53 Stitches

Sustainability, Ecology and Social Engagement in Contemporary Art

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Master of Fine Art

at

Rhodes University

By

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ABSTRACT

Through an exploration of both the sculptural and socially-engaged art practices undertaken in creating my Master of Fine Art exhibition, *53 Stitches,* I unpack some of the possibilities pertaining to the practice of sustainability, ecology and social engagement in contemporary art. This thesis explores the history and concepts of sustainable development and what the implications are of the far-reaching global consideration of sustainability for contemporary art production. Looking at the writings of Felix Guattari's (2000 [1989]) and Suzi Gablik's (1992) on the effects of the economic model of capitalism on our environmental, social and mental ecologies, I discuss the necessary paradigm shift of the artists' identity from the 'individual self' towards the 'relational self', affirming our interdependence upon our social and natural environments. With reference to the writings of Maja and Reuben Fowkes (2008), I explore the principles of sustainability in contemporary art and discuss the notion of 'sustainability of form' through insight into dematerialisation, recycling and the prospect of artists now becoming knowledge producers/facilitators. This is supportive of my personal exploration and experimentation with recyclable materials as a creative medium, used as a means of knowledge and skills facilitation in socially-engaged arts practice and the process of art-making as research. I refer to the sculptural and 'painterly' constructions of Sofi Zezmer and Mbongeni Buthelezi, respectively, as a means to elucidate a practical contextualisation of my practical work, particularly with regard to the use of plastic as a constructive medium. Looking at the works of Linda Weintraub (2006), Marnie Badham (2010) and Miwon Kwon (2002), I expand on the theoretical discourse pertaining to socially-engaged art practices, and elucidate the reconfiguration of the role of the artist towards now becoming a cultural service administrator, organiser and knowledge facilitator. With reference to Arjen Wals and Johnson et al., I further discuss the role of education in sustainability and explore the necessary reconciliation between university institutions and the social and environmental context in which they are located, in the form of place-based capacity building and service learning. I explore within this thesis the concepts and process-based research of my own sculptures.

I declare that this thesis is my own work and that all sources I have used have been acknowledged by complete references. This thesis is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for Master of Fine art at Rhodes University. I declare that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at another university.

Bronwen Lauren Salton

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INTRODUCTION

The processes by which I have come to realise and weave together the conceptual threads of my Master of Fine Art submission, *53 Stitches*, have been discovered through a passionate process of innovation, experimentation and renovation of my creative self and practice in the pursuit of achieving a more sustainable approach to my art-making. The exhibition title refers to a Chinese proverb which says:

> The longest journey a man [sic] must take is the 18 inches from his head to his heart[1]

53 Stitches is the numeric conversion, in single crochet stitches, of this distance. *53 Stitches* represents the physical and spiritual rite of passage I have taken, in the making of this exhibition, to transform my knowledge and skills into demonstrable actions that elicit change in both my life and in the lives of those around me by innovating my creative processes to consider the three pillars of sustainability (ecological, economic and social) within my practice.

In the three years of my practice-based research, I have been driven solely by a spiritual, passionate and subversive desire to effect change within myself and my creative practice so as to connect in a meaningful way with my immediate ecological, economic and social environments. I longed to break free from what I experienced as the isolated and mundane space of the institution and that of my creative cocoon, in order to gain insight with regards to the environmental and socioeconomic realities of South African society. However, I have learnt through the undertaking of *53 Stitches* that insight is not in the knowing but in the doing – the act that informs the knowing, and initially involves the ability to admit, 'I don't know'. In Fine Art Institutions, we tend to be more concerned with knowing than with doing. Knowing a thing, through academic research alone, and retaining a thing, by being

[1] Proverb, author unknown. [Online] Available at: http://www.searchquotes.com/quotation/The_longest_journey_a_man_must_take_is_the_eighteen_inches_from_his_head_to_his_heart/10749/ [06/07/2012].

actively invested in the engagements and outcomes of the research, are two very different approaches in gaining wisdom and understanding within a topic of research.

My practice as research processes has taken the form of the latter pursuit of wisdom, as I have dynamically submerged myself and my process in the act of engaging with community so as to understand the questioning of my research which pertains to the methods and strategies I could pursue in creating art that was ecologically, economically and socially conscious. Through actively engaging with the concepts of sustainability, my creative practice has been largely informed by my involvement with socially-engaged arts projects and initiatives in the marginalised communities of Grahamstown. These social, creative and educational engagements have focused on the use of both waste materials (specifically plastic bags) as an economic and environmentally sustainable medium, and the traditional art practice of crochet as an artistic method for the construction of aesthetic and functional forms and as a potential means for self-employment.

53 Stitches, as a cohesive body of work, is comprised of three installations: *The Radicals, Need(le)Work and Pulp* (2012: Figs. i, ii and iii) [to be included post exhibition], all of which have been made through utilising the three dimensions of sustainability and are linked, by the use of plastic crochet, both physically and metaphorically as the interwoven, adjoined and entwined relational connections that have been established, by all collaborators, to environment, economics and society throughout the creative process. The approach that I have used in gaining knowledge, experience and influence for the making of *53 Stitches* is characterised by ceaselessly establishing connections with society members, organisations and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences and social struggles. The outcomes represent a map or wide array of magnetisms, interactions and influences with no beginning or end, as, like a root, I have found myself existing in between things, and branching out radically in relation to the engagements I have searched for and embarked upon during the germination of my creative journey.

In Chapter One, I outline the history of sustainable development in order to contextualise, within a global context, the processes and research pertaining to my own practice. I discuss the concept of sustainable development as it presents a far-reaching challenge for global societies, critically informing our daily lifestyle choices as individuals, artists and collective

social groups. I unpack the theory surrounding the three spheres or 'pillars' of sustainability namely the 'social', the 'environmental' and the 'economic'. In my discussion I look mainly at The Bruntland Commission's[2] report, *Our Common Future*, to assert the on-going global discussions which identify the three 'pillars' of sustainability as connected, interdependent and mutually re-enforcing entities of human life. I reveal the importance of sustainable development in emphasising the political recognition of the environmental and social degradation caused by rapid economic growth in developed and developing industrial societies.

I further discuss how the emergence of sustainable development in current theory and international practice has highlighted important issues for contemporary art and artistic practice by raising an awareness surrounding the ecological, economic and social context concerning the production and reception of artworks in the age of capitalism. A large portion of this mini thesis is informed by authors Maja and Reuben Fowkes[3] as their theories and principalities relating to the practice of sustainability in contemporary art are the primary source of research in this field. I go on to briefly discuss the auto-destructive[4]

[2] Named after its chairperson, Norwegian former prime minister Gro Harlem Brundtland (1939 –), the Brundtland Commission (1987) developed a report; *Our Common Future* that fostered the development of sustainable strategies for existing ecological systems. Thus the concept of 'sustainable development' was launched: social and economic advance to assure human beings a healthy and productive life, but one that did not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It further led to the first *Earth Summit* – the UN Conference on Environment and Development – at Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and to the formulation of *Agenda 21.* http://www.agnt.org/brundtland/ [02/11/2012]

[3] 'Maja and Reuben Fowkes are curators and art historians whose work focuses on the theory and aesthetics of East European art from the art production of the socialist era to contemporary artistic responses to the transformations brought by globalisation. They are curators of the exhibition series Revolution Trilogy, the transnational SocialEast Seminars on the Art and Visual Culture of Eastern Europe and the interdisciplinary Symposium on Sustainability and Contemporary Art at Central European University Budapest Their contribution to recent thinking on art and ecology has also included feature articles in the art magazines Artecontexto and Verge, and a lecture series on the sustainability of biennial culture. In 2010 their contribution to the field of East European art history was recognised with a grant from the Igor Zabel Award for Culture and Theory'. [Online] Available at: http://translocal.org/contactindex.html [05/11/2012].

[4] Auto-destructive art is a term invented by the artist Gustav Metzger in the early 1960s and put into circulation by his article *Machine, Auto-Creative and Auto-Destructive Art.* "Auto-destructive art is primarily a form of public art for industrial societies. Self-destructive painting, sculpture and construction is a total unity of idea, site, form, colour, method and timing of the disintegrative process. Auto-destructive art can be created with natural forces, traditional art techniques and technological techniques" (Metzger as cited in Home 1991: 60–64). [Online] Available at: http://www.stewarthomesociety.org/sp/assault.htm [05/11/2012].

acid paintings[5] of conceptual artist Gustav Metzger, who actively displayed an aesthetic representation of the changed relationship between humans and nature following the effects of industrialisation, capitalism and consumerism.

In relation to the far-reaching and devastating effects of capitalism on both human psyche and natural environment, I unpack Felix Guattari's[6] articulations on 'ecosophy' – which can be understood as an integrated ecological philosophy and understanding of three (environmental, social, and mental) ecological frameworks needed to overcome the domineering and caustic influences of what Guattari (2000 [1989]) terms Integrated World Capitalism (IWC). Guattari elucidates on the direct connection between environmental degradation and the effects of IWC on our human subjectivities, which, through mass media, technology and consumerism, has fostered a culture of indifference and passivity towards our relationship with society and the natural environment. In support of Guattari's argument I consider the theoretical writings of Suzi Gablik[7], who also highlights the dislocating effects of capitalism, coupled with the ideologies of modernism, on our physical and spiritual relation to social communities and natural environments. Maja and Reuben Fowkes (2008) acknowledge the theories of Guattari and Gablik, and reiterate their perspectives by highlighting the importance of the artists' methodologies in engaging with the impasses presented by capitalism and in transforming society to be more sustainable.

In Chapter Two, I discuss the ecological, economic and social after-effects of capitalism, late capitalism, and the ideologies of modernism and postmodernism in contemporary fine art societies and institutions, by highlighting the implication of these on the artist's identity. Consulting the theories of Suzi Gablik, I explore the concept of 'connective aesthetics' to expresses my own aesthetic art processes and research approach in *53 Stitches*. Connective aesthetics emphasises the necessary shift of the artist's identity and consciousness from a

[5] "*Acid action painting:* Acid is painted, flung and sprayed onto the nylon which corrodes at point of contact within 15 seconds" (Metzger as cited in Home 1991: 60–64. [Online] Available at: http://www.stewarthomesociety.org/sp/assault.htm [05/11/2012].

[6] Felix Guattari was a psychoanalyst, social theorist and radical activist. He is best known for his work with Giles Deleuze (Guattari 2000 [1989]: back cover).

[7] 'Suzi Gablik is an artist, writer, and teacher. She has lectured and written extensively in the areas of the philosophy of art, cultural criticism, and cultural politics. Her book Has Modernism Failed? has become one of the most popular and influential works of contemporary art criticism. Her other books include The Reenchantment of Art, Conversations Before the End of Time, and her memoir entitled Living the Magical Life: An Oracular Adventure'. [Online] Available at: http://www.enlightennext.org/magazine/bios/suzi-gablik.asp [05/11/2012].

narrow, egotistical, capitalist framework to a broader, more inclusive, ecological framework by considering our biological relatedness, interdependence and connection to our environment and social communities (Gablik 1992b: 4). Further, I discuss my own experience as an artist working in the framework of an art institution and the personal mental shift that occurred resulting in my pursuit of innovation within my conceptual and practical processes, with the end goal of realising a more sustainable and socially-responsible approach to art production. This reorientation of my mental subjectivity called for a critical observation and consideration of the environmental, social and economic impact of my creative practice and that of the institution, and as a result I directed my process towards an intuitively experimental exploration of waste materials and plastics as a medium with which to create sustainable form.

With reference to Maja and Reuben Fowkes (2008), I discuss the issues pertaining to the inclusion of sustainable development within the contemporary art context, and I expand upon the theories relating to possible approaches for achieving sustainable form in contemporary art, namely 'dematerialisation', 'recycling' and the potential of 'artists as knowledge producers'. In this section I discuss the conceptual work of artists Chris Jordan, in relation to dematerialisation, and Sofi Zezmer and Mbongeni Buthelezi, in relation to recycling. I briefly introduce the concept of 'artist as knowledge producer' in relation to Mbongeni Buthelezi's role of artist as educator and expand on this concept in Chapter Three. In Chapter Two I explore the various methods, materials and techniques used by Sofi Zezmer and Mbongeni Buthelezi in relation to those of my own creative exploration of waste materials in *53 Stitches*, with particular emphasis on plastic as an innovative and economically-sustainable medium.

I introduce a discussion on the relational concepts, evolving networking processes and various collaborative techniques I employed in the creation of *The Radicals*. I discuss my collaborative engagements with *The Arkwork Collective* (Appendices 1 and 2), in which I began to explore the expansive and versatile properties of waste material, specifically plastic, as a medium. I deliberate on this process of research and reveal the enormous potential of collaborative art practices, in conjunction with plastic waste, as a medium to engage with all spheres (economic, environmental and social) and aspects of sustainability. I discuss my investigation into applying crochet techniques to plastic fibre and expand on the

conceptual realisation of the properties of plastic crochet to interface with economic, environmental and social sustainability. I elaborate on the processes used for the creation of *The Radicals*, with particular analysis of the evolving shapes and forms the sculpture has assumed and the socially-engaged methods and procedures (Appendix 6) I used to expand the body of work. I explore the central concept of growth in *The Radicals* in relation to the collaborative and socially-engaged research processes I was involved in, discussing the process by which I explored waste materials as a route to personal, environmental and societal development or growth in creative expression. I further expand on the installation choices made in choosing to exhibit in The Provost Prison in Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape, South Africa.

In Chapter Three, I expand on the concept of 'artist as knowledge producer' or knowledge facilitator within the broader paradigm of societal and environmental ecology and sustainability. By consulting the theories of Maja and Reuben Fowkes, Suzi Gablik, Linda Weintraub[8], Marnie Badham[9] and Miwon Kwon[10], I explore the notion of artist as knowledge producer as a vital aspect of sustainability in art practice, as it involves the necessary shift away from the anthropocentric model of the artist and art institution, towards a renewed sense of environmental, economic and social responsibility. Weintraub (2006a) offers the term 'eco-tistical artist' to illustrate the shift in the social and environmental responsibility of the artist, and advocates the necessary inclusion of ecology

[8] Linda Weintraub is a writer, curator, educator and artist. Weintraub is currently writing a series of collage textbooks entitled Avant-Gardians: Textiles in Art and Ecology. Weintraub interrogates ecology in diverse areas of aesthetic instruction. [Online] Available at: http://lindaweintraub.com/informal-bio [11/11/2012].

[9] 'Marnie Badham is a researcher, cultural animateur, artist, writer and activist who facilitates creative projects to promote social change. She has co-authored a book documenting her practice, "Artist and Community Collaboration" (Common Weal Community Arts, Canada, 2006), and affected policy and funding programme review, as well as lectured in the field. In Canada and Australia, she has engaged with many communities on the margins in partnership with prisons, health centres, aged care, on the street, and with rural, remote and indigenous communities. As a PhD candidate in Community Cultural Development at the University of Melbourne's Victorian College of the Arts and the School of Population Health, her current curiosities lie in cultural planning and place-based identity, cultural pluralism, democratic models of engagement, and the evaluation of social change'. [Online] Available at: http://marniebadham.cgpublisher.com/biography.html [11/11/2012].

[10] Miwon Kwon is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Art History at UCLA. Her research and writings engage several disciplines including contemporary art, architecture, public art, and urban studies. She is a founding editor and publisher of *Documents*,, a journal of art, culture, and criticism, and serves on the advisory board of *October* magazine. [Online] Available at: http://eipcp.net/bio/kwon [05/11/2012].

and sustainability theory and practice in academic art pedagogy to enable artists to become knowledge producers and facilitators. I further explore Gablik's (1992b) notion of connective aesthetics and the conceptual and practical shift in focus away from the individual artist towards a consideration of the way they interact with 'others' and the environment. Gablik (1992b) elucidates that the ability of artists to redefine themselves as relational rather than separate has the potential to invoke a quality of connective aesthetics that involves the awakening of 'listening self' rather than the disembodied eye. I explore this shift, and argue that it can only be realised once the artist shifts his/her vocation from self-assertion to integration, and I consider how this can be achieved through dialogue, networking, knowledge facilitation and sharing of resources.

I discuss Marnie Badham's (2010) support for a new framing of the practice of 'socially-engaged arts' within art historical theory, as the practice currently falls under various theoretical paradigms. I expand on the problems relating to the multiple understanding and labelling of community engagement within the fine arts, revealing that currently we are still without a clearly-articulated and definitive understanding of this comprehensive theory and practice within arts curricula, despite a long history of socially-engaged arts in historical practice. I further explore Badham's (2010) discussion of the shift from a democratisation of culture towards a culture of democracy, and discuss the distinguishing features between art made *for, by* and *with* community groups.

I relate Weintraub's, Gablik's and Badham's concepts to the multiple socially-engaged arts and collaborative initiatives I have been facilitator or 'artist as knowledge producer' of over a period of three years. I discuss in depth the participatory research procedures, methods and techniques I utilised with regards to my engagement with *The Sakhuluntu Cultural Group* (Appendix 3) and, more specifically, *Art Factory* (Appendix 4,5,7,8), which have largely been focused on the environmental, social, economic and educational sustainability of re-imagining plastic waste material as a creative, aesthetic and functional medium. I discuss the methods and procedures used in each initiative, in which knowledge of the conceptual and practical skills to create from recyclable materials is needed, as well as the associated education of the ecological impact of waste material on our natural and urban environments, which were a central focus. In relation to these socially-engaged art initiatives, I discuss how these collaborations between professional artists and non-arts

social groups see the professionals assuming the position of 'artist as knowledge producer' as they share their skills, resources and knowledge with marginalised social groups. I discuss, with reference to Arjen Wals[11] (2007), the importance of education within sustainability and the development of learning frameworks that assist individuals and communities in understanding the complex ontology of their natural and built environments.

I explore the primary method of crochet used to create *53 Stitches* in relation to connective aesthetics, as it has the potential to initiate a connection between people and a connection between people and the environment. I discuss the contemporary renaissance of interest and activity in needlework and the link between the experience of isolation in the global village and a re-evaluation of the value of handwork as a means of recapturing the tactility and sensuality of community. I discuss in depth the various concepts, processes and changing phases and forms of *Need(le)Work*, and relate these transformations to the formulation of the small crochet business initiative *The Masibambane Crochet Collective* and our collaboration on *sub-* (Appendix 6). I explore the concept of social development and growth, and the need for employment in marginalised social groups, through my discussion on *Need(le)Work* as it relates to the powerful potential of collaboration, innovation and social capital generated through the creation of this artwork.

I further explore the problems pertaining to the apparent disconnect between tertiary institutions and the social context in which they are located, in relation to the observed divide within my own context of the Rhodes University art department, and I discuss the hindering effect this separation has on nurturing artists as knowledge producers. To support this argument, I look at the theory of place-conscious, capacity building put forward by Johnson et al. (2009), which suggests that social groups and natural environments are suffering due to University institutions not using their expansive resources, knowledge and skills in developing more active and conscious leadership roles within their students. I

[11] Arjen Wals is a Professor and holds the UNESCO Chair of Social Learning and Sustainable Development as well as being an Associate Professor in Environmental Education. His teaching and research focuses on learning processes that contribute to a more sustainable world. A central question is how to create conditions that support new forms of learning that take full advantage of the diversity, creativity and resourcefulness that is all around us, but so far remains largely untapped in our search for a world that is more sustainable than the one currently in prospect. [Online] Available at: http://www.sse-forum.ch/?page_id=13 [11/11/2012].

discuss the concept of service-learning and community engagement in the context of Rhodes University, drawing on statements provided by the Vice-Chancellor, Dr Saleem Badat (2011), as well as the Director of Community Engagement, Diana Hornby (2011). I explore the concept of social responsibility and the application of community engagement and grassroots democracy. I discuss how the use of these relational methods offer alternative and productive ways to combat 'self-interest' in individuals, thus allowing for the development of socially-conscious learners as knowledge producers who are active in the sharing of critical resources, information and skills with those who do not have access to these amenities.

In relation to these concepts, I contextualise the creation of my last body of work *Pulp*, which conceptually represents the coming together or pulping together, of the University's resources, information and skills, and the social context in which they are geographically located. I discuss the physical representation of these concepts by exploring the contour sculptural objects created from the medium of paper/cement. Lastly, I pay homage to three individuals, through a series of walled paper/cement silhouettes, and discuss these in relation to the emergence of passionate and dedicated individuals in the urban environment of Grahamstown, who are ceaselessly striving to pursue the positive potential that can be achieved in exploring sustainability, ecology and social engagement within the arts.

Figure. i. Bronwen Salton

53 Stitches: The Radicals (installation) // 2012

Photo: Michael Salzwedel

Figure. ii. Bronwen Salton

53 Stitches: Need(le)Work (installation) // 2012

Photo: Michael Salzwedel

Figure. iii. Bronwen Salton

53 Stitches: Pulp (installation) // 2012

Photo: Michael Salzwedel

CHAPTER 1

HISTORY OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Sustainability is the capacity to 'maintain', 'endure' or 'support' and is derived from the Latin word *sustinere* (*tenere,* to hold, *sus*-, up). The sustainability of biological systems in ecology describes how systems remain diverse and productive over time, whereas human sustainability is the potential for long-term preservation of well-being which incorporates three dimensions (environmental, economic and social). The concept of sustainability presents a critical and far-reaching challenge to present-day global societies as it proposes an overall change in lifestyle by encouraging the responsible management and use of the Earth's natural resources on behalf of individuals in global societies. The emergence of sustainable development in modern theory and global practice has raised notable issues for contemporary art and artistic practice and brings to the fore an awareness of the broader ecological, economic and social context surrounding the production and reception of artworks in an era of capitalism.

In their publication *The Ecology of Post-Socialism and the Implications of Sustainability for Contemporary Art*, Maja and Reuben Fowkes (2008: 101) describe how the appearance of sustainable development, as a key concept in worldwide debates, came about precisely during the years which saw the fall of communism in Eastern Europe at the end of the Cold War (1947–1991)[12] and concurrently witnessed the division of the world along the lines of the 'economic growth' of the North and the 'economic development' of the South. The end of the Cold War saw the dissolution of ideological polarities that had for decades provided an excuse for ignoring the systematic ruination of nature, and opened up a space for the idea of sustainability to emerge in the context of a global understanding of the ecological and social crisis (Fowkes and Fowkes 2008: 101). In 1987 the United Nations (UN), upon realising the heavy deterioration of the human environment and ecological resources,

[12] The Cold War was a sustained state of political and military tension between the United States and the Soviet Union and their respective allies. During this period, the Cold War had an overwhelming effect on the global environment, ranging from the environmental impacts of nuclear weapons to the rise of industrialisation and urbanisation. Environmental warfare quickly became an effective political tool for battle (McNeill 2010: 5). Therefore, in succession, environmental change accelerated sharply during the Cold War years, and so did environmentalism both as a popular movement and as a scientific preoccupation.

appointed The Brundtland Commission[13] to investigate the connection between environmental and social development.

The target of the Brundtland Commission Report, *Our Common Future*[14], was the multilateralism and interdependence of global societies in the search for a sustainable route of human development, and it placed environmental concerns firmly on the formal political development agenda with the aim of considering economic, environmental and social development as one single issue. The report first introduced the influential and most widely cited definition: 'Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'[15]. As put forward by the report, this definition contains within it two key concepts:

- the idea of **needs**, in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and
- the awareness of **limitations** imposed by the state of technology and social organisation on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs[16].

The sustainability report recognised that human resource development in the form of poverty reduction, gender equality and wealth distribution was critical to articulating strategies for environmental conservation, and concurrently recognised the existence of environmental limits to the economic growth in developed and developing industrial societies. The mandate of the report directed its attention to the areas of population, food security, the loss of species and natural resources, energy, industry and human urbanisation

[13] Named after its chairperson, Norwegian former prime minister Gro Harlem Brundtland (1939 –), the Brundtland Commission (1987) developed a report, *Our Common Future*, that fostered the development of sustainable strategies for existing ecological systems. Thus the concept of 'sustainable development' was launched: a social and economic advance to assure human beings a healthy and productive life, but one that did not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It further led to the first Earth Summit – the UN Conference on Environment and Development – at Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and to the formulation of Agenda 21. http://www.agnt.org/brundtland/ [02/11/2012]

[14] United Nations. 1987. Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: *Our Common Future* [Brundtland Report].

[15] United Nations. 1987. Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: *Our Common Future* [Brundtland Report], p. 37.

[16] *What is Sustainable Development?* International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2012. http://www.iisd.org/sd/

– identifying these dimensions (environmental, economic and social) as connected and therefore unable to be seen or treated as separate or in isolation from one another[17]. The concept of sustainable development requires the reconciliation of the *three pillars* of sustainability (2001: Fig. 1) namely; environmental, economic and the social. By using three overlapping ellipses, this strengthens the idea that the *three pillars/spheres* of sustainability cannot be viewed as exclusive, but as mutually reinforcing each other. Sustainable development concerns the specification of set actions by the current generation to not diminish the prospects of future generations in partaking in levels of wealth, food consumption, health, education and general well-being.

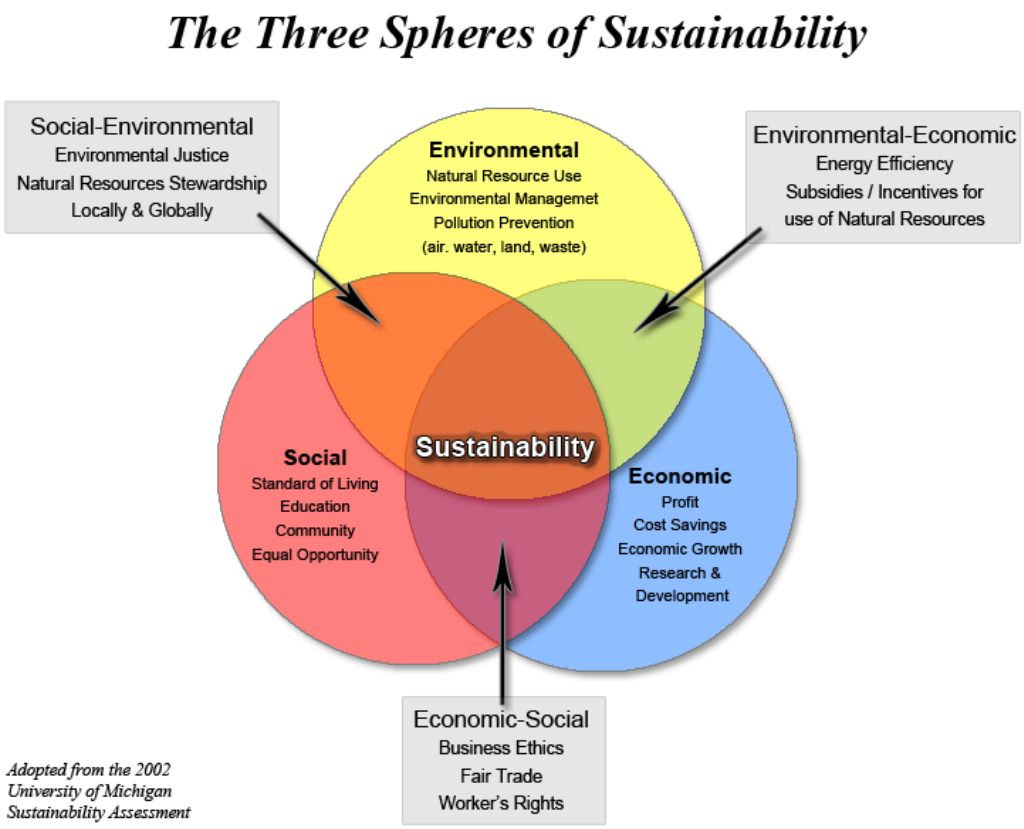

Figure 1: The Three Spheres of Sustainability Venn diagram[18]

The three main pillars of sustainable development include economic growth, environmental protection and social equality; however, it is difficult to obtain evidence for equal levels of

[17] United Nations. 1987. *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development*, General Assembly Resolution, December. p. 27.
[18] Three Spheres of Sustainability Venn diagram. Adapted from the University of Michigan Sustainability Assessment, April 2002. http://css.snre.umich.edu

consideration and initiatives for all three of the pillars in countries' policies worldwide. Due to the overriding tendency of the majority to place economic growth at the forefront of sustainability policies, it is evident that the environmental and social dimensions are severely suffering. Therefore, sustainable development interfaces specifically with global economic market forces and globalisation, as well as the influx of techno-scientific transformations, and considers the environmental and social penalties of these economic and technological advancements.

The Brundtland Commission put forward the conceptual framework needed by many countries to initiate change within their policies along the concepts of sustainability, and ushered in a series of global forums[19] in which sustainable development was discussed and mandates of actions were put into place to guide global societies into a sustainable future. However, it was not until 1992, at the first United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED Earth Summit) in Rio de Janeiro, that international delegates met to discuss a concrete and inclusive plan of action for sustainable development going into the twenty-first century. Throughout the UNCED Earth Summit, more than 179 global, national and local United Nations Organization and government leaders adopted a strategic blueprint of action, Agenda 21[20], to attain sustainable development, conscious of the 'three pillars' in policy-making decisions, and to address critically the areas in which economic development impacts on the social and ecological environments. The UNCED Earth Summit provided a space for open and critical debate amongst world leaders, and through this process the realisation of the connection between ecology and social justice became clear (Fowkes and Fowkes 2008: 101) .

Agenda 21 describes how environmental change is primarily motivated by increased population, consumption and technology, and elucidates the need for a reduction of wasteful and inefficient consumption patterns displayed by the dramatically overdeveloped

[19] To mention a few: International Forum on Partnership for Sustainable Development in Italy , 4–6 March 2004, in co-operation with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN/DESA) www.uncsd.iisd.org/ [02/11/2012]; The World Sustainable Development Forum (WSDF) established in 2005 as a global platform for sustainable development www.wsdforum.org/ [02/11/2012]; Global Forum on Sustainable Development held in South Korea on 10–11 April 2012 www.iclei.org/ [02/11/2012]; Earth Summit, 20–22 June 2012 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil www.earthsummit2012.org/ [02/11/2012].

[20] United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for Sustainable Development: Agenda 21 [http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/agenda21/]

countries of the global North while encouraging increased but sustainable development in the developing and underdeveloped countries of the global South. A major concern of Agenda 21 is the need to eradicate poverty by giving impoverished people the knowledge, skills, and amenities to gain access to the resources they need to live sustainably. The blueprint of global action suggests strategic policies and drivers to achieve a sustainable balance between population, consumption, wealth distribution, health and education while considering the environmental life-supporting capacity of our planet. Agenda 21 calls on governments to adopt national strategies for sustainable development and states that these policies cannot come to fruition without wide participation, and encourages broad series of partnerships with international organisations; businesses; regional, state, provincial and local governments; non-governmental sectors; and citizens' groups.[21]

Concurrently with the fall of communism and the release of the Brundtland Report, conceptual artist Gustav Metzger and radical social activist, theorist and philosopher Felix Guattari were seen to re-orientate their philosophy towards the world's ecological crisis. Both Felix Guattari and Gustav Metzger criticised the capitalist and technocratic world perspectives towards the devastation of our natural environment, human subjectivities and aesthetic freedom.

Gustav Metzger, through a series of conceptual auto-destructive[22] artworks, drew attention to the way in which the Cold War, capitalism and consumerism had provided a pretext for ignoring the systematic ruination of nature, reflecting in his work the changed relationship of humans to nature. Gustav Metzger's first public demonstration of his concept of 'auto-destructive art', in the form of acid painting[23], took place at the Temple Gallery in London on the evening of 22 June 1960, (1961: Fig. 2 and Fig. 3), and sought to highlight contemporary society's obsession with destruction and the damaging effect of machinery,

[21] International Institute for Sustainable Development. Rio and Rio +5: Agenda for Change – A plain language version of Agenda 21. [http://www.iisd.org/rio+5/agenda/]

[22] Auto-destructive art is a term invented by the artist Gustav Metzger in the early 1960s and put into circulation by his article *Machine, Auto-Creative and Auto-Destructive Art.* "Auto-destructive art is primarily a form of public art for industrial societies. Self-destructive painting, sculpture and construction is a total unity of idea, site, form, colour, method and timing of the disintegrative process. Auto-destructive art can be created with natural forces, traditional art techniques and technological techniques" (Metzger as cited in Home 1991: 60-64). [Online] Available at: http://www.stewarthomesociety.org/sp/assault.htm [05/11/2012].

[23] "*Acid action painting:* Acid is painted, flung and sprayed onto the nylon which corrodes at point of contact within 15 seconds" (Metzger as cited in Home 1991: 60-64. [Online] Available at: http://www.stewarthomesociety.org/sp/assault.htm [05/11/2012].

technology and consumerism on environmental and human life (Watling 2012). The performance commenced with Metzger, wearing a gas mask and protective clothing, separated from the audience by a large pane of glass, across which was stretched a sheet of white nylon. Using a adapted paintbrush, he applied and painted a solution of hydrochloric acid to the fabric which then began to react, and ate at the nylon. With the acid dissolving and melting away the fabric, Metzger offered an action painting in which the artwork was being both created and destroyed at the same time (Watling 2012). Metzger explained:

> I was very aggressive putting the acid onto that nylon . . . it was partly me attacking the system of capitalism, but inevitably also the systems of war, the war-mongers, and destroying them in a sense symbolically (Metzger cited in Peyton-Jones 2009: 25).

Figure. 2: Gustav Metzger
South Bank Demonstration // 3 July 1961
Photo: Hulton Getty Picture Collection[24]

Figure. 3: Gustav Metzger
Recreation of First Public Demonstration of Auto-Destructive Art // 1960, remade 2004
Hydrochloric acid, white nylon
3000 x 2500 x 1000 mm
Collection: Tate. Acquisition: presented by artist 2006[25]

Metzger used the auto-destructive method of conceptual art-making to create an anti-capitalist, anti-consumerist artwork and statement, as the creatively destructive process of his acid paintings ensured that nothing would remain of the artwork which could potentially contribute to the art market economy, thus opposing the commodification of the artwork (Ridgway 2009).

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[24] Fig. 3: [Online] Available at: http://www.ucl.ac.uk/forum-for-holocaust-studies/pages/South_Bank_Demonstration.html [05/11/2012]

[25] Fig. 4: [Online] Available at: http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/metzger-recreation-of-first-public-demonstration-of-auto-destructive-art-t12156/text-summary [05/11/2012]

Similarly, the object of Felix Guattari's (2000 [1989]: 27) criticism was aimed at a new form of capitalism he termed 'Integrated World Capitalism' (IWC), which, through a series of techno-scientific transformations, has brought human civilisation to the brink of an ecological catastrophe, causing instability in the world's economic, social and natural environments. Guattari (2000 [1989]: 19) begins his argument:

> The earth is undergoing a period of intense techno-scientific transformations. If no remedy is found, the ecological disequilibrium this has generated will ultimately threaten the continuation of life on the planet's surface. Alongside these upheavals, human modes of life, both individual and collective, are progressively deteriorating . . . . It is the relationship between subjectivity and its exteriority – be it social, animal, vegetable or Cosmic – that is comprised in this way, in a sort of general movement of implosion and regressive infantalization.

