

POLITICAL GREY: AREAS OF AMBIGUITY AND CONTRADICTION

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Abstract

This Master of Fine Arts submission, consisting of a thesis titled 'Political Grey: Areas of Ambiguity and Contradiction' accompanied by an exhibition titled 'Positions', encompasses the concept of leadership while uncovering and expressing its 'grey areas' in a contemporary and undefined moment in South Africa. The concept of leadership has been complicated throughout the thesis in terms of how it is conceptualised in a traditional royal African art context as well as how Leader-Figures have been and are portrayed in both Western and African portrait genres. The notion that the new is built upon the old is continued throughout my thesis and is evident in the accompanying body of work. This notion is expressed on a number of levels: by the re-contextualisation of the print medium; the creative processes described as 'postproduction' which I use in my work; as well as that which is described as a 'post-transitional' moment. The recent political history of the country is considered, with reference made to the anti-apartheid movement and resistance art produced. Printmaking, viewed as an archetypal medium for resistance, is discussed, with reference made to its socio-political role during the 1980s as well as to the extent to which it continues to be used by contemporary artists in a different realm of conflict and change. This is demonstrated by the shift from the medium as a tool for protest to the medium as an instrument of political irony and pointed commentary.

I declare that this thesis is my own work and that all the 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 for any degree or examination at another university.

Carmen Koekemoer

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Introduction

The productive tension between politics and art, reality and imagination, and the past and future makes itself felt in South African contemporary art. (Hecker 2011: 17).

The relationship between art and politics has a long history in South African visual culture. The tension between the two is demonstrated in times of political upheaval and change – from the height of the anti-apartheid struggle in the 1980s to the present day. Printmaking, a medium historically and internationally associated with images of resistance and revolution, finds its place in the relationship between politics and art in South Africa. Given the socio-political expression of the print medium during the resistance movement in apartheid South Africa, and the difficulty of defining the present period, this thesis and the accompanying exhibition both consider how the same creative medium continues to be used today. It is the *content* which has changed. The everyday struggles which artists and cultural workers were waging to liberate art and society from the illegitimate authority of apartheid became the content of resistance art. Today, after apartheid, we find ourselves in a different realm of ‘conflict and change’, which, while it supposes – in part – a change in the content of a given struggle, encourages the continuance of the archetypal medium for protest. The continued use of the medium includes the different ways that it has been used by artists like Brett Murray, Kudzanai Chiurai and Vulindlela Nyoni, as well as the extent to which it has been used for pointed socio-political commentary. Though each artist mentioned in this thesis uses different methods, they each demonstrate how printmaking continues to be used in a present day context, and how it has shifted from a blatant socio-political tool into an instrument for political irony and means of expressing ambiguities and contradictions.

My interest as an artist lies in printmaking as a medium, as well as the various processes involved in each stage of creating a print. My studio work synthesises my interest in the archetypal print medium with my conceptual concerns regarding the ruling elite of South Africa. My exhibition component, titled ‘Positions’, comprises a body of work which includes traditional prints such as linocuts, stencils and monotypes, as well as digital media such as video projection and digital prints. The title of the exhibition is both relative and ambiguous. It alludes, on the one hand, to the different offices of leadership, for example, the office of President. On the other hand, it also suggests my perception, as an artist and citizen of South Africa, of the political leaders of my time. Additionally, the notion of a position as something which is assured is subverted by ‘grey areas’ of uncertainty. The exhibition is contextualised by the ambiguities and contradictions of leadership in

the current South African political moment. The artists who I have selected to include in my thesis discussion also express ambiguities and contradictions of leadership, both in South Africa and in Zimbabwe, in their own work. For example, Brett Murray's *Spear* (Fig. 22), Kudzanai Chiurai's *Black President* (Fig. 25) and Vulindlela Nyoni's *King of Voëls* (Fig. 27).

The portraiture genre also forms a significant part of both the written and visual components of this research, particularly how it is used, and has been used, to portray Leader-Figures. In the thesis, key texts on Western and African portraiture by Jean Borgatti (1990), Joanna Woodall (1997) and Richard Brilliant (1990) are applied to the work of the three artists included – Murray, Chiurai and Nyoni – as well as to my own work in terms of how present-day Leader-Figures have been portrayed using this genre. Crucial to the inclusion of Leader-Figure portraiture is Suzanne Blier's (1998) writing on royal African art, in which she reveals certain contradictions of leadership. I use Blier's points as a conceptual guide – though her text is based on specific forms of royal African art, the concepts and ideas revealed by her writing are relevant to my argument, which seeks out the uncertainties within leadership. The notion of ambiguity is also a key feature for both components of my submission. Throughout the thesis I refer to 'grey areas', a term picked up from John Pepper (2009) who defines these areas not just in terms of slippages in the apartheid legislation, but also as metaphorically undefined, unclear and contradictory aspects of the apartheid system. The notion of 'grey areas', though applied to an apartheid context by Pepper, is used to refer to all areas within the institution of leadership, including Leader-Figures, which cannot be easily defined. My exhibition is installed in the Gallery-in-the-Round at the 1820 Settlers Monument in Grahamstown – the walls of the gallery are unfinished concrete (Fig. 43), which literally perpetuates the idea of 'grey areas' and ambiguities in terms of both the conceptual and physical space of my work as well as the ambiguities expressed in my different series.

The thesis is arranged chronologically, beginning with the 1980s in the first chapter and the contemporary¹ moment in the second chapter. I focus on these two separate 'time frames' as a means to integrate aspects of the past with the present, for example, 'grey areas' and the continued use of the printmaking medium for socio-political commentary. Chapter one is dedicated to the historical and socio-political contextualisation of South Africa, especially with regards to the role of visual art during the 1980s. Philippa Hobbs and Elizabeth Rankin's 1997 book, *Printmaking in*

¹ In the context of my thesis, when the term 'contemporary' is used to refer to present day, it points to the period since 2008 up until 2013.

a Transforming South Africa, is used to contextualise the role of printmaking in South Africa, and more specifically the suitability of print as a medium for resistance art. Seminal texts by authors Sue Williamson (1989; 2009) and Judy Seidman (2006; 2007; 2011b) are used to expand on the role of printmaking and graphic art during the anti-apartheid movement. John Pepper's (2009: xxi) reference to 'grey areas' in his book, *Art after the End of Apartheid* is introduced in this chapter to convey the notion of ambiguity as it existed in apartheid legislation.

