s”) supposed “liberation from cultural codes” is in fact a flight from traditional, historically embedded societies that suspends all ties with specific social contexts in favour of an ahistorical mixing of architectural codes all over the world. His discussion of certain architectural works that resist this uprootment through postmodern architectural “space of flows” (2010: 450-452) thrusts the contrast between this very human, situated and situating place, and the space of flows into one’s face. Rafael Moneo’s new Madrid high-speed AVE train station for the high-speed train between Madrid and Seville, with its recuperated station building, refurbished with enclosed gardens full of birds and palm trees, exuding a reassuring aura of belonging in that place, is one such architectural example, where the space of flows is represented by the actual train station platform, adjacent to the park. No one who boards this high-tech train after passing through such a humanised (and humanising) place, could fail to notice the transition from a place-space to a space of flows – something alienating and dehumanising, despite it being the dominant space of the current era. Moreover, the fact that this rapid rail connection is not linked to the European high-speed train network sends a conspicuous message about its function in a world where the space of flows dominates, but has not conquered everything. In Castells’s words, with their echo of Marx: “The broken mirror of a segment of the space of flows becomes exposed, and the use-value of the station recovered, in a simple, elegant design that does not say much but makes everything evident” (2010: 451-452).

Castells (2010: 450-451) shows that in a different, but equally provocative way, Ricardo Bofill’s new Barcelona airport, which strikes one as a kind of Heideggerian anxiety-inducing place because of its sparse beauty, represents another creative manner of resisting the ultimately dehumanising effect of the architecture exemplifying the space of flows. It confronts people ruthlessly with the contrast between the “space of places” and the “space of flows”, where they have “…to face their terrible truth: they are alone, in the middle of the space of flows, they may lose their connection, they are suspended in the emptiness of transition. They are, literally, in the hands of Iberia Airlines. And there is no escape”. Despite the apparent effectiveness of these architectural responses to the space of flows, however, I shall argue, below (by means of concepts articulated by Deleuze and Guattari), that a different strategy is possible, one of combining or intertwining different spatial modes, in terms of which these two examples from Castells may also be read.

Not that space is always just “there”, waiting to be experienced. As Castells (2010: 440-441) aptly remarks, it is the “expression” of society, not its “reflection”. In a manner reminiscent of Henri Lefebvre’s (1991) claim, that space is socially “produced”, Castells describes how material social practices shape spatial forms and structures in complex ways – partly because these practices do not occur in a vacuum, but in a spatial-historical arena where they are grafted onto structures inherited from the past, and partly because the practices concerned do not always harmonise, but arise from conflicting values and interests of social actors, the present era being no exception, despite the dominance of a mode of space that embodies the interests of the most powerful group of people in global society, namely the “space of flows”.

For present purposes one can take the statement, that “…space is the material support of time-sharing social practices” (Castells 2010: 441) as one’s point of departure, keeping in mind (as he notes) that as material support it always carries a symbolic meaning. Moreover, what he means by “time-sharing social practices” is fundamental to understanding the nature of the dominant spatial mode. Traditionally it implied the spatial contiguity of simultaneous social practices, such as weddings taking place in a church, or commerce in a spatially bounded
marketplace. What characterises the “space of flows” in its purest form (as in communicational exchanges over the internet, where individuals are physically located thousands of kilometers from one another at the time of communicating) is precisely that simultaneity is retained, but spatial contiguity is surpassed. However, the space of flows also manifests itself in less pure, but still unmistakable form – sometimes in very concrete, physical guise.

“Situated experience”, the space of places, and the encroachment of “the space of flows”

Anyone who values the pleasures of the space of places should be thankful that, as Lefebvre puts it (1991: 164): “No space ever vanishes utterly, leaving no trace”. He elaborates by explaining that “…each new addition inherits and reorganizes what has gone before; each period or stratum carries its own preconditions beyond their limits”. If this were not the case, the incremental encroachment of the space of flows on spaces that are experienced in other modes might end with the near-total obliteration of such spaces, as seems to be the case in Irvine, California, where domestic homes appear to be the last bastion of the space of places (Castells 2010: 457-458). Gaston Bachelard (1969: 211-231) has described some of these other experiential spatial modes evocatively in terms of “the dialectics of outside and inside”, including the relationship between the intimate spaces of one’s home and an outside variously conceived in terms of vastness or alienation. Particularly relevant for my present interpretation of certain qualitatively decisive properties of experiential space is Bachelard’s observation (1969: 211), that:

Outside and inside form a dialectic of division, the obvious geometry of which blinds us as soon as we bring it into play in metaphorical domains. It has the sharpness of the dialectics of yes and no, which decides everything. Unless one is careful, it is made into a basis of images that govern all thoughts of positive and negative.

It is virtually impossible, in other words, to prevent spatial phenomena or distinctions to remain merely spatial; invariably they are pervaded by axiological and metaphysical valences, even if these are captured in metaphorical language. Bachelard (1969: 212) reminds one, for instance, that philosophers tend to associate “inside” and “outside” with “being” and “non-being”, and it is difficult to resist proceeding down the path of association to the axiologically loaded opposition between identification or familiarity and alienation, submission and domination, or acceptance and aggressivity. If “inside” carries associations of familiarity, it is often the case that “outside” has connotations of a space that must be aggressively conquered, dominated and domesticated. Today it is no different: in the contrast, as well as the contest, between enduring or lingering spaces of place and the currently dominant, still expanding space of flows these oppositions – but sometimes also combinations (in which domination usually emerges the winner), as Lefebvre points out (1991: 166) – come into play, as I shall attempt to show through the analysis of concrete examples.

There are few things that can match walking in areas where the “space of places” is still palpable to be able to appreciate the meaning of “situated (and situating) architecture”, even if, as Lefebvre notes (above), it is combined with an oppositional mode of space, in this case the space of flows. In the Tuscan Italian city of Siena, near Florence, one is afforded a virtually tangible instance of such a “combination” or intertwinment of the space of places and of flows. It should surprise no one that the space of flows has obtruded itself even here, in a city which still bears the architectural-spatial imprint of its medieval design – after all, the still ongoing technological revolution referred to earlier has brought about a transformation of societies worldwide, so that
what is distinct about contemporary society in respect of spatial characteristics is conspicuous in Siena no less than in “modern” cities.

What are these characteristics? In the early 21st century it is abundantly evident that networks (actual and virtual) are everywhere, and along these networks – the internet being the basis of the vast majority of them – everything “flows”: information, communications, commodity and financial investment-flows, merchandise of the most unimaginably diverse kinds (think of the growing number of courier-services), and burgeoning global flows of tourists. Bringing together what has been said about the space of flows being the newly hegemonic spatial mode of our time, Castells (2010: 442) puts it like this:

our society is constructed around flows: flows of capital, flows of information, flows of technology, flows of organizational interaction, flows of images, sounds, and symbols. Flows are not just one element of the social organization: they are the expression of processes dominating our economic, political, and symbolic life. If such is the case, the material support of the dominant processes in our societies will be the ensemble of elements supporting such flows, and making materially possible their articulation in simultaneous time. Thus, I propose the idea that there is a new spatial form characteristic of social practices that dominate and shape the network society: the space of flows. The space of flows is the material organization of time-sharing social practices that work through flows. By flows I understand purposeful, repetitive, programmable sequences of exchange and interaction between physically disjointed positions held by social actors in the economic, political, and symbolic structures of society.

This is what the “space of flows” amounts to – as Castells has pointed out, all modes of space have always been the basis of what he calls “time-sharing activities”. In the Middle Ages, a village square or a Romanesque church was such a space; what he calls a space of “place” or of “contiguity”, in which social activities marked by simultaneity took place. The difference today is not that space is no longer the basis for simultaneous social activities; it still is that, but because of the technological revolution it is no longer place-bound. Today social, economic, political, intellectual activities take place simultaneously, and at locations scattered all over the globe. This is the “space of flows” that is the dominant spatial mode.

In what way does one experience the space of flows in a city like Siena, ostensibly frozen in time as far as its architectural and urban spatial articulation is concerned, then? The first thing to remember is that what Castells has defined as the “space of flows” did not appear from nowhere; it was always there as a possibility, or virtually (as Deleuze might say), but until recently it was never dominant; the “space of places” or of contiguity (next-to-one-another space) was dominant. In other words, it was not the precursors to the space of flows, namely roads or paths, that dominated the places where one was on one’s way to, but the other way around. The space of flows has therefore always existed in the shape of paths in forests, roads linking towns, and so on. Historically it was given a boost by the road-network that the Romans built throughout the Roman Empire about 2000 years ago, and another, bigger boost by the 19th-century construction of railroad-connections throughout Europe, America and the colonised world. This road- and railways-system was an anticipation of what could, and did, happen when technology crossed the electronic barrier, paradigmatically in the shape of the internet. Only then could, and did, the space of flows become the hegemonic spatial form, and once one knows how to recognise it, one soon becomes aware of its ubiquity in the unlikeliest of places, such as Siena.

Where does one encounter the space of flows on a daily, almost continuous basis, today? Most conspicuously, when you are texting or talking on your smartphone, or when you see people sitting together in a coffee shop, not conversing, but engrossed in what is happening on their smartphone screens. It is nothing unusual to see people walking down the street staring at
their smartphone screens and texting; it seems to have become a kind of second nature. When one is using, or surfing, the internet, you are part of the space of flows; when you enter an airport building, you are swallowed by it, especially in the “duty free” areas where all you see around you are nauseating repetitions of Gucci, Versace, Bulgari, Dior, or any of the dominant brands that have the world in an economic stranglehold. If one happens to work as a stockbroker, chances are that you spend a large part of the working day in the space of flows, tracking the fluctuating value of stocks and shares across the globe, and you are likely to perform financial transactions quasi-instantaneously in the this spatial domain, with as little as a “click” on a specific software icon.

In urban space things happen less instantaneously, in the guise of combining spatial modes, as Lefebvre has noted. The share of the space of flows is no less noticeable, however, and becomes quite obtrusive when one is admiring unique architectural works in places like Florence and Siena (but also Paris, Prague, Rome, Vienna and all the beautiful cities of the world). Picture this: you walk down to the famous Piazza del Duomo of Florence (Catling 2015: 66-69), where one of the outstanding examples of Gothic church architecture stands in all its glory, composed of white, pink and green Tuscan marble, with the almost impossibly colossal “cupola” or dome designed by Brunelleschi and completed in the 15th century. When you get there, even as early as eight o’clock in the morning, there is already a queue stretching the length of the huge building, waiting to go inside. And most of these people are part of tour groups – for myself one of the most dreaded manifestations of the era of the space of flows. To be sure, tourism is as old as the hills; it probably existed in the Roman era, and not only because Goscinny and Uderzo show this to be the case in Asterix books. But today, in the globally pervasive space of flows (here, flows of tourists in global, interconnected spaces) it is a phenomenon that overwhelms one because of its sheer magnitude. And whether you like it or not, you cannot avoid it completely. Unavoidably you become part of this mass of rubbernecking humanity, even if, as a matter of principle, you avoid tours and prefer doing things like discovering beautiful places “on your own”. Involuntarily, however, you are swept along by the flood of humanity that comprises the travel-accompaniment of the space of flows (“flows of tourists”), although the opportunity sometimes presents itself to escape from the throng into an interstitial space of places, where situated experience awaits one, such as when, at the instigation of a knowledgeable Italian friend, you slip into the courtyard of the Palazzo Chigi Saracini, which houses the Siena Academy of Music (the Accademia Chigi Saracini), and imbibe the relative silence and tranquillity of the place while the musical strains of Gregorian chants, emanating from its interior, enfold you in that space, temporarily away from what David Harvey (1990: 260-307) has dubbed “space-time compression”, which goes hand in hand with the space of flows.

It will be apparent from the experiential examples, above, that wherever the space of flows functions, the kind of situated experience that coincides with spaces of place is disrupted and systematically undermined. This occurs when one stops for a moment in one of Siena’s crooked little streets of medieval origin to take in a particularly striking spatial configuration comprising the framing effect of roof-angles opening onto a bell-tower, and a caravan of camera- and smartphone toting tourists, led by a flag-bearing tour guide, blunders into your line of sight. One has no option but to live with it, which is why one must deviate from the beaten track, for example by hiking into the Tuscan hills, like those surrounding Florence, to have a different perspective on the city stretching out before one, without being suffocated by the waves of tour groups instantiating the dominant spatial mode. But within the confines of a city, particularly a small one such as Siena, it becomes almost too much to bear for someone not attuned to the
space of flows, because it exemplifies a “space of place” that, in Heideggerian idiom (1978: 420; 1973: 3-8; Harries 1997: 223-225; Olivier 1998: 23-46), creates its own singular “region”. From the Piazza del Campo, where the annual horse races still take place every year, to the enchanting Siena Duomo (Catling 2015: 224-225) in white and black Tuscan marble atop a hill, and the charmingly crooked little streets, with unexpected vistas unfolding as you walk further along them, the liberating place-quality of Siena is music to one’s soul. But all too often this music is rudely interrupted by the emissaries of the space of flows in the guise of tour groups (easily recognisable by the tour guide walking in front, holding a conspicuous object of some kind like a postmodern totem around which the votaries of the new gods of global flows gather).

One has to admit that these frustrations accompany the territory of “travelling” today, and it’s no use complaining that one cannot experience a place like Siena as it was probably experienced at the time when it flourished, in the late Middle Ages and Renaissance, long before the space of flows triumphed. Even today the charm of that spatial aspect is not wholly absent, as I have tried to indicate above. This was confirmed by an Italian woman who has lived in Siena for ten years, who spoke of her passion for the place, born of happiness to be able to live in a city with diverse, yet qualitatively coherent spatial attributes, where the irrepressible workings of the “space of place” are unmistakable. Paradoxically, even in the midst of the hegemonic spatial mode imposing itself on visitors, intermittently one’s experience of this city still qualifies as “situated experience”. There is another way of articulating the conditions of possibility of this unlikely event, and for this one has to turn to the work of Deleuze and Guattari.

Striated space, smooth space, rhizomes and lines of flight

One can approach the state of affairs described above differently, however, by invoking the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, particularly their distinction between “smooth space” and “striated space”, as well as the notions of “rhizome” and “lines of flight”. The two kinds of space are fundamentally different, but they seldom occur in pure form; rather, one encounters them in a mixture of sorts. As they put it (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 474), “…smooth space is constantly being translated, transversed into a striated space; striated space is constantly being
reversed, returned to a smooth space”. By associating smooth space with “the war machine” and striated space with the “State apparatus” (1987: 474), they intimate that the former is conducive to the emergence of a mode of space that “breaks up” or dismantles established, relatively stable spaces, while the latter is recognisable precisely by such comparative stability or organization, which reflects the imposition of spatially controllable power relations on smooth space – an enforcement that could, in principle, be reversed, returning the space to a relatively smooth state.

It is not as easy as it may seem to interpret the hegemonic operation of the space of flows in the area of global tourism along the lines suggested by this evocative distinction on the part of these two poststructuralist French collaborators. Consider the implications of their remark, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, that (1987: 371):

Smooth space is precisely the space of the smallest deviation: therefore it has no homogeneity, except between infinitely proximate points, and the linking of proximities is effected independently of any determined path. It is a space of contact, of small tactile or manual actions of contact, rather than a visual space like Euclid’s striated space. Smooth space is a field without conduits or channels. A field, a heterogeneous smooth space, is wedded to a very particular type of multiplicity: nonmetric, acentered, rhizomatic multiplicities that occupy space without “counting” it and can “be explored only by legwork.”

On the one hand it seems apparent that the visual pleasures in a city like Siena or Florence do not constitute smooth space; not only because of the indispensable role of sight when one’s eyes caress the splendours of Brunelleschi’s Duomo or the beautiful tile-work of the houses in the medieval configuration of streets in Siena, but precisely because one’s sight is inescapably guided, if not coerced, by pre-established “conduits or channels” in the field of vision. On the other hand, however, one’s “situated” experience in Siena is one that cannot dispense with “exploration only by legwork”, and while not everyone yields to the temptation of running one’s hands across the various textures of stone walls and marble surfaces, such tactility nudges one in the direction of smooth space. As to the question of which one of the two is dominant, it is undeniable that striated space preponderates – the inescapable visuality, confirmed by ubiquitous use of cameras (including one’s own), together with the sheer mass of tourists literally “flowing” through the network of streets, forces one to decide in its favour. But it is not an easy victory for the striation accompanying the space of flows.

Significantly, in the above excerpt Deleuze and Guattari allude to “rhizomatic multiplicities”. In their work “rhizome” is roughly the philosophical counterpart of the botanical term – which denotes plants like the “wandering Jew”, that expands through many interconnected stems at a subterranean level, but seems to consist of separate plants above the soil – suggesting that many, if not all, things in the world are rhizomes, or rhizomatically interconnected, although such connections are not always (in fact, seldom) visible. Bees and the plants whose flowers they visit to gather pollen comprise a rhizome, or an “assemblage” (when one sees them separately, few people would guess that their species-economy is rhizomatically conjoined), just as a book does, according to Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987: 4). Every book inescapably interacts with all other books – when Umberto Eco published *The Name of the Rose* (1983), for example, the meaning of the title in relation to the narrative could not be hermetically sealed off from an uncontrollable myriad of ways that it resonates with other books or literary texts, including William Blake’s poetry and William Shakespeare’s tragedies, for obvious reasons. Moreover, “[a]n assemblage is precisely this increase in the dimensions of a multiplicity that necessarily changes in nature as it expands its connections” (1987: 8). In short, the rhizome or assemblage is a model that functions as a “crystal” of sorts regarding Deleuze and Guattari’s ontology. Insofar as, petrologically speaking, a crystal concentrates in itself layers upon layers of
a mineral, metaphorically stated the rhizome (or an assemblage) denotes the layers upon layers (“laminations”, perhaps) of the relationally interconnected, dynamically and quantitatively as well as qualitatively differentiated constituents of rhizomorphic reality. Having pointed out that “multiplicity” has to be thought of “substantively”, as that which has ontological primacy, and not merely as “the multiple”, in _A Thousand Plateaus_ (1987: 8) they observe:

> A multiplicity has neither subject nor object, only determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions that cannot increase in number without the multiplicity changing in nature (the laws of combination therefore increase in number as the multiplicity grows).

From the above one may infer that “rhizomatic multiplicities”, which are encountered in “heterogeneous smooth space”, are not necessarily immediately obvious – their relational interconnectedness is mostly hidden – but are nevertheless the harbingers of apertures through which one may escape from striated spaces such as the space of flows, when the latter seems to hem you in. The courtyard of the building housing the Academy of Music in Siena, referred to earlier, comprises such an aperture giving access to heterogeneous, comparatively smooth space, intensified by the fact that music often filters into it from the building, acting as a catalyst – it is no accident that Deleuze and Guattari identify music as a privileged instance where, alternately or in amalgamated form, smooth and striated space may be experienced (1987: 477-478).

What I have called an “aperture” suggests another, related concept, namely “line(s) of flight”. “Territorialities…”, Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 55) write, “are shot through with lines of flight testifying to the presence within them of movements of deterritorialization and reterritorialization”. By “deterritorialization” Deleuze and Guattari appear to mean the undoing of the stasis that accompanies the establishment of structures, territories and identifications of all kinds. It is the opposite of “reterritorialization”, which is said to “arrest the process” of freeing territories of such identifications (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 382; Olivier 2014). “Lines of flight” are also equated with “deterritorialisation” by them (1987: 37), so that one can gather from this that, within relatively striated spaces as well as smooth spaces there are always latent opportunities, ruptures or “lines of flight” that mark opportunities of escaping from the space in question into something qualitatively different. One could therefore say that, slipping out of the striated space of the space of flows instantiated by the throng of tourists into a secluded space of place in the courtyard of the Siena Academy of Music (or into the waiting area in Moneo’s station building in Spain, referred to earlier), was made possible by a “line of flight” which presented itself at a particular moment within the movement of the space of flows, embodied in a moving crowd of tourists. Not that the courtyard in question represents unadulterated “smooth space” – only something like a desert in which even nomads could get lost, does, although even the desert could be subjected to striation through territorialisation (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 474-475).

In the light of the preceding argument, which testifies to the increasing complexification of the world, one has to rethink the meaning of “situated experience”. As more people are born (than those who die), and as more ontological levels of multiplicity emerge, these necessarily interact with others in increasingly complex ways. Think of everything that one encounters in “cyberspace”, and the impact that these phenomena have on concrete social reality – the way that social media sites, with their glut of images such as “selfies”, affect notions of identity and modes of social interaction, to mention only one thing. Further, recall that in the section on the Hundertwasser house as “situated (and situating) architecture”, being situated was conceptualised as finding oneself in a signifying totality within which commensurate, embodied action is called for. In this case “signifying totality” was conceived of along the lines of what
Castells calls a “space of place”, which differs qualitatively from the newly dominant “space of flows” introduced by the information-technological revolution paradigmatically represented by the internet. Having considered the implications of the space of flows, not merely in the realm of information-flows, but concretely as global flows of tourism from which Hundertwasser’s Kunsthaus Wien is not exempt either, one has to revise the meaning and implications of “situated experience”.

It would be easy, but shortsighted, to restrict it to instances of the space of places as havens of refuge from the encroachment of the space of flows, as in the case of slipping through the aperture, or following the line of flight offered by the peaceful courtyard of the Academy of Music building in Siena. This would be to ignore the intertwined form in which these countervailing modes of space are encountered today – after all, complexity means precisely that one cannot neatly separate them and take refuge in the one when the other becomes unbearable, either because of the space of flows’ overwhelming character of “space-time compression” (Harvey 1990: 260-307) or, by contrast, of the ennui that potentially accompanies the experience of being “imprisoned” in a space of place. In short: “situated experience” today includes both, and entails taking up the opportunities afforded by the lines of flight pervading even the most striated of spaces, of which the space of flows is the paradigmatic contemporary instance, in order to gain access to the heterogeneous pleasures of relatively smooth spaces preserved in the interstices of the dominant space of flows. In this way, instead of simply resisting the space of flows in its virtual ubiquity, one learns to combine or “intertwine” different spatial modalities with it, so that the pleasures accompanying situated experience of spaces of place are not conclusively devaluated.

If this sounds incongruous, consider that, since the advent of the internet, the complexification of the world through increased multiplicity has accelerated. Further, in contrast with the notion of “oversignifying breaks separating structures”, internally or externally (which is still conceivable in a world where multiplicity has not asserted itself rhizomorphically), Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 9) propose the principle, that a “ruptured” rhizome will always resurrect itself, like the biological rhizome of ants, which will reappear even if it seems as if it has been annihilated. If I understand them correctly, this means that conclusive breaks or separations are not possible in the rhizomatic sphere of multiplicity. Everything is interconnected, and regardless of where you start, you can proceed to any quadrant, nook or cranny of “reality”, with no possible transcendence; only immanence. Nor can you occupy a point or position – there are only lines (1987: 8). Fortunately these include “lines of flight” that mark “apertures” through which one can escape into heterogeneous spaces that are not isolated, or insulated, from the rhizomatically configured space of flows, but interact, combine, or intertwinewith it in complex ways. In so doing it is perhaps the case that both the Wanderlust and the intermittent need for peaceful sojourn on the part of human beings can be accommodated and satisfied. In fact, if one of these inclinations should prove to be triumphant once and for all, eclipsing the other conclusively, humanity would suffer irredeemably.

**Conclusion**

From the above, very brief elaboration on the meaning and implications of rhizomatic thinking in their work (against the backdrop of the discussion of the space of places and space of flows), it follows that Deleuze and Guattari have left the typically western metaphysical/ontological attachment to substantialist thinking behind for good – that is, the tendency to think of the world as consisting of isolated, discrete, objects and spaces, instead of an interconnected totality.
which can only be said to “be” to the extent that mutually constitutive relations *are* the most basic constituent(s) of reality. And these “relations” are not static “things”, but active, ongoing, processual activities. The image of the rhizome captures nicely what is misleading about the ordinary appearance of things as discrete “objects” – as in the case of a plant belonging to the genus of rhizomatic plants, the connections are usually invisible. Most of the time one is only aware of the spaces or “objects”, without considering that they only appear as discrete spaces, objects or things insofar as one enters into a relation of some kind with them. You enter a room, drink from a cup, brush your teeth with a toothbrush, eat an apple, stare at a beautiful person (man or woman), admire an artwork, sit on a toilet, lie on a bed, walk down the street, and so on. And the spaces or “things” would be incomprehensible if it were not for the activities by means of which they first emerge as “things”, or more accurately, nodal “points” (where lines converge) that crystallise in the force-field of the activity concerned (itself a sub-multiplicity).

Furthermore, Deleuze (and Guattari) have contributed to a way of thinking that departs significantly from traditional ways. Where the latter have tended to proceed along lines determined by binary logic – that is, oppositional thinking, such as man/woman, up/down, inside/outside, black/white, and so on – the rhizomatic pattern favoured by these two poststructuralist thinkers eschews such an exclusivist approach. Ronald Bogue (2007: 2), referring to Deleuze’s work (although it is equally valid for his collaborative work with Guattari), has characterised it as follows:

Deleuze’s way is the transverse way, the diagonal path connecting incommunicable ways, a trajectory that intensifies the distances between locations. His way is also a way of doing – a practice of making transverse connections, of assembling multiplicities that affirm their differences through their connections.

It requires a strenuous effort to abandon old, traditional ways of thinking and bend one’s mind to this “transversal logic”, but once it has been achieved, the world that is in the process of emerging – that of the “space of flows”, but also of “lines of flight” within these multiple flows that give one access to different spatial modes, including that of place – is negotiated with much greater ease. Once one has made this mind-switch you are ready to move into a new way of “transversal”, rhizomatic thinking and acting, which, in turn, ushers in the ability to grasp the world in relational terms: relations (*not* things or objects) are the dynamic “basics” of reality as multiplicity – a multiplicity that encompasses the negotiation of rhizomatically interconnected, multiple spatial modes by way of gaining a purchase on lines of flight leading from one to the other. And once one has grasped this, you are ready for a truly “posthuman” world or future, if by “human” one understands that being who has always attempted to rule over the world by reducing everything to “things” and “objects” to be controlled and dominated. To be “posthuman” in this sense would be to have assimilated the understanding that everything is interconnected (not only spatially). Any form of “rule” which ignores this rhizomatic insight will therefore also, inevitably, *itself* experience any destructive effects that its domination may have regarding its “objects”.

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Bert Olivier works as Senior Research Fellow in Philosophy at the University of the Free State, South Africa, and is also an adjunct professor in the School of Education, of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. His work is interdisciplinary and he has published academic articles and books across a wide variety of disciplines such as philosophy, architecture, literature, psychoanalysis, cinema and social theory, although his home discipline is philosophy. Bert was awarded the Stals Prize for Philosophy by the South African *Akademie vir Kuns en Wetenskap* in 2004, and a Distinguished Professorship by the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, South Africa, in 2012.
Domestic ritual versus domestic architecture: a review of three Indian projects

Gerald Steyn
Tshwane University of Technology
E-mail: steyngs@tut.ac.za

A number of award-winning Modernist social housing schemes have in practice been dismal failures. Perhaps the most ignominious of all, the Pruitt-Igoe development (demolished in 1972), clearly illustrates that a disconnection between domestic ritual and domestic architecture renders a housing project unfit for its purpose and, sometimes, simply uninhabitable. This article sets out to explore and compare how three renowned architects, Charles Correa, Balkrishna Doshi and Jane Drew, achieved situatedness in three acclaimed Indian housing schemes. In most countries that have a serious housing shortage and a large income disparity, social housing projects are characterised by their universality and purely utilitarian quality. The Indian projects under review, however, demonstrate not only cultural awareness, but also regional sensitivity in the broadest sense. They emphasise that even poor people deserve a situated domestic experience and that the profession, like the three featured architects, needs to be much more sensitive in responding to the needs of the poor.

Key words: domestic ritual, Indian housing, situatedness, social housing

Situatedness is intrinsically associated with Martin Heidegger’s proposition on *Dasein*, explained as “being in the world”, or “presence” by Christian Norberg-Schulz (2000: 10). Neil Leach (1997: 94) is more explicit: “For Heidegger the problem of man’s [sic] situatedness in the world is inextricably bound up with the question of dwelling”, meaning that houses (and housing) must be physically and psychologically situated and comply with the conditions of *Dasein*. The problem was, according to Christian Norberg-Schulz (1985: 91, 110), that “The modern house ... did not look like a house” (his italics). He argued that the “modern” house did not provide the desired existential – and situated – experience. Heidegger clearly considers vernacular houses situated; “the concrete landscape of daily life” according to Norberg-Schulz (1985: 94).

Vernacular houses have, as a rule, evolved as a synthesis of the social needs and customs of a community balanced with ecological requirements and technological constraints. Over time physical [domestic] space and aesthetics developed in perfect alignment with domestic rituals – the manifestations of customs – to produce social space. Along with industrialisation and urbanisation came overcrowding and homelessness, and professional architects were appointed
by philanthropists to design housing for these unfortunate people. It was at exactly that point – when architects started to design public housing – that the connection between domestic ritual and domestic architecture started to unravel (figure 1). In fact, Norberg-Schulz (1985: 48) laments the “loss of the traditional settlement, and hence the loss of place” [his italics].

![Figure 1](image.png)

**Figure 1**
The Pruitt-Igoe Housing in St Louis being demolished in 1972, 17 years after completion (source: Jencks 1977: 9).

Public housing, more widely called social housing (in Europe) or affordable housing (in the USA), means “housing for those who cannot afford the free-market price” (Davis 1995: 1). Sam Davis proceeds to argue that the definition insists that “a responsible and humane society” has a moral obligation to assist such people to acquire decent housing. Unlike Norberg-Schulz, my concern is social housing in the Third World. Anthony O’Connor (1983: 165), author of *The African City*, found that “Dwellings [are] too small and crowded, especially for entertaining others” and “Women’s priorities may, of course, differ, but their views rarely prevail. Preference for undertaking many activities out of doors is also part cause and part effect of poor housing.” Even the legendary Sigfried Giedion (1954/2007: 317) cautioned about low-cost housing in the Third World:

> Now, suddenly, great masses of their populations, who up till now have been living in shacks made up from old packing cases or flattened gasoline cans, are having dwellings erected for them. Yet these dwellings must be related to the basic customs of their inhabitants, and not be facile copies of European or American rental houses, which cannot meet the emotional or the material needs of the particular region.

With very few exceptions, Western housing researchers have been focussing predominantly on policies, market conditions, ergonomics and building-physical attributes, with little attempt to relate domestic ritual – household activities and social behaviour [customs] – to an appropriate
domestic architecture (figure 2). The aim seems to have been the formulation of minimum standards.

Situatedness, as the broader social, aesthetic and technological dimension in architecture is, therefore, patently not a priority of the Western research agenda. A great deal of research into Indian housing on the other hand, investigates the activities and behaviour of low-income households in particular. A significant example is the doctorate by Anindita Ghosh (1994) at McGill University entitled “The Use of Domestic Space for Income Generation in a Low-Income Housing Settlement” (figure 3). Moreover, very unlike the West, some of India’s foremost architects have been conducting their own rigorous research and have been extensively involved in designing for low-income communities.

Three celebrated social housing projects by three prominent architects have been selected for this investigation. They seem to represent the desired level of situatedness that has been eluding low-income housing schemes in other parts of the world. These are at Chandigarh (Jane Drew, 1951), New Bagalkot (Charles Correa, 1985) and Aranya at Indore (Balkrishna Doshi, 1989). The aim is to determine how this has been achieved.

Figure 2
Western research and minimum space norms (sources: Rowe 1993: 187; DoE 1981: 13).

Figure 3
Theoretical framework

Reza Shirazi (2013) convincingly establishes a regionalism-phenomenology relationship in her article entitled “Critical Regionalism, Raum, and Tactility: Kenneth Frampton’s Contribution to Phenomenological Discourse in Architecture.” Norberg-Schulz’s (1979) “idea of Genius Loci, or spirit of place, [the sine qua non of regionalism] inspired by the later work of Martin Heidegger on the poetic practices of dwelling” (Shirazi 2013) certainly alludes to both situatedness and regionalism, while phenomenology is intrinsically an underlying concern of both. This relationship is corroborated by Kingston Heath (2009: 47) in his well-argued views on “regionally situated design”. This approach follows on what he calls a “situationist ideology”, which is informed by “environmental and sociocultural knowledge of the locale” and design within the “context of local sensibilities.” But just as there is no common definition of phenomenology, there are no incontrovertible definitions for either regionalism or situatedness and their interpretations are inevitably based on assumptions. While it can be argued that a good regionalist design will contribute to a situated environment and conversely, that a situated space will probably possess strong regionalist features, phenomenology is the common method of discovering essential attributes that informs both (figure 4).

Method

The three chosen case studies are each presented by means of an introduction to the architect, followed by a brief description of the project. Ergonomics and other building-physical characteristics can be objectively measured, but the assessment of situatedness relies entirely on value judgements and, by definition, qualitative assessment criteria. In keeping with the nature of qualitative research, the analysis is not a tick-box process (figure 5).

The interpretations of Norberg-Schulz allow a direct engagement with Martin Heidegger’s concept of poetic dwelling, but “being in the world”, and “presence” are hardly amenable as assessment criteria. Sam Davis is an accomplished Berkeley-based academic and architect with considerable experience of designing for vulnerable people, including the homeless. While he never uses the term situatedness, he is certainly involved in the physical and social environment with great intensity and is actively concerned with interrelated human, cultural and natural problems. In his thoroughly useful The Architecture of Affordable Housing, his advice is straightforward (Davis 1995: 3): housing must respond to “local needs, codes, customs, and climates” and must also “meet the cultural and psychological needs” of its inhabitants.
Kenza Boussora (b.1961) is an Algerian architect, author and academic. Her article entitled “Regionalism: Lessons from Algeria and the Middle East” (1990/2007) was first published in the respected Mimar journal by the Aga Khan Award for Architecture (AKAA) and has been republished in various sources since. Boussora (1990/2007: 123) is deeply concerned about this lack of relationship between custom [behaviour] and built form. Her critique is unquestionably applicable all over the post-colonial world. Boussora’s (1990/2007: 124-5) four objectives to achieve regionally appropriate architecture, which is essentially characterised by situatedness, are: build in harmony with social needs, build in harmony with the geographical characteristics of the region [climate and topography], build in harmony with local [available] resources and, somewhat more controversially, build in harmony with the existing built forms.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
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<th>Jane Drew</th>
<th>Charles Correa</th>
<th>Balkrishna Doshi</th>
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<td>FROM ABSTRACT TO CONCRETE</td>
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Figure 5
The matrix guiding research (source: the author).

Contemporary theories and inspirations from India

Today India is prominent as a global power and is not only expected to become the third largest economy in the world in the near future, but is also anticipated to overtake the US economy in 2050. It is interesting to note, therefore, the determination and compassion with which Indian professionals and politicians are prepared to face one of their biggest social and environmental challenges: homelessness and squatters.

With a significant proportion of its citizens living below the poverty line, many Indian architects early on adopted a pragmatic and humane approach to the poor. Charles Correa (1989: 112), the Indian architect and activist, proclaims: “What [poor] communities need is not just our compassion, but our professional, (i.e. visual and topological) skills.” The following three case studies illustrate how concerned and sensitive architects applied their professional skills to produce situated social housing.

Chandigarh workers’ housing (1953) by Jane Drew (1911–1996)

In 1951, Le Corbusier and his team designed Phase One of the new city of Chandigarh for 150,000 inhabitants and Phase Two for an additional 350,000 people. The city has since expanded way beyond those phases by incrementally adding modular “sectors”. Although Chandigarh enjoys the highest per capita income in India, 30% of its population is nevertheless poor and living in slums. However, facilitated by tight controls, development – even of slum settlement – tends
to occur within the periphery and there is very little (noticeable) spread into the surrounding countryside.

Avermaete and Casciato (2014: 80) suggest that Le Corbusier was thrilled by “discovering an archaic and almost mystical world pulsating with life” and was subsequently determined “to seize elements of design yielded by the location and the natural way of life of its inhabitants. This discovery led Le Corbusier to develop a firm belief that the site’s system of small settlements and pathways must not be eliminated, but rather integrated into the layout of the future city.” The spatial and territorial hierarchy from superblock to neighbourhood to dwelling unit reflects this view (figure 6). In vernacular terminology [typology] it would have been described as from village to hamlet to homestead.

The spatial and territorial hierarchy from superblock to neighbourhood to dwelling unit reflects this view (figure 6). In vernacular terminology [typology] it would have been described as from village to hamlet to homestead.

The original brief stipulated 13 categories of dwelling units, intended for government employees of all ranks. Although he dictated the basic principles: mainly sunscreens, cross-ventilation, threshold areas and generous outdoor and rooftop living areas, Le Corbusier’s collaborators, his cousin Pierre Jeanneret, Jane Drew, and Maxwell Frey, assisted by a number of young Indian architects produced the designs. Avermaete and Casciato (2014: 197) note that these architects considered four factors in their residential designs: (1) construction costs, (2) adaptation to the sub-tropical climate, (3) availability of materials and use of local, low-cost building techniques and (4) a search for housing styles in harmony with the identity of the place and its residents. Consequently, as Avermaete and Casciato (2014: 197) put it: “The result was an architecture that, even before considering questions of formal meaning and aesthetic value, was inspired by functional concerns.”

After work commenced, a fourteenth residential category was proposed by Le Corbusier, designed by Jane Drew (Avermaete & Casciato 2014: 209), clearly offering minimum standards for poor people and based on the pattern of the traditional Indian village. Drew and Fry were English architects who practised in Ghana before and after working in India; their book entitled Village Housing in the Tropics (1947) is a classic (figure 7). It also demonstrates their proficiency in researching foreign climates and formulating architectural responses. The grouping of the toilet units of four attached units into quadrants is also a principle introduced by Jane Drew that is still used today (Mehta 2006: 65). Drew emphasises a point made by Sigfried Giedion
It has not been necessary for the architect to be a native of the country in which he [sic] is working in order to express its specific conditions."

This category offered minimum standards for poor people, providing small row houses, each on a 62 square metres plot. Most were clustered, facing communal courtyards in such a way that “a group of 750 inhabitants forms a village” each comprising about 2.34 ha (Le Corbusier 1995 volume 5: 158; figure 8). In his opening address at a conference celebrating Chandigarh, the then president of India, Mr Narayanan (Takhar 2002: 21), commented on the innovative nature of the “design and layout of these modest dwellings” (figure 9). Only a few were built, but they were so successful as starter homes that none are recognisable today, all having been extended (personal observation).

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**Figure 7**
Examples of Jane Drew’s research on traditional West African villages and homesteads

**Figure 8**
Le Corbusier and his collaborators in Chandigarh
(source: unit and site plan by the author after Mehta 2006: 58; sketch from Le Corbusier 1995 volume 5: 118).
Figure 9

Figure 10 below shows how Sector 22 evolved from Le Corbusier’s urban framework to its current fully developed state. Fast moving traffic is restricted to the surrounding V1, V2 and V3 roads. V4 is an internal bazaar street, V5 a rather narrow looped internal neighbourhood street providing access to a finer grain of wards, quarters and estates by means of V6 lanes. V7 and V8 are pedestrian and cycle paths in green strips and through parks. It is interesting that the public is fully familiar with V terminology!

Figure 10
Planning framework of Sector 22 compared with actual development. Parks and greens are hatched on the ‘as built’ plan, and the internal looped V5 streets are indicated with a dashed line (source: drawing by the author).
Sector 22 is primarily a residential area and was one of the first to be built. Many of the dwelling categories are to be seen here, always as clusters and row houses, many around courtyards. Each neighbourhood is essentially a dormitory estate, but the sector as a whole offers great functional and typological variety.

The housing does not stand alone. It forms an identifiable neighbourhood within the village and within walking distance of the V4 bazaar street, its edges (and public transport) and other public amenities. There are shops, twelve hotels, taxi ranks, public service facilities, filling stations and a fruit and vegetable market situated around all the edges of the neighbourhood, except that of the northeast. Inside the sector there are no less than five schools, a nursery school, a veterinary hospital, a chest clinic, a polyclinic, four places of worship and a cinema. In addition, there are 48 parks and greens spread throughout the sector occupying 19 ha or 20 percent of the sector’s area. The smallest is just 570 m² while the largest is nearly four hectares, and the average is 4,000 m².

New Bagalkot (1985—) by Charles Correa (born 1930)

Charles Correa has received most of the world’s most important architectural awards, including the Aga Khan Award for Architecture and the Gold Medals of the UIA and the RIBA. He was labelled “India’s greatest architect” at an exhibition of his work at the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) in London in 2013, where the curator, Dr Irena Murray, commented on: “His deep understanding of the implications of climate, demographics, transport and community life.” And at the 2009 RIBA Jencks Award, Charles Jencks said “Correa’s work on social housing, courtyard housing and squatters ‘unhousing’ is equally profound and relevant for today.”

Working from his architecture studio based in Mumbai, India, Correa is known for his research on climate change, affordable housing and his projects to improve cityscapes, city plans, institutional buildings and resorts, but also for a large number of housing schemes, including many for low-income communities. Apart from reminding architects of their social contract, his theories also emphasise the importance of achieving a continuum of space from public to private (figure 11), the usefulness of open-to-sky courtyards, the need for affordable public transport, and the urbanistic advantage and egalitarian nature of similar, small building sites for rich and poor. He believes that the ideal urban residential type is the one or two-storey courtyard house (1989:38).

![Figure 11](image-url)


In 2013, during the exhibition at RIBA, Correa told The Guardian newspaper that the Miesian monotony of the International Style that was dominant while he was studying bored him: “Instead, he returned home and has since built a body of work grown out of a deep understanding of his country’s vernacular.” The article concluded that, “As the simple product
of climate, landscape and local techniques, his buildings have always stood out against many of his contemporaries’ pursuit of exotic western forms.”

Most architects are familiar with Charles Correa’s celebrated low-cost scheme for Belapur, India (figure 12). In a geometrically complex site layout with unquestionable fractal qualities, Correa designed courtyard houses that allow occupants to extend their houses themselves, clearly demonstrating that socially and economically acceptable solutions are indeed possible.

Figure 12

Figure 13
Charles Correa’s 1985 design for New Bagalkot
(Drawing by the author after Correa 2000: 127-128).
Charles Correa designed New Bagalkot in 1985 to accommodate 100,000 people displaced because of a new dam. Sadly, due to local politics New Bagalkot was never built. Basing his layout on the diagram of the sacred mandala and collecting his cues from traditional small Indian towns, he claims he focussed on “traffic and spatial organisation”, rather than architecture (2000: 126-129). He even adds that “the buildings are exactly the way they would look in most small towns anywhere in India.” Four bazaar streets converge on the bazaar sector in the centre, which is also linked to the station by a traders’ route connecting the station to the centre (figure 13). Correa (1996: 27) explains that: “Here the principles of equity, affordability, job generation etc. are developed within an overall urban form which has deeper cultural relevance, recalling Sri Rangam, the ancient temple town on the river Cauvery, built as a set of concentric rectangles, in the form of a Vedic mandala, depicting the non-Manifest World” (figure 14).

![Figure 14](image)

**Figure 14**

**Aranya (1989—) by Balkrishna Doshi (born 1927)**

Equally famous internationally is Balkrishna Doshi. He worked as a senior designer with Le Corbusier in Ahmedabad and Chandigarh in the 1950s before establishing his practice and research institute, the Ahmedabad-based Vastu-Shilpa Foundation (VSP) in 1956, known for its pioneering work in low cost housing and city planning. Doshi has been tirelessly propagating the need for creating communities through urban plans, as well as the necessity to consider custom, ecology, familiar construction technologies and the use of practical, robust materials. Krystina Kaza (2010) describes Doshi as “an architect steeped in modern planning principles, but with a very strong interest in traditional Indian architecture and settlements” (figure 15).

![Figure 15](image)

**Figure 15**
His housing schemes, the Gujarat State Fertilizers Corporation and his Aranya project, amongst many others, have been immensely influential as affording examples of designs where poor people are fully integrated with the bigger community. The Aranya project received the prestigious Aga Khan Award for Architecture in 1995. The documentation motivating the award (AKAA 1995) is very comprehensive and, perhaps because of the award, the project as a whole has been widely analysed and reported on. Aranya was designed for an eventual population of 60,000 on an 85 hectare site. Doshi’s master plan is organised along a central spine that also encompasses the business district. He also designed a pilot scheme of 80 houses to demonstrate the wide range of options (figure 16). The citation from the AKAA 1995 Cycle, entitled Aranya Community Housing, offers an appropriate, succinct description of the project: “Six sectors, each with populations of 7000-12,000, lie to the east and west of the spine and are diagonally bisected by linear parks. Ten houses, each with a courtyard at the back, form a cluster that opens onto a street […] The site plan accommodates and integrates a variety of income groups. The poorest are located in the middle of each of the six sectors, while the better off obtain plots along the peripheries of each sector and the central spine” (figure 17). And very significantly: “The jury found Aranya to be an innovative sites-and-services project that is particularly noteworthy for its effort to integrate families within a range of poor-to-modest incomes.”

Apart from the ubiquitous courtyards, each house also has an otl̄a, an open or semi-enclosed transitional space, which is an essential element in vernacular Indian dwellings (Kaza 2010). While Doshi’s pilot scheme demonstrated the potential of the project, Aranya was envisaged as a site-and-service project; his drawings illustrated the nearly infinite ways in which the dwellings could be configured. Even “slum” housing erected by low-income households is tolerated and, as Sarosh Anklesaria (2013: 178) explains, such “squatter settlements are ‘networked’ through the provision of infrastructure and civic amenities much after the initial stage of squatting.”

Anklesaria (2013: 179) adds that Aranya “was considered to be a remarkable project through various indices of social and cultural design.” In fact, the architectural theorist, Cynthia Davidson (1995: 64) called this “an unusually sophisticated scheme that should be widely studied.” Anklesaria (2013: 179) notes, “Doshi was significantly influenced by the urban informality of slums in Indore. Hence the ubiquitous grid plan so often associated with site and services projects is replaced with a more contextual urban design” (figure 18).
A reflective overview

There is indisputably a tendency to regard social housing standards in some parts of Asia, Africa and South America as at a lower level in every respect than in Europe and North America. This tendency has been called “post-colonial karma” by some and is a form of top-down and arrogant paternalism. Sam Davis (1995: 3), referring to the situation in the USA, is adamant that it is a misconception that minimum standards must not be exceeded. The only real minimum standards are that a house should be “basic, safe and clean.”

Quoting Heidegger numerous times, Norberg-Schulz (1985: 63) comments on the need for density, variety and continuity and stresses the value of squares and streets as urban spaces.
These must be “spatial figures”, which must be “easily recognisable and possess a conspicuous identity.” The three case studies conform to all these conditions (figure 19).

There can be no doubt that all three case studies respond positively to Davis’ local needs, codes, customs and climates, as well as to cultural and psychological needs. They respond equally to Boussora’s dictum to build in harmony with the social needs, the geographical characteristics of the region [climate and topography], and with local [available] resources. These are also the tenets of critical regionalism in the widest sense and are arguably not particularly controversial; as Nezar AlSayyad (in the foreword to Heath 2009: xi) advises: “Critical regionalism designated a form of architectural practice that embraces modern architecture critically for its universal unifying qualities while simultaneously responding to social, cultural, and climatic contexts of the region in which it is built.”

However, Boussora’s fourth objective, to build in harmony with the existing built form, challenges critical regionalist doctrine. She (2007: 125) is quite adamant on this point: “This objective seems to characterize best the concept of regionalism. Its concern is with the physical
and aesthetic aspects of a building, aiming to retain the specific architectural character of each region by reviving an older, local style.”

This could contradict Frampton (1983: 21) who insists that “it is necessary … to distinguish between Critical Regionalism and simple-minded attempts to revive the hypothetical forms of a lost vernacular.” It is not surprising that Boussora would advise building in harmony with the existing built forms; Algeria has a long history of urbanisation, starting with Roman occupation, followed by the Arab invasions of the 9th century, Ottoman overrule and finally, French colonisation in the 19th century. The legacy of its historical fabric is a range of very resilient and robust forms that easily adapted to the demands of the 20th century city which also influenced Le Corbusier profoundly (figure 20).

In later years Frampton (2007: 327) would concede that it is acceptable to reinterpret vernacular elements “occasionally” in order to “cultivate a contemporary place-orientated culture.” Indian architects of course do not have to revive a lost vernacular, because of the long, uninterrupted continuity of the country’s architectural and urban traditions (figure 21). The Harappan civilization that evolved more than 5,000 years ago in the Indus Valley, situated in present-day northwest India and Pakistan, featured some of the first planned towns and cities, of which Mohenjo-daro is the best-known example. In his seminal work entitled History of Urban Form Before the Industrial Revolutions A.E.J. Morris (1994: 33) mentions not only the existence of urban superblocks, institutional constructions such as palaces, temples, central granaries and ritual baths, but also remarks that the “high quality of the sanitary arrangements at Mohenjo-daro could well be envied in many parts of the world today.” In addition to specialist shops, restaurants and craft workshops, there was also a wide range of vernacular house types,
from “small single-room tenements” to large multi-storey courtyard houses, many with useable flat roofs.

In their study of historical architecture and urbanism, Indian architects and scholars seem to focus not only on spatiality, but also on symbolism, meaning and philosophy; metaphysical, rather than scenographic, imagery. The Discovery of Architecture: A Contemporary Treatise on Ancient Values and Indigenous Reality by Ashish Ganju and Narendra Dengle (2013) and New Architecture and Urbanism: Development of Indian Traditions, edited by Deependra Prashad (2010), are just two examples of work by eminent Indian scholars proudly exploring the history of Indian architecture in all its dimensions, including the metaphysical.