Guattari argues that political and executive authorities seem to be incapable of understanding the full weight of the repercussion of ignoring these issues as they are driven by the system of economic growth and gain. Yet, despite the fact that partial realisation of the dangers has come about through discussions on sustainable development, the methods being used to tackle environmental and social degradation are from a purely technocratic perspective.

Capitalism and the Three Ecological Imperatives

In his studies *The Three Ecologies* (2000: [1989]), Guattari discusses the theoretical framework of *ecosophy*, an integrated ecological understanding and approach needed to overcome the oppressive and destructive powers of capitalism. Guattari (2000 [1989]: 21) argues that IWC has systematically begun to contain and structure our human subjectivity so as to meet its own ends by polluting our unconscious subjectivity, through the use of mass media, technology and consumerism, so that we no longer consider our relationship with and need for the environmental and social dimensions that are critical to human existence. Guattari (2000 [1989]: 28) states:

> The increasing deterioration of human relations with the socius, the psyche and 'nature', is due not only to environmental and objective pollution but is the result of a certain incomprehension and fatalistic passivity towards these issues as a whole, among both individuals and governments.

Guattari describes a direct correlation between environmental degradation and the impact of IWC on our human subjectivities, which fosters a culture of indifference and passivity, and a disconnection towards our relationship with society, with the environment and with our own psyche. In her paper *The Ecological Imperative*, Suzi Gablik puts forward a similar perspective to that of Guattari, and she too describes the symptomatic underpinning of the capitalist system on our human psyche which has resulted in a physical and spiritual disconnection to our social communities and the natural environment. Gablik (1992a: 49) states:

> In the modern world, which has fostered individualism and detached autonomy as fundamental forms of self-definition, no life is sacred because we do not recognize it as such. Modern individuals do not see the Earth as a source of spiritual renewal, but as a stockpile of raw materials to be exploited and consumed . . . we are bred from birth to be consumers . . . . As a culture . . . we [have] never establish[ed] a relationship with some larger context of meaning. Instead we devastate the land in greed.

Gablik calls for an active restoration of the metaphysical consciousness of our era, which considers the natural world beyond the restricted and materialistic worldview which has been promulgated to us by mainstream capitalism, technology, science and mass consumerism.

Guattari (2000 [1989]: 27) argues that ecosophy (ecological psychology of the three ecologies), provides for an 'ethico-political and ethico-aesthetic articulation' in three ecological registers/ecologies – environmental, social relations and human subjectivity – so as to address the problems caused by IWC. These three ecologies (environmental, social and mental) are not distinct territories but serve as interchangeable lenses or styles, much like the three spheres of sustainability, that are formed relationally and transversally, presenting sites of negotiation and reconstruction. Guattari's contribution in *The Three Ecologies* is vital as he includes, along with the widely-acknowledged dimensions of environmental and social ecology, the psychological sphere of mental ecology.

Environmental ecology is concerned with preserving the integrity of the natural environment in the face of the impact of modern industry and technology, whilst social

ecology, founded by social ecologist Murray Bookchin[26], advocates a reconstructive and transformative philosophy on social and environmental issues, critiquing current social, political and anti-ecological trends. As a body of concepts, environmental and social ecology visualise a moral economy that moves beyond insufficiency and hierarchy towards a world that re-harmonises human subjectivities with the natural environment, whilst celebrating diversity, creativity and democracy[27]. Social ecology, therefore, affirms that the problems encountered by the environment have their origins in the difficulties being experienced by society as hierarchical and oppressive social structures have manifested themselves in our relationship towards the environment (Fowkes and Fowkes 2008: 102).

Mental ecology deals with factors and conditions of the psychological dependency disorder created by the degree to which IWC has spread and manifested itself in an increasing number of spheres of our human condition. Guattari (2000 [1989]: 38), explains mental ecology as a way of coming to one's own psyche by the expansion of alternative experiences centred around a respect for uniqueness in society and the environment whilst grasping at points of rupture in meaning, connection and signification. Mental ecology promotes innovative practices and a 'breaking free' from the mundane improvement and repetition of the goals of IWC in order to do something else, go somewhere else and think something else, contrary to what is deemed 'normal' in society. Guattari argues that the natural structures of human subjectivity are being threatened by the pollution and soaking of the unconscious, in conformity with global market forces, mass media and consumerism, to the point of near annihilation (Fowkes and Fowkes 2008: 102). Guattari (2000 [1989]: 38) describes the effect of mental ecology as follows:

> In order to have an impact on individual and collective life, mental ecology does not presuppose the importing of concepts and practices from a specialized 'psychiatric' domain. It demands instead that we face up to the logic of desiring ambivalence wherever it emerges – in culture, everyday life, work, sport etc. – in order to reevaluate the purpose of work and of human activities according to different criteria than those of profit and yield.

[26] Murray Bookchin (1921–2006). As stated by Mike Wood, Bookchin pioneered the social ecology movement within anarchist, libertarian socialist and ecological philosophy. Bookchin's anti-capitalist writings advocated decentralisation of societies through democratic and social action. [http://www.infed.org/thinkers/murray_bookchin.htm].

[27] Institute for Social Ecology. [http://www.social-ecology.org/]

Capitalism's power and reach is so all-encompassing and demanding that it has infiltrated 'us' by extending over all aspects of social, economic and cultural life as well as our unconscious subjective strata. Mental ecology invokes a search by individuals or collective groups for nonconforming routes of thought and action that run in opposition to the 'normal' order of things.

In consideration with the philosophical concepts and practical implications underpinning the idea of sustainable development, Maja and Reuben Fowkes (2008: 102) offer an inclusive, contemporary and in-depth description of sustainability and state:

> The key problems addressed by sustainability are, therefore, the ecological effects of the capitalist model of growth onto the environment, society and human subjectivities, manifested through consumerism, hierarchies in society and social injustice. The transformation of society into a more sustainable one entails putting into practice the principles of ecology, grass-roots democracy, social justice and non-violence.

Fowkes and Fowkes (2008: 102) put forward the idea of an ecological citizenship in which the right of the natural environment to exist is acknowledged, and they draw on Guattari's mental ecosophy to achieve this moral community by highlighting the importance of artists' methodologies in engaging with the problems presented by IWC. Guattari (2000 [1989: 24) states:

> Mental ecosophy will lead us to reinvent the relation of the subject to the body, to phantasm, to the passage of time, to the 'mysteries' of life and death. It will lead us to search for antidotes to mass-media and telematic standardization, the conformism of fashion, the manipulation of opinion by advertising, surveys etc. Its ways of operating will be more like those of the artist, rather than those of the professional psychiatrists who are always haunted by an outmoded ideal of scientificity.

Gustav Metzger (2009) appeals specifically to contemporary artists to work towards re-establishing our connection with our natural, social and ecological environments, and urges us to abandon the destructive capitalist world developments and assume a more personal and responsible position with regards to environmentalism, ethics and politics.

Metzger states:

> In the broadest sense it is a question of artists being part of a much wider community — a world community — and facing up to the world-wide conditions that may make future life impossible . . . . I could see this possibility of using the ideas of social change within art, with art and not simply through political, economic activity. I remain certain that the drive towards art, the possibility of making art, is of the utmost importance . . . [however] one of my concerns is that the art and the artists don't give themselves sufficient opportunity to drift into the depths of humanity, the depths of nature, and from those depths come out like a swimmer, coming out from the depths and breathing deeply. Art, I believe, needs to sink into the center of a human being, come up, and that will be hope - the art will be hope.

Gablik (1992a: 50) re-articulates this notion by revealing how the conceptual and practical methodologies of contemporary artists can save the sensitivity of the world itself by helping us recall our sense of belongingness to something worthy of protection. However, this kind of ecological and societal subtext art (and artists) is not yet an official part of mainstream aesthetics. However, the debate and inclusion of sustainable practices in contemporary art grow evidently as many artists are now beginning to realise the need, like Gustav Metzger did, for a radical re-evaluation of the dominator models of culture, capitalism, modernism and post modernism, towards a more sustainable and ethical ideology which highlights and respects the interests of our natural and social environments. These escalating global urgencies before us are demanding a critical examination of the economic, social and environmental impacts of contemporary art production. Chapter Two expands upon the necessary shift towards the practice of sustainability in contemporary arts, with an in-depth exploration of *53 Stitches* and the conceptual and physical practices of dematerialisation and recycling.

CHAPTER 2

SUSTAINABILITY IN CONTEMPORARY ART

The corrosive ecological, economic and social effects of capitalism, late capitalism and the ideologies of modernism and postmodernism can clearly be found in the hierarchical principalities of contemporary fine art societies and institutions. The modernist idea of the artist's right to supreme individualism, detached autonomy and self-interest promoted artists that tended to be focused on product development, career achievement, fame and economic gain. In his essay, *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Frederic Jameson (1991) puts forward the differences in culture between modernism and postmodernism and discusses the cultural expressions and aesthetics associated with the different systems of production, drawing on the fields of architecture, fine art and other culturally communicative forms to illuminate his arguments. Jameson (1991: 4) discusses the emergence of postmodernism as a revolt against the aforementioned modernist ideals, yet stresses postmodernism's equally offensive features and states:

> From obscurity and sexually explicit material to psychological squalor and overt expressions of social and political defiance, which transcend anything that might have been imagined at the most extreme moments of high modernism—no longer scandalise anyone and are not only received with the greatest complacency but have themselves become institutionalised and are at one with the official culture of Western society.

Jameson (1991: 5) refers to the aesthetic production of postmodernism not as a style but as a cultural form, symptomatic of the commodity production of late capitalism. The frantic economic urgency of production and the ever greater turnover rates of novel consumer items, assigned "an increasingly essential structural function and position to aesthetic innovation and experimentation" in the arts. Jameson argues that postmodernism has led to a disconnection to history and a fascination with the present, thus transforming the historical past into a series of hollowed-out stylisations, what Jameson terms pastiche[28], which can then be commodified and consumed, resulting in the threatening victory of capitalist thinking over all other forms of thought.

[28] Pastiche (*noun)*: an artistic work in a style that imitates that of another work, artist, or period. Oxford English Dictionary. [Online] Available at: http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/pastiche [05/11/2012].

The global fine art economic market is constructed on these capitalist goals of money, prestige, power and profit, and functions by means of the commodification of aesthetic objects, ideas and the artists themselves, who are defined and valued through 'showing or not showing', 'selling or not selling'; an ideology that is still so crucial and intrinsic to the whole fine art society's notion of success (Gablik 1992b: 3). The hidden constraints of these artistic ideals, which have been so ingrained and so internalised by our culture over decades, continue to echo through contemporary art theory, practice and institutions today, fostering the perpetual physical and mental disconnection of artists towards contemporary environmental, economic and social injustices. In her publication *Connective Aesthetics*, Suzi Gablik (1992: 2) describes this condition and states:

> Maintaining a deeply connected relationship with society [or the environment] is not how the modernist vision has conceptualised aesthetic freedom or the principle of individual selfhood. We live so much in the ethos of competitiveness, which keeps us bound to individualistic modes of thought and directed towards the making of products, that most of us in the capitalist world have never had an experience of true community [or a connection to that of nature].

Gablik (1992b: 2) disrupts the promotion of an artist's identity as autonomous, hard-edged and individualistic, and argues for a necessary paradigm shift away from these ideals to what she calls connective aesthetics. The concept of connective aesthetics requires a consciousness that is unlike the current structure of the artist as isolated and self-contained, but an awareness that affirms our interdependent, interconnected and relational selves towards not only our economic but also our social and natural environments. Connective aesthetics emphasises the shift of the artist's identity and consciousness from a narrow, egotistical, capitalist framework to a broader, more inclusive, ecological framework by considering our biological relatedness to our environment and social communities (Gablik 1992b: 4).

Through my experience as an artist working within the framework of an art institution, I have observed this argument to be true. In the undertaking of *53 Stitches* I began to recognise that I had become too culturally informed, individualistic and socially isolated in the academic institution, so much so that I had started to lose sight of what I perceived to be the 'point', function and purpose of art. I experienced extreme loneliness and purposelessness, and my relational-self began to cry out with creative frustration as I quickly

understood that my prior conceptual and practical processes were ripe with egotism and self-interest, disconnected from reality and society, only conforming to traditional fine art aesthetic and conceptual formulas of self-expression. No longer satisfied with merely improving my creative practices, I aimed to break down all that I had learnt and pursue innovation within my conceptual and creative processes with the goal of achieving a more sustainable and socially responsible approach to art-making. The initial consideration of innovation in my process occurred within the realm of mental ecology; a personal spiritual revelation jolted me out of my cycles of repetitive and passive objectivity into a passionate realm of subjectivity in which I truly 'felt' that something or everything had to be transformed and centred towards sustainable development and a working towards change with regards to environmental, economic and social injustices.

The reorientation and adjustment within my mental subjectivity led me to consider environmental and social ecology in my creative practice, so much so that I felt I could no longer deny or ignore the clamour of economic, societal, spiritual, environmental and political disaster in the world in which I move. The on-going adversities facing global societies, those of economic recession, social instability and insecurity, and environmental ruin, all became more important to me in the context of my search for contemporary artistic expression. Recognising that these global crises were ever present within my own context, as an artist I felt that could no longer justify the production of art that was void of moral consciousness, art that was without spiritual content, or art that accepts no responsibility for, and denies the very state and needs of, the world in which we exist and which we depend on.

This change within my own consciousness, identity and perspective represents a direct correlation to the world's shift towards sustainability, and thus calls for contemporary artists to consider the conceptual and practical realm of sustainability within their respective fields of practice. The notion of sustainability supports the conceptual and practical developments underpinning *53 Stitches* as I intuitively pursued the processes of recycling, crocheting and socially-engaged art initiatives as research goals, techniques and objectives, and fed these practices directly into the methods and procedures used in the creation of the three bodies of work within *53 Stitches* titled, *The Radicals, Need(le)Work* and *Pulp.*

The current response to the far-reaching global consideration of "how to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"[29] has a strong overtone for artistic practices and requires a reorientation of the ideologies of contemporary art and theory towards the principles of sustainability and stewardship. However, the concept and practice of sustainability, as a subtext for contemporary fine art, has had difficulty emerging as part of official mainstream aesthetics, as it calls into question the broader ecological context surrounding the production and reception of artworks and problematises the preservation of the untouchable status of the art object as the highest value in civilisation. During the modernist period it was a question of aesthetic values, whereas now, in the contemporary sustainability of art movement, it is a question of ethical values. According to Fowkes and Fowkes (2008: 103), parallels can be drawn between sustainability's efforts to shift our understanding of nature as an endless resource from which to take towards investigation into alternatives to the common understanding of art as commodity.

The relevance of and engagement with sustainability in contemporary art can be considered from two definitive perspectives. First, an articulated assessment can be made by the artist towards unsustainable practices in society, as well as a consideration of the role of art in highlighting critical environmental, economic and social issues by providing possible innovative and imaginative ideas that can be assumed by the artist/artwork/institution or public viewer in working towards achieving sustainability and stewardship within the field of contemporary art. Secondly, an approach of eco-criticism can be made back towards the art world itself by investigating the environmental effect of the production of artworks as well as the functioning and awareness of art institutions towards the ecological and societal crises currently being experienced (Fowkes and Fowkes 2012).

Innovation, as a primary tool involved in achieving sustainability within contemporary arts, is derived from the Latin verb *innovare*, which means 'to renew or to change', and involves the deliberate application of knowledge, imagination and creativity in introducing

[29] United Nations. 1987. Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: *Our Common Future* [Brundtland Report], p. 37.

something new, be it a device, method, medium, or concept that results from experimentation[30].

In his publication *Innovation and Conflict: Finding Creative Solutions to Social Problems,* Bernard Hoffert (2006: 1) describes passion as the basis for innovation in so much as passion is the substance which fuels our innate desires to build, to transform, to achieve and to innovate: "Without passion there is no idea, no research, no pursuit of the new which will add to culture, transform it and make life better". Hoffert's influential statement implies that in order for society to experience change or renewal, or apply the concept of sustainability within a field, there is the necessary requirement for passionate individuals driving the process. According to Hoffert (2006: 5), innovation is generally accepted as a primary element of development and progress; stressing that regardless of the field of profession or academic study, all are dependent on innovation to carry the field forward, identifying creativity with the advancement of new ideas and arguing that the most effective tools for developing these ideas are through individual acts of observation, perception and imagination. Hoffert describes how individuals observe their environment in relation to their interests and concerns, and understands these observations in relation to the knowledge and information they have gained from being active in that setting. Hoffert (2006: 4) further pronounces "there is no 'innocent eye', every observation has meaning in regard to how we interpret it and we can only interpret in regard to what we know".

The observations I have made, in the process of realising *53 Stitches,* are informed by the knowledge, information and experience I have gained from being a student in the Rhodes University Fine Art Department, Grahamstown, South Africa, for both my four-year undergraduate Bachelor of Fine Art (BFA) and my three year Master of Fine Art (MFA) degrees. These observations were made in relation to my interests regarding the three pillars of sustainability (social, environmental and economic) in both personal art practice and fine art institutions, in an attempt to imagine how I, as an art practitioner, could address the topics raised by acting in stewardship to solve problems.

The basis of innovation within my creative process stemmed from an observation regarding the environmental and economic impact of materials and methods used in the creation of

[30] 'innovate *verb*' *South African Concise Oxford Dictionary.* 10th Edition. 2002. Ed. Katheryn Kavanagh. South Africa: Oxford University Press Southern Africa. p. 595

aesthetic sculptural objects. Contemporary moulding techniques and construction methods, used in the education of sculpturing practice, involve the use of large quantities of moulding materials such as Gypsum Plaster, CrystaCal, Elastocil Silicone Rubber, PVC Industrial Resin, Fibreglass and Body Double Silicone Rubber, whereas the materials used to cast aesthetic objects out of these moulds include CrystaCal Plaster, Elastocil Silicone Rubber, PPC Cement and PVC Industrial Resin. Not only are these processes extremely expensive and economically unsustainable, but they are also chemically hazardous to both the artist and the environment in which they are made and used. Concurrently I observed and have participated in the ritual 'trashing' of undergraduate student sculptures at the beginning of each academic year. These sculptures are systematically disposed of each year once their purpose of an academic grade has been achieved, and are tossed into the refuse tip and transported to the main landfill in Grahamstown, subsequently adding to the environmental crisis our society is experiencing[31].

I perceive the undependable and unsustainable use of expensive, toxic and environmentally unfriendly materials and processes, together with the systematic disposal and dumping of art objects, as a form of negligence. The oversight of environmental responsibility by artists occurs, I believe, as a result of artists and art institutions 'stopping at nothing' to obtain and achieve their conceptual and aesthetic goals. Unfortunately this unethical approach to art-making is often considered to be the 'norm'. This 'norm' does not necessarily constitute deliberate acts of negligence. Rather, I perceive it to be unconscious acts of indifference, as I have observed the lack of interest and concern regarding these economic and environmental issues. Realising that my own creative practices were also influenced by this 'norm', I began to imagine the possibilities of sculptural construction that was conscious of economic and environmental sustainability, and subsequently turned my attention to the application of ecological dematerialisation and use of recyclable and waste materials as a medium within my creative practice.

[31] I would like to note here that I am not arguing against the use of these materials and processes in the teaching and production of sculptural objects, nor am I in opposition to the disposal of purposeless art objects that accumulate in the studio space. I have merely observed what I consider to be the irresponsible encouragement and use of these materials in the sculptural learning process, coupled with the carelessness with which these objects are made, exhibited, marked, forgotten about and then disposed of.

The observations and perceptions made by artists, therefore, in conjunction with an exploration and engagement with the concepts of sustainability in contemporary art, allow for radical critiques regarding the environmental, economic and social ethics involved in the production of artworks. Considering both the institutional education of art practice and the individual creative process, artists engaging with the concepts of sustainability are empowered with the ability to offer innovative alternatives for both artistic production and the social responsibility of artists.

Art which ceases to view itself as entirely self-referential and disconnected from the realm of non-art, environment and society has the potential to explore the notion of 'sustainability of form', through insight into dematerialisation and recycling of both concepts and art objects. Concurrently the concept of 'artist as knowledge producer' is explored in sustainability of contemporary art, and is involved in mediation, service-learning, and facilitation of knowledge and resources exchange within communities by producing alternative and creative frameworks for dealing with the critical economic, social and environmental issues side-lined in mainstream culture, aesthetics and politics today (Fowkes and Fowkes 2006b).

By expanding upon the methods of dematerialisation and recycling as contemporary forms of sustainability in art practice, and through discussions of various artists working in the realm of sustainable art practice, I explore the creation of *53 Stitches* and my process as research with particular emphasis on recycling plastic as a medium, with crochet and collaboration as method, in an attempt to discover sustainability within my practice.

Sustainability of Form

Dematerialisation and recycling practices are two credible approaches to realising 'sustainability of form' in contemporary art, and follow the idea of deep ecology[32] which is

[32] 'Deep ecology' was coined in 1973 by a Norwegian philosopher Arne Naes (1912–2009), whose sentiments were based upon conservation and preservation of the environment. The word *deep* in part referred to the level of questioning of the purposes and values when arguing in environmental conflicts. The *deep* movement involves deep questioning, right down to fundamental root causes. The long-range deep approach involves redesigning whole systems, based on values and methods that truly preserve the ecological and cultural diversity of natural systems. The distinguishing and original characteristics of the deep ecology movement were its recognition of the inherent value of all living beings and the use of this view in shaping environmental policies. One of its principles is "[that] ideological change is mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in

quite simply 'making do with enough'. Sustainability of form requires an innovative approach on the part of the artist to research into alternative conceptual and practical methodologies in art production, and involves an awareness concerning the environmental, economic and social impact of the artwork. Sustainability of form considers the responsible and ethical use of resources and materials, and favours a non-exploitative approach in research, methodologies and procedures in the practical making of an artwork (Fowkes and Fowkes 2008: 103).

Dematerialisation

Dematerialisation as a working concept has been applied to various fields of study, namely in ecology and economics. In ecology, dematerialisation suggests the sustainable use of synthetic materials by converting their linear path of extraction, production, use and disposal into a circular material system that reuses materials as much as possible to avoid their final destination being a refuse landfill. In economics, the concept of dematerialisation involves the idea of 'doing more with less' by reducing the measure of resources required to serve any given economic purpose. However, dematerialisation in contemporary art questions the tendency to view art as a commodity, where artists attuned to dematerialisation and the concept of sustainability in art practice are reluctant to add to the existing stockpile of aesthetic objects, raising questions as to the limit of their accumulation. The practice of dematerialisation in contemporary art echoes the innovative practice, radical questioning and conceptualism of the conceptual art movement of the 1970s[33]. Relating dematerialisation as a tool for achieving sustainability eschews the continuous creation of art objects, which subsequently has the potential to minimise the ecological

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situations of inherent worth) rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between big and great" or, to paraphrase, making do with enough (Drengson 2005) [Online] Available at. http://www.deepecology.org/deepecology.htm [03/11/2012].

[33] In 1961 the term *concept art* was coined by the artist Henry Flynt in his article bearing the same title. It is art in which the concept or idea involved in the work take precedence over traditional aesthetic and material concerns. In *Paragraphs on Conceptual Art* (1967), Sol LeWitt noted that "the idea or concept is the most important aspect of the work . . . when the artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair." Dematerialisation of the art object followed after conceptualism, and it has served as a vehicle of socio-political inquiry and comment in sustainability and environmental issues in contemporary art. [Online] Available at: http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/conceptual-art.htm#conceptualism [10/11/2012].

impact of the artwork, and shifts the focus towards process-based practice which often involves performance art, ephemeral art and digital art. The contemporary use of technological advancements, which have over the past decade innovated and improved upon our communication, networking, archiving, business and creative tools, can be seen as a more sustainable and alternative approach to traditional forms of art production, as the digital medium has practically zero impact on the environment and is widely used by environmental activists and artists to communicate new ideas, frameworks and practices to the global online networking society (Fowkes and Fowkes 2008: 103).

The large scale digital photographic prints of American artist Chris Jordan, in his 2011 solo exhibit *Running the Numbers* at the Other Gallery Beijing, can be seen as contemporary dematerialisation, as Jordan offers a stark, threatening and critical commentary on the capitalist model of excessive production and consumption in modern American society through the austere lens of statistics. Jordan's visualisation highlights the consequence of our 'throw-away culture' and attempts to 'make visual' the enormity of the statistics revealed by the images, statistics that Jordan believes we are not able to comprehend. Every day, we as informed individuals are confronted with an enormity of statistics concerning the mass phenomena of pollution, global warming, economic movements, crime, rape and HIV/AIDS infection, characterised and communicated to us in numbers ranging in the millions, billions and trillions, quantities that we as human beings cannot meaningfully grasp. The challenge here, as a world population of approximately 7.5 billion people, is our sense of insignificance as individuals to fully comprehend the horror these statistics, as once we have realised that these environmental issues are a result of our own selfishness and greed we begin to become overwhelmed and emotionally disabled. Chris Jordan (2011) remarks:

> Statistics can feel abstract and anesthetizing, making it difficult to connect with and make meaning of the profoundly important phenomena they represent. Finding meaning in these mass phenomena can be difficult because the phenomena themselves are invisible, spread across the earth in millions of separate places. There is no Mount Everest of waste that we can make a pilgrimage to and behold the sobering aggregate of our discarded stuff, seeing and feeling it viscerally with our senses. Instead, we are stuck with trying to comprehend the gravity of these issues through the anaesthetizing and emotionally barren language of statistics.

Through digitally constructed large-scale assemblages, composed of thousands of smaller photographs depicting the sheer volume of used cell phones, plastic bottles, plastic bags, cigarette butts, car keys, mail order catalogues, aluminium cans, plastic cups and paper, Chris Jordan brings these staggering quantities to life and guides the viewer to visually grasp the impacts of our consumer culture by giving a face to the immobilising statistics which confront us daily (Doan 2007).

In each of his images, Jordan offers a jarring insight into western contemporary culture and consumerism by portraying specific statistical quantities of disposable waste accumulating in our oceans, landfills and household refuse bins which reflect our rapid rates of daily consumption. As can be seen in *Plastic Bags* (2007: Fig. 4 and Fig. 5), which depicts 60,000 plastic bags, equal to the number of plastic packets used in the US every five seconds, Jordan's visual representation of these quantities has a different effect on the viewer than the raw numbers alone. Jordan's images play with a visual manipulation similar to that of optical illusions, as the visually perceived image, from afar, differs from the objective reality of its content on closer inspection. At first glance, *Plastic Bags* (2007: Fig. 4) appears to be a landscape of pixelated colours (tan, white and blue) which seem to merge together and create a pattern, mesmerising and drawing the viewer in. Yet a closer inspection of the image (2007: Fig. 5) reveals that what seem to be pixels, from a distance, are in fact a multiplicity of tiny digital photographs, representing disposed plastic packets, captured and composed by Jordan to depict the statistic.

Similarly, Jordan's image *Paper Cups* (2008: Fig. 6 and Fig. 7) may at first be visually interpreted as a flat plane of vertical lines, varying in hues of white, grey and blue. However the image is made up of a digital representation of 410,000 paper cups, equal to the number of disposable hot-beverage cups used in the US every fifteen minutes, which Jordan has compositionally stacked into vertical columns (Doan: 2007).

Therefore, Chris Jordan's photographic works confront the viewer with the visual realities of his or her own contribution to mass consumption and waste, and urge the viewer to connect personally with the issues at hand despite the complex emotions of fear, anxiety, grief and rage, which may come about once the full weight of the reality which Jordan is depicting is realised by the viewer. These emotions, which are the emotional process of

becoming aware of the realities and consequences of our comfortable and sought-after consumerist habits, have a sobering effect on the viewer who realises their interconnectedness with others and the environment, and can ultimately be a driving force for courageous individuals or communities to take action for change (Jordan 2011).

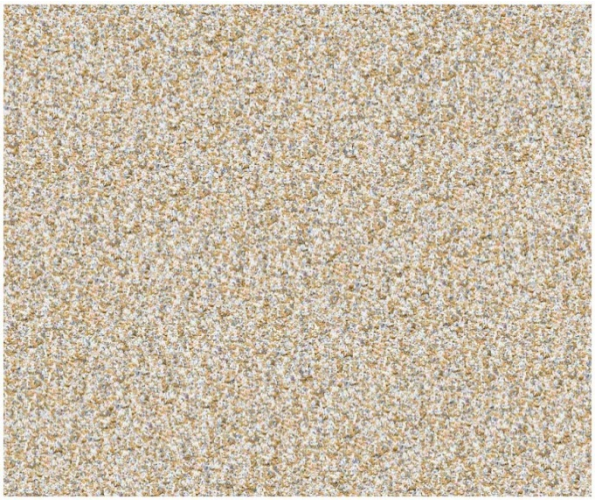


Figure. 4: Chris Jordan
Plastic Bags // 2007
Digital Inkjet Photographs[34]
(60 x 72") Actual Size

Figure. 5: Chris Jordan
Plastic Bags (Detail) // 2007
Digital Inkjet Photographs[35]
(62 x 72") Digital Zoom

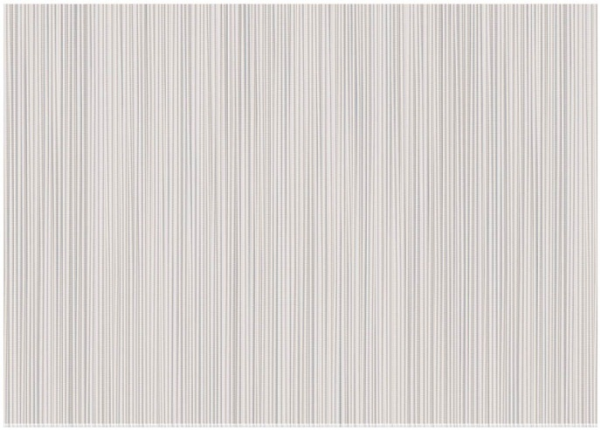


Figure. 6: Chris Jordan
Paper Cups // 2008
Digital Inkjet Photographs[36]
(60 x 96") Actual Size

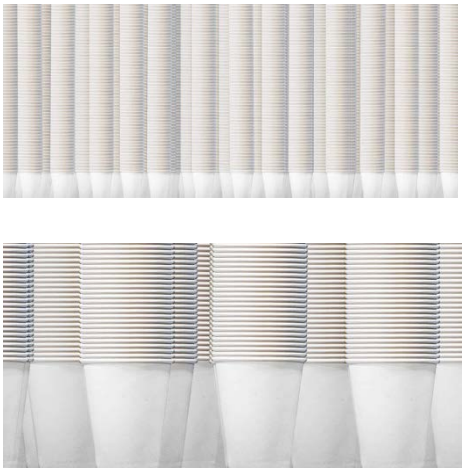


Figure. 7: Chris Jordan
Paper Cups (Detail) // 2008
Digital Inkjet Photographs[37]
(60 x 96") Digital Zoom

[34] [Online] Available at: http://www.bu.edu/sustainability/chris-jordan-photography/ [06/09/2012].
[35] [Online] Available at: http://www.bu.edu/sustainability/chris-jordan-photography/ [06/09/2012].
[36] [Online] Available at: http://www.bu.edu/sustainability/chris-jordan-photography/ [06/09/2012].
[37] [Online] Available at: http://www.bu.edu/sustainability/chris-jordan-photography/ [06/09/2012].

Recycling

The concept of recycling in contemporary art avoids the constant search for originality in mass media and mass production by contemporary artists, and requires the artist to think critically of the environmental impact of the materials used in the creation of an artwork, often resulting in the search for novelty within the detritus of mass-consumerism. Recycling, in its widest sense, can be seen as a form of ecological dematerialisation, and can be applied to sustainable form in both the conceptual and practical consideration of the material content of an artwork (Fowkes and Fowkes 2008: 103). The recycling of concepts, or the physical use of recycled materials in contemporary art, has its roots in the legacy of Dada with Marcel Duchamp's 'ready-made'[38] or 'ready-made assisted'[39] as an everyday object selected, manipulated and conceptually designated as art. By selecting and exhibiting commonplace and mass-produced objects, Duchamp attempted to abolish the elitist notion of the art object as sacrosanct; an ideology that provided a major basis for both the Pop Art and Conceptual Art movements and that now shows its face again as an influential practice in the current sustainability of contemporary art movement.

The use of recyclable or waste materials in contemporary art has become avant-garde as, globally, contemporary artists are turning their creative innovation towards the unconventional use of waste materials as a dynamic and playful medium. A Google search on the subjects of waste art, recycled art, plastic art sculpture, green art, recycled public sculpture and recycled fine arts reveals an explosion of waste materials as a medium in contemporary art. Whist exploring waste art websites, I became aware of the large amount of recyclable objects collected and utilised in the making of sculptures, assemblages and

[38] **ready-made:** The only definition of 'ready-made' published under the name of Marcel Duchamp ("MD" to be precise) exists in Breton and Eluard's *Dictionnaire abrégé du Surréalisme*: "an ordinary object elevated to the dignity of a work of art by the mere choice of an artist." Obalk, H. 2000. The Unfindable Readymade. *Tout-Fait: Marcel Duchamp Studies*, 1(2). [Online] Available at: http://www.toutfait.com/issues/issue_2/Articles/obalk.html [05/11/2012].

[39] Marcel Duchamp(1887–1968) created the first ready-made, *Bicycle Wheel* (1913), which consisted of a wheel mounted on a stool, as a protest against the excessive importance attached to works of art. This work was technically a *ready-made assisted*, because the artist intervened by combining two objects. By selecting mass-produced, commonplace objects, Duchamp attempted to destroy the notion of the uniqueness of the art object. The result was a new, controversial definition of art as an intellectual rather than a material process. [Online] Available at: http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/492875/ready-made [10/11/2012].

installations, and realised that, in order to experiment with this medium, I was to do the same, a seemingly easy process when one considers the extreme amount of trash available in our environment. Due to this expansive accumulation of discarded, predominantly plastic, waste in our oceans, fresh water systems and landfills, the result of our excessive patterns of capitalist consumerism, artists are able to access vast amounts of recyclable objects at an economically sustainable rate, which are deconstructed, then reconstructed and transformed into 'ready-made assisted' large scale public sculptures, gallery installations, photographic and painting assemblages and paper tapestries, as well as an extensive range of marketable and functional aesthetic objects.

There are many poignant and inspirational contemporary artworks of both local and international artists and crafters, whose application of recycled and bought synthetic plastic, metal and paper materials in their creative processes results in sheer innovative and imaginative creations, subverting traditional forms and techniques. Waste material found and collected is predominantly three dimensional in form, however, the malleable, durable and viscous nature of the various mediums allows artists to experiment and playfully manipulate the medium into numerous forms. The collection and use of recyclable materials in contemporary art acts as a system of ecological dematerialisation, as it disrupts the linear movement of waste – extraction, production, consumption and disposal – and re-initiates the process into that of a circular movement by extracting disposed-of waste, producing it into an artwork and then exhibiting it to the public for either visual or economic consumption.