During the transition from the 1980s to the 1990s, and from apartheid to official democracy, Albie Sachs (1990a) suggests a specific transition in the arts in his paper 'Preparing Ourselves for Freedom'. He proposes that art should shift away from being used as a cultural weapon. The purpose and nature of his paper were to reveal contradictions and to encourage artists to do the same in their work. Understandably, Sachs' call was met with many conflicting responses at the time; however, it is his response to the reactions received that is of significance for this thesis. He suggests that, by revealing ambiguities and contradictions in art, inconsistencies are exposed which then encourage, provoke and lead to better understanding. By discussing the various ambiguities of Leader-Figures that each of the artists (including myself) reveals through their work, a better understanding of the concept of leadership is conveyed.

The second chapter is framed by the current South African discourse, specifically as it is termed by Ronit Frenkel and Craig MacKenzie (2010): 'post-transitional'. This term has been complicated in this chapter, and its accuracy in defining the contemporary moment briefly questioned in terms of South Africa being beyond transition. Further, it suggests that the current political moment is one of contradiction and ambiguity. Throughout the thesis, the theoretical and conceptual framework of my studio work is discussed using Nicolas Bourriaud's (2002) 'postproduction', which negates the use of raw material or starting from a blank slate (2002: 17; 18). Recognising printmaking's inherent graphic language, which comprises a range of symbols, imagery, processes and techniques built up by resistance aesthetics in South Africa, amplifies what Bourriaud says about creative practice no longer being about beginning on a blank slate, but rather re-ordering what is already there. With this approach in mind, the studio practice component explores new ways in which the medium can be used as an instrument for socio-political comment in a new realm of conflict and change. It investigates how the same print medium, with its established methods and techniques, can operate minus its familiar resistance content.

The idea of the new being built upon the old, and of there being no clear-cut distinction between past and present, but rather a continuation, is sustained through the content of the two thesis chapters as well as in my own work. It is expressed in the continued, yet different, use of the print medium for political commentary, and also complicated by the definition of the post-transitional proposed by Frenkel and MacKenzie (2010). The concept of the old serving as a foundation for the new also seeks out the ambiguities which exist within the concept of leadership, as they have been revealed in contemporary art, and also the ways in which similar ambiguities have been portrayed in portraits of leaders in the past.

Chapter One: Circumstances of Abnormality and Absurdity² – The System of Apartheid and Resistance Art

Few subjects are as fascinating as kingship. Few subjects are more complex (Suzanne Blier 1998: 11).

Leadership, like kingship, is a complex concept to negotiate. To begin interrogating the existing institution of leadership and its representing Leader-Figures³, the socio-historic and political factors specific to South Africa, which led to this point, need to be unpacked and contextualised. Leadership's existence within an institution or system and the ways in which authority is demonstrated through a given system, as well as the actual position of authority occupied by an individual, will be considered. In this first chapter, I will begin by discussing apartheid and the art associated with the liberation movement⁴, especially printed graphic art produced during the 1980s. Apartheid, a topic which has received the attention of innumerable papers, texts, movies, art, music and other forms of coverage, is familiar in academic, artistic and popular circles. Nonetheless, it is important to touch on this specific history, and the graphic art produced during the last decade of official apartheid in particular, in order to contextualise my theoretical and conceptual concerns. I begin by touching on the socio-political climate of South Africa in the 1980s, taking into account the physical and metaphorical spaces occupied by socio-politically active art. Included in this chapter are examples of how anti-apartheid and apartheid leaders, namely Solomon Mahlangu in a poster by Judy Seidman titled *Tell my people that I love them . . .* 1982 (Fig. 9) and President P.W. Botha in an artwork by Paul Stopforth titled *The Leader* 1989 (Fig. 17), were portrayed using the print medium.

1.1. Structure

The apartheid era in South Africa began in 1948, with the coming to power of the Afrikaner-dominated National Party and its promotion of an ideology of racial and ethnic separation (Peffer 2009: xvi).

Apartheid is a regime considered to exemplify oligarchy, a system of governance defined by the administration of a distinguished group which rules tyrannically with their own interests at heart and with those not of the ruling party having little, if any, political voice. In South Africa, the

² Enwezor refers to the context of apartheid and the circumstances under which resistance art was produced. He (2009: 19) writes that resistance art was an art "that examined its traditions, made obvious. It was an art that was produced under a state of emergency, under conditions of abnormality and absurdity".

³ The Leader-Figure is a general term I use to refer to an individual who holds a position of power, persuasion and influence. I have used capital letters to emphasise the title of authority given to such individuals.

⁴ The liberation movement includes all anti-apartheid establishments that were committed to the demise of the regime.

minority 'white'⁵ group were preferentially treated concerning access to most of the country's resources, amenities and geographic spaces. Legislation ensured that the 'white' population group, consisting dominantly of English- and Afrikaans-speaking people, was preferentially treated regardless of whether they supported the apartheid regime or not. Hendrick F. Verwoerd, the Prime Minister of South Africa between 1958 and 1966, defined apartheid as "separate development" in an attempt to rebrand and justify the segregationist policies of the regime (Welsh and Spence 2011: 10). Sipho Mdanda (2011: 17; 19) clarifies that the endorsement of the separate development policy "ensured that inequalities between the racial identities constructed through colonialism and under apartheid were enshrined in legislation and implemented through state machinery". He also explains that the intention of apartheid was "to prevent the designated races from ever merging, forcing them apart, and establishing one as superior to the other". The separation of racial groups was retained by allocating different geographic and urban areas to different racial groups. Rasheed Araeen (2011: xi) points out, though, that this "did not necessarily prevent people from moving from one area to another as long as this movement followed the prescribed paths or allocated social roles within apartheid".