Norberg-Schulz (2000: 12) expanded Heidegger’s affinities for the traditional: “Vernacular architecture is specifically an image of the world, which makes present the environment in which life takes place, not in an abstract manner, but with a concrete poetic figuration.” Here situatedness alludes to the physical and social architecture of home as a single, homogenous concept, consisting of these two totally interdependent aspects. Norberg-Schulz clearly admires not only the Norwegian cabin in the forest and the courtyard houses of the Mediterranean and Middle-East. He (1985: 50) also actually lauds the New Urbanism (without actually naming it) for “what a few years ago might have seemed pure unrealistic nostalgia” for its role in returning not only “dense, clearly delimited settlements”, but also “figural quality.” Norberg-Schulz (1985: 110) furthermore approves of Post-Modernism for its “inexhaustible possibilities of ever new figural qualities”, clearly implying a preference for neo-Vernacularism. As Jencks (1977: 8) claims: Post-Modernism extends “into the vernacular.” There seems to be a need among Modernist architects to be less pedantic about vernacularism by blurring the critical regionalist/post-modern divide.

It is puzzling that Sigfried Giedion is not more prominent as a key figure in the emergence of regionalism. It is true that he dismissed regionalism, even the work of Alvar Aalto, in the 1940s, but in the Post War period he admitted his change of attitude to an unquestionably regionalist position (Giedion 1954/2007: 315):

There is one other thing that the modern architect has learnt [the first is not to ignore the traditional buildings of a region]: the first and foremost, before making any plans, he must make a careful—one might almost say a reverent—study of the way of life (the climate of living) of the place and the people for whom he is going to build. The new regionalism has as its motivating force a respect for individuality and a desire to satisfy the emotional and material needs of each area.
Echoing Giedion, Nikos Salingaros (2010: 137), well-known professor of mathematics, urbanist and architectural theorist insists that “Traditional design gives results known independently to be correct”, but more significantly, he advises: “Use these as a check before proceeding to more innovative design problems for the contemporary world.”

Conclusion

Situatedness in architecture and urbanism basically means user-centredness; whether as an ethic, a philosophy, an ideological approach or a research-and-design methodology. To be more specific: Situatedness is substantively achieved when architecture is a reflection of social structure and ecology. From Drew, Correa, Doshi and many other Indian architects we can learn how to interpret and unfold vernacular urban settings and building types to create a more appropriate and predictable – and situated – living environment (figure 22). When they reinterpret vernacular traditions, it is patently not because of nostalgic sentimentality, but because the patterns operate on the physical and psychological levels as well as to simply ensure continuity of form and space. It is also significant that these architects demonstrate not only a keen interest in the vernacular in their individual researches, but also astute insight into human behaviour and expectations.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 22**

Interrelationships with the vernacular as a catalyst (source: the author).

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After graduation Gerald Steyn worked for Frei Otto at the Institute for Lightweight Surface Structures in Stuttgart, Germany, and the National Building Research Institute in Pretoria, South Africa, before entering practice as an architect in 1980, specialising in low cost housing and medium density residential projects. He joined the Department of Architecture at the Tshwane University of Technology in 1999, responsible for postgraduate development and research, and was appointed research professor in 2001. His areas of research specialisation are: (1) architectural and urban history, (2) traditional and vernacular African architecture, and (3) contemporary African settlement dynamics. He holds B Arch and M Arch degrees from the University of the Free State and a PhD from the University of Pretoria.
The space between commerce and culture: design as social agency

Ami Jessica Hawley
Graphic Design Master’s student
E-mail: amihawley@gmail.com

Bruce Cadle
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University
E-mail: bruce@nmmu.ac.za

Design occupies a position of ambivalence bestriding the concerns of culture and capital, yet it accounts for a great deal of personal and economic meaning. In The Culture of Design, Guy Julier introduces design culture as a ubiquitous signifier of modernity: defining it as the study of the shifting interrelationships between producers, designers and consumers. When exploring how these agents interrelate both a material and symbolic understanding of the world of consumption becomes apparent. Design begins to account for more than economic markets, including the more intangible production of values and ideas. According to Bourdieu, producing, designing and consuming, pivots on competition. Bourdieu’s sociological field model when applied to this study suggests that design culture can be allocated to two symbolic fields of competitive struggle located in cultural and commercial hierarchies. Design is problematised by the criticisms of Theodor Adorno and Hal Foster, who believe that the social agency of practices, on the critical edge of these prevalent cultural and commercial fields can better explore value creation. Designers seeking to assign new meaning to what they produce have a capacity to reimagine the economic and cultural worlds that design inhabits. This article intends to demonstrate how design as social agency can reimagine current socio-cultural conditions of production, intervening in fields of culture and commerce. Design proposals are presented as evidence of shifts towards this challenge of design’s symbolic production inhabiting a space between dominant fields, superseding concepts of commercial-interest and cultural marginalisation.

Key words: design culture, culture industry, cultural production, design as social agency, symbolic production

Die ruimte tussen handel en kultuur: ontwerp as sosiale agentskap

Ontwerp bekleed ‘n teenstrydige posisie wat kultuur- en kapitaalaangeleenthede beskry en tog verleen dit baie betekenis aan persoonlike en ekonomiese belange. In The Culture of Design lei Guy Julier “ontwerpkultuur” in as ‘n alomteenwoordige aanduier van nuwerwetsheid deur dit as ‘n studie van veranderlike verbande wat onderling tussen vervaardigers, ontwerpers en verbruikers bestaan, bekend te stel. Wanneer die onderlinge verbande tussen hierdie agente ontdek word, word die materiële en simboliese interpretasie van die verbruikerswêreld duidelik. Ontwerp begin om aan meer as ekonomiese markte, insluitende die meer ontvange vervaardiging van waardes en idees, rekenings te gee. Bourdieu meen dat vervaardiging, ontwerp en verbruik om kompetisie draai. Bourdieu se sosiologiese veldmodel, toegepas op hierdie studie, stel vir dat die ontwerpkultuur aan twee simboliese velde van ‘n mededingende stryd wat in kulturele en kommersiële hierargieë geleë is, toegewys kan word. Ontwerp word deur Theodor Adorno en Hal Foster problematies gekritisieer, wie glo dat die sosiale praktykgentakappe op die kritiese rand van hierdie ontwakende kulturele en kommersiële velde die waardeskepping beter kan ontgin. Ontwerpers wat ‘n nuwe betekenis soek in wat hulle vervaardig, het die vermoë om die ekonomiese en kulturele wêreld van ontwerp weer voor te stel. Hierdie referaat beoog om te demonstreer hoe ontwerp as ‘n sosiale agentskap huidige sosio-kulturele produktsievoorwaardes kan voorstel deur in die kulturele en kommersiële velde in te gryp. Verskeie ontwerpproostelle word as bewys van die verskuiwing na hierdie uitdaging voorgelê waarin ontwerp se simboliese produktsie ‘n ruimte tussen oorheersende velde beslaan en wat konsepse van kommersiële belang en kulturele marginalisasie vervang.

Sleutelwoorde: ontwerpkultuur, kultuurindustrie, kulturele produktsie, ontwerp as sosiale agentskap, simboliese produktsie

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Design is responsible for constructing and situating day-to-day experiences. From a ubiquitous branded paradigm (branded leisure, systems, nations, people, ideas), increasing choice in consumer goods, to rising on-screen interactivity, design is tacit to most experiences we encounter. In *The Culture of Design*, Guy Julier (2014: 4) believes that design is beyond a profession but is rather a culture signifying modernity. He studies this culture as symbolising value creation, or symbolic production in society, through the objects, spaces and images it creates. Design culture’s symbolic production sits between the demands of economics and culture, shaping economic values and cultural values, such as taste and monetary worth. Reflecting on Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of cultural intermediates, Julier (2014: 151) explains that “as befits this [creative] sector, [designers] are [...] liminal: they cross between cultural experience and commercial entrepreneurialism”. Through conforming to and structuring ideas of economic values and symbolic value, design has contributed to both an economic system and a cultural system.

The cultural sector or creative economy (Howkins 2013), promoting the rise of the creative industries, expresses the increasing obligation design has to making artistic ideals economic. 350 million citizens in Central and Eastern Europe alone were drawn into liberal democracy and market capitalism from the 1980s to the early 1990s (Julier 2014: 4). Under the growing political order of capitalism, the ideology propagated by design is primarily one of a consumerist nature. Design is central to desire, dissatisfaction and obsolescence (Dunne and Raby 2001: 59), in the interest of a capitalist growth model, a system aiding competitive growth over other forms of growth i.e. moral or socio-political growth.

*The Space between Commerce and Culture* explores design’s symbolic production, situating the social conditions of the field of design, and examining where different practices of design are expressing agency between its fields and structures. Departing from Bourdieu’s field model of cultural production (1993), primarily applied to the fields of art and literature, the aim is to explore design’s field of production and the agents challenging it. Symbolic production is explained and then design’s symbolic production is problematised, as it exists between commercial and cultural poles. Examples of design practices are then offered that address symbolic production, revealing how design, through acts of social agency, can create new cultural and commercial values.

**Introducing design culture’s symbolic production**

The symbolic production of design addresses the intention and practices of the designer, an issue directly concerning the gap between a preferred future and the means to aspire to it. Mangez (2007: 55), underpinned by the sociology of Bourdieu, explains symbolic production as a way of providing “a meaning for reality”, articulating “how the world functions or should be functioning”. The social field in which design and other forms of symbolic production are practiced and consumed can provide an understanding of the relationship between objects, how they create values and how they might create new values. All designed objects, images and systems initially originated from perceptions, thoughts and ideas. These thoughts are measurable symbolically and are implicit of the interplay between social structures and agency determining all forms of design practices. Social structures are produced “[when] the construction of a representation of reality also hides other possible ways of understanding and making sense of the world” (Mangez 2007: 57). This can be applied to how the commercial and cultural symbolic worlds that design
inhabits and constructs are conceived of. Edification regarding the meanings behind commerce and culture build towards this understanding.

Julier’s definition of design culture is the point of departure for this study’s inspection of design: the study of the interrelationships between design (in all its forms) and consumption. He considers design in its fullest sense, not only restricted to domestic objects, attempting to explain the complexity of “networks and interactions that configure the production and consumption of the artificial world” (Julier 2014: XIII). With no fixed interpretation, the varying agency of designers, producers, and consumers, three irregular and relational domains of design, production and consumption, shape its circumstantial meaning. These domains are the reason for a collection of spaces, objects and images, designed, produced and consumed literally and symbolically (i.e. by way of social constructs, institutionalized relations, noneconomic powers), with a deep consequence for collective values. The charting of design’s cultural and economic changes is ultimately underpinned by design’s value creation that “hinges on articulating the cultural reconstruction of the meaning of what is consumed” (Fine and Leopold 1993: 4). Whether Julier is discussing design’s global and political reorganisation, or design’s recent advances in discourse (for instance ideas about ‘good design’) or even general consumer goods; it signifies a symbolic production of cultural and economic meaning, a changing and interrelated response to all three domains of design culture (i.e. designer, producer and consumer engaged in practices of designing, producing and consuming).

Understanding the assigned meanings of objects, spaces and images (materiality) produced by design’s social relations, becomes possible when design’s relationship to materiality is ‘seen’ as something constructed symbolically. “Symbolic goods [...] convey values over and above their value in exchange [and are] vital to the moral as well as the material economy” (Hewison 1997: 31). Julier (2014: 135) supports this idea by explaining that, “consumer goods exist both as objects and as signs”. Bourdieu, in a detailed study of consumption, popularised the idea of symbolic goods in the 1970s and 1980s, when classifying the symbolic production of cultural goods, such as music and art. Similarly, he understood all goods as “both a commodity and a symbolic object” (Bourdieu 1993: 113). From this perspective he could explain how symbolic goods were involved in enterprises of both a cultural and economic nature, “established between symbolic profit and economic profit”, where “the recognition implied by the act of consuming” defines where the object and its producer are positioned within the field (Bourdieu 1993: 48). He proved how cultural goods are embedded in social hierarchies as well as economic systems, providing sociology with key phrases to understand social life within capitalism. The term “cultural intermediates” (Bourdieu 1984: 359), from his book Distinction, is often used in media studies to indicate a new class of cultural producers who blur the conventional gap between what symbolises cultural goods and commercial goods. He describes a fundamental symbolic understanding of design, showing that, designers mediate the gap between production, in its crude form as the system for the organisation and creation of goods and services, and consumption, as the user’s engagement with them (Julier 2014: 74).

Bourdieu (1993: 114) also introduced the concept of “the market of symbolic goods” with its forms of noneconomic capital, in The Field of Cultural Production, presenting a way to allocate different forms of production. For Bourdieu the theory of a field is developed as a social construct, with its own inner-logic or ethos that points to a competitive worldview of symbolic distinctions. Here economic and noneconomic capital becomes “the principle through which individuals [and goods] occupy a certain social space” (Bourdieu 1997: 50, in Fowler), or field. Bourdieu’s theories assist in contextualizing value creation, not only in the more traditionally
encultured and intellectual fields of music, art and literature but for all kinds of production that involves needs and beliefs.

A social world predominately centred on two kinds of distinctions, economic performance (economic capital) and noneconomic performance (symbolic, social and cultural capital), is defined by Bourdieu, and applied to design in this study. His ideas, when extended into the social fields of design, account for design’s polarised extremes of hard-selling commercialism and consecrated designer culture. These are two broadly defined fields that, in their extremes, describe practices that sell to a mass audience on the principle of economic reward, or by contrast, principally compete for symbolic profits or credibility, at times for no economic reward at all (this might include work entered into prestigious designer competitions or exhibited design in museums). Bourdieu’s model (1993: 49) is based on what he describes as two prime sub-fields or poles of production: the unrestricted “field of large-scale cultural production (FLP)” (or “commercial production” for clarity), and the “field of restricted cultural production (FRP)” (1993: 151). His model is useful when extended to the contemporary grouping of design’s symbolic goods, a professional field Bourdieu had grouped largely with the inartistic culture of mass-market retailing or unrestricted production and the cultural intermediates described in Distinctions.

In light of Bourdieu’s social model, when this article addresses commercial or cultural as divided fields of production or practices within design, it refers to two distinctive classifications of design: “Commercial design” refers to specifically organised [design] with a view to the production of cultural goods destined for non-producers of cultural goods, “the public at large”[…] , [submitting] to the laws of competition for the conquest of the largest possible market (Bourdieu 1993: 115).

By contrast “cultural design” refers to practice that “tend[s] to develop its own criteria for the evaluation of its products, thus achieving the truly cultural recognition accorded by the peer group whose members are both privileged clients and competitors” (Bourdieu 1993: 115). This simple model illustrates the struggles facing symbolic production. For instance there is a struggle between the autonomy of practice (also implying agency outside of the market) and the heteronomy of the market; between the older generation’s “orthodoxy of established traditions and the [younger generation’s] heretical challenge of new models of practice” (Johnson in Bourdieu 1993: 16); between ideologies of craftsmanship and fashion for fashion’s sake; struggles between dominant and dominated practices; and struggles between a niche-consecrated reception and wider popularity. According to Bourdieu this has become a map for the dynamics of power in society, a game of dominance and independence, upon which the two cultural fields of production are based.

There are other ways of studying design and how its fields of production and symbolic values are grouped, however, integrating Julier’s (2014) and Bourdieu’s (1993) ideas on design and social relations supports this article’s questioning. This article proposes that widespread differentiation within design culture can be allocated generally to either commercial or cultural ‘poles’ of symbolic production. It shows how certain practices of design favour exploration for cultural legitimacy, often found in the self-published work of designers and design displays by institutions, associated with high-end markets, design competitions and the creation of ‘taste’ by fringe cultures and counter-cultures. Other forms of design can be described more readily as practices that compete for economic capital, underwritten by the private interests of clients and media, found in the design, production and consumption of generally mass-produced domestic goods. This commercial field is easily typified by brands like Verimark. As a typical form of
commercialism, it produces cultural and economic value through commercials mannered by domestic clichés, and products legitimized by novelty and peer-consumer validation. Forceful, hackneyed, hard-sell salesmanship and repetitive visual advertising and merchandising determine Verimark’s brand equity. Products are mass-produced and globally distributed for broader economic and cultural colonisation.

The choices made in these juxtaposing fields of design socially mediate a great deal of economic and personal value. Design is increasingly turning culture into a commodity, contending for economic capital and cultural legitimation. In Good Looking, Stafford (1996: 5), writes about the increasing visualization of contemporary culture, expressing that “freeing graphic expression from an unnuanced dominant discourse of consumerism […] is a challenge” and that all the humanitarian sciences need to focus their attention on it. Likewise Dunne and Raby (2001: 59), on the topic of “designers as agents of capitalism” refer often to the idea of freeing design from “a narrow commercial vision”. Julier (2014: 252), in a similar respect, explains that both cultural and commercial design are laden with “the dominance of the growth-model [be it in cultural or economic capital] to justify what design is for […] limit[ing] the discussion and miss[ing] [design’s] significance”. This highlights the problems that restrict design’s symbolic production to the competitive interests of commercial and cultural fields.

Problematising design’s symbolic production

It is not uncommon for designers to separate their portfolios into commercial and non-commercial sections as a means of showing agency. This is representative of the challenges faced by symbolic production – that which is the dominant form of design (the marketable and structured service of commerce) and the dominated, where social exploration and personal expression reflect self-worth.

Design as neither a solely cultural or commercial endeavour holds two disparate symbolic meanings. Forty (1986: 242) explains that the economic and cultural “invariably co-exist, however uncomfortably in the work of design”. He refers to design’s symbolic production as facing a “paradox […], in that designers are both in command of what they do and at the same time are the agents of ideology, subcontractees to a bigger system” (Forty 1986: 242). Jan van Toorn (2006: 319), the influential Dutch graphic designer known for his conceptual abstraction and provocative social commentary, views the problem as a constant striving to neutralise the “inherent conflicts of interest” of serving a collective, whilst working for a professional and private model of industry. When reflecting on the ambit of design, it is evident that the commercial ideologies that it has propagated, limits socially orientated explorations and autonomy of practice. Van Toorn (2006: 51) believes that there is no immediate response to this incoherence in working, explaining that designers need “to grasp what it means to work in a society that is dominated by the relations of production and cultural exchange of a radical capitalist economy”. Design culture’s “tension between individual autonomy and consumption’s wider-role in promoting […] competition” (Julier 2014: 71) demonstrates a struggle between two fields dominating design’s configuration.

Commercial production exists to service market, industry, and the private interests of client and media. This is “sometimes referred to as ‘mass’ or ‘popular’ culture [as experienced through] privately owned television, most cinematic productions, radio, [and] mass-produced literature” (Johnson in Bourdieu 1993: 16), but also extends to many other forms of design. It is a means of cultural producing that sits in the field of commerce, criticized for its predictable sense
of “internal sameness [and] de-humanized…methods of operations and content” (Adorno 1991: 87). It has been accused of instilling homogenized ideals of production and value concerned “not by [a commodity’s] specific content and harmonious formation” but its “principle of realisation as value” (Adorno 1991: 86), with design moving from being a means to an end (craft) to being an end in itself (industry). In various studies commercialism is associated with social alienation, spectacle and signs detached from meaning (concepts developed by Debord (1967) in *The Society of the Spectacle*).

Bourdieu addresses a broad field of mass production, “sustained by a large and complex culture industry. Its dominant principle of hierarchisation involves economic capital or the ‘bottom line’ (Johnson in Bourdieu 1993:16), implying but not limited to: popular fashion, gimmicks and fads, and a certain form of professional know how involved with the tireless repetition and affirmation of particular cultural and economic worldviews. Dunne and Raby (2001: 58), two academics advancing the critical design movement in the United Kingdom, have defined this form of design as “affirmative design” because of how it has normalized certain values and modes of production and exchange by affirming the status quo and sustaining the dominant worldview of market capitalism. The cultural worldview that accepts electrical home appliances, such as a fridge, stove and kettle, as symbolic of ‘normal’ requirements of contemporary living, is a pointed example of one of these affirmations. These inanimate objects were popularized in the early century in the American baby-boomer economy, influenced by the “postwar-’malling’ of suburban and urban spaces” (Foster 2002: 55-57). Branded by the ideals of independence, productivity and wellbeing, the product’s symbolic production is synonymous with the social idea of “The American Dream”, but in the most general sense symbolizes the essentials of a global domestic space. Tacit to this form of symbolic production is an equally significant commercial worldview that symbolises these products commercial viability, such as assembly-line production and built-in obsolescence. Steven McCarthy (2013: 12), in *Designer as Author*, problematises the prevalent uncritical way in which design is practiced as “anonymous design production, devoid of credit and blame”: In capitalism the products of labour are separated out from the relations of labour. After all, under capitalism, objects are placed in the marketplace where the consumer is unknown, just as the consumer is unlikely to know the producer or much about the systems of their production (Julier 2014: 75).

For the commercial production of design, this has meant that often designers remain anonymous to their market and individuals engaging with the design remain anonymous to who designed the object, space or image. Because of the sheer scale of production popularised by a global economy, commercial design, has very few chances to engage with the idea of autonomy, authorship and independence. Rather it is focused on mechanising masses of goods into masses of homes. In so doing it limits explorative, nuanced communication to populations of diversified cultural groups, in favour of communicating to the widest group possible. Design, from this perspective, alienates its audience by means of generic and socially problematic ideas of ‘lifestyle’ and ‘fashion’.

And so to “culture”. The word is used to address a less explicitly economic, and tangible way of working or making than its commercial counterpart that is found in the field of restricted production (FRP). Bourdieu (1993: 54) views it as the romanticized field of ‘taste-making’, often referring to a dominant class faction and a leading form of cultural intermediating that can create its own fields of reception. This sub-field of design owes much of its symbolic power to the legitimacy that museums, galleries, and libraries afforded to literary and artistic historical-awareness. To understand this field of production is to interrogate a form of intangible distinction that constitutes a particular brand, object, or space of higher cultural value in consideration to
This form of production is characterized by experimentation and exploration, because it is not required to communicate with as wide an audience. It most often signifies humanitarian disciplines and high-end markets. It is frequently criticized for the way its “success in terms of the ‘dialectic of distinction’ constantly removes the painter or writer from the mass base he or she aims at”. In this sense it becomes “production for producers” (Johnson in Bourdieu 1993: 15); for example, high-designers making ‘high design’ for other high-designers. This form of symbolic production of design is becoming what Julier (2014: 87) states is “the most forceful in its influence on public perceptions of design and designers”, signifying the popularity of design-art (see Coles 2007. Design and Art), designer goods or high design and “design classics” (Julier 2014: 91).

Julier (2014: 92, 103) comments on design’s encultured production as being increasingly revered as cultural capital since the 1980s, the designed object holding something of intellectual and historical merit, blurring these virtues with corporate culture. With the global art market’s growth in the early 2000s the movement of design art, with its self-published and individual led approaches has made strides into intellectual discussion and high-end markets, questioning whether design is only further commercialising the idea of art or whether we might use design and art to bring more cross disciplinary approaches to industry and cultural production. The designers have mixed feelings about the professional titles artist and designer, some do not identify with any title, and other creatives view their work as a direct contribution to the definition of art. The movement is characteristic of “highly expressive furniture or lighting that often [makes] reference to well-known historical or everyday objects or included visual twists” (Julier 2014: 103). When hero designers, push, or seemingly push, design to new limits of ‘cultural vanguardism’, he argues that useless and impractical designer objects, end up facilitating a market of “cultural sightseeing”: spectacle perpetuating conspicuous consumption, much the way high fashion or high-design does. Bourdieu (1984: 365) explains that increasingly there is a case for designers belonging to a class engaged in the symbolic production of needs. The designers working in this field “mediate ‘cutting edge’ cultural forms to a wider audience” (Julier 2014: 54). In many ways, the profession of design is associated with lifestyle and subculture, a field with its own ethos, self-marginalised from other forms of cultural and commercial production. Design has seen a shift toward personal studio and portfolio-based ‘art school’ structures integrating into design’s educational systems. It has shifted towards self-reflexivity; emphasis placed on the individual documenting and exhibiting of academic, professional and stylistic approaches that compete for legitimacy within its own field. Something Frith and Horne (1987: 28) discuss as a profession that is also a lifestyle within popular culture.

Design, when seen as a more cultural activity, becomes highly reflexive and self-conscious, produced with a certain self-gratifying and self-idealising symbolism, reinforcing Bourdieu’s ideas of an FRP. Chaney states it thus:

‘Designers’ use of style to ironically evoke or play with other contexts of use makes style a reflexive medium: a way of talking about itself and a way of talking about modernity. The logic of a process in which the self-consciousness or reflexivity of design grows more important is that the goods of economic exchange begin to lose any foundation in intrinsic value or function...it seems that an inevitable consequence of a reflexivity of production is that style comes to supersede substance (1996: 150).

Although this form of “substance-less style”, or emphasis on appearances, is central to general commercial goods, in these instances rather than originating something of its own style, it usually mimics style that has been qualified as sophisticated or interesting in more marginal fields of design. What Chaney is describing is a form of self-aware, cultural symbolic production.
that accounts for its lack of orientation around social matters of substance, superseded by an orientation around stylistic form. Style is a word describing the particularities of a thing, or manners of doing something, rather than the thing itself. In many ways design can become its own attraction because it does not need to express understanding of the complex consumer value system. Rather it can become a form of value creation for its own ends, through reflexive practise. This begins to explain why the distinction between the social intentions of commercial and cultural production becomes increasingly indistinct.

The space between commerce and culture: a blurring between cultural and commercial ideas.

As illustrated in the opening definition of design according to Julier and Bourdieu, design is fundamentally liminal or intermediating by nature, it negotiates between economic and cultural values, and communicates these values from client or producers to consumer, as befits the context. The space between, identified in the title of this article, can be defined by its intervention (a living space of a liminal nature, actioned by two opposing objectives) but more customarily, within design culture, by the way it occupies a position on both sides of a boundary or threshold, presenting what might be described as a ‘vague space’. Soar (2002:102) states that the space between often describes something more ambiguous than intervention, for all its ‘distinction making’ in taste and economy, design’s lack of orientation describes a space of indistinction, a “decontextualized [and] depoliticized” space. He refers to this as a “cultural smorgasbord regularly feasted upon by those members of the bourgeoisie associated with cultural production; that is, the new petite bourgeoisie, aka the new cultural intermediaries” (Soar 2002: 102)). As Soar points out, the difference between commercialism’s devices and the methods of cultural practices are not always easy to distinguish; many of the practices lie on the fringe of both fields of production. Ironically they produce forms of culturally subversive material that possesses great design appeal for the new cultural elite.

Designers negotiate between economic strategy and cultural legitimation on a daily basis, with the power struggles of money and status guiding the trajectory for design culture. Commercial design, perceived to be of less creative freedom or cultural capital, is continually borrowing from high-end fashions and the high-end industries as it seeks ways to refresh its messages for marketability (Johnson in Bourdieu 1993: 16). There is also evidence of pursuing new material that is rapidly shifting from the mainstream and ‘low culture’ towards ‘high culture’ (see Bell 1976: 20). Leland (2004: 305), in Hip: The History, considers this occurrence as “corporate-co-option”, where counterculture and high-end fashion present illusions of freedom from mediocrity through a figurative turf-war of styles. He describes this freedom as illusory because the relationship between the two fields is binary; the two underlying intentions behind the practices are inexhaustibly chained to each other, like a dog chasing its own tail. Both forms of symbolic production are engaged in bringing design culture into a space of social stalemate, where design is its “own reward” (Leland 2004: 1), thus neglecting the profession’s capacity for social outreach and change.

An example of this phenomenon is visible in a recent collection by Jeremy Scott’s world-renowned fashion house Moschino. Its Spring-Summer 2015 Fashion Show was inspired by the legacy of Barbie (Manning 2014: 1). Although the designer remains the very opposite of anonymous and the commodities are primarily retailed at mass to a globalized market of cultural elites, priced far above the general consumer’s means, it has merchandised a lifestyle around its brand that will permeate into the broader aesthetic and logic of culture and commerce. In a
tireless fashion cycle, Moschino’s rarefied and playfully ironic aesthetic (connoting the artistic appropriation of ‘low culture’) will be diluted to the point of incomprehension by its increased popularity. In full knowledge of its cultural and commercial fragility Moschino will begin again, finding a new aesthetic to merchandise its brand, continually shifting to remain a leading force in cultural and economic capital. Although Moschino may be contributing to a fascinating material culture of things, it does not address the symbolism behind its cultural and economic ideology; rather it indulges political and social ambivalence, in the name of fashion. Here the blurring of the border between culture and commerce presents design’s value-creation as orientated towards competitive self-gratification.

Foster (2002: 22, 25) concurs with this and presents the example of American designer, Bruce Mau as someone who is involved with ‘encultured’ brand exercises, is acknowledged as a creative ‘artist’ but enjoys the status of a businessman. Mau’s symbolic struggle is where he places himself between these two roles, successfully building brand equity for clients by “wrap[ping] intelligence and culture around the project […] the apparent product, the object attached to the transaction, is not the actual product at all…the real product has become culture and intelligence” (Foster 2002: 22, 25). His profession depends on his capacity to perform in a competitive system. To do this he confesses to decontextualizing goods to associate them with something culturally appealing. Design should outperform or liberate social life from commercial systems. This form of incoherence of ideology accounts for how quickly the branding of empty ethos is labelled as creative innovation and cultural vanguardism. In Foster’s (2002: 18) view, Mau is not a victim of commerce, but is experiencing how ‘nothing’, very often the substance-less and repetitive ideas of commerce, can become ‘something’, demanding equity, attention and capital, at the expense of design’s authenticity and genuine social ideas. Instead symbolic value is conceived within production, rather than perceived, and begins to exist with no clear purpose, or rather existing for its own sake, an extremely common characteristic of both fields of design. Foster (ibid.), examines Mau’s business-orientated design approach as a symptom of the conflation of design within current day capitalism as a form of “commercial curdling” (2002: 18), where even within design’s most ‘cultural’ or ‘elegant’ instances, the stalemate induced by profit-interest spirals the value of design into a “consumerist loop”, Foster urges designers to find “cultural running-room” (ibid.).

Foster’s (2002: 81) commentary on commercialism in Design and Crime, addresses how design and commerce have ‘consumed’ each other in a post-Fordist economy, where after the 1990-1993 recessions, the economy diversified, resulting in smaller operations with faster and cheaper outputs (Julier 2014: 37-39). Foster resonates with Adorno, explaining how culture and marketing have become more integrated. The ‘culture of marketing’ and ‘the marketing of culture’ promoting an indifference to commercialism’s devices and “political ambivalence” (Foster 2002: 61). In much the same way Adorno spoke of commercialism and how the Bauhaus contested the old art world, and its inaccessible hierarchies by democratizing the individuality of art into the world of design. Underpinned by his readings of Jean Baudrillard (1981: 86), regarding “the practical extension of the system of exchange value to the whole domain of signs, forms and objects”; and explored in more detail in Economies of Signs and Space (Lash and Urry 1994), Foster explains that as the Bauhaus “transgressed the old orders of art…it also promoted the new sovereignty of capitalist design, [and] the new political economy of the commoditized sign”. Foster (2002: 82) believes commercialism and cultural ethos, its primary symbolic value, is “in the service of brand equity and cultural capital”. With design touching so many aspects of everyday life, the symbolism of ‘surface quality differentiation’, seen in both cultural and commercial instances of design, is in fact beginning to standardize contemporary experience.
“Life-styles”, the culture industry’s recycling of style and art, represent the transformation of an aesthetic category…into a quality of commodity consumption. The expansion of the role of competing life-styles, the permeation of these styles into the home, […] the way in which products have become a direct extension of their advertising image, all these phenomena token a closing of the gap between the culture industry and everyday life itself, and a consequent aestheticisation of social reality (Adorno 1991: 86).

Adorno (1991: 86) made a distinction between authentic culture and a culture industry. Similarly to Foster, he highlights the ‘closing gap’ that design’s symbolic production is facing. Adorno stresses that design within this culture industry is recognised “by the principle of [its] realisation as value, and not by [its] own specific content and harmonious formation” (Adorno 1991: 86). Especially through the devices of lifestyle aestheticisation the design culture industry “transfers the profit motive naked onto cultural forms” (ibid.). Prior to this moment design was an artisanship, a practice that “sought after profit only indirectly, over and above [its] autonomous essence” (ibid.). The word “autonomy” here, refers to design’s symbolic production, and its blurring of the boundaries between cultural forms and commercial forms.

Moschino, Verimark, and Mau, contest for consumer demand within their fields or industry and have virtually no autonomy from the principles of the economic market. Primarily these sectors’ internal competitions are rooted in the visual; how quickly consumers can identify the brand and what it represents. This is a design service industry. Visual communications, created by designers, is not so much a service to the capital in question, but increasingly a form of capital itself connoting a market entirely made-up of brand equity. This turns a competitive market, whether cultural and restricted or commercial and broad, into a symbolic ‘game’ where an object’s symbolic production is determined increasingly on brand positioning or visual representation, rather than the object’s uncompromising use-value, social nature or conceptual and moral underpinning.

Redefining design culture

As in many other social fields that Bourdieu’s study might be applied to, it is apparent that the dynamics of competition separate people. Much like the dynamics of a living ecosystem, competitive advantage engenders and sustains the order. Within design culture people are separated through what they buy, produce and design, this separation fuels distinctions for cultural and commercial systems. Design has received criticism for misinterpreting and misplacing value, because it makes no distinction between design strategy and market strategy, fixated on competitive advantage as an end in itself. Both Foster and Adorno call for a shift in practice to one that is more independent of industry, critically discerning and explorative of more humanistic alternatives. This idea might be illustrated as two cogs within a piece of machinery. One cog signifies design for cultural competitiveness, and the other signifies design for economic competitiveness. The interaction between these cogs signifies the antagonistic dynamic between status-making and moneymaking ideals, high and low culture, the artistic and non-artistic, mainstream and subculture. keeping both systems in motion. The cogs might be productive at their roles, but this does not imply that the greater construct they serve is also productive. As previously discussed design’s competitive approaches are commonplace, and have lead to a form of value creation that accepts design as an end in itself, regardless of its social significance.

Before presenting examples of how social agency can assist in creating alternative ideas for design today, Table 1 is an attempt at distinguishing between the different values represented

43
by commerce and culture and ultimately what that might mean to contemporary design. Design has blurred the interpretation of culture; a word understood by this study as an insight into the behaviour and patterns of society so as to find new potential and opportunity for social relations. This table aligns culture with this self-reflexive definition. It represents a symbolic gap between the definitions of commerce and culture, the juxtaposition of the descriptions illustrating the struggle between a particular hegemony in symbolic production prevalent in both typically cultural and commercial expressions of design, and a symbolic production of social agency that could welcome a more authentic and meaningful design culture.

The comparative table was inspired by Dunne and Raby’s list describing the dominant design in circulation in comparison to the design they see as speculative design (Dunne and Raby 2013: vii). They juxtaposed values like “making us buy” with “making us think”, “affirmative design” and “critical design”, “problem solving” and “problem finding” and several other dichotomies, to illustrate this conceptual separation. In a similar way Table 1 illustrates how design’s current symbolic production separates design from a culture of socially responsible agency. The table’s comparisons are used to inspire the questioning necessary to get design from the space of the ‘cultural real’ into the space of the ‘cultural ideal’. In this way the juxtaposition accuses “salesmanship” of being at the expense of “kinship”, getting design away from structured “normalcy” so as to foster design that resonates and generates “curiosity”. The table looks towards these kinds of shifts in design culture so as to get away from reducing value into something of a solely competitive nature, when vastly inclusive, discerning, complex, interdisciplinary approaches are available to all designers. By comparing these two accounts of design’s approaches to value creation, the table forms a starting point to encourage a bridging of the gap between the world design has fostered, and a more discerning culture of value creation.

When design is seen in context to its symbolic production one understands more directly the social challenges it faces. Design culture is constrained by traditional structures and notions of symbolic value established during the modernist era. This series of paired ‘opposites’ – self-reflexive authorship vs. style, togetherness vs. alienation, capitalist agency vs. social agency – express a disjunction of symbolic values seen in design today. The table reallocates the meaning of truly cultural design to something bigger than seemingly elegant, clever or creative design (as it is usually allocated), but design that is re-scripting the ideas of culture and commerce to say something discerning of value creation for collective growth. Although so far the space between describes a blurring of culture and commerce, it can also represent the ideological ‘battleground’ of contemporary design. It is here where design culture can also be emergent and evolving. Design, rather than assigning meanings and values by context, has fixated on value as an end in itself within self-contained systems, stagnating the evolution of meaning. It has aligned values with cultural-taste and economic strategy, reducing the ambit of design into competitions in status and money. Competitive advantage and exchanges are inevitable to cultural evolution. How these ideas of consumerist growth and competitive advantage are symbolically positioned, determines whether design creates healthy systems for the greater good.

What sort of design can exist that bestrides commercial hegemony and cultural competitions, design that has social agency and yet is not only experimental and visionary, but serves a value function that acknowledges the importance of commerce? To begin to understand the space between in design culture is to anticipate new cultural production, new markets and new ways of seeing the world design inhabits. Exploring practices as social agency outside of the subfields of symbolic production can draw attention to how design might define value in alternative ways. Rather than blurring existing notions of commerce and culture, it brings something perceptive and purposeful to these ideas.
Distinguishing Commerce from Culture in Design’s Symbolic Production
(source: Hawley, 2015).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commerce</th>
<th>Culture</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>Non-commercial</td>
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<tr>
<td>Style</td>
<td>Self-reflexive Authorship</td>
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<td>Alienation</td>
<td>Togetherness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consumption</td>
<td>Exchange</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exchange value, value within a market</td>
<td>Use value, actual value outside a market</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>Making</td>
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<td>Culture Industry</td>
<td>Authentic Culture</td>
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<td>In Private interest</td>
<td>In Collective interest</td>
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<td>Promotional</td>
<td>Honest</td>
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<td>Capitalist Agency</td>
<td>Social Agency</td>
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<td>Mechanical</td>
<td>Human</td>
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<td>Mimicked</td>
<td>Authored</td>
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<td>Reductive</td>
<td>Complex</td>
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<td>Culturally scripted</td>
<td>Cultural stewardship</td>
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<td>Affirmative</td>
<td>Critical</td>
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<td>Social ideas</td>
<td>Social dreaming</td>
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<td>Normalcy</td>
<td>Curiosity</td>
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<td>Salesmanship</td>
<td>Kinship</td>
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<td>Competitive</td>
<td>Inclusive</td>
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<td>Institutional</td>
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<td>Production Value</td>
<td>Human Value</td>
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<td>Exchange value</td>
<td>Use value</td>
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<td>Profit interest</td>
<td>Aspirational social interests</td>
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<td>Linear</td>
<td>Circular</td>
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<td>Symptomatic</td>
<td>Relational and systemic</td>
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<td>Alienating</td>
<td>Resonating</td>
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<td>Unsustainable</td>
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<td>Homogenisation</td>
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<td>Obtuse</td>
<td>Discerning</td>
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<td>Mechanical</td>
<td>Human</td>
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<tr>
<td>Form</td>
<td>Content</td>
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Table 1
Distinguishing Commerce from Culture in Design’s Symbolic Production
(source: Hawley, 2015).

Design as social agency: challenging design’s symbolic production

If design is neither overtly for taste-making or systemised production what might it say or look like? How does design become disassociated with everyday models of market, industry and institution to enable it to explore new forms of symbolic production? Various ideas presented here below are social agency in action and are encouragement for design to expand the field into a more socially relevant realm. Essential to this is the question of “how?”; how does design culture evolve and expand to better speak to its own contradictions?
In contrast to how design’s symbolic production has been systematized by competitive notions of material and symbolic capital, design can also signify something of social agency and liberty, where “the creators of symbolic goods…[might] scribble all over [the marque], to break in from the margins of an ersatz, marketised identity and reveal just what our collective sense of ourselves could be” (Hewison 1997: 31). Bourdieu (1993: 44) explains that social agents are able to “use the power conferred on them, especially in periods of crisis, by their capacity to put forward a critical definition of the social world, to mobilize the potential strength of the dominated classes and subvert order prevailing in the field of power”. Berman (2009: 149), in *Do Good Design*, believes designers to be agents of social change and encourages designers to ground their work in a professional ethic, expressing that designers must “recognize the interdependence, power, and influence of [their] role as a professional”. The emphasis on design’s social agency and power, can be confused as an idealisation of the social role of the designer. Designers have varying degrees of independence and power to influence structure, and no designer can work entirely outside of structure. For this reason the concept of negotiating the space between structure and agency is a central theme to this paper’s conception of social agency. Working with existing structures, adapting and seeing design as something evolving with structures is an important step in encouraging the kind of social agency that makes a real impact on human value systems.

One of the protagonists of that challenge is freelance, conceptual designer Marti Guixé (2010) who calls his portfolio “concepts and ideas for commercial purposes”, expressing that most of his “projects are not commercial, but are a way of defining a new perception of this kind of product.” In a similar more academic spirit Jan van Toorn (2013) looks at his own graphic design practice as a form of “visual journalism”, with a highly researched, politicised and documented social underpinning. Dunne and Raby (2013: 159) describe the mechanism behind their practice as a “poetic […] subversion of spectacle for public good and progressive politics”.

Situated within the economic sector, Superflux (2015), a collaborative Anglo-Indian design practice, explain their work as being “at the intersection of emerging technologies and everyday life to design for a world in flux”. They self-initiate what they call “lab work”, focused on their “own products and designs, public engagement, and broader questions about process and practice”, and are particularly interested in “humanising technologies” and “redefining progress”. They are not alternative for the sake of artistic subversion, as many cultural practices position themselves, but express that they see the necessity to “work within the social structure [as this method will] improve [their] chances of being socially and economically relevant” (Superflux 1998).

These few examples represent a transition where contemporary designers and private practices, competing within both commercial and cultural fields, might position design’s symbolic production differently, without being titled artists or jobless idealists. Their stances can be explained by tracking design’s social agency and responsibility to collective values in recent history. The Arts and Craft movement, pioneered by John Ruskin in the mid-1800s and ideologically influenced by Marxist philosophy, became one of the earliest examples of a labour-led revolution within design culture, where the movement took highly individualistic approaches to design’s production in rebuke of an industry alienating and dehumanizing social life (Livingstone and Linda 2005).

Despite the growing number of institutions, markets, publications and books that promote and reward design in the interests of industry and commercial value, in 1964, 22 designers signed
a manifesto titled *First Things First* (Garland 1964). The manifesto spoke directly to the hope that designers and consumers would tire of gimmick and salesmanship. In 1999 Émigré magazine published a revised version of the manifesto; *First Things First Manifesto 2000* (Poynor 1999), that proposed “a reversal of priorities in favour of more useful, lasting and democratic forms of communication – a mind shift away from product marketing and toward the exploration and production of a new kind of meaning.” In a more recent attempt to call for professional action Garland’s work has been adapted to speak to a wider industry of creatives, including those involved in web development, and technologists. The manifesto has been reopened for signatories by Cole Peters (2014), reading: “We have become a part of a professional climate that recognises prizes venture capital, profit, and scale over usefulness and resonance.” The suggestion: “A mind shift away from profit-over-people business models and the placing of corporations before individuals, toward the exploration and production of humble, meaningful work, and beneficial cultural impact.”

Giving some evidence to the social agency implicit to the ideology of the manifesto is James Ballard, a British fictional author who embarked on a design project of an exploratory nature, unseen in the commercial world of conceptual advertising being published at the time. From 1967-1970, he self-financed a series of five ambiguous and poetic adverts. His *Advertiser’s Announcements*, as he called them, were linked to the imaginative logic of his speculative fictions found in the novels that comprise *The Atrocity Exhibition* (1970). He does not speak to this link, in fact the images served no industry or brand, and without much context to Ballard’s fiction, the ambiguous imagery and accompanying bizarre texts presented narratives that prod uneasily for answers and context, leaving the viewer with the job of interpreter. He explores here the concept of sex and women as ‘packaging’, commercialism’s quantification of the outer world, and even sexual experience as it is condensed to capital. Rather than qualifying or assigning any clear meanings to the appropriated imagery through the text for a particular customer, as would be expected of advertising, he demonstrates ambivalence to the traditionally competitive and materialistic ideology of design, showing nothing to sell and no one to sell for. By acting as both the client, the producer and to a degree the customer, Ballard challenged this format’s limitations by his artistic personalisation of the scape. In his later annotations to *The Atrocity Exhibition*, Ballard (in McGrath 2009) explains that there is similarity in a personal relationship: “people are expected to package themselves, their emotions and sexuality in attractive and instantly appealing forms.” Although today this form of explicit appropriated imagery is more prevalent in advertising, these works, in symbolic production, anticipated the poetic gestures of speculative and fictional design through their self-published ambivalence and self-devised symbolism and narratives. The implications of hijacking the medium of advertising to say something beyond market strategy serves as a challenge to advertising’s assumptions. Without directly parodying advertising for its superficiality, he turns the perceived hierarchies that produce design’s definitions and transactions (such as the publisher-advertiser relationship), into an optional rather than compulsory choice.

Self-published, conceptual design just ‘outside’ of industry shows how design can construct ideas of value and consumption that are independent of the dominant forms of production. When “antiquated models of practice” and client-oriented, “business model mindsets” are discarded (Sueda 2014: 10) design culture advances in meaning, design growing in agency and abet. Challenging established values could show how design as social agency might supersede the dogmas of mass production and restricted cultural production. Models of practice seeking agency between these ideologies, independent of dominant economic and cultural interests, are examined in the discussion that follows. Providing new perspectives on what design might
mean to consumerism. This article proposes that between the dominant fields of commercial and cultural exchange, situated within mass and exclusive markets, design might intervene with more socially meaningful contributions that better convey the complexities and contradictions of contemporary life. Although consumerism is a complex structure of value-creation, as Ballard shows, structure can be given meaning. This view is further elaborated on in Economies of Signs and Space:

The sort of economies of signs and space that became pervasive in the wake of organised capitalism do not just lead to increasing meaninglessness, homogenisation, abstraction, anomie and the destruction of the subject. Another set of radically divergent processes is simultaneously taking place. These processes may open up possibilities for the recasting of meaning in work and leisure, for the reconstitution of community and the particular, for the reconstruction of a transmogrified subjectivity, and for a heterogenization and complexity of space and everyday life (Lash and Urry 1994: 3).

Design agencies, with their professional know how, operating in high and middlebrow markets form structures that often limit design’s ambit. They instil the norms that govern how designers should think and practice. These pressures can evoke intervention and internal struggles where pioneering practices express autonomy in relation to a “universe of possibilities” (Bourdieu 1993: 11). Bourdieu’s (Fowler 1997: 43, 50) “sustained analysis of artistic and non-artistic culture”, commercial and cultural fields of production, allows one to see how designers might “preserve the autonomous laws of the artistic field from the laws of the (current) market” (Bourdieu in Fowler 1997: 43, 50), in a sense forming a genre in design that is not of the dominant genres. This act is a means of distinguishing design’s evolving significance to society by “recasting” commercial and cultural structures to ones more meaningful. When exploring design’s social agency as an act for autonomy and a “language to critique the status-quo of the marketplace” through “proposals of new functions that question the dominant market systems” (Julier 2014: 102-106), design is revealed that is neither explicitly competing for economic gain nor distinctions in taste. There are increasing anti-aesthetics (see Heller 1994, The Cult of the Ugly) in the name of individuality, devising youth cultures and ideas of taste, much like Moschino’s apparel. Although conceptually it is loaded with the artistic ideals of anti-traditionalism and freedom of expression, Moschino remains a market-leading aesthetic or niche of ‘individuality’. According to Hamilton (2014), challenging markets in any “genuine[ly] transgression today means opting out of the structures of the market, especially the psychological ones [because all] individuality expressed in market activity is a product of subtle coercion”. By presenting what lies ‘between’ design’s ideological struggle, pushing beyond dominant economic and cultural production, novel and innovative practices engaged in making fresh economic and cultural connections reveal themselves.

Dunne and Raby, in Speculative Everything (2013), document many examples of design proposals of a self-initiated futuristic nature. Their work is infused with the thinking behind speculative fiction, contemporary art, and film set design, presenting design as experiments in social dreaming that reposition domestic goods and social life, applying paradigm shifts to explore how consumerism might be envisaged. Their fictional constructs are intended to initiate what they call a “speculative material culture” (Dunne and Raby 2013: 140) made up of speculative fictions and proposals for social change. Although they can be criticised for producing ‘design for design’s sake’, a form of restricted self-reflexive production isolated by its own elitism, they believe that this subfield of symbolic production will guide design into a discursive space, ending design’s formalist approach and bringing a much-needed autonomy of practice to the discipline.
In 2013 a series of plastic shopping bags, “my shopper” cards, cartons of milk and oat boxes (see Figures 1 and 2) were presented on industrial shelving and exhibited at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University’s annual graduate exhibition by co-author, Ami Hawley. As a fictional design proposal, inspired by Dunne and Raby’s critical design thinking, the work represented a general shopping experience that might be, to take the South African supermarket chain’s slogan literally: “Inspired by you”. The Pick ‘n Pay: Inspired by You Project, whether read as a literal proposal or as ironic critique, represented a challenge to the banality of commercial design and the discord between the narrow vision of the shopping experience and the vastly rich visual culture available to society. Inspired by the current evolution of online personas, crowd sourcing and digital curatorship through social media and blogs, like Pinterest, the work questions the validity of commercialism’s ‘white space’ remaining “white” and ‘relevant’ to the product being sold.