For the purpose of this mini-thesis, I have chosen to discuss the works of two contemporary artists, Sofi Zezmer and Mbongeni Buthelezi, whose creative use of recycled and bought plastic materials reflects my own exploration and experimentation with waste materials, with specific attention being drawn to the processes and techniques used by these artists to collect, deconstruct, manipulate and reconstruct form from these unconventional materials.

In her 2010 solo exhibit *Remote Control* at the Mike Weiss Gallery NYC, the half sculptural, half intuitive Duchampian hybrid work of contemporary Polish artist Sofi Zezmer can be appreciated as sustainable form. Zezmer, through her use of common, often underestimated, recycled and bought synthetic plastic materials, traces the path of our

everyday modern existence. Her carefully constructive sculptural pieces, as can be seen in *American Dream LS1, Pink* (2009: Fig. 8) and *Leedom* (2007: Fig. 9), convey the convergence of biological and technological systems into strange futuristic bug-like organisms (Mitsios 2010). By infusing and deconstructing the elements of drinking straws, cable ties, plastic funnels, bicycle helmets, construction netting, IV drip tubing and other plastic medical supplies, Zezmer alters the viewer's common understanding of the objects' use to inform our daily lives, and challenges the viewer with regards to his or her own relationship to consumerism, mass production and over consumption (Mitsios 2010).

Figure. 8: Sofi Zezmer
American Dream LS1, Pink //2009
Plastic, metal
(30 x 25 x 18 cm)
Courtesy of Mike Weiss Gallery, NYC [40]

Figure. 9: Sofi Zezmer
Leedom // 2007
Plastic, metal, glass
(61 x 30 x 41 cm)
Courtesy of Mike Weiss Gallery, NYC[41]

[40] [Online] Available at: http://www.yatzer.com/Sofi-Zezmer-loses-control-at-Mike-Weiss-Gallery [06/09/2012].
[41] [Online] Available at: http://www.yatzer.com/Sofi-Zezmer-loses-control-at-Mike-Weiss-Gallery [06/09/2012].

The viewer is seduced by the complex, delicate and sterile perfection of the acquainted parts of contemporary consumerism, transformed by Zezmer into beautiful yet menacing techno-centric organisms and virus-like amalgamations, alluding to the threatening existence of new technologies, mass consumerism and the fundamental alienation and displacement of our culture from the natural environment due to post-industrial efficiency (Hrbacek 2010). As seen in *American Dream LS1, Pink* (2009: Fig. 8) and *Leedom* (2007: Fig. 9), Sofi Zezmer has deconstructed the various parts of ordinary found, bought and collected consumer household, garden, fashion and medical objects, and through the process of cutting, melting, piercing, arranging and attaching the malleable plastic pieces together in colour-specific forms, Zezmer has transformed and reconstructed waste materials into evocative sculptural and installation structures.

Similarly, the recycled plastic 'painterly' work of contemporary South African artist Mbongeni Buthelezi, whose use of recycled, industrially-produced plastic materials found littering the urban streets, natural landscapes and landfills in South Africa, can be viewed as environmentally, economically and socially sustainable contemporary artwork, whilst his melting process displays the innovative, versatile and dynamic nature of the plastic medium. Buthelezi began his plastic-painting artistic journey in the 1990s, when he turned his attention to the large mountains of waste plastic bags and wrappings as an alternative medium, as he could not afford expensive paints and canvases. Recycled plastic waste is an inexpensive medium that can literally be found anywhere. However, Buthelezi did not see rubbish which had been discarded; instead he saw colours, shapes and objects of innovation which should be kept and re-created (Seippel 2009: 13).

As can be seen in *Winter in Kilptown* (2008: Fig. 10) and *Hula Hoop I* (2007: Fig. 11), Buthelezi does not randomly collect rubbish, but collects specific grades and colours of waste recycled plastic, using these plastics not only as his canvas but also as a medium with which to 'paint'. Buthelezi's plastic painterly constructions are made entirely out of recycled plastic as he uses thick industrial plastic foils as plastic canvases and then 'paints', using a heat gun, with his expansive palette of colourful plastic cling-foil used to package beverage cans and liquor bottles (2008: Fig. 12 and Fig. 13). Buthelezi's encounter with waste materials represents something positive, an innovative and humble action that is full of

hope, yet, his use and redirecting of everyday waste material has situated him within contemporary aesthetics as an artist at the core of our time (Seippel 2009: 13).

Buthelezi began his career collecting waste materials himself by walking through the urban streets, shopping centres and townships of Johannesburg, looking for and collecting colourful plastic wrappers that had been disposed of in dustbins, or plastics simply trailing the streets. However, since his humble beginnings, Buthelezi has now established his own collection network – a form of recycling, as on the one hand he liaises with plastic producers to obtain obsolete rolls of thick dyed plastic, which he uses as his canvas, and on the other he has employed a number of informal rubbish collectors in Johannesburg, who sift and sort through household trash bags on collection day for recyclables to collect specific plastic wrappings according to his needs, and they deliver them to him directly (Seippel 2009: 13).

In this way, Buthelezi's work can be appreciated as sustainable form, as his processing and application of waste materials forms part of the modern-day recycling process. Through the process of melting together discarded plastic into expressive painterly depictions of everyday South African life, Buthelezi has changed the use of the most commonly-used material of our time in an unique way, developing a new form of art. By transforming what is generally seen as useless rubbish into artistic expression, through his process Buthelezi gives new meaning and value to the rejected waste of modern consumerism, and sets an innovative and respectable example for up and coming South African artists (Gruntkowski 2009: 50)

Whether they intended it or not, the work of both Sofi Zezmer and Mbongeni Buthelezi can be seen as environmentally-sustainable eco-art through their respective use of recycled material. By the mere fact that their large-scale contemporary artworks are made predominantly from waste materials, they are in fact contributing to the global and local sustainable efforts to reduce the amount of waste that ends up in landfills.

Figure. 10: Mbongeni Buthelezi
Winter in Kliptown // 2008
Plastic on plastic
132 x 160cm

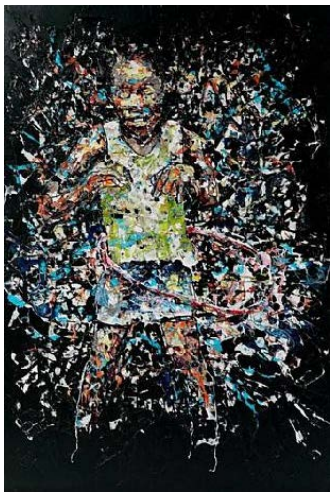


Figure. 11: Mbongeni Buthelezi
Hula Hoop I // 2007
Plastic on Plastic
275 x 185 cm

Figure. 12: Mbongeni Buthelezi
The Artist's Palette // 2008

Figure. 13: Mbongeni Buthelezi
Painting in plastic using a Heat Gun // 2008

The collective and collaborative nature of Buthelezi's work, however, has further economic and social sustainability elements, as his collection processes employ strategic networking and economic development for others by including community members and skilled individuals into his processes, thereby making his work socially inclusive and economically sustainable for an assembly of people. This, ultimately, suggests that the creation of his artwork is environmentally, economically and socially responsible. Buthelezi's artworks communicate more vigorously the concept of sustainable form in contemporary art than those of Sofi Zezmer and Chris Jordan; his application of waste materials in the creation of contemporary art represents the conceptual commentary of Zezmer and Jordan, but

Buthelezi goes further by collecting, connecting to and familiarising himself and his artworks with his natural, urban, economic and social environments so as to engage practically and innovatively with excessive waste accumulation. Buthelezi's working process also includes educational programmes, in which he demonstrates his melting and painting techniques to groups of secondary institution scholars, educating and inspiring them to innovate their own creative processes; and this places Buthelezi in the realm of 'artist as knowledge producer' (2009: Fig. 14 and Fig. 15).

These processes of collection, deconstruction, reconstruction and transformation of plastic waste materials into new forms, as discussed and demonstrated in the work of Sofi Zezmer and Mbongeni Buthelezi, as well as the exploration into 'artist as knowledge producer', as displayed by Buthelezi, resonate with the processes I have undertaken throughout the creation of *The Radicals, Need(le)Work and Pulp,* which make up the body of the exhibition *53 Stitches.*

Figures. 14–15: Mbongeni Buthelezi
Educational Workshop // 2009
Demonstration at Pretoria Art Museum

53 Stitches: Beginning and Becoming

The primary aim and objective in the undertaking of *53 Stitches* was to explore the potential use of both discarded and bought plastic and paper materials in sculptural construction as an economically and environmentally sustainable and responsible medium. I had observed the increasing costs involved in the moulding and casting of aesthetic sculptural objects and considered it to be both economically unsustainable and environmentally irresponsible. My

consideration of both recycled and bought plastic and recycled paper waste materials as a medium seemed to be able to combat both observed impasses. I therefore departed from the typical conceptual research space of the fine art institution, and set out to investigate the movement of waste within Grahamstown, so as to discover the most appropriate and fruitful locations to collect large quantities of rubbish to work with and experiment with as an initial research process. Concurrently, I began recycling within my own domestic environment to aid the collection process. My early research into accessing a large quantity of waste materials led me to network, connect and communicate with multiple community members: environmental maintenance facilitators, shop owners, municipal officials, landfill operators and employees, municipal waste collectors and academic researchers involved in waste movement life cycles and systems. I discovered, in the local context of Grahamstown, that the South African national waste management systems, still in the process of negotiating the proper implementation of sustainable ecological dematerialisation systems and recycling on a national, local and domestic level, are very much in the beginning stages of being realised, and are struggling to be put into practice. One just needs to take a walk or drive around the urban areas of South Africa to know that these observations are blatant, as consumable waste is literally strewn across urban and natural landscapes. Consequently, the situation allowed me to freely access a large amount of plastic grocery bags, plastic water and detergent bottles, soda cans, aluminium liquor bottle tops, shredded paper, and industrial plastic netting with which to begin my experimentations.

Through my social networking research process, I discovered and made contact with Dylan McGarry, a creative individual who was on the forefront of waste material construction in Grahamstown. Feeling slightly overwhelmed by the material I had collected, as I had never worked with waste before, I sought McGarry out to gain insight and advice into the ways in which he worked and constructed with the predominantly plastic medium. My collaboration with Dylan McGarry and *The Arkwork Collective* (see Appendix 1 and Appendix 2), was the foundation from which I initially began to explore the expansive and versatile properties of waste as a medium, specifically plastic. I also discovered through this process of research the enormous potential of collaborative art practices, in conjunction with the waste medium, to engage with all spheres of sustainability (economic, environmental and social).

My first collaborative project in 2010 with *The Arkwork Collective* (Appendix 1) involved organising and facilitating a series of plastic crochet workshops at the Environmental Learning and Research Centre on Rhodes University Campus, aimed at providing a creative space in which a group of sixteen lower-income members of Grahamstown could acquire the practical skills of crochet and then apply these techniques to the economic and environmentally-sustainable medium of plastic grocery bags, as opposed to costly woollen yarn. I had, over the past three years within my private capacity, experimented largely with and applied many of the techniques of crochet using conventional woollen yarn as a medium. In the process of planning for the plastic crochet workshops, I sought out and recycled large quantities of plastic grocery bags, and asked the registered participants to do the same in preparation for the workshop. By cutting up and deconstructing the recycled bags into strips of various sizes and thicknesses, I experimented with the ways in which the thickness of the cut plastic strips would affect the gauge of the desired pattern. I discovered that the plastic packets, when cut too thin, tore in the crochet process and the desired thickness needed in order for it not to break affected the measure of the pattern, increasing it in size threefold. I observed, through my experimentation, the durable and malleable nature of plastic packets when applied to crochet, which led me to investigate more freely the possibilities of crocheted plastic, in terms of size and quantity, within my own practice, which led to the creation of *The Radicals, Need(le)Work* and the embossment in *Pulp.*

The Radicals

Phase 1: *Crude Plume*

Whilst sitting and scrumbling with my crochet hook, scissors and plastic, the creation of the plastic crocheted black refuse bag 'barnacles' or 'organic growths', constituting much of the form and texture of *The Radicals,* was developed and discovered through an innovative and experimental process. Scrumbling is a contemporary urban word for 'free-form' crochet techniques and can be described as fragments of crochet, made without rules or patterns, resulting in original, imaginative, intuitive and exploratory designs. The method of crochet, for me personally, is a meditative yet obsessive process and soon I had created numerous 'barnacles' of various sizes while experimenting with the logistics of how many crochet forms I could crochet out of one black plastic refuse bag and what that would amount to if I

had to crochet an entire roll of plastic bags. Economically, the use of bought plastic significantly lowered my expenses as I was able to create approximately 100 crochet forms from a roll of 50 black plastic refuse bags at a cost of R31. I delighted in the texture and organic form that the plastic took when crocheted, and when assembled together it created an artificial amalgamation of 'organic growths' that resembled an oceanic coral reef (2011: Fig. 16). The obsessive and repetitive accumulation of crochet barnacle forms led me to draw parallels between my compulsion to create objects and the global phenomenon of mass production and mass consumption which has resulted in our obsessive need for plastic consumables and their accumulation on the earth's surface and oceans.

At the same time as I was experimenting with plastic crochet, the world experienced the largest accidental marine oil spill in the history of the petroleum industry, an ecological disaster of immeasurable proportions. The world watched as the *Deepwater Horizon* drilling rig, after exploding, triggered a massive offshore crude oil spill that gushed out into the ocean of the Gulf of Mexico, unabated for over three months, causing extensive damage to marine and wildlife habitats. Researching into the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill*,* crude oil and petroleum, I discovered that these are the key ingredients in the manufacturing process of synthetic polymers, and four per cent of the world's total crude oil production is used for the manufacturing of plastic merchandise (Ellis et al. 2005: 4).

Plastic grocery bags are made from a high-density polyethylene (HDPE), whereas glossy refuse bags are made from low-density polyethylene (LDPE), both of which are a non-renewable resource made from ethylene which takes epochs to decompose. The industrial uses of HDPE and LDPE are appealing to global manufacturers as the polyethylene can be manipulated, through chemical and heat processes, into any form, shape or colour (Ellis et al. 2005: 4). However, the detrimental environmental effect of the manufacturing process and subsequent disposal of the plastic bag has been highlighted over the last decade. Following their manufacture, plastic products are then shipped all around the world, a transportation system that requires vast amounts of fossil fuels, producing large amounts of pollutants and contributing to the numerous occurrences of oceanic oil spills. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2004), Australia imports over four billion bags annually, whereas, globally, an estimated four to five trillion plastic bags are produced annually.

North America and Western Europe account for approximately 80 per cent of the usage and North America disposes up to 100 billion plastic bags each year (Ellis et al. 2005: 6).

Figure. 16: Bronwen Salton
***The Radicals*: Crude Plume** (Detail) // 2011
Crochet plastic

Considering that the 'black barnacles' assumed the appearance of an artificial coral reef or of a reef soaked in crude oil, and that the chemical composition of the crochet forms was that of crude *Deepwater Horizon* oil and petroleum, I began constructing the shape of a 'bird's eye' geographical view of the *Deepwater Horizon* Gulf of Mexico oil spill's oil pipelines and oil platforms out of crochet barnacle forms (2010: Fig. 17). Intrigued by the interconnectivity of the pattern, the connecting of locations into a crustacean like shape, I imagined re-creating this shape entirely from crochet as the method of interconnection in crochet allowed for the stitching of form.

Figure. 17: The Gulf of Mexico Mess[42]

In order to create the large-scale floor/wall fibre sculpture[43], I employed the help of five women, in the Grahamstown location's suburb of Xolani, who were all proficient in the techniques of crochet (Appendix 6). The initiation of the crochet group came into being quite serendipitously as, at the same time as I was imagining how to formulate and employ a group of people to crochet for me, I was approached by an old friend, Thabisa Belwana, who has previously been employed by sculptors in the department, as she was in search of some informal employment. I proposed to Belwana the idea of temporary employment for five community members who would be willing to crochet the 'barnacle' motif at an agreed-upon rate. Belwana was excited by the opportunity and communicated to me that, although she did not know how to crochet, her mother, aunt, sister and pastor all knew how. I asked Belwana to approach these members with the employment- and income-generating opportunity I was proposing, and told her that I would teach her the basic crochet stitches and the method of crocheting the 'barnacle' motif so that she could share it with the group if they came on board. The four women in Thabisa's community agreed to the initiative and we began crocheting.

[42] Figure. 17: Gregory White. (2010) 'Words Can't Describe The Gulf Of Mexico Mess'. *Business Insider.* [Online image] Available at: http://articles.businessinsider.com/2010-05-10/news/29968612_1_gulf-spill-oil-spill-esri [28/09/2012]

[43] My intention was to create a versatile sculpture that could be installed either on floor or wall surface. Due to the malleable nature of the crochet plastic, I was able to succeed in creating *Crude Plume* in such a way that it could be installed as both a floor or wall piece.

The objective of the initiative was to create a successful business and working relationship between myself and the five members of the newly-formed crochet collective. We had agreed that I would provide all tools and materials for the commission of the crochet motif that I had designed, and the group would crochet the motifs at an agreed-upon price of R1.50 per shape crocheted. The goal of the initiative was to set up a production line of the crochet motifs, so that I was collecting and paying for a significant quantity of the crochet motifs monthly. Due to my need for a large quantity of crochet motifs, an agreement was made that the initiative was to maintain the production of and payment for the crochet motif for at least twelve months. By the end of February 2011, production of the black plastic crochet motif was in full swing; Thabisa had become an intermediate crocheter and had learnt the basic 'barnacle' motif which she then taught to the group. During the first four months (February to May), I met with the group fortnightly at the Salvation Army church and home of Captain Cynthia Dyandyi. In these meetings we discussed as a group the progress of the initiative, and I made queries into the happiness and well-being of the women as the crocheting of plastic is quite labour intensive. We talked about different stitches and needle sizes, and clarified and solved any problems that arose during these meetings. On the Friday before each meeting, Thabisa would SMS me the quantity of motifs that each woman had crocheted and the amount that I owed each of them; we had made this arrangement so that I could organise the exact amount of money for each person before we met. After every session I would collect the crocheted motifs completed in the two weeks past and write out the appropriate receipts in correlation with the invoices Thabisa had written out for me, and I would pay each person the amount that I owed her. By May 2011 I had received a large amount of motifs and began to construct and assemble the shape of the *Deepwater Horizon's* oil pipelines and platforms, intended for the forthcoming group Master's exhibition, titled *Wet Paint,* which ran during the Standard Bank National Arts Festival 2011. Due to the intended scale of the floor fibre sculpture, titled *Crude Plume,* I was only able to assemble three-quarters of the sculpture using all crochet motifs collected in the past four months (2011: Fig. 18).

Crude Plume appears as a black 'coral reef' soaked in oil, a leaking, in which each intricate, glistening and beautiful 'barnacle' is threatening, gaping with blankly open orifices, emptied of life. The text that accompanied the work, in which I provided the viewer with statistics

concerning the catastrophic effects of the *Deepwater Horizon* Gulf of Mexico oil spill, compelled the viewer to question the limits to which global societies and the 'powers that be' are modifying our landscapes, and to consider the destruction we are imposing on our planet. The placement of the work was intended to divert the gaze of the viewer downwards, an imposed humbling of sorts, while the sumptuous texture of the floor piece beckoned viewers to further kneel down and examine more closely the intricacies of the crocheted form, a successful strategy, as audiences were found to be touching, fiddling and squeezing barnacles out of sheer intrigue and fascination. The conceptual and methodological process underpinning the fibre sculpture *Crude Plume,* during the *Wet Paint* exhibition, was well received by audience and media personnel during the Standard Bank National Arts Festival 2011 (see Appendix 9: Selected Press).

Phase 2: *The Radicals*

In December 2011, after two years of extensive involvement in and facilitation of numerous 'socially engaged arts' initiatives and interdisciplinary collaborations (Appendices 1–9), I felt I needed to re-examine and re-position *Crude Plume* within a more personal and local context, as the representation of the Gulf of Mexico oil spill seemed too dislocated from my immediate process of research, engagement and learning experiences. Over the years, the most poignant experience that I have both observed and partaken in was the ritual ripping open of black plastic refuse bags, in search of food for some[44], in protest for others[45], and in rummaging for creative materials in my case.

[44] The ripping open of refuse bags in search of food is a common experience of many marginalised and impoverished people in South Africa.

[45] During the 2010–2011 South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU) national strikes, protestors overturned dustbins and tore open refuse bags, spewing vast amounts of waste in the streets of South Africa as a form of protest.

Figure. 18: Bronwen Salton
***The Radicals*: Crude Plume** // 2011
Crochet Plastic

Intrigued by the concept, as well as the shape and form that different refuse bags took, depending on the contents, I began constructing replicas of refuse bags that I had photographed. Through intuitively bending and welding thin steel rods together as an armature, then using chicken wire, recycled bottles, containers, black plastic bags and a heat gun for melting, I bulked up and created the form in likeness to different forms of refuse bags laid out for collection. Following the initial construction of the bags, I began

cutting up, stretching, undoing, melting and attaching the black 'barnacle' crochet motifs onto the bags, so it would appear that the refuse bag is growing out the parasitic conglomeration of crochet forms. Concurrently, I commissioned the crochet collective to start crocheting 'barnacles' out of recycled plastic grocery bags that I had collected and bought over the two years. By ripping and rupturing the constructed garbage bags, I intended a bulging out of recycled plastic 'barnacles' from those ruptures so as to signify the spilling out of used waste onto the streets and into the environment (2011: Fig. 19). Yet I was still not satisfied with how I had transformed *Crude Plume*, and continued to ponder on 'the something' that could truly represent my experiences of applying waste material and crochet in community engagement programmes (Appendices 1,3,4,5,7,8), in small business ventures (Appendices 2 and 6), and within the process of *53 Stitches.*

Figure. 19: Bronwen Salton
The Radicals (work in progress) //2011
Crochet plastic, steel, wire mesh, recyclable material

I started exploring the concept of growth: the growing accumulation of waste in our environment; the growing connections and relationships I had formed through my research and engagement methodologies; the growth of educational, learning and knowledge-sharing experiences in the community engagement participants; the growing of form when crocheting plastic; the growth and accumulation of crochet plastic motifs; the appearance of the crochet motifs as growing parasites, tumours or organic life; growing in my own personal spiritual, environmental and artistic consciousness; growth as change; innovation

as growth; growth as time; growth as life. Considering this I turned towards natural creation for inspiration and found that the growth of all natural things, human, animal and plant, all have their genesis in a seed. Conceptually, I saw the refuse bags, and their waste contents, as being sources of the aforementioned growth, bringing out the origins of creative life in the working processes of *53 Stitches*. I imagined the constructed refuse bags to be the carriers, capsules or seeds of life and growth, sprouting forth radicles in different stages of development, representing the various stages of progress, change and growth experienced by both my own exploration as well as 'socially engaged arts' movements I helped facilitate.

The title *The Radicals*, is created from the homophones 'radical' and 'radicle', and plays on the construction of both words, derived from the related Latin noun *radix* 'root' and adjective *radicalis* 'having roots'. When applied in contemporary English, radical and radicle signify two very different definitions, yet both are applicable to the research methodology, community engagement process and people, and ultimate creation of the installation. 'Radical' is commonly used in general English and has been applied to various political, mathematical, chemical, musical and linguistic fields of study. Radical[46], as an adjective is defined as '1: relating to, or affecting the fundamental nature of something; innovative or progressive, 2: thorough and intended to be completely curative, 3: advocating thorough political or social reform'. Radicle[47], on the other hand, is applied to Botany and to Life Science fields of study and is defined as '1: relating to the lower part of the axis of an embryo; the primary root, 2: a rudimentary root; radicle or rootlet, 3: a small 'root like' part or structure, as the beginning of a nerve or vein'.

'Radicle' refers to the physical form of the objects created but also denotes the conceptual growth experienced both personally and within the community through the investigation into waste materials as a creative medium. As a 'radicle' grows it becomes rhizomatic[48] in nature, developing smaller adventitious offshoots that branch from the primary root, conceptually representing my process as research methodologies and practices of

[46] 'radical *adjective'. South African Concise Oxford Dictionary.* 10th Edition. 2002. Ed. Katheryn Kavanagh. South Africa: Oxford University Press Southern Africa. p. 963
[47] 'radicle *noun'. South African Concise Oxford Dictionary.* 10th Edition. 2002. Ed. Katheryn Kavanagh. South Africa: Oxford University Press Southern Africa. p. 963
[48] 'rhizome *noun'. South African Concise Oxford Dictionary.* 10th Edition. 2002. Ed. Katheryn Kavanagh. South Africa: Oxford University Press Southern Africa. p. 1003

networking, communicating and connecting with a multiplicity of community members, drawing on numerous points of information, skills and projects to inform the creation of *53 Stitches. The Radicals* is installed into the double-storey high guardhouse of The Provost (panoptic prison), an exhibition space.

The Provost: Ranked Power to Relational Freedom

Built in 1838 by the order of Sir Benjamin D'Urban, The Provost derives its name from its relationship with the Provost Marshall. The Provost Marshall was the officer responsible not only for maintaining order, but also for the correction and guardianship of deserters and military offenders, in 19th century military camps. The architecture of the prison was loosly based on Jeremy Bentham's panopticon prison system, a design that enabled the 'ceaseless surveillance' of the prisoners held within the prison's walls. The Provost panoptic prison consists of a semi-circle of cells with an exercise yard enclosed within it, which could be kept under constant surveillance from the windows of the two-storey guardhouse. In 1937 The Provost was declared a national monument and was restored in 1982 by the Cape Provincial Administration before being handed over to the Albany Museum Grahamstown (Rhodes University 2009)[49].

Installed within The Provost Prison, I have actively placed *53 Stitches* outside of a conventional gallery space. My distaste for the pristine interiors of 'white-cube' gallery spaces has led me to constantly search for alternative, 'more lived-in and dirty' spaces in which to exhibit my work. The search for unusual installation spaces echoes my aesthetic processes and, in the case of The Provost as my chosen site, I was drawn to the circular architecture of the space. I enjoyed the circular spatial structure of the building as I related it to that of the organic appearance of *The Radicals* and *Pulp.* I have not chosen this space in relation to its historical context or location but enjoy the play of using a location once associated with incarceration and oppression to exhibit a body of work that represents freedom, democracy, interdependence and growth.

[49] The Provost Prison. [Online] Available at: http://www.ru.ac.za/albanymuseum/exhibitions/provost/ [05/11/2012]. More information available online: http://www.sa-venues.com/things-to-do/easterncape/provost-prison/.

As an installation, *The Radicals* represents 'sprout-like' organic formations in various stages of germination, growing in, around and through a large sea of black 'sponging' plastic crocheted forms. Closer inspection reveals that each radicle emerges from torn ruptures of black plastic refuse bags, the life of which originates from a complexity of recycled crochet 'barnacle' motifs constructed from discarded plastic grocery bags commonly found in South Africa. At the breaching point of each root, the recycled crochet 'barnacle' clusters slowly disperse, flatten and integrate themselves into the radicle as it transforms in length, size and shape (2012: Fig. 20 and Fig. 21) . Conceptually, the growing plastic motifs represent the ever-increasing and aggressive accumulation of material waste in the natural environment resulting from our careless consumer patterns. However, the intricacy of crocheted plastic, which serves as a metaphor for interconnectivity between myself and communities through waste material, conveys the positive potential, beauty, and creative use of what could be found within the depths of a refuse bag, reflecting the learning, knowledge-sharing, creative and connective experiences of using plastic waste material as a creative material in the 'socially engaged arts' initiatives that I facilitated within my creative exploration of *53 Stitches*.

Installed in the tower guardhouse of The Provost, *The Radicals* fashions a 'seed-sprouting dish' of sorts, as the circular shape of the double storey guard tower not only echoes that of contemporary seed-sprouting containers, but also mimics the shape formations of the crochet motifs – circular and organic. The radicles emerge from an overwhelming and threatening conglomeration of black 'barnacle' motifs, which partly consumes the space, creeping up walls and seeping through cracks in the floorboards, with the roots growing out of the floor that separates the two storeys of the tower structure. *The Radicals* alludes to individuals or groups who are advocating strong convictions towards fundamental political, economic, social and environmental transformation. The conceptual and physical choices I made to transform my artistic and research process towards a consideration of sustainability within my approach can be considered experimental, as I chose to change and affect the fundamental nature of my practice. As in the sculptural and painterly work of Sofi Zezmer and Mbongeni Buthelezi, my choice to experiment with waste plastic material is somewhat radical, as it subverts the traditional approach and techniques typically used in formal fine art education and begins to access a broader environmental, economic and

social paradigm. The community members who I connected with, worked with, built with, crocheted with, had long political and philosophical conversations with, organised and facilitated with, and laughed with, are all the most radical people I have ever met. They ooze with inspiration, are innovative and progressive, and constantly seek political and social reformation in South Africa, actively working hard to achieve these goals though passionate dedication to the potential of creative education, expression and skills development in the marginalised and forgotten youth in South Africa.

Figure. 20: Bronwen Salton
The Radicals (work in progress) // 2012
Crochet plastic, wire mesh, steel, recyclable materials

Figure. 21: Bronwen Salton
The Radicals (detail) // 2012
Crochet plastic, wire mesh, steel, recyclable materials

Through my commitment to socially-engaged arts initiatives, introducing into them the potential of discarded waste material as a medium, I have come to realise the radical potential of and need for passionate, integrated, and innovative 'artists as knowledge producers' involved in mediating, transferring and growing the knowledge, skills and resources within marginalised communities in South Africa so as to create equal and shared opportunities and access to critical information and practical skills needed to grow social capital in societies.

CHAPTER 3

ARTISTS AS KNOWLEDGE PRODUCERS

A vital aspect of sustainability in art practice is the necessary shift away from the anthropocentric model of the artist, and the art institution, towards a renewed sense of environmental, economic and social responsibility. Artists engaged with the concepts of sustainability are generally more actively involved in exploring alternative ideas, frameworks and actions that can cause society to shift their consciousness towards a consideration of sustainability in their daily lives (Fowkes and Fowkes 2006a). Rather than only focusing on the environmental implications of art processes, the practice of sustainability in art calls for a consideration to be made of the social, ethical and economic dimensions. The concept of 'artist as knowledge producer' draws on the ideals of social ecology and eco-communalism, wherein social ecology rejects the dominator or the hierarchical institutional model and seeks to reconnect humans to nature by espousing diversity, small communities, bio-regionalism and fitting technology. Eco-communalism opts for a disconnection from corrupt political and social institutions and favours the establishment of exemplary institutional and personal action towards social justice (Fowkes and Fowkes 2006b).

Contemporary art educator, author and environmentalist Linda Weintraub offers the term 'eco-tistical artist' to describe the shift away from an anthropocentric, self-interested artist by switching the prefix 'ego' to 'eco' to depict artists that redirect their focus towards home, habitat and society. In a world poised between the residues of an industrial and technological revolution and the evolving concepts of sustainability, 'eco-tistical art' elucidates the significant connections that exist between human values and environmental concerns, as well as academic disciplines and discourses, and brings to the fore questions regarding the responsibility of fine art practitioners and institutions towards economic, environmental and social injustices (Weintraub 2006a: 54–55).

Weintraub (2006a: 54) argues that the emergence of ecology and sustainability within global consciousness has led to these concepts becoming an increasingly powerful determinant in economic and political legislations, and therefore they should be critically applied and integrated into broad-scale art theory and practical pedagogy to enable student

artists to become ‘knowledge producers’ and ‘knowledge facilitators’ within the broader paradigm of societal and environmental ecology. However, as it stands, the theory and practice of sustainability and ecology are generally not yet integrated into fine art educational models and are likely to remain underrepresented until ecology is formally accepted and instituted within arts curricula (Weintraub 2006a: 55). According to Weintraub (2006a: 55), the primary goals are to inspire and encourage secondary and tertiary fine art educators to introduce conceptual ecological and social theory into their teaching practices so as to provide the future generation of artists with an ecological and socially-responsible framework from which to work.

In the post-Cartesian ecological world view that emerged through a global shift towards sustainability, the ‘ego’ self is no longer contained and isolated, but rather it is relational and interdependent. The implications of this shift within contemporary art require the consciousness and relationship of the artist to move towards society and the environment in such a way that artistic practice becomes rooted in the ‘listening’ self rather than in a disembodied eye, thus shifting the conceptual and practical focus away from the individual towards a consideration of the way in which they interact with ‘others’ and the environment. Artistic practice that is rooted in the understanding of our interconnection and intersubjectivity, ‘the intertwining of self and others’, has an eminence of relational and connected aesthetics which cannot be fully realised in monologue but which require entering into the realm of dialogue, open conversation, networking, knowledge producing and sharing of resources (Gablik 1992b: 4).

The ability of the artist to redefine themselves as relational, rather than separate, has the potential to bring about a new era in social and environmental cohesion within aesthetics. For many contemporary artists who embrace this paradigm, it has meant growing the number of voices to which they pay attention and which they include within the conceptual and practical undertaking of an artwork, or allowing previously marginalised social groups to speak directly of their own experience through aesthetics. This innovative approach can be understood as the artist shifting his or her vocation from self-assertion to integration within the socius and ecology (Gablik 1992b: 6).

Suzi Gablik (1992b: 6) elucidates the politics of connective aesthetics as the achievement of a shared understanding of our interdependence, and acknowledges art in this paradigm as an essential intertwining of self and 'other', self and society. She states:

> Inviting in the other makes art more socially responsive. It is not activism in the sense of the old paradigm, but an empathetic means of seeing through another's eyes, of stretching our boundaries beyond the ego-self to create a wider view of the world. The relational self knows that it is embedded in larger systems and tends towards integration (Gablik 1992b: 6).

The notion of connective aesthetics that Gablik proposes recognises that we now live in an increasingly uncertain world where societies are facing mass migration, globalisation, climate change, economic recession and the fear of 'terrorism', which has led to individuals feeling a critical need for community. Many artists, as part of the global community, are also experiencing this need and now fashion their creativity out of this interconnection, often weaving it directly into their work.

Yet, according to socially-engaged artist and researcher Marnie Badham (2010), artists and communities have for decades been engaged in simulating dialogues, developing cultural expression and addressing these global challenges at a localised and personalised level through the collaborative and creative practice collectively defined as 'socially-engaged arts practice'[50]. According to Badham (2010: 84), there still remains little critical research and clearly-articulated aesthetic theory on the intrinsic artistic and social values of this practice, despite the fact that accumulating international evidence has linked the instrumental benefits of 'socially-engaged arts practice' to an increase in 'social capital', cultural and democratic participation within communities, economic development, and enhanced general health and well-being.