The architecture of apartheid was constructed in such a way that legislation systematically and strategically divided the nation, yet at the same time allowed different races to artificially cross paths on a regularly monitored basis. The following acts are examples of 'walls' that partitioned society at large, either on a physical level or metaphorically to 'iron out the creases' that could disrupt the orders of separation.

- i) The Group Areas Act (Act No. 41 of 1950) divided urban areas where different population groups could own property, work and reside, making residential separation compulsory. Forced removals and displacement were often a result of this act (2012a: South African History Online).
- ii) The Reservation of Separate Amenities Act (Act No. 49 of 1953) ordered segregation in all public facilities, resources and services. Amenities were allocated according to the

⁵ On the note of racial classifications during this time, David Welsh and J.E. Spence (2011: 4-5) state that "the appropriate nomenclature for South Africa's racial categories is a minefield". They define the term 'black' as the common status of "victims of discrimination, rather than differences in skin colour". Although a "terminological tangle" itself, the term 'black' is viewed in comparison to the official apartheid classification of 'non-white', the negative of 'white', which was the term used to classify the minority racial group.

classifications of 'white' and 'non-white' so as to eliminate interracial contact and preserve races separately (2012a: South African History Online).

iii) The Internal Security Act (Act No. 44 of 1950), or, as it was previously known, the Suppression of Communism Act (Act No. 44 of 1950)⁶ banned the Communist Party of South Africa and any activity considered 'communist'. Communist activity could broadly be defined as any activity related to political opposition that supported radical change. Therefore, any person, media documentation or form of art that openly opposed apartheid or supported so-called communist groups was banned (2012a: South African History Online).

The apartheid Government enclosed and protected itself and its ideology within this labyrinth of legislation. However, in the course of its strategy of 'racial-preservation', it erected structures that would serve as canvases for resistance art. The 'wall', existing as a built structure (a brick wall, a fence) or an abstract entity (legislation), in many cases certified separated areas. The wall was a complicated and contradictory site: it was a collaborator in the system, it physically divided groups and minimised interaction; it was a betrayer of safety when it could so easily be knocked down; it laid claim to private and public spaces; it separated inside from outside; and it was a surface of resistance and the façade of domination.

1.2. Tension

After June 1986, in an act of appeasement seen by many as a sign of failed policy, the government repealed many of the laws that had enacted petty apartheid (Peffer 2009: 35).

By the mid 1980s, much of what the apartheid Government had set in place began to disintegrate as it was challenged both socially and physically. Referring to the collapse of certain laws, Peffer (2009: xx; 35) states that "on the social front, it became clear by the 1980s that urban apartheid had been a grand failure", evidenced by the gradual withdrawal of Group Areas legislation and integration of public amenities. Serious housing shortages had reduced the Group Areas Act to a theoretical construct, and consequently large numbers of groups referred to by the Government as 'non-white' entered urban areas that were previously designated 'white' areas, forming 'grey areas' (Peffer 2009: xxi). Paradoxically, this added another colour to the black and white coordinated key to the map of the city when these 'grey areas' were officially recognised by the Free Settlement

⁶ See John Dugard: *Human Rights and the South African Legal Order* 1978, pp.155-163.

Areas Act in 1988 (Peffer 2009: xxi). Metaphorically, these ‘grey areas’ also referred to the undefined, unclear and contradictory aspects of the apartheid system, or the “cultural phenomena that could never be accurately classified according to the apartheid criteria” (Peffer 2009: xxi). Whilst the system was beginning to show signs of failure, the last efforts at institutionalised apartheid were made by means of various States of Emergency declared by the acting President, P.W. Botha⁷, banning all organisations and meetings that were deemed suspicious and oppositional to the Government.

On the anti-apartheid front, the establishment of the Mass Democratic Movement⁸ was underway, and drew in all sectors of the population and introduced non-racialism⁹ as a political discourse. The liberation movement was accelerated in response to more draconian measures enforced by the apartheid Government (Hecker 2011: 14). Situated within the anti-apartheid movement, and falling in line with the political tensions at the time, the use of art as a weapon of struggle saw an increase during the decade.¹⁰ For many, according to Sabine Marschall (2002: 47), “art was the only sector in which political opposition could find a voice”. The phenomenon of politically-active art, or resistance art, was a response to the truths made clear by the events of 1976. Resistance art emerged as artists responded to socio-political events and issues. In her book, *Resistance Art in South Africa*, Sue Williamson (1989: 8) writes that resistance art “is also about the growth of the ideas that art is not necessarily an elitist activity, and that popular cultural resistance has a vital role to play in the life of the community and the struggle for freedom”. Williamson’s book is organised into categorical chapters that focus on specific mediums and types of resistance art, for example, posters, murals, graffiti, T-shirts and Peace Parks.

⁷ P.W. Botha was Prime Minister of South Africa between 1978 and 1984, and State President between 1984 and 1989.

⁸ Mdanda (2011: 19) explains that “the formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF) in 1983 and the Congress of the South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in 1985 were two major political developments that gave rise to what became known as the Mass Democratic Movement”. Seidman (2007: 127) clarifies that the Mass Democratic Movement, known as the MDM, was “not an organisation in itself, but a description of the wide range of anti-apartheid groups drawn together under the umbrella of the UDF [United Democratic Front]”.

⁹ As opposed to multi-racialism, which highlights the plurality of races, non-racialism is defined by Cock and Bernstein (2002: 21) as an ideological position that “does not involve a denial of racial inequalities . . . but does mean the denial of race as an operative category in the political process and public life and calls for nationalistic solidarity and a common South African citizenship, irrespective of race or ethnicity”.

¹⁰ The notion of art as a weapon of struggle became popularised by the ‘Culture and Resistance Festival’ hosted by Medu Arts Ensemble in 1982 in Gaborone, Botswana. The festival comprised a conference and an exhibition titled ‘Art for Social Development’. The event, which could not take place in South Africa for a number of reasons, can, in a sense, be characterised as democratic. Participants from South Africa and abroad, from different backgrounds, population groups, and professions, were all brought together during this event and functioned as a community that shared a vision of a liberated country. It was during this time that participating artists sought to redefine their role as ‘cultural workers’. After the festival, cultural workers entered the liberation movement armed with the knowledge that art had an important role to play in the struggle, and the skills to transfer democratic practices amongst all those resisting apartheid.