![Figure 1](image1.jpg)

Ami Hawley, Pick ‘n Pay Supermarket Installation: Inspired by You, Full Cream Milk Cartons, 2013, cardboard, 20x9x6 cm, Port Elizabeth, NMMU 2013 Graduate Exhibition (photograph: Ami Hawley).

The work also questioned whether everyday things might be positioned to present something less sterile and stagnant about collective beliefs. The designer’s personal ‘rendition’ of Pick ‘n Pay’s branded goods, represented a collection of self-originated and curated images that Hawley, had collected over the course of her research. The shopping apps and online followings would devise the evolving aesthetic of the stacked shopping aisles, possibly creating a very interesting dynamic in brand tribalism (i.e. one devised by customer’s taste and collective public
concerns). There are immediate inconsistencies in this paradigm for the shopping popularly accepted, however the design engages people in rethinking the commercial shopping-scape, the value of an image and the passive consumer dynamic. The Pick ‘n Pay project illustrates the way a business and designers might engage in social dreaming, not just problem-solving, but devising new problems to solve.

![Image of Oat Bran Boxes](image)

**Figure 2**
Ami Hawley, *Pick ‘n Pay Supermarket Installation: Inspired by You, Oat Bran Boxes*, 2013, cardboard, 23x17x6 cm, Port Elizabeth, NMMU 2013 Graduate Exhibition (photograph: Ami Hawley).

In another more recent, wry and romantic turn on commercialism, the world-renowned fashion house Miu Miu, and filmmaker Miranda July (Oyster 2014) debuted a new film as part of their acclaimed “Women’s Tales” series, called *Somebody*. The film showcases their own ‘speculative’ application (app), available for download: “…bringing people together [it]… passes on messages to your friends via complete strangers that are in close proximity to said friends”. The app is currently connecting unlikely strangers using the service with those who we need to reach someone ‘in person’. Although it can also be read as a form of parody on the interfaces that have put between individuals in an increasingly technologically connected society, the application challenges whether technology might also be something inspiring personal contact between strangers, addressing ways in which delivering a message to someone might be felt as an altruistic gesture. The application shows how economic competition, might diversify into practices that foster intimacy and kinship rather than salesmanship despite its
success at promoting Miu Miu’s business of selling clothing: but what of the actual business and economic structures themselves?

Importantly the design brought to these business operations, although socially valuable (de-alienating the communication of established symbolic production) does not attempt to rescript the core economic structures that situate its commercial values of exchange. In this regard examples are far harder to situate. One might locate this fundamental challenge of design’s symbolic production to contemporary design institutions and the symbolic production of design activism (also associated with art-activism and eco-design).

The Central Saint Martin’s (2014) college in London began dissecting the idea of value through the initiation of one of the “world’s first social media fuelled price-drop pop-up shop[s]”. Titled “Worth”, it is a “is a 4 day long pop-up shop”, that sold limited edition designs originally priced at 1 million pounds each, but becoming significantly lower in price as the shop gathered online social recognition (likes, shares and tweets). This example was interesting for the way it applied current-day commerce differently, it signified the importance of online culture and collective buying power in the future of commerce, and the way to design for it.

In a similar but more abstract and cross-disciplinary vein Critical Practice and the Camberwell, Chelsea and Wimbledon Graduate School’s Public Programmes (Webb 2015) presented a cross-disciplinary “reimagining of commerce” through their annual interactive conference called #TransActing: A Market of Values. With stalls and stallholders from a cross-range of disciplines, from the humanitarian arts, researches, to economists, the market focuses on a peer-lead approach to cultural production, turning the market space into an idea space. Essential to engaging in this market is the understanding that the money system, however socially subsuming its structures, is only one symbolic means to take account and make exchanges. The market is unique in how it engages in designing the particularity and function, inherent to money (taking-stock, budgeting, markets, industry), whilst pursuing new cultural systems of values that are not always so easily reduced to a monetary value or measured (for instance measuring worth and satisfaction). The issue of scarcity and collective belief, key to any value system, is not an easy matter to unravel. What determines scarcity and how collective belief might be realigned with values that promote happiness, abundance and generosity? These are social questions that might realign the culture and commerce we know with a symbolism or assigned value of humanistic care, rather than competitive strategy.

Agency when employed to express abstract ideas of social value, like those illustrated above, can find more incidence in material reality as well. Spanish architect, Santiago Cirugeda (Markussen in Marskin 2013) shows how design activism can result in grassroot spatial changes, promoting new collective values within shared spaces. The spaces Cirugeda is interested in concern social value and the independence of the citizen in urban spaces, subverting his training in design to serve outside of industry and government. His work might be seen as exercises in social initiation and subversion. Cirugeda, is often denied permission by the municipality to access the urban spaces he hopes to reclaim for the citizens, and so he uses interesting ways to work on the edge of what he knows about industry and professionalism, to bring unexpected potential to the social scape, through collective community projects. He often subverts institutionalised boundaries and builds upon what exists, in one example he decided to erect a first floor extension to his flat, which projected over the sidewalk. Permission was denied. To overcome the narrow vision of governmental policy he graffitied the street-side wall of his home, and then waited for his application to erect scaffolding to remove the graffiti to be approved. Once approved, this
structure was used as the supporting structure for the desired extension designed onto the first floor.

In one of his many socially orientated design projects, Cirugeda exploited the laws around rubbish skips. He recognised that individuals were not permitted to design urban spaces, but a skip could be placed anywhere. He therefore began to involve the community in converting skips for a number of social purposes, including a playground. By turning them into play objects he questions and challenges ideas of public space and the street through their actual use (Markussen in Julier 2013: 228). On the edge of the law, he engages in a design practice that is quick, collectively built, economical and in service of the vision of the people, rather than those who are rewarded by existing restrictive social structures (see Spatial Agency 2014).

Design in the ambit of activism, like Cirugeda’s, can have its own bias, romanticizing anarchy or in some more manipulative instances, using subversive design to find political and commercial popularity within particular social circles. Cirugeda, like the examples provided above, show how design might act in the present to intervene in new social worlds, outside of industry and market capitalism. The thinking behind these approaches, when cross-pollinated and employed at larger social scales have a capacity to hybridise and replace existing economic and cultural structures in pursuit of better ones.

Conclusion

“The space between” articulates the concept of intermediation between design’s economic and cultural interests, presenting design as a strategy to increase cultural and commercial competitive value. This indicates how “the space between” might be seen increasingly as a commercial-loop, spreading a form of ‘commercialised-cultural value’, The examples of Moschino and Mau, articulate taste-making and market-strategy are one and the same idea. These kinds of examples, prevalent in design culture today, indicate how commercial and cultural value need to be defined in relation to society such that it transcends fixed notions of symbolic production, and the preoccupation with competitive advantage in cultural legitimation and economic-reward. This obstacle hides the potential for other ways to perceive and make sense of the world design inhabits.

The authors believe that design can take what is rewarding about either field of production to mediate new meaning between its dominant practices. In the examples above taste-making and market-strategy are challenged and the mechanisms and tools of design are used to explore social issues like gender, political landscapes and new economies of value. These designers indicate a self-reflexive autonomy of practice where value is positioned to symbolise social curiosity rather than social normativity.

Practicing design as social agency, aware of design’s symbolic meaning, allows interesting opportunities to arise when the model of design and culture that exists, synergises with the ‘poetry’ and exploration of a preferred economic and cultural system. Design can encompass many more interpretations of the words culture and commerce. When design becomes cultural for culture’s sake, commercial for the sake of commerce, or radical for radicalism’s sake, it conflates its own agendas, and often looses its potential to take what is socially rewarding from both spaces it sits between.
Notes

1 Tomes and Armstrong (2010: 38, 39) express enlightening views on the ‘good design’ phenomenon, revealing how the roles of manifestos, self-expression and “standards of good taste” in the establishing of a framework, contribute also to creating an “oscillation in which a particular idea of ‘good design’ which crystallises the priorities of school or era itself creates the discontents which eventually undermine it”.

2 “Culture” is a very broad idea that can have no fixed definition. As a word speaking to any product of human activity, symbolic or material, the practices of commerce are as much “culture” as any traditional artistic or ‘honourable’ ideas of “culture”. For the purposes of immediacy, the word “culture”, used in the context of this study, is concentrated on the definition Bourdieu provides for it in his theory of production, implying a certain consecrated restricted practice.

3 High-art, high-design, and certain ‘serious’ forms of music, literature, poetry and cinema are referred to here.

4 The collection appropriates Barbie’s artificially curled, overly blonde hair, painted face, bright pink garments and hypersexualised body shape into the haute couture consumer space – an embodiment of the Las Vegas aesthetic and parody of the Hollywood starlet ideal.

5 This witty, gentle and poignantly troubling film can be viewed at http://www.oystermag.com/miranda-july-invents-a-messaging-app-for-miu-miu

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Soar, M. 2002. Graphic Design/ Graphic Dissent: Towards a Cultural Economy of an Insular Profession. Amherst:
Ami Hawley is a Master’s Graphic Design student at NMMU. Her research draws attention to social alternatives for the design profession and the values it projects. Hawley explores these alternatives to design’s dominant practice in her personal capacity as an entrepreneur and social agent, beginning Pippin: The clothing curatorship in 2010 as an initiative in sustainable, authentic and visceral alternatives for the marketplace.

Bruce Cadle is a professional teacher, agent provocateur and research programme head in Applied Design at NMMU. His interest in developing keen and critical minds leads his teaching and research practice, as a senior academic, towards discourse on design critique in visual communication and fashion, and curriculum design and development.
“Remembering” and imagining: Women’s nostalgic engagement with vintage fashion

Inge Economou
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University
E-mail: inge.economou@nmmu.ac.za

Nostalgia has become an important cultural phenomenon. Predicated on the notion of loss and alienation from the present, and a longing for a past (that can never be realised), nostalgia can be described as an imaginative return to a former, often idealised, time. The appeal of vintage fashion includes a fascination with the imperfection that comes with the aging process, the unique ‘one of a kind’ exclusivity and ‘authenticity’ involved in wearing items that are not mainstream or readily available, as well as the charm of imagined past histories, stories, and identities that accompany vintage garments. Vintage clothing presents women with creative opportunities for self-representation and expression of identity, imaginatively connecting past and present, and invoking various forms of mediated memory. As a theoretical study, this research draws from literature across disciplines, including culture and media studies, fashion, and feminism. It explores the use of vintage fashion as a nostalgic expression that responds to a sense of loss (alienation) that women experience in current mainstream westernised fashion, and it precipitates an attraction to the past. The paper critically assesses vintage fashion for its potential to reconstruct women’s ‘situatedness’ – enabling them, as agents, to nostalgically manipulate and advance self-representation and identity expression through creative ‘remembering’ and imagining.

Key words: nostalgia, vintage fashion, women, memory

Onthou en verbeeld: vroue se nostalgiese verbintenis met antieke modes

Nostalgie het ’n belangrike kulturele verskynsel geword. Die beskrywing van nostalgie as ’n verbeeldingryke terugkeer na ’n vorige, verheerlikte tydperk, is gebaseer op ’n konsep van verlies aan en vervreemding van die hede en ’n begeerte na die verlede (wat nooit kan realiseer nie). Die aantrekkingskrag van antieke modes behels ’n bekoring met ‘onvolmaaktheid’ wat met veroudering gepaardgaan, die unieke ‘enig in sy soort’ eksklusiwiteit en oorspronklikheid om items wat nie in die hoofstroom van geredelik beskikbaar is nie, te dra. Die behels ook die aanlokklikheid van denkbeeldige geskiedenisse, stories en identiteite van die verlede wat antieke kledingstukke vergesel. Antieke klere bied skappende geleenthede aan vroue om hulleself te verteenwoordig en hulle identiteit uit te druk deur die verlede en die hede met mekaar te verbind en om sodoende verskeie vorme van onregstreekse herinneringe op te roep. As ’n teoretiese studie onttrek hierdie navorsing inligting vanuit literatuur dwarsoor die dissiplines, insluitende kulturele studies, mediastudies, die mode en feminisme. Die studie ontgin die gebruik van antieke modes as ’n nostalgiese uiting hoe vroue die huidige hoofstroom, verwesterde modes as ’n gevoel van verlies (vervreemding) ervaar wat ’n aangetrokkenheid tot die verlede ontketen. Die dokument is ’n kritiese bepaling van die moontlikheid hoe antieke modes vroue se posisie kan herbou deur hulle as tussengangers die geleentheid te bied om selfverteenwoordiging en identiteit te bevorder deur kreatief te onthou en te verbeeld.

Sleutelwoorde: nostalgie, antieke modes, vroue, herinneringe

Vintage and “retro” trends have become important cultural phenomena, as is evident in the increasing popularity of nostalgic consumer goods (Brown, Kozinets and Sherry 2003). Vintage consumers are trading in their digital media players for “scratchy” vinyl records, going back to using old film cameras, valued for the imperfect images they produce, and riding bicycles called “fixies”, which are without modern gearing and braking technology. Globally, and in South Africa as well, as part of this retrospective trend, people are dismissing mainstream fashion in favour of vintage, “thrift” or second-hand clothing. The nostalgic appeal of vintage fashion includes fascination with the imperfection of the aging process, and for the histories and imagined stories of garments, as well as with “exclusivity” and “authenticity”, which are perceived as being absent in mass fashion production and consumption (McColl, Canning,
Celebrities such as Julia Roberts, Reese Witherspoon, and Penélope Cruz have brought vintage fashion into the spotlight, by gracing red-carpet events such as “the Oscars” in vintage Valentino, Dior, and Pierre Balmain. Celebrity use of vintage has contributed to its current popularisation (McColl, Canning, McBride, Nobbs and Shearer 2013: 140). It has encouraged the demand for vintage goods, and contributed to an increase in the number of vintage fashion stores and markets, as well as online shops and blogs. The perceptions linked to second-hand clothing are changing, and the stigma of wearing clothes that have been worn by someone else, as well as the perception that old garments are unfashionable, is being reversed (Mackinney-Valentin 2010: 71). Vintage fashion, which was initially marginal, is being subsumed into consumer culture, and is becoming increasingly mainstream, while at the same time showing resistance to the traditional conventions of fashion. Currently, “the old is fashionable in the present”, and “old clothes, revalued as vintage, have risen to an unprecedented popularity and visibility” (Jenss 2013: 108).

Reflecting on the potential of clothing to function symbolically in identity construction, this paper explores the “loss” that women are experiencing in contemporary mass produced, and “disposable” fast fashion, and it investigates how the use of vintage fashion, as a nostalgic phenomenon, appeals to women as a possible non-mainstream, but nevertheless popular, alternative. This study, theoretical in nature, draws from disciplines including media and cultural studies, fashion, and feminism, and it aims to critically assess the potential that nostalgic engagement with vintage fashion has in terms of offering women constructive and creative alternatives for self-representation and expression of identity outside of mainstream fashion.

**Vintage fashion**

Mackinney-Valentin (2010: 68) describes vintage as “the physical, material revival of an item that has been excluded from the fashion system at some point, and which has often been previously owned”. As far as terminology is concerned, the term “vintage” is often used broadly to refer to the use of second-hand clothing. More specifically, clothing dating from before the 1920s is referred to as “antique”, while clothing from the era between the 1920s and the 1980s (or the 1990s) is referred to as “vintage” (Cervellon, Carey and Harms 2012: 957; McColl, Canning, McBride, Nobbs and Shearer 2013: 145). The term “retro” can be distinguished as usually referring to newly manufactured or handmade garments that replicate old styles, while the term “vintage” refers to authentically old items (Jenss 2010: 172). Despite efforts to underline the subtle differences between these terms, media overuse and increased popularisation in the consumer market has confused the original meanings, and currently the term “vintage” can be understood quite broadly to signify a garment that is valued for its age (Cervellon, Carey and Harms 2012: 958). The provenance, age, uniqueness, and condition of a vintage garment are all factors that play a role in determining the material and symbolic value of the vintage item (Cervellon, Carey and Harms 2012: 957). Collectors’ items, such as old couture pieces, are symbolically and materially considered more valuable, particularly when the provenance is significant. For instance, well-known auctioneers Christie’s sold an iconic black Givenchy dress, worn by Audrey Hepburn in the 1961 film Breakfast At Tiffany’s, for £410,000 in 2006, as “the dress was more than just vintage Givenchy, it was cultural history” (Blythe 2007). The term “vintage”, for the purposes of this paper, will be used broadly to refer to ‘retro’ garments or “vintage” garments, which are noticeably from, or are styled according to, previous eras (generally before the 1980s), in order to distinguish such garments from modern, more recently discarded second-hand or ‘thrift’ items.
Throughout the history of fashion, reuse of garments has been an integral practice. Meticulously hand-tailored and crafted, both fashion garments and textiles were valuable resources, and were therefore reused in a variety of ways. With rapid industrialisation, urbanisation, and modernisation, mass production has shortened the life cycle and cost of fashion garments, and generated a profusion of second-hand goods. This abundance of recently discarded garments, together with the development of a strong middle class, which can afford to be “current” with the latest fashion, has encouraged the stigmatisation of second-hand clothing as a sign of poverty. Jenss (2010: 172) explains that “[s]econdhand clothes became the source of clothing for the urban poor, where they were not only a substitute for commodities in the first fashion circle, but also essential to meet basic needs”. Clothing exchanges, “make-do-and-mend”, and fabric reuse strategies during wartime similarly encouraged the association of clothing reuse with deficiency and “lack”. However, this attitude started to shift in the second half of the twentieth century, as artists and subcultures, such as punks and hippies, started to wear second-hand clothing, to symbolically express non-conformism, individuality, and originality. This type of symbolic reuse of fashion, which was not based on any economic motivation, became a precursor for current vintage-fashion trends, and it started to shift societal perceptions of reuse away from associations with poverty, and towards associations with identity (Jenss 2010: 172). Currently, the pace at which fashion is produced, consumed, and discarded has reached a point where mainstream fashion has been described as “fast-fashion” (Cassidy and Bennett 2012: 252). This term implies a criticism of the inherent obsolescence of contemporary fashion trends – of the dizzying rate at which contemporary fashion trends become outmoded. In reaction to the fast-paced cycle of fashion, the negative associations attached to second-hand clothing are being reversed, and old clothes from previous decades are being revalued for their uniqueness, compared to mass-produced mainstream garments (Jenss 2010: 171). Accordingly, terms such as “vintage” and “retro” are increasingly being used today, in preference to older terms, such as “rags” and “thrift”, to distinguish the relatively higher value of second-hand clothing currently, as “material transmitters of history, time and cultural and social value” (Jenss 2010: 171).

Vintage fashion in South Africa

The vintage trend is noteworthy in South Africa (Parke and Elliott 2014), and it reflects a diverse range of vintage-fashion tastes and approaches. Second-hand clothing in Africa has in the past been associated with “lack”, and it still is, as vast amounts of discarded fashion garments are baled and shipped to sub-Saharan Africa. However, novel approaches to vintage fashion in South Africa are changing this understanding of fashion reuse, and are currently relating fashion reuse to creative, innovative, and constructive identity statements, which nostalgically engage with fashion styles of the past, with the aim of asserting individuality and uniqueness.

Considering vintage norms globally, there is a wide spectrum of different approaches to vintage fashion. On the one end of the spectrum, there are trendy and fashion-conscious vintage consumers, who are aesthetically orientated, less concerned with “authenticity”, and content to combine vintage finds with the latest “new” fashion garments. Here, vintage’s increased popularity and credibility within the mainstream enables consumers to establish themselves as unique and individual, by constructing innovative garment ensembles that cannot be replicated easily (Palmer and Clarke 2005: 174). On the other end of the spectrum, there are vintage connoisseurs – specialists – who are highly concerned with the historical and past symbolism associated with each piece, and who seek out rare and ‘authentic’ garments. Often these vintage
experts wear vintage garments exclusively, and do not participate in mainstream fashion, while others may wear retro garments that have been meticulously tailored, carefully replicating vintage patterns. For these individuals, vintage is not about being fashionable; it becomes a way of life. This relates to the way the use of vintage fashion has been explored, both as a form of identity and subculture expression (DeLong, Heinemann and Reiley 2005; Gregson, Brooks and Crewe 2001; Jenss 2004) and as a form of consumption (Veenstra and Kuipers 2013). In South Africa, which has a diverse socio-economic and cultural mix of people, many different modes within a vast spectrum of vintage-fashion engagements are relevant.

Vintage enthusiast and editor of Glamour magazine in South Africa Pnina Fenster, in an interview with the organisation Vintage, with Love (2014), highlights the appeal of vintage fashion, when she speaks about her favourite garments:

A black satin Vivienne Westwood evening dress that my partner bought me to wear when I won an SA Style Award, a gold cat suit that belonged to my mother, my father’s colourful golf shirts and my grandmother’s lace tea dress. And my Albertus Swanepoel hats, every one of which is a treasure […] Clothes, like perfume, are about memories, expression and associations and all of these are linked to love […] I started wearing vintage seriously as an art student – it was the only way I could afford well-made unusual clothes, and this was before vintage became as fashionable and pricey as it is today. But my very first piece was an heirloom Bedouin caftan that was a gift from an aunt and uncle […] It’s hard to beat a vintage Bedouin caftan for exotic! And it talked to the gypsy and dreamer in me […] I love the idea that clothes have life beyond the original wearer, that they can be saved, repurposed and loved for many decades. And I also love the serendipity of a great vintage find.

Fenster, as a fashion-conscious and stylish consumer, appreciates the originality and uniqueness of each garment, the nostalgic connection with and respect for past histories and memories, and the spontaneity and chance involved in vintage shopping. These features are in line with what Cervellon, Carey and Harms (2012) identify as vintage-fashion appeals, namely an interest in fashion, the charm of nostalgia, the appeal of uniqueness, and the allure of the ‘treasure-hunting’ experience involved in seeking out appropriate vintage garments. Fenster’s engagement with vintage is not unlike the engagements of many vintage enthusiasts in South Africa and abroad, and it reflects elements of vintage as both alternative fashion consumption and identity expression. While vintage-fashion engagements enable consumers to engage nostalgically with garments, so that they can be stylish and fashionable, but at the same time unique and different, they also provide potential for engagement to include deep symbolic significance, and to represent meaningful lifestyle and identity statements.

Black African vintage-fashion followers in South Africa, such as The Sartists, The Timeless Collective, and Khumbula, are distinctive in their nostalgic engagements with vintage fashion as identity statements that challenge the stereotypes of ‘being African’ (Parke and Elliott 2014; Nkuna 2014). These groups, which tend to be male-dominated, are in some ways reminiscent of the Congolese Sapeurs, and share some similarities with the Soweto Smarties (also known as the “Soweto Smartteez”). One notable group, Khumbula (khumbula means “remember” in isiZulu and isiXhosa), operates in Johannesburg, and consists of a group of young vintage-fashion enthusiasts, who collaborate with well-known Namibian vintage aficionado Loux Gebhard, known as “Loux the Vintage Guru”. The group includes one female member, a law student, Andile Biyane (see figures 1 to 3 for photographs of Biyane and some Khumbula members). For Khumbula, vintage fashion is used to express African creativity and craft, and to challenge stereotyped conceptions of African identity, as Biyane (in Norgaard 2015) explains:

Africa has such great voices which can bring a new stronger, unique perspective on art and the way Africa has been interpreted. But too many African stories are not being told by Africans. And that’s
why Khumbula was formed [...]. We document ourselves because we are Africans [...] to perpetuate and break down stereotypes of what Africa is and was globally. It has also helped us as a collective to communicate what is important to us, preserve our history [...] We hope our craft can involve a world of strangers and bring them to the core of what our country is about and touch what people don’t want to look at. Our craft is a continuation of an African legacy. We are a different perception of this mysterious continent. We bring to society an Africa that is not seen on their television screens.

Biyane highlights the creative potential that nostalgic engagement with vintage dress offers the members of Khumbula, to imaginatively “rewrite” history in the minds of people, to challenge stereotypes, and to change perceptions. Engaging with vintage fashion enables opportunities to creatively draw from history, while rewriting it, as Aronowsky-Cronberg (2009a: 7) indicates:

> Whether we use old clothes as a mark of distinction or of authenticity, as a way to connect with a real or imagined past, or simply to toy with characters from our collective remembrance, these are the material memories that ensure that the past is always carried with us into the future. By both literally and metaphorically preserving remnants, residues and symbols of the past, old styles are given new meanings.

Khumbula’s engagement with vintage fashion is a fairly unique African example of globalised vintage consumer trends that highlight the ability of fashion to provide meaning and communicate in ways that are personally, socially and culturally relevant, and to express identity. These types of nostalgic engagements that seek to resist the mainstream point to the creative and “agentic” potential of vintage fashion to advance self-representation and identity construction in unique and purposeful ways.

Figure 1
Harness Hamese, 2013, Andile Biyane of Khumbula (source: courtesy Mr Hamese).
Figure 2
Harness Hamese, 2014, Andile Biyane in a group for Khumbula (source: courtesy Mr Hamese).

Figure 3
Harness Hamese, 2013, Bafana Mthembu and Andile Biyana of Khumbula (source: courtesy Mr Hamese).
Fashion, discourse, and resistance

The concept of “being clothed” relates to functional consideration of covering the body, whether for warmth and/or protection from the elements or for modesty, while the concepts of “fashion” and “dress” highlight symbolic and discursive features, which include statements of status, wealth, ‘beauty’, and identity, among others. Accordingly, the terms “clothing” and “dress” refer to body coverings, that is, what people wear, and are not necessarily linked to what is considered fashionable. However, while the term “clothing” refers to garments, the term “dress” more broadly includes body modifications, and, following Roach-Higgens et al. (in Barnard 1996: 192, 193), can be described as “an assemblage of modifications of the body and/or supplements to the body”. Fashion is not static or fixed; it refers to what is popular at the current time in terms of styles or approaches to dressing. The term “fashion” refers to dress that articulates what is the most popular and up-to-date aesthetic; it is dress that is defined at a given moment by what is considered to be “desirable, beautiful, popular” (Entwistle 2000a: 1). By articulating the latest styles, and in making available certain kinds of clothes, fashion provides the basic building blocks for the way people dress every day. At the same time, fashion draws from a wide range of complex, interwoven, and ever-changing stimuli, including how people engage with fashion, in order to establish for itself what the next aesthetic, however short-lived, could be. What is of interest here is how engagement with vintage fashion, as a reaction against mainstream fashion, can present women with creative opportunities for self-representation and expression of identity as unique and different to the norm. These identity expressions vary in manifestation: from creative and performance-based statements, intended for a public audience, such as those of Biyane of Khumbula, to more personal expressions of identity, that allow for meaning within the lived experience of the wearer.

Fashion and clothing is ubiquitous in modern life, and one cannot avoid becoming part of the visual world, and, as such, part of the discourse of fashion (Kaiser 2012: 30). Whether one chooses to be “in fashion” or not, whether one ignores, conforms to, expands, or reacts against, fashion, one remains part of the “conversation”. While there are few laws that regulate the clothing one wears in globalised countries, there are many unwritten rules, ideals and conventions, however shifting, changing and contextually driven these may be. This relates to Foucault’s (1977) theories on discourse and power, and the notion of fashion and dress as a function of ideology. In this way, fashion, or dress, is not neutral. It not only represents “functional” considerations of protecting modesty or providing protection, but also provides access to symbols that represent identity; though not always easily decipherable or stable, these symbols add significant dimensions of meaning, which the body would not possess without fashion or dress (Entwistle 2000b: 324, 325). The ability of fashion to generate and communicate meaning enables one to understand fashion as being able to construct subjectivity, and to bring women’s subjectivities into being in very particular ways. Fashion plays a pivotal role in the development and promotion of values regarding women within globalised consumer culture, to which conceptions of gender, beauty, the body, and sexuality are integral, and which women are “subject to”. While fashion functions in relation to a vast array of social, economic and cultural forces, it has the discursive potential to structure, shape, produce, and reproduce women’s choices in clothing and dress, and, as such, to constantly shape self-perception and ideas about the self in relation to others. Barker (2008: 93) contends, “bodies are ‘subject to’ the regulatory power of discourse, by which they become ‘subjects for’ themselves and others”. Fashion operates as an ever-changing and shifting system, encompassing a wide range of competing discourses linked to power, which set “significant parameters around the body and its presentation” (Entwistle 2000b: 329).
Feminists’ have drawn on Foucault’s work to understand the female dressed body as discursively constituted, as a ‘docile’ and ‘disciplined’ body, on which the forces of dominant ideologies, such as fashion, gender, patriarchy, and consumption, operate as power. Here, fashion and beauty regimes, as disciplining practices, inscribe a woman’s body as “an ornamented surface”, and, as Bartky (1990: 69) asserts, “in the application of makeup and the selection of clothes, art and discipline converge”, although she argues that “there is less art involved than one might suppose”. One may be inclined to think that fashion, in its currently neoliberal guise, which encourages freedom of choice and agency, as well as diversity of expression, no longer possesses power to ‘discipline’ the body. However, twentieth- and twenty-first-century exercise and slimming regimes, for example, function in much the same way as a nineteenth-century corset, as a discursive product of fashion (Entwistle 2000a: 21). What is qualitatively different between the corset and the exercise and slimming regimes is that the latter is a product of increased self-discipline, where self is constructed as a product of self-surveillance (Entwistle 2000a: 25). Self-discipline is linked to self-surveillance, where, for example, a woman may constantly check her make-up, worry that wind or rain might ‘mess up’ her hair, or monitor her weight and what she eats (Bartky 1990: 80). Here a woman becomes a “self-policing subject... a self committed to a relentless self-surveillance”; furthermore, this “self-surveillance is a form of obedience to patriarchy” (Bartky 1990: 80). Foucault’s later work shifts the focus from ‘technologies of domination’ to “technologies of self”, to make room for subjectivity and the construction of self as more autonomous (Evans, Riley and Shankar 2010: 120). Foucault’s more recent ideas allow for the potential of agency and self-determination, and, as such, for a more active and self-determining fashioning of identity. Foucault (1988: 18) explains that “technologies of self”:

permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality.

While the discursive force of various fashion-related ideologies should be acknowledged, it is equally important to acknowledge the power of resistance, and the potential of agency. While it may not be possible to escape or overcome discursive forces, it may be possible to situate oneself to varying degrees in response to them, and to activate the agentic potential of self. The lived experience, as embodied and situated practice, allows for agency and ‘choice’, yet remains restrained within the discursive system of fashion, as Entwistle (2000a: 37) explains:

Choices over dress are always defined within a particular context: the fashion system provides the “raw material” of our choices but these are adapted within the context of the lived experience of the woman, her class, race, age, occupation and so on. Dress in everyday life is a practical negotiation between the fashion system as a structured system, the social conditions of everyday life, such as class, gender and the like as well as the “rules” or norms governing particular social situations. The outcome of this complex interaction cannot be known in advance […].

The constructive potential of resistance and agency does not assume escape from dominant discursive forces, as acts of resistance paradoxically serve to resist and reinforce the power of the dominant discourse. Foucault (1988: 94) explains that “[w]here there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power”. So, while fashion is always discursively constituted, it also allows for resistance and agency, thus fashion is constructed complexly, as both liberating and constraining.

The lived experience of fashion highlights the complex relationship between fashion and identity and the role clothing plays in constructing meaning. In its ability to communicate, fashion can be described as a structured system of signs, which function within ‘communities’ of
‘meaning-making’ (Barnard 1996: 31). However, garments themselves do not generate meaning; it is through the use of garments within social and cultural contexts (lived experience) that meanings and identities are generated and “negotiated” (Barnard 1996: 33). This is not to say that meanings are necessarily “stable” or generalisable; they are constantly open to negotiation and renegotiation, and dependent on the shifting social and cultural conditions, as well as the power relations, under which they are generated. The visual form of clothing is integral to the bodily presentation of “self”, to the creation of meaning, and, as such, to conceptions and projections of identity. Fashion is deeply entrenched in the representation of individuality as visual metaphor for identity, yet fashion “does not produce permanent symbolic solutions: its symbols are too ephemeral and its ambivalence too deeply rooted” (Davis in Entwistle 2000a: 139). Edwards (2011: 105) explains:

Identity itself is often tricky to define other than as a social sense of one’s own individuality and location in the wider society or as the process of self-definition and self-presentation in everyday life. There is an intense sense of conflict here as identity is often seen on the one hand as something of a fixed entity, something one is whilst it is equally experienced as contradictory and awkward, or something one may be, could be or would like to become. Identities also tend to multiply and change according to time and place – I am not the same here as there, or the same now as I was [...]. At the heart of all of this is the tension of the individual and the social, a sense of oneself as the same and yet different to others, as fitting in and as standing out, and as shaped and yet creative. It is, moreover, not surprising that the swirling world of fashion should have so strong a connection with the equally dynamic world of identity, and as the patterns and shapes of the clothes on models mutate in front of us we are also confronted with the three dimensional kaleidoscope of ourselves.

Identity can be understood not as an individual characteristic or set of “given” characteristics, but rather as contextual, and as being able to be ‘chosen’, or even ‘invented’, in the globalised and media- and image-saturated world. Identity is neither static nor fixed, but is “an emotionally charged discursive description of ourselves that is open to change” (Barker 2008: 216).

Women who wear vintage engage with opportunities for creative self-presentation and identity construction through their use of nostalgic clothing, and they seek to reconstruct their ‘situatedness’ differently to the norm, straddling both past and present imaginatively, in resistance to prescriptions of the mainstream. Without taking away from the constructive potential of vintage fashion, it is important to note that use of vintage fashion (as a form of resistance) is increasingly being incorporated into mainstream consumption, and, as such, the dominant discourse of mainstream consumption is constantly being affirmed. This relates to the idea that acts of resistance cannot overcome or escape discourse, and that acts of resistance always paradoxically assert the dominant. However, it is within the act of resistance that power for self-articulation and identity construction lies. Cherrier (2009: 192) notes that “[r]esistance is not a process of gaining power over the dominant but rather an inner process of self-reflection and self-expression”. Vintage consumption as consumer resistance relates to what Cherrier (2009: 189) refers to as a “project identity”, which refers to consumption as resistance which does not model itself in direct opposition to the mainstream (unlike anti-consumption activists), but rather seeks to create personally meaningful modes of consumption (Cherrier 2009: 189):

It represents making a space for oneself, of finding one’s place. Creating one’s place means resisting one’s own domination and developing a space perceived as more authentic or more one’s own, where issues of inclusion and exclusion are not culturally determined. It is interesting to note that, as a creative act, a project identity largely observes the rules of consumer culture, even if its objective is to undermine them. Hence, project identities are not strictly negating the principle of material position but are rather constitutive of it, creating new cultural codes, practices, and alternative market structures.
In this way, nostalgic engagement with vintage garments and old clothing styles offers for vintage consumers unique and novel opportunities for ‘framing the self’ away from the norm, yet not in direct opposition to it, provocatively drawing attention to a sense of ‘alienation’ and ‘loss’ that women are feeling in relation to the present, and which precipitates a nostalgic attraction to the past.

**Vintage fashion and nostalgia**

Nostalgia as a theoretical construct is implicit in vintage fashion. Simply put, the word “nostalgia” refers to a desire to imaginatively return to a former, often idealised, time. Pickering and Keightley (2006: 922) explain that “at its simplest, as a specifically modern concept nostalgia has been used to identify both a sense of personal loss and longing for an idealised past, and a distorted public version of a particular historical period or a particular social formation in the past”. The word “nostalgia” was originally used as a medical term by Swiss student Johannes Hofer in 1688, to refer to homesickness experienced by various spatially displaced people (Boym 2007: 7). In the nineteenth century, nostalgia was reconceived of as a psychological experience associated with temporal longing (Jenss 2013: 113). Following the Oxford English Dictionary (in Jenss 2013: 114), nostalgia can currently be understood as “[s]entimental longing for or regretful memory of a period of the past, [especially] one in an individual’s own lifetime”, and “sentimental imagining or evocation of a period of the past”. Nostalgia refers to a desire to imaginatively return to a former, often idealised, time, rather than a desire for an authentic return to the past. This relates to Boym’s (2007: 15) conception of “reflective nostalgia”, which understands the irreversibility of past histories and is not determined to return to, recreate, or restore the past. The way vintage fashion interprets ‘reflective nostalgia’ is to contemplate and use artefacts from the past, such as old garments, as tools to creatively ‘reassess’ the present, expanding on it with imaginary and creative possibilities that cross the physical boundaries of time. Boym (2007: 15-16) explains that reflective nostalgia “can foster the creation of aesthetic individuality”, where the focus is not on the salvaging, or retrieval, of a past considered as “absolute truth”, but rather on the contemplation of history and “the passage of time”. In this way, women’s nostalgic engagements with vintage fashion can always be understood as cultivating creative and mediated ‘remembering’ that constitutes imagining.

Nostalgia desire for the past is related to the “instability” of the present – to the increasing pace of modern life, the incessant rush, and the lack of connectedness and tradition. Turner (in Veenstra and Kuipers 2013: 356) describes nostalgia as “a mood of particular importance in contemporary cultures in association with the loss of rural simplicity, traditional stability and cultural integration”. While nostalgia is not necessarily anti-modern, it is inextricably linked to a sense of “loss” associated with modern life. Nostalgia simultaneously negates and thrives on modern progress, and on the “instability” and “loss” that modern life generates. Nostalgia can exist only in relation to modern instability, and, as such, it functions as a type of ‘Jekyll and Hyde’ mirror image to progress (Boym 2007: 8). In this way, vintage fashion is paradigmatic in its nostalgic response to the alienating experience of fast-paced garment life cycles, the instability of constant progress, and the accelerated change of current mainstream fast fashion. Consequently, the main features within mainstream fashion identified as potential sources of “loss” for vintage consumers include, firstly, mainstream fast fashion’s constant quest for newness, for short garment life cycles, and inherent obsolescence, and, secondly, for mass production’s proliferation of garment copies, of symbolic “sameness”, as such.
The ideology of the ‘new’ proposes that what was worn last season (or even last month) is no longer “in fashion” – that it is somehow irrelevant, redundant, or deficient. Related to this, any sign of wear or aging similarly reduces a garment to no longer being adequate. Faurschou (1987: 72) describes this inherent redundancy as a product of the ideology of consumption, and as “the cycle of desire itself”. In this way, the consumption of mainstream fashion is marked by “an instantaneity and feverish rhythm of time, driven by an ever-rising volume and intensity of desires, which in turn imply the prompt purchase, use and speedy replacement of objects” (Jenss 2013: 116). Related to this, the culture of hurriedness, where time is experienced “in a very punctuated way”, and where it “breaks up or ‘pulverises’ into something like eternal instants”, undermines any notion of continuity, progression, or succession (Jenss 2013: 116). Fast fashion’s hurried pursuit of newness, its ‘discontinuity’, and its perpetual recycling of empty signs points to a postmodern ‘spectacle’, an obsession with surface over substance, with “empty” aesthetics. Relevant here is Baudrillard’s notion of “simulacrum”, where only reproduction, sinister playfulness, and simulation prevail (Guy and Banim 2000: 314). Here, in a world oversaturated with image and simulation, “narcoticized and mesmerized”, the very idea of meaning is brought into question (Kellner 2007), and

media-saturated consciousness is in such a state of fascination with image and spectacle that the concept of meaning itself (which depends on stable boundaries, fixed structures, shared consensus) dissolves. In this alarming and novel postmodern situation, the referent, the behind and the outside, along with depth, essence, and reality, all disappear […]. As simulations proliferate, they come to refer only to themselves: a carnival of mirrors reflecting images projected from other mirrors onto the omnipresent television and computer screen and the screen of consciousness, which in turn refers the image to its previous storehouse of images, also produced by simulatory mirrors (Kellner 2007).

The term “simulacrum” describes fast fashion’s rapid recycling of signs, and its proliferation of mass-production garment copies. Vintage fashion seeks to resist this. Vintage fashion, as a reaction to fast fashion, seeks to resolve the “loss” of continuity and meaning inherent in fast fashion, through its use of vintage garments, by establishing “material linkages between the present and the past”, as a form of “sartorial nourishing of a memory culture at risk” (Jenss 2013: 116). Ironically, vintage and retro trends also contribute to the “instability” of time and “meaning”, augmenting visual multiplicities and destabilising “signs”. Vintage consumers employ mediated memory in highly personal ways, and the ‘meaning’ cannot necessarily be “stabilised” outside of the personal lived experience. Consequently, retro trends, and the accompanying recycling of historical symbols, removed from “origin” and history, when taken to the extreme can be considered critically as social or cultural amnesia. Boym (2001: 339) refers to this as nostalgia that too easily breeds with the banal. In this way, social amnesia, which constitutes a complete lack of memory, fails historical knowledge, but it also fails the historical imagination (Pickering and Keightley 2006: 923). Furthermore, it is interesting that ‘continuity’, which implies a progressive and future-orientated view, is facilitated by backward-looking engagement with the past. As such, the future becomes an imagined past, as much as the past becomes an imagined future. The nostalgic retrospective view enables the vintage consumer to generate meaning, and to relate this meaning to identity through the real and imagined histories of garments.

While fast fashion’s current rapid pace, its quest for newness, and its proliferation of mass-produced copies has the potential to destabilise, the past has the capacity to engage vintage consumers nostalgically in powerful ways. Vintage consumers respond nostalgically to both present and past in their quest for different non-replicable individualised identities within old clothing styles. Here the notion of ‘exclusive’ can be considered as different to the limitless replication of mass production. The ephemeral and throwaway nature of cheap and mass-produced fast fashion does not serve to satisfy vintage consumers’ pursuit for self-
representation as exclusive and different. Palmer (2005: 197) suggests that “vintage has now shifted from subculture to mass culture because of the disappointing fact that, regardless of price, fashion today is rarely exclusive”. Fast fashion and mass production, marked by “surplus, and a diminishing value of new clothes”, and where “a to-go coffee is more expensive than a new shirt or pair of jeans”, cannot meet vintage consumers’ need for identity as exclusive and individual (Palmer 2005: 197). The importance that vintage fashion attaches to having a unique and individual identity is apparent in the way its marketing uses ‘real’ women as models, rather than the ‘unapproachable’ supermodel (Palmer 2005: 198), and this, too, becomes an act of resistance: resistance against the hegemonic idealising beauty standards in the mainstream media. (See figures 4 and 5 for examples of marketing using ‘real’ women, from Foxglove Thrift & Vintage.)

Figure 4

Figure 5
The individualised and unique aesthetic is, to a certain degree, found in the material form of garments themselves, in old garments that are limited in availability, in that they are no longer manufactured, and only a few have been preserved through time. Paradoxically, although mint-condition vintage garments are considered rare and valuable, limited “wear” as symbols of past use provide symbolic value. The way garments are marked by former use, by ‘histories’ of previous owners, defines them as exclusive and individualised, in contrast to the ‘perfect’ multiples of new fashion garments. In addition, the unique and individualised aesthetic also reveals itself as a product of complex processes, where vintage consumers employ historical knowledge, personal reasoning, and creative flair to source and combine garments and accessories, often from completely different eras (including the current era) to create unique ensembles (De Long, Heineman and Reiley 2005: 34). Here, individual skill, effort and commitment is involved on the part of the vintage consumer, in acquiring knowledge about vintage fashion and history, in sourcing and utilising appropriate consumer channels and resources, and in undertaking the process of ‘shopping’, as a ‘treasure hunt’ to source the ‘right’ garment, at the ‘right’ price, and in the ‘right’ size. As such, wearing vintage is “a complex and creative process that involves making authentic judgments and being authentic” (De Long, Heineman and Reiley 2005: 39).

Access to the past can be ‘negotiated’ in several different ways. Old garments, in particular, are powerful mediators of ‘memory’, as such “part of a sartorial and embodied process of remembering, or engaging with, the past” (Jenss 2013: 118). Vintage clothes, worn as a second ‘skin’, are intimately associated with the body, and pose unique aesthetic and sensory qualities that connect the wearer to the past, in physically and emotionally personal ways. The past is materially embodied in old garments through signs of wear, unfamiliar smells, and markings that speak to past histories, such as a stain, a note or a coin in a pocket, or a hand-sewn hem adjustment. In this way, second-hand clothes have the power to establish “an intimate sensual immediacy between the present and the past, between a former and a current wearer”; there is likely “no other material object through which temporality and material memory can be experienced in such an intimate way” (Jenss 2010: 174).

Access to the past can be achieved through the use of vintage garments, and also through a variety of mediated memory ‘channels’. People share information collectively, and through traditional media, such as books, magazines, movies, and television shows, as well as through online sources, including websites, personal blogs and online image-collection sites, and social networking sites. Museum collections and personal collections provide access to knowledge and artefacts from the past, and, increasingly, consumer shopping channels, such as vintage shops in physical form and online shops, are being used. In this way, nostalgia can refer to both a longing for a past personal experience found in childhood memories and a longing for a past not personally experienced but appreciated via mediated memory channels, such as is evident with audio, visual, textual, and/or narrative recollections via people, media, artefacts, or places. Nostalgic remembrance of childhood moments, as such a desire for the past, within one’s own lived experience, called “primary nostalgia” (Jenss 2013: 112), is a familiar experience of nostalgia for most people. Memory, by its very nature, is mediated, and even historical memory, which is meticulously traced by historians, who, through research, critical practice, and cross-referencing, attempt to reconstruct and articulate the past in unbiased and objective ways, cannot be considered as unmediated ‘truth’ (Pickering and Keightley 2006: 926). The mediated nature of memory has become further complicated by the fact that memory has become increasingly intertwined with the burst of media technology development that has characterised the twentieth century. These new forms of mediated memory “originate outside a person’s lived experience and yet are taken on and worn by that person through mass cultural technologies of memory”,

68
and, consequently, “memories of previous generations can become deeply integrated into the personal memory of following generations”, Jenss (2013: 115), citing Landsberg, explains. The mediated nature of collective memory relates to the way an iconic image in the popular media can become a “metonymic shortcut” which can generate a nostalgic response and stir up ‘instant’ memories about a past period (recall, for instance, the famous 1954 Marilyn Monroe image from the movie *The Seven Year Itch*, where Monroe is holding her pleated white dress down over an air vent) (Pickering and Keightley 2006: 926). Aronowsky-Cronberg (2009b: 171) explains how mediated memory can reach a point of fiction, where the imaginative potential of nostalgia intertwines with collective and/or media memory to produce “imagined nostalgia”:

As the purchase and wearing of vintage clothing is a conscious act, one that requires the exclusion of other styles of dress, it is hard to assert that it is a strictly involuntary memory. At the same time, however, the wearer is not, in most cases, remembering something from their own past, but rather taking a step into the collective memory. Whether you don a dress that once belonged to your mother as a young girl, acquire a coat that, in its former life, was, say, part of the wardrobe of an unknown soldier fighting in the First World War or, as a young vintage fan wear a cardigan with an imagined Rockabilly past, you are equally stepping into a past that did not include you. Hence, you are not remembering your own past, but an imagined past, one that you were never part of; but, due to the constant reproduction of it, [you] feel familiar with all the same.

What is evident in this discussion of mediated memory is that vintage-fashion consumers engage various ways of ‘remembering’, to actively connect past to present, and whether consciously or unconsciously, draw from a vast range of mediated memory sources, which are socially, culturally, collectively, and/or personally generated, altered, legitimated, and shared.

The potential of nostalgia for both painful and pleasurable emotions has been explained in psychology as a process where negative bouts of nostalgia related to homesickness, loneliness, sadness, and/or anxiety can trigger “nostalgic reverie”, which can function constructively as affirming “warm” feelings that boost the self (Vess, Arndt, Routledge, Sedikides and Wildschut 2012: 274). This quality of nostalgia explains its appeal as a “feel-good’ emotion that has the potential to operate as a coping mechanism in dealing with the negative feelings of loss and alienation. In fact, nostalgia has the capacity to “restore positive moods and feelings of social connectedness”, to “increase positive affect and feelings of affiliation”, “amplifying explicit self-esteem”, and to “buffer” individuals from the negative impact of existential threats on perceptions of meaning in life, death-related anxiety, and associated defences” (Vess et al. 2012: 274). As such, nostalgia facilitates selective processing of mediated memories as both wistful and melancholic, and ‘warm’ and pleasurable. Davis (1979:31) similarly illustrates the discerning nature of nostalgia, when he describes it using the metaphor of “a kind of telephoto lens on life which, while it magnifies and prettifies some segments of our past, simultaneously blurs and grays other segments”. The positive and affirming potential of nostalgia can explain why nostalgia is such a popular cultural phenomenon, and points to its potential as a psychological coping mechanism.

**Conclusion**

This paper, in its aim to critically assess women’s nostalgic engagement with vintage fashion for its constructive potential to reconstruct agency and sense of ‘self’, has not evaluated in detail the nature of and reasoning behind the personal choices that vintage consumers make in their resistance to current mainstream fashion, but has focused on the idea that women are, indeed, making such choices. The scope of this paper, and its theoretical nature, does not allow
for discussion of those aspects in mainstream fashion that alienate vintage consumers, in direct contrast to those aspects from the past that engage and affirm them. This type of discussion would need to be contextually sensitive, not generalised, and would need to be explored as part of a study of the personal lived experiences of women. Hypothetically, for instance, one could imagine that a vintage consumer alienated by the ideal of thinness evident within mainstream fashion may be drawn to clothing from the 1950s that compliment voluptuous figures, or another, alienated by explicit sexualisation may be drawn to the elegant classicism of the 1947 “Dior New Look”.