Badham (2010: 86) advocates a new framing of the practice of 'socially-engaged arts' within an art historical context, as the case for community engagement within fine arts falls under

[50] Socially-engaged art practice is a way of empowering the disempowered within society by using art as a medium or tool of empowerment and sustainability. Engaged within the community context, the artist blurs the lines between art and life. Over the past twenty years, an abundance of art forms have emerged that use aesthetics to affect social dynamics. [Online] Available at: http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/theatreblog/2008/may/08/theethicsofsociallyengaged [10/11/2012].

the paradigms of community art, community-engaged arts, participatory arts, arts for social justice, artist and community collaboration, socially-engaged arts, relational or dialogical art, grassroots arts, applied aesthetics and community[51] cultural development. The multiple understanding and labelling of community engagement within the fine arts suggests that, despite the long history of socially-engaged arts in art historical practice, we are currently still without a clearly-articulated and definitive understanding of this comprehensive theory and practice within art curricula. Therefore, Badham (2010: 85) argues, if the artistic merit of this field is overlooked by contemporary art theorists and judged as a non-professional art practice, we run the risk of losing the positive social, environmental and economic impact of these collaborative and educational engagements.

Despite the inability of practitioners and theorists to define 'socially-engaged arts' by particular artistic style, form or aesthetic, it is, like other traditional art forms, approached by specific principles and ethics. Socially-engaged art practices tend to be interdisciplinary in nature and respond to locally-observed realities and social injustices, with 'artists as knowledge producers/facilitators', who manage the application of social, cultural and environmental aesthetics. Artists who assume this role tend to be less concerned with their own aesthetic historical context and more with the shared values and ethics of the community in which they engage. Miwon Kwon (2002: 4) describes this shift as one that moves away from the 'aesthetics of administration' towards the 'administration of aesthetics'. The role of the artist in the administration of aesthetics is reconfigured and now becomes that of a cultural service administrator, organiser and facilitator rather than that of a producer of aesthetic objects. The principles of socially-engaged arts include collaboration,

[51] 'community *noun'* **1** a group of people living together in one place, especially once practising common ownership > a place considered together with its inhabitants: *a rural community.* > (**the community**) the people of an area or country considered collectively; society. **2** a group of people having a religion, race, sexuality or profession in common: *the scientific community.* **3** the condition of having certain attitudes and interests in common. > joint ownership or liability. **4** *Ecology* a group of interdependent plants or animals growing or living together. *South African Concise Oxford Dictionary.* 10th Edition. 2002. Ed. Katheryn Kavanagh. South Africa: Oxford University Press Southern Africa. p. 233. The notion of what defines community is a contested paradigm that varies based on each individual's or academic field's perceptions or ideologies of society. I am aware that 'community' is a argued term but within the context of this thesis I relate it to **1** the social groups of people living in the collective space of Grahamstown, Eastern Cape. **2** the social group of marginalised, lower-income class of people living in the context of South Africa who do don't have access to amenities (housing, education, employment, medical and sanitation facilities) enjoyed by the middle–upper class.

networking, hybridity, dialogue and innovation, interpreted by both the artist and the community to inform the process, form, aesthetic and outcomes of the field of practice (Badham 2010: 86). However, as explained by Badham (2010: 86), the last decade has seen a significant shift in the approach and application of these principles from the traditional democratisation of culture, which displays a patriarchal, hierarchical 'welfare-like' approach of helping underprivileged communities, to the embracing of cultural democracy, much like grassroots democracy, in which there is a recognition of the value and uniqueness of plural communities and of their right to control the creation and direction of their own cultural expression, creativity and aesthetic. Cultural democracy acknowledges the rights to authorship, representation and distribution in the collaboration of artist and community.

This shift from democratisation to democracy of culture distinguishes between art made *for, by* and *with* the community, so as to understand and regard the power relationships and ownership of voice of the created aesthetic and artistic content of the realised collaboration. Arts *for* community is work made for the archetypal audience and forms part of a global policy movement towards the 'democratisation' of culture with the aim of providing 'arts for all', with particular emphasis on those communities who have experienced economic, social and cultural marginalisation. Arts *for* community and the democratisation of culture extended access to, but not ownership of, cultural products for societies. Arts *with* communities advocates creative initiatives through collaboration between professional artists and non-art community groups, and falls under the paradigm of 'community cultural development', focusing on artists in residence, health, education and social justice programmes. Arts *with* community directs its attention towards broader cultural, economic, social and environmental concerns and outcomes by increasing and including new voices and forms of expression, previously excluded in democratisation, by engaging both artists and community members in a process of social development and self-determination. Arts *by* communities suggests a total reconsideration and reinterpretation of the criteria of 'artistic excellence', when the artistic work under consideration is made *by* non-professional artists or community groups. Art *by* communities involves a conceptual shift that challenges the more literal and traditional reading of art forms, as new, previously-unacknowledged voices and forms of cultural expression are acknowledged, redefining who an art maker is and who defines cultural aesthetic (Badham 2010: 87–93).

Social Engagement: Art Factory 2010–2012

As aforementioned, I have over a period of three years (2010–2012) been extensively involved in facilitating numerous 'socially-engaged arts' initiatives with marginalised community groups in Grahamstown, which have been largely focused on the environmental, the social and most importantly the economic sustainability of re-imagining waste material as a creative aesthetic and functional medium. My involvement in *The Sakhuluntu Cultural Group* (Appendix 3) and, more specifically, *Art Factory* (Appendices 4,5,7,8) focused on the use of waste material as an economically-manageable and environmentally-educative medium, and falls under both the paradigms of arts *with* and arts *by* communities. *Art Factory* is an annual creative arts, drama, dance and mentoring programme, held annually during the Standard Bank National Arts Festival[52], which focuses on the support and inclusion of the informal local 'miming' youth who busk on the streets to raise funds for themselves. The *Art Factory* initiative was formulated in 2009 by the chairpersons of *The Sakhuluntu Cultural Group*, Vuyo Booi and Merran Roy, who recognised the need for support by the informal miming youth. The *Art Factory* programme runs daily workshops during the festival, and relies on voluntary collaboration by artists, choreographers, musicians and performers to give an hour of their time to run these workshops with the *Art Factory* participants and as such is an 'arts *with* community' initiative. During the past three years I have formed part of the organisation, facilitation and collaboration team, and have organised the inclusion of 'outside' teams of collaborators such as the *Mixtape Public Arts Project* (Appendices 4 and 5), *the LitterAWEH!ness Recycling Indaba* (Appendices 7 and 8) and the *eMzantsi Mapiko Carnival* (Appendix 8).

These collaborations between professional artists and performers with non-arts community members see the professionals assuming the position of 'artist as knowledge producer' as they share their skills, resources and knowledge with marginalised community members

[52] Standard Bank *National Arts Festival* is a popular cultural event in South Africa, and the biggest annual celebration of the arts. It runs for 11 days during the months of the June and July. It is held in Grahamstown, a town situated in the Eastern Cape. The programme comprises of drama, dance, physical theatre, comedy, opera, music, jazz, visual art exhibitions, film, student theatre, street theatre, lectures, craft fair, workshops, tours (of the city and surrounding historic places) and a children's arts festival. [Online] Available at: http://www.nationalartsfestival.co.za/ [10/11/2012]

who have been previously excluded in democratisation and have not had the privilege of accessing such information and practical skills. *Art Factory* participants in the last three years, assisted by the collaboration teams of *Mixtape*, *LitterAWEH!ness* and *eMzantsi*, have created an assortment of recyclable aesthetic objects such as: ironed plastic packet windsocks and recycled plastic bottle flowers (2010: Fig. 22 and Fig. 23), recycled plastic container masks (2011: Fig. 24 and Fig. 25), plastic bag raincoats (2011: Fig. 26 and Fig. 27) and large plastic container drums, musical instruments and carnival attire (2012: Fig. 28 and Fig. 29). Each series of workshops focused on the education in practical and conceptual skills needed to create from recyclable materials, as well as the associated knowledge of the ecological impact of waste in our environment. The workshop environment is inclusionary, educational and creative, encouraging the participants to learn and express themselves imaginatively through the experience. The workshops aim for social development and self-determination in the participants, allowing agency and ownership of their skills and creations, as well as encouraging leadership roles in the older, more mature participants. Over the three years we have aimed at establishing professional working relationships with the older participants who have consistently attended the *Art Factory* workshops, and have successfully 'trained-up' and encouraged them to assume more formal workshop facilitator positions, working alongside the organisers in decision making, preparation and actual facilitation of the workshops.

According to Arjen Wals (2007: 35), the rudimentary aim of sustainability education is to develop a framework of learning that assists individuals and communities in understanding the complex ontology of their natural and built environments. This understanding of and education in sustainability results from the learners' interaction with their biological, physical, social, economic and cultural environments, and focuses on developing the knowledge, attitudes, values, and practical skills needed by learners to effectively and responsibly participate and engage in sustainability problem solving and the management of resources. Wals (2007: 36) further elucidates that sustainability education should demonstrate the ecological, economic, social and political interdependence of communities in the modern world as a means to foster a sense of responsibility and solidarity among social groups as well as global communities, which is the foundation for achieving effective conservation of natural resources. Wals (2007: 36) paper links the theme of 'learning in a

changing world' to the concept of 'changing in a learning world' and emphasises the need for a reflexive responsiveness of individuals and communities and the creation of learning societies.

Figure. 22: **Art Factory: Plastic windsock workshops** // 2010
Plastic packets, domestic iron
Photo: Bronwen Salton

Figure. 23: **Art Factory: Plastic flower workshops** // 2010
Plastic bottles, plastic bottle caps, plastic netting, wire
Photo: Bronwen Salton

Figure 24: **Art Factory: Recycled plastic mask** // 2011
Recycled plastic containers, staples, string
Photo: Bronwen Salton

Figure 25: **Art Factory: Yandiswa Mazwane (eMzantsi Carnival) facilitating plastic mask workshops** // 2011
Recycled plastic containers, staples, string
Photo: Bronwen Salton

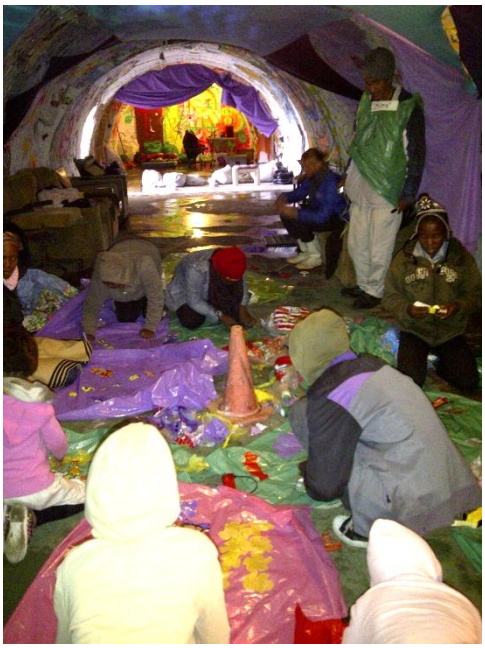


Figure. 26: **Art Factory: plastic raincoat workshop** // 2011
Colourful plastic, recycled plastic, stickers, tape
Photo: Bronwen Salton

Figure. 27: **Art Factory: Plastic raincoat creations** // 2011
Colourful plastic, recycled plastic, stickers, tape
Photo: Bronwen Salton

Figure. 28: **Art Factory: eMzantsi recycled carnival outfits** // 2012
Plastic bottles, plastic bottle caps, plastic netting, wire
Photo: Bronwen Salton

Figure. 29: **Art Factory: eMzantsi recycled musical instruments** // 2012
Recycled large plastic drums, plastic piping, and paint
Photo: Bronwen Salton

Art Factory workshops are designed for the participants to assimilate learning and skills development from a creative and performative perspective, growing the cognitive mental and physical skill abilities of the learners to consider aspects of sustainability. *Art Factory* initiatives are only at the beginning of their growth, they are only radicles in the greater system of development, yet the programme brings together scholars, practitioners, ordinary people and marginalised youth, from vastly different walks of life, to connect, share and utilise their diversity, dissonance and interdependence in order to develop a space in which learners creatively work towards a more inclusive, flexible and responsive way of 'doing life'.

Marnie Badham (2010: 88) states that:

> Socially engaged art can be seen as a *tool for change*. Culture, as understood in broad terms, relates to how we both engage in, and make meaning of, the world in which we are immersed. Culture gives us 'tools' to make sense of the world. This accumulated repertoire of knowledge, assumptions and beliefs is comprised of both history and heritage – documented traditions and achievements – and new and changing ways to interpret the world through experience, learning and socialisation.

Need(le)Work

Phase 1: Masibambane Crochet Collective

A concern with one's own locality and a desire to reconnect with old knowledge, history and heritage, lost in the rapidly accelerating modern world, is yet another sustainable artistic practice (Fowkes and Fowkes 2008: 105). My desire to investigate and apply the ancient knowledge of crochet as a method to create fibre art stemmed from a longing to 'get back to basics', to reconnect with my hands and my intuitive creativity outside of the realm of fine art, as a means to create aesthetic objects of functionality. I grew tired of the mundane existence of contemporary living, of watching television to pass the time, of shopping as therapy, of drinking as entertainment and of mindlessly scrolling down Facebook to feel connected to 'friends', and sensed I needed to spend my time more constructively.

David McFadden (2008: 8) illuminates this impasse in *Knitting and Lace: Radical and Subversive?* and states:

> In a world where the clinical and impersonal nature of digital technologies may perplex and discourage us (and where we daily confront what often seems like the homogenous anonymity of the global village), what can restore our connection to community, to our history, and our shared aspirations is the sense of hand – i.e., of making something from start to finish by manual labour.

The contemporary renaissance of interest and activity in needlework in the twenty-first century has its roots in an awakening of our mental ecology towards a realisation of the experience of isolation in the global village, and subsequently a re-evaluation of hand-making as a means of recapturing the essence, tactility and sensuality of community and of art itself has been made (McFadden 2008: 8).

The historical techniques and traditions of the fibre arts have served the practical and conceptual needs of artists throughout the centuries; notably the vitality of needlework and weaving can be appreciated in the Arts and Crafts Movement in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, where the techniques and textiles of various forms of fibre-based crafts were introduced into the Avant-garde curricula and designs of the Bauhaus (Lunin 1990: 698). However, now in the twenty-first century, contemporary artists are

suspending and subverting the traditional application of techniques and materials by expanding the definition of 'fibre' to include rubber, plastic, found objects, hair, glass, wire, and fibre optic cables. The tradition of knitting, crochet and lacemaking has emerged from the gender-specific 'domestic female hobbyist's home' into galleries and museums worldwide (McFadden 2008: 9).

I began crocheting in 2006, and quietly spent two years creating a square woollen blanket the size of a double bed, investigating and educating myself in the various techniques and stitches, experimenting wildly with the possibilities that the method of crochet offers the maker. Through the years, and more poignantly during the creation of *53 Stitches,* I have observed the performance and action of crochet to have 'creative tensions', as it is can be at any one time simultaneously meditative and dynamic, singular and communal, quiet and communicative, stationary and transitory, and both physically and conceptually connected in its ontology.

Through my engagements with the *Arkwork Collective* plastic crochet workshops (Appendix 1), and through the employment of the group of women to crochet black 'barnacles' for the creation of *The Radicals*, I experienced the communal and socially-connective aesthetic nature of crochet, as well as the economic, functional and business possibilities of the method and the plastic medium. After spending time in the domestic spaces of these five women[53], I observed the various knitted and crocheted functional creations they used in their homes and realised that each of these women had a knowledge and technical skill in crochet that surpassed my own understanding of the fibre art, as it has been passed down to them from generation to generation. There in the minds and hands of these older women lay dormant a cultural history of crochet and knitting techniques, patterns and skills. Due to the fact that these five women were helping me achieve my artistic and aesthetic goals for my MFA, I felt that in entering into a partnership with them I could help them further sustain their economic generating needs, and I approached the group with the idea of starting up a small business in which we would work collectively, and experiment with the creation of marketable and functional recycled items to sell at the Standard Bank National Arts Festival 2011.

[53] Thabisa Belwana, Philiswa (Cynthia) Belwana, Nompinda (Sylvia) Mentjie, Nomiki (Cynthia) Dyandyi and Lindi (Cynthia) Donyli.

Through the research I conducted for my MFA, I came across numerous internet websites dedicated to the unlimited potential of crochet as a medium to create fun and functional novelty items of value, such as crocheted bags, placemats, cell phone covers and tablecloths, as well as hair and jewellery items, and I became aware of the income-generating possibilities of the fibre art. I bought a book titled *eco deco: eco-friendly design ideas for the home* by Stewart and Sally Walton, which demonstrates practical step-by-step instructions for the creation of numerous functional household designs made predominantly from recycled materials, and introduced the book to the group to communicate the fact that we were not limited to recycled plastic and crochet.

The ladies, excited by the idea, agreed, formulated the *Masibambane Crochet Collective* (Appendix 6), and began creatively experimenting with possible functional designs. The isiXhosa translation for the word 'Masibambane' is 'let's hold this project up', and I felt humbled that the women chose to represent themselves in this light, communicating a sense of togetherness, inspiration, faith and hope for the success of the initiative. The first functional design idea developed from the creation of the crochet 'barnacles' as one of the women, Sylvia Mentjies, suggested that the 'barnacle' could serve as a mobile phone cover, and so the creation of recycled grocery bag 'barnacles' began. After browsing through *eco deco: eco-friendly design ideas for the home,* Thabisa Belwana settled on the making of decorative frames from recycled egg-cartons and cardboard, and so we began sourcing the materials needed to begin construction.

Concurrently with the formulation of *Masibambane*, I was approached by a Master of Choreography student in the Drama department, Gavin Krastin, with the opportunity of collaborating on his Master's choreography piece *sub-*, which would be showcased during the Standard Bank National Arts Festival 2011. Krastin had been made aware of my investigation into plastic crochet through my practical supervisor Natalie Western, who also was collaborating on *sub-*, and proposed that I construct a large-scale, site-specific crocheted plastic fibre installation, which took the shape of a 'growing/spreading organic

virus', to meet his conceptual and interdisciplinary objectives for his choreographic production[54].

Unable to individually take on the construction of such a fibre sculpture, I approached the *Masibambane Crochet Collective* for help, and explained that three of the members, if they were willing, could be informally employed by Krastin to crochet the initial plastic chains that I needed to construct the sculpture. Considering that I had completed *Crude Plume*, the production of the black 'barnacles' had stopped for the time being, and as the *Masibambane Crochet Collective* was busy working on the small business, the women decided that the commission was worth their while, and it was decided that Captain Cynthia Dyante, Boniwe Mene and Sylvia Menjties would take on Krastin's commission, while Thabisa Belwana, Cynthia Belwana, Cynthia Donyli and myself would continue the work on *Masibambane*.

After witnessing the striking colours of the plastic Krastin had delivered, Thabisa and I had decided that it was both beneficial and essential that we purchase a small quantity of assorted colourful plastic for the *Masibambane* products. Initially, I was hesitant purchase plastic, as it would defeat the purpose of focusing on recycled plastic as a medium which supported the economic sustainability of the project; however I had come to the conclusion that the inclusion of fun colours in the crochet products would enhance the marketability of the crocheted products. Though research and I realised that the expense of purchasing was manageable and that the quantity of plastic we would be purchasing was substantial and beneficial to the project.

The plastic crochet 'barnacle' mobile phone covers were in production and the objects now a mixture between the recycled and bought plastics (2011: Fig. 30), and almost immediately took on a more appealing aesthetic. Thabisa had joined me in the Rhodes University sculpture department and had begun quickly working on the egg-carton mirror frames (2011: Fig. 31), and I was utilising the 'plastic ironing' method I had learnt in the creation of plastic windsocks for *Art Factory* 2010[55] to make abstract lined paper book covers (2011: Fig. 32). During the Standard Bank National Arts Festival, *Masibambane* sold their wares at

[54] Karstin informed me that he had an allocated budget for the making of the installation and that he would be able to fund the materials and labour needed for its construction.
[55] See Appendix 5 for method

the Environmental Learning and Research Centre (ELRC) on Rhodes University Campus (2011: Fig. 33) and the small informal business initiative was a great success, earning two media press interviews and releases[56]. *Masibambane* has since then expanded the business into 2012, introducing to their stock round crochet plastic place mats and wire plastic crochet bowls (2011: Fig. 34 and Fig. 35). With the introduction of new products, we had also set up a small business page on Facebook as a marketing and networking strategy (2012: Fig. 36), and concurrently approached businesses in Grahamstown with the possibility of including our wares in their shops. During the first six months of 2012, the *Masibambane Crochet Collective's* products were included in a local craft shop called *Kisma & Co* (2012: Fig. 37); however, we did not sell at the craft shop and had to therefore withdraw our stock. Nonetheless, the small business experiment has been an incredible experience, and *Masibambane* has since sold at both the 2011 and 2012 National Arts Festival, covered their expenses and made a small profit.

Figure. 30: *Masibambane Crochet Collective*
Crochet mobile phone covers // 2011
Crochet plastic
Photo: Bronwen Salton

Figure. 31: *Masibambane Crochet Collective*
Egg-carton mirror frames // 2011
Egg-cartons, cardboard, plastic netting, mirror
Photo: Bronwen Salton

[56] See Appendix 9: Selected Press

Figure. 32: *Masibambane Crochet Collective*
Ironed plastic book covers // 2011
Melted coloured plastic lined book sets
Photo: Bronwen Salton

Figure. 33: *Masibambane Crochet Collective*
Stall at the ELRC // 2011
Thabisa and me setting up shop
Photo: Jennifer Salton

Figure. 34: *Masibambane Crochet Collective*
Crochet plastic place mats // 2012
Coloured and recycled plastic crochet
Photo: Bronwen Salton

Figure. 35: *Masibambane Crochet Collective*
Wire bowl with plastic crochet cover // 2012
Wire bowl, coloured and recycled plastic crochet
Photo: Bronwen Salton

Figure. 36: *Masibambane Crochet Collective* ***Masibambane*** **Facebook Page** // 2012

Figure. 37: *Masibambane Crochet Collective* ***Masibambane*** **at Kisma & Co** // 2012

Phase 2: *Need(le)Work*

As per Gavin Krastin's conceptual needs, I began constructing the 'virus-like' growth from the plarn[57] of single chain crochet delivered to me by the three *Masibambane* women. Krastin had described his conceptual idea to me, yet had given me complete aesthetic freedom with regards to method and the ultimate form that the fibre sculpture would assume. Intuitively I started constructing the form, using a large plastic crochet square that I had previously made as an 'armature' of sorts. Due to the thickness of the single crochet chain plarn, I found myself having to use my hands as the crochet 'needle', hooking the plarn and pulling it under, over and through itself, connecting and intertwining the plastic together. *Need(le)Work* grew organically as I instinctively crocheted the plastic into my own idea of a growing, ominous and spreading virus (2011: Fig. 38), fashioned out of the colours of the South African national flag. The fibre sculpture was installed into Krastin's chosen site-specific space of the Nombulelo High School in Joza, Extension 9 of the Grahamstown location, connecting the multiple performance spaces in the site and growing out of drain pipes and cracked ruptures in the space (2011: Figs. 39–41).

[57] Plastic yarn (plarn)

Figure. 38: Bronwen Salton
Need(le)Work (initial form: aerial view) // 2011
Crochet plastic

Figure. 39: Bronwen Salton
Need(le)Work (*sub*- installation in progress) // 2011
Crochet Plastic

Figure. 40: Bronwen Salton
Need(le)Work (*sub*- performance) // 2011

Figure. 41: Bronwen Salton
Need(le)Work (site-specific installation detail) // 2011

Within the context of *53 Stitches*: *Need(le)Work,* as an installation, has shifted in form during the creative process. Installed onto the outside of The Provost guard tower inside the exhibition space, *Need(le)Work* connects the 'virus growth' created for *sub*- with the

functional crochet designs made by the collective, and resembles the form of single-celled slime mould, growing and spreading in a networked fashion on the walls of the space like the roots of a fig tree. As installed in the exhibition space, *Need(le)Work* connects *The Radicals* and *Pulp* though the creeping tentacle roots of its form.

Through a networking and coming together of recycled and bought plastic, crochet techniques and passionate individuals who have enthusiastically worked towards building trust, respect and creativity into each other's lives, *Need(le)Work* embodies the positive and powerful potential of innovation, encouragement, experimentation and persistence in fostering change in an unjust system. *Need(le)Work* also denotes the economic pressures on the people living in the marginalised urban spaces of Grahamstown, South Africa, as the poorest national province in the country, and highlights the desperate 'need for work' experienced by the community. The colourful installation represents the vibrancy and creativity that can grow and spread within a community when professional and non-professional art producers combine and share their knowledge, skills and resources to create, inspire and grow social relationships, social interdependency and social capital through a connective aesthetic.

As an installation, *Need(le)Work* is an artwork created both *with* and *by* the community through the formulation of the *Masibambane Crochet Collective* small business initiative and the informal employment of the collective's participants. The dual authorship of the installation puts forward a reconsideration and reinterpretation of both the criteria of authorship and artistic excellence, as the work under consideration has been made by both professional and non-professional artists and community groups. This shifts the conceptual nature of the work and challenges the literal and formal reading of aesthetics, as now a multiplicity of new voices are informing creative expression, thus redefining the concept of who defines fine art and cultural aesthetics.

Throughout the socially-engaged arts initiatives that I have been a part of, equally in an organisational, facilitating and participatory capacity, I have experienced the power of collaboration between individuals and groups, as well as the positive change that can be effected within a society when mutually beneficial partnerships are formed and knowledge and resources are shared. However, due to the fact that the Rhodes University Fine Art

Department does not currently have a formal community outreach or engagement programme[58], the decision to connect and engage creatively with communities has been a personal journey, as I had to create a structure from which to balance and interconnect the two spheres of my practice and research, and therefore my activities over the past three years have stemmed from my own personal conviction and my commitment to community engagement, knowledge sharing and the practice of connective aesthetics.

This disconnect between the fine art institution and the community has been a point of contention within my research as, once discovering the powerful learning, sharing and mutually beneficial experience of socially-engaged arts practice, I have struggled to comprehend and understand the reasons for neglecting this experience and learning opportunity within the fine arts history and practical curricula. I have felt and seen the critical change, which Marnie Badham (2010: 88) describes, take place and develop within all participants of the collaborative arts projects over the years, increasing active, creative and informed community members, and thus adding to the 'social capital' and 'employable sector' of South Africa as these democratic participations have grown the knowledge, skills, general well-being and economic development within the community members. Therefore, in order for this critical change to occur on a broad scale and in a sustainable fashion, I believe and strongly put forward that educational institutions themselves would have to adopt and utilise, within their own legislations, the concepts of sustainability, ecology and social responsibility so as to support their various faculties, department staff and learners in the process of integrating these strategies into curricula.

To support this stance, I refer to a recent study on the history of tertiary (University) education in the United States, conducted by Johnson et al. (2009: 179), which suggests a severe disconnection and dislocation between tertiary institutions and the environmental and social context in which they are located. In his 2002 article, *The disconnect between*

[58] Currently the Rhodes University Department of Fine Arts does not have an active Community Engagement programme and has not had one for the past three years; the last connection to a community engagement programme ended in 2009 and it was never revealed as to why the interactions had ceased. In 2009, I was in my fourth and final year of my undergraduate Bachelor of Fine Arts and participated in the community engagement programme. The programme itself had been running for some time and was only available to fourth year practical students to get involved in. The community engagement workshops took place at the Carinus Secondary School of Arts where for two weeks of the four terms of the year, children from disadvantaged areas were bussed into town to attend these workshops and, after a year of workshops, the artworks produced by those students were exhibited in the Main Fine Arts School for an evening showing.

colleges and their communities, Paul Ruffins (as cited in Johnson et al. 2009: 179) suggests that communities and the environment are suffering due to University institutions not utilising their expansive resources, knowledge and skills in developing more active leadership roles within their students, so as to steward both environmental and social concerns. Ruffins postulates that the loss to environment and communities resulting from this disconnect is particularly evident in rural regions, where, if shared, these human and institutional resources and expertise could be positive driving forces in environmental and social revitalisation efforts for rural communities. However, more often than not, these resources go unutilised in local communities, and are transferred elsewhere to other national regions via traditional academic forms of publications, conferences, presentations etc. (Johnson et al. 2009: 179).

The result of this disconnection is twofold, as not only will the local community and environment suffer, but the effects will also be felt by the institution itself. Johnson et al. (2009: 179) suggest that the failure of institutions to adopt strategic service-learning opportunities in community engagement, via the active and inclusive transference of knowledge and skills to marginalised community groups, results in missed opportunities to engage students in authentic and meaningful learning experiences. Johnson et al. (2009: 179) state:

> Research suggests that learners benefit academically and socially from engagement with pedagogies that emphasise service to the community via practical application of relevant skills and knowledge . . . . Strong service learning programs that exhibit a responsiveness to place will include an assessment process that requires the learner and the learning system to determine the community needs and measure the impact on that community . . . . Teachers are facilitators of learning in this approach and the students and the community become co-facilitators.

This conceptual framework has been collectively defined as 'place-based learning' (Johnson et al. 2009: 180) and can be described as a systematic process that connects service-learning initiatives to the community they serve; it requires these engagements to justly identify the community's needs and desires for specific services in knowledge and skills development that can be acquired, addressed and delivered by the university. Place-based learning involves going beyond classroom or lecture theatre academic instruction to include the

active engagement of faculty, administrative, student and community personnel in comprehensive teaching and learning activities that develop every individual's ability to support each other by considering the educational, social, economic and environmental well-being of their community (Johnson et al. 2009: 180). The Vice-Chancellor of Rhodes University, Dr Saleem Badat, offers a similar point of view to that of Johnson et al. with regards to the function of Rhodes University in the peri-urbanised[59] community of Grahamstown in which the institution is located, stating:

> There must be a deep understanding in the University that our future is inextricably tied in with this town. We must support the town and engage with it as far as socio-economic opportunities are concerned and around a whole lot of practical issues such as (municipal) services . . . . The function of the University is not just to produce graduates to satisfy throughput rates – but rather to produce a particular kind of graduate. Through community engagement students don't just acquire compassion and creativity but also knowledge, competencies and expertise not available in any lecture hall or laboratory (Badat in Carlisle, 2011: 5).

Badat highlights the responsibility of the tertiary institution to both the community and its learners, making clear the need to produce learners who are socially, environmentally and economically aware of their privileged positioning in South African society and who are conscious of the responsibility they have towards the marginalised community members in their immediate context and beyond.

I agree with these statements and consider it an honour to have had the privilege of 'service-learning', as it has unequivocally altered my consideration and approach towards society, social injustice and the process of art making itself. I have experienced 'socially-engaged' practices to be powerful tools for change and have become somewhat of a radical and activist for the integration and application of service-learning within tertiary fine art education. I have observed, within the context of my fine art environment, the generic 'producing' of young fine art practitioners to fulfil throughput rates. These practitioners have not been given the learning experience of considering their critical purpose and positioning within the larger context of social revival and reform. I believe that the education of young professionals and art practitioners should be inextricably tied to the

[59] Peri-urbanisation is used to describe the urbanisation of former rural areas in which the rural or semi-rural areas are located on the urban periphery.

understanding that tertiary learning is a privilege that 88% of the South African population do not have access to. The importance of this understanding means that these learners make up 12.1%[60] of the population who have access to critical knowledge, skills and resources and that through this privileged positioning there is a critical responsibility to distribute and share this information with community groups who have not been given the opportunity to do so by their own means. Director of Community Engagement at Rhodes University, Diana Hornby, in her writing on the true meaning of community engagement in South African universities, refers to a observation made by Pedro Tabensky, a Rhodes University Philosophy professor, who comments:

> We need to foster the idea that a university experience is a privilege, not a degree factory that produces graduates with the sole purpose of accessing resources and goods from the 'upper crust' of society . . . . If the University's responsibility is to generate and disseminate knowledge, how do we ensure that the knowledge acquired by students is contributing to the broader society? (Tabensky in Hornby 2011: 1).

Closely related to the concepts of social responsibility and service-learning is the application of community engagement and grassroots democracy[61], which offers an alternative and proactive means to combat 'self-interested' individuals, and which allows for the emergence of socially-responsible learners/artists as knowledge producers through sharing of resources, critical information and practical skills with those who do not have access to these amenities. Hornby describes the physical change in University faculties and learners who have come to understand the value of engaging with communities as a vehicle to transformation, discovering that, through an investment in community engagement, their teaching, learning and research outputs are enriched and enhanced through producing mutually beneficial results. Hornby (2011: 1) states:

> New spaces have been created in the community where learning is happening, and knowledge is being produced and applied, reworked and made ready for practice. Unexpected new 'teachers' have emerged through these initiatives in the community – people sharing their knowledge and expertise and facilitating an understanding of difference and other ways of approaching life.

[60] South African Census 2011 results. [Online] Available at: http://www.dispatch.co.za/census-2011-results/ [05/11/2012].

[61] Grassroots democracy is the social and political process in which much of the decision-making power is exercised and vested in the local community as opposed to the isolated and detached individuals in the high seats of office or government. (See http://grassrootsdemocracy.ca/2011/01/what-is-grassroots-democracy/)

Hornby's writing reveals that South Africa's young democracy offers an enormous potential for individuals and communities to make positive and significant contributions to the growth, empowerment and development of citizens, of society and of the country. Hornby believes that all citizens, men, women, young and old, possess the agency to transform South Africa into an energetic, compassionate and empowered society. However, Hornby explicitly points out that to consider community engagement as something separate to teaching, learning and research would be missing the point completely, and she highlights the ways in which community engagement initiatives should be developed beyond the traditional 'good deed' approach to "occupy a more critical and strategic role of enhancing scholarship, development, social cohesion and social transformation" (Hornby 2011: 01).

Pulp

The creation of the final installation *Pulp* resulted from experimentation with shredded waste paper material, which I had collected from Rhodes University, mixed together with PPC cement, as a further investigation into the use and application of waste material as a medium. *Pulp* represents both the blending together of individuals in collaborative community projects and the critical need to mash together the University institution resources, knowledge and skills with the urban and social environments. *Pulp*, as an installation, is the only body of work that I have created without any collaboration per se, and contains within it a layering of conceptual meaning. The installation is comprised of two different sculptural constructions: a landscape of 'contour like' mounds or peaks and a series of embossed paper/cement portraits, both of which are connected conceptually and physically by the paper/cement medium.

During my recycling and collection processes, I obtained a vast amount of shredded documents from the Rhodes University administration department and had begun experimenting with the idea of making recycled paper. Through a process of first soaking together shredded paper, egg-cartons and scrap Fabriano printing paper, then pulping the mixture using a heavy-duty mixing machine, and lastly draining the water from the pulp by hand, I was able to produce large quantities of fibrous paper tissue (2012: Fig. 42 and Fig. 43).