Resistance art was rooted directly in the context of struggle in the midst of the Mass Democratic Movement and what was known as ‘people’s culture’¹¹. Enwezor (2009: 320; 2009: 19) clarifies that “the 1980s thus witnessed the efflorescence of socio political art” and that this art was one “produced under a state of emergency, under circumstances of abnormality and absurdity”. Whilst considering the notion of resistance art contextualised by the anti-apartheid movement, the contradictory positions ‘white’ artists, or cultural workers – a term which sought to remove any division in race and placed emphasis on unity – should be noted. Roger van Wyk (2011: 173) writes of the contradiction: “[they] criticised the status quo while enjoying the benefits, often from within the privileged environment of liberal universities and colleges”. Nonetheless, it has been pointed out by Mdanda (2004: 189) that the role of art within the struggle was not racially exclusive, but instead it encouraged and allowed people to move beyond racial divisions. Conversely, Steve Biko (1972: 64), leader of the Black Consciousness Movement¹² in South Africa, attributed the structure of non-racialism in the resistance movement to ‘white’ liberals who, he explains, “maintained that if you stood for a principle of non-racialism you could not in any way adopt what they described as racist policies”. Biko rejected the integration promoted by ‘white’ liberals and described it as “salving the consciences of the guilt-stricken white”. Even within the overall anti-apartheid movement, which drew on non-racialism as a political discourse, and in the domain of resistance art, tensions existed in the relationship between ‘white’ liberals and their pre-determined social status. In other words, the socio-political requirements and commitments of the ‘white’ liberals within the struggle were at odds with the knowledge of their paradoxical status as anti-apartheid supporters in relation to their privileged social status. Regardless of the ambiguous and conflicting status of some artists, resistance art continued to play a significant role in the liberation movement of the 1980s. For the resistance movement, Seidman (2007: 90) expresses that race did not “determine the status of individuals or the extent to which they were allowed to participate in campaigns”. While it stands true that race was not a determining factor for involvement in the anti-apartheid movement like it was a determining factor in apartheid society, not all race-related

¹¹ In the 1980s, the term ‘people’s culture’ became a buzzword and, according to Emile Maurice (2011: 87), it was generally understood as that which presented a vision in opposition to the apartheid system.

¹² Black Consciousness had become popular within ‘black’ population groups, communities and organisations and it too played a role in initiating the student revolt. In his paper titled ‘White Racism and Black Consciousness’, Steve Biko (1972: 68) states that “[the] philosophy of Black Consciousness, therefore, expresses group pride and the determination by the blacks to rise and attain the envisaged self”. Biko’s thoughts on Black Consciousness can be seen as a major influence on black identity and, in turn, the resultant art. Writing about finding a community voice, Seidman (2011b: 105) states that “Black Consciousness ideology called for culture rooted in experience of communities whose identities had been negatively defined as ‘non-white’ by apartheid”. Identity was threatened by apartheid systems of racial classification, and the reawakening and revitalisation that Black Consciousness promoted was both encouraging and necessary at the time.

struggles within apartheid were the same. That is to say, although there was a common struggle against the political system¹³, there were very different individual struggles from different aspects and positions in society. People turned to expressing their circumstances and experiences through visual art – one of the few sectors in which individuals could voice their concerns as well as interact across racial borders. The *term* ‘resistance art’, however, is homogenising, as it leads one to assume that there was only one type of resistance – the mass struggle against the apartheid system itself. Though Williamson (1989) mentions different categories or types of resistance art in her seminal book, which remains a useful resource, there is no clear indication of the different types of struggles and hardships faced during apartheid. This removes the sensitivity from the art which was produced under incredibly abnormal circumstances.

In his paper titled ‘Alter Images and the Aesthetics of South African Resistance Art’, Andries Oliphant (2006: 163; 173; 174) touches on key features in his description of resistance art. He describes it as the “direct transcription of *political* events”; the simultaneous negotiation of the aesthetic and the political; a form of art that is “acutely sensitive to the situations in which human freedom is in peril”; and a disapproval of what is “ethically dubious”, while its greatest challenge was to avoid falling into a category of knee-jerk, predictable and prescribed responses. He also likens resistance art to bridges and pathways between two opposing sides. For Oliphant, then, resistance art is didactic and a unique form of record-taking, it is a creative awareness and consciousness and also a means of joining conflicting forces. Stated differently, the space that resistance art bridged across was the same conceptual and physical space dividing ‘inside’ from ‘outside’ and ‘white’ from ‘non-white’ – the ‘grey areas’, as it were. This space was significant because it allowed for the articulation of the vision for transition from one order of governance to the next.

1.3 Register

Printmaking entered the domain of resistance art via a number of avenues, but specifically in the form of protest posters and relief prints. Philippa Hobbs and Elizabeth Rankin (1997: 3) state that, like many other cultural forms, “prints constituted a site of resistance”. Further, they add:

In times of change, printmaking has often served a social role in disseminating ideas, sometimes subtly in the resonances of individual artworks in galleries,

¹³ Although I refer to a common struggle against the apartheid system, this does not imply that this common struggle was the same for all those involved. Instead, reference to a common struggle suggests the overall opposition to the apartheid system.

sometimes more overtly in the messages of publications, political banners, posters, even T-shirts. The democratic nature of the multiple and versatile print, which shifts steadily from 'high' art and more pragmatic applications, may provide an intrinsic if subliminal agenda for its important role in South African art.

My interest in printmaking, both in practice and research, has encouraged me to consider the historical role of printmaking in South Africa and how it materialised as an influential medium, both artistically and commercially, during the anti-apartheid movement as a type of protest and resistance art as well as a tool for disseminating ideas. I have considered the re-contextualisation of this medium in a contemporary South African moment. Included here is the consideration of the ways in which this medium continues to be used today – a different moment of conflict and change – by contemporary South African artists. Bearing in mind the medium's potent socio-political, historical importance, how is printmaking being used for current socio-political commentary, and does it hold the same power as it did previously? As a medium historically associated and intricately linked to social change, to what extent has it been used in the present-day? In the most general sense then, my work is described as the union of my interest in the history of the archetypal resistance medium and in contemporary concerns regarding the representation of current political themes as I continue to work with printmaking, both in the traditional manner of relief prints and in contemporary digital printing.