Many interesting questions remain to be answered concerning women’s nostalgic engagement with vintage fashion as a highly complex phenomenon with many contradictions and complexities. However, what can be confirmed is that vintage fashion provides women with opportunities, within their lived experience, to respond to dominant discursive forces and potential instability and “loss” in modern life. Women, through vintage clothing, are able to make sense of who they are and how they “fit in”, by “standing out” as “unique” individuals, different to the normative influences of mainstream consumption practices, and, in so doing, make sense of their “place” in the world. By selectively combining and assembling visual identities nostalgically via a range of remembered and imagined “memories” and histories materialised in old garments, women can be enabled actively as “agents” of their personal aesthetics. In this way, women can nostalgically manipulate and advance sartorial self-representation and identity expression through creative “remembering” and imagining. As such, vintage fashion, in various ways, offers consumers the potential to resist mainstream fashion’s quest for “newness” and “sameness”, and to relocate temporal “situatedness”, as highlighted earlier in the examples of Pfenster, and of Biyane from Khumbula, as well as in the more globalised and generalised examples of vintage consumption. While one cannot be overly optimistic about the power of resistance, vintage fashion provides opportunities for women to negotiate and situate “self” as active rather than passive, and to participate in the creative reimagining of the present way of “being”. In this way, “[r]ather than being a straight celebration of the past, or a mere yearning for a slower paced world, vintage clothing is a way to ‘indicate knowledges to knowing audiences’” (Aronowsky-Cronberg 2009a: 194).

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Notes

1 There is some disagreement regarding the term “retro”. McColl, Canning, McBride, Nobbs and Shearer (2013: 145) indicate that there may exist an understanding of the term “retro” as describing a younger version of vintage, and that the term “vintage” could refer to anything from before the 1950s, with anything from before 1980 being classified as “retro”.

2 The import of second-hand clothing has been criticised for damaging local economies in Africa, as second-hand clothing constitutes over half of the clothing sector by volume in many sub-Saharan African countries, according to CNN reporters Curnow and Kermeliotis (2013). South Africa and Nigeria have, in fact, banned the import of second-hand clothing, and other African countries are considering adopting the same approach.

3 The organisation and blog Vintage, with Love was started by Leigh Ord and Jacque Myburgh.
Chemaly, and it incorporates fashion with charity, in the form of vintage fashion sale events to raise money for literacy projects.

The Sapeurs are members of the male-dominated movement La Sape; “La Sape” is an acronym for Societe des Ambianceurs et des Personnes Elegantes (translated as “the Society of Ambianceurs and Elegant People”) (Kaiser 2012: 140). The Sapeurs are a group of men in the Republic of the Congo who seek to express a unique African identity through their stylish, flamboyant, and gentlemanly way of dress, which is often in stark contrast to the austere, poverty-stricken environments that these men live in. They use dress and behaviour as a form of resistance against colonialism, and they seek to undermine stereotyped ideas regarding Africa (Doig 2014; Kaiser 2012: 141). These features are similarly evident in the dress and aspirations of the Soweto Smarties/Smaritez. The Smarteez, as post-apartheid youth, do not consider themselves politically orientated, and focus their flamboyant and DIY fashion as a struggle “against blandness and conformity – to them, it’s all about partying, self-expression and challenging stereotypes” (Stanley 2010).

These images, by Khumbula member and photographer Harness Hamese, are from the Khumbula Collective blog: khumbula.wordpress.com.

Even through Foucault’s work on discourse has been used in relation to fashion (see Entwistle 2000a: 16-26), it should be noted that Foucault himself did not write extensively on discourse and power in relation to fashion.

The book Up Against Foucault: Explorations of some tensions between Foucault and feminism which consists of a series of contributions edited by Ramazanoglu (1993) analyses key aspects of Foucault’s theories in relation to feminism.

Boym (2007: 13) distinguishes two types of nostalgia, namely restorative nostalgia and reflective nostalgia. Restorative nostalgia seeks to transcend historical and temporal boundaries, to restore the past, and to go ‘home’, as is evident in certain religious and national revivals. In contrast, reflective nostalgia, of which vintage-fashion engagement is an example, understands the irreversibility of past histories, and uses artefacts of the past to creatively connect past and present in imaginative ways.

These images, by Kirsten Makin, are from the Foxglove Thrift & Vintage website: www.thethriftyfoxglove.com.

Works cited


Inge Economou obtained her MTech degree from NMMU (Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University) in 2004. Her research focused on the historical-theoretical background to contemporary graphic design practices. She is currently a visual communication lecturer at the NMMU, where she is the programme leader for undergraduate courses. Her current area of research interest lies in South African visual culture, identity and nostalgia, particularly as it relates to the representation of women.
The purpose of the article is to illustrate the situated effect of culture and identity reflected in domestic suburban architecture. The influences on how home-owners decorate their security fences should be considered. These influences often create context driven behaviours, where the role and status of the inhabitants are reflected through domestic architecture at a particular time. These behaviours are related to age, class and other factors, for example, motives and emotions. Motives and emotions are influenced by the relationships between culture and the individual (personality) and performance of the members within a community. Members in a group situation tend to conform and imitate as a result of upward social mobility (USM). This article focuses on conformity and imitation as reflected in the built environment. This illustrates expressions and cause and effect through domestic decoration within local cultural contexts. The relationship between the role and status of the members of the group, that tend to imitate and conform, is not only reflected in the customary behaviour of their community, but is also visible in the way they make provision for elaborate decorated security fences for their homes. This article argues that the inhabitants of Bloemanda in Mangaung-Bloemfontein use the domestic qualities of security and decoration in their built environmental context as personal and cultural expression. This qualitative analysis of local decoration and neighbourhood safety reflects the situatedness of the perfectly ordinary (fences) but also the loss of ethnic cultural expression. The contribution of this article is the focus on the importance of personalised and cultural influences on the contemporary suburban neighbourhood’s street interface.

Keywords: conformity, decoration, domestic security, imitation, upward social mobility

Suburban dwellers react to the built environment through reading and understanding the contextual ‘language’ consisting of all man-made objects in a previously natural landscape. The behaviour of home-owners in an established suburb of Bloemfontein-Mangaung will be used to illustrate the effect of locality or situatedness of a neighbourhood. The question arises if it was designed by a process of decoding information or whether there were other influences?
The same users can share in the decoding of this information in the built environment and communicate the same message or language (Rapoport 1977: 3) to other users in the environment. The concept that defensible spaces (Newman 1972) is built on, is where visibility, knowing your neighbours and having shared public space (with controlled access), leads to safer and more user friendly spaces. The efforts that communities can do, to make their own neighbourhood safer and better, should also be considered (Jacobs 1961). The built environmental language of a neighbourhood can for example communicate the safety and security situation, while also communicating the culture and identity and even the role or status of the home owners.

The crucial point is that people respond to their built environment in a complex combination of cognition, beliefs, norms and attitudes. This, in turn, affects their choices of construction materials and techniques, whether these are earth-constructed, face-brick or prefabricated houses. The same can be said about how inhabitants of a neighbourhood use available artisans and building material to produce everyday objects, such as security fences for their houses. These objects reflect craft and skill but also the culture and identity of the home owners. These reflections celebrate both the situation at a particular time in the neighbourhood as well as making a house a home. “Our domicile is the refuge of our body, memory and identity” (Holl, Pallasmaa and Peres-Gomes 2006: 34).

It can be argued that homeowners in the same neighbourhood can engage in the same esthetical expression regarding their houses. This expression reflects social standing on the one hand and culture and identity on the other, while the communal security situation in the Bloemfontein-Mangaung study area is represented in unexpected lavishly decorated boundary fences. For example, in the study area repetitive geometric motifs and floral patterns, as used by different home owners for their contemporary houses, were found. These home owners are still being influenced by their ethnic background, individual expression and memory. With these fences the ordinary becomes the extraordinary. These everyday objects are used to celebrate a cultural context while reflecting culture, identity and persona. Houses become homes if we start to engage in ‘ideal life’.

“The timeless task of architecture is to create embodied existential metaphors that concretize and structure man’s being in the world … architecture materializes our image of ideal life” (Holl, et al.: 2006: 37).

The “home” as a reflection of the identity and role of the homeowners in some neighbourhoods, is influenced by a series of variables. One variable that should be considered by architecture as discipline – and often neglected – is the influence of ‘upward social mobility’ (USM). USM refers to people’s changing values about their social status and proper roles. This is often based on cognitive factors (how people understand social dynamics), norms (which status is considered to be more desirable), beliefs (how one could or should attain such status), and individual attitudes (whether people want to enjoy USM) (Bosman 2015: 34-5). Other variables, such as sentimentality, aesthetic views, religious views, and ecological beliefs, should also be considered, but for the purpose of this article, these will not be discussed.

The following sections will explain how suburban home owners’ attitudes are affected by social capital and social mobility, rather than environmental sociology, to explain the choices of building materials for fences of houses. This will be followed by a section on the effect of inequality and USM in South Africa, to explain how class and migration can affect a suburban area. The effect of cognition, of location and culture will be discussed to show that it influences values and normative beliefs. The last section to be discussed before the results includes some
models that help to explain the psychological process of enculturation between cultures and personality that influence perceptions. A case study shows the current situated examples of the everyday.

**Environmental sociology, materiality of buildings and situatedness**

Some studies in environmental sociology, covering issues of environmental protection, have been conducted in the past (Buttel and Flinn 1974; Van Liere & Dunlap 1980; Honnold 1981). Research on social bases of environmental concern often focuses on the socio-economic variables that explain the conditions for environmental protection. Early studies reported well-educated urbanites to be concerned with environmental protection (Buttel and Flinn 1974). Later studies (Honnold 1981) elaborated that education and age turned out to be the only socio-economic variable consistent and significant to environmental concern. There are limited qualitative and quantitative studies that provide information on people’s attitudes, choices and associations of materiality of their own houses and residential objects.

According to studies from Van Liere and Dunlap (1980), “income and occupation prestige” are just weakly related to environmental concerns. These are also linked to the social capital of these communities that find themselves in the same situation. The influence of migration, social capital and upward social mobility can possibly help to explain the choices of materials used for houses and domestic objects such as decorated fences, gates and gardens.

**Social capital and upward social mobility of low-income households**

The concept of social capital (social networks) provides the basis of how the urban labour market functions in developing countries. The survival of households has been a regular and serious concern mentioned in literature on development economics. These households are often affected by migration and social mobility, where the households’ financial status is connected to a “life strategy” (Sandu 2010).

The Russian-American sociologist, Pitirim Sorokin is considered to be the originator of social mobility as a separate scholarly subject. He explained that any individual’s place in social space is determined by the position he or she occupies in the economic, political and social stratification. These stratification types are related to each other (Carocci 2011: 367).

Social mobility is further defined as individuals’ upward or downward movement between one class to another (Crossman 2015). Upward social mobility (USM) is a future-orientated belief system in which the past tends to be regarded as inferior or inappropriate. These belief systems are a specific set of social values and norms that express the importance of improving social standing and material benefits over time. It is an important spur to action, as people set about improving their own material and social conditions and also represent this to others (Bosman 2015: 35). This representation is displayed in the public realm and is experienced as ‘those that have and those that do not have’. This display illustrates inequality.

**Inequality in South Africa**

Social conditions in South Africa are unequal. This inequality, which accompanies greater social differentiation, is a growing field of research in South Africa (Krige 2015: 104). This research holds the continued debate around the conceptions of class (Crankshaw 2005; Schlemmer 2005;
Alexander et al. 2013; Melber 2013) that are contrasted by neo-Marxist and neo-Weberian class stances. The Marxist approach is based on production that results in ownership and different classes, while the Weberian approach is based on consumption and class (Nijman 2006: 759). In South Africa, these approaches have shaped research on how black middle-class individuals react on “newfound wealth” and social mobility (Seekings 2009; Southall 2004). Migration is a “total social fact” (Rotariu and Mezei 1999: 5), that changes and shapes rural communities and “social mobility trajectories” (Alexandru 2012) of communities. These changes then build new mind sets. The interaction of these mind sets and connections, influenced by the desire for USM, affects people’s behaviour. This section is necessary as most studies investigate experiencing architecture or urban form, but very few focus on cognition, culture and values towards a specific phenomenon, such as everyday objects (security fences), that become people’s extension of their personality (identity) and status (social position) in their community. This phenomenon is shaped by a world view.

Cognition, cultural awareness and values

The cognition and awareness of location and culture are influenced by a specific world view. Furthermore modern individuals live within changing contexts (globalisation, urbanisation and consumer culture) that do not always support the indigenous knowledge of ethnic groups and their customs - especially in the South African context.

According to Swanwick (2009: 6), cognitive studies investigate how people process information in their surroundings to give meaning to what they see. Cognitive theorists focus on individuals’ essential readiness to contemplate change in their own situation (Bandura, 1982; Fishbein and Ajzen 1975). Walinga (2008: 319) states that readiness models highlight the fact that (some) people may think that they can change their situation. Furthermore, Gabora and Aerts (2005: 69) defined an “integrative framework” to explain how phenomena evolve. This framework views evolution as a process of context-driven actualisation of potential (CAP). This process can explain different phenomena within a variety of disciplines.

According to Gabora and Aerts (2005: 81), a person experiences CAP in different ways, depending on the context. This process is potentially present every time the person has, for example a “contextual encounter” (cultural experience within a built environment). The use of ethnic motifs or patterns can change with incremental adaptations from a rural to a sub-urban context. These adaptations are the result of the particular changes of the context (cultural built environments) in which they are used, such as with fences in Bloemanda.

Individuals furthermore own internal models of the world of ideas and artefacts that are revealed in a particular context (Gabora and Aerts 2005: 83). The brain also provides the infrastructure of individual change (in a specific context), and also provides the mechanism that internalises (to create, update and re-sculpt) the internal models influencing the world view and consciousness. Nunn (2006: 184) explains consciousness as the extent to which a person is aware of internal models and then actively direct the internalising process.

One effect of cognitive ability was illustrated by Paterson (2008: 428), who found that the class of destination of upwardly mobile people (with above-average ability) was influenced much more than people of below-average ability. Carocci (2011: 387) furthermore believes that not only rational and conscious plans, but also people’s unconscious, habitual or incorporated motivations, should be examined. This is reflected in the built environment as an empirical
reality through examples of house construction and decoration of fences in an environment where neighbours experience it as either good or bad. This awareness may influence their own consciousness and future choices regarding construction materials for their own houses and even esthetical elements for decoration and security. This awareness and cognition develops into and affects people’s normative beliefs and even values.

Furthermore, as a means to solve the extent of choice available to the individual, Goudappel (1985: 179) developed the urbanistics concept as “a systematic inventory and classification of the elements that rule our active interventions through physical planning” illustrated in man’s relationship with his built environment. In essence, urbanistics aims to merge the framework of reflection (thought) with that of action by providing an understanding that the various interactions that exist, could take place in any given situation (Steyn 1989: 10-25). Regarding the urbanistics concept, Goudappel (1985: 180) differentiates between three levels of reflection (thinking), which might help to understand the connection between values, theory and practice, namely:

- the ideo-structure, dealing with the ideals and values (personal) which directs human activities;
- the superstructure, dealing with theoretical and organisational thinking (norms); and
- the infra-structure, dealing with the physical appearance of things (objects) and phenomena.

For this article these connections endeavour to explain the links between behaviour and normative beliefs.

**Behavioural and normative beliefs**

According to Ajzen and Fishbein (1980: 3-6), in their “theory of reasoned action”, a person’s intention is a function of a social influence determinant together with a personal nature determinant. In their theory, they explain that attitudes are functions of beliefs. If someone believes that showing a specific behaviour will lead to mainly positive outcomes, the person will have a positive attitude towards acting out the behaviour. If someone believes that performing the behaviour will lead to mainly negative outcomes, he or she will then have a negative attitude. These are behavioural beliefs. Furthermore, social norms are different sets of beliefs. These beliefs are held by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980: 7-8) as normative beliefs, that people take into account in specific environments. Individuals have to see the outside world for what it is, in order to internalise the expectations of others. Therefore: “By taking perception as a model for architectural thought, a student of architecture (which I strive to be) struggles to become a seer. The art of seeing brings a certain joy in engaging the revealing of the world. Yet it remains in our ‘perspective’ from which we form our own visions” (Holl, et al. 2006: 29).

Normative beliefs will furthermore cause the social pressure put on a person’s behaviour to comply or not comply with social norms (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980: 8). Social pressure has a significant influence on individuals’ own normative beliefs such as the use of representation of fences or the colours that the home-owners paint their houses and household objects.
The research of Hinds and Sparks (2008), illustrated that attitudes and behaviour are linked. The behaviour of people interacting with land and landscape reflects direct engagement in land management and indirect usage through recreation. To explain individuals’ behaviour, we need to understand, in each case, the relative importance of a person’s own attitudes and the normative factors which influence their intentions. In this analysis, ‘attitudes’ refer primarily to individuals’ own subjective perspectives, while ‘norms’ refer to social values to which an individual may be exposed (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980: 6).

Values, attitudes and behaviour

Otto Klineberg (1961: 507-508) defined attitudes as “individuals’ states of readiness to undertake certain kinds of responses”. Oppenheim (1992: 175) stated that attitude “is a state of readiness, a tendency to respond in a certain manner when confronted with certain stimuli”. This can happen by imitating others or because of various personal experiences. These stereotypical images in our heads influence our perceptions and behaviour. Thus: “We restrict the term attitude to a person’s evaluation of any psychological object and we draw a clear distinction between beliefs, attitudes, intentions and behaviours” (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980: 25).

Ajzen and Fishbein (1980: 27) explained that action and measures of attitudes are strongly related. The role of an individual includes the attitudes, values, and behaviour (supported and held by the society) and all persons occupying a certain status. Attitudes and behaviours are influenced by role and status which are related to variables such as respondents’ class, age and other demographic factors (Klineberg 1961: 374).

Figure 1
Analytical diagram illustrates how personality and cultures influence perceptions (source: Bosman 2015: 29).
Figure 1 illustrates Linton’s understanding of ‘status’ as the place of an individual in a particular system occupied at a particular time and ‘role’ as the collection of cultural forms linked with a specific status (Klineberg 1961: 363). These include values, behaviour and attitudes associated by all people, occupying this status. Status is associated with an occupation (socio-economic position) or prominent social figure (role) in the community, as may be displayed by a particular motif on a fence.

Klineberg (1961: 363) confirms that a “society keeps itself going” through the phenomenon of expected behaviour roles. In addition, at an individual level our age, sex, class and some factors, such as motives and emotions, are influenced by social interaction. According to Klineberg (1961: 374 - 437), motives and emotions are influenced by “the relation between culture and the individual (personality) and the performance of the various roles which “a community assigns to its members” (Klineberg 1961: 437). Members in a group situation tend to conform. Even non-conformists often conform to different and unconventional norms.

In this article, the propensity of individuals to accept the customary behaviour of their communities in an uncritical way - and then to conform - is an important feature of social reality (Klineberg 1961: 457). Modern communities exist within a changing context, which includes factors such as globalisation, urbanisation and consumer culture that tend to undermine the indigenous knowledge of ethnic groups. Traditional customs such as the annual decoration of house murals are, therefore, losing ground, but may be replaced by decorating fences (even if not annually).

Ajzen and Fishbein (1980: 7) explain individuals’ attitudes and subjective norms to improve our understanding of intentions. For example, when a person has a positive belief that an action of behaviour will be to his/her benefit or for the good of society, the person will have a positive attitude towards that behaviour. Zimbardo and Leippe (1991: 32) formulate five categories of reactions to a social object The behaviour itself (to replace an old fence with a new fence).

a) Behaviour intentions (expectations of how their next fence should look like or what material should be used).
b) Cognitions (ideas that inform actions and beliefs such as knowledge about decorative symbols, motifs and patterns or artisan skills and available materials).
c) Affective responses (emotions or ‘feelings’ that reflect one’s attitude at the level of physical responses, such as sentiment, or a need for exhibition of identity and cultural background).
d) Attitude (the overall summary evaluation that includes all components).

In this analytical scheme, the concept ‘attitude’ is, therefore, a collective term that combines a complex set of phenomena, from cognition, values and sentiments to intended behaviours and eventually carrying out a specific action. Significantly, “attitude” includes the behaviour itself, since almost all behaviours include a strong element of attitude – even if it is only instructing an artisan welder how to design your steel security fence.

**Results and discussion**

A qualitative analysis was used to establish the attitudes of some inhabitants of Bloemanda in Bloemfontein-Mangaung. Bloemanda was established in the late 1980s as an upcoming black
middle class neighbourhood, next to the Vista University campus (currently the University of the Free State South Campus). Houses with above average decorated fences were selected where only the homeowners (not other family members) were present. Twenty homes were approached, of which ten homeowners were interviewed with questionnaires. No respondents received any information before the survey was conducted. All ten interviews were completed in one day.

Based on the attitude model of Zimbardo and Leippe (1991: 33) the questions in the questionnaire were structured and formulated to address the “attitude”, the “behaviour intentions”, “cognitions” and “affective responses’ of the respondents, while their behaviour (decorated fences) was observed.

Figure 2 presents the adapted model of attitudes towards traditional decorative patterns. The ‘behaviour intention’ can be that the person does or does not want to use traditional patterns on the security fences currently or in future. The ‘actual behaviour’ is that the home owners commissioned the fences with a specific design in mind. The ‘cognition’ can be that the person knows from experience, that the designs have traditional decorative patterns or not, while the ‘affective response’ is that these are just security fences without cultural meaning (no emotional or cultural connection).
Fence constructed from 1998 to 2002 (photographs by the author).

Behavior intentions: Respondents were asked to “tell me more about the fence”. Fences constructed from 1998 to 2002 (figures 3-5) showed different steel profiles (mainly re-bar rods and twisted 10 mm diameter solid mild steel rods) combined with or without face brick work and were between 1200 – 1500mm high.

Fence constructed from 2002 to 2010 (photographs by the author).

Fences constructed between 2002 and 2010 showed more “devils fork palisade” profiles (see figure 6), curved flat bar (see figure 7) and hollow square and rectangular mild steel hot rolled profiles (see figure 8). These fences are between 1500 – 3000mm high combined with or without face brick work.

These designs were influenced by the owners in collaboration with local artisan welders and bricklayers from the direct or neighbouring suburbs. All respondents reported the importance of privacy and or security as the main reason or intention of these fences. It seems that the anonymous respondents reacted well to the attention that their fence received, which reflected on the importance of status in the neighbourhood.

Attitudes: In the follow up question respondents were asked to state if it is “good to have decorations on a fence”. The respondents’ answers differed from “Yes, it will give more value when we sell the house” and “the feedback from the neighbours and the public is good” to “it is not really that important” to “the main reason is for security and not decoration” or “I do not like the flower patterns”.

82
Figures 9 & 10
Fences of a home owner who felt strongly about her own identity in the community
(photographs by the author).

Cognition: Respondents were also asked to elaborate on “how do you see or think about
the fences” in this neighbourhood? The respondents were outspoken about their own and
other previously old poorly constructed fences; that their next fence will be better than the
neighbour’s fence; that they were very happy and proud of their current beautiful fence that gets
a lot of attention from friends, neighbours and the public; that this helps to create a comfortable
environment for themselves; that it gives them identity in the community (figures 9 and 10); or
that their upgraded fence influenced the neighbours to improve their own fence. One respondent
replied that she “would like to have an even better, more decorated fence” which supports the
notion that “Living up to the Joneses” is alive and well in this neighbourhood as in many other
neighbourhoods. Three of the ten respondents held the traditional connectedness (situatedness)
in high regard and were very proud that other people do acknowledge it. A possible explanation
is that the respondents’ ethnic background confirms their cultural role (significance) in the
neighbourhood, but also their status (as role models), since these fences were expensive to
commission. It seemed that by confirming their ethnic background (such as Sesotho and Zulu)
they were filled with pride and joy if objective (outsider) comments were made about it.

Affective responses: In the final question respondents were asked to share “how do you
feel about the fence?” This question probed the emotion, sentiment and beliefs further, if the
previous question did not allow the respondents to open up more about ‘feelings’.

Figures 11, 12 & 13
Fences with flower patterns and Basotho hat
(photographs by the author).

Two of the ten respondents did not like decoration (such as flower patterns) on the fences.
Three of the ten respondents enjoyed the decorative patterns but did not feel that they hold
any traditional connection for them. Five of the ten respondents felt very comfortable with the
decoration, two of these respondents where very proud that their Basotho tradition (figures 11,
12 and 13) was recognised in the patterns and decoration (flower pattern and Basotho hat) and one of the respondents explained his fondness of motor car wheels as reflected in the wheel patterns. He also commented on the similarities with rickshaw cart wagons (figures 14, 15 and 16) as a reminder of his Zulu background in KwaZulu Natal.

![Figures 14, 15 & 16](image1)

One home-owner’s fence with Zulu rickshaw wagon wheels (photographs by the author).

These findings confirm the argument that homeowners in the same neighbourhood can engage in the same esthetical expression regarding their houses. This expression reflects social standing and identity (conformity and imitation) on the one hand and cultural significance (role and status) on the other hand, while the communal security situation in the study area is represented in these unexpected lavishly decorated boundary fences. The availability of skill and materials supports the situated and residential phenomena as shown in the different mild steel profiles, materials and variety of details. These unexpected expressions of decorated security fences become metaphors for the homeowner’s culture and identity in a predominant Sesotho speaking neighbourhood.

**Conclusion**

The contribution of this article is to discuss and illustrate the connection between identity, culture, role, status, conformity and imitation of security fences. Through the celebration of everyday objects it not only holds cognition, normative beliefs, attitude and behaviour, but also memory. This research illustrates how individuals in the same situation react in a unique contextual way to protect themselves against outside dangers, while living up to the social standing or what can be considered as the norm in the neighbourhood. This situatedness of the environmental (safety and security) is how homeowners increasingly protect themselves with fences (built environment) on the one hand. On the other hand, there is a need by individuals and home owners to beautify their homes while establishing identity, status and their social role within the context (cultural and built environment). It can therefore be stated that this design process consists of more than just decoding information. Culture and identity have a considerable influence, as illustrated in attitudes, behaviour and value regarding situated neighbourhood safety and fence decoration. This should be acknowledged and explored in similar research efforts.
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Gerhard Bosman a lecturer at the University of the Free State completed a PhD at the University of the Free State, South Africa. His qualifications include: DPEA-Terre (CRATerre-ENSAG, France); B Arch and B Arch Stud. (University Free State, South Africa); member of the Chair UNESCO-Earthen architecture; member of the South African Council for the Architectural Profession (SACAP) and a member of the South African Institute of Architects (SAIA).


**Exploring the Goddess: religion and inclusivity within the Hindu community in South Africa**

Nalini Moodley  
Tshwane University of Technology  
E-mail: moodleyn@tut.ac.za

This paper examines the interaction of religion with ethnic and racial discourses in contemporary South Africa and questions how this process has affected the projection and development of Indian identity in this country. In particular it looks at the established Indian identity as it has traversed the apartheid years to contemporary post-apartheid South Africa and the articulation of religious and ethnic identity in public spaces of engagement. The paper explores the use of Hindu iconography, especially the goddess Kāli, in the art works of artist Reshma Chhiba which has recently attracted critical discussion and debate within the Indian community. The paper asserts that Hindu iconography when used in contemporary art practices create platforms for critical engagement within a community and country which perpetuates stereotypical understandings of the Indian minority yet provide a view into obscure artistic knowledge amongst this community.  

**Key words:** religion, ethnicity, Hinduism, minority

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Indian art presents a test case for the western understanding of India, as its aesthetic standards differ so much from those of the classical west (Mitter 1977: xviii). Partha Mitter goes on to say that in early European explorations of Asia, travellers saw “Hindu sacred images as infernal creatures and diabolic multi-limbed monsters” (1977: xviii). While Mitter’s view may be outdated and predictable, some Indian art in South Africa is still interpreted in this way, though not only from a western perspective but by the local Indian population as well.

Although the Indian population has been resident in South Africa for 155 years, no meaningful study has been done of contemporary Indian art. Although little research has been undertaken with regard to the nature of the Art History curricula throughout South Africa, an observation of all university curricula via their websites reveal that even Indian art history of the sub-continent is not considered in any significant form.  

While this paper acknowledges the limited scholarship of Indian art in South Africa, it further recognises the limited engagement with art produced by South Africans of Indian ancestry. The discourse of the work of artist Reshma Chhiba is such an attempt. The paper argues that Hindu South Africans, while distanced from India, maintain Hindu practices and ritualistic beliefs with a great deal of effort and commitment as a mark of their Indian identity.
and cultural pride. As a result of their minority status Indians tend to jealously guard their place in this nation and entrenched an identity imbued with religiosity and cultural tradition. Bhabha recognises this phenomenon as culture recognizing itself through their projections of ‘otherness’ (Bhabha 1994:17). South African Indians have been known to hold on to practices and beliefs which are no longer practiced on the Indian subcontinent. Hence the desire to hold on to a sense of Indianness which originated in India but no longer is practiced or visible to the outsider.

While very similar practices may have diminished in contemporary India they are in South Africa modified and transformed to make it meaningful. Over a period of one hundred and fifty five years detached from India, the Indian community in South Africa has created a community more Indian than those from India. South African scholars such as Pratap Kumar, Brij Maharaj, Goolam Vahed, Rehana Vally, Devarakshanam Govinden, Ashwin Desai and many more have discussed this diasporic community extensively. It is therefore not the focus of this paper to discuss these issues but rather focus on the reception of contemporary art within this Indian community and within a transformative South African agenda. It is also important to acknowledge that there is little scholarly work done on the reception of Hindu iconography in contemporary South Africa.

**Religious prerogative**

In August 2013 the Post newspaper, a paper with an Indian readership, and headlined as “The Voice and Heart of the Community,” placed on its front page an article titled “‘Come Inside’ Kāli is not blasphemy, it empowers women, says artist.” This was a response to an art exhibition by artist Reshma Chhiba which comprised a 12 metre deep walk-in vagina which represented the power of the Hindu goddess Kāli. Chhiba was asked to produce a work for the disused Women’s Jail section at the Constitutional Hill in Johannesburg and she decided to use the opportunity to make a statement about women power. According to the Post, the Gauteng artist “turned heads with her controversial exhibition at Constitution Hill Women’s Jail in Hillbrow” (Johannesburg) entitled *Come Inside* (figure 1). People were invited to walk, without their shoes, into a construction made of 100 metres of red cotton fabric with the soundtrack of screams and mocking laughter. According to the article Chhiba stated that the vagina construction and extended tongue are metaphorical for defiance and power which goddess Kāli represents for her. As a Kāli worshipper she adds that Kāli is misunderstood and perhaps the reason why so many people choose to worship other deities. She goes on to say that Kāli is an empowered figure and women should tap into “their Kāli and experience it” (Post 2013 August 21-25). For Chhiba, women today, especially Indian women, tend to be dominated and submissive to their partners. But she suggests that the empowering is for women of all race groups and for women all over the world. The screams and the mocking laughter which assault the visitor as they walk through the work recall the space of the jail which once incarcerated and stifled women. For Chhiba these sounds mock the space by laughing at it thereby negating the silent oppressive power of these places which held many women including Winnie Mandela in 1958 and 1976 (Post 2013 August 21-25).

The work received both positive and negative attention, from varied spheres of the South African public. The website *Voices of Africa* (2015) [full reference in endnote] reveals the tension that surrounds this work. For example while the women’s jail was praised as a place of pain, suffering and reverence, some thought the imagery disrespected the legacy of the place, others thought it blasphemous and others still reflected upon it as a shocking piece of something that
should be private. Another website artdaily.org, reveals how, for example a 24-year-old female security guard at the former prison thinks the art work is pornographic. On the other hand, Gender Links, a lobby group promoting gender equality in southern Africa, praises Chhiba’s artwork for re-igniting discussion on a subject normally avoided. In yet another site, This is Africa, the voice of the new generation, a summary of the debate and discussions around what is undoubtedly a controversial work is made explicit. Clips from ENCA (a 24 hour television news station that broadcasts throughout Africa) highlight the type of coverage this exhibition attracted. While many praised it for its political message it was also considered far too explicit and blasphemous. As it was displayed during women’s month some found it empowering. It seemed to create an opportunity for reflection on the embedded issues of sexual violence in South Africa. Statistics show that there is approximately 65 000 rapes annually, rampant domestic abuse against women, increasing cases of corrective rape and an alarming gap between men and women in contemporary South African society.

While the dialogue and controversy were encouraging for the artist, it also exposed the limited appreciation the Indian community has of contemporary art.

The article in the Post cites Ashwin Trikamjee, the president of the South African Hindu Maha Sabha who states that Chhiba has ignored a basic principle as a Hindu. He says: “one cannot use religious symbols in the pretext of creativity and in the process blaspheme against Hindu belief. Creativity in art is not a licence to use the Hindu religion to legitimise the artists’ symbols no matter what they may be. I find her art to be offensive.” The South African Hindu Maha Sabha’s website reveals that it is an organisation founded in 1912 and aims to create unity amongst all Hindus in South Africa. It further states that it is the mission of the South African Hindu Maha Sabha (SAHMS) to work towards the advancement of all members of the Hindu faith among all Hindu linguistic groups in a spirit of respect, unity and brotherhood (http://www.sahms.org.za/). This organisation is hereby viewed as the mouth piece of the South African Hindu community regarding creativity in South Africa. The strong position of the organisation also reveals that it should have particular knowledge about the creative arts which will inform their comments. Unfortunately it is evident that they have a limited knowledge of fine art and the varied nuances thereof and how the image can be used as a tool for education, enlightenment and entertainment. Many attempts made to elicit a comment or response from the SAHMS was unsuccessful and therefore their position will not be further explored in this article.

Throughout the history of art there are moments when artists used their creativity to communicate with or about “God” or a spiritual force. The rock paintings of the San in southern Africa reveal this connection as do the ancient rock temple sculptures of India. The stained glass windows of Early Christian art also reveal the use of art to communicate the narratives of the bible to the illiterate. The paintings of the Renaissance also reflected on religion, while the art of the east has always maintained a fundamental connection with the divine. India in particular is a veritable showcase of art and religion through temple design, art and as sculptural representations which abound in all corners of that sub-continent. With such a rich legacy existing between art and religion it seems inevitable that religious images find expression in contemporary society.

In South Africa religion and art have always been comfortable bedfellows. A perusal of South African art reveals that while artists used their work to strive for liberation many also used a non-racist paradigm of religious imagery as a means of challenging, exposing and undermining the apartheid ideology (Pissara 2011: 79). Works from artists such as Noria Mabasa, Johannes Mswanganyi, Sokhaya Charles Nkosi, Jackson Hlungwani, Wim Botha and Fikile Magadlela used appropriated religious imagery to challenge institutions such as the
church and shift accepted norms of religious conduct. South African artists of Indian origin like Ravi Govender, Kiren Thathiah, Faiza Galdhari and Selvan Naidoo also use/d religion as subject matter (Moodley 2013: 195-218) to comment on society or explore their personal engagement with religion. Within this context ‘Come Inside’ (figures 1-5), an installation by Chhiba raised the ire of the Hindu community.

Figure 1
Reshma Chhiba, *Come Inside*, 2013, fabric, comforel, wool, batting, wood, swords, light, photographic print, sound installation, Approximately 12m deep x 3m wide x 2.5m high (source: courtesy Reshma Chhiba).

Figure 2
Detail of the installation (source: courtesy of Reshma Chhiba).
Figure 3
Reshma Chhiba, *I am Kāli, I am Black* (ed. 1/5), 2013, Digital print on fibre paper 81 x 68.3cm (source: courtesy Reshma Chhiba).

Figure 4
Detail of the projecting tongues (source: courtesy Reshma Chhiba).
A brief overview of Hinduism in South Africa might be useful here to position the shift that *Come Inside* created.

The majority of Indians in South Africa came as indentured immigrants. Between 1860 when the first ship the Truro arrived and 1911, approximately 150 000 Indians arrived as indentured migrants. Following this group came the “passenger” Indians who travelled to South Africa of their own volition. While the “passenger” Indians were mostly from Gujarat and came as traders, the indentured were mainly from the south of India speaking Tamil, Telegu and Hindi. According to Gopal et al (2014: 31) migration was not an easy decision for Hindus as there was concern about being polluted by mixing with outsiders and by losing the Hindu relationship with the sacred geography of India, with its gods, goddesses, holy rivers and places of pilgrimage. This created an attachment to the motherland of India with Hindus making up approximately 85% of the indentured population.

Many followed the Vedic tradition which sought to discover the divine will and establish as part of religious expression social wellbeing through prayer and ritual. Hence many devout Hindus attempt to fulfil their religious responsibilities through an observance of fasts, ceremonies, vows, auspicious days and temple offerings (Arkin et al, 1989: 154). Within the Hindu spectrum of worship there is a categorisation of the Hindu body into the traditional subdivisions of Saivism, Vaishnavism and Shakti denominations. Sections of the Hindu community also display tantric forms of worship which include the *Kavadi* festival as well as *Kāli* worship. While *Kavadi* attracts hundreds of thousands of devotees across the country *Kāli* worship attracts a much
smaller number. The worship of the goddess or Shakti worship found expression in KwaZulu-Natal with dozens of temples dedicated for worship. The Goddess is sometimes worshiped in her elevated form as an independent Supreme Deity where she is the dynamic force of the universe. The Goddess is also seen to be benevolent, auspicious and nurturing as well as “fierce, wild destructive and punishing, displayed in her independent forms such as Kāli…” (Diesel 1998: 74). Kāli worship is evidently not well documented but there are some scholars like Diesel (1998) who has conducted some research on this practice in South Africa. She states that Kāli is viewed as carnivorous, demanding blood sacrifices and associated with disease, death and decay. The Goddess Kāli represents both the light and dark aspects of life, expressing the truth that life and death, creation and destruction, are inextricably linked, all being essential for continuity and new life (1998: 75). She is also associated with certain attributes which are often seen in various iconographic representations as seen below (figure 6). Some of these attributes such as the protruding tongue, the large knives/blades, the dark voluminous hair and the colour red, have been appropriated by Chhiba in *Come Inside*.

![Goddess Kāli](free internet)

**Figure 6**

**Goddess Kāli** (free internet).

**Positioning Indian Identity in South Africa: Art Practice and ethnicity**

Identity within the Indian community in South Africa is diverse and complex. The multitude and proliferation of languages and religions make simple categorisations within this community difficult. The construction of a homogenous identity is problematic as this subtle nuanced community embraces simultaneous politics of sameness and difference.

In South Africa, people of Indian origin classify themselves in one of three classificatory ways: South Africans, Indian South Africans or South African Indians. According to Singh (2008: 5) each of these categories is politically loaded for historical reasons, as they demonstrate “the individual’s affinity or lack of it either to India or to South Africa.” Here they are making a statement about how they wish to be seen in the context of their identity construction and perhaps their personal beliefs. The South African Indian community is made up of people from different regions in India who initially spoke a range of languages like Hindi, Tamil, Urdu, Telegu, and
Gujerati which was accompanied by varied beliefs and customary practices. However, over time this diversity had to succumb to the more powerful hegemonic force of colonialism which gave way to new forms of, what Singh refers to as, “Indo-South African identities” (ibid:6). This form of identity is based on the retention of socio-cultural and religious practices which originated in India and which was adapted to the new conditions that South Africa afforded them as a minority community.

Pallavi Rastogi (2008: 1) also offers some interesting perspectives. She argues that Indians desire South African citizenship in the fullest sense of the word. To her the Indian community requires citizenship as a national anchorage as a result of their erasure in both the apartheid and post-apartheid consciousness. She defines this quest for belonging as an “Afrindian identity” which contextualises an Africanisation of Indian selfhood and an Indianisation of South Africa (Moodley 2012: 25). Kumi Naidoo (1997) also applies this term when he proposes that Indians ought to re-imagine themselves as a specific construction of the African continent and indigenise themselves without negating their rich and diverse heritage.

Questions of identity as posited by Bhabha (1994: 64) suggest that there can never be an affirmation of a pre-given identity, but the production of an identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image. Fanon in his essay *Fact of Blackness* (1967) describes this transformation as the trauma of being forced to look at himself from the outside and then failing to recognise the image with which he is presented. As a result of being objectified by South Africa’s gaze, the identity of the Indian manifests as an externalised image projected onto them by external forces and without their control thereby preventing the colonised from inventing themselves in their own way. It is worth noting here that the resilience of the Indians bolstered their sense of community to ensure greater result in terms of their political resistance, cultural awareness and promotion of language, music and dance. This has had a unifying effect which cemented a community that was only to acquire full citizenship one hundred years after their first arrival in South Africa (Moodley 2012: 27).

Citizenship for the Indians in South Africa was a product of 100 years of struggle against white hegemony. The varying discriminatory practices experienced by them during colonialism and apartheid in South Africa ensured that this heterogeneous community be tagged with homogenous labels. Common agendas against their oppressors led to their mobilisation as a cohesive whole and enhanced their opposition to the state. In this context religious, linguistic and the varying social boundaries between these Indian people were abandoned in favour of a common goal.

The South African Indian has been confined to the race lexicon of the South African population, resulting in dislocation and relative isolation from other allocated identities. The racial/ethnic/colour divide functioned in relation to White self-definition as a binaristic ‘otherness’ identified by post-colonial theorist Bhabha (1994: 64). Bhabha suggests that the very identification of these differences acknowledges the colonizer’s “invitation to identity” – who you are is who he (the colonizer) says you are (1994: 64). This has had considerable implications for the Indians in South Africa, as the community became increasingly homogenized in fulfilling colonial and apartheid expectations.

Homogeneity had and has implications for the artists of Indian ancestry who realize/d these expectations based on the particularities and characteristics of being Indian. The homogeneity of the community was established since the arrival of the indentured Indians when, as a diverse population group representative of numerous castes and cultural divisions, they were summarily
referred to as either Madrassi or Calcuttie, which reflected their port of departure (Vally, 2001: 122). Such was the beginning of the homogenous identity with which Indians in contemporary South Africa have been designated. Such expectations failed to conceive of the impact of cross-culturalism or modernity. Further, the Indian South African could conceivably therefore constantly re/produce an identity which assumes the role of that pre-given identity, further fulfilling the expectations of the colonial centre.

In Apartheid South Africa, Vally (2001: 79) argues, the need for communities to differentiate themselves from each other arose not only from imposed racial differentiation, but also from a need to assert their specific identity. This was prompted by the need to align culture, society and politics to provide access to specific rights assigned to that particular group and thereby to pose a collective challenge to the state that denied them their rights (During, 2005: 152). Such a position prevails even in present post-apartheid South Africa: the struggle for identity occurs within a troubled pluralistic society where communities need to locate themselves and assert their difference and visibility. New legislation like the affirmative action policy, employment equity and Black economic empowerment are means of redefining and rectifying the economic imbalances of the past. Black economic empowerment for example is a tool to help bridge the economic gap between the Black and White communities in South Africa and to realize a degree of equality. The need for these policies exposes the instability of identity in South Africa as a post-Apartheid country.

Anthony Appiah (in Back and Solomos 2009: 670) argues that once the racial label is applied to a people, ideas about what it refers to, ideas that may be much less consensual than the application of the label, come to have a number of social effects. Appiah further explains that these labels have not only social effects but also psychological effects which shape the way people conceive of themselves and their identity.

As a result, Indian identity is often called into question even by the very community to which it is attached. Over time and as this community succumbed to the powerful hegemonic force of colonialism and Apartheid, it gave way to what Singh (2008:6) refers to as new forms of Indo-South African identities. He explains that these Indo-South African identities are based on adaptation to the conditions that South Africa offered Indians as an ethnic minority. This identity construction was defined by its opposition, where one’s own image was presented and represented from the “inescapable roundabout way of otherness” (Escobar in Araeen et al., 2002: 147).

While During (2005: 145) suggests that identity, in this case Indian identity, is created by placing individuals into groups who share the same traits and consequently reduces individuality within that group, Appiah (in Back & Solomos 2009: 671) argues that there is an “intentional conformity” to existing expectation in the process of reinforcing that identity. Hence, as a result of being a collectivizing notion, the projection of identities upon groups has created a sense of dislocation from the broader collective, namely, the South African population. In this way Indians are seen to be more “Indian” than their Indian counterparts in India.

The Indian community in South Africa seems to be entrenched in what Edward Said calls the “subject race” dominated by a race that knows them and knows what is good for them better than they know themselves. Is it perhaps the community’s desire to stay as pure, cultured, respectful and subservient as the coloniser thought in order to have imbibed the desire to not stir, not challenge the status quo and not allow spaces for others to engage in activities which go against the grain of normality and conformity? This problematizes the notion of identity
by questioning the frame of representation where the community is confronted with itself and thereby sees its difference. This is the moment in a collective history that seems to shake the very foundation of conformity, resulting in a self-protective functionality which leaves the insider feeling like an outsider. These are some of the issues that arise from the exploration of the work of Chhiba and the reaction to it from the Indian community.

Identity is dynamic and therefore constantly changing and evolving and in a country like South Africa this evolution is necessary and an important activity for a community to engage in. However, by merely relegating challenges to blasphemy without engagement is short-sighted and cause for concern within the minority community itself.

In the Indian community’s desire to be recognised as one that has shaken its “apartheid gaze” (Richards 1991: 101) and create a new agency and new strategy of representation, it clearly struggles with the exploration of new forms of representation which are ambiguous and controversial. This struggle highlights a fundamental desire to explore the role of the artist in this society.

In the early accessions to gallery and museum collections during the early 1990s art produced by Indian South African artists were closely aligned to the Indian modernists formalist traditions of the sub-continent. Further, works by artists like Kiren Thathiah, Ravi Govender and Raison Naidoo reflect these nuances while bearing content that is heavily laden with Hindu and Indian individualities. Here the works, either in subject matter or title, comment on various aspects of Hindu/Indian culture, tradition and related idiosyncrasies. However, it is critical to note that the works reflected in the collections of the galleries like the Durban Art Gallery and the Tatham Art Gallery have no shock value and could be considered fairly conservative and produced by artists of a somewhat “different” perhaps subordinate generation. Chhiba can be considered part of a cohort of artists who experiment with a variety of media from traditional prints, photography, painting and sculpture to more radical installations, video productions and temporary site specific engagements. Come Inside as an installation needs to be experienced against the context of Hindu Kāli worship and the confines of the women’s jail and the related history. However, Come Inside was viewed by the Hindu community as blasphemous and as an insult to the community as a whole. This perspective which was made clear on various community radio stations and newspapers, showcases the fundamental desire Hindus have to be identified as a respectable, upstanding, conformist group.

Conclusion

Thus while contemporary Hindu South Africans are exploring and understanding their developing new identities they are doing so from a perspective still steeped in historical memory which clings to religion and traditional cultural practice as a pure unchanging focal point. While Chhiba herself is a devout Kāli worshipper she created a work based on her deep and personal understanding of the Goddess. South Africans of Indian ancestry are practicing their art and religion in a changing environment with a rich yet troubled history. Finding a platform to engage is proving to be part of the process of art making. An aspect to consider in this process is that the Indian audience might be ‘young’ to contemporary art practice as the focus for a large proportion of the population is not the fine arts but the arts of music and dance. Arts appreciation within the Indian community is largely limited to the creation of beautiful paintings of the pantheon of Gods and this limitation impacts on the reception of Indian art practitioners in the country.
While Chhiba used this experience to reflect on her practice, many others might find this reception impacting negatively on their careers. Thus artists of Indian ancestry are placed in a volatile position; they desire to be accepted and secure some patronage yet at the same time demand freedom of expression.

Notes

1 For example the University of Witwatersrand syllabus states that the course is based on the social history of historical arts in Europe, Africa, Asia and the Middle East. It examines the relationship of art production and reception to social structures, political power and religious formations in selected societies from these different geographical regions including Pagan and Christian Europe, African indigenous religions, African Islam, Hindu India and possibly Buddhism. The course does not cover these extensively, but explores relationships between the construction of art (knowledge) and the exercise of power in the discussion of selected examples (from rules and Syllabuses 233-234) from http://www.wits.ac.za/files.pdf.

2 Indian South Africans make up 2.7% of the South African population.


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Nalini Moodley is the Assistant Dean and Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of the Arts at the Tshwane University of Technology, South Africa. She completed her PhD in Art History at the University of KwaZulu-Natal which focused on the visual art produced by Indian South Africans from 1961 to 1999. Her present areas of research include minority politics, race and identity politics and the challenges of being Indian in post-apartheid South Africa. She has published papers on Hindu artists, Indian dance and the position of Indians in the new South Africa in peer reviewed journals.
Situating through representation: two community centres investigated through Lefebvre’s *Spatial Production*

Madelein Stoffberg  
University of the Free State  
E-mail: mmmmarkram@gmail.com

In South Africa, underdeveloped areas such as townships are marked by monotonous 51/9 and Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) housing with little provision made for public infrastructure. Development in these areas aims to provide the necessary facilities such as schools, clinics and community centres. Apart from these services, settlements lack public spaces signifying identity and meaning. Community members’ configuration of spatial perception is crucial for constructive actualisation and appropriation. Situatedness is investigated through the representation of space of community centres as perceived by the users. The concept of representation of space is comprehended as defined by Lefebvre in his spatial triad of perceived, conceived and lived reality. Two case studies, the Helenvale multi-purpose resources centre and the Ubuntu community centre, situated respectively in Helenvale and Zwide, (both are developing areas on the outskirts of Port Elizabeth), were investigated. Spatial perception pertaining to these community centres was analysed using mapping and sort-charts, and supported by semi-structured interviews. Findings focus on representation of space formed by the relationship between context and architecture.