Figure. 42: Bronwen Salton
***Pulp*: (**Preparation of paper for *Pulp*) // 2012
Shredded paper, egg-cartons, fabriano

Figure. 43: Bronwen Salton
***Pulp*: (**paper pulp detail) // 2012
Shredded paper, egg-cartons, fabriano

After my initial experimental process of soaking, pulping and then draining, I intuitively began mixing the paper pulp with left over PPC Cement that I had kept from my undergraduate exhibition *1023.* I found that the paper pulp and cement mixed and dried together successfully, as the paper seemed to retain the moisture that cements needs in order to set properly. I experimented with different ratios (of paper to cement to sand to water) and found that the perfect ratio was 1: 1: 2: 1. Concurrently, I applied large plastic doilies that I had crocheted to the paper/cement mixture, which I had rolled out flat like pastry, and experimented with pressing them into the mixed medium to create an embossment of the pattern on to the paper/cement. The experiment was successful and resulted in the plastic crochet doilies creating a beautiful and intricate relief pattern in the dried paper cement mixture (2012: Fig. 44 and Fig. 45).

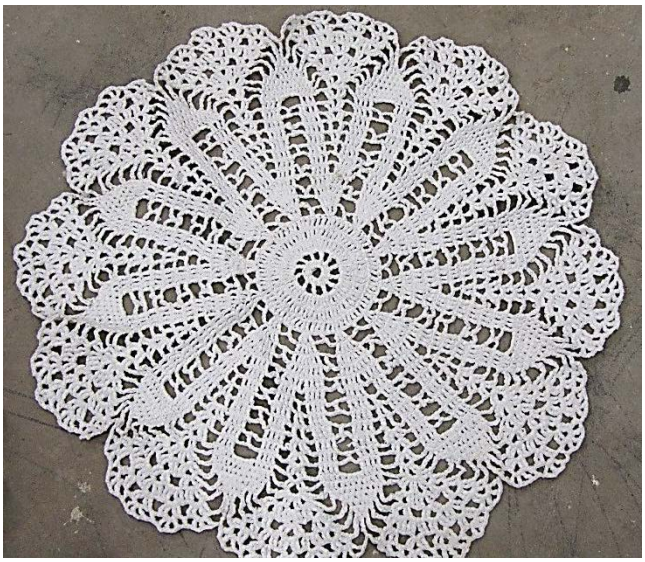


Figure. 44: Bronwen Salton
***Pulp*:** (large-scale plastic doily) // 2012
Plastic crochet

Figure. 45: Bronwen Salton
***Pulp*:** (plastic silhouette and doily embossment) // 2012
Paper cement mixture

The second experiment I conducted was using the paper/cement mixture to fill the corners of plastic packets and then dropping the packet moulds, corner first, on to a flat surface, which resulted in the packet paper/cement form squashing into itself and creating a 'contour like' pattern in the form, referred to as 'paper poos[62]' (2012: Fig. 46). Further experimentation led me to use raw black cement oxide powder in the process, which resulted in a breaking down of the paper cement contours when dried, as the powder oxide had not been properly mixed into the paper cement (2012: Fig. 47). The improper mixture of the black oxide was intentional as I wanted to create a sort of rupture or break in the perfectly formed contours, signifying a contamination of sorts. Like crochet, the process of 'paper poo' making became meditative and obsessive, considering the quantity and economical sustainability of the materials, I began creating a multitude of the objects: during one sitting I could produce a batch of 117 'paper poos' (2012: Figure 48).

[62] I refer to then colloquially as 'paper poos' as they look like the manure droppings of a large wild animal, for example an elephant.

Figure. 46: Bronwen Salton
***Pulp*:** ('paper poos' contours detail) // 2012
Paper and cement

Figure. 47: Bronwen Salton
***Pulp*:** ('paper poos' with oxide ruptures detail) // 2010
Paper, cement and black oxide

Figure. 48: Bronwen Salton
***Pulp*:** (mounding 'paper poos') // 2012
Paper, cement, black oxide

Conceptually, the process and action of packing the mixture into the corner packet moulds, then dropping them to create the form, speaks of a collective attitude of carelessness on varying levels. First, the 'dropping' action directly relates to the dropping of plastic waste consumables into the environment as a result of our contemporary 'throw away' culture. Secondly, the action refers to both the carelessness in which art objects are produced and the consideration the fine art institutions' positioning towards the integration of 'socially-engaged arts' theory and practice. The contour peaks themselves represent the mapping and geographical locality of the process and the engagement research of *53 Stitches*. Installed into the central yard area of The Provost, the paper/cement contours are loosely arranged in exhibition space, occupying both the yard and prison cells, to represent the place markers in which activity surrounding *53 Stitches* took place. The erosion and contaminating effect of the black oxide on the contours conceptually represents the social, economic and environmental deterioration of capitalism and the breaking down of connections due to the dislocation of the tertiary institution from the community. Simultaneously, however, it signifies the positive infection, leaking and spilling out of creative collaboration within the community when skill, knowledge and resources are shared between individuals.

As I have mentioned, the making of *Pulp* has been my only independently-created body of work, and once again, alone with my creative and conceptual self, I began to long for collective creativity once more. Without the established connections, collective help, creative initiatives and formation of friendships based on trust and respect, my Master of Fine Arts practice as research would have been a hollow experience, and therefore I decided to include, represent and honour these inspiring individuals in my work. I have worked closely with each of the three women represented both in the 'socially-engaged arts' projects and on the physical creation of *The Radicals* and *Need(le)Work*, and they have all been incredibly supportive, engaging, inspiring and hardworking, each highlighting the positive power of collective engagement. These women have wholeheartedly engaged with me in the investigation of waste material as a medium, and have been on the front lines of mashing together the positive potential of academic information and lived experiences, knowledge and skills, in the hopes of creating change within the current social, environmental and economic systems, opening up and creating new spaces for increasing

'social capital' in South African societies. Without these women I would never have been able to muster up the courage to subvert the status quo and push through to complete *53 Stitches.*

The silhouettes were initially created as a shadow outline drawing which I then measured, cut up and intuitively began crocheting in a pattern from plastic yarn. I constructed the frame from welded steel and created the 'canvas' or armature from wire mesh, applying a thick layer of paper/cement mixture on both sides (2012: Fig. 49). In the process of pressing paper/cement into the wire mesh frame I began to leave gaps/cracks in the form (2012: Fig. 50). The plastic silhouettes and round, large-scale doilies were then pressed into the paper/cement, covering sections of the silhouettes to create the appearance of the figures emerging from the paper/cement, and I then left them to dry (2012: Fig. 51). Once the paper/cement had dried I peeled off the plastic crochet doilies, leaving an intricate embossment or imprint of the haloed silhouettes on the paper/cement (2012: Fig. 52).

Installed within three of the prison cells, the crochet plastic silhouettes materialise out of the paper/cement walls and conceptually represent the emergence of creative, passionate individuals in society who are fearlessly committed to striving for positive change in society. The imprint of the plastic halos which are floating above the figures signifies the impression left by these women on my life and that of the community, whilst the negative spaces left by the embossment denote my experience, that sense of isolation, in my individual production of this body of work. *Pulp* represents the coming together of individuals, collectives, information, knowledge and skills, and the emergence of passionate and dedicated individuals in the urban environment who are ceaselessly striving to pursue the positive potential that can be achieved in exploring sustainability, ecology and social engagement within the arts.

Figure. 49: Bronwen Salton
***Pulp*: (**work in progress) // 2012
Steel, wire mesh, cable ties, paper/cement

Figure. 50: Bronwen Salton
***Pulp*: (**work in progress) // 2012
Steel, wire mesh, cable ties, paper/cement

Figure. 51: Bronwen Salton
***Pulp*:** (work in progress, plastic embossing) // 2012
Steel, wire mesh, cable ties, paper cement, plastic crochet

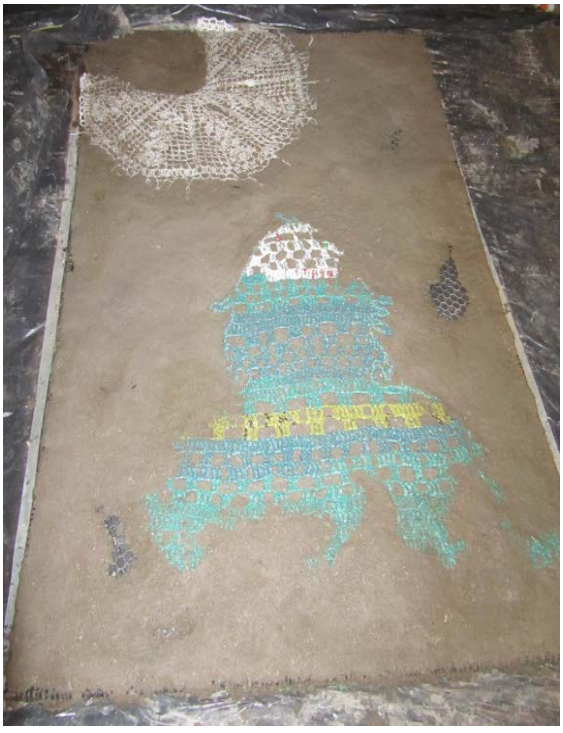


Figure. 52: Bronwen Salton
***Pulp*:** (work in progress, plastic embossing) // 2012
Steel, wire mesh, cable ties, paper cement, plastic crochet

53 Stitches, as a complete body of work, reflects a passionate and experimental process-based exploration into the possibilities of achieving sustainability within contemporary art production. In *53 Stitches* I have attempted, through the partial use of waste plastic material as a medium, crochet as a primary method and social engagement as an artist tool in knowledge facilitation, to interface and experiment with the concepts of sustainability. By considering all dimensions of sustainable development (economic, environmental and social) I have explored the possibilities of solving the economic, environmental and social impacts of my art processes. *53 Stitches* represents the life and social growth produced by the connection and interdependence of numerous community groups for the purpose of facilitating and achieving environmental, economic, social and educational sustainability and change.

CONCLUSION

Insight into the history of sustainable development elucidates the current global shift towards initiating the sustainable frameworks needed to combat the destructive effect of the capitalist economic model on our ecological, economic and social environments. I have contextualised, within my own artistic production of *53 Stitches*, the importance of viewing these three spheres of sustainability (economic, environmental and social) as connected, interdependent and mutually reinforcing. With reference to Felix Guattari (2000[1989]) and Suzi Gablik (1992), I have discussed the cross-continental challenge that now faces global societies, and the importance of becoming more critically aware of our contribution to environmental and societal ruination, which has occurred as a consequence of the capitalist model systematically containing our human subjectivities through mass media, technology and consumerism. In relation to the disconnection and passivity of human relations to the socius, psyche and 'nature', I have explored Guattari's theoretical framework of ecosophy as an integrated ecological understanding needed to overcome the caustic powers of capitalism. The importance of Guattari's (2000 [1989]) contribution, in the context of *53 Stitches*, can be seen in the discussion of mental ecology as physical and psychological way of reconciling our psyche to environment and society by expanding on experiences which are centred around a respect for the uniqueness in society and nature, promoting alternative, creative and innovative practices. An exploration into the concept of connective aesthetics, as put forward by Gablik (1992b), reveals the necessary shift of the artist's identity from one that is isolated, individualistic and self-contained to one that is more interdependent, relational and connected to society and environment. The concept of connective aesthetics is central to the practical, conceptual and theoretical underpinning of *53 Stitches* and serves as a metaphor for the processes as research methods used in the creation of the exhibition.

Discussions on the emergence of sustainable development in current theory and practice have raised important issues pertaining to contemporary art and artistic practice, and have called into question the ecological, social and economic ethics surrounding the production and reception of artworks in the era of capitalism. With reference to authors Maja and Reuben Fowkes (2008), I have shown that the inclusion of sustainability in both

contemporary art theory and practice has had difficulty emerging as a respected practice, as it challenges the status of the art object as sacrosanct, and shifts our understanding of nature as an endless resource from which to take, towards an investigation into alternatives to the common understanding of art as a commodity. Exploring the theories relating to possible alternative ways of achieving sustainable form in contemporary art, namely 'dematerialisation', 'recycling' and the potential of 'artists as knowledge producers', one can see the current emergence of innovative sustainable artistic practices in the conceptual work of Chris Jordan, Sofi Zezmer and Mbongeni Buthelezi.

Discussing the various methods, materials and techniques used by Sofi Zezmer and Mbongeni Buthelezi, I have contextualised my own creative exploration of waste materials in *53 Stitches*, with particular emphasis on plastic as an innovative and economically-sustainable medium. My experimentations with waste materials have been attuned to the notion of connective aesthetics, as the relational concepts of networking, collaboration and socially-engaged arts practices resulted in the creation of *The Radicals* and led me to explore the positive potential of plastic crochet as an economically-sustainable medium and method, as well as the power of artists as knowledge producers in community engagement. The evolving shapes and forms of *The Radicals, Need(le)Work* and *Pulp*, coupled with the socially-engaged methods and procedures used to expand the body of work, explore the central concept of 'growth'. The notion of 'growth' explored in *53 Stitches* is twofold, as it both represents the negative accumulation of non-biodegradable waste in our natural environment, yet also embodies the positive development and creative life that has been achieved in revolutionising the primarily plastic waste medium in socially-engaged arts initiatives and collaborations I have been a part of.

Expanding on the concept of 'artist as knowledge producer' or knowledge facilitator, within the broader paradigm of societal and environmental ecology and sustainability, reveals this to be a vital aspect of sustainability in art practice, and involves the necessary shift away from the anthropocentric model of the artist and art institution towards a renewed sense of environmental, economic and social responsibility. The necessary shift in the art's identity from 'ego-tistical' to 'eco-tistical', as put forward by Linda Weintraub (2006), advocates the necessary inclusion of the theory and practice pertaining to ecology, sustainability and socially-engaged arts in academic art pedagogy as a means to enable artists to become

knowledge producers and facilitators. Related to the concept of 'artist as knowledge producer', I have discussed the process –based research techniques I have employed in the multiple socially-engaged arts initiatives I have facilitated over a period of three years, and have contextualised these in relation to the creation of *Need(le)Work.* These engagements have largely been focused on the environmental, social, economic and educational sustainability of re-imagining plastic waste material as a creative, aesthetic and functional medium. The knowledge of the conceptual and practical skills needed to create from recyclable materials, as well as the associated education of the ecological impact of waste material on our natural and urban environments, has been a central focus in each of the initiatives. Seeing professionals assume the position of 'artist as knowledge producer' brings about the sharing of skills, resources and knowledge with marginalised social groups, highlighting the vital importance of education within sustainable art practices in developing learning frameworks that assist individuals and communities to understand the complex ontology of their natural and built environments.

Exploring the problems pertaining to the apparent disconnect between tertiary institutions and the social context in which they are located, observed within my own context of the Rhodes University art department, shows the hindering effect this detachment has on nurturing artists as knowledge producers. Looking at the theory of place-conscious capacity building/place-based learning building, one can see the importance of developing more active and conscious leadership roles within students/artists, so as to ensure the distribution of the university institutions' expansive resources, knowledge and skills in communities in order to curb the unwarranted suffering of social groups and natural environments which has resulted in this disconnection.

I discuss the concept of service-learning and community engagement in the context of Rhodes University, and I explore the concept of social responsibility and the application of community engagement and grassroots democracy. I discuss how the use of these relational methods offers alternative and productive ways to combat 'self-interest' in individuals, allowing for the emergence of socially-conscious learners as knowledge producers who are active in the sharing of critical resources, information and skills with those who do not have access to these amenities.

I explore the primary method of crochet used to create *53 Stitches* in relation to connective aesthetics, as it has the potential to initiate a connection between people and a connection between people and the environment. The processes and methods of research undertaken in *53 Stitches* reveal the enormous potential of alternative and intuitive experimentations in the medium of plastic, the method of crochet and the process of exploring the realm of artist as knowledge producer in socially-engaged art practices, in order to engage with all spheres of sustainability (economic, environmental and social) in contemporary art. Although *53 Stitches: Sustainability, Ecology and Social Engagement in Contemporary Art* gives a detailed exploration of these concepts in relation to my process as researcher, I have been hesitant to draw any fixed conclusions. I have realised, through these experimental investigations into the practical application of sustainable development in *53 Stitches,* that I have only seen the tip of the iceberg that is sustainability in contemporary art.

APPENDIX A

EXHIBITION INSTALLATION IMAGES

Figure. 53. Bronwen Salton

53 Stitches (installation view) // 2012

Photo: Michael Salzwedel

Figure. 54. Bronwen Salton

53 Stitches (installation view) // 2012

Photo: Michael Salzwedel

Figure. 55. Bronwen Salton

53 Stitches (installation view) // 2012

Photo: Michael Salzwedel

Figure. 56. Bronwen Salton

53 Stitches (installation view) // 2012

Photo: Michael Salzwedel

Figure. 57. Bronwen Salton

53 Stitches (installation view) // 2012

Photo: Michael Salzwedel

Figure. 58. Bronwen Salton

53 Stitches (installation view) // 2012

Photo: Michael Salzwedel

Figure. 59. Bronwen Salton

53 Stitches (installation view) // 2012

Photo: Michael Salzwedel

Figure. 60. Bronwen Salton

53 Stitches (installation view) // 2012

Photo: Michael Salzwedel

Figure. 61. Bronwen Salton

53 Stitches (installation view) // 2012

Photo: Michael Salzwedel

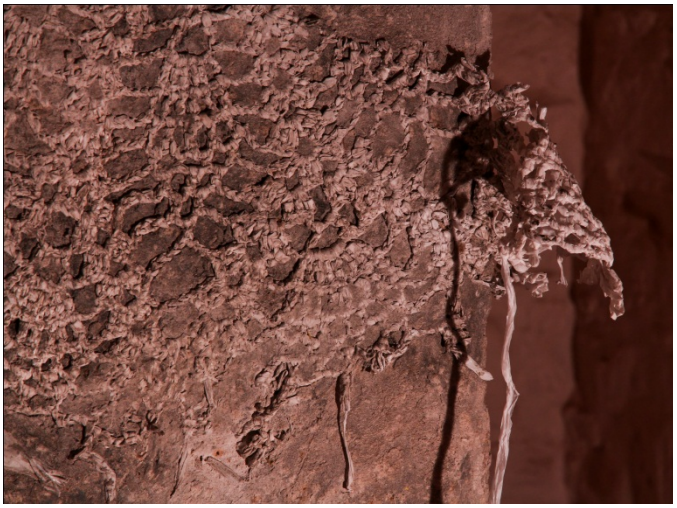


Figure. 62. Bronwen Salton

53 Stitches (installation view) // 2012

Photo: Michael Salzwedel

Figure. 63. Bronwen Salton

53 Stitches (installation view) // 2012

Photo: Michael Salzwedel

Figure. 64. Bronwen Salton

53 Stitches (installation view) // 2012

Photo: Michael Salzwedel

APPENDIX 1

The Arkwork Collective

The Arkwork Collective is a Section 21 Non-Profit Organisation. It represents a collaboration of contemporary artists, in the visual, theatrical, and musical arts, as well as anthropologists, social/environmental scientists and psychologists. The collaboration draws from a unified interest in creating holistic artistic experiences with marginalised communities, strives to create experiences for people who usually do not have the opportunity to creatively engage with their daily lives and personal histories, and facilitates the process of turning lost space into empowered place. *The Arkwork Collective* provides the free resource and expertise of volunteer artists. As an organisation, it uses arts-based intervention as a form of social justice, catharsis, education and personal empowerment. The projects conducted by the NPO involve people living on the edge of contemporary society (http://arkwork.yolasite.com/).

Community Engagement Project 1

Year: 2010

Month: 05 April 2010 – 29 April 2010

Project: Plastic Bag Crochet Tapestry: Crochet Circle

Venue: Environmental Learning and Research Centre, Rhodes University Grahamstown, Eastern Cape.

Director:

- **Dylan McGarry**: (Director of The Arkwork Collective, Arkwork Circus, Media and Publicity)

Facilitators:

- **Bronwen Salton**: (Organiser and Facilitator of the Project)
- **Nothemba Makina**: (Advanced Crocheter and Skills Facilitator of Project)

Plastic Bag Crochet Workshops

Goals, Objectives and Approach of Workshop

The goals and objectives of the plastic crochet workshops, as discussed and planned by McGarry and myself, was to provide and facilitate a space in which a group of lower-income community members could acquire the practical skills of crochet whilst applying these techniques to the medium of recycled plastic bags instead of conventional woollen yarn. The objective and use of recycled plastic bags as a medium was not only to follow in step with the Arkwork Collective initiative of up-cycling waste materials in creative ways, but also to re-establish a measurable sense of the value of the plastic bag in the minds of the workshop participants as a legitimate and economically manageable medium in which to create. The ultimate goal and objective of the workshops was to design and create a crochet plastic bag tapestry that would be hung in the Environmental Learning and Research Centre (ELRC) situated on Rhodes University Campus. McGarry approached the men and women involved in the building of the ELRC with the idea and opportunity of being involved in the workshops and gathered a group of sixteen men and women who were interested in participating. McGarry also approached Nothemba Makina to be a Skills Facilitator with myself on the project. Makina is an advanced crocheter and informal trader who fashions and sells her functional products made out of crocheted plastic bags and various beaded items at the Drosty Arch on Somerset Street, Grahamstown, Eastern Cape. McGarry had organised that we use a room at the ELRC, which was still under construction at the time, as our activities directly related to the ethos of the ELRC.

Methods, Procedures and Techniques

I was given a small budget by McGarry to purchase the necessary tools needed in order for the workshops to run. The tools and equipment needed to teach crochet are very simple: all that is needed is a 5mm crochet needle, a pair of scissors and someone who knows how to demonstrate the basic stitches of crochet. The materials used were recycled plastic packets collected by McGarry and myself, however, one of the teaching techniques and requirements of the workshop participants was to collect plastic packets from their urban environment as material for their crochet creations. The methods I wished to implement with regards to the running of the workshops followed the methods in which I was initially

taught crochet in 2007, and that was learning how to crochet an American Granny Square, a basic pattern in which the student is able to learn all the basic stitches of crochet. On the first day of the workshop, Nothemba and I were introduced to the group of sixteen and a roll call was taken. I introduced myself and Nothemba and briefly explained what we were going to be doing. I swiftly handed out the 5mm crochet needles and scissors to all members and, after realising the communication barrier between myself and the predominantly Xhosa-speaking group, I handed over the floor to Nothemba. The procedures and techniques used in the first workshop rendered my envisioned method, procedures and technique planning null and void as, once Nothemba began demonstrating the techniques used to correctly cut a plastic packet, I too became a student. The procedures and techniques that we conducted were as follows:

- **How to cut a plastic packet in such a way as to create a continuous thread of plastic yarn (plarn)**.

  This technique requires you to cut off both the handles and base of the plastic packet so that both right and left sides are open while the top and bottom are sealed. Open up the packet so that there are no folds in between the plastic. Begin to fold the packet horizontally upwards into strips, leaving a space at the top of the packet. With scissors, begin to cut the folded plastic vertically, about the size of two fingers whilst leaving the top of the packet intact. Pick up the cut plastic packet and notice that it is still intact due to the uncut band on the top; now slide one hand and arm through the cut packet. In order to cut the plastic into a continuous thread of plarn, you have to cut the remaining plastic in a diagonal fashion, but first cutting off the first strand of plastic and then continuously cutting diagonally across the packet, bottom corner to top corner. If you have successfully followed all steps you should have a continuous thread of plarn that can then be rolled up into a ball.
- **How to hold the crochet hook and yarn/plarn.** It is important to become accustomed to and comfortable with holding the crochet hook and yarn as it requires the use and movement of both hands simultaneously, which can be quite a challenging exercise in hand–eye co-ordination. I have found that the handling of both crochet hook and plarn is a personal technique and have seen many different approaches as can be seen in.

- **How to make a slip knot to start the crochet process.** A slip knot is the very first thing you need to learn to get started with crocheting as every crochet process starts with a slip knot. The method that Nothemba and I demonstrated to the group is the easiest way of making a slip knot by using the crochet hook. To achieve this, you have to first wrap the plarn around the crochet hook as shown in (image) in an anti-clockwise direction. Whilst using your left thumb and index finger to clasp the plarn on the hook firmly, wrap a long piece of yarn over the hook and pull the strand of plarn through the loop you have created on the hook, and tighten into a slip knot.
- **How to make the basic crochet stitches: Chain (Ch), Single Crochet (Sc), Double Crochet (Dc) and Slip Stitch (Sl st).** The chain stitch (ch) is the first stitch you learn in crochet and follows directly after the slip knot. Once you have made a slip knot on your crochet hook, you wrap the yarn over the hook "yarn over" and then pull this plarn through the loop on the hook. We got the group to do this repeatedly to practise the stitch as most crochet patterns start with a series of chains. The next stitch we taught was the single crochet (sc) and to learn this stitch you have to have a long series of chain stitches, so we got the group to make a long chain of approximately 30–35 chain stitches. When making the first single crochet on a starting chain you have to work backwards into the chains. Insert the hook under the top loop of the second chain from the hook, not counting the loop on the hook when determining the required loop. Once the hook is inserted, plarn over hook and pull through so that there are two wrappings of plarn on the hook. Plarn over hook and pull plarn through 2 loops on the hook; repeating this process you work down the row of 35 chains and practise the stitch. The double crochet stitch is slightly more complicated, but for me it is the most fun and efficient of all the stitches. To create a double crochet at the beginning of a round or row, you have to make two chains first as they represent the first double crochet To begin a double crochet, you wrap plarn over hook then insert hook into the top loop of the next stitch, plarn over hook and pull plarn through stitch, leaving three plarn loops on the hook. Wrap plarn over hook and pull plarn through two loops on hook (image), plarn over hook and pull plarn through the last two loops on hook. Repeat form down the row to practise. The last stitch we learn is the slip stitch (sl st) that is used to join stitches and rounds: insert the hook into the desired loop plarn over hook and pull plarn straight through

both loops on hook so that you are left with one on the hook, and repeat down row to practise.

- **Communication and Transferral of Knowledge and Skills.** The communication and transferral of knowledge and skills associated with the basic techniques of crochet were relayed to the group of participants through verbal instruction and visual articulation of the action. Due to the fact that the sixteen participants were predominantly isiXhosa-speaking, Nothemba Makina assumed the role of audibly explaining the concepts of crochet in Xhosa, answering most of the complicated questions participants had. I found myself as the only non-Xhosa speaking member of the workshop, and so I relied on simply sitting with a group of three or four people and visually showing the participants how I crochet and how I make the stitches, and encouraging that they imitate my actions as so to learn. This method of teaching worked well for both Nothemba and myself as crochet is not an art that can be explained and understood in words alone; action and participation are required in order for the knowledge and skill to be transferred and acquired with the most efficiency.

- **Crocheting an American-Style Granny Square.** After the group had spent 3 days practising all the basic stitches, I introduced the granny square pattern to the group. I had over the past days been experimenting with plarn and crocheting and I had crocheted a few granny squares as examples for the group to work off as a practical example of what we going to be learning next. With the example I had crocheted, it was much easier to work efficiently with the group on tackling the pattern. To crochet an American Granny-Style Square the pattern and abbreviations are as follows:

Abbreviations

- Ch = chain
- Chs = chains
- St = stitch

- Sts = stitches
- Sl st = slip stitch
- Dc = double crochet

Pattern

- Slip knot onto hook
- Ch 6
- Join with sl st into 1st ch to form ring
- Ch3, 2dc, ch2, (3dc, ch2) 3x into round, sl st to join 3rd chain from foundation loop
- Sl st into next ch 2 space
- Ch 3, 2dc in space, ch2 to form corner, 3dc into same space, ch2, (3dc in next space, ch2 to form corner, 3dc in same space, ch2) 3x around then sl st to join. You should have 4 corner clusters.
- Sl st into ch2 space, ch3, 2dc, ch2, 3dc into same space, ch2, 3dc into next space, ch2, 3dc into next space, ch2, 3dc into same space; (3dc in next space, ch2, 3dc in same space, ch2, 3dc into next space, ch2, 3dc into next space, ch2, 3dc into same space) 3 x the sl st to join round. You should have 4 corner clusters with 4 single 3dc clusters in between them.
- You can continue with this pattern as many times around the square as you wish and your square will continue growing.

Observing and imitating the actions of the instructor or the person who has understood the techniques of crochet is how all members of the workshop were able to learn and understand the granny square pattern. Once all participants had gained the skills, members were able, through manipulation, to perform the technical crochet actions by following the instructions and practising the techniques. Participants' squares started to become precise and neat as the participants refined the techniques and reworked the stitches so as to perfect the skill. The articulation of the techniques learnt by participants increased each hour that was spent practising during the workshops. Towards the end of our time together, all participants had come to naturalise the techniques, achieving the American granny

square without needing to think much about it, testifying to the level of skill and performance that had been achieved by the participants. A natural level of creativity, style and design had been achieved by each individual in the workshop: each square was unique as each individual had used the colours of the plastic packets in an informed and personally creative way.

Outcomes

The initial goal and objective of the project was to organise, design and create a wall tapestry using the procedures and techniques learnt in the workshops. Unfortunately, due to time and monetary constraints by the Arkwork Collective, Dylan McGarry, Nothemba Makia and myself, the realisation of the tapestry never came to fruition. However, the technical skills and knowledge gained by the participants, in the two weeks of workshops, is knowledge that transcends what the project aimed to achieve, and all participants walked away from the workshops with an intermediate level of crochet skill as well as being aware of the versatility and affordability of plastic as a medium.

Works Cited

The Arkwork Collective. [Online] Available at: http://arkwork.yolasite.com/ [16/04/2011].

APPENDIX 2

The Arkwork Collective and Arkwork Circus: Transnet Foundation's Greening the Greens Strategy – Renewal Tree.

The Arkwork Circus

> The Arkwork Circus is an innovative, non-profit organisation affiliated to the Environmental Learning Research Centre at Rhodes University, and its Sustainability Commons. The central focus of the Arkwork Circus is to explore learning processes, while creating awareness about the levels of discarded waste that accumulates in rubbish dumps around Grahamstown. It provides providing opportunities for young people to comment on their surroundings in creative ways. This is reflected in the Arkwork Circus slogan "reviving the discarded". Using story-telling, thematic story construction, creative play, African masquerade and puppetry, participants draw on their own unique creative expression to develop informed, empowered and collective decisions about the future (Alexander et al., 2011).

For the 2010 Standard Bank National Arts Festival programme, the Arkwork Collective chose to focus their activities and workshops around the concept of 'rubbish' as a metaphor for members in society that are marginalised and undermined by the system that creates so much waste. The Arkwork Collective's activities, preparation and workshops are designed to include and support participating youth from the marginalised community in Grahamstown.

> Besides the issue of waste, social issues such as the discrimination of the poor, alcoholism, substance abuse, sexual abuse, sexism and xenophobia emerged in dialogues amongst the young participants. They were encouraged to think through these issues and to create a play based on their thoughts (Alexander et al., 2011).

Works Cited

Alexander, J., Kulundu, I. and McGarry, D. 2011. '*Creatively negotiating a shared purpose'.* The Arkwork Collective. [Online text] Available at: http://arkwork.yolasite.com/research-and-development.php [16/05/2012].

Year: 2010

Project: Transnet Foundation's "Greening the Greens" Strategy (TFGGS), Arkwork Circus.

Venues: Dakawa Art Centre, Amatole Parade National Arts Festival, Rhodes University Kaif Lawns, Union Building.

Director:

- **Dylan McGarry:** (Director of The Arkwork Collective, Arkwork Circus, Media and Publicity)

Co-director and Financial Manager:

- **Gerianne deKlerk** (Administration, Co-ordination and Management of Arkwork Circus)

Arkwork Collective Collaborators:

- **Adrian Gravett:** Artist in Residence at Arkwork – Facilitator of the development of Arkwork circus puppets, focusing on the use of waste materials as a medium.
- **Injairu Kulundu**: Rhodes University Master's Graduate of Political Science, focusing on community learning within grassroots social justice movements – with a backround in theatre and performing arts, Kulundu organised and developed the Arkwork Circus performances for TFGGS.
- **Jamie Alexander**: Rhodes University Master's Graduate of Anthropology focusing on story-telling and the development of communal narratives – Alexander worked with Kulundu in developing the story and narrative for the Arkwork Circus performances.
- **Simon Max Bannister** : Environmental Artist and Sculptor dealing with contemporary issues of 21st century Capitalism and the implications of waste on the environment – working closely with Gravett on the props and costumes for the Arkwork Circus whilst working on his own body of work that often explores waste material as a medium.

Transnet Foundation's Greening the Greens Strategy (TFGGS)

The Transnet Foundation's Greening the Greens Strategy proposed and outlined the strategic development of an integrated waste-management plan and an all-inclusive environmental education strategy for the Transnet Foundation (TF) Village Green (VG) Fair, which is annually hosted by the Standard Bank National Arts Festival in Grahamstown, South Africa. The motivation for the development of the waste-management strategy stemmed from the need to improve the waste-management services of the Village Green Fair since it was moved in 2009 from the Municipal grounds of the Fiddlers Green in the centre of Grahamstown to the Great Field located on the campus of Rhodes University. The TFGGS adopted a holistic strategy that proposed and ultimately implemented recycling, composting, non-degradable waste reduction, carbon efficiency, waste-water recycling and water conservation. In addition to these strategies, the TFGGS, in conjunction with the Arkwork Collective, aimed to employ interactive artwork, street performance and public participation as an educative tool that encouraged participation from festival goers as part of the strategy. The TFGGS drew on the local knowledge systems of Grahamstown to develop locally appropriate translations of contemporary international practice, including in this strategy a wide variety of Grahamstown community members.

Year: 2010

Director:

- **Ismail Mahomed:** Director of Standard Bank National Arts Festival and Funding Director for the Arkwork Circus.
- **Selina White:** Director for the Village Green Fair – working closely with Cosman Bolus and Dylan McGarry with the Transnet Foundation's Greening the Green programme.

Collaborators:

- **Dylan McGarry:** (Director of The Arkwork Collective, Arkwork Circus, Media and Publicity)

- **Cosman Bolus:** Rhodes University Master's Graduate of Environmental Sciences and Sustainable Development – Co-ordinator and Logistical Manager of the environmental activities of the TFGGS on the Village Green.