Hobbs and Rankin (1997: 2; 3) describe the features of printmaking as follows:

Printmaking is unique amongst all the media available to artists in its close historical links to industrial processes The relationship of printmaking to social change is not solely metaphoric. Because of their relatively easy duplication and dissemination, and their ready alliance of image and text, prints have long been vehicles of information and ideology.

Printmaking was one of, if not the most popular of mediums used for resistance art, either as protest posters hastily designed and printed under the darkness of night or carefully thought-through relief prints. It was a favoured medium because of its graphic language and inherent reproducibility resulting in cost-effective and time-effective processes; accessibility of tools and printing facilities; portability and ability to transition between contexts; and lastly the capacity for mass production and dissemination (Hecker 2011: 11). Printmaking engaged with the anti-apartheid movement on a practical level; prints, especially protest posters, had quite a specific function equated to political communication (Seidman 2011b: 113). Perhaps the protest poster can be considered the most recognisable type of graphic art and all resistance art. There are numerous

publications by Judy Seidman (*Red on Black: The Story of the South African Poster Movement*, 2007) and the late Jonathan Berndt (*Weapon to Ornament: The CAP Media Project Posters*, 2007 and 'The Spectral Life of Posters in the Archive', 2010 [unpublished]), to name a few influential authors dealing with this specific adaption of the print medium, ranging from poster aesthetics and anonymous artists to a recent discovery of archived Soviet Posters in Cape Town¹⁴.

There is an international graphic language specific to protest and revolution. A book titled *Reproduce and Revolt* (MacPhee and Rodriguez 2008) contains a visual dictionary of international graphic imagery precisely for socio-political use. MacPhee and Rodriguez (2008: 9) write that "in the political realm, there is a long history of compelling and easy to reproduce political graphics being used and reused by activists and artists". This graphic vocabulary lends itself to be adapted in different social contexts around the world. During the liberation movement, South African artists often appropriated material from other revolutionary imagery from Europe and Russia, and these imported graphics were altered to be more specific to the South African struggle context. For example, *In the World* from *May Day is Ours!* 1989 (Fig. 1), a black and white poster produced by the Gardens Media Project¹⁵ as part of a 5-part poster series for May Day¹⁶, has visual similarities to a colour poster designed by N.M. Kochergin, *I-e Maya 1920 goda. Cherez oblomki kapitalizma k vsemirnomu btratsvuu trudyashchikhyas!* (*The First of May*) in 1920 (Fig. 2). Although the posters are not identical, the imported graphics and poster aesthetics are evident in the South African poster. In both images the text serves two purposes: it frames the top and bottom of the picture plane in two separate bands, and it announces May Day. In both, the picture plane is compositionally divided into two sections. The bottom half is occupied by figures in motion and the top half is taken up by an orb-shape. In the South African version the orb represents planet earth (this is also suggested by the text at the top of the poster). The directional lines in the background suggest rays of light emitting and illuminating the earth from behind, creating silhouettes of the worker implements and tools that crown the planet. The orb, in the Soviet poster, may symbolise the sun. This is encouraged by the outward succession rings of warm shades of yellows. The pick and hammer carried by the

¹⁴ These posters from the 1940s, known as Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union (TASS) Posters, are held in the Iziko South African National Gallery (ISANG) and form the nexus of networks linking South Africa and the Soviet Union in the 1940s and 1980s (Berndt 2010: 1)

¹⁵ The Gardens Media Project was an anti-apartheid organisation made up of mostly 'white' art students from the University of Cape Town. They garnered their collective skills, producing printed material and other graphic art between 1985 and 1989. Other organisations they were linked to include the End Conscription campaign (which opposed the conscription of 'white' men into the South African military), and the United Democratic Front, and it also established the T-shirt printing division at the Community Arts Project (Hecker 2011: 82-83).

¹⁶ May Day is also known as International Workers' Day, and it is a celebration of the labour force.

two male figures are similarly silhouetted by the 'light'. The figures in the South African poster face the viewer, resulting in a more confrontational image, whereas the images in the Soviet poster are depicted in profile and only seem to pass by the viewer. On the left hand side of the South African poster there is a section of a wheel. Inclusion of the wheel points to the COSATU logo (Fig. 3 and Fig. 4), initially designed between 1985 and 1986 by Lou Alman. Strong Soviet iconography is present in the logo, namely the three worker-icons and their respective tools (Fig. 2).



Fig. 1: The Gardens Media Project, *In the World* from *May Day is Ours!* (1989), Silkscreen, 100 x 70 cm.