**Key words**: community centre, context, identity, meaning, representation of space

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Situating public buildings in South Africa

Currently, public infrastructural development is focusing on the needs of previously disadvantaged communities. Projects focus on urban renewal and individual buildings, providing the necessary services and connections to transport nodes. Apart from the functional requirements, these buildings play a key role in shaping community members’ perception of their environment as “place” within a larger urban environment. The representational value of architecture in developing communities should be reaffirmed, allowing effective actualisation of public infrastructure.

In order to discuss representation of space as a link between architecture and place, the spatial perception of community members ought to be defined. Spatial perception of place is
to be delineated as memory and identity. The impact thereof on the alterations of imaginary boundaries that form new connections and networks, should be considered. Furthermore, architecture’s contribution in shaping a place’s identity should be investigated.

The structure of this paper is divided into four sections. The first section comprises of the theoretical investigation of *The Production of Space* (1991) written by Henri Lefebvre in 1974, of which the English translation was only completed in 1991. Although the focus is on representation of space, Lefebvre’s spatial triad will be placed in context. In addition, aspects of representation of space in relation to the configuration of place, are discussed. Secondly the two case studies are described, although some readers may already be familiar with these community centres. Apart from outlining the functional value, this section focuses on architectural elements and their respective contexts, which are related to the discussion on representation of space. Thirdly, a brief description of the methods used to gather data follows along with a description of the data collected. This highlights the fourth section discussing the findings, which investigates the relationship between context and architecture.

The four sections provide an overview of a case study investigating representation of space as perceived by community members. Representation of space is viewed as perceived space, influenced by Representations of Space designed by architects, which forms community members’ lived reality of Spatial Production. Representation of space is further clarified in a discussion in which themes that investigate place, architecture, meaning and identity are identified. The purpose of the case study is to apply the theoretical constructs to a “lived reality”, describing the state of public architecture in underdeveloped areas. Community members’ perception of place should not be neglected, as it informs transport- and social networks, reconfigures boundaries and shapes communities’ unique identity.

**Representation of space as defined by Lefebvre**

Henri Lefebvre (1901-91), a French philosopher, developed his oeuvre in two main directions: an examination of Marxism (1968) and social reality of urbanisation (Stanek 2011). Apart from other seminal literature such as *Critique of Everyday Life* (Lefebvre 2002) and *The urban revolution* (Lefebvre 2003a), *The Production of Space* is the most significant to consider in terms of spatial perception of architecture.

As the main subject in *The Production of Space*, Spatial Production can be described as “a social formation (mode of production), and as a mental construction (concept)” (Elden, 2004: 185). Lefebvre investigates the concept of Spatial Production through a triad of Spatial Practice (lived reality), representations of space (conceived space) and representation of space (perceived space). Spatial Practice is clarified by Lefebvre as “embodying a close association, with perceived space, between daily reality (daily routine) and urban reality (the routes and networks) which link up the places set aside for work, ‘private’ life and leisure” (1991: 38). Representations of space are described by Lefebvre as Conceived Space, thus abstract two-dimensional space. For Lefebvre, it is

the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers, as of a certain type of artist with a scientific bent – all of who identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived. This is the dominant space in any society (or mode of production). Conceptions of space tend, with certain exceptions...towards a system of verbal (and therefore intellectually worked out) signs (1991: 38-39).
Representation of space in contrast, is the symbolic as perceived by users. The representational is space directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of ‘inhabitants’ and ‘users’, but also of some artists and perhaps of those, such as a few writers and philosophers, who describe and aspire to do more than describe. This is the dominated – and hence passively experienced - space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate. It overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects. Thus representation of space may be said, though again with certain exceptions, to tend towards more or less coherent systems of non-verbal symbols and signs (Lefebvre 1991: 39).

Perceived space is read from the lived reality (Spatial Practice) of conceived space (Representations of Space), but focuses on the materiel (conceived space) qualities rather than material. The material refers to “words, images, symbols [and] concepts” opposed to materiel being the “collection procedures and tools for cutting-up and re-assembling” (1991: 137). As described in Triads and Dyads (2003b), Lefebvre refers to a ‘triadic structure’ consisting of a three-way relationship in which the ‘Other’ always exists. In order to distinguish this triad from only being an ideology, one must consider the concrete in order for the “lived, conceived, and perceived realms [to] be interconnected, so that the ‘subject’, the individual member of a given social group, may move from one to another without confusion” (Lefebvre 1991: 40).

From The Production of Space (Lefebvre 1991), five themes have been identified to investigate representation of space. These themes include displacement, condensation, archetypes, centring and objectification. Displacement is described by Lefebvre as “metonymy, the shift from the part to the whole, and contiguity” (1991: 225). This describes the relationship between the Gestalt and context, simultaneously viewing spaces as the “enumerate parts of space” and “space as a whole” (1991: 295). This confirms the approach to Spatial Production where “active elements within space and the genesis of space as an ensemble (that) is at once social and mental, abstract and concrete” (1991: 295). Condensation, in turn, investigates “substitution, metaphor and similarity”, (1991: 225) focusing on the symbolic value of abstract and concrete space. Archetypes refer to material qualities as part of perceived space rather than materiel as conceived space. Effective centrality is “directional, relational, situational-qualitative, fluid and dynamic” (Lefebvre 1991: 142). These centres are linked to time and named places, often typologically defined. Lefebvre lastly describes objectification as “markers of rhythm, as reference point, [and] as centres” (1991: 211).

The first three themes of displacement, condensation and archetypes can be linked to memory whereas effective centrality and objectification to identity. Memory is delineated as the perceived. Participant’s perception is investigated through contextual references or integration and the symbolic. Effective centrality and objectification in turn situates space within place, allowing typological associations to form points of orientation.

Two case studies: the Helenvale multi-purpose resources centre and the Ubuntu community centre

The chosen case studies are located in the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality (NMBM), with the Helenvale multi-purpose resources centre in Helenvale, adjacent to Gelvandale, and the Ubuntu community centre in Zwide, Extension 2 (figure 1). Both these settlements were planned as part of the Group Areas Act (Robinson 1996). Helenvale was designated mainly for Coloured residents whereas Zwide was allocated for Black residents. Even though the restrictive boundaries of
apartheid have been eradicated, these areas are still peripheral and far removed from services and business opportunities. Although these two communities are situated relatively close to each other, cultural discrepancies are significant. Helenvale has a predominantly Coloured Afrikaans population of 96%, and Zwide has a 92% Black isiXhosa speaking population (according to data from the 2011 Census).

The two case studies were chosen for geographic proximity as both are located in the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality (NMBM). This is not for ease of comparison as the cultural and socio-economic circumstances of the two areas differ significantly, but rather for their distinction as public and private funded centres. Furthermore, both centres received recondition from the South African Institute of Architects (SAIA); the Helenvale multi-purpose resources centre received a Merit Award, and the Ubuntu community centre received an Award of Excellence.

Helenvale’s multi-purpose resources centre was designed by local architects, Matrix cc Urban Designers and Architects. Initially the client was Helenvale Urban Renewal Project (HURP), but due to political problems the project was taken over by a new client: the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality (NMBM). Although the project was publicly funded, it formed part of a German funded project focusing on the development of streets, public spaces and infrastructure. The project was completed in 2013 through the inclusion of Small Medium Macro Enterprises (SMME) allowing local contractors to be involved in the construction of the multi-purpose resources centre.

The program of the multi-purpose resources centre comprises of a multi-purpose hall, a smaller community hall and offices. These spaces are linked by an internal corridor designed as a community street (Herholdt 2013). Adjacent to the multi-purpose hall, a sports field and caretaker’s residence is provided (figure 2). At the entrance, the plaza links the community
street with the urban park, forming part of Helenvale’s upgraded public space. Between this connection, the urban park and entrance forms an axis with two sculptural elements (figure 3). An aluminium mural at the entrance, with bronze figures of children skipping rope, forms the one axis point. Opposite the mural, in the urban park, is a statue of a child flying a kite, which is a representation of one of the local residents. Both these artworks relate to traditional activities, as can be noted by the numerous kites caught in the overhead electric cables.

Figure 2
Ground floor plan of the Helenvale multi-purpose resources centre indicating functional organisation (source: drawn by the author from Herholdt 2013).

Figure 3
(Left) The entrance to the community centre on one end of the axis, formed by the aluminium mural (source: the author).

Figure 4
(Right) The other axis point is defined by the sculpture in the urban park (source: the author).
Zwide’s Ubuntu community centre was designed by Field architects (although an American based firm, Stan Field was born in Port Elizabeth). The client, Jacob Lief of the Ubuntu Education Fund, a Non-government Organisation (NGO), commenced with an education program in 1991. After utilising a hall in Zwide, a new community centre was added adjacent to the existing building.

The community centre consists of a multi-purpose hall, flexible meeting space (figure 5) and a multi-functional space on the first floor (figure 6). Educational facilities include three class rooms for pre-primary education, an outdoor play area and a resource facility with computer access. Health related facilities include consultation rooms, a pharmacy and counselling offices. Apart from the multi-functional space, offices and a boardroom for staff are provided on the first floor. On the rooftop, a community garden is tended by community members forming part of an educational program and food scheme. All the different functions are linked by a corridor, allowing access from the street, to parking space and to the internal courtyard.

Figure 5
Ground floor plan of the Ubuntu community centre indicating functional organisation (source: drawn by the author from Herholdt 2013).
Although both these buildings function as community centres, their users differ significantly due to their funding and management structures. The Helenvale multi-purpose resources centre is publicly funded, with three staff members which include the secretary, cleaning staff and caretaker. Programs provided at the centre are presented by external parties. In addition, the community hall can be rented by the community for private functions.
In contrast, the Ubuntu community centre is privately funded with a structured educational and health program for clients. Community members residing within a seven kilometre radius from the centre, must apply in order to be admitted into the educational program or for access to health care services. As a private organisation, spaces are not rented out to community members for private functions. Over 60 staff members are employed, of which the majority resides in bordering communities.

Space corroborated through mapping and sort-charts

For each case study, 20 community members participated in an in-depth semi-structured interview assisted by sort-charts and a mapping exercise. The latter were used to visually communicate the participants’ spatial perception as they often struggle to verbalise these abstract concepts.

Sorting as a physiological method is mostly used to collect data about cognitive structures relating to meaning and perception (Harloff 2008) How to Sort: A Short Guide on Sorting Investigations, www.methodofsorting.com). The use of questionnaire sorting is detailed herein. A paper questionnaire variant and a HTML form variant are introduced. Their equivalence among each other and with traditional sorting of paper cards is tested for two sets of items. These sets consist of 20 colors and 25 web-site content items. Results from paper questionnaires and HTML forms do not differ significantly. Contradictory results were obtained on the equivalence of paper card sorting and questionnaire sorting, depending on the item sets. Another variant allowing for placement of items in several clusters simultaneously has been termed fuzzy sorting (Harloff and Coxon 2005, How to Sort: A Short Guide on Sorting Investigations, www.methodofsorting.com). In architecture, this method is used to gather information on visual data relating to participants perception thereof. Spatial perception can be connected to specific spaces, archetypal elements and activities. The correspondence analysis, a multivariate statistical technique, further allows the researcher to form connections between categorisation of different participants. Correspondence analysis is mostly used for testing associations between two data sets, where the observations consist of frequencies in a cross-table, and the findings are portrayed on a bi-plot which has two dimensions or axis (Greenacre 1984).

For both case studies, participants were required to order 15 images, focusing of various aspects of the community centre, into 5 categories of enclosure, welcome or inviting, identity, symbol and community. After collection of data, the information was tabulated to be graphically represented through a correspondence analysis, producing bi-plots illustrating the relationship between different categories and images (as seen in figures 9 and 10).

From the correspondence analysis of Helenvale and Zwide, three themes are interrelated; condensation, archetypes and displacement (indicated on figures 9 and 10) as identity, symbol and welcome/ inviting to reduce the level of difficulty for participants).

Although participants related most to the concept of community (which represents displacement, effective centrality and objectification), no relationship were formed with other categories. Participants associated public space and related activities with community. Helenvale’s participants associated the themes of condensation and archetypes with building elements and activities whereas Ubuntu’s participants associated these themes with form.
Figure 9
Correspondence analysis of Helenvale’s sort process (source: the author).

Figure 10
Correspondence analysis of Ubuntu’s sort process (source: the author).
The mapping exercise required participants to identify seven categories relating to the theoretical themes. Questions asked during the semi-structured interview related categories back to theoretical themes. On the superimposed map (figures 11 and 12) of data gathered from the 20 participants, several functional spaces were identified such as the community centre, the school, commercial activities and numerous streets. It is significant that these spaces were not only identified for functional activities but rather for their representational and symbolic value.

Opposed to Helenvale, Ubuntu’s participants identified the adjacent school, library, commercial activity and open space opposite the centre as nodal points. These facilities were mostly identified for their functional contribution towards educational activities. Little representational or symbolic value was identified.

Figure 11
Superimposed data from completed maps of Helenvale participants (source: the author).
Discussion: the relationship between context and architecture

These communities developed as segregated residential areas and often lack cultural references that situate place within a larger urban environment. Architecture is thus significant to create an identity, not imposing on the existing, but rather reading from the context to disclose the underlying.

From the investigation of representation of space, three points were highlighted that reflect the relationship between context and architecture. The three key aspects could be described as follows: Firstly, the importance of form and archetypes to create a reference or nodal point. Secondly, the contribution of artworks to the formation of memory and identity. Thirdly, the relationship between perception of place, pedestrian activity and locality.

At both community centres, archetypal elements and aspects of effective centrality has been identified. At Helenvale, two archetypes that were identified include the tower and covered walkway to the entrance. In addition, these elements were also seen as a reference point in the community, being the only clear orientation point in the vicinity. Apart from the tower being lit at night, the inscription thereon gave community members a sense of situated place. In contrast to Helenvale, no archetype was mentioned at Ubuntu, but the structures form as an abstract metaphor was identified as directional and reference point. The distinct form is in contrast with
the ordered geometrical grid of the Zwide community, which related to growth and opportunity according to participants. This differentiated form was furthermore perceived as relational with the centre of Port Elizabeth. The centre acts as reference point for development, removing the perception of the periphery and difference.

Effective centres, as directional and relational points, can be created either through archetypes or form (an aspect of Spatial Practice). As the archetypes are symbolic elements, words or concepts, they tend to be more concrete and identifiable. In contrast, form rather proves to be an object or point of reference with symbolic value relating to abstract concepts.

The architects of the Helenvale centre proposed the addition of two artworks with no prescribed theme, allowing the artist to determine the subject. No meaning was inscribed upon the works, but rather portrayed the activities of children in the area. Kite flying is a distinct activity associated solely with Helenvale for several generations, becoming a strong identity for Helenvale’s residents. Apart from this reference, both sculptures became memorial points after construction. Due to the high rate of gang violence, several community members had died tragically. Numerous deaths included young children who were in the cross fire or in the way of stray bullets. Artworks thus have the ability for meaning to be ascribed from the lived experiences of community members.

Both sculptures at the Helenvale multi-purpose resources centre are supportive of the concept of condensation. As metaphor, these artworks represent the children of Helenvale and activities associated with the area. Meaning is further attached to the sculpture of the child flying the kite, becoming a memorial space for many residents. Due to the sculptures’ lack of abstract representation or symbolic meaning, community members were able to form their own similarities or substitutions as points of condensation.

Although both buildings were initially designed as community centres, the Helenvale centre is utilised by the community members in close proximity whereas the Ubuntu centre provides services to preapproved clients only. While Helenvale is used by residents residing within walking distance from the centre, Ubuntu’s clients travel by bus from afar. Through pedestrian activity, Helenvale’s users have a clear understanding and familiarity with the environment. This creates several nodal references and networks with the centre. Opposed to Helenvale, there is less pedestrian activity related to the Ubuntu centre. Networks are formed with the adjacent school and library as they are utilised for educational activities by the Ubuntu staff. Clients therefore have a vague contextual reference.

Pedestrian activity opposed to vehicular transport plays a significant role in participants’ spatial perception of the environment surrounding the community centre. Residents’ familiarity with the environment shaped through pedestrian activity helps to construct a clear notion of displacement. This forms an association with surrounding infrastructure, not focusing on functional utilisation, but rather on identity and meaning shaped through lived experience. Concerning vehicular access, the centre is considered in relation to the greater urban context. Network formation is significant, connecting the centre spatially while reconfiguring boundaries. The centre also becomes a point of objectification, forming an effective centre and reference point.

**Conclusion**

Architecture has a significant influence on community members spatial perception. It alters existing spatial configurations. Meaning and identity as archetypal elements are key aspects
forming reference points being directional and relational. But even more significant is the implication of form on place, and how this element of Spatial Practice can become a metonymy of effective centrality.

In townships lacking identity and character, public infrastructure can contribute to create a positive spatial perception of the environment. Meaning can be reinforced through artwork, providing a framework for community members to form memorial or symbolic references. This notion is further reinforced by the structure’s unique identity, not mimicking the existing built fabric, but allowing participants to project their own abstract interpretation thereof.

Peripheral communities are often defined by set boundaries, which cannot be altered. Although architecture does not have the ability to remove these boundaries, it can create new networks and alter the relating perceptions thereof. The notion of place and identity can be strengthened through local pedestrian networks. In contrast, networks with the greater urban context can be reinforced when these community centres become a node within a larger network.

Works cited


Madelein Stoffberg enrolled as a student of Architecture at the University of the Free State, obtaining BArchStud. degree in 2007, a BArchStud (Hons) in 2008, and a MArch in 2009. Appointed to her current position as a part-time junior lecturer in the Department of Architecture immediately on graduating, she completed her PhD. in 2015 titled Lived Reality, Perception and Architecture: Two Community Centres Interrogated through the Lens of Lefebvre’s Spatial Triad.
Architectural phenomenology and the tyranny of lived experience

Hendrik Auret
University of the Free State
E-mail: hendrikauret@gmail.com

Noted contemporary architectural phenomenologists like Steven Holl, Juhani Pallasmaa and Alberto Pérez-Gómez insist on the fundamental role “architectural experiences” play in safeguarding meaningful “situatedness”; our ability to dwell in the places we create. The architectural value of lived experience seems unquestionable, yet the German philosopher, Martin Heidegger – whose writings have been instrumental to architectural phenomenologists – had doubts about this line of inquiry. In one of his “private manuscripts”, later published as Contributions to Philosophy (of the Event), he contemplated whether the notion of “lived experience” could be used to mask the ominous self-willing character of the modern technological mindset. Heidegger’s cautionary words may represent a serious indictment against the route followed by architectural phenomenology. This paper questions the primacy of “lived experience” in architectural phenomenology by interpreting the overlooked implications of Heidegger’s initial reservations. In contrast to the prevailing focus on lived (primarily spatial) experience, it argues that there is a more fundamental way to think about situatedness and experience ensconced in Heidegger’s concept of care (Sorge).

Key words: architectural phenomenology, Martin Heidegger, lived experience, care (Sorge), situatedness

The capacity of works of architecture to ‘move us’ saturates the marrow of architectural phenomenology. The foundational role that the idea of ‘lived experience’ plays in this regard seems well established. Indeed, the writings of some of the most noted contemporary architectural phenomenologists, like Steven Holl, which focus on “experiential phenomena” (Holl 2009: 16), Juhani Pallasmaa on engagement with the ‘architectural image’ as an “experiential singularity” (Pallasmaa 2011: 55), and Alberto Pérez-Gómez on the need for architecture to “[engage] a lived world of experience” (Pérez-Gómez 2009: 26), insist on the fundamental value of the ‘phenomenological experience’ of architectural space.

In a rather unquestioning way, I used to accept the devotion of architectural phenomenology to the primacy of lived experience as motivation for designing buildings as works of art. However, in 2007 I visited a building that eventually compelled me to re-evaluate the claims of these leading architectural phenomenologists.
Steinkopf Community Centre and the primacy of experience in architectural design

Steinkopf Community Centre (1980), designed by the celebrated South African architect, Roelof Uytenboogaardt (1933-1998), is located in one of the remotest parts of South Africa. Consequently, many architects and architecture students “know” the building from plans and a series of photographs taken shortly after completion and published in the journal, *UIA International Architect* (1985).

These striking images (figures 1-3) show a sequence of dynamic elements. Firstly, the floor contains various stepped levels that create an ordered, yet dynamic, topography. From this ‘landscaped floor’ an appropriately stereotomic mass of arches, buttresses and choreographed walls, rises toward a soul-stirring tectonic canopy which diffuses the harsh cosmic light flaying the barren surroundings. The images promise a building which offers remarkable and moving spatial experiences.

In addition, the design was informed by community participation. Uytenboogaardt claimed that the “knowledge [of the local people, especially in terms of climate] guided the architectural [sic] and planning adopted in the Community Centre” and that the “programme and siting were
established with the community”. The community also played a significant role during the construction process: “All basic components and material used in the construction, except for the pre-fabricated steel frame, were manufactured in the community” (Uytenbogaardt 1985: 12). When seen in light of the multifarious post-Apartheid efforts at creating community nodes within South African informal settlements, this building seemed like a stroke of genius; years ahead of its time, with much to offer contemporary design.

A visit to this secluded building is akin to an architectural pilgrimage. The awe-inspiring landscapes one has to traverse when travelling from Bloemfontein seems like a series of lessons in appreciating the frugal abundance one anticipates at journey’s end: the red sand and dunes of the Kalahari sparsely dotted with vineyards gives way to the endless space of the Bushmanland, only to be re-animated by the jumbled piles of rocks (stapelrotse) strewn haphazardly across this expanse. Upon entering the foothills of the Kamiesberge lies the town of Springbok; to the south extends the long road to Cape Town and to the north, Steinkopf.

The building is not hard to find. Steinkopf is a small town. The parallel ridges of the roofs are visible from afar as a grouping of straight lines contrasting with and yet accentuating the koppies to the west of the town. It seems like one has been “prepared” to meet the inspiring austerity of this building, but as one approaches a distressing realisation dawns.

Simply put, the Community Centre (figures 4 -5) was unused, vandalised, and replaced by a new, but distinctly unimaginative pyramid-roofed community centre a few blocks towards the south. Despite its soaring forms creating a “shaded world” (Uytenbogaardt 1985: 12) in contrast to the desolate region, despite community consultation and the adoration of architects, the building has failed as a community centre. Why would a building offering such sophisticated spatial experiences so quickly fall into disrepair? Could it be that the value of experience has been overstated?
The ground of experience

The roots of the contemporary appreciation of “phenomenological architectural experiences” of manmade places is often traced back to the writings of the influential German philosopher, Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), and one of the most celebrated and also one of the first ‘architectural interpretations’ of Heidegger’s philosophy by the Norwegian architect and theorist, Christian Norberg-Schulz (1926-2000). In an essay published in 2007, David Wang and Sarah Wagner produced a “map of phenomenology” which presented the work of Norberg-Schulz as the creation of “phenomenological experiences [in] special places”. They then criticised this approach as a translation of Heidegger’s work which is not “quite right”, since Heidegger “describes the immediate phenomenological experiences of all persons, regardless of [locality]” (Wagner and Wang 2007: 11). However, a close reading of Heidegger and Norberg-Schulz’s writings reveals a much more nuanced stance towards the value and primacy of architectural experiences.

In his first book which drew heavily on the psychology of perception, *Intentions in Architecture* (1963), Norberg-Schulz discussed human experience in terms of its role in shaping the perceiver’s *schemata*: a term used to describe typical acquired mental structures that provide fleeting experiences with a measure of stability (1963: 37-48). After his pivot towards phenomenology during the 1970s – a move inspired by reading Heidegger’s work – Norberg-Schulz tried to engage experience as a function of the ‘structures’ of orientation and identification (1980: 42). In his last work, *Architecture: Presence, Language, Place* (2000), Norberg-Schulz went even further and searched for the “ground” of experience in terms of his understanding of Heidegger’s concept of pre-cognition (*Vorverständnis*) (Norberg-Schulz 2000: 75 & 125). From his lecture notes it is clear that Norberg-Schulz (already by 1989) was trying to extend beyond the ‘spatial experience of special places’:

> the essences or general properties of the world are not known as a result of experience, but are “given” through [Heidegger’s concept of] “pre-cognition” or *Vorverständnis*, that also comprises man’s own nature. As modes of being-in-the-world these essences do not exist, in the sense of having concrete presence, but are only “grasped” through their infinite manifestations ... As a mode, the essence is not an ideal form, but rather a structure of relations to other essences (Norberg-Schulz 25/11/1989: 9-10).

Thus our comprehension is given ‘in advance’, rather than being composed of experiences. Human beings are able to poetically grasp or recognise a situation as a whole, rather than having to ‘construct’ it from individual experiences intentionally arranged according to *schemata*. However, Heidegger went even further than questioning intentionality. He proposed that pre-cognition always already stems from the very “being of the intentional” (1925: 178-180/129).

In his pioneering work, *Being and Time* (1927), Heidegger formulated humankind’s existence as concerned participation in a concrete life-world. He called this intimate entanglement “being-in-the-world” (1927: 52-62) and referred to the human being living (or entangled) in this world as *Dasein*: the one who is there. Heidegger argued that the significance of human intentionality – the way we relationally engage with our world – is grounded in “the fact that in its being this being is concerned about its very being” (1927: 12). The fact that this ‘intentional being’ is ‘in’ the world has spatial implications, but to reduce “being-in” to spatiality would miss *Dasein’s* deeper reality. Heidegger asserted that the “existential meaning” of the “being of *Dasein*” depends on the fact that we care about our existence (1927: 41). In Heidegger’s formulation, care has a dual significance; it engages the way people simultaneously ‘take care’ of things, and are ‘concerned about’ things. *Dasein* is in the world as care (*Sorge*).

Already in his 1925 lecture course, published as *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena*, Heidegger proposed a shift from intentionality to the interpretation of *Dasein*.
as care: “what phenomenology took to be intentionality and how it took it is fragmentary” (1925: 419-420/303) due to the “neglect of the question of the being of the intentional” (1925: 178-180/129). Heidegger believed that care engulfs the being of Dasein. It follows that any “understanding” (including pre-cognition) depends on care. For Dasein, “understanding is ... a way of primary being toward something, toward the world and toward itself” and therefore “understanding and more so the way of enacting understanding, interpretation, are determined by [the] being of Dasein, by care” (Heidegger 1925: 413-415/299). Care is the ground of human intentionality; it determines understanding and serves as the precondition for meaningful experience. Not only did Heidegger advocate a more primal alternative to experience as the condition of its very possibility as intelligible, he also warned against the unquestioning reliance on experience.

**Heidegger’s warning and the tyranny of lived experience**

In contrast to the route followed by contemporary architectural phenomenology, Heidegger was sceptical of the way lived experience could be appropriated. In his ‘secret manuscript’, written between 1936 and 1938 and published much later as *Contributions to Philosophy (of the Event)*, he made an ominous prediction. Essentially, Heidegger was concerned that the notion of “lived experience” could be distorted to supplant and hijack our concerns, while simultaneously masking the menacing role of “machination” (1938:107-108/85) within the modern mindset.

Heidegger (following Hölderlin) viewed the modern era as a particularly “destitute time” (1946: 89) dominated by the efficiency of modern technology. He argued that the technological age depends on a “calculative” demand for practicality (1946: 127; 1959: 420). He called this perilous situation the Gestell (1953: 325) (often translated with the word ‘enframing’) of modern technology. Heidegger was not critical of technology per se. Technology, when understood in its original Greek sense of *techne*, is a vital “way of revealing”. Both the ‘craftsman’ and ‘artist’ employed *techne* as a “bringing forth”; a moment of revelation by means of *poiesis*, or making (1953: 318). The fact that this conception of technology, as something poetic, strikes modern beings as strange illustrates what is disturbing in modern technology. Modern technology, by “challenging” and “setting upon”, reveals beings as “stockpile” and Dasein as “human resource”. The letting-be (*Gelassenheit*) of *poiesis* has been replaced by a demand for “maximum yield at minimum expense”: a “challenging-forth” in search not of “truth”, but of “efficiency” (1953: 319-323).

Heidegger proposed that the effects of machination are shrouded by three tendencies: “calculation” which presents experimentation as objective experience, “speed” which obscures the importance of patiently waiting and demands manufactured ‘novel experiences’, and the “massive dissemination” of data which obscures the worth of “the rare and the unique”. The common characteristic shared by these tendencies is the “denuding of every disposition” which ultimately makes meaning impossible by categorising all that is distinctive (Heidegger 1938: 119-124/95-98). These tendencies have become pervasive in the contemporary world. The question is whether architectural efforts to make meaningful experiential spaces have also succumbed to the sway of machination?

First of all, it is the inability to question, or indeed, the seeming unquestionability of the primacy of ‘lived experience’, which should alert us to this possibility. Heidegger argued that the “[eradication of] question-worthiness” is a characteristic of the kind of calculative thinking which supports machination (1938: 109-110/87). Thus the influence of machination is evident...
in the way we unquestioningly value lived experience. Under the sway of calculative thinking we become “orderers” and “users” of (objectified) experiences, rather than grateful participants.

When “lived experiences become objects of lived experiences” (Heidegger 1938: 494-495/389) calculation reaches its zenith, and the concerned relationship implied by being-in-the-world is once again supplanted by the idea of an “experiencing subject” assessing the “experiences offered by objects”; the concerned being becomes a consumer of experience.4 Taking care becomes mere ordering, and care itself becomes a “hunt for lived experiences” (Heidegger, 1938: 123-124/98). Experience becomes commodity. Is this not the same enticing promise underpinning both the so-called ‘Bilbao Effect’5 and ‘green design’s’ dependence on ‘efficiencies’; acts of ‘number-crunching’ revealing the ‘truth’ of meta data?

Heidegger’s astute observation is that “machination explicitly draws back behind that which seems to be its extreme opposite [while remaining] completely and utterly … under its domination” (1938: 126-127/101). Thus the ‘phenomenological’ focus on lived experience carries within itself the negation, masking and suppression of the concerned being of the intentional: the tyranny of lived experience.

In contrast to this self-willing domination, care provides access to reality by poetically drawing near. Only as long as there is care – “as long as Dasein is” – can there be “an understanding of being” and a ‘discovery’ of “innerworldly beings” (Heidegger 1927: 212). The Heidegger scholar and translator, Richard Polt, summarised the interdependence of Being and Dasein (in terms of things) as follows: “Real things are independent of us, but what it means to be real depends on us”. It is, therefore, possible to say that “care … provides the context that gives meaning to reality” (Polt 1999: 82). Magda King, one of the early6 interpreters of Being and Time, argued that if we could not “let [things] touch us, concern us, [or] be relevant to us” then meaningful ‘discovery’ would be impossible (2001: 72). The experience of the meaning of reality is grounded in the concerned nature of Dasein.

**Lived experience and the art of care**

What then, should we demand from architecture, if it is to manifest the meaningful care-saturated situatedness of human life? In his book, *The Ethical Function of Architecture* (1997), Karsten Harries, proposed that works of architecture need to safeguard human life against two fundamental “terrors”: the “terror of space” and the “terror of time” (1997: 226). I consider Norberg-Schulz’s (Heidegger-inspired) formulation of architecture as the “art of place” (2000: 28) a persuasive response to the ‘terror of space’. However, in terms of the ‘terror of time’, I would like to point out that there is a fundamental difference between Heidegger and Norberg-Schulz’s positions.

Norberg-Schulz’s approach to the temporal unfolding of Dasein’s existence was based on the work of his mentor, the Swiss historian and architecture critic, Sigfried Giedion (1888-1968), who understood life as a “tension between constancy and change” (Giedion 1962: 8). In his own work, Norberg-Schulz perpetuated Giedion’s understanding of “time [as] the dimension of constancy and change” (Norberg-Schulz 1980: 32). However, this interpretation of time is at odds with Heidegger’s position. In the same way that ‘lived spatiality’ is something more than ‘mathematical space’ arranged around x, y and z axes, ‘lived time’ implies something more than ‘continuity and change’. Continuity and change offers its own gifts; it is a convenient analytical tool and Norberg-Schulz deftly used it to describe the way place and especially the
spirit of place “remains the same even if [new architectural interpretations of this enduring totality ensures that] it is never identical” (2000: 356). However, if architecture is to become the “art of the experience of living” (2000: 356) – or, as Norberg-Schulz more succinctly described in Norwegian, *livskunst* (1995: 183) – then architects not only need to engage with the way people live in space as place, but also need to address the question of lived time.

From what I have argued, it follows that the terror of time is further exacerbated by the tyranny of lived experience. Surprisingly, it is exactly as a safeguard against this terror/tyranny that Heidegger’s concept of care provides a thought-provoking alternative. For Heidegger, care is not indicative of a moral stance, but denotes the fundamental way in which we live in time.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger developed the temporal implications of care and defined care as “being-ahead-of-oneself-already-in (the world) as being-together-with (innerworldly beings encountered)” (1927: 192). This convoluted term stems from Heidegger’s formulation of the “structural moments” (1927: 335) of care: understanding (*Verstehen*), attunement (*Befindlichkeit*), falling prey (*Verfallen*), and discourse (*Rede*).

Attunement describes the way *Dasein* is “always already” (Heidegger, 1927: 137) “thrown” into the world in a certain way: the “mood” (1927: 135) *Dasein* is already in. Attunement is therefore grounded in *Dasein*’s past. Understanding entails “projecting toward a potentiality-of-being” (1927: 336) and therefore reaches towards *Dasein*’s future. Falling prey to the prevailing ‘moods’ and ‘understandings’ of the ones sharing *Dasein*’s being-in-the-world describes *Dasein*’s usual “absorbed” (1927: 175) forgetfulness of being. This is not, however, a ‘negative’ (in moralistic terms) aspect of *Dasein*’s being. In fact, falling prey confirms *Dasein*’s concerned involvement in its ‘there’. Amid the things of the world *Dasein* is “being-together-with” and falling prey therefore “has its existential meaning in the present” (1927: 346). The interaction of understanding, attunement and falling prey make up “the complete disclosedness of the there” and is “articulated by discourse” (1927: 349). This does not mean that these ‘ecstatic moments’ exist separately or follow each other chronologically. Instead, Heidegger argued that *Dasein*, in everyday being-in-the-world, encounters these aspects as a unified structure of care which he called the “ecstatic unity of temporality” (1927: 350): “Every understanding has its mood. Every attunement understands. Attuned understanding has the characteristic of entanglement. Entangled, attuned understanding articulates itself with regard to its intelligibility in discourse” (1927: 335).

This interpretation of lived time as care allows for the way in which *Dasein* understands the situation as a particular “Moment” that reaches ecstatically into the future and the past in order to reveal the significance of the ‘there’. The “ecstatic unity of temporality” (1927: 350) discloses the “there” (1927: 364) as a meaningful situation to a concerned being-in-the-world. The notion of ‘lived time’ engages time as the “horizon of the understanding of being” (1927: 17) and *Dasein* as a being that lives ecstatically within time as care. Thus experiencing moments is not primarily a function of experience, but emanates from *Dasein*’s concerned being. The way we live in time can most appropriately be described as care. Instead of being restricted to a certain dimension of time, experience is structured by care as an ecstatic mode of living; resolutely open to future, past and present.

However, to insist on “care” as a moral obligation is to misunderstand it. Care is not the same as the metaphysical “ought” (Heidegger 1935: 149-152/210-214) – one ought to do this or that. Instead, we are, whether we like it or not, concerned. Heidegger was adamant that care should not be seen as the “cares of life” (1927: 57), or a “special attitude”. Care is prior to any
‘attitude’, ‘experience’ or ‘ethics’. It describes the way we always already exist in a world, and explains why existence can be meaningful (or meaningless) for beings like us.

It is convenient to misconstrue Norberg-Schulz’s art of place as a method to build the experience of the place. Thus making the architect into what the American architect, artist and theorist Jorge Otero-Pailos (2010: 173) derided as “the romantic definition of the architect as authorial genius-creator”. While this is an over-simplification, it is important to move beyond the idea that the art of place defends the primacy of the experience of the place. In contrast, it is possible to create a symbiosis between understanding architecture as the art of place and the concerned being of the intentional. Heidegger’s formulation of care, coupled with his reservations regarding experience, indicate a more coherent and appropriate way towards the meaningful making of places. Buildings are not merely a concretisation of the experience of the place, but speak most convincingly and appropriately about the concerns governing our lived situatedness. Thus Norberg-Schulz’s art of place may be supplemented by an “art of care”. Dwellers not only live in a spatial reality between earth and sky as Norberg-Schulz was fond of saying, but equally importantly, between birth and death. In turn, this way of thinking also provides a way to question the enduring value Norberg-Schulz ascribed to places.

The art of care is fundamentally concerned with the way Dasein’s life is drawn close to the situation in which life takes place. This is a relationship crucial to architecture as a work of Dasein. It is not that the place must be derived from temporality as care, but that care in all its ecstatic temporality illuminates the concept of place as developed by Norberg-Schulz in a fundamentally new way. Amid care place is revealed as a spatio-temporal life-care-place totality; a whole in which care draws life and place into contiguity, life is emplaced mortal care, and place is a lived spatio-temporal “region of concern”. When a work of architecture ‘moves us’, then it can be understood as an ecstatic engagement of life and place drawn close in care: those moments in which works of architecture reach into our existence and, to paraphrase the famous words of Le Corbusier (1923: 141), “touch our hearts”.

The art of care proposes that it is most appropriate to think of our spatio-temporal existence as a life-care-place totality; a situation in which lived space is best understood as place, and lived time is understood as care. This kind of thinking leaves room for the continuity and change of concrete places between earth and sky, the concerned ecstatic moments of mortal life between birth, death and divine, while acknowledging the way people ultimately appropriate places as regions of concern.

The Steinkopf Community Centre and the concept of care

Could this kind of thinking have altered the fate of the Steinkopf Community Centre? Other localised factors probably also played a significant role, but the art of care suggests that the design of the centre fundamentally failed to resonate with the collective care of the community. Furthermore, it is possible to argue that the mismatch between the imposed design and the particular region of concern is grounded in the way Uytenbogaardt engaged the temporal dimension of architecture: “For my part, architecture is a continuum of past, present and future and the great search is for the timeless qualities of architecture” (Uytenbogaardt 2006: 31). From what I have argued, it follows that the ‘search for the timeless’ disregards the ecstatic nature of mortal lived time by yearning for abstract absolutes; imagined enduring continuities which conveniently exclude the multifarious regions of concern entangled by Dasein’s Sorge.
Instead of presenting architecture in terms of inter-epoch continuities, the art of care seeks to engage with the intra-epoch nature of dwelling. In terms of the art of care, dwelling can most appropriately be described as an ecstatic relationship of care between concerned ‘ways of life’ and places as ‘regions of concern’. This is the gift of understanding ‘time’ as ‘lived time’. In contrast to the experience of ‘timeless’ continuities, the notion of ‘lived time’ acknowledges the way people live ecstatically within time as care; attuned to histories and memories, projecting certain designs into the future and revealing particular instances as wonder-saturated moments.

**Conclusion**

Care draws life and place into contiguity. It represents an always present, but usually untapped, human capacity; a way of thinking, able to move beyond the individualism of this isolated though digitally ‘connected’ age without threatening the unique ways in which Being overcomes us. If care makes something like meaning accessible to people, and if meaningful architecture – i.e. the moving way in which a particular building is inspired by the lived situatedness of dwellers – is our goal, then a deeper appreciation of care seems essential.

If this is the case, then the “hunt for lived experiences” (Heidegger, 1938: 123-124/98) may be one of the most beguiling red herrings that contemporary architecture would need to overcome; a ruse designed to divert our attention from that which is nearest. If architects desire to understand the making of meaningful place in all its spatial and temporal abundance, if they desire their works to become *livskunst*, then they need to ‘re-remember’ that mortal lived space is always already place and mortal lived time is always already care. In the face of the tyranny of lived experience, architectural *livskunst* consists in building *Dasein*’s emplaced care. Heidegger’s cautionary words may indeed represent a serious indictment against the route followed by architectural phenomenology.

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**Notes**

1 See, for instance, the discussion of the close links between ‘architectural phenomenology’ and ‘experience’ by Jorge Otero-Pailos (2010: 14-24 & 262). However, Otero-Pailos (2010: 19) also displays the pervasiveness of the misleading idea that Heidegger’s work dealt primarily with the “experience of Being”.

2 In particular, the work of the Hungarian-American psychologist, Egon Brunswik (1903-1955), and the Swiss child psychologist, Jean Piaget (1896-1980).

3 In various instances a considerable amount of time elapsed between Heidegger’s completion of a manuscript (or a lecture course) and
its publication date. In order to clarify the development of Heidegger’s thought, the ‘dates’ used as reference in this article refer to the year in which Heidegger completed these works or delivered the lecture course. In the list of references the specific volume (or translation) which was used is indicated. This particular lecture was delivered in 1925, first published in German in 1979 and in English in 1985.

4 Economists enthusiastically subscribe to this view and point to the value of the “experience economy” (Pine & Gilmore 1998: 97).

5 The Bilbao Effect refers to the economic stimulus (in terms of tourism) provided by Frank Gehry’s striking design for the Bilbao Guggenheim Museum. However, when all major cities are endowed with such a ‘masterpiece’ then the novelty dissipates and the ‘experience seekers’ move on to the next offering.

6 The first version of her ‘guide’ to Being and Time was published in 1964.

7 My doctoral thesis, “Care, place and architecture: a critical reading of Christian Norberg-Schulz’s architectural interpretation of Martin Heidegger’s philosophy” (UFS, 2015), contains an in depth discussion (Chapter 6) of what the art of care may imply in re-interpreting Norberg-Schulz’s art of place.

8 It is interesting to note that Le Corbusier believed these ‘moments’ to be connected with how one can suddenly “perceive [an architect’s] intentions” (1923: 141) at the same time that Heidegger was dismissing the primacy of intentionality in favour of questioning the “being of the intentional” (1925: 178-180/129), or care.

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Hendrik Auret is currently employed as a part-time senior lecturer at the University of the Free State and practices full-time as a professional architect at Roodt Architects. He holds B.Arch.Stud (2004), B.Arch (hons) (2005) and M.Arch (prof) (2006) degrees (all *cum laude*) from the University of the Free State and won the 2006 National Corobrik Architectural Student of the Year Award. In 2015 he obtained a Ph.D. (with specialisation in architecture) from the same institution.
Domesticity in select artworks representing the township experience

Pfunzo Sidogi
Tshwane University of Technology
E-mail: sidogip@tut.ac.za

Reporting on the layout of the Douglas Calderwood inspired design of houses in Soweto during the 1950s, the journalist Nat Nakasa observed that: “Almost all the houses are built to the same pattern – thousands upon thousands of small match-box cottages separated from each other by wire fencing.” However, within these mono-styled structures, the experience of the township as “home” manifested in diverse ways and artists were among the most sincere and salient illustrators of these varied but ordinary and everyday happenings. This paper examines the various portrayals of domesticity in select artworks from the mid-twentieth century till the present that narrate the township experience from within the confines of the “match-box” dwellings which line township streets. A portion of the paper engages with the term ‘domesticity’ and how its shifting conceptualisations have been aesthetised. In the main, this paper seeks to elucidate the character of “township domesticity” as experienced and interpreted by select eminent South African artists.

Keywords: domesticity, township, art, home

South African townships3 are among the most layered and important spaces in the country; politically, economically, culturally and otherwise. As a place, the township is imbued with historical symbolism memorialised through events like the 1976 student protests in Soweto, the Sharpeville Massacre of 1960, the displacements of District Six, and so on. From its pragmatic but racially enshrouded inception during the 1950s, the township has been predominantly perceived as a site of squalor and in some instances as the absolute insignia of black suffering. Before relocating to America in the mid-1960s Nakasa (in Patel 2005: 36) cogently branded the Soweto Township as a “bleak” and “depressing” territory. However, besides this and countless more justifiable portrayals of the township as a regressive space, its constituents have experienced and continue to experience this environment as home. This paper is interested in artworks that mirror the myriad of situated experiences of the township as a domicile.

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This analysis samples prominent, and sometimes personally significant, depictions of what I term ‘township domesticity’ from the 1950s to the present. Though the paper makes a much needed introductory engagement with this subject, it calls for further more discursive readings into the nature of township domesticity within art, especially in light of the varied township demographics of South Africa. Although there are noteworthy artistic portrayals of domestic experiences in various townships prior to 1950, it was only from the 1950s onwards that the township became the focal settlement for black South Africans, facilitating their pseudo urbanisation and assimilation into modernity. Furthermore, though there have been many forms of capturing the indoor happenings of township life, this exploration will mostly focus on paintings, drawings and a few mix-media works. The artworks discussed here reveal obscure and nuanced accounts of the township as home through the artists’ gaze and experience of the space.

Townships were officially formulated towards the end of the 1940s “to house the black population” (Blokland 2014: 179). In this sense, the township, as a house, can be viewed as a communal domestic scene. Architect Douglas Calderwood probably made the biggest mark on the township as home by fashioning the now iconic match-box houses, layered side-by-side row after row, a structural legacy which still dominates township architecture today. Molobi (2014: 8) provides an account of how these closely packed houses create searing tensions between neighbours, tensions that various municipalities countrywide are still unable to resolve:

Homes were constructed in such a way that sections of next-door neighbours were overlapping to the other family. When revamping the house, they built by adding single or two rooms to make the whole family comfortable, raising tensions with next-door neighbours because they will feel that a portion of their space is stolen. (sic)

Figure 1
Anton Kannemeyer – Conrad Botes, LSM (Living Standard Measure), 2005 (source: copyright requested from Anton Kannemeyer).
Cooke (2011: 1) laments how these small impractical units are still used as the blue print for public housing programmes that continue to mark existing and emergent townships as “soulless and dangerous” spaces. And although there has been an improvement in the overall domestic living standards of township dwellers since 1994 through improved basic services for example, the township is by no means an ideal living space. In fact, those residents fortunate enough to afford homes beyond the township almost always opt to relocate to formally white suburban areas. *LSM (Living Standard Measure)* (fig. 1) by Anton Kannemeyer and Conrad Botes presents a sequential narrative of the various living standard measures used in South African society. Alongside the different modes of transport, the artists have cunningly aestheticised the domestic space as the key yardstick of living norms. This underscores the value that domesticity still holds in modern societies. Not surprisingly, the distinctive South African townships such as mining to city-based townships are wittily sandwiched in the middle of the artists’ living standard measure chronology. This paper acknowledges artworks that represent the domestic encounters of those who experience the ambiguously loaded township home as their primary place of shelter and leisure.

**Domesticity**

The representation of domesticity has been a prominent feature in canonised western art for centuries. Although its meanings have shifted across generations and places, domesticity has generally symbolised the happenings of the home and the proper social roles between the sexes, races, and age groups performed within it. Maguire (2015: 585) confirms this by arguing that the concept of domesticity has been used to strengthen “strict heteronormative gender roles...” Indeed, most aesthetic constructions of domesticity, both visual and literary, tend to showcase a gender-biased notion of the domestic where women are the perpetual upholders of the home. These imbalanced representations fuelled many of the polemics against the classical understanding of domesticity such as feminist critique. Furthermore, besides being the ultimate symbol of the binary social contract between men and women, the domestic space was also used, quite efficiently, to reinforce relations amongst different social groups. Wall (2002: 25) establishes that most English writers between 1500 and 1700 positioned domesticity at the apex of British society, especially in terms of “economic and status issues.” As such, males were represented as the alpha-beings, in line with their monopoly within the political and economic arenas, whilst women were almost always portrayed in what our enlightened era considers as subservient household roles, and where they featured, non-European peoples assumed precarious positions.

However, even though the generally accepted discourses tend to demonise these representations as harmful and restrictive towards the female gender, Matthews (1987: 34) reveals that the conceptions of domesticity in America during the late eighteenth century, for example, “had a favourable impact on women.” Matthews acknowledges that there were definite “gaps between the ideal and the real,” but even so, her revelations induce us to view the various illustrations of domestic roles not only as negative patriarchal constructions bent on reasserting male dominance, but rather as aestheticised portrayals of ever floating human relations within the context of a home. Edwards (1986) further argues that certain depictions of African-American families within the domestic space during the nineteenth century go against the grain of our common understanding of how such families experienced family life during dark days of slavery. Referencing the painting by Eastman Johnson titled *Old Kentucky Home (Negro life in the South)* 1859, Edwards (1986: 28) interprets the work as “a scene of affluence
and contentment that seems at odds with our perception of slavery,” especially in a notoriously racist region in America.

What is particularly interesting about these anecdotes is that they reveal a kind of disparity or misfit between the societal realities and the experience of the domestic space. Mckoen (2005: xxi) urges us to guard against the assumption that the domestic is an automatic reflection of what transpires in the public realm. Although it has been proven that there is a definite correlation between the two worlds, as will be shown in some of the artworks discussed here, the domestic setting also needs to be read as an autonomous sub-world which offers individuals an opportunity to fashion their own reality, beyond the conventions of the zeitgeist.

Finally, this brief exposition of the term domesticity is meaningful in that it reveals a kind of triangulated understanding of domesticity as a lived experience. At the one end of the triangle are the very real social forces which take place outside the home, sometimes and expectedly, these societal realities filter into the domestic. However, at the opposite end is the actual experience of the home as an independent space, supposedly and for the most part, free from the influence of the external societal factors. And counter-balancing these two pseudo-binaries is the artistic interpretation of the domestic through the eyes of the sovereign virtuoso, who has the creative license to alter the reality through his/her own spiritual and expressive lens. The various notions of domesticity in art are therefore an infinite push and pull between this triad where the nature of people’s situated experiences of the home is never fixed or stable. More importantly, this triangulated conceptualisation of domesticity can be appropriated as a kind of schema for analysing artworks of this nature.