The Renewal Tree

The TFGGS was designed with specific emphasis on the engagement with public consciousness around waste as part of the logistical and creative process as, without correct public engagement to realise and support the use of this strategic system, the initiative would have been futile. The TFGGS, in partnership with the Village Green, welcomed the idea of creating and facilitating an Environmental Educational Area (EEA) within the Village Green (Image). The EEA was specifically designed to be an interactive and participatory space that facilitated the connection between the Village Green Fair itself and the festival goers who visit and support it. The EEA was created to support and highlight the multiple organisations within the Eastern Cape who are actively and positively working within an assortment of environmentally-related initiatives in South Africa (2010: Fig. 1). At the centre of the EEA, the Arkwork Collective proposed that a public-participatory and interactive sculpture of a tree be built using waste materials or 'rubbish' collected from the recycling strategies implemented by the TFGGS (McGarry 2010: 26)

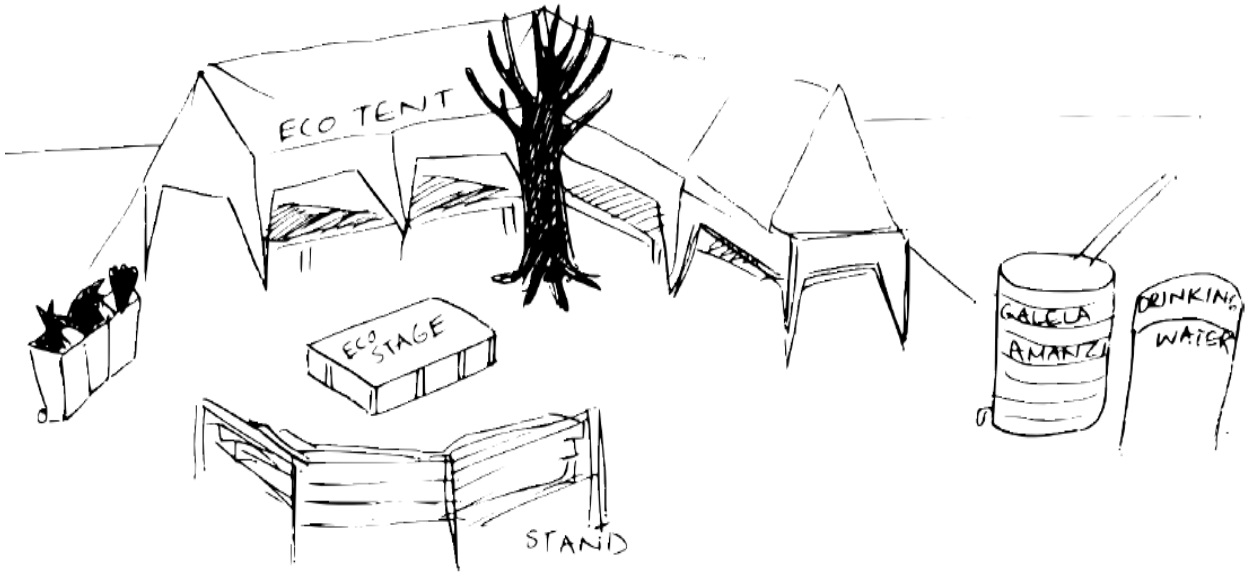


Figure. 1: Dylan McGarry

An Environmental Education Area for the Village Green // 2010

Greening the Green Final Report: The Trash Tree, p. 26.

Year: 2010

Month: 10 May 2010 – 13 July 2010

Project: Renewal Tree, Transnet Foundation's "Greening the Greens" Strategy (TFGGS).

Venues: Dakawa Art Centre, Rhodes University Sculpture Department, Rhodes University Kaif Lawns, Union Building.

Director:

- **Dylan McGarry:** (Director of The Arkwork Collective, Arkwork Circus, Media and Publicity)

Co-director and Financial Manager:

- **Gerianne deKlerk** (Administration, Co-ordination and Management of Arkwork Circus)

Arkwork Collective Collaborators:

- **Bronwen Salton:** Rhodes University Master of Fine Arts Student – Designer and Creator of the Transnet Foundation's and Arkwork Circus 'Renewal Tree' focusing on waste material as a medium.

Renewal Tree Collaborators:

- **Bronwen Salton:** Organiser and facilitator of the design, construction and installation of the TFGGS Arkwork Circus 'Renewal Tree' for the Standard Bank National Arts Festival 2010.
- **Peter Midgely**: Rhodes University Graduate: BA (Classical Civilisation, Anthropology and Sociology), BA Hons in Anthropology and Post Graduate Diploma in Enterprise Management (PDEM) – Midgely helped with technical support and with the construction of the Renewal Tree.
- **David Knowles**: Rhodes University Graduate in Music and Philosophy – Knowles was the chairman of the Rhodes Society GRASS (green revolution and social solutions)

and was involved in the collection of plastic waste materials and in the creation of plastic flowers and creepers that would adorn the tree.

- **Etai Evan-Zahav**: Rhodes Universiy Graduate (BA), focusing on History and Political Studies – Evan-Zahav helped with the creation of plastic flowers that would adorn the tree.
- **Warren Kernick-Vinen**: Rhodes University Graduate in Fine Arts (BFA: majoring in sculpture) – Kernick-Vinen assisted with the sculptural creation of birds that would be the wildlife in the Renewal Tree. These bird sculptures were made entirely out of recycled waste materials.
- **Whitney Turner**: Rhodes University graduate in Fine Arts (BFA: majoring in sculpture) and is currently completing her Master's in the Performative Arts – Turner helped and assisted with the spray painting of the Renewal Tree and with the creation of plastic flowers that would adorn the tree.

Renewal Tree Community Group Collaborators:

- **Skahuluntu Cultural Group (Appendix 3)**: The members of the Sakuluntu Cultural Group were part of interactive creative 'plastic flower' making workshops that I had created and facilitated, which contributed to the creation and 'blooming' of the Renewal Tree during the Standard Bank National Arts Festival 2010.
- **Art Factory (Appendix 4)**: The members of Art Factory 2010 were involved in the 'plastic flower', 'plastic windsock' and 'plastic clothing' making workshops created and facilitated by myself and Heidi Salzwedel, which contributed to the creation and 'blooming' of the Renewal Tree during the fifteen days of the Standard Bank National Arts Festival 2010.
- **Mixtape Public Arts Project (Appendix 5)**: The members of the Mixtape Public Arts Project were involved in the facilitation of the 'plastic flower' and 'plastic windsock' workshops, as well as other workshops with the above-mentioned Community Groups, and therefore were involved in the contribution to the 'blooming' of the Renewal Tree during the Standard Bank National Arts Festival 2010.

Goals and Objectives

As proposed by the Arkwork Collective to the Transnet Foundation's Greening the Greens Strategy, I was commissioned with the design, construction and installation of the communally-sculptured 'trash tree' that was to form part of the events and activities surrounding the flagship launching of the TFGGS at the Standard Bank National Arts Festival in 2010. The goals and objectives of this interactive trash sculpture were to stimulate environmental education, through artistic means, in order to achieve this specific environmental strategy. The project intended to use artistic methods to engage with public consciousness surrounding environmental and social issues associated with waste accumulation and the appropriate management thereof.

The brief I was given was to create a sculpture that took the form of a large, possibly a threatened, indigenous species of tree, which would stand approximately three or four metres high. It was suggested that the armature be constructed using welded reinforced bars, and that it would ideally fit together like a puzzle so that it could be installed und uninstalled with ease. The objective of the brief was that I was going to be working with five informal waste collectors and youth at risk, who I would train in sculptural and craft skills, and that they would be instrumental in the construction and installation of the Renewal Tree. The goal as a group was to manipulate and deconstruct recycled plastic containers and bags to create ornaments such as bark, leaves, flowers and birds. These ornaments would be used to adorn the tree's branches and complement the Renewal Tree's aesthetic. The main objective of the interactive public sculpture was to see the Renewal Tree bloom over the fourteen days of the festival, with the features being made by both the collective and the public (2010: Fig. 2).

I had been given a modest budget to purchase materials for the armature, as well as a large amount of recycled material collected by the Arkwork Collective over the year. The Arkwork team had collected and accumulated a large amount of green plastic threading used to secure bricks, as part of a clean-up initiative after the RDP building works in the eRhini township, Grahamstown.

Figure 2: Dylan McGarry

The blooming of the Renewal Tree //2010

Greening the Green Final Report: The Trash Tree, p. 26.

Further I given a substantial amount of colourful plastic netting, used to wrap large deliveries of fruit and vegetables, that was intended for and used as the inside of the recycled plastic flowers. It was suggested in the TFGGS final report that:

> A donation can be made to this initiative, and the public can assist in either creating their own flowers, leaves, or animals to adorn the tree or simply purchase pre-made decorations to add to the tree or take away with them. The public will see this community nurtured tree 'bloom' from the waste over the 14 day period. This education initiative encourages the public to look at their waste in a different positive light; in addition it provides the public with another visible quantification of how much waste they are producing, supporting the recent research in the value of feedback systems in encouraging recycling (McGarry 2010: 27).

Works Cited

McGarry, D. 2010. '*Greening the Green: A comprehensive waste management strategy for the Transnet Foundation's Village Green Fair, National Arts Festival 2010 and beyond. Final Report'.* South Africa: Environmental Learning and Research Centre, Rhodes University, pp. 1– 41.

Method, Procedures and Techniques

As I have mentioned, I had received a modest budget to purchase tools and materials needed in order to build the initial armature and structure of the Renewal Tree. I formulated the design of the tree's structure with close reference to the proposed 'look' of the tree, as proposed by McGarry in the TFGGS final report, as can been seen in (image). Once I had agreed to take on the construction of the Renewal Tree, I began to work with the Arkwork Collective at their temporary studios at the Dakawa Art Centre, located in the 'coloured suburbs' of the eRhini township, Grahamstown. At the Arkwork studios, I met with two informal waste collectors and car guards, Andile and Imfundu, who transferred their skills to me on the ways to create leaves and flowers out of the colourful recycled bottles that had been collected. The process used to transform a recycled bottle into a beautiful flower is easy, creative, fun and enlightening. This was my first interaction with recycled materials as a medium to create crafty sculptural objects.

How to make a Flower and Leaves out of a Recycled Plastic Bottle:

Flower

- With a pair of sharp scissors or craft knife, cut the desired plastic bottle horizontally and you can use both sides of the container.
- Cut down the sides of the bottle half in the shape of petals; these can be as creative as you wish.
- With your hands, bend the petals outwards to create the basic shape of the flower.
- With a hammer and nail, puncture two holes in either the bottle cap of the one bottle half or the bottom of the other half.
- Cut a section of colourful plastic netting (collected from fruit and veg rubbish), and a piece of thin metal wire.
- Put the plastic netting in the centre of the bottle and thread the wire through the netting and through the two holes punctured.
- Twist and fasten the wire, then flower is completed.

Leaves

- Use a green bottle, preferably, and cut container horizontally
- Cut out the shape of a leaf.
- With a hammer and nail, puncture one hole in the base of the cut out leaf.
- Attach with wire to the back of the flower.

Considering that the objective of the project was to serve as an environmentally-educative tool for marginalised community members and youth at risk, I became aware of the positive potential of recycled plastic as an artistic and economically-sustainable medium that could be successfully used in community development projects. I had, during this project, connected with another youth cultural group called Sakhuluntu, which operated in Extension 9 Joza suburb, eRhini township (see Appendix 3), and I decided to connect the two projects and use the above-mentioned process as fun workshops to run with the children who attend Sakhuluntu. In this way the construction of the Renewal Tree was being facilitated by a contribution from many people.

Collecting Methods

Although the Arkwork Collective had collected a significant amount of recycled plastic threading, colourful bottles and plastic packets, I had realised that, in order to have enough to bloom the tree and run workshops with the public, a significant amount more had to be collected. McGarry had informed me that the majority of the colourful plastic containers used were collected from the Grahamstown landfill, and that the informal waste collectors living at the dump site were paid an agreed-upon amount to collect items from the landfill. Due to the fact that I had budget to spare after all other costs were accounted for, I went to the Grahamstown landfill to conduct some business with the informal waste collectors. I had never visited the largest landfill in Grahamstown, and on arrival I could not escape the overwhelming accumulation of waste in that space, the result of generations upon generations of our 'throw-away society'. I experienced a sense of macabre excitement whilst driving down the trash-filled road; looking at the polluted sandy dunes and the threatening beauty of the site stirred up the magpie in me. Within minutes of my entering the dumpsite, my car was surrounded by young black boys, aged approximately thirteen to twenty years old, all shouting at me, 'Hey mama, mama, hey sisi, sisi', so I stopped my car,

not really knowing what to do, and got out to talk to the group. The guys continued shouting at me, then arguing amongst each other as to who was to get my business, and only after I had introduced myself and asked them to all listen and stop shoving each other were we able to talk. I communicated to the group that I was a friend of Dylan McGarry and that I was interested in paying anyone who was willing to collect colourful plastic containers for me. The guys remembered McGarry and knew exactly what I wanted, we agreed upon the price of fifty cents (R0.50) per bottle collected, and they said that I should come back the next day to collect. I came back the next day, same time same place, and collected five black plastic packets full of bottles. After counting the contents of one of the bags, we approximated that each black plastic bag has one hundred bottles in it and that I would pay them each fifty rand (R50.00) for each of the bags. The guys were satisfied with the agreement and I paid out a total of two hundred and fifty (R250.00) rand to the group and collected five hundred colourful bottles.

The informal waste collectors were great to connect with: the guys spoke English really well and were polite and extremely willing to help me. The relationship we had established was based on mutual respect and had become a mutually beneficial and non-exploitative working arrangement. Over the past two years, I have returned to the site on multiple occasions and conducted business with the group of guys. I have found this business relationship with the informal waste collectors a positive and effective way of collecting significant amounts of waste materials for artistic use at a low economical cost that benefits both parties involved.

The material collected was used in workshops I conducted with the Sakhuluntu Cultural Group, Art Factory and Mixtape before and during the Standard Bank National Arts Festival 2010.

Design and Construction of the Renewal Tree

The design of the tree required that I used 8mm galvanised flat bar, 12mm galvanised round bar, 6mm nuts and bolts, 15cm hollow plastic tubing, chicken wire, welding rods, wire, cable ties, scissors, wire cutters, spray paint, heat gun, recycled plastic bottles, and recycled plastic packets and bags. I had to source and price all materials needed to be purchased in order to make sure I was within budget.

- In order to achieve a somewhat round shape for the trunk of the tree, I chose to design the trunk as an equilateral hexagon.
- The six-sided base would be constructed from six equal 8mm flat bars, joined at each corner with a 6mm nut and bolt.
- At each of the corners, a longer 8mm flat bar, almost double the size of each of the sides, would be joined with a 6mm nut and bolt so that it would strut out and would serve as the balance of the structure once pegged into the grass on installation.
- On the top bar at each of the corners, I welded a 60cm x 12mm round bar vertically to the flat bar in order to support the 15cm hollow x 3.5m high plastic tubing that I used to create the body of the tree trunk.
- Once the base and body were all attached, the tree trunk frame was wrapped in 3.5m high chicken wire that had been woven through with green plastic threading to create the aesthetic of bark.
- The branches of the Renewal Tree were made from collected bamboo rods that had been cut down from a tree.
- At the top of each hollow plastic tube, four to five holes were drilled to accommodate the bamboo branches that would later be slotted into the holes.
- Lastly, the hollow plastic tubes were spray painted with green, blue, yellow and red paint to look more organic as they were a strong cream colour.

The entire structure was made in such a way that all the pieces of the structure could be taken apart and reassembled with ease; this fulfilled the requirements put to me. The construction of the Renewal Tree was done collectively by the individuals mentioned above, all of whom were friends of mine from Rhodes University, whose help I had asked for. The design, construction and installation took about six weeks to accomplish, with help from all parties involved.

Outcomes

With any Community Engagement project, things do not always go as planned and are not always as structured as they should be. The design, construction and installation of the Renewal Tree did not follow any of the proposed planning done by the Arkwork Collective. The building and assembling of the Renewal Tree turned out to be a solitary task. The

proposed group of five informal youths that I was to work with collectively on the construction of the tree were never approached, as they could not be paid for their work due to insufficient funding from the Arkwork Collective. Disappointed by the fact that I now had no-one to work with, and disheartened by the enormity of the task in conjunction with my Master's degree, it became quite overwhelming, so I sought out people to connect and work with. In the final stages of the construction of the *Renewal Tree*, I worked with a collective of academic friends, mentioned above, who I had rallied to help me; this group of artists, musicians, performers and anthropologists were so incredible and innovative in their use of recycled materials, furthering the idea that anyone could access and create from these dynamic materials. The *Renewal Tree* was completed and installed on the grassy field right at the entrance to the Village Green in time for the opening of The National Arts Festival 2010, July 2010 (2010: Fig. 3 and Fig. 4).

Blooming of the Renewal Tree

See Appendices 3, 4 and 5

Figure. 3: **Greening the Greens 'Renewal Tree' // 2010**

Photo: Bronwen Salton

Figure. 4: **The Renewal Tree // 2010**

Photo: Bronwen Salton

APPENDIX 3

The Sakhuluntu Cultural Group.

The Sakhuluntu Cultural Group, a non-profit organisation, was formed in 1998 by cultural activist and performer, Vuyo Booi, whose primary aim was to create an organisation that focused on facilitating marginalised youth towards a more positive future, free of crime, drugs and alcohol. Vuyo Booi (founder) and Merran Roy (chairperson) have tirelessly worked and continuously striven to achieve this goal by providing after-school activities to develop the creative potential of the youth involved. However, Sakhuluntu is constantly under threat due to a shortage of funds, voluntary staff and voluntary students.

Whilst collaborating with the *Arkwork Collective* (Appendix 2), I had become involved in yet another Community Engagement programme initiated by a group of fourth-year painting students in the Rhodes Fine Art Department. The student Community engagement group was started as a reaction to the dissolving the previous year in 2009 of the Community Engagement programme linked to the Rhodes Fine Art Department. Due to the lack of communication from the department as to why these Engagements had dissolved and to their inability to provide or support any alternative means for students wanting to engage in Community Development, Martin Lund and Sven Christian took it upon themselves to mobilise the art student body by creating an 'out-of-school' Community Engagement initiative with the Sakhuluntu Cultural Group in Extension 9, eRhini Township, Grahamstown. After Lund put out the call for students in the art school to be involved in this project, we gathered a party of five dedicated members: Martin Lund, Seven Christian, Heidi Salzwedel, Craig Groenewald and me. We, as a student volunteer body, collectively believed in the positive change that could be generated by volunteering our time, effort, knowledge and skills in developing the creative arts and the minds of the children involved in the Sakhuluntu Cultural Group. We met with the members of Sakhuluntu on a weekly basis and worked with a group of approximately twenty children, aged six to seventeen years of age, and ran afternoon creative workshops in painting, drawing, sculpture and dance.

Year: 2010

Month: April 2010 – November 2010

Project Name: The Sakhuluntu Culatural Group

Venues: 09 Kota Street, Extension 9 Joza eRhini Township, Grahamstown.

Chairperson:

- **Merran Roy** (Chairperson of The Sakhuluntu Cultural Group, Administration, Fundraiser, Media and Publicity)

Co-chairperson and Workshop Facilitator:

- **Vuyo Booi** (Founder, workshop organiser and on-the-ground co-ordinator of the group)

The Sakhuluntu Cultural Group Collaborators:

- Martin Lund
- Sven Christian
- Heidi Salzwedel
- Craig Groenewald
- Mvuleni Ndumo
- Sinesipho Skoti ('Skoti')
- Efese Betela

Project 1

Drawing and Painting of Sakhuluntu Festival Banner

Facilitators:

- Martin Lund
- Efese Betela
- Bronwen Salton
- Heidi Salzwedel
- Sven Christian
- Sinesipho Skoti ('Skoti')
- Craig Groenewald
- Mvuleni Ndumo

Goals and Objectives

The Sakhuluntu Cultural Group participates annually in the Standard Bank National Arts Festival, showcasing their traditional and contemporary dance routines in an effort to raise

funds and awareness surrounding the activities and initiatives. The objective of painting a Sakhuluntu banner was to involve the children in a creative, fun, participatory workshop in which they would be creating their own backdrop that would accompany their festival performance. The goal of this workshop was to enable the children through the responsibility of creating their own banner for their festival performance, fostering a sense of excitement, of pride and of the importance of their activities, as 2010 would be the first year that a banner backdrop would accompany their performance.

Methods, Procedures and Techniques

The painting of the Sakhuluntu banner took place over five days of afternoon workshops that had been planned and organised by Martin Lund and Sven Christian. The tools and materials required and sourced were:

- 1.5m by 2.5m white fabric
- Fabric paint (primary colours)
- Paint brushes, recycled yogurt containers, water and creativity.

A general design was created by Martin and Efese and was transferred onto the fabric by Lund with the use of a projector supplied by the Sculpture and Painting Department at Rhodes University. In the five days of painting the banner, the children were taught about the colour wheel and how to mix different colours. In the physical painting of the banner, the children were guided and helped so as to ensure the banner was reasonably neatly painted. Due to the fact that most of the children did not speak English, most of the instructions or information provided by the English-speaking volunteers was translated by Skoti, Efese or Vuyo, however, most of the actions were simply shown to the children and they copied the actions.

Outcomes

The banner was a huge success and everyone had fun creating it, and the children learnt about the primary colours and created a colour wheel to learn how the paint colours can be mixed to create new colours. During the Standard Bank National Arts Festival, the use and inclusion of the banner in the Sakhuluntu street performances was an even greater success. The inclusion of the banner backdrop brought a heightened sense of pride to the group, and

the two older boys assigned to holding the banner held it with pride. The backdrop itself brought awareness to the performances and was very eye-catching to passing festival goers, but most importantly the children recognised their success in creating the banner for their performances.

Project 2

Recycled Plastic Flower-Making Workshop:

Facilitators:

- Bronwen Salton
- Sven Christianson
- Heidi Salzwedle
- Craig Groenewald
- Martin Lund
- Efese Betela
- Sinesipho Skoti ('Skoti')
- Mvuleni Ndumo

Goals and Objectives

Since I had become involved in the *Arkwork Collective* (Appendix 2) in the previous month, I had begun to realise the environmental, creative and economic potential of waste materials for a cultural group like this. I communicated to Vuyo Booi the multiple uses of waste material as a creative medium, as an environmentally-educative tool and as an economically-friendly and fun way to stimulate the creative minds of the children attending the Sakhuluntu Cultural group. Voyo and all the Sakhuluntu volunteers agreed that waste materials could be used as a catalyst for instilling an environmentally-educative stance into artistic and creative practice. The objective of the workshops was to share the skills I had gained from the *Arkwork Collective* (Appendix 2) with the children of Sakhuluntu and create flowers out of recycled plastic bottles. The goal of the workshops was to stimulate the creative minds of the children as well as communicate the environmental concerns surrounding pollution and its effect on our environment.

Methods, Procedures and Techniques

The workshops took place over three afternoon sessions, and commenced on day one with a 'clean-up' of the surrounding urban environment, as part of the environmentally-

educational objectives of these workshops. The tools and materials needed to be sourced were:

- Large quantity of recycled plastic bottles and containers (clear water bottles, 2l soft drink bottles, juice bottles etc.)
- Recycled plastic bottle tops.
- Colourful plastic netting (sourced from Arkworks and fruit and veg)
- Hammer, nails, thin wire and spray paint

Day 1:

- The workshops were initiated with the collective group of Sakhuluntu participants and student volunteers venturing out into the surrounding area, armed with black plastic refuse bags, with the aim of collecting as much plastic waste as we could. Before the clean-up, the isiXhosa adult members of the group (Vuyo, Efese and Skoti) communicated to the children environmentally-educative information on the effect that littering and pollution have on the environment and on how we as community members all have a duty to act responsibly towards not only our urban living spaces but also to the environment by not littering (2010: Fig. 1 and Fig. 2).
- After an hour clean-up, we returned to Kota Street with approximately twenty black bags full of material that we could potentially use to create with. The litter was then sorted: all plastic bottles/containers and plastic packets were kept and the rest was piled up and packed ready for the next Municipal refuse collection day. Due to the unsanitary nature of the material collected and the potential health risk for all members involved in the workshops, the plastic packets, plastic bottles and containers were all first cleaned and disinfected with some water and Sunlight soap and left to dry for the following day (2010: Fig. 3 and Fig. 4). Whilst sorting and cleaning the rubbish, it was communicated to the children the importance of recycling, sanitation (disinfecting rubbish to avoid illness) and the possibilities of waste as a valuable material.

Figure. 1: **Joza extension 9 'clean up' // 2010**

Photo: Bronwen Salton

Figure 2: **Joza extension 9 'clean up' // 2010**

Photo: Bronwen Salton

Figure. 3: **Joza, extension 9 landfill // 2010**

Photo: Bronwen Salton

Figure. 4: **Collected materials for workshops // 2010**

Photo: Bronwen Salton

Day 2:

- The next day we were all ready to start with the making of 'plastic flowers' and everyone was overly excited! After a quick demonstration on how to cut the flowers, pierce the bottle top and thread the wire, attach the colourful plastic netting to the inside and then spray paint for colour (see Appendix 2), I gave the children free creative reign and they got completely stuck in.
- I was completely awestruck with the energy and motivation of the group and with the fact that these children, who have never had any prior art and craft education in their schools, could be so passionate, innovative and creative with the materials.

- I was interested in the roles the children assumed whilst engaging freely with the workshop, as one of the older boys took it upon himself to be the designated hole puncher of the bottle caps. The majority of the group were under the age of six, and therefore this boy had all the youngsters line up while he hammered the two holes in the caps for them. Everyone was helping each other and the older children all assumed leadership positions and helped the 'babies' with their flowers.
- The first load of flowers made were used to decorate the bare fences of the home of Sakhuluntu, Vuyo's home, and because the children were on creative fire most of them made two or three flowers and were then able to take their creations home to their families (2010: Fig. 5 and Fig. 6).

Figure. 5: **Plastic Flowers // 2010**

Photo: Bronwen Salton

Figure. 6: **Plastic Flowers // 2010**

Photo: Bronwen Salton

Day 3:

- Inspired and motivated by the group's massive excitement, and willingness to learn and engage with me in the use of waste material, I suggested to Vuyo Booi that the Sakhuluntu Cultural Group be included in the Arkwork Collective and in the facilitation of the blooming of the Renewal Tree over the Standard Bank National Arts Festival. Booi was extremely excited by the idea, and suggested that we run these workshops in the build-up to The National Arts Festival and then again during The National Arts Festival for the *Art Factory 2010* (Appendix 4) workshops.

- Since the Sakhuluntu group is busy during the festival with their street performances, I decided to use the third day of the workshop to explain the construction of the Renewal Tree to the group and suggest that we make another batch of flowers that I would keep, and then during the National Arts Festival we would as a group go and 'bloom' the Renewal Tree. The group was excited about the idea and so we spent the third day making more flowers.

Outcomes

The workshops were an overwhelming success, and my objective of sharing, educating and enlightening the children of the Sakhuluntu Cultural Group on the fact that trash could be recycled, re-used and re-imagined through creative practise was achieved. The children furthered their cognitive skills of cutting with scissors, creating petal shapes in the bottles, assembling the different parts of the flower and ultimately completing their assigned task. The children had learnt about pollution, litter awareness and their responsibility in keeping their environment clean, as well as learning that trash still has value after its initial purpose has been fulfilled and that waste can be used in many creative ways. During the Standard Bank National Arts Festival the Sakhuluntu Cultural Group, *Art Factory 2010* (Appendix 4), with the help of the *Mixtape Public Arts Project* (Appendix 5), all had an opportunity to hang the flowers they had created on the Renewal Tree and helped in the facilitation of the gradual 'blooming' of the tree over the course of the festival.

Project 3

Recycled Plastic Windsock Workshop

Facilitators:

- Bronwen Salton
- Sven Christian
- Heidi Salzwedel
- Craig Groenewald
- Martin Lund
- Efese Betela
- Sinesipho Skoti ('Skoti')
- Mvuleni Ndumo

Goals and Objectives

Through my involvement with the *Mixtape Public Arts Project* (Appendix 5) as director, facilitator and co-ordinator of the Mixtape's Community Engagement workshops during the Standard Bank National Arts Festival 2010, I recognised how the goals and objectives of Mixtape could positively benefit the Sakhuluntu Cultural Group, *Art Factory 2010* (Appendix 4), and concurrently the work being done by the Arkwork Collective, and I decided to connect the various groups under the same umbrella, under my supervision, and to use waste material as a connecting conceptual thread through the group's activities and workshops. I proposed the idea of using recycled materials as the primary medium to create with all cultural groups involved, and swiftly researched and proposed various workshops and activities that could be cost-effectively achieved during the ten days of the National Arts Festival. Considering Mixtape's focus on public art interventions, I decided to incorporate the 'plastic flower making' for the *Renewal Tree* that I was constructing for the Arkwork Collective as one of three workshops focused on the up-cycling of waste materials. The second workshop I created centred around the making of up-cycled windsocks from recycled grocery plastic packets, and I decided to preliminarily run the workshop with the Sakhuluntu Cultural Group before the festival began as a 'test series' for the workshops during the festival.

The goals and objectives of the 'plastic windsock' workshop were similar to those of the 'plastic flower making' workshop, and were aimed at the building and construction of windsocks made from recycled plastic packets, but involved a different process to that of the plastic flowers. The objective of the series of workshops was to create windsocks using recycled plastic and then to test their success by flying them. The goal of this workshop was to use a different creative process in the use of waste materials, and ultimately to fly these windsocks publically to raise awareness around the group's activities.

Methods, Procedures and Techniques

The workshops took place over a three-day period and were planned and organised by myself, Heidi Salzwedel and Craig Groenewald. The tools and materials required in the creation and assembling of plastic windsocks are:

- Recycled plastic packets (Pick n Pay, Checkers, Shoprite, Spar etc)
- Large quantity of newspaper
- Electric Iron
- Scissors
- Wire and thick thread
- Thin pieces of bamboo.

I had resourced the pattern of a windsock from the internet as well as the melting of plastic with an iron and newspaper, and had experimented with the process before I ran the workshop. What I had learnt from the flower-making workshop was that it worked best to physically demonstrate the process to the children and have them imitate your actions, therefore I had to familiarise myself with the process so as to be able to explain it to the group. The procedures and techniques are as follows:

How to iron plastic bags using the pattern of a windsock

- First, cut the plastic bags down the side seams and remove the handle sections so that the plastic is doubled in thickness.
- Place thick layers of newspaper down on to the working surface and heat the iron to a medium heat. Make sure the newspaper surface is large enough to accommodate the size of windsock you wish to create.
- Place the plastic bags in such a way as to create a rectangle, ensuring that all plastic bags are overlapping by at least two centimetres.
- A second layer of newspaper is applied and then the plastic bags are heated and melted together with the application of an iron.
- Once all the layers have been melted together, cut the rectangle diagonally from one corner to the next to make two triangular shapes. Do this to make six or seven triangular shapes.
- Arrange the triangular shapes so that the long bases of the triangular shapes are all in line and all sides are overlapping by at least two centimetres.
- Apply newspaper on both sided of the plastic bags and melt sides together with the use of the iron. The shape is now a long piece of plastic with all the pointed pieces of the plastic free at the end.

Making of the circular frame

- A simple circular fame is then constructed with the use of thin bamboo and wire.
- Overlap the thin pieces of bamboo and fasten with wire.
- Join the bamboo pieces in such a way as to make a circle, fasten tightly and securely with wire.

Finishing the windsock

- The windsock is then folded around the frame and melted securely to the frame with the use of the iron.
- The seam line is then also melted as to ensure the windsock is secured.
- String is attached to the frame in four 'corners' of the circular frame in order for the windsock to be hung and flown.

Day 1:

- The first day of the workshop transpired much like the first day of the flower-making workshop, in which I demonstrated the process to the group and then they imitated my actions. Due to the intermediate level of difficulty of the process, and the fact that young children were using dangerous equipment such as irons, we worked through each process together. First I demonstrated a step in the process and then the children copied the process under the supervision of the older children.
- The children assumed a similar ranking as they did in the flower-making workshops, where the older children took on the more technical and difficult processes so as to help and assist the 'babies' in the group.
- On day one, we successfully completed the first six steps of the process and we repeated these six steps until our time was up. At the end of day one we had successfully made numerous triangular shapes ready for assembly the next day.
- The group mastered the techniques of the process with ease, like they did in the flower-making workshops, and after the first demonstration the children continued with the steps with little help.

Day 2:

- On the second day of the workshop we completed the seventh and final stage of the windsock pattern.
- The next step was the making of the circular fames, and once again I demonstrated the process and the children copied and completed the task.
- At the end of day two, we had completed the making of half of the windsocks and therefore we were ready to complete and fly them the next day.

Day 3:

- On the third and final day of the workshop we completed the construction of the windsocks and prepared to fly them.
- Once the windsocks were strung up we looked for high-rise structures to fly the windsocks off, however, due to the significant lack of trees in the location, we found ourselves with a lack of spaces to hang the windsocks off.
- Ultimately, we managed to hang two off the telephone poles outside 9 Kota Street, and the rest of the windsocks were flown by the children, who manually flew them by running around and flying them like kites (2010: Fig. 7 and Fig. 8).

Outcomes

The outcomes of the series of workshops were a success and fulfilled all the desired goals and objectives. The Sakhuluntu group tackled the processes involved with this workshop with creative innovation and passion, and fulfilled all the tasks put forward to them. Through this process the children learnt a new way of re-envisioning waste materials and had a lot of fun making and flying the plastic windsocks. The windsocks, like the plastic flowers, were used as examples for the workshops I ran during the Standard Bank Arts Festival 2010 with Art Factory (Appendix 4), and also represented the Sakhuluntu Cultural Group in the activities and public interventions done during the festival. After the windsocks were flown, Vuyo Booi realised the attention they drew from the local community and awareness was created surrounding the positive and educative initiatives of Sakhuluntu.

Figure. 7: **Windsock raised at Sakhuluntu // 2010**

Photo: Bronwen Salton

Figure. 8: **Windsock raised at Sakhuluntu // 2010**

Photo: Bronwen Salton

APPENDIX 4

Art Factory 2010

The Art Factory, formed in 2009 by Merran Marr and Vuyo Booi, is a partnership between the Sakhuluntu Cultural Group (Appendix 3) and the Standard Bank National Arts Festival, and focuses on the upliftment of the children who 'busk' on the streets during the ten days of the festival period. The 'white-clay-faced' miming statuette boys have become a ubiquitous and intriguing feature of the National Arts Festival over the past eight years. At first their presence on the streets was received well due to their inventive costumes and impressive skills in miming, but, after the first two years, the novelty wore off and the children were ignored and excluded, seen as 'beggers' and a nuisance to the festival goers. (2011: Fig. 1–6: taken by Sophie Marcus Smith)

Figures: 1-6 **Art Factory Photo-shoot // 2010**
Photo: Sophie Marcus Smith

Realising their need and acknowledging their efforts to be included in the festivities, Merran Marr and Vuyo Booi started up the Art Factory programme under the umbrella of the Sakhuluntu Cultural group, with the support of the Festival Director Ismail Mahomed. According to Mahomed (as cited in Hemphill, 2009):

> Street busking is a feature of all major arts festivals. Over the years, street "busking" by children in Grahamstown has evolved as its own art form. Hundreds of children line the pavements desperately wanting to become part of the Festival experience. The Festival has responded to this challenge by offering training to groups of young people in different kinds of skills which will assist them artistically and which will also address some of the many socio-economic challenges in the city.

The Art Factory has over the last three years invited and recruited the boys off the streets to be involved in the workshops, with the added incentive of receiving a nutritious lunch. The workshops provide various educative life skills, focused in music, art and drama, in an effort to help increase the professional level of their performances, thus enabling them to not only raise more monetary funds for themselves but also raise awareness for themselves as a legitimate part of the National Arts Festival's street performances. According to Mahomed (as cited in Hemphill, 2009):

> Whilst the Festival is essentially about celebrating our cultures and our arts, we cannot ignore the responsibility that we all have to meet the many challenges of our society. South African artists have a long history of social activism. The Festival's development programmes create a happy marriage for growing the arts and for building our societies through the arts.