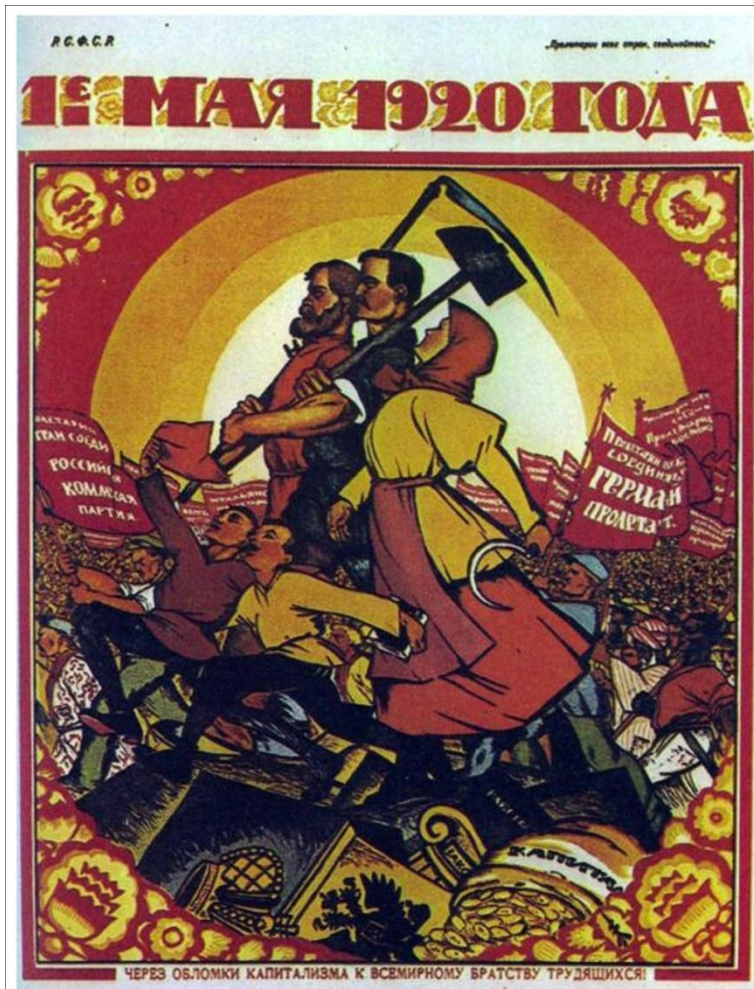


Fig. 2: N.M. Kochergin, *1-е Мая 1920 года. Через обломки капитализма к всемирному братству трудящихся!* (*The First of May*) (1920), Lithograph, 70 x 53 cm.



Fig. 3: Lou Alman, COSATU Logo design (1985).

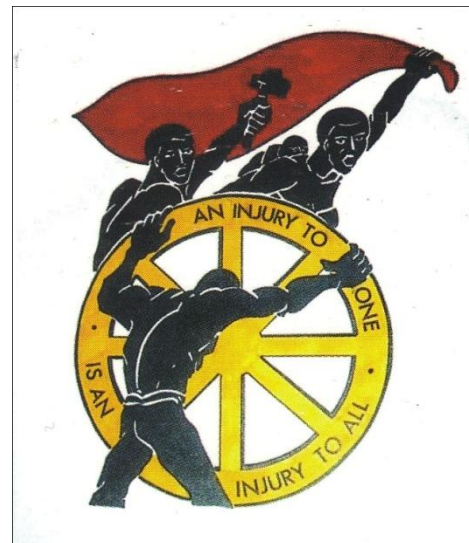


Fig. 4: Lou Alman, COSATU Logo design (1986).

In Soviet iconography, the workers represented the collective hero of the working class, and in South Africa, during the anti-apartheid struggle, the concept of the collective was an important feature of the resistance movement. The appropriation and use of popular struggle iconography was a common creative strategy amongst poster designers and cultural workers¹⁷. The typical struggle vocabulary included images of raised and clenched fists, flags, shackles, urban or industrial landscapes, and worker implements and tools. Because these symbols were so often repeated they were in danger of becoming impotent clichés. At the beginning of the 1980s, Seidman (2007: 78) defended the use of repeated symbols, saying, “True. They can be clichés, over-used. But they can also be immediate, real. Any object in a painting that is recognisable will almost certainly fulfil a symbolic as well as representational purpose. We must be conscious of this dual role”. Upon reflection on the use of these symbols and the role of culture as a weapon of struggle, Frank Meintjies (1990: 30) writes: “clenched fists and militant rhetoric alone do not denote important cultural work Sloganeering soon becomes a barrier to depth and genuine expression”. These symbols were, however, part of a visual language that communicated messages that could be shared and understood across social divides. It is easy to assume that this sort of graphic language is problematic when it is assigned a particular, prescriptive function, when the socio-political context in which most of the posters were produced is not considered. The States of Emergency placed pressure on the production of protest graphics during the 1980s with both positive and negative effects. For example, on the one hand art was an outlet and means of bypassing the restrictive laws, but on the other hand artists were left with very little room for experimentation and aesthetics, and were expected to limit the message to be delivered (Seidman 2007:195). The availability and reproducibility of trusted symbols and graphic struggle vocabulary were advantageous to the task at hand.

The techniques and processes of printmaking lend the medium to appropriation, and allow the artist to synthesise imagery sourced from various materials. A contemporary example of appropriation (or misappropriation, depending where one stands) of protest poster iconography

¹⁷ Included in this practice of appropriation and repertoire of graphic imagery during the 1980s is the face of the ultimate South African struggle icon, Nelson Mandela. The graphic portrait accompanied by the text ‘FREE MANDELA’, was probably written and graffiti-stencilled in more places and more regularly than any other. Seidman (2007: 206) further adds that the campaign to free Mandela spanned the years between his arrest and his release, and she explains that “because his image was banned, graphic artists used older photographs, and drew pictures based upon reports of what he looked like in prison. Both the artists and the audiences recognised that these images were symbolic and idealised, rather than realistic portrayals”. Today Mandela is still an icon associated with freedom. Recently three Zimbabwean exiles chained themselves to the bronze sculpture of Madiba in Johannesburg’s Mandela square at Sandton, saying they wanted freedom for Zimbabwe on the eve of the elections. One of the three exiles, Butholezwe Nyathi, said that Mandela represented freedom for all Africans (2013: City Press Online).

and printing is Brett Murray's rendition of anti-apartheid posters that featured in two recent solo exhibitions, 'Hail to the Thief I' and 'Hail to the Thief II'¹⁸. The exhibitions included three poster prints titled *The President* 2010 (Fig. 5), *The Struggle* 2010 (Fig. 6) and *Amandla* 2010 (Fig. 7), which parody iconic political posters from the 1980s: *You have struck a rock* 1982 (Fig. 8), *Tell my people that I love them* 1982 (Fig. 9) and *Asiyi eKhayelitsha* 1982 (Fig. 10) respectively. Brett Murray's reworking is almost exact, a deliberate copying of the original images, except for the words, which have been changed. The text in *Amandla* (Fig. 7) has been changed to "We demand Chivas, BMW's and Bribes", in place of "We demand houses, security and comfort". In *The President* (Fig. 5), only the last word has been changed from "crushed" to "president". Murray's text reads: "Now you have touched the women you have struck a rock; you have dislodged a boulder; you will be president". The text in the original poster (Fig. 8) was derived from a popular 1956 struggle song translated into English (Seidman 2011: 10) from isiZulu. Seidman created the original in 1982 especially for the role played by women in the struggle for liberation. Seidman (2007: 123) states that "during the 1970s and 1980s, the role of women in the liberation struggle came under a new spotlight. Women comrades were detained, tortured, and killed". Murray's parody subverts the intended meaning of empowerment and homage to the role of women in the liberation struggle. His text seemingly reads as a step-by-step guide to becoming President. Posters were also created to mark struggle days, now public holidays, such as June 16 and August 9¹⁹.