Defining “home”

The house, as a physical structure, is perhaps the greatest signifier of domesticity. Verschaffel (2002: 287) describes the house as “a device for articulating differences and defining a hierarchy in the meanings one lives by... .” To this end, the house is a place loaded with meaning and symbolism which sometimes supersedes the context or constraints of where it is located. As noted before, the house empowers individuals to fashion rules and systems of human interaction beyond, or sadly, below the conventional norms. The nature of the house or home since the dawn of mass industrialisation has evolved significantly in keeping with the seismic changes that have engulfed society as a whole. The pre-industrialised home was cherished as the ultimate place for female activity. However, Verschaffel (2002: 288) establishes that the advent of modernity has challenged the classical definitions of the home, for it [modernity] “introduces exchange, movement and transport, change and openness, it induces the globalisation that weakens identity and deconstructs the home.” Thus, the cosmopolitan disposition has fragmented the constitution of the home and as a result introduced new models of thinking about the domestic.

Interestingly, although new forms of domesticity have taken shape, there is scepticism as to whether or not the advent of modernity has actually eroded the skewed social hierarchies between men and women, self and other, west and rest, which continue to play out within the home. Sawaya (2004: 1) believes it hasn’t, contending that “women are excluded from modernity along with other “primitives” because domesticity is part of the untrained, undifferentiated labour of the past.” A basic reflection of the situation in most contemporary South African middle-class homes affirms how these social hierarchies have remained intact, where black women, for example, are still primarily employed as domestic workers, entrusted with the duties of tending the home. In a compelling treatise regarding the kitchen as the engine of the home, Meah and
Jackson (2013: 592) deduce that new forms of domesticity where men are more involved in household chores, for example, have not really lessened the physical and psychological burden placed on women as home-makers:

> Our work supports those who argue that men are increasingly involved in domestic tasks such as cooking but that they have entered the space of the kitchen largely on their own terms, as a lifestyle choice, rather than taking primary responsibility for the routine work of feeding the family, which still falls mostly on women.

Although most women are still confined to laborious tasks within the home, modernity has provided a fortunate few with opportunities of reimagining the house as an edifice. Traditionally, the building of the house was an exclusively male privilege, but the ever increasing economic advantages afforded to women since the turn of the twentieth century have thrust them into the forefront of radically recreating the home. In a seminal account of women who worked with leading American architects during the mid-twentieth century to craft revolutionary houses, Friedman (2006: 16) reports that:

> ...not only did women commission avant-garde architects to provide them with houses in which to live their visions of a new life, but these visions rested on a redefinition of domesticity that was fundamentally spatial and physical. A powerful fusion of feminism with the forces of change in architecture thus propelled these projects into uncharted realms of originality. Women’s focus on the home was grounded in historical experience and in the recognition that, for better or for worse, their power resided there.

This gripping account validates the flux triangulated determination of the domestic today. It follows then that the aestheticisations of the home in contemporary art echo this fluidity, especially within the township setting.

**Township domesticity**

Since the 1950s the celebrated artistic portrayals of township homes can be described as essentially ‘schizophrenic’. ‘Schizophrenic’ in the sense that the spread of activities that happen within the confines of the ‘match-box’ walls and similarly constrained yards have been as varied as the range of people who constitute township population, resulting in multi-dimensional and often contradictory artistic renditions of the township home. These heterogeneous experiences call for a broadened application of the term domesticity within the context of the township home. In fact the nature of the township home, both structurally and anthropologically, demands a more dynamic and fluid solicitation of the term domesticity. Township domesticity is therefore not restricted to the conventional narrow understanding of domesticity as household work performed by women; rather, township domesticity within this paper is construed as a snapshot of all the undulating experiences of the township home. This augmented slightly generalised definition allows for the inclusion of the numerous rich and diverse representations of the domestic into this discussion. In a rare analysis of domesticity in the Alexandria Township, Lucas (1994: 15) argues that “An examination of household in conjunction with networks of kinship, affinity and other close social relationships, in specific yards, begins to suggest that domestic space extends beyond households...” Although Lucas acknowledges the uniqueness of households, she advocates for a global analysis of domesticity in the township, which is not simply confined to the home itself, but ultimately views the whole township as a domestic setting. Therefore, township domesticity must be scrutinised from the micro perspective of the individual township home and from the global outlook of the entire township as a home.
The township home as a site for violence

South Africa ranks amongst the worst offenders of extreme and violent crimes in the world and many of these ills originate from the context of the home. Molobi (2014: 7) substantiates: “Domestic violence, child abuse, adolescent pregnancy and child-led families are totally common in South Africa.” This reality is certainly prevalent in township households and as a result it is not uncommon to encounter artworks showcasing such grim happenings. Trevor Makhoba’s painting *The writing is on the wall* (2002) vividly exposes the toxic impact of domestic violence on a family. In the painting, a man sips a presumably cold beer after a tiresome lashing of his hapless wife. The woman sits in excruciating pain, clenching the back of her head drawing attention to the near perfect geometric formations of bloodied cuts on her chubby back. Three children look on with pale facial expressions, motionless as they witness the unspeakable. Makhoba tarnishes the woman’s back with glowing red paint, obviously depicting the bloodied gashes; however, this red stain is replicated on the faces of the children, the bed’s headboard, and the wardrobe. Here Makhoba is highlighting the crippling results of abuse, both to the inhabitants of the house and the physical space. The small size of the township home results in little or no privacy between adults or children, thus the township home does not conceal parent relations to children, as would be the case in larger homes with multiple rooms. In the township home all the frailties of the complex male-female relations are laid bare in front of the children. It could be argued that another reason why the woman is so defeated and visibly ashamed is because her children have voyeured her during her weakest, most vulnerable moment.

The township home as a site for religiosity

However, as mentioned above, the experiences within township homes are disturbingly conflicted. Depictions of violent domestic conflicts or heinous abuse are contrasted by scenes of couples in a loving embrace, or sensitive renderings of families enjoying a unitary meal or engaged in spiritual worship, as seen in Gerard Sekoto’s *Evening Prayer* painting. The scene within this artwork is that of a family horded around a bright candle. The main male character is silhouetted by the candle’s intense light, which pushes his figure to the foreground thereby becoming the focal point of the painting. This main character seemingly leads the prayer, evidenced by his crouched body position. Religiosity is of course widespread within the townships, with many churches congregating in houses rather than a public building because of the latter’s scarcity.

Christianity is by far the most prevalent religion, with the African variant Zionist churches being the most dominant denominations. The 2001 South African Census revealed that over 6.8 million people were affiliated to Zionist Churches, with the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) accounting for more than 70% of that following (Government Communications Information Systems, 2012: 12). The major cause for these spectacular numbers is that churches like the ZCC have successfully married African customs with the Christian faith. This compromise means that prayers can be conducted in one township home, whilst simultaneously another house is used as a consultation space by traditional healers or *Sangomas*. Blokland (2014: 179) corroborates by noting that “Township culture typically blends traditional indigenous customs and rituals with modern western urban ways.” The still-life composition of various items used by *Sangomas* by Simon Lekgetho aptly titled *Still-life with Sangoma’s bones and other objects* (1964) spotlights the prominence of African religious practices within the township home. This work, which Miles (in Proud 2006: 150) credits for inspiring “a significantly African dimension to still-life painting,” was probably painted when the artist was residing in the Ga-Rankuwa Township.
The delicate smooth finish in which the objects have been treated reveals a kind of reverence for the items and the rituals they perform. However, even though township domesticity celebrated and merged traditional customs with urbanised lifestyles, Blokland (2014: 179) contends that there was “a measure of disconnectedness from traditional ways of life,” which is not surprising considering the overwhelming influence of modernity in all its forms with the township.

**The township home as a site for recreation**

Besides acting as pseudo churches and spiritual asylums, township homes have also been used as sites for leisure and entertainment commonly known as shebeens, which were and remain hotspots of social interaction. Shebeens are homes that have been converted into liquor stores and pseudo pubs, where all manner of folk congregate, yet these spaces retain their DNA as homes that harbour normal families. Outlawed during apartheid, shebeens are implicated by many as key protagonists for the ills that beset townships today, since they promote alcohol consumption. However, shebeens are valued and often lucrative businesses within the township. Nakasa (in Patel 2005: 16) poetically coined the shebeen as a “noble institution,” going on to describe them as “hospitalable homes, often run by solid housewives and respectable men.” This romanticisation of the shebeen provides a poignant illustration of a strange form of township domesticity. Nakasa (ibid) concludes with a succinct defence of the shebeen’s uniqueness “...we drank our drink the shebeen way – a way outside the normal human experience of drinking in bars, hotel lounges and clubs.” George Pemba’s *Daughter of the Shebeen Queen* (1957) painting showcases an unexpected and unlikely component of this infamous social establishment, a young girl. The innocent girl, who is identified as the daughter of the shebeen owner, is delicately crafted by Pemba via layers of brushwork that radiate a calmness and decorum about her. It is the ‘hospitalable’ side of the shebeen as home which Pemba explores through the lens of a young girl who is the ultimate insignia of the existence of a family unit within the notorious shebeen.

The hospitability of township homes is further expressed in artworks that depict the infinite celebrations and parties that are a central part of township lifestyle. The sight of a narrow township street cordoned off because of an event taking place at a certain home is distinctively common. Sam Nhlengethwa’s *The party* (1992) is a prime illustration of these regular but special occasions. Nhlengethwa’s mixed media collage displays fabulously dressed individuals enjoying the company of expensive alcohol, whilst they engage in recreational talk. Although the townships abound with many ills, the indoors provide a space where people disengage and experience the joys of urban living. Such events are also an ideal opportunity for people to flaunt their moderate success via flamboyant dress codes. In a comical but accurate analysis of black people and their affinity to lavish goods, Kilpatrick (2010: 27) writes:

> In general, black men dress very well. They love expensive brand-name clothes. If you go to the township you’ll see men walking along the side of the road dressed in suits and shiny black shoes. And even the maids dress well when they go out.

This fixation with expensive designer goods was historically motivated by the fact that black people were prohibited from investing in property, shares or any other value generating venture. Therefore, those who obtained financial success against the odds could only spend it on expensive cars and imported boutique merchandise. Therefore, the domestic setting was and remains a secure avenue to showcase the latest and most exclusive acquisitions. The existence of such occasions also points to the class hierarchy which exists within the township, where some families live relatively comfortable lives.
The township home as a site for poverty

Even though wealth and wellbeing are part of the domestic experience within the township, the harsh reality of poverty and suffering endures for many. Once again reporting on the situation in Soweto Nakasa (in Patel 2005: 36) wrote:

> Not many people earn much money here. There are people, thousands of them, who don’t eat three meals a day. There are homes where husbands give instruction that visitors are not to be served with tea, however long they may stay. That is the bleaker, more depressing face of this place.

This absorbing account reminds us of the not-so-beautiful side of township domesticity; where households are not hospitable, as they can barely feed themselves to begin with. Julian Motau’s *The distressed family* (1967) is a beautifully sketched portrayal of a mother hogged by two indigent children. The ominous bodily expressions reveal the agony of the situation this seemingly fatherless family find themselves in. This charcoal expression of brut pain is highly symbolic of the horror countless township homes experience on a daily basis. Sadly, children are usually the most affected by this reality. Speaking of Pimville during the 1940s and 1950s Eloff and Sevenhuysen (2011: 13) note that the township “had one of the highest mortality rates for children under the age of five,” which pinpoints some of the sickening results of township poverty.

The township home as a site for activism

![Dumile Feni, *Release all political prisoners*, 1988, charcoal on paper (source: copyright requested from Gallery MOMO).](image)

*Figure 2*
The sheer brutality of such accounts fuelled the multiple resistance movements against the apartheid government which had effectively created the township through forced displacements and systemic restrictions on land acquisition and ownership for black people. As such, the domestic space became a key site for these resistance efforts. Many political activists depended on the township home as a shield from the all-pervasive apartheid police force. Important meetings and strategic discussions were held by revolutionaries within the domestic setting. This resulted in women becoming key participants in the freedom struggle, as they supported, housed, hid, and protected many prominent political dissidents. Dumi Feni’s *Release all political prisoners* (fig. 2) shows two women with their children hoisting plaques calling for the freeing of prisoners held at Robben Island. The inclusion of two homes in the background of the composition solidifies the point that the fight against apartheid was also waged from the confines of the township home. This subtle form of protest points to a frustration against apartheid which was felt and experienced inside the domestic space, and how it subsequently became a site for activism.

**The township home as a communal space**

Besides being a place for activism, the domestic within townships was and remains a communal space. The close proximity of township homes result in very little or no privacy amongst neighbours. Lucas (1994: 17) reveals that some kind of privacy is possible via “the narrow spaces between shacks,” which is “often the venue for private conversations or people who simply want to be alone.” However, the lack of privacy often results in expected tussles between neighbours. The reverse of this is the unwavering solidarity within township domestic settings. This is true within hostels and various houses that have been transformed into communal lodging facilities. Joseph Manana’s *Hostel Dwellers* (2004) drawing provides a pictorial narrative of men experiencing meal time together in a common living space with a few of them playing live music in the background. Since the establishment of townships, hostels have been indispensable dwellings for many men who work in the industrial zones, but have families back in the rural regions from whence they come. Manana’s artwork projects a sense of uniformity amongst the men, through their common work-suite clothing. However, each man has distinct physical features seen through the varying hairstyles, and unique musical abilities, definable in different but complimentary musical instruments held by three of the individuals, which reasserts each man’s peculiar identity.

**The township home and conventional domesticity**

It is evident based on the images reviewed here that the nature of township domesticity is as varied as it is different from the conventional notions of domesticity as seen in classical western art. This is not to suggest that the orthodox limitations that domestic settings have on women for example do not persist in the township. In fact, it could be argued that township women are far more vexed as domestic beings than their counterparts living in suburban spaces. Pretoria based artist, Tommy Motswai reminds us of the burdens women experience on a daily basis within the domestic in the subversively titled crayon drawing *Happy Mother’s Day ‘Mom’* (1989). The colourful rendering is that of a woman making food in the kitchen during Mother’s Day. The emotion on the figure’s face is grim, showing complete discontent with the activity she is engaged with. The kitchen is a key site of cementing or subverting the traditional notions of domesticity. Meah and Jackson (2013: 579) validate this assertion:
Within the home, the kitchen emerges as a key site in which power is deployed, either in constraining women or – conversely – in affording women power which they may be unable to exercise in other domains.

The township is an amorphous organ, forever in a state of flux, and it is this flexibility which gives it the potential of presenting new forms of domesticity. To take this concept further, the township home and the township as a home, regardless of its limitations can radically reform our conceptions of domesticity. Artists are of course implicated in this process as they have the creative license to capture and even engineer these emergent domesticities where they are yet to exist. Themba Siwela’s oil pastel drawing *When Gomondela is on duty* (2001) is an animated illustration of a subversive domesticity, where the assertive woman is dictating the terms of engagement within the home. Unexpectedly the man has a wide grin as if in complete approval of the duties he has to fulfil, like washing the women’s under-clothing, which is an utter taboo for black men, especially those who reside in townships. But perhaps the most symbolic gesture signalling these new domesticities is that of the woman in the background who is enraged and bemused by what she sees. These are the kinds of rehabilitated domesticities that need to be imaged, scenes that will even shock those who are meant to benefit from the reformation.

Artists are essential to this reformation. Henry Ossawa Tanner, whose paintings were fixated with the experiences of African-Americans during the late nineteenth century, stated that he always sought “to represent the serious and pathetic side of life” amid his people, he went on to poignantly add: “he who has most sympathy with his subject will obtain the best results” (Edwards, 1986: 30). In other words the artist who is immersed within the context he/she are depicting is most likely to produce very sincere images that manifest within them a very tangible connection between the maker, his/her materials, and the place or situated experience. The select artworks reviewed in this paper certainly achieve this.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, this abridged reading of the various kinds of township domesticities reveals the complex and sometimes conflicting incidents ubiquitous within the township home. Although traditional forms of domesticity where women are revered as the custodians of the home still prevail within the township, this paper highlighted other forms of the domestic that proliferate the township home. As host to millions of people seeking their share of the fruits of the democratic miracle, the South African township home continues to play a pivotal role in moulding and reshaping the country socially, economically, politically, and culturally. Artists are of course best placed to continue to reflect and sometimes fiction the varying domesticities performed within the township home. It is hoped that the images they produce will continue to intrigue, bemuse, and inform us of the petty, the beautiful, the significant, and the sombre happenings within township homes.

**Notes**

1. It is worth noting here that the use of the term domesticity for this reading is slightly precarious. Firstly, in that the term has been pragmatically appropriated because of its historical prominence in various discourses about art, however, its usage becomes tricky in that its traditional art historical associations somewhat distance it from the South African township scenario, as the contexts of the ‘cult of domesticity’ during sixteenth to nineteenth century Europe and America are completely polar to ‘township domesticity’ in South Africa.
a couple of centuries later. With that said, the use of this term provides a more than stable base for a conversation of the domestic within the township.

I would like to acknowledge Hulisani Ndou and Pfunzo Mamathuba who expertly translated and proofread the title, abstract, and key words in Tshivenda.

According to Bond (in Darity 2007: 405) townships are commonly defined as peri-urban areas used as both “residential and industrials sites.” Established as part of the Group Areas Act of 1950, township housed all the non-white peoples. Within this paper, the townships referred to are those which were primarily inhabited by the black population group.

A majority of the artworks referenced in this article can be sourced and viewed in Proud (2006) and Hobbs (2006).

Speaking about the presence of Africans in seventeenth Century Flemish paintings, van Haute (2015: 21) reveals that the representations of blacks were “ambivalent... which allowed the African subject to be portrayed in different roles, be it as a king, a soldier or musician, a satyr, a servant or a saved soul.”

Once again, I concede that the term domesticity as commonly understood might not be suited for some of the interpretations presented in this paper.

According to Lucas (1994: 19) during the 1980s in Alexandria for example, women could report abusive husbands to a people’s court which was set up by township youth to uphold some form of justice, furthermore, “If the youths who ran the courts found the husband ‘guilty’, he would be punished, often severely.”

Lekgetho’s studio was initially located in Lady Selbourne, north of the Pretoria CBD, until the forced removals of 1958 when black people were relocated to Ga-Rankuwa and later Soshanguve Township. Lekgetho lived and worked in Ga-Rankuwa until his death in 1985 (Miles in Hobbs 2006: 150).

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Pfunzo Sidogi is a lecturer at the Tshwane University of Technology’s Department of Fine and Applied Arts. He holds an MTech: Fine Art degree (cum laude) from the same institution. He is a member of the De Arte journal editorial board and publishes on themes related to African visual culture, Post-Africanism, and arts education.
In the period prior to and after the First World War
German painters expressed a passion for their art

Estelle Alma Maré
Tshwane University of Technology
E-mail: mare_estelle@fastmail.fm

The article deals with works by German painters belonging to Die Brücke, as well as later expressionists, during the tumultuous period of radical social change, violence and personal trauma prior to, during and after the First World War. The selected painters who were involved in the war confronted their angst and the general uncertainty of the period with uncompromising candour in self-portraits and later in depictions of the horrors and destruction of warfare. Specific works exemplifying these two themes are investigated, with reference to both their content and intrinsic artistic expression.

Key words: German Expressionism, First World War, soldier-painters’ self-portraits, depictions of war

Duce bellum inexpertis (Desiderius Erasmus).¹

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

During the early years of the twentieth century, before the First World War, 1914-19 (then referred to as the Great War), artistic trends in Europe were abundant and varied. In France Post-Impressionist artists, such as Paul Cézanne (1839-1906), Vincent van Gogh (1853-90) and Paul Gauguin (1848-1903), became initiators of avant-garde art that included Expressionism, of which Eduard Munch (1863-1944) was a major exponent and influence on German painters during the first decade of the twentieth century. Contemporary European developments included Futurism, Jugendstil and Dada, while individual artists developed styles referred to as Symbolism and Orphism, or formed groups, such as the Nabis and Fauves. Gradually abstraction became a new experiment, especially as practised by Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), a member of the Der Blaue Reiter group in Germany.

However, there were two main, but widely divergent artistic trends during the pre-war era in Europe. In Paris the desire for renewal in the visual arts came under the influence of current scientific ideas, notably Albert Einstein’s special and general theories of relativity that overturned the universally shared objective Newtonian universe and replaced the mechanistic concept of absolute space and time with a multitude of contingent, observer-dependent space-time frames. Inspired by revolutionary scientific ideas Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), Georges Braque (1882-1963) and other artists experimented with Cubism. The distorted, fragmented and
recomposed objects and figures painted by cubist painters, as if simultaneously seen from various angles, with emphasis on irregular geometric forms, were pertinently claimed to echo the early twentieth-century scientific developments in which advanced, non-Euclidean, geometry was developed in the formulation of theories regarding four-dimensional space-time. Moreover, the influence of Cézanne, who famously stated that he based his painterly forms on the sphere, the square and the triangle, was also evident in cubist painters’ works.

In the Weimar Republic, Germany, a completely different artistic trend unfolded. Even though artists were aware of the experiments in France after Cézanne, the German Expressionists “derived their emphasis on immediacy and superabundance of vitality from Nietzsche’s highly charged vocabulary…” (White 2002: 183). This charged vocabulary refers to Dionysian vital instincts, creating the “image of the Nietzschean artist as the incarnation of a virile force of nature” (White 2002: 187). A group of avant-garde artists who aspired to the ideal of Ekstase, founded Die Brücke in Dresden in 1905. These included Karl Schmidt-Rottluff (1884-1976), Erich Heckel (1883-1970), Otto Müller (1874-1930) and Emil Nolde (1867-1956). Max Pechstein (1881-1955) and Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (1880-1938) joined later. The call for the direct rendering of artists’ creative drive placed the emphasis on dramatic compositional tension in the figural representation, enhanced by the application of primary colours for expressive effect. Furthermore, recognition of the distortion and abstraction of forms in sculpture from Africa and the Pacific Islands that Die Brücke artists viewed in the Völkerkundemuseum in Dresden added to the allure that a “primitive” manner of expression had for them. Donald Gordon (1987: 14) defines this tendency to sublimate vital forces as “the transposition of instinctual urges into socially acceptable art”. However, it is questionable whether Die Brücke artists or later German expressionists aspired to create socially acceptable art. On the contrary, their mission was to radicalise the late nineteenth-century artistic tradition in which Neo-Classicism and Romanticism co-existed; to create works with unconventional subject matter in an expressive style that echoed Nietzsche’s concept of Rausch, implying intensity, frenzy and excess. Furthermore, their aim was to shock the society of Kaiser Wilhelm’s Germany with their bohemian behaviour. They aimed at: “Schock, Provokation, Aufbegehren der Jugend gegen das Establishment als Maxime!” (Wolf 2013: 9). Their provocation was aimed at the bourgeoisie who profited from the rapid industrialisation and economic expansion of Germany during the early twentieth century, but who lacked discernment in matters of art, culture and morality.

Figural compositions, enhanced by dramatic contrasts of form and colour, are the hallmark of innovative works by Die Brücke painters, who terminated their association in 1913. Similar traits were developed in the works of two painters aligned with the Der Blaue Reiter, Franz Marc (1880-1916) and August Macke (1887-1914) who were both killed in the Great War. Their contemporaries belonging to the Neue Sachlichkeit group, represented by Otto Dix (1891-1969) and George Grosz (1893-1959), explored social realism during the 1920s.

German painters representing the various groups found themselves situated in the period preceding the Great War, in the conflict and its aftermath that subjected them to external forces beyond their control. The works they created during and after the war can aptly be described as attempts at personal sublimation to fend off mental disorder and despair that the hoped-for utopian society would not be achieved by the war.

The last summer of old Europe ended on 1 August 1914 when war was declared. Many Germans welcomed the chance to fight and hoped for a swift victory and the triumph of a transformed society. However, after two months 3.5 million European soldiers had died or were wounded. By the end of the war in 1919 the casualties amounted to over 37 million: 17

![Figure 1](http://www.ottodix.org/index/catalog-paintings?&offset=10)

**Figure 1**

*Otto Dix, The War Cripples, 1919, destroyed by the Nazis in 1933 (retrieved from the public domain: http://www.ottodix.org/index/catalog-paintings?&offset=10).*

Notwithstanding their personal vicissitudes during the catastrophic period of great human and environmental destruction in Europe, German artists expressed a passion for their art, thus ensuring that their legacy is rated as one of exceptional merit in art history. Examples for discussion are selected from war-related paintings by various artists who were conscripted as soldiers or served in other positions in the military during the war. These works are discussed in two categories: first, self-portraits of servicemen-painters who looked inward to express interoceptive awareness of their subjective feelings, and second, servicemen-painters’ exteroceptive visions of the destruction of human and natural worlds of which they were witnesses.  

**Self-portraits as interior visions by German soldiers and servicemen**

Self-portraits by German artists who served in the Great War are a unique, albeit very limited, collection in the expressionist oeuvre. These portraits, inspired by the precarious situation in which they were painted, reveal the painters’ uncompromisingly honest views of themselves, but nevertheless with various symbolic connotations.
Otto Dix, the soldier who survived

Otto Dix was willing to fight in the Great War because like many of his compatriots, including Franz Marc, Dix believed that the war would cleanse society of its wrongs so that a better world could emerge. Consequently, he optimistically joined up in 1914, and, as Eva Karcher (1992: 30) notes, “Dix, despite his sensitivity, took up the challenge of events”.

During the first year of the war, while in a trench, he painted himself on both sides of a sheet of paper. One of these remarkable depictions shows his three-quarter face illuminated by red and white flashes from explosions in the midst of infernal combat, with his eyes turned in their sockets to the extreme left – the sinister side (figure 2).

Figure 2

Otto Dix, *Self-Portrait as a Soldier*, 1914, ink and watercolour on paper, 68x53.5 cm, Municipal Gallery, Stuttgart (retrieved from the public domain: http://www.memorial-caen.fr/10EVENT/EXPO1418/gb/texte/004text.html).
On the other side of the paper Dix painted his Self-Portrait Wearing a Gunner’s Helmet (figure 3). The perturbed face of the painter, situated on the front line, emerges darkly from the black shadow of night, suggestive of death, around his helmeted head. Conspicuously highlighted, the helmet bears the shining symbols of war. Even though Dix was initially attracted to the war, this portrait reveals his anticipation of the horrors that he later witnessed and documented creatively (discussed in the next section; see figure 8).

In the first year of the war Dix also painted his Self-Portrait as Mars, once again wearing a gunner’s helmet. In the space surrounding his figure scenes of violent conflict in which horses flee, buildings burn and death seems to triumph, are depicted in the cubist style which is ideally suited to emphasise the fragmentation of forms (figure 4). Christopher Short (1993: 142) comments: “The sheer energy, aggression, and chaotic movement of colour in the image is clear…” Short moreover finds in Dix’s explicit references to Nietzsche a justification for Dietrich Schubert’s interpretation that he quotes:

[I]n this portrait-histoire, a historical allegory, Dix portrays himself as Mars, the war god. Both the notion of a cruel, Dionysian principle of chaos, destruction and rebirth, and the notion of a dancing star, derive from Nietzsche. As Zarathustra said, one must have chaos within oneself to give birth to a dancing star.

One may surmise that Dix most probably intended the brilliant star on his helmet to be Nietzsche’s sublime dancer.

Figure 3
Otto Dix, Self-Portrait Wearing a Gunner’s Helmet, 1914, ink and watercolour on paper, 68x53.5 cm, Municipal Gallery, Stuttgart (retrieved from the public domain: http://www.memorial-caen.fr/10EVENT/EXPO1418/gb/texte/004text.html).
Max Beckman, the nurse who suffered a breakdown

Serving in the medical corps in eastern Prussia, and later in Flanders and Strasbourg, Max Beckman chronicled the war during 1914 and 1915. He witnessed the mustard gas attacks around Ypres and as a nurse was present at life-saving operations that surgeons performed on gruesomely wounded soldiers.

Beckman’s *Self-portrait as a Nurse* dates from his last year of service before he suffered a mental breakdown and was sent home to Germany (figure 5). The artist depicts himself as alert, looking out of the picture, making penetrating eye contact with the viewer while his hand draws on an invisible canvas. The red cross on the collar of his jacket signifies his noble status as a man caring for the wounded; however, this status did not replace his focus on himself and his passion for art.
Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, the decadent artillery driver

Fearing that he would be conscripted to the infantry Ernst Ludwig Kirchner began drinking absinthe and developed a dependency on sleeping pills and morphine (figure 6). Instead of joining the military, he volunteered his services as an artillery driver and was billeted to Halle. In a state of nervous anxiety, aggravated by a tragic sense of foreboding of the apocalyptic outcome of the war, Kirchner experienced his duties as distressing and destructive of his artistic vitality. After suffering a nervous breakdown he was admitted to a sanatorium at Königstein in Taunus.

In a state of torment Kirchner nevertheless continued painting and in 1915 portrayed himself in military uniform with a masklike, unnaturally yellow face, blind blue eyes that are a pale reflection of the bright blue uniform, a cigarette in his mouth and prominently holding up his severed right hand (figure 7). Kirchner did not suffer an actual amputation, but a symbolic one. The war turned him into a disabled painter, having “lost” his right hand – the focal detail that affects the viewer as extremely gruesome. Notably the painter’s back is turned on a nude model in the background who echoes the colour of his face, hovering ghostlike among canvasses.

The theme of this self-portrait suggests that Dionysian exuberance has regressed into the pain of victimhood, but Kirchner’s manner of expression proves that his creativity remained invincible.
Figure 6
Figure 7
Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Self-portrait in a Military Uniform*, 1915, oil on canvas, 69,2x61 cm, Oberlin, Ohio, Oberlin Memorial Art Museum (retrieved from the public domain: http://www.oberlin.edu/aman/kirchner_SelfPortrait.htm).
The exterior world of destruction depicted by soldier-painters

**Otto Dix’s reminiscence of trench warfare**

Otto Dix’s *The War*, a triptych with predella, assessed as one of the most important visions of the morbid horror of trench warfare during the Great War, was painted between 1929 and 1932 (figure 8). The central panel is a reworking of a lost painting, *The Trench*. Dix’s belated war reminiscence depicts a soldier whose face is covered with a gas mask as the sole survivor in a collapsed trench filled with debris, decomposing corpses, above which a skeleton hangs from the branch of a tree. The details of this vision of carnage are meticulously realistic, causing the viewer to experience nausea in the presence of rotting bodies and the destruction of nature. By means of references to paintings depicting suffering or war by Medieval German masters Dix skilfully enhances the effect of violence that humans evoked and suffered through the ages. For example, the legs of one fallen soldier is covered with blisters and wounds like Christ’s limbs in the *Isenheim Altarpiece* by Grünewald (1470/80-1528). The swirling clouds above the trench that echo the colour of blood evoke the *Battle of Alexander* by Albrecht Altdörfer (*circa* 1480-1538), while the triptych format is probably appropriated from the *Sebastian Altar* by Hans Holbein the Elder (*circa* 1465-*circa* 1524).

![Figure 8](http://www.mmemorial-caen.fr/10EVENT/EXPO1418/gh/texte/099text,html)

Otto Dix, *The War*, 1929-32, a triptych with predella, mixed media on wood, central panel 204x204 cm; side panels 204x102 each, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden (retrieved from the public domain: http://www.mmemorial-caen.fr/10EVENT/EXPO1418/gh/texte/099text,html).

The side panels respectively depict men leaving for the front and two wounded men returning. In the predella some men are asleep – or maybe dead – under a flimsy canvas shelter. In brief, this arrangement indicates a cyclical narrative of hope, despair and the ultimate conclusion of human endeavour.
Franz Marc, the soldier who died

At the height of the German expressionist movement Franz Marc founded *Der Blaue Reiter* in 1911 which became the centre of an artistic circle that included August Macke and Wassily Kandinsky. Marc was a complex artist, responsive to the colour theories of Robert Delaunay (1885-1941), as well as aspects of Futurism and Cubism. His subject matter and style are distinctive in that most of his mature works portray stylised wild animals in natural settings. For Marc animals represented all living beings, as Rosel Gollek (1996: 381) comments: “The principle of the transitory condition of all living things and their interpenetration, the simultaneity and inseparability of spirit and matter, is reflected in [Marc’s] pictures…” This statement is corroborated by the fact that on the back of his most abstracted painting, *Fate of the Animals*, completed in 1913, Marc wrote: “Und Alles Sein is flammend Leid” [And all being is flaming agony] (figure 9). This work is unique in portraying Marc’s premonition of impending war and his passion to explore the vulnerability of animals caused by the violence and destruction of both human beings and natural forces. The fugitive animals which, like human beings, are in need of rescue as well as redemption, are represented as distorted fleeing forms, shown in a flat geometric space, not in the space of their natural habitat. The animated conflict between natural forms trying to escape rectilinear geometric shapes, results in an existential situation of “flammend Leid”, enhanced by primary colours.

![Figure 9](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franz_Marc)
Stylistically Marc tended to abstraction, uniquely in his own way without being indebted to Kandinsky. In this regard Sixten Ringbom (1960: 409) explains: “He had asked himself what nature looked like to an animal, and regarded the visualizing of the animal’s world as a profitable task for the painter. From such speculation he came to abstraction…”

Marc, who registered as a volunteer at the outbreak of the war, never completed his oeuvre. He died at the Battle of Verdun in 1916 before Government orders of reassignment of him and other artists could be affected.

*George Grosz, the misanthropist*

Unlike many of his contemporary artists, George Grosz did not see the First World War as an opportunity for political or social liberation. Even though opposed to the war he nevertheless volunteered for military service in November 1914, in a bid to escape conscription and the ordeal of being sent to the trenches. Discharged on health grounds in 1916, he was drafted again in 1917. Suffering from a nervous breakdown and attempted suicide Grosz was finally discharged from the army but was fated to spend time in a mental hospital.

In 1916 the traumatised Grosz anglicised his name from Georg Groß to George Grosz to show his contempt for his native Wilhelmin Germany. Ursula Zeller (1996: 697) characterises the change in the man and the development his art as follows: “The war made Grosz into a misanthropist and an Utopian. In his art he fought against preoccupations of Wilhelmin society by uncovering their shadowy aspects of crime, murder and erotic licence.” After the war Grosz applied his artistic talent as a satirist to scenes of social decadence that reflected his disillusionment with humanity. Politically he sided with the radical left and propagandists of the proletarian revolution, with which he also became disillusioned after a trip to Russia. Grosz emigrated to America when Hitler came to power in 1933 and from that safe distance he viewed the horrors of the Second World War.

In an allegorical painting, entitled *God of War*, Gosz parodies Mars, the Roman god of war, who gloried in human suffering (figure 10). The god storming in from the right side of the picture with big boots is transformed by Grosz into an ugly bearded titan wearing a helmet decorated with a laurel wreath, carrying a dove, the symbol of peace, on his shoulder, giving the Nazi salute in the direction of an explosive light source in which a spider lurks. On the left side a typical Hitler follower is shown captive in a position of supplication to the god, his ears closed with wooden blocks, mouth stitched up and both hands clutching a swastika. As a final perversity a child sitting in the foreground with a toy war machine at his side handles a machine gun.

*God of War* is Grosz’s response to the renewed violence and destruction that did not end with the Great War, but escalated into a second, even more disastrous global war. With the centrally placed Nazi symbol, Grosz emphasises the guilt of Nazi Germany in blindly worshipping the destructive spirit of war.11
Conclusion

Artists were often activists for peace. None was more prominent than Käthe Kollwitz (1867-1945), whose son died on the battlefield. She initially supported the necessity of the First World War, as Joan Weinstein (1997: 42) avers:

Her diaries reveal the necessity of war, even admiring the willingness of German youth to sacrifice themselves for the cause. Much of her art during the war reflected this resolve, even after the death of her second son Peter in action. It was only in the very last stages of the war that Kollwitz publicly assumed an anti-war stance.

Even though Kollwitz was not a painter, her graphic oeuvre reveals compassion for the victims of the destruction of the Second World War and highlights the suffering of her gender in war fought by men. The poster, Never Again War [Nie wieder Krieg], designed for a youth organisation in 1924, depicts a young man campaigning for the end of war (figure 11). Needless to say, her

Figure 10

George Grosz, God of War, 1940, oil on canvas, 119,5x90 cm, Estate George Grosz (retrieved from the public domain: http://www.artnet.com/magazineus/reviews/kley/george-grosz-fernell-franco11-10-09.asp).
graphic appeal to the youth to abhor war did not have the intended result and the Second World War broke out in 1939. She died on 22 April 1945, shortly before the declaration of peace.

Figure 11
Käthe Kollwitz, *Never Again War*, 1924, private collection, crayon and charcoal on paper (retrieved from the public domain: http://www.kks-hannover.de/Kollwitz_37.html).

Throughout the ages visual artists all over the world have represented the perennial scourge of war, but as in the case of Kollwitz, without being able to influence the end of mass violence. Altdorfer has been mentioned as a representative of Medieval interpretation of warfare. Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) revealed the cruel energy of men and horses in close combat in his lost fresco, *The Battle of Anghiari*. Francisco Goya (1746-1828) was aghast at the horrors of the war against Napoleon Bonaparte in Spain that he recorded in a series of 80 etchings, entitled *Disasters of War*. And after the destruction of Hisoshima and Nagasaki shortly before the end of the Second World War, Japanese artists have responded to the loss of 300,000 lives and their cities, as the exhibition in the Maruki Gallery panels in Hiroshima bear witness.\(^{12}\)

Art cannot sublimate the horrors of war, but war has never in the history of humankind destroyed the impulse of artists to express their interior visions during times when situated in the midst of violence as witnesses of the ruin of human and natural worlds. This statement is uniquely true of German artists’ experience of the First World War, which was an emotional event in which they participated willingly or unwillingly and that shaped their creative responses in many-faceted ways, as expressed in a unique collective oeuvre. The painters who survived had the courage to continue practising their art after the Great War. Their legacy consists of a collection of vivid works shaped by their commitment to expressionist art and social critique, which are not only interesting as documents of the disasters of war, but mainly as symbolic representations of the human creative spirit.

Now, seventy years after the end of the Second World War Europe has developed in peace as the European Union which received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2012. The sacrifice to achieve lasting peace was too enormous to repeat. Therefore an echo of Käthe Kollwitz’s slogan lives on: “Nie wieder Krieg”.
Notes

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

2 Miller (2001: 6) states: “The age-old quest of both art and science has been to seek new representations of phenomena beyond appearances.” He deals with the parallel development of early twentieth-century scientific thought and art, especially in Picasso’s exploration of a representation of four-dimensional reality in Cubism, focusing on the origins and development of Les demoiselles d’Avignon (1907).

3 For an overview of artistic trends in Imperial Germany, see Paret (1997).

4 For a concise overview of the establishment of Die Brücke in Dresden and participating artists, see Vogt (1976: 27-44).

5 Short (1993: 43 and 180) explains the Nietzschean term Rausch and the related term Ekstase as “intensity, frenzy, and excess”, being the modes of expression referred to in the texts by Kirchner and other members of Die Brücke group.

6 Der Blaue Reiter was initially a journal, established by Franz Marc, but the name later became synonymous with the group of collaborating artists.

7 The apt subtitle of the survey of the arts in Germany, 1890-1937, by West (2001) is Utopia and Despair. It is a valuable source regarding the context of German expressionist art.

8 Interoceptive and exteroceptive feeling states are contemporary neurological terms describing personal awareness of bodily responses to the self and the environment.

9 Kirchner also composed his face in a later self-portrait to resemble an African mask. See the Self-portrait with a Cat, 1920, The Busch-Reisinger Harvard University rt Museums.

10 The Trench (1920-23) was probably destroyed by the Nazis in 1933. For a discussion of this painting and the assessment of various art historians as the most horrible expression of death after Grünewald’s Crucifixion, see Crockett (1999: 92-6).

11 For a discussion of this painting, see Ralph Jentsch, in Judin (2009: 148).

12 See this journal 30(2), 2015, for an article by 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”.

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Estelle Alma Maré is the editor of this journal. Her present affiliation is with Tshwane University of Technology, Pretoria, as an extraordinary professor in Architecture.
Situating Geography and the powers of Law, State and Church in the dynamic of Change that lead to the establishment of Pretoria

Yolanda van der Vyver
Doctoral student, Department of Architecture, University of the Free State
E-mail: yolanda@adept.co.za

A two dimensional representation of Pretoria at the middle of the 19th Century shows that the landscape had been shaped by forces of nature and human dominance. This article aims to determine the powers through which Pretoria was established. The first aim is to describe the advent of the philosophy of change, to identify the change from movement to settlement and to determine how the powers of Law, State and Church formed the Boer worldview. The authority of State through which the beacons of the first Boer farms were erected is determined and the influence of the prevailing geography on primary settlement is explored. The change in landscape from agricultural settlement to town for the purpose of establishing a Zittingplaats des Volksraads...in het midden des lands is documented. Finally the reason for setting out Pretoria according to a grid pattern is described as both a sign of human dominance over landscape and of water management. This article analyses the historical contexts through archival material, site visits and secondary sources and presents findings from the general to the specific.

Key words: 19th century Pretoria urbanism, Zittingplaats des Volksraads, Boer worldview, change in landscape, first farms in Pretoria

A mid 19th Century two-dimensional representation of the geographic area that is Pretoria today (figure 1) shows the positions of the homesteads of the first Boer farmers relative to ChurchSquare (Kerkplein), access roads into the Square and the natural features of Walkerspruit and the Apies River, from its source (Fontein) through the hills of Elandspoortrand.

Later images (1859 and 1878) representing the two-dimensional mapping of the street layout of Pretoria by A.F. du Toit (figures 2 and 3) still contain reference to the original farms and natural features in the margins, but human dominance in the form of a grid superimposed over the topography is what catches the eye. The natural geographical features have been marginalised, but not ignored, both on the maps and in the actual layout of the town.

A palimpsest, where twentieth century maps are superimposed over the earlier maps at the correct geographical points (figure 4), places the older maps in the context of current Pretoria, which is in the greater Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality.
Figure 1
Map showing the farmsteads of both Bronkhorst brothers and Andries van der Walt (source: Van der Waal Collection).

Figure 2
Figure 3
Plan of Pretoria, Jeppe 1878 (source: Van der Waal Collection).

Figure 4
Pretoria Palimpsest (source: palimpsest by the author).
Figure 1 depicts the change from natural landscape to human agricultural settlement and figure 2 depicts the change from agricultural settlement to town. The development of the philosophy of change and the seminal moments that caused these changes follow.

The Advent of the Philosophy of Change

From the earliest times humans tried to determine what caused change. Although still bound by ancient mythological ways of thought, Milesians Thales and Anaximander (6th to 5th Centuries BCE) were the first to discover a new world of natural science and philosophy. The psyches of Thales and the goddess Dike of Anaximander were said to be responsible for change in the world. Anaximenes, the third philosopher from Miletus, broke through this last trace of myth. He discovered that change in nature could be explained mechanically (Brumbaugh 1970: 26). Anaximenes thought that all change was the result of changes in density brought about by condensation and rarefaction. This new idea gave scientists experiments, models and physical explanations of change and their cause, which is still our way of thinking. He believed that change and collision kept the system shifting (ibid: 27). His system of nature needed no souls or deities but only matter in motion. This spinning world remained the key model for astronomy and natural philosophy through the following ten centuries.

Heraclites from Ephesus (born 353 BCE) introduced change and motion as part of an ever-living restless fire, *pyr* that supplies the driving force of a universe in endless change (Brumbaugh 1970: 48). He said the world exists as a conflict and tension of opposites (Pirsig 1974: 372). Heraclites was trying to express both the tensions that lead to harmony and the tremendous energy that flows through reality in his fire imagery. It is energy and not matter that is important to him. Today we can recognise as a genuine possibility a process philosophy in which physical reality is not matter, but power (Brumbaugh 1970: 49). When reason becomes enchanted by mechanical models or mathematical maps and forgets the concrete fact of change, the strife and individuality, the stuff of our experienced world, is forgotten. Heraclites, like his predecessors, began by looking for the one stuff underlying the changing world we observe all around us. Reality for him consists of motion, process, power, strife and flow (ibid: 43). The Roman stoics thought that they were following Heraclites when they identified logos with God and combined materialism and pantheism, the view that all things are part of God (ibid: 46).

Change from movement to settlement

It was the great agricultural revolution that enabled humans to settle in one area for a longer time. Diamond (1997) probably explains the agricultural revolution the best. It started in the Fertile Crescent when small bands of egalitarian hunter-gatherers were transformed into farmers, who could settle in greater numbers, sustained by subsistence farming and who could diversify and specialise into trades and later professions. Although settlement was often less than permanent, these nomadic farmers moved in search of green pastures and fertile land, often leaving barren ground and abandoned villages behind. The transfer of agricultural knowledge followed the path of least resistance, along the same latitude, where the climate stays relatively constant. From the Fertile Crescent eastwards farming communities established in villages and towns, parts of the bands breaking loose to travel further to establish new communities. Language and culture changed, adapted and expanded, leaving the art of writing, technology, the wheel, war and religion in its wake. But the transfer of knowledge along the longitudinal medians was more difficult. The climate changes and so does the landscape. The Sahara, possibly a result of over-
grazing and climate change, and pests as the tsetse fly, spurred farming and crops like olives and grapes, so successful in the Mediterranean regions, could not cross the barrier of the desert or the tropical equator (Diamond 1997).

Moving and settling: from the cape to the interior

In the late 15th century the arrival of the Dutch East India Company (Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie, VOC) in the Cape of Good Hope in 1652 brought Mediterranean crops per ship, bypassing the African desert and disease. Fruit, olives and vineyards flourished in the Cape and the VOC’s victualing station successfully provided sustenance to visiting ships. Although the intention of the VOC was not to settle on the continent, nine men were released from Company service early in 1657 and each was granted land along the Liesbeek River. The Company did this to save on salaries. These Vryburghers increased in numbers over the years and in 1710 there were more than three thousand settled over a hundred kilometres away from Cape Town (Pearse 1956).

Although the settlement remained, dozens of disillusioned burghers left the Cape in the early 1700’s for the interior in search of greener pastures and to move away from the jurisdiction of an uncaring Cape bureaucracy. These Trekboere lived a simple life in true nomadic fashion, moving and sometimes settling, but with less than permanent abodes. In 1838 thousands of Dutch descendants, now called Voortrekkers or Boere, trekked from the Cape Colony through the open space of the South African landscape to escape the reality of British colonial power that was working its way through the continent. With their universe contained in the ox wagon, their aim was not a specific geographic point further north, but they were driven by a dream or vision of a “promised land” somewhere, a vision that was taken directly from the Old Testament. The Trek took place from 1835 to 1840.

The Power of the Laws that formed the Boer Worldview

A comprehensive unpacking of the laws that governed the Voortrekkers and their ancestors, which may or may not have had an influence on their worldview, would have been desirable at this point, but for the purpose of this article, a summary based on the sources referred to, will suffice. The injection of Dutch descendants and Roman-Dutch Law to the southern tip of Africa happened through the 17th century enterprises of the Dutch East India Company (VOC). Their influence began in 1652 and lasted until 1795, when the British occupied the Cape. British rule was a deciding factor in the Voortrekkers’ move northward during the Great Trek. There seem to be gaps in the chronological evolution of the Law and often the findings are surprising and contradictory. Even though A was possible, B happened. Although X would have been expected, Y ensued. This follows:

The VOC

- Although the VOC did not have a mandate to colonise the Cape, the Dutch managed to build up colonial possessions on the basis of indirect state capitalist corporate colonialism via the VOC.
- It had a policy of non-interference in local laws in China and Japan.
• Although the VOC was a corporation (the first corporation to issue shares), it was an arm of the Dutch State, from whom it obtained its power (Gerstell, 2010).

**British occupation(s)**

• After the requested British occupation in 1795 and forced occupation in 1806, the British had the fullest right to abolish Roman-Dutch law as they pleased and replace it with English law (the King has power to alter the old and to introduce new laws in a conquered country) but this never happened (du Plessis, 1999: 50).
• The retention of the Roman-Dutch law meant that burghers could enjoy the same rights and privileges.
• Until 1847 territorial expansion of the Cape Colony took place by way of shifting borders and with that the area of validity of the Roman-Dutch law was expanded.
• There was infiltration and reception of English law in certain fields.
• Roman Dutch law was retained because judges had a “loyalty” to the Roman-Dutch law and kept on applying it. The works of old writers such as De Groot and Van Leeuwen were translated into English in the 19th century, which made important Roman-Dutch sources available to English-speaking jurists in the Cape (du Plessis, 1999: 51).
• Although Roman-Dutch law was retained, the Boers did not always agree with the interpretation and this was one of the reasons for the Great Trek.

**The Great Trek**

• Although the Boers imagined that they were turning their backs on colonial law and order and the Cape judiciary, they were still liable for all crimes committed south of 25degree latitude, which falls just below the present-day Warmbaths (Bela Bela) in northern Transvaal, in terms of the Cape of Good Hope Punishment Act (1836).
• Because leaving the British-owned Cape Colony was illegal the Dutch Reformed Church refused to allow ministers to accompany them. Even though breaking the law meant that the Christian Voortrekkers sinned against the Church, they made peace with that contravention, because they felt that British Rule was unfair and that breaking the law was justified.
• They trekked under their own form of governance, with the Bible and their own consciences to guide them.
• The Boers embraced most of the Roman-Dutch laws that were not too different from the laws that prevailed in the Cape.