The goals and objectives of the Art Factory programme are to provide a source of enthusiasm and purpose for the children, who may be feeling unmotivated as a result of their circumstances, as well as to provide the participants with a cooked lunch, as most of the participants are busking in order to feed themselves and their families. The goals of the workshops held are to increase the artistic and performative knowledge of the participants so that they can actively put their newly-acquired skills into practice and earn a bit more money during the festival. According to Merran:

> We prefer to have children in a safe space where they can be fed and taught skills than have them on the streets. We encourage supporters of the project to drop off food items at The Art Factory rather than to throw coins at the children

in the streets. Unsupervised on the streets, the children with money are easily exploited.

Each year the Sakhuluntu Art Factory team up with another Eastern Cape local performative cultural group from Bathurst called 'Trapps Valley'. The Trapps Valley cultural group are invited each year to join the street performances and workshops held by Art Factory during the National Arts Festival.

Works Cited

Hemphill, G. 2009. 'Phezulu takes street art to new heights'. *Cue Press.* South Africa: Rhodes University Journalism Departement. [07/08/2011].

APPENDIX 5

Mixtape Public Arts Project

The Mixtape Public Arts Project aimed to create a platform for engagement with public arts in South Africa by bringing together artists from divergent backgrounds and working in a variety of media through a series of focused projects and events that would take place during the Standard Bank National Arts Festival 2010, held annually in Grahamstown, Eastern Cape, South Africa. Mixtape functioned to enable discussion, collaboration and production amongst South African cultural producers, and aimed to facilitate visual art performance and any form of performance or exhibition that occurs outside of conventional gallery spaces, allowing for the increased accessibility of contemporary art in South Africa: working towards building an arts-aware public while broadening the practice of the emergent and constantly-developing South African artistic community (Stupart 2010).

Social Responsibility

Mixtape as an entity was intended to address a fundamental issue facing contemporary art forms in South Africa, that of the emergent post-apartheid gulf between the majority of cultural producers and the avenues through which they are given the ability to express and present their ideas. The networking and collaboration that Mixtape aimed to foster would be extend into communities where artmaking is not a part of education or everyday life. These previously isolated and marginalised communities would be a focus of the Mixtape project but:

> As opposed to the traditional, often paternalistic models of going into a community and dictating artistic working methods and/or outcomes, this aimed be a process of sharing skills and ideas and working towards a new cultural synthesis that truly represents the authorial voices of South Africa today, while still sharing the skills of both highly educated and self-taught artists and artisans, to the benefit of all involved. (Stupart 2010)

Aims

- To widen the South African public understanding of what art is and encourage the idea that art can be everywhere and anything, fun, accessible and interactive.

- To share the formal and conceptual knowledge of experienced and/or educated visual artists with members of disadvantaged communities, and to provide a recognised platform for their expressions.
- To encourage South African visual artists to engage in the public realm and to make work that is interactive, site-specific and legible to a broader South African audience.
- To integrate modes of art-making including film, performance, intervention and the plastic arts, so that the National Arts Festival can celebrate *all* arts, without compartmentalising modes of production.
- To provide a new platform for meaningful community arts projects centred around public art.
- To give rise to a space where openness, collaboration, discussion and workshopping is encouraged amongst South African artists.
- To provide a space for collaboration between South African visual artists and cultural producers from diverse backgrounds

Objectives

- To take ten to fifteen artists from Cape Town to the 2010 National Arts Festival, where they would work with a Grahamstown contingent to implement a range of projects – all outside official art spaces. These projects would range from curated exhibitions on the Village Green to art happenings in Grahamstown's townships, with absolutely anything, including transient sculptures, outdoor film screenings, murals, street art, billboards, interactive performance art and anything in between.
- To engage in a year-long process of education, collaboration and sharing between a group of Cape Town artists and cultural producers. Weekly meetings would be established where a core group of young artists would discuss ideas, processes and practicalities of their public projects for 2010 Festival. These meetings would also be attended periodically by artists who are experienced in working in the public sphere, who would lead workshops, give advice and share their experiences with the artists

involved. Everyone involved would then be working together to make, curate, script and/or perform their work.

- To engage with cultural producers based in Grahamstown, and to engage them in ideas of public arts within their own communities, particularly during the National Arts Festival. The project would encourage a contingent of participants who would work from Grahamstown on a series of their own contributions, all the while communicating and collaborating with the core Cape Town group. There would also be constant communication between Cape Town and Grahamstown regarding appropriate sites, methods and content so that Grahamstown-based artists would maintain an important role in contributing to the National Arts Festival and artists from elsewhere in the country would remain aware and considerate of the environment in which we are working.
- To run a series of workshops over three months in disadvantaged communities in Grahamstown around the theme of Public Art, where artists, crafters and interested community members would meet with the project organisers and other participants to discuss, plan and collaborate on public arts projects, culminating in an intensive workshop during the festival where these projects would be realised, working with the other participants from both Cape Town and Grahamstown .
- To run short, focused, object-based workshops in Cape Town's disadvantaged communities, where project organisers, participants and community members would work together to plan and construct public arts projects within the communities, to be taken up to the National Arts Festival with the Cape Town contingent.
- To encourage festival goers to venture outside their comfort zones while they are attending the National Arts Festival, engaging in more of Grahamstown's, and South Africa's, cultures. Selected events, exhibitions and happenings would take place in the townships on the outskirts of Grahamstown, with transport to and from the events from a central point of the festival. Ideally, similar transport would be provided for members of these communities to selected events in town.

Works Cited

Stupart, L. 2010. 'Mixtape Public Arts Project Proposal'. Personal copy.

Year: 2010

Month: 20 April 2010 – 13 July 2010

Project: Sakhuluntu, Art Factory, Trapps Valley- in collaboration with Mixtape Public Arts "Transitory Spaces" Project.

Venue: 09 Kota Street, Extension 9 Joza eRhini township, International Library of African Music (ILAM), Three Chimneys Farm.

Directors of Sakhuluntu and Art Factory :

- **Merran Marr**
- **Vuyo Booi**

Collaborators Art Factory:

Workshops

- Mixtape
- Trapps Valley
- Bronwen Salton
- Heidi Salzwedle
- Efese Betela
  Mvuleni Ndumo
- Whitney Turner
- Genevieve Louw
- Gareth Morris-Davies
- Hannah Lewis
- Karena Liebetrau

Giant Puppets

UNIMA crew
Daya Heller (UNIMA)
Sinesipho Skoti ("Skoti")
Mvuleni Ndumo
Hendrick Goliath
Luxolo Qokose

Directors of Mixtape: Linda Stupart and Craig Groenewald.

Collaborators Mixtape:

Grahamstown

- Bronwen Salton
- Heidi Salzwedle
- Rachel Baasch
- Sven Christian
- Whitney Turner

Cape Town

Tony East

Hannah Lewis

James Randle

Karena Liebetrau

Genevieve Louw

- Gareth Morris-Davies
- James King

Mixtape Public Arts Project: 'Transitory Spaces'

For the intention of this thesis, I will be focusing on the recycled plastic projects that I co-ordinated, facilitated and was involved in with regards to the MIxtape Public Arts Project. These projects are: Workshop 1: 'Plastic Flower Workshop' and 'Plastic Windsock Workshop' and Workshop 3: 'Plastic Clothing Workshop'.

Goals and Objectives

Mixtape's 'Transitory Spaces' project aimed to activate various areas in Grahamstown that hold historical, social and cultural significance through public interventions. My objectives in implementing recycled '*plastic flowers' and 'plastic windsock'* projects with the Sakhuluntu and Art Factory organisations in Grahamstown were to provide a space in which creativity, environmental education and the re-imagining of waste materials could occur in a positive, enlightening and inclusive way. The aim of the workshops was to create 'plastic flowers' and 'plastic windsocks' during the secluded Art Factory workshops, and then as a group 'bloom' the Arkwork Renewal Tree and launch the windsocks in various public spaces. These public participatory interventions aimed to not only raise awareness of the activities of the Sakhuluntu, Art Factory and Trapps Valley organisations, but also create a sense of inclusion

of these groups in the festivities surrounding the National Arts Festival 2010. The '*plastic clothing'* workshops were created by Heidi Salzwedle, and aimed at creating a space for the Art Factory participants to re-imagine their 'look', while following the concept of using waste materials to create new costumes and props to enhance their aesthetic as well as to attract attention to their performance by 'jazzing' up their outfits.

Method and Procedures

The 2010 Art Factory 'recycled plastic' workshops were co-ordinated and facilitated by myself and Heidi Salzwedle in collaboration with the Mixtape Public Arts Project. The process in which the workshops take place requires the first day of the National Arts Festival to be a day of recruitment and registration, in which the facilitators (myself, Heidi Salzwedle and Mvuleni) take to the streets to locate and invite the 'white-faced' performers to be involved in the Art Factory workshops. Mvuleni, being a creative, energetic and vibrant isiXhosa local, was particularly brilliant in 'breaking the ice' with the participants and clearly explaining to the potential participants our intentions and the focus of the workshops. After the informal street performers who wanted to participate in Art Factory were recruited, the group walked down to the International Library of African Music (ILAM), the base for Art Factory workshops, and a register of the participants was created while the week's workshops were explained to the group. The Sakhuluntu Cultural Group and Trapps Valley from Bathurst were also present for the introduction, so the street performer participants already gained the sense that they were a part of something big, inclusive and focused on 'their' community. Lunch was provided for all who were present and the group were encouraged to come again at 9am to ILAM for the commencing of the workshops.

Schedule

In addition to the plastic flower and windsock making workshops that ran before the Festival, Mixtape intended to collaborate with the existing workshop holders at the ILAM centre at Rhodes University and Sakhuluntu in Extension 9 during the Festival, with a series of five three-day workshops focusing on recyclable crafts (Workshop 3), drama and dance (Workshop 6). There were two workshops per day, the morning session taking place from 11h00–13h00, and the afternoon session from 14h00–16h00. (Please see the schedule below for the running order of the workshops.)

Workshop 1

20 – 23 June 2010: RECYCLED PLASTIC 'FLOWER' AND 'WINDSOCK' MAKING WORKSHOP (RUN BY BRONWEN SALTON, WHITNEY TURNER AND HEIDI SALZWEDLE) @ ILAM

Day 1: Introducing two workshops, demonstrating techniques and processes.

Day 2: Making flowers and windsocks out of recyclable plastic materials.

Day 3: Making plastic flowers and windsock frames.

Day 4: Installing kites from the first day at Fringe spaces

Workshop 2

23 – 25 June 2010: RECYCLABLE ART WORKSHOPS (RUN BY GENEVIEVE LOUW AND TEAM) @ Sakhuluntu Extension 9 Joza.

Day 1: Building a model of Grahamstown out of trash.

Day 2: Building animals out of trash, focusing on the rural animals around them, donkeys and donkey carts.

Day 3: Display the sculptures publically in Kota Street, Extension 9 Joza for the community to admire.

Workshop 3

26 – 27 June 2010: RECYCLED PLASTIC CLOTHING WORKSHOP (RUN BY HEIDI SALZWEDLE AND TEAM)

Day 1: Introducing the workshop, demonstrating techniques and processes then cutting out pattern of clothing.

Day 2: Ironing the seams of the patterns together, decorating the clothing.

Workshop 4

26 – 29 June 2010: DRAWING AND MONOPRINT/PAPER PLANE WORKSHOP (RUN BY GENEVIEVE LOUW AND TEAM) @ SAKHULUNTU EXTENSION 9, JOZA

Day 1: Observational drawing and creative writing exercises.

Day 2: Monoprinting.

Day 3: Making paper planes with drawings/written pieces and then stringing them up along Kota Street, Extension 9 Joza.

Workshop 5

30 June – 2 July 2010: MUSICAL INSTUMENTS AND DRUMMING PARADE WORKSHOP (RUN BY GENEVIEVE LOUW AND TEAM AND DEVELOPERS OF THE SAKHULUNTU CULTURAL GROUP)

Day 1: Make musical instruments out of recyclable materials.

Day 2: Rehearsal with instruments.

Day 3: Drumming along High Street and at Fringe spaces.

Workshop 6

3 – 4 July 2010: THEATRE WORKSHOP (RUN BY NIC DAVIES AND JAMES MCGREGOR)

Day 1: A series of five electives run in small groups during the day, consisting of:

1. Dance technique
2. Acting and vocal technique
3. Staging
4. Stage Design with recyclable objects.
5. Scripting

Day 2: Continuation of electives, and rehearsal.

Day 3: The skills learned will be used to perform during the Closing Procession of the National Arts Festival.

Art Factory Workshops 2010

Method, Procedures and Techniques

Workshop 1

Recycled Plastic 'Flower' and 'Windsock' making workshops @ ILAM

- Introducing two workshops, demonstrating techniques and processes.
- Making flowers and windsocks out of recyclable plastic materials.
- Making plastic flowers and windsock frames.
- Installing kites from the first day at Fringe spaces
- Participants engaged in the process

Plastic Flower Making Workshop Methods: (see Appendix 2)

Plastic Windsock Workshop Methods: (see Appendix 3)

The plastic flower and plastic windsock workshops were attended by participants of Sahhuluntu, Art Factory and Trapps Valley, which resulted in a large number of participants, approximately 35–40 people. Due to the fact that both the Sakhuluntu and Traps Valley dance performers were constantly in and out, the number of people working on the plastic flowers and plastic windsocks fluctuated, which meant that there were approximately 15–25 participants working on the flowers and windsocks at a time. The method, procedures and techniques related to the making of the flowers and windsocks were explained to the groups on the first day of the workshops, and I had examples from the two previous workshops I had run with Sakhuluntu so that the participants could have a better understanding of what I was explaining. Much like in the Sakhuluntu workshops, I needed only to explain and show by example the process once, and the group felt confident enough to get started and complete the task at hand. The windsocks created were fun, colourful, expressive and unique, and we all had a great time in creating and installing the flowers and windsocks. (2010: Fig. 1-4).

Figure. 1: **Plastic Flower workshops // 2010**

Photo: Bronwen Salton

Figure. 2: **Plastic Flower workshops // 2010**

Photo: Bronwen Salton

Figure. 3: **Plastic Windsock workshops // 2010**

Photo: Bronwen Salton

Figure. 4: **Plastic Windsock Workshops // 2010**

Photo: Bronwen Salton

Workshop 3

Plastic Clothing Workshop

The workshops took place over a two-day period and were planned and organised by myself and Heidi Salzwedle.

- Introducing the workshop, demonstrating techniques and processes then cutting out pattern of clothing.
- Ironing the seams of the patterns together, decorating the clothing.

The tools and materials required in the creation and assembling of plastic windsocks are:

- Recycled plastic packets (Pick n Pay, Checkers, Shoprite, Spar etc)
- Black plastic bin liners x2
- Electric iron
- Scissors.

The making of recycled plastic clothing was formulated through experimentation by myself and Heidi Salzwedle, and by trial and error we devised a successful method of creating wearable plastic clothing by using an existing piece of clothing (ie: shirt or trousers) as the pattern. The process required a similar method to that of the windsock as the plastic needed to be ironed and melted/'sewed' together.

How to make plastic clothing

- First, cover working surface with a thick layer of newspaper and set the iron to a medium degree of heat.
- Tear off two sheets of the black plastic bin liners from the roll and lay them out on the working surface. Cover with newspaper and iron gently so that the two sides of the bin liner are melted together. Do this to both sheets of plastic.
- Use the desired item of clothing (in this case a T-shirt) and lay it out flat and neatly on to the black plastic.
- With the scissors, cut out the outline of the T-shirt item, but with a margin of approximately 5cm, and do this on both pieces of black plastic. As a result you

should have two identical cutouts of the clothing item (one piece for the front and one for the back).

- Using the grocery bags, cut out shapes and letters to decorate the two cut out pieces; this is done by using newspaper and the iron to melt on the decorations.
- Place the cut out pieces on top of each other so that they are aligned and the decorated sides are face to face. Cover with newspaper and melt together the seam lines.
- With scissors, cut the melted plastic so that there is an opening for the neck, arms and waist, and turn the T-shirt inside out so that the decorations are on the outside.
- Put on the T-shirt to fit.

During the Art Factory workshops, the procedures used by workshop facilitators were much like what I described in Appendices 2 and 3, in that the process was demonstrated to the group of participants and then was imitated by the participants with the knowledge they has gained by viewing the process. This was the case with the plastic clothing workshops: the participants took on the process with full creativity and passion and were successful in their tasks (2010: Fig. 5 and Fig. 6).

Figure. 5: **Plastic Clothing workshop** (Heidi Salzwedle) **// 2010** Photo: Bronwen Salton

Figure. 6: **Plastic Clothing workshop** (Vuyo Booi & Sakhuluntu boys) **// 2010** Photo: Bronwen Salton

Outcomes

The flowers and windsocks not only emphasised the significance of these cultural groups, in terms of the history of the National Arts Festival, but also opened these spaces as legitimate performance and workshop sites during the National Arts Festival, being actively utilised by various marginalised organisations participating in the Festival, such as the Sakhuluntu Cultural Group, Art Factory, and the Arkwork Collective. The plastic flowers were hung by Sakhuluntu, Art Factory and Trapps Valley participants on the Arkworks *Renewal Tree* located on the Drosty Lawns as part of the intended public participatory 'blooming' of the public sculpture. The plastic windsocks were launched at major street performance sites of the Festival, which included the Village Green, ILAM, the Drodsty Lawns, and High Street in Grahamstown. The plastic clothing made by the Art Factory participants formed part of their 'new look', and they proudly wore their costumes as they performed their newly-acquired skills in miming and performance, gained through the workshops provided by the MIxtape duo Nic Davies and James McGregor. Considering the enormity of the task of collaborating with such a large and diverse number of people and organisations, most of whom had never done community engagement on such a large scale, the extended fifteen days of the National Arts Festival 2010 were a great success. Much was learnt by all participants involved: organisers, directors, workshop co-ordinators and learners, and the experience taught us all the benefits of open communication, teamwork and meticulous organisation.

APPENDIX 6

The Masibambane Crochet Collective

In the beginning of 2011, I had wanted to continue working collectively with members of the community and had realised that, in order for me to build up a substantial quantity of the crochet motif I had created and wished to multiply, I knew I had to employ a number of people to help me achieve this. In early January 2011 I was contacted by Thabisa Belwana, a friend of mine from the Hlani Township, asking if I had any employment for her as I had previously found small paying jobs for her in the Rhodes Fine Art Department. I communicated to Thabisa that I had no formal employment for her but that I was looking for some people to informally employ to help me crochet black plastic bags, and I invited her to meet with me for coffee so that we could discuss the terms and conditions of the employment I had for her. On our first coffee work date, I communicated to Thabisa what I wished to achieve: I explained that I was crocheting recycled plastic packets and that I needed the help of approximately five people to achieve my goals. I explained that I would need her to find four other possible members in her community that she could trust and suggest their inclusion in my business venture, with the opportunity for income generation for all members involved.

In order to employ members of the community to help me achieve my artistic and aesthetic goals for my Master's practical submission, I had to create an equal and shared experience, and therefore I felt that I needed to set up a situation in which I could help the people who were helping me to achieve their goals and aspirations. I communicated to Thabisa that I did not see this opportunity as a one way interaction, and suggested the idea of starting up a recycled plastic crochet collective, in which all members of the group would work collectively on the creation of a small business in which we could create functional objects to sell over the upcoming National Arts Festival 2011, and that this business would belong to all of us. With the extensive research I had conducted through online sources, I had become aware of the unlimited potential of crochet as a medium to create fun, functional, novelty items of value, such as crocheted bags, placemats, cell phone covers and tablecloths, as well as hair and jewellery items.

I explained to Thabisa the various roles required in order for the initiative to work, and communicated to her that I was prepared to employ her, at a small monthly income of R150, to manage and organise the collective workings of the two business undertakings. I would be entering into a business relationship with her and the group, I would be providing all crochet hooks, scissors and plastic packets to start the process off, and I would be providing monetary compensation for all work done for me, at a price of R1.50 per shape crocheted. Thabisa approached five women to be a part of the initiative, and all agreed to come on board and agreed to all the terms, payment and conditions, and after we had assembled a group, Thabisa and I wrote up a contract that stipulated all the terms and conditions we had agreed upon and we both signed the document.

Initiative 1: Commision of Black Plastic Crochet Motif

Year: 2011

M**onths:** January 2011 – April 2012

Venue: 33 Nonzube Street, Xolani Location, Rhodes University Sculpture Department.

Director: Bronwen Salton

Organiser and Facilitator: Thabisa Belwana

Members of Masibambane:

- Cynthia Belwana
- Capt Cynth Dayante
- Boniwe
- Nandipa
- Silvia
- Cynthia art dep

Goals and Objectives

The objective of the initiative was to create a successful business and working relationship between me and the five members of the newly formed crochet collective, in which I would provide all tools and materials for the commission of the crochet motif that I had designed,

at an agreed-upon price of R1.50 per shape crocheted. The goal of the initiative was to set up a production line of the crochet motif so that I was collecting and paying for a significant quantity of the crochet motifs per month. Due to my need for so many motifs, an objective of the initiative was to maintain the production of the motif for at least twelve month. One of the objectives of the initiative was, as a group, to begin with the experimentation and use of crochet and plastic to create functional items that we could potentially sell at the Standard Bank National Arts Festival 2011.

Methods, Procedures and Techniques

I asked Thabisa if she could crochet, and she said that she could not but that all of the women in the group could, and were actually quite skilled in the fibre art. I proceeded by suggesting that I would teach her the basic stitches of crochet and that of the motif, and invited her to join me daily in my studio space to learn whilst I continued with my practical work. Thabisa wholeheartedly agreed and suggested we start the very next day, testimony to her willingness to jump in, learn and help me get this initiative started. In the two weeks that followed, I shared the basic techniques of plastic-bag crochet to Thabisa, much like I had taught the individuals in the Arkwork Collective plastic crochet workshop (Appendix 1), and taught her the pattern to crochet the motif I wanted the group to crochet for me so that Thabisa could share this with the group.

How to Crochet a Black Plastic 'Barnacle' Motif

First, cut up a black plastic bin liner to create one continuous strand of plastic yarn (plarn): see Appendix 1. (Also see Appendix 1 for crochet abbreviations for following pattern.)

Pattern

- Slip knot on to hook.
- Ch 7
- Join with sl st into 1st ch to form ring
- Ch3 then dc into ring all way round and join with sl st to join 3rd ch in foundation st.
- Ch3, dc into each dc from previous round, and continue round like a spiral until shape and desired length is achieved.

By the end of February 2011, production of the crochet motif was in full swing, and Thabisa had become an intermediate crocheter and had learnt the basic motif that she then taught the group.

For the first four months (February – May), I met with the group fortnightly (on Mondays) at the Salvation Army church and home of Capt Cynth. In these meetings, we as a group discussed the progress of the initiative, and I made enquiries into the happiness and well-being of the women with regards to the initiative. We talked about stitches and needle sizes, and we clarified and solved any problems that arose during these meets. On the Friday before each meeting, Thabisa would SMS me the quantity of motifs that each lady had crocheted and the amount that I owed each of them: we had made this arrangement so that I could organise the exact amount of money for each lady before we met on the Mondays. After every Monday session I would collect the crocheted motifs completed in the two weeks past, write out the appropriate receipts in correlation with the invoices Thabisa had written out for me, and pay each lady the amount that I owed them.

Masibambane Crochet Collective

During the 'Monday meetings' we discussed the formulation of a business, and I encouraged the women to start thinking about the nature of the business while experimenting with plastic crochet techniques to develop functional items that we could potentially market and sell at the Standard Bank National Arts Festival 2011. I provided the group with source material from books and internet resources on the contemporary use of crochet to make functional and sellable objects as inspiration for their ideas. I felt it was important that the group come up with the initial ideas for the business and follow their own unique innate aesthetic.

I had communicated to the group that our small business had to have a name and that it was up to the group to collectively think of a name that best represented the aims and goals of the project. The group decided that the project group be called The Masibambane Crochet Collective, where the isiXhosa translation for the word Masibambane describes 'let's hold this project up'. I felt humbled that the women of Masibambane chose to

represent themselves in this light, communicating a sense of togetherness, inspiration, faith and hope for the success of the initiative.

Functional Crochet Items

Plastic Crochet Mobile Phone Covers

The first idea that emerged from the group was a functional take on the non-functional crochet motifs that I was commissioning the group to make. Sylvia Mentjies had approached Thabisa with the idea that the crochet 'barnacle' motif looked like and could function as a mobile phone cover. Sylvia's idea was positively innovative, and so we began to make funky recycled plastic cell phone covers of different sizes to accommodate different makes of mobile phones, e.g. Nokia, Samsung, BlackBerry. We collected and incorporated recycled grocery packets to add colour and texture into the cell phone covers (2011: Fig. 1 and Fig. 2).

Figure. 1: **Masibamabne plastic crochet phone covers // 2011** Photo: Bronwen Salton

Figure. 2: **Masibamabne plastic crochet phone covers // 2011** Photo: Bronwen Salton

Plastic Crochet Placemats

I suggested that we try and make placemats, and showed the ladies how to make a granny square (Appendix 1), and so the production of these squares began.

Egg Box Frames

Our next step was to explore a different waste material to create functional eco-deco objects, e.g. glass, paper, polystyrene, plastic bottles. I had acquired a fantastic 'do-it-yourself' home eco-deco book that explored the use of various recycled items to create functional household items. Thabisa and I agreed that we would attempt to make a household hanging frame and mirror made out of recycled egg boxes. In order to obtain a substantial amount of material to use, Thabisa and I went out and collected trash from all major waste landfills, dumpsites and business in Grahamstown. Once again I went out to the Grahamstown landfill, accompanied by Thabisa, to conduct business with the informal waste collectors as I had done for the construction of the Arkwork Circus TFGGS 'Renewal Tree' (Appendix 2). The business Thabisa and I wished to conduct with the group was that of the collection of egg boxes from the landfill for an agreed-upon price. The communication with the group was significantly more effective with Thabisa at my side; she conducted most of the business in isiXhosa and then translated and explained the agreement we had reached. Similarly to my last experience with the informal waste collecting group, they were highly motivated and said we should return the next day, same time, to collect the egg boxes, and had agreed upon the wage of twenty-five cents (R0.25) per unspoiled egg box collected. The following day Thabisa and I collected approximately three hundred egg boxes from the group at a overall payment of seventy-five Rands (R75.00). We had successfully sourced more than enough egg boxes to begin the process of making the egg box 'flower' frames.

How to make a Egg Box 'Flower' Frame

The eco-deco book provided step-by-step instructions on how to make the frames, and I had suggested that Thabisa take full responsibility for them, allowing her unlimited creative freedom with the designing and making of the product. Thabisa joined me in my studio at the Rhodes Fine Art Department every day for seven weeks and produced a total of ten egg box 'flower' mirror frames (2011: Fig. 3).

- Enlarge oval frame template and cut two shapes out of cardboard.
- Cut the smaller oval out from the centre of one of the shapes. Glue the two sides together.

- Cut all the cups from the egg carton, leaving the taller central parts intact.
- Trim the egg carton shapes into flowers. You will need at least 50 shapes
- Paint the base of the frame as well as the flowers. Once dried, start gluing the flowers on to the frame.
- Glue the cut mirror into the centre.

Figure. 3: **Masibambane egg carton mirror frame // 2011**

Photo: Bronwen Salton

By May 2011 an influx of black crochet 'barnacles' was coming in in leaps and bounds and I was paying out a substantial amount of money to the group on a monthly basis; everyone was satisfied with the working arrangement and were collectively working hard towards our goal of launching the Masibambane eco-deco line at the National Arts Festival 2011.

Masibambane – (sub-) Commission

In May 2011, I was approached by a Master's Choreography student, Gavin Krastin, offering me the opportunity to build a site-specific sculptural installation to accompany his final Master's Choreography production that would be showcased during the National Arts Festival 2011. Krastin described the concept underpinning work that he was doing and

described his vision of the site-specific art installation made completely out of crocheted plastic bags, in the colours of the South African flag. He described the creation of a virus or growth, something beautiful yet ominous, spreading and connecting the multiple performances happening simultaneously in multiple venues on the site, which was the Nombulelo High School in Joza. Krastin explained that he had been given a budget and would be able to pay for all the materials and labour in the creation of the installation.

I accepted the offer and immediately approached the women of Masibambane to see if they would be willing to crochet a mass quantity of plastic for a fair amount of money. We, as a group, decided that the women Cynthia Dyandyi, Boniwe Lamani and Sylvia Mentjie would do the crochet commission for Gavin Krastin, and Thabisa, Cynthia Belwana and Cynthia Donyli would continue with the work and preparation for the National Arts Festival.

Krastin delivered a mass amount of beautiful, colourful plastic (green, blue, yellow, red, white and black), and the creation process of the 'growth-like' installation had begun. After witnessing the striking colours of the plastic Krastin had purchased, Thabisa and I had decided that it was essential and beneficial that we travel to Port Elizabeth and purchase an assortment of colourful plastic for the Masibambane products. Initially I did not want to purchase plastic, as I felt it would defeat the purpose of focusing on recycled plastic as a medium which supported the economic sustainability of the project, however, I had come to the conclusion that including fun colours in the crochet products would only increase the appearance, value and marketability of the crocheted products. Though research and telephonic communication with Henrose Plastics in Port Elizabeth with regards to the cost and quantity of plastic, I realised that the expense was manageable and the quantity of plastic we would be purchasing was substantial and beneficial to the project.

Amazingly colourful cell phone covers, squares for placemats and egg box frames were all being made with an immense amount of creative energy, and progress was accelerating better than I expected. Members of the group were excited by the products being made and I was in awe of the innate creativity flowing like colourful light from the hearts and minds of the women as they encouraged each other and lifted their project up.

Ironed Plastic Book Covers

Thabisa and I both felt that we needed something else to add to our merchandise to further impress our potential market. I suggested to Thabisa that we employ the newspaper ironing plastic technique, which I had used for the Sakhuluntu, Art Factory–Mixtape 2010 'plastic windsock' project (Appendix 3), to design a range of ironed plastic covered book sets. Due to the fact that the other members of the group were all heavily tasked, I took to the making of a line of colourful ironed plastic covered book sets to complete the 2011 start-up range of eco-deco items that Masibambane would be launching over the National Arts Festival.

I used the same techniques (Appendix 3) to create beautiful free form design 'wrapping paper' which I then used to cover a variety of feint and margin counter books of different sizes. I then packaged them in sets of four of each size ready to be sold at festival (2011: Fig. 4 and Fig. 5).

Figure. 4: **Masibambane Ironed Plastic Book Sets // 2011**

Photo: Bronwen Salton

Figure. 5: **Masibambane Ironed Plastic Book Sets // 2011**

Photo: Bronwen Salton

Standard Bank National Arts Festival 2011

Space

The National Arts Festival was approaching hastily, and I had yet to find a free stall space for Masibambane to sell our wares, as it is heavily expensive to rent stall space during the festival. I approached Injairu Kulundu, who I had collaborated with on the Arkwork Circus in 2010 (Appendix 2), as she currently worked at the Environmental Learning and Research Centre 'Sustainability Commons' on the Rhodes University Campus. I introduced the Masibambane Crochet Collective initiative to her and voiced our need for space to sell during the festival in the hope that she could assist me. Kulundu informed me that the 'Sustainability Commons' were running a series of lectures and activities surrounding Environmental Conservation and Sustainability at the Commons during festival and were opening up the space for 'green' informal traders in the local and surrounding Eastern Cape communities to sell their products. Kulundu welcomed Masibambane to be a part of the eco-community during festival and informed me that a space would be made available for us free of charge. Masibambane had found a space, our products were near to completion and all seemed to be falling into place nice and neatly.

Masibambane Products

Thabisa and I photographed our products, created Masibambane posters and business cards, considered the presentation, packaging and pricing of our inventory, and were ready for the National Arts Festival to begin.

- Crochet Plastic Mobile Phone Covers @ R20.00 each
- Recycled Flower Egg Box Frames @ R xx each
- Colourful Ironed Plastic Book Sets @ R150.00 each
- Crochet Plastic Placemat: Due to time constraints and technical complications we were only able to make one placemat, and so we decided to use the one that we had made as an example of a product that we would make on order to any member of the public that wished to commission the item. However, a customer during the festival wished to buy the one we had and Thabisa sold the placemat @ R250.00.

Outcomes

During the ten days of the National Arts Festival, Thabisa, armed with a money box and a receipts book, manned the Masibambane stall and conducted our business like a true business woman. The cell phone covers were a favourite, as were the book sets. However, the awful, and at one point critical, amount of rain that accompanied the National Arts Festival put a slight dampener on the level of exposure Masibambane had hoped for. Owing to the fact that the Sustainability Commons was a completely new venue on the National Arts Festival programme, coupled with the extreme weather conditions, the venue unfortunately experienced a dismal amount of festival goers passing through to look at our products (2011: Fig. 6). Nonetheless we did extremely well and made a substantial amount of capital, enough to cover all of our costs and still make a profit, a sign of successfully-made products and a well-managed business. Masibambane received a fair amount of publicity during the festival and two articles were written and published in the local newspaper Grocotts and on an online site Urban Sprout (See Appendix 9: Selected Press).

Figure. 6: **Masibambane Crochet Collective Stall at the ELRC** (Myself and Thabisa) **// 2010**

Photo: Jennifer Salton

After the stress and chaos of the National Arts Festival had passed, the Masibambane group decided to take a break from our product line and to continue with the making of crocheted barnacles for me. Thabisa, through a contact from Sakhuluntu, was given the opportunity to participate in a two-week business course that was being offered by the Makana Municipality in conjunction with the Rhodes Investec Business School. I had decided to concentrate and re-direct my focus and energy on my Master's degree, and so the second half of the year went by quietly for Masibambane.

January 2012

Towards the end of 2011, the group had started to discuss and develop a new range of round plastic crochet placemats that we would add to the Masibambane product line. I met with the group mid-January 2012 to discuss our goals and objectives for the year.

Goals and Objectives

Our goals and objectives for the year 2012 were:

- To investigate the possibility of registering Masibambane as a small business.
- To design, develop and include additional items to our product line.
- To approach small craft and 'knick-knack' businesses in Grahamstown to include our product range in their business on a consignment basis.
- To work towards the Standard Bank National Arts Festival 2012 to sell our wares there again.

Methods, Procedures and Techniques

I had done some research and networked with people involved in community development and small grass roots business projects to gain information on the logistics of registering Masibambane as a small business. I came to find that the logistics involved were complex and complicated and required a substantial amount of time, energy and networking. Due to the fact that I had now entered into the third year of my MFA, I had to make a harsh decision to put the registering of the business on hold, and opted to create a business Facebook page for Masibambane instead to market and publicise our small business (2012: Fig. 7). The production of round plastic crochet placemats was in full swing and I met with

the group to discuss the new product. The group was mixing a variety of black, recycled and colourful bought plastic to create the placemats, and the design was eye-catching and unique. I suggested to the group that we make sets of 6–8 placemats and finish off each set in the same colour to create a similar aesthetic for each grouping, and that we should sell them as a set. As luck would have it, a small craft shop was opening on High Street called Kisma & Co, which focused its retail on up-cycled craft products, local art and crafts. I approached the shop owner Tracey (surname), a fellow recycled craft fundi, to discuss the possibility of including a range of Masibambane products in her store. Tracey was more than happy to include the Masibambane in Kisma & Co as she was particularly impressed with our new range of placemats (2012: Fig. 8).