Murray's appropriated posters were received with mixed feelings; on the one hand they were praised for their tongue-in-cheek approach to the questionable escapades of the ruling elite of the country, and on the other hand they were criticised for plagiarising iconic struggle images. *The Struggle* (Fig. 6) is an adaption of Seidman's commemorative poster; *Tell my people that I love them* (Fig. 9). Seidman (2007: 76) writes that the execution of the man in the image came to be honoured as a landmark throughout the struggle years.

¹⁸ Another contemporary South African artist who has quite blatantly appropriated the print medium, as well as resistance art aesthetics, is Cameron Platter. Platter's process of appropriation is described as a kind of sampling similar to that used by hip-hop musicians. Platter demonstrates his artistic process in his drawing titled *The Battle of the Cinema Privé and Casino and Grill in Rorkes Drift* as he reinterprets John Muafangejo's linocut, *The Battle of Rorke's Drift*. Through the artist's sampling of Muafangejo's work, the carnage between the Zulus and the British is replaced with enchantment and debauchery in a KwaZulu-Natal nightclub (Hecker, 2011). He demonstrates not only how the printmaking medium has shifted in terms of resistance art in South Africa, but also how the actual printmaking technique can be manipulated into another autographic medium such as drawing.

¹⁹ These two days mark Youth Day and Women's Day respectively.

In her poster, Seidman includes the last words spoken by the figure, identified as Solomon Mahlangu²⁰, before he was hanged: “Tell my people that I love them and that they must continue the struggle”. Murray omits the last word in his rendition and adds the words “for Chivas Regal, Merc’s and Kick-Backs”. His decision to change the text and continue working in the medium using the same graphic language forces a different reading. While highly contentious, if not scandalous to some, Murray has opened up debate concerning the conduct of the ruling elite as well as (in)appropriate appropriation of familiar struggle imagery²¹. Lloyd Pollak (2011: African Colours) defends Murray’s strategy as licit, arguing that the contemporary African National Congress “appropriated the struggle, and exploited it as part of its legitimizing mythology. As the party has ceased to [honour] the struggle ideals of equality and social justice, it and its propaganda are now fair game”. Seidman (2011b: 10) vehemently disagrees, stating that “recasting images in the public domain to deliver a message contrary to the originals is misappropriation”, and she argues that Murray’s artistic revisions “have the images saying the opposite of what we believed”. In his artworks, Murray comments on the contradictory political institution along with the ruling elite who, for some South Africans, force the perception that the present moment is truly not the one which was previously fought for during apartheid. Through his continued use of this archetypal medium, he demonstrates how a previous resistance medium and aesthetic continues to be used today for pointed socio-political comment, as well as how this also complicates the notion of appropriation of Soviet struggle imagery during apartheid by cultural workers. Murray’s appropriation of the familiar medium and posters forces a reminder of the struggle in the face of what he perceives to be the undermining of liberation ideals.

²⁰ Solomon Mahlangu was an anti-apartheid activist and member of the cadre of Umkonto we Sizwe, the military wing of the African National Congress. According to the records on South African History Online (2012d), “on 13 June 1977, Mahlangu and his companions, Mondy Johannes Motloung and George ‘Lucky’ Mahlangu, were accosted by police in Goch Street, Johannesburg. In the ensuing gun battle two civilian men were killed and two wounded. Solomon Mahlangu and Motloung were arrested”. Solomon Mahlangu was tried with two counts of murder and several terrorism charges, which resulted in his execution on 6 April 1979. Observers believe that this date “was deliberately chosen to coincide with the 327th anniversary of Jan van Riebeck’s arrival at the Cape in 1652” (South African History Online 2012d).

²¹ It is noteworthy to mention that Murray’s artworks were included in two separate solo exhibitions which ran for a couple of months in both Cape Town and Johannesburg at the Goodman Gallery. It is worth considering why, during the second exhibition when *The Spear* (Fig. 22) debacle occurred, the appropriated struggle posters did not cause more unease, as they commented on the collective shortcomings and skewed priorities of the ruling elite, including the President (Fig. 5). Phylcia Oppelt (2012: 5) refers to the posters included in ‘Hail to the Thief II’ and writes: “There are other art works in the Murray exhibition that should cause the ANC far more discomfort and should lead to introspection”.

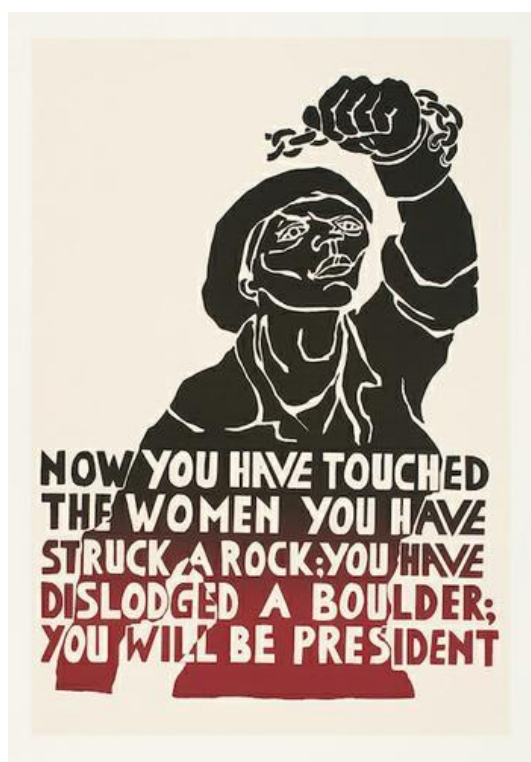


Fig. 5: Brett Murray, *The President* (2010), Silkscreen, 100 x 70 cm.