**Determining local law through the power of state(s)**

In 1837 The Voortrekkers congregated for a while in the Winburg area (Figure 5). The Voortrekker leader, Potgieter selected the site of Winburg. They camped there in the largest gathering of the Great Trek and there they established a State, a government that would maintain law and order, but uniquely this State had no fixed territory. The Voortrekkers could not agree on a territory and after Winburg they dispersed in various directions until they settled in the different Boer Republics. The end of the Great Trek is marked by distinct change from movement to settlement.
Natalia

The Voortrekker Republic, Natalia decreed a constitution, Regulatien en Instructien in October 1838. It determined that a magistrate had to observe the judgements of the court according to “de Hollandsche regtspleging, zoo civiel als crimineel”. After a brief existence Natalia was annexed as a British colony in 1843 and incorporated into the Cape Colony in 1844. In 1845 Roman-Dutch law was legally recognised to be the law of Natal. Natal later became a separate colony in 1856, through the Royal Charter, but Roman-Dutch law prevailed. Its status was once again confirmed in 1896. When Zululand was incorporated into Natal and in 1897 the law of Natal, subject to certain conditions, was also made applicable to that region. Some Boers remained in Natal while others moved back over the Drakensberg. A Boer woman famously said that she would rather cross the Drakensberg again barefoot than stand under a British rule.

Republic of Winburg-Potchefstroom

For a short time until 1840 the towns of Potchefstroom and Winburg, as well as their surrounding territories, were joined in a political entity known as the Republic of Winburg-Potchefstroom. Winburg was the seat of the Adjunct Volksraad and was a sub-capital of the Republic of Natalia (Floyd 1960). The Adjunk-Raad of Potchefstroom was initially subject to the Natal Volksraad, but in April 1844 it broke relations with the Natal Volksraad, due to the British annexation of Natal in 1843 and at the same occasion set up a decree known as the Drie-en-dertig Artikels (Thirty-three Articles). This decree was ratified in May 1849 at a volksvergadering (national assembly) (Van Zyl and van der Vyver 1982: 215).

In Article 31 of the Thirty-three Articles, the “Hollandsche wet”, was made the basis of administration of justice for matters that were not governed by the articles “doch op een gematigde
“stijlvorm en overeenkomstig van het costuum van Zuid-Afrika tot nut van de maatschappij.” A constitution was set up after that in 1858 but it did not say anything about the law that had to be applied. The next year in 1859 the Volksraad of the ZAR confirmed in a supplement to the constitution of 1858 that Roman-Dutch law would be applicable in the Transvaal. That supplement was actually a re-enactment of Article 31 of the Thirty-Three Articles of 1849, which confirmed the independence of the new republic (after relations with Natal had been broken off). The 1859 regulation accepted the “Wetboek van Van der Linden” that is his Rechtsgeleerd Practicael en Koopmans Handboek in so far as it was not in conflict with the constitution and other laws or decisions of the Volksraad, as “het Wetboek in dezen Staat”: “Het Wetboek van Van der Linden blijft (voor soover zulks niet strijdt met den Grondwet, andere wetten of Volksraadbesluiten) het Wetboek in dezen Staat.”

It was further determined that the Wetboek of Simon van Leeuwen, Het Roomsch-Hollandsch Recht and the Inleidinge of Hugo de Groot would apply in cases where Van der Linden’s work is unclear or had nothing to say on a particular issue. After the British colonisation of the Transvaal, various of the Transvaal decrees were recalled, amongst others those on which the applications of the Roman-Dutch Law in the Transvaal rested. In proclamation 14 of 1902 it was determined that the Roman-Dutch law, except in so far as it is modified by legislative enactments, shall be the law of this colony (Van Zyl and van der Vyver 1982: 216. See also Du Plessis 1999: 52). The Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR) was established after the signing of the Sand River Convention on 17 January 1852. Potgieter and Pretorius were elected to serve in the assembly.

OFS

When the OFS, the area between the Orange River and the Vaal, was declared part of the British territory in 1848, it was brought under British Rule by commander Sir Harry Smith’s proclamation of the Orange River Sovereignty (ORS), but Roman-Dutch law was made applicable there by proclamation. After the independence of the Boer Republic of the Orange Free State was recognised in 1854 through the Bloemfontein convention, due to the eight defeats suffered by the ORS to Moshoeshoe, Roman-Dutch law was declared to be the “constitution” of the new republic. After the British victory on 1902 it was enacted that the Roman-Dutch law as accepted and applied in South Africa, would be the common law of the new colony.

Competence to declare a constitution

The question begs by what power the Voortrekker leaders established the Boer Republics and the answer can be found in the works of the legal minds of the 20th century. There exists an original competence to create law. This competence is an integral part of the internal structure of a community, set up by God to create law through its organs whether by compliance with the existing positive law² (for example in a well-ordered state) or in the absence of an existing positive law (as in the case of establishment of Voortrekker Republics), or in conflict with the existing positive law (as in the case of a one-sided declaration of independence) (Van Zyl and Van der Vyver 1982: 279.) After moving from the Cape the Voortrekkers did not regard themselves as subject to the law of the Cape Colony, thus they were not already established according to a pre-existing legal system (ibid: 213). The validity of the first Voortrekker constitutions therefore rests on that original competence to create law. The Voortrekker communities formed new constitutional law on that basis when they founded republics: by virtue of an original competence (ibid: 279).
Agricultural settlement - erecting beacons (from 1840)

The first farms in what later became Pretoria, were established by brothers Lucas and Gert (JGS) Bronkhorst in 1840, the date which also marks the end of the Great Trek. Gert was a man with a more than average education and later played a leading role in the First war of Independence. He was Potgieter’s secretary and one of the men who in 1836 took part in the unprecedented exploratory expedition from the Vet River (O.F.S.) to a point near the Portuguese coastal town of Sofala, covering a distance of 2,000 km through unknown and dangerous tsetse fly-infested country. On their return journey the patrol passed over the terrain where in 1840 the Bronkhorsts were to build the first European homes along the Apies River.

Gert (JGS) registered Elandsdoorn (Elandspoort 193) (figure 1), which extended from the south to Daspoortrand in the north and from Pretoria West through to Hatfield in the east. His farmhouse was on the east bank of the Apies River (in current Sunnyside) with Andries van der Walt’s hartbeesthuis on the west bank (figure 6). South of Elandspoort his brother, Lucas Cornelius Bronkhorst, erected the beacons of the farm Groenkloof (358 JR), which encompassed the Fountains Valley area. Lucas built his humble frontier house at the source of the Apies River and for years afterwards the Fountains were known as Bronkhorst Fountain. The foundations of Lucas Bronkhorst’s home can still be seen in the Groenkloof Nature Reserve (figure 7).

Preller (1939: 13) describes pioneer house building:

Then when a suitable place had been found, in which we women normally had some considerable say, the men built a hartebeest-house. This took the form of a rectangular oblong, divided into two or three rooms, the walls being also temporarily built of wattle and daub, or of clay only under a thatched roof. The permanent dwelling, which again came into being perhaps a year or more after the hartebeest house had been put up...retained the oblong form, but was built either of stone or brick.
According to Van Vollenhoven (2008) the ruin of Lucas Bronkhorst’s house is of great cultural significance. After Bronkhorst’s death in 1874 the farm was sold to H.J. Frames for £1,250. Frames then sold the farm to Jesse Jeans. At this stage it had been realised that this farm and particularly the springs should be public property and in 1883 the Supreme Court ordered Jeans to transfer the farm to Government. Jeanes was paid only £4000. Thus the farm Groenkloof became the property of the State. On 25 February 1895 President Paul Kruger signed a proclamation and a portion of the farm Groenkloof, including the Fountains Valley, became the first proclaimed game sanctuary on the African continent, mainly to protect the oribi from hunters (http://www.sahra.org.za/sites/default/files/heritagereports/Other_Groenkloof_Nat_Res_Van_Vollenhoven_AC_Aug08_0.pdf).

Later a trek led by Andries Pretorius from Ohrigstad, together with a few stragglers from Natal and OFS, also settled in the area. The picturesque and fertile Apies River valley soon attracted great numbers of settlers, with the result that Field Cornet Andries van der Walt was continually burdened with the task of erecting beacons for the farms of newcomers.

A popular account of how the first farms were set out is re-iterated in the establishment story of the farm Hartebeespoort, where the original pioneer dwelling and outbuildings were built on the premises of what is today known as the Pioneer Museum (Figure 8) in Silverton. David Botha was a Cape farmer who migrated first to Natal and then to Ohrigstad in the Northern Transvaal. Botha arrived in Ohrigstad in 1846 with his four children, but the prevalence of malaria and the death of a son made him look elsewhere for land. In April 1848 the family moved to the farm Hartebeespoort. It is told that Botha rode 20 minutes on horseback in a northerly direction and planted the first beacon, then he rode 22 minutes east, 25 minutes south and 15 minutes west to plant the other beacons. The size of the farm was 1,800 morgen.
From the section above, it is clear that agricultural settlement conformed to legal requirements of ownership. Beacons were erected and farms registered, but how and with what authority? The Zuid Afrikaansche Republic (ZAR) only came into being in 1852, twelve years after the registration of land.

When the Dutch occupied the Cape in 1652 land became an issue of power. The system of land tenure that was introduced by the Roman-Dutch law in the Cape in 1652 reflected the Romanist concept of individual ownership, in terms of which an owner had the fullest and most comprehensive rights over the property that he or she owned. Modern South African land law developed from the Roman-Dutch law. The Dutch assumed that the land over which they could claim sovereignty was *res nullius* (i.e. property belonging to no one) and that they could own and occupy it. Later, they moved northwards and eastwards to find new farming land. In the process, they deprived the San and the Khoi of their grazing and hunting lands by force of arms in order to take occupation of the land. The Dutch introduced the system of land registration that we still know today. In terms of this system, provision was made for the insertion of certain conditional clauses in deeds of grant of land. These early deeds of land granted in ownership contained a variety of conditions (Van Wyk 2014: 13-31).

Registration of the first farms in Pretoria in 1840 was probably with the political entity known as the Republic of Winburg-Potchefstroom, which was subject to the Natal Volksraad. Registration was based on the Dutch system of land registration, as we still know it today. The first registrar was established in Natal in 1846.

The Adjunk-Raad of Potchefstroom broke relations with the Natal Volksraad, due to the British annexation in April 1844 and at the same occasion the inhabitants of the Transvaal at Potchefstroom drafted the Thirty-three Articles, which was ratified in 1849. The articles allowed ownership according to the *Hollandsche wet*, which was made the basis of administration, (Van Zyl and van der Vyver 1982: 215) so earlier registered farms were transferred under the new authority. In 1844 land ownership in the Cape was changed from leasehold to freehold, so it is
safe to assume that after 1844 farms in the Transvaal were also registered as freehold (Van Wyk 2014: 7).

**Geography as settlement generator**

From the earliest times, geography was a settlement generator. When choosing a site for a settlement the ancient Greeks considered all the geographical elements of hillside, river, defence, natural hazards and human enemies. Geography affected every step of daily life in ancient Greece. The tides, the stars and the hills were objects of importance that required close attention (Brumbaugh 1970: 9).

According to Crouch (2004) the Greeks chose sites for their colonial towns that resembled the geological context of their native country, confident of their ability to adapt their familiar town-planning and water management practices to suit these conditions. The political organisation was one of city-states, a decentralised pattern that developed naturally and was well suited to the geography of the Greek mainland (Brumbaugh 1970: 9-10).

It was the abundance of water from the Fountains Valley and its subsequent flow along the Apies River that generated more permanent settlement in the area by the Boers at the end of their Trek. It was also the presence of these two strong flowing fountains (figure 9) that lead to the first settlement of people in the area of Pretoria. The two fountains are completely independent of each other and are separated by a dyke. 25 million litres of clear pure spring water still flow strongly from the two springs in the dolomite formation between Pretoria and Irene every day. The summer rainfall dominated by subtropical anticyclones cause thunderstorms that produce lighting and brief but torrential downpours, often accompanied by devastating floods (http://www.sahra.org.za/sites/default/files/heritagereports/Other_Groenkloof_Nat_Res_Van_Vollenhoven_AC_Aug08_0.pdf.).

The soil in the fountains area comprises of chert with fine and granular consistency and quartz, which is hard, fine and gritty. Chert is associated with dolomite, which is not as resistant to erosion as quartz, especially when it comes into contact with water. Dolomite results in sinkholes and allows for the forming of these strong flowing fountains. In pre-historic times chert was often used as a source material for stone tools. Pretoria has both a Stone Age and an Iron Age past (there is no evidence of a Bronze Age).

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**Figure 9**

The two fountains of Pretoria today. The one on the left has its source in the Fountains Resort and the one on the right in the Groenkloof Nature Reserve. They join to form a single stream a short distance thereafter (photograph by the author).
Stone age tools that date back to 2,000 BCE were discovered in the Wonderboom area and along the banks of the Apies River (figure 10). Some activity sites (so called because they were classified as workshops where the by-products of tool manufacture including flakes and cores were found) were identified in the Groenkloof Nature reserve on the escarpment overlooking the valley and the river. These activity areas are mostly surface sites located near exposed chert. The Middle Stone Age is well represented although some Later Stone Age artefacts were also found (ibid).

In the 1600’s the southern Transvaal Ndebele tribe occupied the area, after travelling from Natal led by a chief called Musi. Only one site in the Fountains Valley area has been identified where definite Iron Age occupation is visible (figure 11). This site is a cave located in a dolomite outcrop. Caves such as these are normally associated with the Stone Age. This particular cave is not very deep. At the entrance of the cave is a terrace, which was formed in all likelihood by human activity. Iron Age potshards and some Stone Age tools were found on this terrace. It is assumed that, in times of crises, Iron Age people found refuge in caves such as these. The potsherds that are found at this site are broadly associated with the Moloko tradition. This tradition is an Iron Age pottery style linked to proto Sotho-Tswana speaking peoples (http://www.sahra.org.za/sites/default/files/heritagereports/Other_Groenkloof_Nat_Res_Van_Vollenhoven_AC_Aug08_0.pdf).
Mzilikazi built two military kraals on the Apies River during the Difecane (1820-1832). The first was northwest of Pretoria on the road to Hartebeespoort Dam and the other was along the Daspoort hills. His main residence was on the south slope of Meintjieskop, but he later moved to the north of the Magaliesberg range (ibid). In 1836 it was reported to Mzilikazi that thousands of white people were moving southwards to invade his land. He launched an attack on the Potgieter Trek. The Voortrekkers managed to ward off their attackers but suffered great loss of life and livestock. Shortly after this, Mzilikazi launched a second attack on the Voortrekkers and this time his men carried off all the livestock owned by the Whites. Potgieter, determined to succeed, launched a counter-attack on the Matabele at Mosega and managed to recover a considerable number of their livestock. In December 1837, Potgieter launched another attack on Mzilikazi and his tribe. This battle, together with the one waged by Dingane a few months earlier, was enough to send Mzilikazi fleeing across the Limpopo. With Mzilikazi out of the way, it was easy for Potgieter to drive the rest of the Matabele stragglers to the north over Silkaatsnek. Although some Tswana tribes returned to the Apies River area after the departure of the Ndebele, there is no evidence of large communities occupying the area that is now Pretoria (http://www.sahra.org.za/sites/default/files/heritagereports/Other_Groenkloof_Nat_Res_Van_Vollenhoven_AC_Aug08_0.pdf).

From Agricultural settlement to town: the first Boer towns Winburg and Potchefstroom

The Voortrekkers initially settled on farms and not in towns, but the Boer towns developed to serve the farming community and were either government sponsored or church towns (Floyd, 1960). Winburg was the first town to be established in the Free State in 1835 and served as its capital (Floyd 1960: 18, 25). The oldest European settlement in the Transvaal was in the Klerksdorp area, but Potchefstroom was the first to develop into a functional town with an organised community. The Voortrekkers established the town in 1838, on a site on the Mooi River chosen by their leader Potgieter. It served as a sub-capital for the Transvaal portion of the Republic of Natalia and was the seat of the Adjunct-Volksraad in the same way as Winburg was for the Free State.

For a short time until 1840 the towns of Potchefstroom and Winburg, as well as their surrounding territories, were joined in a political entity known as the Republic of Winburg-
Potchefstroom. Potgieter was elected as chief commandant and in October 1840 it was decided that Potchefstroom would unite with Pieter Mouriets Burg (Pietermaritzburg). In 1848 Potchefstroom became the capital of the ZAR, a status that was affirmed by Britain on 16 and 17 January 1852, together with the status of the South African Republic (ZAR) when the Sand River Convention treaty was signed on the banks of the Sand River in a tent (Figure 12). According to this convention the British Government would allow the emigrant farmers north of the Vaal River to govern according to their own laws, with a policy of non-interference from both sides. This signalled the establishment of the ZAR.

Figure 12
Sand River Convention Monument today, 15km from Winburg
(photograph by the author).

The power of the Church in establishing Pretoria

The location of the seat of the Volksraad of the ZAR was a contentious issue from the establishment of the first Boer Republics, which were often marred by political discord, disbanding of the Volksraad, the threat of civil war and political schism (Pieterse, 1942: 2). The different towns took turns to host Volksraad meetings and it was not always possible for all members to attend far away meetings, due to cost and distance. This resulted in meetings without a quorum (Kommissieraadsittings), which meant that decisions had to be ratified by the full complement at the next meeting. Progress was severely impeded and often on purpose. Marthinus Wessel Pretorius and Piet Potgieter, the sons of the two Voortrekker leaders, wanted to put an end to this intolerable situation and in August 1853 they submitted a request to the “Kommissieraadsitting” in Rustenburg to determine the “Zittingplaats des Volksraads in het midden des lands” because
it would benefit the whole nation to have a permanent meeting place (Pieterse 1942: 6). M.W. Pretorius suggested Elandspoort for the establishment of the new town and went as far as buying up the farms of Prinsloo, van der Walt and Bronkhorst on the banks of the Apies River (figure 1), but farmers further down the Apies River objected to the establishment of a town there, because it threatened the future of their farms. Pretorius filed numerous motions with the Volksraad, but it was rejected every time, because the Volksraad feared that a new town would be too costly (ibid: 9), despite Pretorius’ plan to divide the farms into erven and sell them in order to pay the first instalments of his loan. The Volksraad was also hesitant about declaring a capital where no town existed (Kraehmer 1978: 7). After numerous of his motions were denied, Pretorius changed his strategy and addressed his request to the Church, which was a softer target (Pieterse 1942: 10). Elandspoort was probably already a Kerkplaas, but Pretorius approached the Reverend van der Hoff, who influenced the Church Council in a meeting on 7 June 1854 to vote for the establishment of a new congregation. The notice of the Church Council to establish a separate congregation on the bought farm Elandspoort “om een afzonderlike gemeente te stichten op de aangekochte plaats Elandspoort” (Kraehmer 1978: 70), appeared on the Volksraad agenda (Pieterse 1942: 11) and on the same day the Volksraad ratified the decision with only two votes against it (both from Lydenburg).

The two farms of Elandspoort and Koedoespoort were declared a town in November 1853, and came to be known as Pretoria Philadelphia in honour of M.W. Pretorius’s father (Voortrekker leader Andries Pretorius, who was instrumental in the creation of the Transvaal Republic) and his father’s brothers. Although Magistrate A.F. du Toit (Andries) only commenced with the process of setting out Pretoria Philadelphia in 1857, the official date of establishment was recorded as 16 November 1855, this being the day that the Volksraad had given its permission. In Article 17 of the Constitution of the ZAR of 18 February 1858, which was accepted in Rustenburg, it was stated that Potchefstroom, located on the Mooi River, would be the capital of the Republic and that Pretoria would be the seat of government. In May 1860 Potchefstroom became the “Chief city” of the Republic with the capital having moved to Pretoria.

In 1856 construction of the church commenced. Preller tells us that the site that is now Church Square was covered with indigenous trees with a park-like appearance and delectable aromas (Kraehmer 1978: 7) but most of the indigenous bush was chopped down when the Square was laid out. The members of the Nederduitshe Hervormde Kerk (Dutch Reformed Church) were widely dispersed on farms and congregated every quarter for the “nachtmahl” service held over several days. Pretorius therefore instructed that the terrain should be extensive to make provision for outspan and camping facilities during nachtmahl gatherings, when many wagons and tents would stand around the square. The area around the first church, which was inaugurated on 22 February 1857 by van der Hoff, was the natural meeting place of the farming community, not only for “nachtmahl” and religious occasions but also for social and political gatherings and trade. The first houses arose quickly followed by simple trading establishments, a school and thereafter the government building (Kraehmer 1978: 8). Some acquired properties close to the church and built tuishuise (farmers’ town-houses or cottages) for accommodation over the nagmaal weekend. The new Hervormde congregation only got its first reverend in 1861.

The search for colonial settlement codes

The powers that lead to the establishment of Pretoria were determined in the previous section. What remains is to determine the reason for the grid layout. A.F du Toit was tasked with setting
out the new town Philadelphia Pretoria, which he did according to a rigid grid pattern. Beginning in 1857 with Church Square, he pegged out the city’s first blocks orientated east-west and north-south (Kraehmer 1978: 9) (figure 2). On his arrival in Pretoria in 1855 there were twelve families in Hartbeeshuise near the thatch church (Pieterse 1942: 21). The road layout of Du Toit was not organic, thus not based on actual requirements and lines between different points in the city and the district. The grid-iron pattern is unrelated to topography and other natural considerations. This grid system was even imposed on sides of the steep ridges (Kraehmer 1978: 10).

The use of a grid pattern is a distinguishing feature of all Boer towns. Pretoria’s layout is similar to that of Graaff-Reinet. According to Kraehmer they unmistakably belong to the same culture, architectural heritage and period. He puts forward as the reason for this that the Voortrekkers who established Pretoria came from the eastern Cape. Andries Pretorius was born and raised in Graaff-Reinet and although Graaff-Reinet was not the original home of many Voortrekkers, they still regarded it as their commercial and cultural centre (heimat). Graaff-Reinet’s style and character was an echo of the Boland towns Stellenbosch, Franschoek, Paarl, Tulbach and later Swellendam, where their fathers were raised (Kraehmer 1978: 12). The Voortrekkers brought with them the traditional building style and town environment of their forebears. They followed this style for the first forty years of the town’s existence reminiscent of the Cape Dutch character of the Boland (ibid: 13).

Holm describes the Voortrekker dorp as based on a simple standard model, well understood by both planners and users, with its regular design lines of order imprinted on the land and the wild landscape (Holm in Fisher et al, 1998: 59). It is clear that there was a similar settlement strategy but was there a settlement code linked to this standard model? Pretoria is often referred to as a colonial settlement but in the true sense of the word that is not true. It was settled as a result of probably the first post-colonial movement in Africa, by a group of people that fled the yoke of their colonial powers. However, there is no doubt that the town layout followed western colonial examples rather than southern African layouts.

The Spanish Crown issued an entire body of laws, the Laws of the Indies (Leyes de Indias), for its American and Philippine possessions. In the 18th century urban planning laws were put into force and under the Law of the Indies the center of all new towns had to be a plaza or central park, surrounded by important buildings with portales or arcades, and from which the principal streets, laid out in a grid pattern, shall begin. Smaller secondary plazas were also called for as well as narrow streets, in hot climates, in order to provide shade. The urban planners of the Spanish government followed these laws and a basic pattern can be observed in most old towns in Spanish colonial Philippines and new towns reflecting these principles were built all through the Americas.

The VOC of the seventeenth century would not have had guidelines on how to establish colonial towns because the mandate of the VOC was trade and not colonisation. As for the British, the Cape had been settled for 150 years when the first British occupation took place, so their influence was secondary. In India the focus was usually to separate the English from the indigenous population and development often took place in existing historic areas where British planning demolished city-cores. The planning and urban design policies of the British followed certain principles, one of which was like Haussmann’s plan for Paris, so popular in Europe and which advocated cutting through and demolishing old city centers to make space for new construction and boulevards (http://www.boloji.com/index.cfm?md=Content&sd=Articles&ArticleID=1008#sthash.lrD5i21c.dpuf). The 1820 British Settler frontier towns of
Queenstown and Grahamstown followed prescribed layouts created to provide secure, defensive towns as buffers against the Xhosa.

It seems that the search for a clear code or guideline that could have been available to A.F. du Toit in setting out the new town of Pretoria Philadelphia, similar to that contained in the Law of the Indies, will not produce a satisfactory answer. The clues to finding the source of the pattern of the pre-determined urban form and morphology may instead lie in traditive, institutional memory and inherited classical western cultural traditions rather than in law.

**The grid as sign of human dominance and water management**

The art of town planning in Greece probably began in Athens but the architect to whom ancient writers ascribe the first step was Hippodamus of Miletus (c. 407 BC) who has been dubbed the “Father of City Planning” (Haverfield 1913: 10). He seems to have worked in Athens and in connection with Athenian cities, under the auspices of Pericles. Aristotle tells us that Hippodamus planned Piraeus, the port of Athens (figure 13). The Hippodamian, or grid plan, was introduced for the first time in Piraeus and became the basis for subsequent Greek and Roman cities (Haverfield 1913: 10). A characteristic of Greek town planning was that the grid was often rigidly imposed over the topography, creating steep streets and steps. The site of the amphitheatre was typically chosen for its position on the slope of a hill so that only the seats had to be carved out. The grid is a rational (or cultural) construct and the Greeks copied the grid as design system, probably because they believed it was what separated civilisation from barbarism. Haverfield (1913: 6) argued that ancient remains that show long straight lines or several correctly drawn right angles date from a more civilised age.

**Figure 13**

Map of Piraeus by Kaupert (1881) (retrieved from http://www2.rgzm.de/Navis2/Harbours/Athen/Piraeus/PiraeusAbb3.htm).
Although there was a certain ‘civilised’ status attached to the grid layout, which is echoed in the idea of human dominance over the landscape, it was also done for practical reasons, mainly to copy the water management systems used in their motherland. The same is true for the Voortrekker dorpe. Du Preez and Peters (2014) describe Boer-founded towns as being:

gridded and laid out on a spur site in such a way that the long streets could take best advantage of the slope for the irrigation of the rectangular erven (allotments), which usually stretched from street to street. Water was obtained from a river or spring, and was lead through the settlement by means of levore (furrows or water leads) resulting in ‘water’ or ‘wet’ erven, as opposed to ‘dry’ erven unconnected to the system. Dry erven would be suitable for tuishuise or commercial use. Wet erven were specifically used for the cultivation of vegetables and fruit. Wherever possible, water leads were in place and trees would line the streets.

They conclude that the basic principle is water. Access to water is what determined the shape of the erven and their placement in the topography. Similar to the decumanus of a Roman town and the cross-street cardo, the street layouts of Boer towns are easily identifiable in their town plans.

Pretoria erven follow a similar pattern. Du Toit was responsible for the provision of a water furrow from the fountains in the Fountains Valley to the north to Scheiding Street, then westwards to Market Street (now Paul Kruger Street) and down the eastern side of this street as far as Church Street. This furrow provided a strong flow of clear water for household and irrigation purposes. Most of the erven had access to the system of water leads and early descriptions of Pretoria include lush orchards and trees. The focus was on the Church and rectangular erven in quartered blocks ran in the wind directions between the two ridges, regardless of internal topography and the water channel. (Kraehmer 1978: 9).

**Conclusion**

Anaximenes’ system of nature needed only matter in motion for change. From the earliest times the movement of humans over the natural landscape left traces of human dominance on the landscape, changing it forever. In the area that is Pretoria today, the earliest two-dimensional representations testify to the change in landscape from the natural geography to agricultural settlement (figure 1) and again from agricultural settlement to town (figures 2 and 3). The people responsible for these changes in the middle of the 19th Century were the Voortrekkers, when they settled in the area after the Great Trek.

The reason for their initial agricultural settlement in the area was the favourable geography. For centuries before them groups of Stone Age and Iron Age people moved and temporarily settled in the area for the same reason and traces of their occupancy are still visible today. The difference is that the Voortrekkers brought with them a worldview that had been shaped by the powers of Law, State and Church. They claimed ownership of the land through the power of their Law on the basis of res nullius, i.e. that the property belonged to no one and they declared constitutions for the Boer Republics (the establishment of which marks the end of the Great Trek) by virtue of an original competence to create law – also new constitutional law – in the absence of an existing positive law. Thus based on their law, they created States / Republics.

Boer towns were either government or church sponsored and more often than not they grew around places of worship, but it was the location of Pretoria Philadelphia in the middle of the geographical area that became the ZAR that caused the change from agricultural settlement to town. M.W. Pretorius’ motions to the Volksraad to establish a Zittingplaats des Volksraads in het midden des lands were not successful until he approached the Church and persuaded Van
der Hoff to sway the Volksraad with a Church Council decision. It was therefore the power of the Church that enabled the establishment of Pretoria rather than the power of the State. When referring back to Heraclites’ notion that the world exists as a conflict and tension of opposites, the roles of State and Church in the establishment of Pretoria come to mind. For Heraclites, reality consists of motion, process, power, strife and flow, but these tensions lead to harmony, the establishment of Pretoria being the resulting “harmony”. And as Brumbauch concluded, today we can recognise a process philosophy in which physical reality is not matter, but power (1970: 49).

Finally the search for a settlement code available to A.F. du Toit in setting out Pretoria Philadelphia does not produce satisfactory results, despite the rigid grid pattern being prevalent in all Boer towns. It seems that the grid, which was first used by Hippodamus of Miletus, was regarded as civilised by Greek settlers. However the reason for the quartered blocks, as in ancient Greece, is more linked to water management, than to a question of status.

Notes

1  The Fertile Crescent (also known as the Cradle of Civilization) is a crescent-shaped region containing the comparatively moist and fertile land of otherwise arid and semi-arid Western Asia, the Nile Valley and Nile Delta of northeast Africa. It includes parts of Asia Minor, also known as Anatolia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fertile_Crescent).

2  Positive law is a body of man-made laws consisting of codes, regulations and statutes enacted or imposed within a political entity such as a state or nation. Positive law contrasts with natural law.

3  Almost all settlements of the first decade of the OFS were without the approval of the Volksraad (Moll, 1977: 23-28).

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Yolanda van der Vyver has a Masters degree in Architecture from the University of Pretoria. For her thesis she rewrote the curriculum for a course on the History of the southern African environment. She obtained a BA Honours in French and a B.Arch from the University of Pretoria. She is currently enrolled at the University of the Free State for her PhD titled “Placing Pretoria’s Church Square in context: a spatiotemporal palimpsest of landscape and power”. She has been practicing architecture since 1996 and is a founding member of Y and K Architects. She is a fellow of the Association of Arbitrators and teaches part time at the University of Pretoria.
The in-group/out-group dynamics of Nerdrum’s positioning of Kitsch as a reflection of situatedness within contemporary art

Willem P. Venter
History of Art, North-West University
E-mail: 13061127@nwu.ac.za

In his description of the Kitsch movement Odd Nerdrum distinguishes between Kitsch and art. This article investigates the concept of Kitsch as theorized by Nerdrum as a manifestation of situatedness within contemporary art. Nerdrum’s positioning of kitsch as Kitsch, and as the alternative to contemporary art, links with other critics’ views of the significance of kitsch within a post-industrial, modernist and postmodernist society. The techniques employed by Nerdrum in his attempts to re-situate Kitsch are held to reflect the concepts in-group/out-group dynamics, as theorized in social identity theory. I argue that Nerdrum attempts to reposition kitsch – from an out-group to contemporary art – to Kitsch - as an in-group. In this the Kitsch movement can be seen as the manifestation of the need for a change of the situatedness of those who create within the framework of what is considered to be kitsch. Nerdrum’s definition of Kitsch, however, is shown to be an ironically modernist marginalizing force in itself, again situating certain artistic attempts as the out-group.

Keywords: in-group, kitsch/Kitsch, Odd Nerdrum, situatedness, the Kitsch Movement, out-group

In his description of the Kitsch movement Odd Nerdrum distinguishes between Kitsch and art. This article investigates the concept of Kitsch as theorized by Nerdrum as a manifestation of situatedness within contemporary art. Nerdrum’s positioning of kitsch as Kitsch, and as the alternative to contemporary art, links with other critics’ views of the significance of kitsch within a post-industrial, modernist and postmodernist society. The techniques employed by Nerdrum in his attempts to re-situate Kitsch are held to reflect the concepts in-group/out-group dynamics, as theorized in social identity theory. I argue that Nerdrum attempts to reposition kitsch – from an out-group to contemporary art – to Kitsch - as an in-group. In this the Kitsch movement can be seen as the manifestation of the need for a change of the situatedness of those who create within the framework of what is considered to be kitsch. Nerdrum’s definition of Kitsch, however, is shown to be an ironically modernist marginalizing force in itself, again situating certain artistic attempts as the out-group.

Keywords: in-group, kitsch/Kitsch, Odd Nerdrum, situatedness, the Kitsch Movement, out-group

Die in-groep/uit-groep-dinamika van Nerdrum se posisionering van Kitsch as ‘n weerspieëling van gesitueerdheid binne kontemporêre kuns

In sy beskrywing van die Kitsch movement onderskei Odd Nerdrum tussen Kitsch en kuns. Hierdie artikel ondersoek die konsep van Kitsch, soos geteoretiseer deur Nerdrum, as ‘n manifestasie van gesitueerdheid binne kontemporêre kuns. Nerdrum se posisionering van kitsch as Kitsch, en as die alternatief tot kontemporêre kuns, hou verband met nog kritici se oortuigings van die rol van kitsch binne ‘n post-industriële, modernistiese en postmodernistiese samelewing. Die tegnieke wat Nerdrum benut in sy poging om Kitsch te hersitueer word voorgehou as ‘n voorbeeld van in-groep/uit-groep-dinamika, soos geteoretiseer in sosiale identiteitsteorie. Ek argumenteer dat Nerdrum pog on kitsch te herposisioneer - van ‘n uit-groep teenoor kontemporêre kuns – na Kitsch – as ‘n in-groep. Die Kitsch movement kan hiervolgens gesien word as die manifestasie van die behoefte vir ‘n verandering in die gesitueerdheid van diegene wat kuns skep binne die raamwerk wat beskou word as kitsch. Met die definiëring van Kitsch skep Nerdrum egter ‘n nuwe raamwerk van ironiese modernistiese marginalisering, waar sekere pogings tot kunsskepping weereens gesitueer word as die uit-groep.

Sleutelwoorde: gesitueerdheid, in-groep, kitsch/Kitsch, Odd Nerdrum, die Kitsch Movement, uit-groep

Contemporary Norwegian artist Odd Nerdrum (born 1944) declared in 1998 at a retrospective exhibition of his work that he is not an artist but a Kitsch painter (Nerdrum 2011b: 25).³ With this statement Nerdrum demands that his work be evaluated by (what he calls) the standards of Kitsch³ (Nerdrum 2011b: 25). Hereby Nerdrum not only situates himself within a certain artistic context, but also allows other artists to situate their work by declaring themselves Kitsch artists. These artists, according to Nerdrum, are the creators of Kitsch – a movement (also referred to as the Kitsch movement) meant to restore that which Nerdrum feels contemporary art has declared to be obsolete.

In the traditional conceptualisation of the term, kitsch has in a sense been the antithesis of art (cf. Greenberg 1939; Binkley 2000; Kellman-Chapin 2013). As discussed later the concepts associated with the term have, from the nineteenth century to this day, held negative connotations, although many theorists are re-evaluating the position, importance and definition of kitsch
(see Boylan 2010; Tedman 2010; Kellman-Chapin 2013). Nerdrum strives in his theoretical, philosophical and artistic definition of Kitsch to reposition the meaning of kitsch, in aspiring for what he calls high Kitsch as a so-called reaction against structuralist modernist assumptions.

In his re-conceptualisation of Kitsch (transcending traditional ideas and definitions regarding kitsch), as well as what he calls the standards of Kitsch, Nerdrum focuses on the technical skills of an artist, working in a style that is not new and is always figurative (Nerdrum being a figurative painter himself). He states that “the highest mastery is what is worth following, not the times”, emphasizing his obvious preference for technical mastery of figurative artistic depiction instead of constantly changing contemporary ideas in art (Kreyn and Nerdrum 2011: 42). According to Nerdrum’s framing of kitsch, the movement aims to portray what he calls the eternal: love, death and the sunset, focusing on the sublime experience of the individual (Nerdrum 2011a: 23). Through these physical and intellectual qualities of kitsch, and in his comments on the subject, Nerdrum presumes to set himself against modernist thought, specifically against its marginalisation of figurative art meant to solicit emotion (Kreyn and Nerdrum 2011: 45). He also claims to react against the persistent view that certain forms of expression carry more weight than others (Nerdrum 2011c: 31). He chooses the word Kitsch as the term for that which he creates in protest against what he believes contemporary art has become.

These attempts by Nerdrum to situate his work (and supposedly that of his students and other likeminded creators of cultural products) within a so called superstructure which groups certain artistic endeavours together display a certain structuralist approach to defining and separating things or people into groups by order of classification. In order to further investigate and analyse Nerdrum’s Kitsch movement as an example of such a constructed group this article employs social identity theory as a theoretical premise from which one can investigate Nerdrum’s positioning of Kitsch, particularly dealing with in-group and out-group dynamics. By considering these dynamics Nerdrum’s paradoxical protest against modernism can be argued to be an ironic continuation of the modernist paradigm.

In order to facilitate this investigation, a discussion of in-group/out-group dynamics in terms of social identity theory and situatedness serves as a framework for analysing Nerdrum’s theorisation of Kitsch, as well as his positioning of Kitsch as the alternative to contemporary art. The origin, use, general understanding of the term and positioning of kitsch in relation to (and within) art is explored and considered from this social identity theory underpinning. Subsequently Odd Nerdrum’s (re)positioning of Kitsch is shown to reflect a conscious attempt at initiating a change in situatedness, by way of in-group/out-group dynamics, of those artists who consider themselves to be part of the Kitsch movement.

By considering all these aspects I argue that Nerdrum strategically focuses on certain characteristics of contemporary art and Kitsch in an attempt to improve the position of the new in-group (the Kitsch movement) by reacting against what he considers to be the negative qualities of the out-group (contemporary art). Nerdrum thus seemingly repositions kitsch, formerly the out-group in contemporary art, as the in-group within the Kitsch movement, thereby changing the situatedness of Kitsch and defining contemporary art as the out-group. Nerdrum’s attempts at opposing modernism is, however, shown as folly, as he merely continues to propagate the modernist paradigm through further exclusion of that which does not fit into his newly constructed in-group.
Situatedness and social identity theory

Situatedness or being situated suggests a fixed, framed notion of place which can be viewed as the modernist binary opposite to fluidity. From an identity framework one could consider Hall’s (2003) investigation of cultural identity from within a cultural theoretical and sociological perspective. Here Hall (2003: 4) states that “identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse”. He continues that one needs to understand identities “as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies”. This notion of identity being directly linked to a myriad of influences that surround and construct it is reinforced by Lindblom and Ziemke’s (2003: 79) definition of situatedness as meaning that an agent’s or entity’s “behaviour and cognitive processes first and foremost are the outcome of a close coupling between agent and environment”.

These statements allude to the idea that one’s situatedness is dependent on several factors external to one’s self. Being aware of these interactions could foster an understanding of how certain elements determine one’s situatedness. On the basis of such awareness, these elements could be approached or positioned in such a way as to change one’s own situatedness in relation to them. When considering Nerdrum’s conceptualisation of Kitsch, it would seem that this approach to consciously change one’s situatedness plays a central role in his theorization of the movement. Another theoretical approach which considers an individual or group’s situatedness as it relates to that which surrounds it is social identity theory.

Trepte (2006: 256) defines social identity theory as a social-psychological theory that attempts to explain cognitions and behaviour with the help of group formation processes, first proposed by Tajfel (1978) and Tajfel and Turner (1979). Similarly Hogg and Abrams (1988: 3) define social identity theory as focused on “the group in the individual”. Tajfel and Turner (1979) propose that the groups to which people belong, the in-group, are an important source of pride and self-esteem. These groups provide a sense of social identity (to groups as a whole and individuals within groups), a sense of belonging to the social world. Stets and Burke (2000: 224) explain that within social identity theory the self is taken to be an object which is categorised, named and classified in relation to other social categories or classifications – this process of categorization is clear when one reads Nerdrum’s definitions of Kitsch (see Nerdrum et al. 2001; 2011).

When one’s self-image is linked to group membership in this way, it follows that by enhancing the status of said in-group, one’s own self-image is enhanced as well (see Stets & Burke 2000; Hogg et al. 1995). An increase in self-image can also be achieved by discriminating against the group(s) that one does not belong to, i.e. the out-group. Through this process of social categorisation the world is divided into “us” (self) and “them” (other), forming the in-group and out-group. Tajfel and Turner (1979: 35) state that within social identity theory the reason for the in-group to discriminate against the out-group is to enhance its collective self-image, leading potentially to intergroup conflict. They (Tajfel and Turner 1979: 40) define a social group as a number of people who believe themselves to belong to a certain group and are said to belong to this group by others.

As explained by Trepte (2006: 256), social identity theory can be divided into four underlying principles. These principles are held to be social categorisation, social comparison, social identity and self-esteem.

Firstly, social categorisation refers to the act of processing information into schemes and categories, in order to later make sense of that which we encounter. As with the way one
encounters any other object this process is applied to people and groups as well. Through this process people are placed into groups according to our perceived understanding of the expected similarities of people’s habits, appearances, etc. which links with those whom we consider to be similar. Tajfel and Turner (1979: 40) call this a cognitive tool to aid social action. This process can lead to suppressing differences between individuals from the same group, and accentuating the differences from individuals from different groups (Trepte 2006: 257).

Social categorisation leads directly to the next principle of social identity theory: social comparison. The categories we create for those we encounter are then compared with other groups – defining an individual’s place within society (Trepte 2006: 258). Trepte (2006: 258) continues that social identity theory assumes that we do not only categorise ourselves and others, but that we evaluate groups as well. Through this process of evaluation the relative superiority and inferiority of groups are determined. Social comparison is usually undertaken with groups that are similar to one’s own. The closer the dimensions of the competing social groups, the higher the need is for one’s own group to be considered in a more favourable light. Social identity and self-esteem are largely determined by the outcome of social comparison (Trepte 2006: 258).

By Tajfel’s (1978) definition, one’s social identity forms a part of an individual’s concept of self, which is linked to membership of a social group, an attachment which carries significant value. A comparison between the in-group and out-group in favour of the former is the foundation for a positive social identity. Trepte (2006: 259) explains that social identity is continuously negotiated, as social comparison is constantly taking place because categories are always in a state of flux. Tajfel and Turner (1979) showed how different belief structures could influence positive social identity. The idea of “social mobility” comes into play here, as individuals can sometimes leave one group in order to join a group with a more prestigious social identity. In my opinion, it is this opportunity for social mobility that reflects the possibility of consciously being able to change one’s (or one’s group’s) situatedness through a process of repositioning – as Nerdrum has attempted to do with the Kitsch movement.

Ultimately social identity theory considers self-esteem to be the foundation for individual motivation, although Hogg et al. (1995: 257) point out that this hypothesis has not been fully investigated. Trepte (2006: 260) concurs by stating that self-esteem is often considered as central to social identity, but that other motivational factors have also been considered.

If one considers social identity theory, as described here, as being linked with the concept of situatedness, the idea of changing the situatedness of the individual or group becomes closely linked to the intergroup dynamics between the in-group and out-group. Consequently the next section examines the traditional situatedness of kitsch in order to reflect on Kitsch as being re-situated through in-group/out-group dynamics.

**Positioning the term kitsch**

Nerdrum’s re-positioning of kitsch as Kitsch seems to reflect an attempt to change the categorization of kitsch (as a supposed out-group). In order to understand Nerdrum’s need to theorize such a change one needs to understand how kitsch has been defined in the past. According to Kjellman-Chapin (2010: 27), there are many issues regarding the use of the word ‘kitsch’, a term used to describe a variety of artefacts and images, including commercial art and aesthetic falsehoods, as well as principles of taste, as it is linked to class distinctions and conceptualisations of camp.⁶
To understand these issues, it is necessary to investigate the so-called historical development of the concept of kitsch, as it reflects the situatedness of that which is deemed to be kitsch.

The term kitsch, as a modern phenomenon, has been in use since the 1860s, first recorded as being used by artists and art dealers in Munich to describe what they called “cheap” artistic items (Morreall and Loy 1989: 63). By “cheap” these artists and art dealers referred to items of an artistic nature that had been manufactured in such a way that they could be sold cheaply to tourists. Speed in the production of these kitsch products along with the use of lower quality materials implied that the craftsmanship and intellectual underpinnings of these items were mostly not of high quality (Kjellman-Chapin 2013: xi). Several authors, such as Kutnicki (2013: 174) indicate that kitsch is mostly connected to the idea of so-called bad taste. These comments imply specific judgements on taste regarding art and aesthetics, as does Kant’s theory on aesthetic judgement (1790), questioning not only the aesthetic quality of the work in itself but also the moral intention of the artist (see Kant 1911). Consequently ideas of taste have been linked to quality in art, in many cases making bad taste and bad art synonymous (Kjellman-Chapin 2013: xii). This hierarchical idea of artistic endeavours implies that certain approaches to art are of more value than others. Morreall and Loy (1989) and Greenberg (1939), conceptualising art from different paradigms, illustrate how categorization of kitsch (and art) reflect the ideas of in-group/out-group dynamics. Morreall and Loy (1989: 65) posit that, what they call, great art should “challenge the audience to interpret it and react to it”. In their opinion (Morreall and Loy 1989: 65), and in that of Greenberg (1939), kitsch is the opposite of this so called great art, as it does not challenge viewers by confronting them with new ideas and techniques. Morreall and Loy (1989: 64) further argue that bad art is not the only criterion for something to be deemed as kitsch. For an object to be kitsch, the object must have certain elements of exhibition or display value (Morreall and Loy 1989: 64). This display value follows the idea that art of a high standard is normally also created to be displayed and appreciated. The difference is that, in the case of so-called high art, this appreciation is by an informed audience by way of contemplation.

Early theorists of kitsch (i.e. Greenberg 1939; Sontag 1964; Morreall and Loy 1989) argue that those who buy kitsch products do so with the illusion of achieving the same result as the “patron” who owns something of a so-called high artistic standard worth displaying to “informed” viewers. Sontag (1964) argues, as Morreall and Loy (1989) do, that purchasing, owning or admiring kitsch is a non-critical action. This means that the admirers of kitsch do not realise that the object of their admiration is actually kitsch (as defined by theorists such as Greenberg (1939), Morreall and Loy (1989) and Ruzgytė (2007)). Sontag (1964) states that the regard for a kitsch product from an informed point of view (as to the standards of taste) implies an ironic appreciation of such objects, which then implies a camp aesthetic. Kitsch, as theorised in the later part of the nineteenth century and most of the twentieth century, is therefore seen by its (artistically uninformed) owners as bestowing on themselves an aura of wealth, elegance or sophistication (Morreall and Loy 1989: 63) – an assumption that would not be made by those who admire kitsch for its ironic properties (see Sontag, 1964), or regard it within another framework as does Nerdrum et al. (2001; 2011).

Another important element of kitsch put forward by Morreall and Loy (1989), as well as other theorists such as Ruzgytė (2007: 84) on the subject, has to do with its dependence on mass production as a means of production and reproduction. As shown below, kitsch does not necessarily have to be mass produced, although the importance and implication of mass production is acknowledged here. Considering works such as Walter Benjamin’s The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction (1935), this article also acknowledges that mass production does not necessarily automatically imply the creation of kitsch.
The role of mass production in the creation of kitsch does, however, suggest the emergence of the idea of kitsch in the mid-nineteenth century. Industrialisation had made mass production a part of Western life by this time, something that would inevitably influence the creation of artistic items of all types (whether made by means of mass production – adhering to elements of kitsch or not – or reacting against mass production and/or kitsch). Mass production lowered costs, and lowering the costs of any item, including those with so-called aesthetic value, creates the opportunity for a wider public to become consumers of such products. Being able to afford artistic items, however, does not entail a corresponding knowledge of artistic traditions among these new consumers emerging from the working and middle classes (Greenberg 1939: 39; Ruzgytė 2007: 85).

On the one hand it follows that mass-produced artistic items not only replicated original artistic works but also created works, within this replication, which catered to the lowest common denominator of public taste and artistic knowledge (Greenberg 1939: 40). The increasing visual literacy, or semi-visual literacy, of the mass consumer of the industrial age led not only to the mass production of aesthetic items born from little knowledge of artistic traditions, i.e. kitsch, but – on the other side of the scale – spawned that which has been considered to be the binary opposite of kitsch – namely the modernist avant-garde.

In 1939, the art critic Clement Greenberg (1909-1994) published an article in the journal Partisan Review called “Avant-garde and kitsch”. In this article he defines avant-garde and kitsch as phenomena of the modern age. Greenberg (1939: 40) argues that in Western society, before the industrial revolution of the nineteenth century, there was a definite distinction between the creation of art and the creation of artistic cultural products. The distinctions between these two artistic endeavours were made in the light of class divisions (art made within an artistic tradition belonging to the elite and other cultural products belonging to, who Greenberg calls, the peasants). These artistic and cultural products were different from what we are familiar with in a post-industrial world – because the means and ends of production were differently focused. Artists in a pre-industrial world created for principals (e.g. religious focus in medieval times, humanistic focus in the Renaissance); for an educated class that had knowledge of the arts (e.g. religious and aristocratic patrons educated to a higher degree than the general population), within a specific framework and with a specified audience in mind (e.g. inspiring devotion among church goers or political subjects, or portraying a position of power).