Terms, Conditions and Pricing:

- Masibambane would pay a rate of R150 per month to have our products displayed.
- Kisma & Co would take 5% of the selling price of items, therefore items were priced accordingly.
- Crochet Plastic Cell Phone Covers @ R20.00 each.
- Crochet Plastic Placemats @ R xx per set of 6.
- Colourful Ironed Plastic Book Sets @ R150.00 each.

Figure. 7: Masibambane Crochet Collective

Masibambane Facebook Page // 2012

Figure. 8: Masibambane Crochet Collective

Masibambane at Kisma & Co // 2012

March 2012

Recycled Crochet Fruit Baskets.

I received a call from the Marketing Manager of the Whitehead Scientific company in Cape Town, enquiring about the Masibambane's recycled products as they were interested in ordering our products for their company's Christmas gifts. I inquired as to how Whitehead Scientific had come to know about Masibambane; Lauren Swardt informed me that she had read about the project on the internet and subsequently contacted me. Through email correspondence, Lauren explained that every year their company gives Christmas gifts, and in doing so they like to support a community or grassroots project. Lauren explained that they were looking for some kind of basket or bowl made from recycled materials, which would then be filled with Christmas goodies. I explained that, as it stood, Masibamane's product line was limited to recycled plastic placemats, cell phone covers, bags and book sets but that we would look into making a basket.

I met with the Masibamabne Crochet collective and informed them of this opportunity, and was surprised to find out that Capt Cynthia had already started experimenting with the creation of a fruit basket. We discussed the logistics of making a basket that could hold somewhat heavy contents and as a group we decided that some kind of metal structure was needed.

Thabisa suggested we get in contact with Pastor Freddie Arense, a wire and beadwork artist who had sold his wares alongside Masibambane at the Sustainability Commons over the 2011 National Arts Festival. Thabisa and I contacted and met with Mr Arense and explained what we needed; we discussed the size and shape of the basket we envisioned and Arense showed us examples of his work. We explained to Arense that we would need to experiment with one basket first to see if we could achieve our goal of crocheting a covering for the basket and if it was successful we would place a large order. Arense agreed to our request and kindly made a wire basket frame prototype for us with in two days, free of charge. The following week I met with Thabisa and she had successfully crocheted a beautiful recycled crocheted wire basket. (2012: Fig. 9-12). Unfortunately we did not get the commission from Whitehead Scientific, although quite honestly we would not have been able to successfully complete the job due to time constraints and the fact that we do not have enough people working in the group to have been able to do what was required from us. However, the making of the plastic crochet fruit baskets was successful and we placed an

order for ten wire frames from Freddie Arense at an agreed-upon price of R18.00 per wire frame. These baskets are in production and will be on sale at the National Arts Festival 2012.

Figures. 9–12: **Masibambane Crochet Collective: Wire Plastic Crochet Bowls // 2012**

Photo: Bronwen Salton

APPENDIX 7

happeefeesh Productions: LitterAWEH!ness Recycling Indaba 2011

In the beginning of May 2011, I was approached by Chris Fisher, a Rhodes University Alumnus, with the idea of collaborating, organising and facilitating a recycling indaba that would run over the course of the National Arts Festival 2011. Fisher had been put into contact with me through Injairu Kulundu at the Environmental Learning and Reasearch Commons (ELRC), as I was at this point the only creative individual working with recycled materials as a medium in Grahamstown.

Fisher had created the LitterAWEHness Recycling Indaba as part of his company happeefeesh Productions and aimed to create awareness around the positive potential of waste as a medium to create, a concept that gave life to my Master's research. Fisher proposed that The LitterAWEH!ness Recycling Indaba would run in conjunction with the Soundkiln Music Festival, situated on the Three Chimneys Farm on the periphery of Grahamstown.

In The LitterAWEH!ness Recycling Indaba project proposal, Fisher emphasised the fact that, in the context of South Africa, discussions surrounding the positive impacts of recycling could be explored to no end, yet more conversation and action needed to be happening around the topic. From a philosophical viewpoint, the notion of recycling shifts the individual's understanding of 'value' in a fundamental way, insofar as when one recycles an object and realises the creative potential of that object, its 'value' is transformed from finite to infinite in possibilities. Chris Fisher states:

> As it stands, there are hundreds of initiatives in South Africa alone that are already getting creative about the re-use of 'litter' and 'waste'. The 'LitterAWEH!ness Recycling Indaba' will serve to harness these efforts, to consolidate experience and to educate people on the opportunity for utilising abundant and free resources in a sustainable way, regardless of context. It will become a platform for such organisations and individuals to exhibit, sell and present their works and philosophies and, more importantly, it will give them the opportunity to facilitate a transfer of skills, knowledge and experience to the wider community.

I expressed to Fisher the socio-economic potential of up-cycling waste materials, through the work being done by Masibambane, which showed that the act of recycling not only

created work for informal waste collectors, but also that the creative use of these materials promotes collective action by strengthening and unifying communities through enabling a somewhat sustainable income. We discussed how such a project would promote environmental conservation and education through finding positive, functional and creative uses for waste material, thus shifting one's ideas surrounding the nature of waste material.

Year: 2011

Project: Art Factory 2011 in Collaboration with LitterAWEH!ness Recycling Indaba

Venue: International Library of African Music (ILAM), Sound Kiln Music Festival at Three Chimneys Farm, Worcester Street, Grahamstown.

Director:

- Chris Fisher

Collaborators:

- Sam Pearce (eMzantsi)
- Yandiswa Mazwana (eMzantsi)
- Trigger (eMzantsi)
- Bronwen Salton (Art Factory)

Goals and Objectives

Fisher's objectives were to facilitate any workshop that explored the concept of the re-use of waste materials in the Indaba programme and had identified core themes, which included environmental awareness, music, art, drama, history, culture, language, sport, science and agriculture.

I informed Fisher that I was at this point involved in multiple projects during Festival and suggested that the only way I could see this project becoming part of my portfolio was to include and connect the LitterAWEH!ness Recycling Indaba workshops to the activities of the Art Factory 2011. My objective was to include the workshops and activities that

LitterAWEH!ness would be bringing to the festival and have them collaborate with Art Factory 2011. Due to Fisher's affiliation with the Soundkiln Music Festival located at the Three Chimneys Farm, Grahamstown, he was unwilling to bring the Indaba into town, which was where the Art Factory 2011 workshops were held, but suggested that he run workshops in town on particular days although keeping the Three Chimneys Farm as his base. I agreed and went ahead in the planning and inclusion of the LitterAWEH!ness Recycling Indaba into the workshop programme of the Art Factory 2011.

Methods, Procedures and Techniques

Fisher had connected with a Cape Town based puppet and carnival crew called eMzantsi, which focuses on the use and re-use of waste materials to create giant puppets and decorative items to sell. Sam Pearce (Managing Director of eMzantsi) and Yandiswa Mazwana (Schools Co-ordinator of eMzantsi) agreed to be a part of the LitterAWEH!ness Recycling Indaba and to assist with the workshops for Art Factory 2011. According to the eMzantsi home page:

> 'eMzantsi' means 'in the South' in isiXhosa and the eMzantsi Carnival is all about celebrating life in Cape Town's south peninsula. By showcasing the fabulous diversity of our people and cultures, we bring our communities together and create a shared south peninsula identity. The Carnival is the culmination of a year-round community-building process that encourages people of the South, especially children and youth, to cross boundaries and collaborate with each other. (http://www.emzantsi.org.za/)

Together with Heidi Salzwedle and Yandiswa Mazwana, Fisher conducted two consecutive workshops with Art Factory 2011 that focused on the use of waste materials to create interactive masks that would be installed on the performance puppet structures lead by Salzwedle. These workshops were scheduled on the 3rd and 4th July 2011 (see Appendix 8).

Together with myself and Trigger (LitterAWEH!ness crew member), Fisher conducted an afternoon plastic raincoat making workshop with the Art Factory Trapps Valley participants. We facilitated this workshop at the Soundkiln Music Festival located at the

Three Chimneys Farm, Grahamstown. This workshop happened on the 7th of July 2011 see (Appendix 8)

Outcomes

Despite the fact that the Standard Bank National Arts Festival 2011 was partly washed away due to torrential rain, all the workshops conducted by the LitterAWEH!ness Recycling Indaba were successful. The collaboration between myself, Art Factory 2011 and LitterAWEH!ness was creative, fun, engaging and inspiring for all parties involved, and positively added to the festival experience for the participants of Art Factory. Considering 2011 National Arts Festival was the flagship event for the LitterAWEH!ness project, an immense amount of learning was gained for the initiative with regards to movement of festival goers and how this affects the awareness and publicity for projects. The LitterAWEH!ness project, based at the Three Chimneys Farm, located on the periphery of Grahamstown, is primarily a night-time party event and therefore is only attended by young party-scene festival goers. Considering this, LitterAWEH!ness did not gain the exposure and attendance that Fisher had hoped for but nonetheless it made a positive contribution to the festival atmosphere.

APPENDIX 8

Art Factory 2011

Year: 2011

Project: Art Factory workshops in collaboration with LitterAWEH!ness Recycling Indaba.

Venue: International Library of African Music (ILAM), Three Chimneys Farm, Worcester Street, Grahamstown.

Chairman: Merran Marr

Co-Chairman: Vuyo Booi

Organisers:

- Heidi Salwedle
- Bronwen Salton
- Mvuleni Ndamo

Workshop Collaborators:

- LitterAWEH!ness Recycling Indaba
- ikapa Dance Company Cape Town
- Rob Farger
- Susan White
- Proyecto 34 Degrees South: Artistic Exchange – Africa and Latin America.

Goals and Objectives

Primary Goals and Objectives – See Appendix 5

For the purpose of this thesis I will only focus on the workshops that I was involved in, namely: Blue Overall Art Factory Puppets, LitterAWEH!ness re-cycled mask-making workshop and Trapps Valley Plastic Raincoat workshop.

The goals of the 2011 Art Factory were to build on to the workshops held in 2010 (Appendix 5) through the incorporation of the use of recycled material as a medium in which to create. The objective of Art Factory 2011 was to continue the collaboration with visual artists and performers to add to the skills and experiences of the Art Factory participants and increase their visual and performative talents.

Methods, Procedures and Techniques

Workshop 1: Art Factory Blue Overall Puppets and LitterAWEH!ness Recycling Indaba

Date: 3 – 4 July 2011

Venue: ILAM

Facilitators:

- Heidi Salzwedle (Art Factory)
- Mvuleni Ndamo (Sakhuluntu and Art Factory)
- Bronwen Salton (Art Factory)
- Yandiswa Mazwana (LitterAWEH!ness Recycling Indaba)
- Chris Fisher (LitterAWEH!ness Recycling Indaba)

Heidi Salzwedle, in preparation for Art Factory 2011, had organised the sponsorship of ten blue overalls from a local hardware store in Grahamstown with which we would create living puppets with the Art Factory participants. The envisioned purpose for the blue overalls was to create living and performative puppets that would be constructed by the Art Factory participants in collaboration with the LitterAWEH!ness crew.

Day 1 (3 July 2011), Day 2 (4 July 2011)

The two days were used to create a cross-like structure out of wood that would act as the neck, torso and arms of the puppets. The wooden structure and plastic recycled masks would be made by the Art Factory participants with the assistance of the facilitators.

The tools and materials required were:

- Multiple pieces of wood of various lengths
- Hammer, nails and wire
- Spray paint.

Each participant chose two pieces of wood, one short and one long, and placed them in the shape of a cross (+). With the use of a hammer, nails and wire the participants secured the pieces of wood in position and then spray painted them in fun colours (2011: Figures 5 and 6).

The recycled mask faces that would accompany the puppets were made with the assistance of Yandiswa Mazwana and Chris Fisher from LitterAWEH!ness. The tools and materials required were:

- An assortment of recycled plastic waste materials, i.e bottles, ice cream containers, milo and hot chocolate containers
- Scissors, staple gun and spray paint.

Chris Fisher and the LitterAWEH!ness crew provided a large assortment of recycled materials and, under the guidance of Yandiswa, the Art Factory participants were encouraged to creatively explore and use the waste materials provided to create mask (faces) for their puppets. To accompany the performances of the Art Factory participants, we made colourful money collection containers out of recycled materials (2011: Figs. 1-4).

Figure. 1: **Yandiswa Mazwana and Art Factory // 2011** Photo: Bronwen Salton

Figure. 2: **Art Factory participants making masks // 2011** Photo: Bronwen Salton

Figure. 3: **Art Factory: Making of Plastic Masks // 2011** Photo: Bronwen Salton

Figure. 4: **Art Factory: Completed Plastic Mask // 2011** Photo: Bronwen Salton

Figure. 5: **Art Factory: Completed Puppet Frames // 2011** Photo: Bronwen Salton

Figure. 6: **Art factory participant with completed puppet frame // 2011** Photo: Bronwen Salton

The wooden structures were then fitted with into blue overalls and held up by each of the Art Factory participants. The composition of the frames, overalls and participants completed, the puppets came to life (2011: Figs. 5-8). The Art Factory then took to the streets, positioning themselves at various popular and public spaces to show the crowds their skills and artistry. Due to the fact that the structures were quite heavy to manage, I provided the participants with a 'ride' in the back of my bakkie to their street-side locations. The ride in the bakkie became such an incentive for the participants that I ended up transporting them every day for the rest of the festival (2011: Figures 9 and 10).

On 5 July the Art Factory participants took to the streets and attracted a lot of attention from the festival goers, and particularly from the press. The article, written by Siobhan Rosenfelds and titled *Finding the artist within*, featured in Cue festival media that day. The Art Factory participants were overwhelmed that they made the papers and were each given a copy to take home to their families (See Appendix 10: Selected Press).

Figures. 7 and 8: **Art Factory: Completed 'look' of the puppets performed by participants. // 2011**

Figures. 9 and 10: **Art Factory: AF participants in the 'bakkie' heading out to 'busk' // 2011**

Photos: Bronwen Salton

On the last day of the National Arts Festival, Heidi Salzwedle and I decided to treat the Art Factory team to a lunch of pizza at Pirates Pizza to end off the festival experience. Over cold Oros and delicious pizza, we debriefed the group and congratulated the participants for all their hard work, dedication and success, and spoke briefly about the road ahead in terms of the sustainability of Art Factory during the National Arts Festival. The outing was a good way of ending off a busy but successful Art Factory 2011 programme of presenters and activities (2011: Figs 11-14).

Figures. 11- 14: **Art Factory: Pirates Pizza lunch with the Art Factory Participants // 2011**

Photos: Bronwen Salton and Heidi Salzwedel

Workshop 2: Art Factory, Trapps Valley Plastic Raincoats and LitterAWEH!ness Recycling Indaba.

Date: 7 July 2011

Venue: Three Chimneys Farm, Worcester Street, Grahamstown.

Facilitators:

- Chris Fisher (LitterAWEH!ness)
- Trigger (LitterAWEH!ness)

- Bronwen Salton (Art Factory)

Participants:

- Art Factory participants from Trapps Valley, Bathurst Eastern Cape.

Methods, Procedures and Techniques

On the afternoon of 7 July, a group of ten Art Factory Trapps Valley participants were transported via a Stenden University bus to the Three Chimneys Farm on Worcester Street to attend the last LitterAWEH!ness – Art Factory workshop. Due to the overwhelming amount of rain we had experienced, I decided it would be a fun idea to run a plastic raincoat workshop with the Trapps Valley participants. The workshop took place in one of the undercover tunnels/kilns and we opened up our workshop session with an ideas circle, in which Fisher placed a waste material object, e.g. a bottle cap, and each person had to pick it up and show what they could do/make out of it. The ice breaker was successful as we all got to learn each other's names and feel comfortable and playful in the space. I then opened up the workshop by explaining and giving a brief 'how to' of the techniques used in the making of the plastic raincoats, and the tools and materials required:

- Large colourful plastic packets: I had taken the large plastic packets of various colours from Masibambane that I had bought for the initiative.
- Recycled plastic grocery and chip packets
- Scissors, clear scotch tape and colourful round stickers

How to make a Plastic Raincoat

- The first step is to cut the plastic packet so that there are openings for the head and arms, fold the packet in half and cut the corners (arms) of the sealed end off. Open up packet and cut a semi-circle in the middle of the seal end for the head.
- Using the recycled packets, cut out shapes, letters and adornments to decorate the raincoat.
- Using the clear scotch tape, tape the decorations onto the raincoat
- Using the colourful circular stickers, create shapes and patterns on the raincoat to decorate.

- Put raincoat on and cut the bottom if needed for appropriate length.

The workshop was extremely successful; cold yet creative the group spread out on the floor of the tunnel and created their innovative plastic raincoats (2011: Fig. 15 and Fig. 16).

Figure. 15: **Litter AWEH!ness plastic raincoat workshop // 2011** Photo: Bronwen Salton

Figure. 16: **Litter AWEH!ness plastic raincoat workshop // 2011** Photo: Bronwen Salton

Outcome

By the time the group had completed their plastic raincoats the rain had let up, so we decided to go outside and parade the raincoats, 'catwalk' style (2011: Figs. 17–23). The group was so enthusiastic and strutted their creations up and down the woodchip pathway. The participants were wonderfully creative with their designs and some of the girls and women created belts to accompany their outfits. The group was so proud of their raincoats that they wore them every day for the rest of the festival, and the raincoats seemed to serve their purpose extremely well – so well that we had members of the public approaching the Traps Valley participants as to where they got their raincoats in the hopes that they could get one. All in all the collaboration with the LitterAWEH!ness Recyling

Indaba was a great success and Chris Fisher and the team truly brought positive and creative energy to the participants of Art Factory 2011.

Figures . 17-23: **LitterAWEH!ness plastic raincoat photo-shoot // 2011**

Photo: Bronwen Salton

APPENDIX 9

Selected Press

Wet Paint

Date Released: Wed, 29 June 2011 12:22 +0200

The Rhodes Department of Fine Art launched its National Arts Festival exhibitions last week at the Albany Museum, where the inaugural postgraduate exhibition is now open to public viewing.

Wet Paint, co-curated by Professor Dominic Thorburn, head of the Fine Arts department, and senior lecturer Maureen de Jager, is an innovative undertaking aimed at creating a space for the Masters in Fine Arts (MFA) students to showcase their work-in-progress. As the MFA is a two-year course, the Department of Fine Art hopes that this exhibition will become a regular feature of the National Arts Festival, and act as a mid-degree touchstone for the students.

Dotun Makun's striking portraits of his fellow expatriots, entitled *International Passports: Nkem, Blessing, Tope* made a statement against the back wall of the gallery. Makun is a member of the Fine Arts Department's Visual and *Performing Arts of Africa* (ViPAA) research group, and will be involved in the new Arts Lounge venture during the Festival.

An unusual series of digitally scanned images, by Cassandra Wilmot, presented four squares of lint, taken from four different wash cycles and enlarged to reveal numerous tiny threads, strands of hair, even feathers. The works repay careful attention on the part of the viewer, ably realising Wilmot's stated aim of illustrating that which is irredeemably, and possibly inadvertently, lost in our everyday lives.

A little further along the back wall of the gallery, Gerald Machona's photographs reveal his eye-catching use of defunct Zimbabwean dollars, which he uses to make masks and, through them, re-imagine the experience of migrant workers in the medium of performance art, which the photographs document. The use of masks references a Malawian traditional masquerade called *Gule Wambulu*, a Chewa rite which has been adopted for use by migrant workers to counter xenophobia. Machona is another member of the ViPAA research group under Professor Ruth Simbao.

Mark Wilby's multimedia installation drew a crowd, many of whom chuckled appreciatively throughout the video playing on a loop. However, it was Bronwen Salton's intriguing floor sculpture, created from crocheted black plastic bags, which drew the eye as the focal point of the *Wet Paint* exhibition. Salton asks the viewer to consider the damage we are inflicting on our planet. Inspired by the Transocean/BP oil spill, the largest ever, the numerous small crocheted pockets appear as a blasted coral reef, or as numerous small sea creatures, with blankly open mouths calling for help.

Among the academics attending the exhibitions were Professor Tebello Nyokong from the Department of Chemistry, Professor George Euvrard from Education and Deputy Vice-Chancellor Peter Clayton. Prof Thorburn thanked Maureen de Jager, Brent Meistre, Mark Wilby, Moira Japp, Ziyaad Jacobs, Jan Nel and John Walters for their assistance in creating both exhibitions. In addition he thanked the MFA students for their enthusiasm in embracing the concept of this new show.

Story by Jeannie Mckeowin

[ONLINE] AVAILABLE AT: http://www.ru.ac.za/latestnews/name,36939,en.html [29/08 2011]

crocheting oil spills and living our art

Submitted by sproutscout on Wed, 2011-07-13 09:29

Masibambane Place Mat

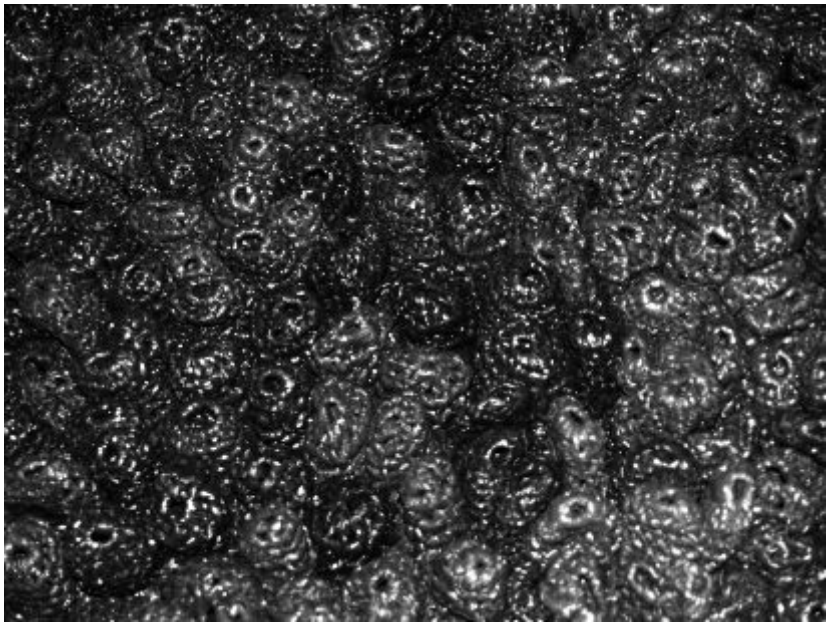
Grahamstown National Arts Festival is a time for late nights, soaking up all the Glühwein and all that's cultural, and being generally frivolous and indulgent. For some, however, this is also a time of reflection. The artists' imaginings of the world are reflected back to us and we catch a glimpse of what is, and what can be. For many artists Festival is a time for celebration of the arts, but also a time for introspection, for a re-evaluation of their art and its space in society. They are given a platform to display and delight, and through this help the audiences and themselves contemplate the place of art, to contemplate the flux of its dynamic form.

For Bronwen Salton, a Fine Art Masters student at Rhodes University, Festival offered up just such a place. It was a platform for her to explore a novel medium: plastic crochet. It was a space to negotiate how the techniques she employs can be transferred to the Grahamstown community. It was a time in which she could re-examine (and in so doing help us to re-examine) the notions of what 'fine-art' is, to whom it is applicable, and how it can recognize and respond to the problems the world faces.

Salton's Crocheted Oil Spill

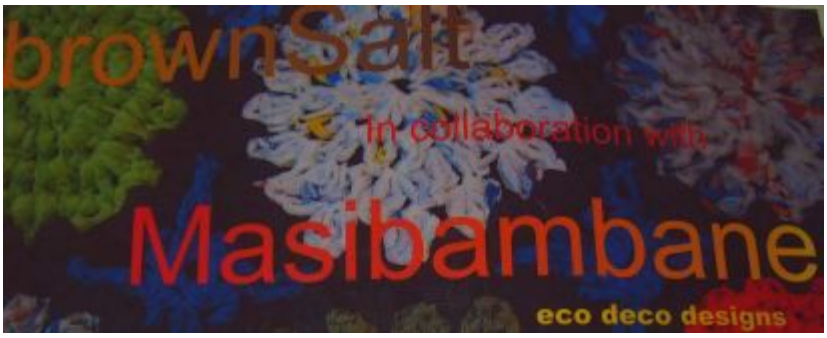
Her masters, in two parts, is very much an experiment. The first part is the actual art piece, an ooze of black plastic crochet representing the Deep Water Horizon oil spill that occurred in 2010. This was exhibited along with other work-in-progress masters pieces at the Wet Paint Exhibition over Festival. The ooze will eventually

be included on a world map that accurately represents the biggest oil spills of all time. Salton's complete Masters piece, then, will be a literal representation of how man is modifying the landscape in which he dwells. Salton stumbled into waste and plastic crochet as an art medium whilst exploring cheaper ways that she could make art. Throughout her undergraduate degree she was frustrated by the expense of art making, and the way this affected perceptions of value of 'fine art'. Making 'fine art' from waste speaks to the value of making something by hand, the value of the skill rather than the medium. The implication of course is that 'fine art' is opened up and becomes more accessible. If more people can afford to create, more people are touched by art, and begin to appreciate it. Just as with Such Initiatives projects, excluded communities can become involved in art, and thus appreciate it more.



Oil Crochet Close-Up

The waste medium also lends an embedded meaning to the work. Although Salton's actual project may be on a specific topic (such as oil spills throughout the world) the medium adds another layer. It speaks of our relation to the environment, and our relation to art. The use of a constructive medium to display a destructive event, comments on our ability to have both positive and negative effects on our environment. It demonstrates that we can be constructive, and solve the problems that we create. Salton hopes to continue making art from waste material in a manner that decreases even the ecological cost of making art. For more on artists that seek to create in an ecologically sustainable way see the Sustainable Art movement or the Green Museum. There is also interesting work being done through the Relational Art movement that deems art should "be a way of living and a model of action within the existing real," ideas close to Salton's own.



Masibambane

What is most exciting about the plastic crochet medium, however, is that each oozing oil tentacle is made with the same technique that Salton uses to make cellphone covers. The art then is also a representation of something that is directly functional, that speaks to the context in which Salton finds herself, and how she can relate to that context. The second part of the masters examines just this, how art can relate to society, be used within society, and so be transformed.

Through this process, Salton has co-founded a community business – Masibambane, which creates useable, sellable items out of waste. The group comprises of women from local groups in the Grahamstown community, such as the Salvation Army. Festival was their first opportunity to sell their wares and gauge the demand for such products. Although most products will be made from plastic crochet, other techniques and other mediums are being explored. "Waste medium presents unlimited opportunities for creativity," Salton enthusiastically comments. The group can collectively create such wares, and create solutions to problems such as pollution and unemployment at the same time. Thus, through action, Salton's art recognizes its context, one of the poorest cities in the poorest provinces in South Africa, and attempts to deal with it.

Mirrors Sold by Masibambane

The Festival space provided Salton with the opportunity to explore ways she can live-out a creativity that is in line with her ethics. She sees art as a medium that can (and indeed ought to) level hierarchies; take responsibility for its context. This project deals with environmental issues in a pragmatic way, seeking a solution to problems, such as unemployment, that is applicable to the environmental needs of the area. For Salton people and the environment cannot be divorced. "We are of the earth," she claims explaining that to

try to separate the two is wholly impractical. It is refreshing to see how 'fine art' is beginning to move out of the stale spaces of the gallery and starting to inter-react with society to create and imagine an improved world.

Bronwen Salton and Thabisa Belwana displaying the Masibambane wares

[Online] Available at: http://www.urbansprout.co.za/crocheting_oil_spills_and_living_our_art [27/08/2011]

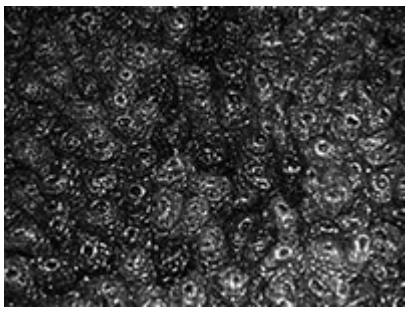
Crochet Spotlights a Cause

Since time immemorial, artists have used their canvases to express their passions or to comment on an injustice that they believe needs to be exposed and righted. Some use literal presentations; others use more subtle abstract expression. Whatever the cause, crochet lends itself to therapeutic, satisfying and creative reflection. Its versatility leads to a path of artistic expression.

Bronwen Salton is a master's student in fine arts at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, South Africa. She is exploring the quite novel medium of plastic crochet. In so doing, she is reexamining (and helping us to reexamine) the notions of what fine art is, to whom it is applicable, and how it can recognize and respond to the problems the world faces.

Her master's degree, in two parts, is very much an experiment. The first part, an actual art piece, is an ooze of black plastic crochet representing the Deep Water Horizon oil spill (also known as the Gulf of Mexico oil spill) that occurred in 2010. The ooze will eventually be included on a world map that accurately represents the biggest oil spills of all time. The second part of her master's degree will be a literal representation of how man is modifying the landscape in which he dwells.

Salton stumbled into using waste and plastic crochet as an art medium while exploring cheaper ways to make art. Throughout her undergraduate degree, she was frustrated by the expense of making art and the way it affected perceptions of the value of fine art. Making "fine art" from waste speaks to the value of making something by hand, and the value of the skill rather than the medium. The implication, of course, is that "fine art" becomes more accessible. If more people can afford to create, more people are touched by art and begin to appreciate it.



Using waste as a medium also lends an embedded meaning to the work. It speaks of our relation to the environment and our relation to art. It demonstrates that we can be constructive and solve the problems that we create. Salton hopes to continue making art from waste material in a manner that decreases even the ecological cost of making art.

Each oozing oil tentacle is made with the same technique that Salton uses to make cellphone covers. The art, then, represents something that is directly functional that speaks to the context in which Salton finds herself and how she can relate to that context.

Through this process, she has co-founded a community business -- Masibambane, which creates usable, sellable items out of waste. The group is comprised of women from local groups in the Grahamstown community.

"Waste medium presents unlimited opportunities for creativity," Salton enthusiastically comments. Thus, through action, Salton's art recognizes its context -- Grahamstown is one of the poorest cities in the poorest provinces in South Africa -- and attempts to deal with it.

"We are of the earth," she says, explaining that to try to separate the two is wholly impractical. It is refreshing to see how "fine art" is beginning to move out of the stale spaces of the gallery and starting to interact with society to create and imagine an improved world.

[Online] Available at: http://www.crochetworld.com/printer.php?mode=article&article_id=1887 [26/08/2011].

Grocotts Mail Online

Plastic gone retro

Sun, 31 Jul, 2011

Tracey Turner

Most people step away from a pile of litter or look disconcerted at a packet that has been caught in barbed wire, but for Thabisa Belwana these waste materials are the ingredients of her craft.

Belwana has created a new line of eco-deco design using recycled materials. The business was initiated by Bronwen Salton, a second year Masters of Fine Art student at Rhodes.

The project, Masibambane, which means "let's go together", includes a group of four other ladies who live in Xolani.

The group meets every Monday to crochet not yarn, but plarn (plastic as thread) .

"Everyone in the group is proud of this project," says Belwana.

The group has created thickly crocheted plastic cellphone covers, place mats and bags. Otherwise they iron plastic together to create book covers. Other expirements are picture frames made from cardboard, egg boxes and paint.

During the Festival they successfully sold their crafts at the Sustainability commons. "We have built up this line that we now know works," says Salton.

Salton uses waste material in her own artwork and has always helped community development in Grahamstown. "As young South Africans we're having to cross divides and connect with people more than ever," she says.

Belwana is thankful to Salton for the project. "She sees other people having a brighter future," she

Bronwen Salton looks happily into an egg carton picture frame that was made by Thabisa Belwana. They have created a new line of eco-deco called Masibambane.

Not only collegues, but friends, Bronwen Salton and Thabisa Belwana stand infront of egg carton picture frames which are creations from their new line of eco-deco called Masibambane.

says.

Belwana is 23 years old and did not finish her matric, but she recently went on a one-week Entrepreneurship and Business Management course co-ordinated by Rhodes Business School.

The course was sponsored by Makana Municipality who select 20 people at a time who already have small businesses.

Belwana has high hopes for Masibambane. "My dream is to build this and for it to grow all over South Africa," she says.

Belwana feels a responsibility to teach art "In the future I want to employ single parents and young people," she says.

The project does not have a selling venue as yet, to support Masibambane eco deco call Bronwen Salton at 082 675 6181 or Thabisa Belwana at 079 970 3310.

SNUG CELL... Need something so snuggle your cellphone this winter? Crocheted plastic covers from Masibambane's new range of eco-deco will do the trick. Photo: Tracey Turner

Crocheted plastic cellphone covers and ironed plastic book covers are the colourful creations by Masibambane

[Online] Available at: http://www.grocotts.co.za/content/plastic gone-retro-31-07-2011 [26/08/2011]

Finding the artist within

Siobhan Rosenfels
Cue student reporter

Standing stiff and immovable, their small bodies suddenly jerk to life when you drop a coin into the container at their feet. In a matter of seconds they transform themselves into another tableau, a creative scene which they will hold until the next coin clatters in.

These small white faces are not just an accident... They resulted from a workshop organised by the Art Factory, which uses the therapeutic and rehabilitative qualities of the arts to provide vulnerable youth with alternatives to seeking refuge on the streets of Grahamstown. Collaborating with Cape Town's Litter Aweh!ness this year, the Art Factory invites these children to come and take part in learning about acting, mask making, percussion, dance and many other aspects of theatre and the arts.

The cold, wet weather didn't deter the enthusiasm of four boys, who have been creating masks using litter such as milk containers, bottle tops, rope, plastic lids and ice cream containers.

"We're spreading the idea that it is a re-usable substance," said Chris Fisher, part of the Litter Aweh!ness project, "it's the beginnings of something quite spectacular."

One of the reasons for using litter is that it can be found anywhere. "It's a huge resource, you can do anything with it," said Heidi Salzwedel, Arts Factory organiser.

Hands eagerly cut, glue and tie bits of plastic, rope and bottle tops to decorate their masks. Instructions are relayed by Mvuleni Ndumo, an Art Factory volunteer, who loudly sings and chats to the boys. A passionate man, Ndumo strongly believes in cultivating artistic qualities in all of the boys. "All of us are artists," he said. "To me, art is the spirit itself."

Salzwedel says the workshop is "teaching them to be resourceful with what they have." The ultimate goal of the Art Project is to impart skills to these kids, so that they can generate an income for themselves.

Keep a look out for these boys, who will now also be wearing oversized blue overalls as part of their act.

Kwanele September, Athi Stamper and Simthembile Speelman after completing their masks and outfits at the Arts Factory workshop. Photo: Cue/Jonathan Jones

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