For those outside of this privileged high class, any artistic and cultural activities were closely linked to folk art, centralised within small communities and based on centuries of traditions and customs (Greenberg 1939: 41). Greenberg (1939: 41) does not consider pre-industrial folk art to be kitsch. Although, seen in retrospect, folk art does share some of the elements of kitsch, it was created on the basis of a different intention. Small communities of rural people did not purchase their artistic items as tourists at shops or markets creating such artistic items for just such a purpose. Within these small communities artistic items were made by the community itself. Urbanisation, especially in the nineteenth century, capitalism, and mass consumption of mass-produced cultural items of an artistic nature signalled the demise of folk art, because the small community that catered for itself no longer existed. Kitsch found its foothold in this economically, socially and ideologically changing industrialised and urbanised Western world (Greenberg 1939: 39).

In the second half of the nineteenth century artists of this fast-moving, innovative and sometimes confusing new world sought new ways to depict what was going on around them. So, along with the rise of kitsch – and in an reaction against that which inspired kitsch – came,
by way of the avant-garde, the rise of modernism. Greenberg (1939: 36) states that the avant-garde developed within Western bourgeois society. This society’s extraordinary sense of history, coupled with a critical awareness of socio-economic conditions, made the development of avant-garde culture possible. Greenberg (1939: 36) further states that avant-garde artists had to isolate themselves from general society if they were to bring about any real innovation. The focus of the avant-garde was to find ways in which art and culture could progress in the ideological confusion and violence of modern times. Within this school of thought developed the concept of l’art pour l’art, where subject matter and content became something to be avoided in art at all costs. This eventually led to abstract or non-figurative art. With the avant-garde artist rejecting general society and withdrawing into the privileged artistic knowledge of the bourgeoisie, the general public (those people who formed the working class and lower middle class) became even further removed from participating in the creation of art and cultural product of a high standard. This arguably enhanced the power of kitsch, as kitsch reliably continued to offer entertainment and/or aesthetic product to the masses – those who were not educated in the arts and theories of taste in the way the knowledgeable expert is. The same could be said of the role of kitsch throughout the rise of Modernism and even Postmodernism.

Within the modernist aesthetic great changes took place in the perception and creation of art from the end of the nineteenth century, but specifically in the early decades of the twentieth century. The influence of rapidly improving science and technology directly changed the way people lived and perceived the world. Furthermore the turbulence of two world wars deeply impacted on society at large, something directly reflected in the art movements that arose around these times.

Looking back at the development of art and aesthetic consciousness over the last century and a half, Vermeulen and van den Akker, in their article “Notes on metamodernism” (2010: 1), argue that society has progressed beyond modernist and postmodernist thought. Vermeulen and van den Akker (2010: 4) characterise Modernity (which in this case suggests modernism) as a discourse and inherently a product of the white, European male’s gaze. This is characterised by ideas of utopianism, (linear) progress, grand narratives, Reason, functionalism and formal purism. As part of the development of modernist thought in art’s relentless push forward during the first half of the twentieth century, figurative depiction was eventually left behind, and with it the artistically uninformed viewer. Through this, art become mainly accessible to what Wartenberg (2002: xiii) calls the knowledgeable experts, a fraction of society made up of artists, academics, curators, art historians, art theoreticians, gallery owners and the visually literate public. Therefore, as the avant-garde and Modernism gradually became increasingly abstract, so kitsch came to be identified not only as what was cheap and mass produced in the nineteenth century, but also as that which did not reflect Modernism’s ideal of order through abstraction. Through this categorization social identity theory’s concept of in-groups and out-groups is reflected.

The second half of the twentieth century (with notable changes in post-World War II society and the rise of consumer culture) saw the development of postmodern thought. As the term Postmodernism is problematic in itself, so too is a simple definition of postmodernist art (see Lyotard 1984; McHale 1991). Postmodernist thought, however, is seen to have dislodged itself from the absolute truths, ideologies and hierarchal views of modernist art. Binkley (2000: 133) argues that the last decades of the twentieth century saw an end to the division of high culture and low culture, and also, debatably, an end to the division of art and kitsch. Kjellman-Chapin (2010: 27) counters this argument by stating that the use of the word kitsch has remained, seemingly, to refer to a known category. She (Kjellman-Chapin 2010: 28) poses the question as
to how the category implied when the term kitsch is used would be defined, as the word recalls “a category of production that deliberately panders to popular tastes; [which] is considered illegitimate, insincere, inauthentic, and without redeeming aesthetic merit”. Kjellman-Chapin (2010: 27; 2013: ix) lists a variety of products that could be, and have been, labelled as kitsch. She names a spectrum of objects that range from garden gnomes and snow globes to original works of art (as well as reproductions of such works) by artists such as Jules Joseph Lefebvre (1834-1912) (figure 2). Comparing inexpensive, mass produced items of an aesthetic nature with Lefebvre’s work, which has been criticised for being sentimental, Kjellman-Chapin (cf. 2010 & 2013) does not attempt to raise or lower the objects to the same level, but endeavours to illustrates the ambiguousness of the use of the term kitsch.

Where Greenberg, writing within the modernist milieu of 1939, found it easy to oppose kitsch with the concept of art, art critics at the turn of the second millennium find it decidedly less straightforward to define kitsch as a phenomenon. Kjellman-Chapin (2013: ix) writes:
From its etymological and, one might argue, its ideological, beginnings in the latter half of the nineteenth century, kitsch has steadfastly resisted a single definition. [...] trading on contested notions of taste, vague and shifting notions of beauty, and unstable cultural hierarchies.

What Kjellman-Chapin highlights here is the fact that although the term kitsch is easily applied, mostly as a term for that which does not meet the standards of contemporary ideas regarding taste, it is not defined as something in itself, but rather as that which it is not, thus situating kitsch as the other – that which is marginalized as being different from the self. This, again, links to ideas of the out-group being different form the in-group, not necessarily for what it is, but for that which it is not. In the light of the views of writers such as Kjellman-Chapin (2010, 2013) and Nerdrum et al. (2001, 2011), it would seem that kitsch needs to be re-evaluated, specifically as something with its own autonomous identity as opposed to being defined by that which it is not. Nerdrum’s re-positioning of Kitsch seems to address this issue of situating kitsch as the out-group based on the perception that it is the other to contemporary art.

(Re)positioning kitsch: Nerdrum and the Kitsch movement

Nerdrum (2011b: 25-32) explains in his manifesto speeches of 1998 and 1999 that he has come to the realisation that his art cannot be accepted in the contemporary art sphere because it does not pursue the same principles as contemporary art does. He (Nerdrum 2011b: 26) constantly refers to the development, popularity and prominence of modernist beliefs about what art is and what the purpose of art is. Nerdrum and his students are painters who depict the figurative, much in the style of the old masters – specifically Baroque painters. Nerdrum suggests that the development of art at the beginning of the twentieth century could be seen as representing “metaphysical applause to the new sciences” (referring to the changes brought to society by rapid developments in science and technology), and that it took form in order to embody a certain truth. He suggests further that this truth is related to man as a social being – thus considering man’s experience of the world as universal. From the dawn of Modernism, posits Nerdrum (2011b: 27), art centred its existence on the resistance it evinces to tradition, historicism and power in all its forms. Hence innovation became a core characteristic of modernist art rather than following tradition. Creating works of an artistic or cultural nature based on an established historic tradition (such as the case of Nerdrum and his students) would therefore not be allowed or be considered as art, as it does not attempt to innovate (Kreyn and Nerdrum 2011: 44). This idea, as linked with definitions of kitsch in the previous section, illustrates Nerdrum’s awareness of kitsch’s situatedness as out-group.

Nerdrum (2011b: 27) states that in time Modernism itself has become a tradition. Institutions, critics, teachers and educated people are expected to be open to the new because of the constant pursuit of novelty within this tradition. He (Nerdrum 2011b: 27) argues that his opposition to Modernism is not based in the movement’s prominence as the prevailing order within the arts. He explains that the term kitsch within Modernism has become a generic name for all that is not regarded as intellectual and new. Kitsch is seen to be all that is old-fashioned, sentimental, melodramatic and pathetic. He quotes the Austrian author and philosopher Herman Broch who proposed in the 1930s that: “Kitsch is the Antichrist, stagnant and dead” (Nerdrum 2011b: 27). From this one would be able to conclude that Nerdrum sets himself against what Modernism marginalised as the other. That which does not follow Modernism’s pursuit of the depiction of the universal experience of man through new approaches is pushed to the side and derogatorily referred to as being kitsch – notwithstanding the vagueness of this classification.
Nerdrum’s revolt against Modernism seems to hold for Postmodernism too. Although Postmodernism does not seek universal truth as Modernism does, and attempts to break down the hierarchy between different approaches to artistic creation, there is still a marginalising of that which does not strive for new and unique ways of expression, very often focusing on the conceptual rather than technical mastery. Again, the generic term kitsch is applied to that which is not sufficiently daring, challenging and new. In response to this Nerdrum seeks to create an arena where those artists who feel the need to work within an established tradition of painterly excellence, for example, can function without having to commit to the ideas of contemporary art. For this reason he refuses the derogatory associations of the word kitsch and uses the idea of Kitsch to describe that which he creates, as well as his reason for creating it.

Nerdrum (Kreyn and Nerdrum 2011: 48) argues that Kitsch seeks to generate emotion within the individual; it is about the individual. He argues that Kitsch should bring to the fore the gravity of life, in the best cases bringing “exuberance to silence through the depiction of sublime nature”. In his description of Kitsch, he defines it as being in contrast with contemporary art’s “sense of irony and emotionlessness, because Kitsch serves life and the individual’s search for meaning”. It does not seek to convey feelings and emotions through abstraction or ideas set outside of the painting. It seeks to depict that which haunts the individual through skilful figurative portrayal. It does not seek new ways to depict man’s turmoil, but attempts to master artistic skills within a set tradition of figurative artistic creation. In these aims, Nerdrum (Kreyn and Nerdrum 2011: 48) argues, lie the potential of achieving high Kitsch. He (Nerdrum) explains that low Kitsch is a stage that one needs to go through in order to be able to attain high Kitsch, because high Kitsch understands the gravity of life, whereas low Kitsch is still learning (Kreyn and Nerdrum 2011: 47-48).

It is through this positioning that Nerdrum seeks to change the way in which figurative painting is regarded. In 2011 Michael Gormley, then editor of American Artist Magazine, remarked that Nerdrum has done for the word kitsch what the LGBT (Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) movement has done for the word queer by adopting it to describe that which drives the artist to create instead of serving as a slighting term (Kralik 2013). In this, it can be argued, Nerdrum has changed the situatedness of those who create outside of the tradition of contemporary art. This article pays further attention to this idea later, as Nerdrum has in his conceptualisation of Kitsch set up his own parameters of inclusion and exclusion. In redefining Kitsch Nerdrum has redefined the identity of those who consider themselves part of this (out-)group. This idea links directly to identity issues within the notion of situatedness, but also with that of otherness within in-groups and out-groups (in social identity theory). Consequently the next section explores the relevance of situatedness and social identity theory, as they relate to Nerdrum’s theories.

In-group/out-group dynamics within the Kitsch movement

When considering the way in which kitsch is seen as a collective reference to that which does not apply to the prevailing taste in art, it could be argued that kitsch – as an admittedly vague but far-reaching concept – is situated as the other, while contemporary art (as defined by the so-called knowledgeable experts) represents the situatedness of the self. This links with Nerdmun’s (2001; 2011) statement that kitsch has become a generic term in Modernism, as well as with Kjellman-Chapin’s (2013) comments on kitsch being positioned not as what it is, but as what it is not. This also relates to the principles of social identity theory, as discussed earlier.
The manner in which kitsch is marginalised implies a process of social categorisation, where (aesthetic) objects and their creators are considered to be outside the framework of contemporary art and are categorised as being different in their aims, objectives and value. Through this process contemporary art, as the self, becomes the in-group, while kitsch, as the other, becomes the out-group. This categorisation leads to social comparisons, as explained by Trepte (2006: 258). As objects that are considered to be kitsch and their creators are identified as being of lesser value by a group that considers kitsch and its makers to be an out-group of lower standing, the social comparison is tilted against what is deemed to be kitsch. This, in turn, results in those who are the creators of what is considered to be kitsch having a negative social identity imposed on them. These creators of cultural products that are seen as kitsch are therefore situated within a framework that influences their self-esteem (if the general assumption that self-esteem is the foundation of social identity theory is to be accepted) (see Trepte 2006 & Tajfel and Turner 1979).

If one then considers Tajfel and Turner’s (1979) idea of social mobility as an opportunity to change the situatedness of those who have been negatively situated through social identity, Nerdrum’s positioning of Kitsch can be seen as an attempt not only to re-situate the meaning and significance of kitsch, but also the social identity of those who have been branded as being makers of kitsch. For the sake of this argument, let us consider the aims of the Kitsch movement as set out by Nerdrum (2011a: 23):

The Kitsch Painter should not be judged on national, rational or religious ground in his depiction of life – but on the basis of timeless qualities.

The Kitsch Painter is not protected by the time in which he lives. He strives to represent history’s most sublime qualities, and should be judged in accordance with these.

A work of Kitsch is either good or bad, and good Kitsch must not be classified as Art. This would be an error in judgement. Kitsch is not Art. Kitsch refers to the sensual and the timeless.

The Kitsch Painter is committed to the eternal: Love, death and the sunrise.

Innovation is of no importance, nor is originality. Going in depth is the goal, for in the depiction of nature itself lies the individual expression.

Because Modernism and Art are the same, Kitsch is the saviour of talent and devotion.

This list makes a few things clear regarding not only Nerdrum’s definition of Kitsch, but also what Kitsch is not. Nerdrum starts off by detaching Kitsch from nationality, rationality and religion. He states that Kitsch’s importance does not lie in its assimilation with these structures, but in its focus on timeless qualities – in technique and message. Secondly, he states that Kitsch (or the Kitsch Painter) is not “protected” by the time in which it is created. Here the idea of art progressing and changing through constant innovation to keep up with “modern” ideas is set as something that Kitsch does not strive for. Kitsch aims to remain the same in its depiction of the sublime and is therefore part of a continuous process of artistic creation that has existed for centuries. In addition to this, he states that works of Kitsch can be considered as either good or bad – a judgement made in accordance to a Kitsch painting’s reflection of what Nerdrum considers a product that reflects the timeless qualities of Kitsch, as well as the technical skill of the painter – what Nerdrum also calls high Kitsch (Kreyn and Nerdrum 2011: 47-48). No matter where a work of Kitsch is placed on the scale of good or bad, Nerdrum holds that it is not to be called art. He emphasises the idea that Kitsch is committed to the eternal ideas of love, death and the sunrise. These concepts are ideas that Nerdrum considers to be deeply personal and thus not the aims of art, but the focus of Kitsch. Furthermore, Nerdrum reasons that Kitsch is not innovative or original, but focuses on the depiction of nature in the name of individual expression. Finally, Nerdrum implies that art, through Modernism, no longer seeks to redeem talent or devotion, and that Kitsch now fulfils this role.
When one considers this manifesto outlining the aims of the Kitsch movement it strikes one that much of what is said refers, however directly or indirectly, to the position Kitsch takes up against contemporary art. In this lies the question of in-group/out-group dynamics. Nerdrum continuously reinforces the idea that Kitsch is a binary opposite to contemporary art. In this way the Kitsch movement finds its defining features invariably in what it is not, i.e. not succumbing to the ideas of contemporary art.

As argued above, Nerdrum’s conceptualisation of Kitsch reflects a conscious change in situatedness, through social identity. If an artist’s work is described as being kitsch (with a lower case “k”), it refers to a derisive description (negative social comparison) vested in concepts of what art should be within the contemporary art landscape (being the in-group). By differentiating Kitsch from contemporary art in comments such as declaring that “because Modernism and Art are the same, Kitsch is the saviour of talent and devotion” (Nerdrum 2011a: 23), Nerdrum not only redefined Kitsch but also sought to raise the status of the group, making it an in-group by way of positive social comparison.

Some problematic issues worth noting do arise when one reads Nerdrum’s manifesto as well as other detailed comments on his conceptualisation on Kitsch (see Nerdrum et al. 2001; 2011). It becomes evident throughout this research that Nerdrum is reacting against the general vagueness of what the term kitsch implies (mostly on behalf of his own figurative painting style), but Nerdrum’s deliberation on Kitsch fails to clearly outline what Kitsch entails. Apart from a few vague self-supporting aims, Nerdrum’s manifest does not outline what Kitsch is or does, but continuously opposes Kitsch as a binary to [concepts of] contemporary art. It is my opinion that Nerdrum, ironically, positions Kitsch as that which it is not, as not being contemporary art, or in his own words: “Kitsch must be separated from art” (Nerdrum 2011c: 32). Moreover, Nerdrum endorses a hierarchy regarding work created within the Kitsch movement by referring to low Kitsch that needs to develop into high Kitsch – the latter being the preferred and ultimate embodiment of Kitsch.

Although Nerdrum refers to artists outside of the figurative painting tradition, such as composers, in his defence of kitsch he pays little attention to the multitude of other objects that are also considered to be kitsch. His musings on Kitsch ultimately focus on the aims of his own work and that of his students, creating a positive social identity for themselves.

Conclusion
This article set out to investigate Nerdrum’s conceptualisation of Kitsch as part of the Kitsch movement as a reflection of a change in situatedness through the in-group/out-group dynamics of social identity theory.

A historical contextualisation of the development and social position of objects that are deemed to be kitsch shows that the word kitsch had initially served as a description of items of an artistic nature that served to amuse and stimulate a growing mass of industrial city dweller and tourist consumers in the latter half of the nineteenth century. By the early decades of the twentieth century the term had become widely known and used, but its application in practice encapsulated so much that a single definition of kitsch had become impossible. Instead, authors such as Greenberg (1939) positioned it as the binary opposite to Modern art and so-called educated taste. It becomes clear that the concept of kitsch had by this time come to mean that which is different from modern art and of lesser aesthetic and cultural value. At the start of the new millennium Postmodernism has supposedly gradually dismantled hierarchy within the
arts, but authors such as Kjellman-Chapin (2010 and 2013) argue that the vagueness of the application and meaning of the word *kitsch* still positions what the term describes as being on the margins of contemporary art.

As a reaction to this marginalisation and *othering* of certain forms of artistic and cultural production, Nerdrum sets out to reposition kitsch. He redefines his work as Kitsch and theorises the meaning, aims and importance of Kitsch in several speeches and publications. He calls Kitsch a superstructure for those who do not wish to create within the limits and boundaries of contemporary art.

I argue that Nerdrum’s repositioning of Kitsch displays a change in the situatedness of objects, and consequently their creators, that have been judged as kitsch. I assert further that this (attempted) change in situatedness reflects intergroup dynamics as explained in social identity theory. Through a process of social categorisation and social comparison, Nerdrum repositions Kitsch in relation to contemporary art by declaring Kitsch to be that which contemporary art is not. This process consequently changes the social identity of those who consider themselves to be part of this new in-group, created by Nerdrum, thus indeed changing the situatedness of these group members.

The situatedness of Nerdrum’s new in-group (the Kitsch movement) does not come without its own complications. In his attempt to contest the way in which kitsch is seen as the *other*, he positions Kitsch in a manifest that constantly announces it as the alternative to contemporary art. By doing this he again defines Kitsch by what it is not, instead of clearly defining what it is. Nerdrum also sets up a hierarchy within Kitsch, when referring to low Kitsch and high Kitsch. This implies that one form of aesthetic creation is, once again, seen as being of more value than another. Of further importance is the fact that Nerdrum constantly opposes modernistic thought, but uses phrases like universal man (with its inherent connotations to patriarchy), and the term superstructure, as well as the concept of writing a detailed manifest – all very strong modernist elements.

Nerdrum may therefore have succeeded in changing the situatedness of his own work, and the work of his students and followers, not by diminishing the prominence of the social identity of contemporary art, but by in turn marginalising those kitsch products that do not conform to his new social group’s values as the new out-group.

**Notes**

1. This statement was made at the press conference held before the opening of the retrospective exhibition of Nerdrum’s work “Odd Nerdrum – Paintings 1978-1998”, at The Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art in Oslo.

2. In this article the term kitsch appears both as written with a lower case “k” or with an upper case “K”. In these cases kitsch (with a lower case “k”) refers to the broad idea of the term, which this article examines in the section discussing the development of the concept of kitsch in modern society, whereas Kitsch (with an upper case “K”) refers to Odd Nerdrum’s repositioning of certain artistic endeavours, which this article also examines.

3. Due to copyright restrictions images of Nerdrum’s work cannot be included in this article. Visit www.nerdrummuseum.com to view his collection.

4. Nerdrum’s use of the term superstructure is noted here. The term’s obvious link to Marxist ideas on the division of society regarding economic structure – where the superstructure represents the political and legal institutions of society (Wolff 2011), is addressed later in the article.
Some authors question the centrality of self-esteem as the foundation of social identity (see Hogg et al. 1995:257; Trepte 2006:260). Considering Nerdrum’s (2011:30) comments on the position of the creator of Kitsch as needing a superstructure to work within (which may also refer to the self-esteem of the artist), I accept the possibility of other motivational factors that may fuel social identity, but retain the hypothesis that self-esteem lies at the heart of this matter.

I take note of the use of the term ‘man’ as opposed to an alternative such as human beings, and refer back to it (along with repeated instances thereof) later in this article.

Nerdrum’s obvious and repeated use of modernist language is noted and discussed later.

Work cited


Willem P. Venter is lecturer in History of Art at the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University. He completed a Masters degree in History of Art and is currently busy with his PhD.
Sculpting with fire: celebrating ephemerality at AfrikaBurn 2015 in the Tankwa Karoo, South Africa

John Steele
Walter Sisulu University
E-mail: jsteele@wsu.ac.za

Land art, and some installation art, is usually aimed at relatively temporarily manipulating the surface of the earth. AfrikaBurn takes place annually in the near-desert of the Tankwa Karoo, South Africa. It is a communal event unique to Africa, and manifests as a fleeting week-long series of interventions in the natural environment, partially aimed at creating and then actively destroying free-standing public sculptures, some of which are huge and intricate. AfrikaBurn gives any one of the thousands of participants an opportunity to be inspired on any scale to generate artworks that take into account a principle that no debris whatsoever is left behind on the surface of the earth after a week-long celebration of creative energies. Unlike, for instance, an artwork built on the edge of the Indian Ocean in the Eastern Cape, where rough tidal seas would ensure gradual destruction, at AfrikaBurn, the sacrificial method of choice is controlled rapid burning, under the direction of a specified firemaster. This paper seeks to unbundle some aspects of land and installation art in Southern Africa with specific reference to AfrikaBurn 2015 events and anti-fracking initiatives. This is within a context that takes into account recognition that even seemingly durable public sculptures are subject to change and may even physically disappear with the passing of time.

Key words: AfrikaBurn; anti-fracking; Burning Man; costuming; ephemeral art; fire art; installation art; land art; mutant vehicles

Central to situatedness of AfrikaBurn (figure 1) is that this annual visual and performing arts event takes place within a lively context of Southern African installation and land art interventions. Strijdom van der Merwe, for example, as in the 2010 work, *am/pm Shadow Lines: Earth Works*, generally uses “natural materials” (Le Clus-Theron 2012: 2) as found on a chosen site. His sculptural forms are shaped “in relation to the landscape … [and may seek to] make statements about our relationship with the land” (www.strijdom.com/about/, accessed 17th June 2015). Janet Botes, emphasising ephemerality, has made much smaller yet similar 2015 land art statements in such works as *A block of sand*. On the other hand, Willem Boshoff’s 2006 installation, *Garden of Words III*, consisted of “15,000 handmade fabric flowers printed with text … commemorating local biodiversity … [a] monument to plants nearing extinction” (Dapena-Tretter 2014: 62). Alternatively, the 2013 installation, *Homing*, by Jenna Burchill, is a high-tech
“meticulously hand-built interactive environment [located inside a building] designed to be an accessible and exciting meeting of contemporary art, sounds and live interactive participation” (http://www.art.co.za/jennaburchell/homing, retrieved on 3 August 2015).

The settings that these artists and AfrikaBurn participants create are parts of themselves, in the sense suggested by Tim Ingold (1993: 156): our “landscapes” of spaces, objects and thoughts within and about “the world as it is known to those who dwell therein” are intimately experienced rather than viewed from a so-called detached distance. Since 2007, the annual AfrikaBurn event has provided space and opportunity for a huge, interactive, land art experience focused extensively on fire and burning rituals. Indeed, fire gives energy, light and warmth, and is widely associated with purity and purification, as well as with rebirth and renewal (Gilmore 2010, Hockett 2004). Rituals associated with fire appear to have been performed throughout recorded time (Bell 1997), evidence of one such early event being the Paleolithic era ceramic female figurine *Dolni Věstonice*, created around 24 000 BC (Budja 2006, Steele 2012, Verpoorte 2001). AfrikaBurn adds to this heritage.

AfrikaBurn takes place within the austerely sculpted and achingly beautiful Tankwa Karoo semi-desert, at the privately owned Stonehenge Farm, situated on the R355 in an ancient plain with the Cedarburg to the west and Tankwa Karoo National Park to the east. This dusty and sharp shale-strewn site in an isolated part of the Northern Cape is briefly transformed during mid-autumn as people come together for about a week to create an intentional transient community based on giving, as well as installation and other forms of visual art, such as theme camps, mutant vehicles, individual and group performance, costume, music from every direction and camaraderie of shared enjoyment under difficult conditions in a relatively pristine natural environment. Close to 10,000 people gathered at AfrikaBurn 2015 and, then a month later, there was hardly a trace of human presence on the physical landscape.

**Anchored standpoints**

Situatedness of AfrikaBurn also includes that it is part of an international community sharing an interest in visual arts and spontaneous entertainment arising out of the Burning Man event held annually for a week on a “prehistoric lake bed … a huge expanse of perfectly flat land with a very distinctive surface of cracked alkali … ringed by mountains” (Kristen 2003: 343) in the
Nevada Desert, United States of America. This temporary Black Rock City site, established in 1991 (Ramey 2010: 35) – like Tankwa Town in the Karoo, among other regional Burn sites – becomes a fleeting place of residence for thousands of creative people who converge to generate “site and time specific installations and performances” (Kristen 2003: 343). On the flyleaf of the indispensable AfrikaBurn 2015 Survival Guide (afrikaburn.com/the-event/preparation/survival-guide, retrieved on 4 July 2015), organisers and participants are all centrally placed as both actors and audience. In response to the question, “What is AfrikaBurn?” it is clearly stated that “you are. You build the camps, the art and the mutant vehicles. You’re the performer – and the audience. There is no them.” Fortunati (2006: 152, 159, citing Foucault 1986) suggests that this attitude encourages “a pluralistic, self-expressive heterotopia” of the sort envisioned by Foucault, whereby this AfrikaBurn space, for example, becomes an “effectively enacted utopia in which … all other real sites that can be found within the culture are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted”.

Guiding principles, initially established by Larry Harvey in the USA (Gilmore 2010: 38), are crucial to the context within which this heterotopia and other worldwide Burns are conducted and experienced. They set the tone and provide a frame of reference for organisers and participants, and are listed at the outset of the AfrikaBurn 2015 Survival Guide (afrikaburn.com/the-event/preparation/survival-guide/guiding principles, retrieved on 4 July 2015). Foremost of these is that of “communal effort”, which stresses “creative cooperation and collaboration” and encourages everyone to become part of a “radically participatory ethic” because “we believe that transformative change, whether in the individual or in society, can only occur through the medium of deeply personal participation”. “Civic responsibility” is also important so that everyone assumes accountability for “public welfare”. Furthermore, “immediacy” is encouraged as a means towards “overcoming barriers that stand between us and a recognition of our inner selves, the reality of those around us, participation in society, and contact with [our] natural world”. It is also stressed that “radical inclusion … self-reliance … [and] self-expression” are three cornerstones emphasising that “no prerequisites exist for participation … reliance on inner resources … [and self-expression are conceptualised as a] gift to others”.

Another anchored standpoint (afrikaburn.com/the-event/preparation/survival-guide/guiding principles, retrieved on 4 July 2015) is respect for the natural environment, evidenced by “leaving no physical trace of our activities”. Other core principles hinge on “decommodification” and “gifting”, which are in direct contrast with, for example, the overtly entrepreneurial emphasis of the South African National Arts Festival that takes place for 12 days in Grahamstown every winter. This festival, which hosts a huge conglomeration of visual and performing arts, is said to “annually contribute R350-million to the provincial economy, and … Grahamstown earns R90-million” (Loewe 2015: 3). Some exhibitions and shows generate substantial income and/or recognition for artists, performers and others associated with this industry. AfrikaBurn, on the other hand, is a not-for-profit company that, according to founder member and artworks coordinator Monique Scheiss, “plows back into subsidising community development projects as well as upcoming artists and promising artworks” (media interview of 1st May 2015). Furthermore, at Tankwa Town, product and self-promotion is discouraged because “our community seeks to create social environments that are unmediated by commercial sponsorships, transactions, advertising” or personal fame. Moreover, the only product for sale during the event is ice, for only a few hours per day. Decommodification is underpinned by an emphasis on “gifting”, which should be unconditional: “Gifting does not contemplate a return or an exchange for something of equal value”. Finally, the eleventh principle (afrikaburn.com/the-event/preparation/survival-guide/guiding principles-retrieved on 4 July 2015), added by the
Afrikaburn directorate, is “each one teach one” because “when the opportunity presents itself, we pass knowledge on”.

Setting

Tankwa Town, which occupies about 1.4 square kilometres (Travis Lyle email of 6th July 2015), is thus not a neutral setting: it becomes a temporary space for enactment of emplaced consciousness that encourages self-reliance, sharing and creative expression on any scale, all within a context that is largely geared for “playing with fire” (Black 2007: 339, Kristen 2007: 333) by thousands of people for whom experiencing the heat, sculptural intrigue and transformative capabilities of this medium are high on the agenda.

Physical infrastructure “satisfying two basic human needs – bodily health and finding one’s way” (Rohrmeier and Starrs 2014: 160) is laid out annually from scratch. According to Travis Lyle, Head of AfrikaBurn Communications (e-mail of 7th July 2015), the event takes place under the auspices of five full-time AfrikaBurn employees and 75 core officials and with the help of approximately 1,400 volunteers. In 2015, there were 15 medical crew on site, as were around 220 public “rangers” who are “non-confrontational community mediators, and are there to promote awareness of potential hazards, ranging from sunburn to tent fires, and lots of other stuff in between” (afrikaburn.com/?s=rangers, retrieved on 5 July 2015). AfrikaBurn Department of Public Works and volunteers also checked and cleared approximately 10 square kilometres surrounding the site for any litter and other matter out of place in order to leave as little human trace as possible once everyone had departed.

The town plan (figure 2) incorporates operational, as well as health and safety headquarters, more than 90 registered theme camps, and carefully ordered camping spaces focused around an extended and expandable public common space, which featured more than 60 registered installation artworks. Of these, 18 were burned, always under the careful auspices of firemaster Martin Glinister. This entire setting is also a playground for various mutant vehicles and mobile music units, which roam about day and night, entertaining, ferrying and drawing crowds to artworks, events and spaces.
**VuvuLounge, Satori and Organism**

The *VuvuLounge 2.0* (figure 3a), for example, made an original appearance in 2007, then in revamped form in 2010 and again in 2011. The 2015 2.0 model, with a 1,000-watt sound system, was developed by Richard Bowsher and Sebastian Prinz, and various other “Vuvus & The Roses”. It featured an elaborate D.J. booth, three everlasting flame burner ports and two large flame throwers shaped like flowers, as well as a trailer lounge-like place for anyone to use as an occasional space for moments of relaxation and resting of weary feet. Once assembled, it was moved mainly between two specific installations, at no more than 10 kilometres an hour, and as per regulations, always accompanied by walkers/conductors while in motion (https://sites.google.com/a/afrikaburn.com/dmv-mutant-vehicles/home/141219eef, retrieved on 5 July 2015). It was most frequently to be found nestled close to the installation, *Satori* (figure 3b), conceptualised by Daniel Popper with help from a large team, who all worked ceaselessly on raising the structure and associated electronica up until the moment of the inaugural performance at approximately 22:30 on Thursday, 30 May. This opening featured a live show by Markus Wormstorm, and spectacular video mapped lighting created by Wayne Ellis and Jannes Hendrikz. The lighting moved with the music, bringing usually abstract visuals to life in such a way as to express conceptualisations of feeling free upon “seeing into one’s true nature” (AfrikaBurn WTF? Guide 2015: 25). Thereafter, *Satori* became a highly favored DJ venue for pulsing electronic music. Its raised dance floor was also a good lookout spot from which to observe other installations and events.

One such installation was *Organism* (figure 4). Situated through a dip towards the west, it had taken eight days of intensive hard labour to erect prior to my arrival at commencement of festivities. Conceived by painter Anthea Delmotte (https://www.facebook.com/CroakMusic, entry for 14 May 2015, retrieved on 6 July 2015), this collaborative “Croak and the Pythian Painter” self-built performance space was an “interactive, transitional, multiform artwork” that grew every day. She explained in an email (of 21 September 2015) that, with help from Byron Ramsey, Jurgen van Schalkwyk and Stuart Woods, the collective intent was to create an
installation that was “alive with living energy, emotions, and experience”. Performances “mixed all the elements that have been used to bring on trance since the earliest of times … visual arts, music and dance … depicting order that forms out of universal chaos and … the cycle of creation, living, experience, up to death” (AfrikaBurn WTF? Guide 2015: 25). Anthea Delmotte and vocalist on keyboards, Martinique Matinino du Toit of alternative band Croak, took centre stage every evening once the sun was four[ish] fingers above the horizon. Matinino du Toit (e-mail of 16 June 2015) has described her AfrikaBurn 2015 experience as being “extraordinary … there is nothing like performing in front of not only a vast and open minded audience, but also performing to the great nothing of the desert … it was a truly calming experience”.

These were mesmerising performances. Vocals soared and oozed, sometimes purely as an instrument without verbal content, underpinned by solid keyboards, guitar by Mike Deall and percussion by Julian Brookstone, to which Delmotte danced and painted, sometimes paused, swayed and painted some more … and on and on, evening after evening. Slowly, images emerged and became subsumed as others became resolved amid swirling dervish-like dances that were also interspersed with sensually slow and gentle moments. Delmotte, who is known for finely rendered realistic portraiture and landscapes (SA Art Times 2013: 36-8; Anthea Delmotte Facebook), used her full hands and other parts of her body interchangeably with rollers and brushes to create extraordinary expressive imagery on successive evenings on a huge 2.5 metre by 21 metre canvas (email of 23 August 2015) spanning the six metre-high installation. Delmotte (e-mail of 14 July 2015) has said of this experience that “a flow takes over while working with this combination of visuals, sound and movement … there is a charge/current of sorts that energises … a bigger energy than just my own … this way of working is experimental and free … I love it. It’s who I am.”

Then suddenly, one evening brought on the exquisite moments of death and rebirth that we – main performers and audiences as participant spectators – had all been aiming at: to accompanying soulful wailing and musical declamations from Croak, under the watchful guidance of Glinister, Delmotte torched Organism, which soon burned furiously, sacrificially sending the structure, painting and messages written all over it into burning particles flying far and wide, images of which have been seared into collective memories. She has described those moments (e-mail of 7 July 2015) of lighting the installation as “the highlight for sure. I could
feel my energy increasing to beyond limits … my body was in overdrive … magic to light it … magic to experience it burn … perfect vision … [and] release”.

Such ephemerality, whereby “works are created with the intention of them having a finite life”, embraces instability and “evinces change by forcing us to confront what once was and to imagine what lies ahead” (Purpura 2009: 11, 14). During the week in which the final phases of Organism were being created, and then radically deconstructed, events and mini performances were taking place throughout Tankwa Town. I was on one occasion particularly intrigued by a huge praying Mantis that paraded between the installations, and only later discovered that it was a performance piece created out of tissue and cane by members of the local Elandsvei Community under the auspices of AfrikaBurn Outreach. The Mantis was not burned, and there are plans afoot to add to it for future performances (http://afrikaburn.com/community/afrikaburn-year-round/outreach, retrieved on 6 July 2015). The Flamin’ Amazing Show, another series of artworks and performances arising out of community development initiatives in the greater Cape Town area, featured large puppets, samba goema music and a fire and circus performance that told an “archetypal story of good versus evil” (http://afrikaburn.com/community/afrikaburn-year-round/dac-funded-projects/flamin, retrieved on 18 July 2015). Both the Mantis and the Flamin’ Amazing Show were enthralling, and they “provided skills development and job opportunities for marginalised and emerging artists” and foundations upon which future community-based initiatives can be grown and brought to AfrikaBurn (http://afrikaburn.com/community/afrikaburn-year-round/dac-funded-projects, retrieved on 22 August 2015).

Metamorphosis and Spirit Train

Another artwork to include a community development component was Metamorphosis (figure 5), created under the auspices of Verity Maud, who has been involved with AfrikaBurn since inception, and a team of helpers. Their website (https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/metamorphosis-a-temple-for-afrikaburn-2015#/story, retrieved on 6 July 2015) explains that four people from Thusong Youth Centre in Alexandra Township in Johannesburg were “upskilled” in carpentry and metalworking during initial cutting and pre-assembly phases, and then accompanied this structure into the desert for erection at AfrikaBurn. Burning Man – and regional Burns, such as AfrikaBurn – attach great significance to the presence of temple spaces, which are usually ritually burned (Gilmore 2010: 87, Haden-Guest 2006: 114, Johnson 2012: 21, Kristen 2003: 345; 2007: 334, Ramey 2010: 44, Rohrmeier and Starrs 2014: 162). Metamorphosis was just such a temple space, “where people can go to reflect, pray, contemplate, remember lost loved ones, just be spiritual” (Steenkamp blog: http://www.flowsa.com/blog/entry/metamorphosis-afrikaburn-2015-a-life-changing-adventure-for-two-flowstars/, retrieved on on 25 July 2015). This installation stands “eight meters high, and spans 20 meters in diameter. In numerology, eight signifies both building, and destruction … [while] the wings symbolise freedom, flight” and change (https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/metamorphosis-a-temple-for-afrikaburn-2015#/story, retrieved on 25 July 2015).

I came across Metamorphosis for the first time at night, after having spent the previous two days travelling and then setting up camp. The eight butterfly wings were supported by four entrances upon which symbols of the elements air, water, fire and wind had been carved. These entrances faced the cardinal points, and the entire structure was topped by a metal flower of life. After some time I noticed that many messages had already been written on the structure by anyone who cared to do so. During the following days, people came and went, adding messages and “using the Temple as needed” (AfrikaBurn WTF? Guide 2015: 23). Unlike for Organism
and many other installations that relied extensively on sound as an integral part of a burn, word was circulated that Metamorphosis would be a silent burn. Then, on Saturday night, restless mutant vehicles, mobile music units and theme camps gradually quietened as thousands of people gathered around the perimeter for this burn. Eventually, an unsteady silence settled on Tankwa Town, and base fires around Metamorphosis were lit and flames grew and licked the structure, crackling and sputtering until peaking before slow collapse and eventual burnout.

This burn was hugely cathartic, and one could almost feel a collective heaving as memories and wishes dissolved in sacrificial flames ... a literal metamorphosis was experienced by many. Yet it was one of many burns, each of which “has many meanings to the community, probably as many as there are participants … [and is seen by some to] symbolise destruction of the past and clearing of space for the future” (Kristen 2007: 334).

Crowds gradually dissolved as Metamorphosis became transformed into coals and then ashes. Lights and music gradually revived, pulling people here and there, towards any of thousands of other attractions, in all directions. One such attractant, intermittently belching flames from several orifices, was the 35 metre-long Spirit Train (figure 6) mobile “steam punk mutant vehicle” (AfrikaBurn WTF? Guide 2015: 16) music rig. Brainchild of Michael Kennedy, But Corpaci and several others, the Spirit Train, created in Cape Town and assembled at AfrikaBurn 2015 for the first time, is a five-carriage train on wheels, built from scratch, pulled by a mutant tractor dressed, thanks to some extraordinarily creative metalwork by Chyma, as a wolf called Lobo. The DJ booth, literally the heart of the train, featuring top-notch music and other controls, including for laser lighting and flame throwers, enabled so-inclined people to dance the days and nights away to seemingly endless tunes and visual effects played by the likes of Iain Dallas, Be Svendson, Jumbo Jones, Kanan K7 and others on the “chunky sound system” (AfrikaBurn WTF? Guide 2015: 16).

The Spirit Train often formed its semicircle of carriages close to the much smaller work Nothing, as well as to the Love life and everything else installation by Rooibaard, each strand of this tree “representing the flow of life” (AfrikaBurn WTF? Guide 2015: 22). This work also featured various soundtracks and oddments of speeches mysteriously playing from within it, which contributed to attracting a steady stream of people, many of whom were on their way to or from the more centrally placed 24 metre-diameter and 12 metre-high (Honey e-mail of 6 July 2015) Clan 2015 installation.
Since inception, in Burning Man tradition (Johnson 2012: 20), AfrikaBurn has always featured an installation specifically designed as a central meeting point, with an effigy of the AfrikaBurn logo prominently placed on top. As Monique Schiess explained (media briefing of 1st May 2015), the logo is derived from a San rock art petroglyph and is intended to convey a “sense of rootedly local South Africaness, community and unity of intent”. Main designer and creator of Clan 2015 (figure 7a), Nathan Victor Honey, said at this media briefing that the Clan 2015 installation, like Metamorphosis, was intended as a focal point in the landscape, an inviting space that would attract gatherings and engender feelings of community. Honey explained that the actual design process took place with inputs from partner Isa Marques and many other sources. He added that it was decided from the start that local community members would be involved in and benefit from skills transfer and thereafter have access to tools used for the build. Thus, the basic framework and preparatory build of Clan 2015 took place in the village square of nearby Sutherland, under the main auspices of Honey and Isa Marques. The skeletal structure was then dismantled and trucked to Tankwa Town, and resurrected over three weeks in readiness for the AfrikaBurn 2015 event.
Honey, with others, was also central to the conceptualisation and build of *Subterrafuge* (figure 7b) in 2014. Seeing this installation in the distance was my first inkling that I was close to arrival at Tankwa Town on Sunday, 26th April. It had been fully constructed on site in 2014 and was due to have been burned in that year, but prevailing winds had made it too dangerous to do so, and now, in 2015, it still stood with iconic towers powerfully dominating the landscape in all directions. It was built “as an attempt to raise awareness and resistance, not only to the fracking of the Karoo, but to all selfish profit-driven destruction of the last few areas of natural wonder still left on the planet … and it is hoped that this message will remain” (AfrikaBurn WTF? Guide 2015: 19) even after the structure has been burned. Honey explained (media briefing of 1st May 2015) that the title of the work referred to the anti-fracking theme in the sense that “sub” refers to “under or below”; “terra” refers to “land”; “fuge” refers to “expelling something”; and “subterfuge” refers to “deceit used to achieve a goal”. He also pointed out that the sharp points at the tips of *Subterrafuge* hint at potential for violent intrusions, such as those proposed by frackers and other exploitative commercial enterprises. Furthermore, Honey positioned the six conical towers, ranging in height from eight to 30 metres, in such a way that one or more of them is usually obscured from view by others; this ambiguity refers to lies and misrepresentations that frackers and other exploiters perpetrate.

Honey has explained (media briefing of 1st May 2015) that both *Subterrafuge* and *Clan 2015*, each using about 20 tons of wood, were designed and built with fire in mind (figures 8a and b). Wood and combustibles were sculpted so as to deliberately shape fire. He thus sculpted these works, aiming for fruition of shape, form and concept, to occur at peak instants of physical destruction, when the fire would be at its fullest power and sculpted glory, at the very moment when the wooden structures themselves were being totally consumed by fire. Such large-scale fire art is unprecedented in South Africa, and ceremonial burning is powerfully transformative when connected, as at AfrikaBurn, to rituals “representing cleansing, purification, and release” (Kristen 2007: 333).

Ritual is central to all burns, be they large or small. In the case of *Clan 2015*, messages and tokens had been placed all over it during the days preceding the evening of Friday, 1st May. On the evening of the burn, people were drawn to *Clan 2015* by mutant vehicles and roaming sound systems. Performance of *Dance of a thousand flames* by fire dancers of the Flow Arts.
Commune and others further set the scene for a spectacular and enthralling burn. Accompanied by muted yet still throbbing electronic music and whoops and cheers, as well as some tears, the centrally placed AfrikaBurn logo stood tall seemingly for ages and then slowly also collapsed and became subsumed by flames. The heat of this sculpture in flames was extraordinary, and dust devils periodically rose and swoopingly swirled across the surrounding space, and as the fire diminished, so people surged forward, again and again, and others departed for alternative entertainments.

The Clan 2015 fire was still hot when word spread that, indeed, Subterrafuge would also be burned that night. VuvuLounge, among other roaming sound systems, drew people to the site and, in due course, it was torched without using any artificial accelerants. These spires sent flames high into the air, then slowly collapsed in on themselves, creating an enormous bonfire around which people drew ever closer. Participants were wonderstruck. Many danced; others performed in different ways, enjoying the pure heat, energy and cathartic release of that monumental burn. The landscape had, again, been irrevocably changed. Honey now also has the dubious accolade of having burnt 40 tons of wood fuel in one night!

These two burns, so soon after each other, generated a “potent collective effervescence” (Chen 2012: 320), which was expressed throughout the night as participants moved among digitally based light installations, musical events and theme camps. On the following evening, it would be the turn of the longest land-based artwork, the 12 metre-high by 120 metre-long Love the way you lie, to be burned.

Roelien Brink’s Love the way you lie

Created by Roelien Brink, this work’s poignant wording “JUST GONNA STAND THERE AND WATCH ME BURN?” (figure 9) had been hovering on the western skyline, and was lit up at night like the Hollywood sign. Brink told me (interview of 30th April 2015) that this installation was conceived at a time of emotional turmoil and pain arising from her separation from the father of their three-year-old child. She relates that at that point, she was in a “very dark, sad and lonely place … the emotion I felt after this loss was almost unbearable” (http://thisisroeyourboat.blogspot.com/, retrieved on 31 July 2015). Construction of the artwork, using approximately 180 discarded wooden pallets, of different shapes and sizes, knocked down and then reconstructed into the 34 characters needed, took three months of solid work with dedicated assistance from a core team of six helpers. Transporting all of this from Cape Town was fraught with challenges. Setting up the work at Afrikaburn took three days of erecting support structures, then the letters, then lights and a generator for nighttime illumination.

The words “JUST GONNA STAND THERE AND WATCH ME BURN?” had formed a backdrop on the far skyline all week, acting as a magnet for passers-by, and encouraged people to think about their own actions and ways in which this very concept had played out/was playing out in their own lives. Created to express heartache and intended to generate multiple meanings, Brink has described her own feelings on the occasion when the lights were switched on for the first time as being a “struggle to fight back tears … it was so beautiful and at the same time so awful … I felt like it was glowing at me, as if the question was burning at me … Getting angry and impatient with me struggling to find the answers” (http://thisisroeyourboat.blogspot.com/, accessed on 31 July 2015).
Eventually, the time arrived and the installation was primed and then torched. When reflecting on the burning of *Love the way you lie*, Brink seems to have aptly expressed a range of feelings and sense of catharsis experienced by many at AfrikaBurn 2015:

> I will never forget the warmth of the blazing flames against my face as it burnt … it reminded me of the warmth my team mates made me feel. It echoed the warmth from people at the festival I did not know. People who came up to me to tell me their stories, based on the meaning the artwork inspired them to feel … I have faith in humanity again. I have faith in love again (http://thisisroeyourboat.blogspot.com/, retrieved on 31 July 2015).

**Conclusion**

Finally, it is appropriate to reflect on Brink’s experience of creating visual art and then feeling regeneration though primal sacrifice by fire and interconnectedness with other people. Her experience of regaining faith in a capacity to love and be loved again, however fleetingly, is part of what Bert Olivier (2002: 242, citing also Olivier 1987) calls the “power of art … [wherein *Love the way you lie* specifically, and AfrikaBurn in general, has an enabling energy] to transform the everyday, as well as people”. According to Olivier (2002: 247, citing Gadamer 1977, 1982), all participants at, for example, Tankwa Town, are, as intended by AfrikaBurn organisers, “co-constitutive of the ‘play’ of art”. He thus also suggests that “interplay among” all installations, theme camps, performances, burns, costuming, roving mutant vehicles and music events invite reflection by participants on “own relations to important issues raised in the process, and consequently to reorient themselves in the world by means of a transformed praxis” (Olivier 2002: 255).

AfrikaBurn as a whole is a hugely playful land art intervention in the sense that land art can be both additive and/or subtractive “modifications to the surface of the earth” (Swenson 2012: 149), plus whatever visual and aural electronica and performance may occur therein and on. Tankwa Town is incrementally created and then purposefully dissolved in a series of spectacular communal events, which include individual responsibilities for final clearing of the site to as pristine a condition as possible, and departure therefrom. AfrikaBurn then marks trancescience by finding another life digitally on websites and in social media, as well as in personal memories … until the next burn, scheduled for 25 April to 1 May 2016.
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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.