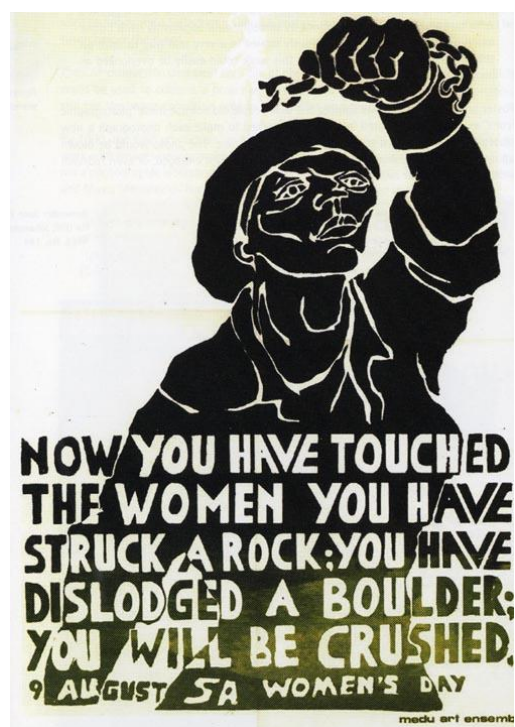


Fig. 8: Judy Seidman, *You have struck a rock* (1982), Silkscreen, 60 x 42 cm.

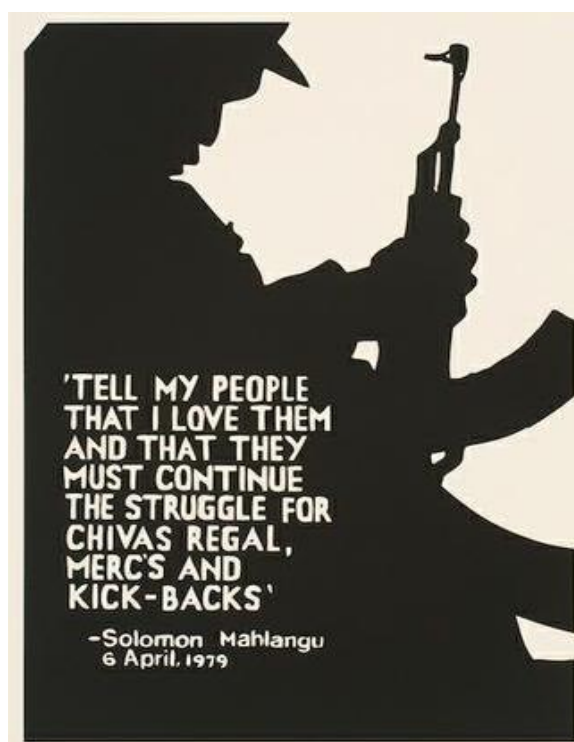


Fig. 6: Brett Murray, *The Struggle* (2010), Silkscreen, 100 x 70 cm.

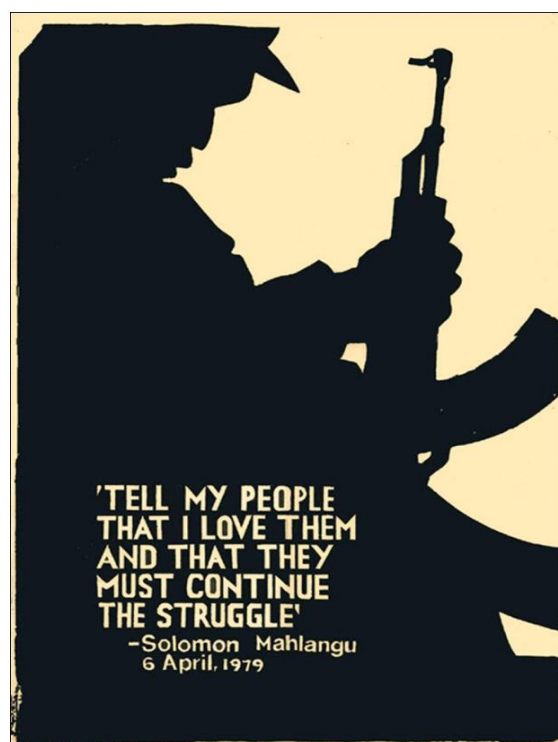


Fig. 9: Judy Seidman, *Tell my people that I love them . . . ' (1982), Silkscreen, dimensions unknown.*

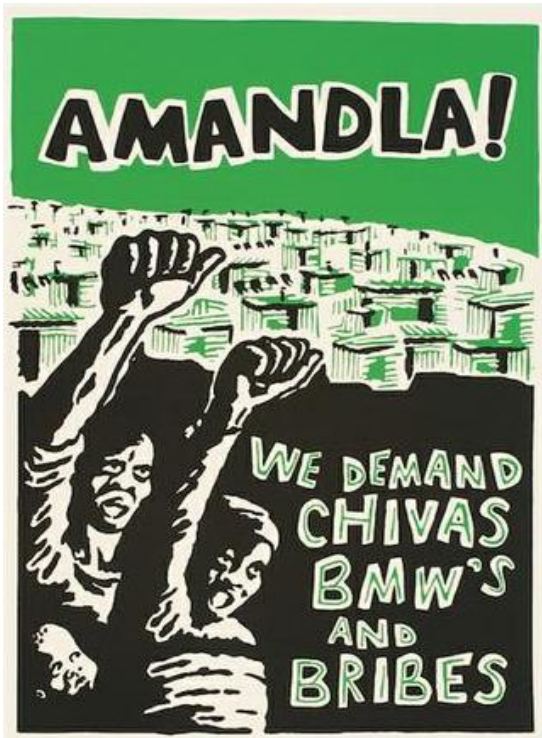


Fig. 7: Brett Murray, *Amandla* (2010),
Silkscreen, 100 x 70 cm.

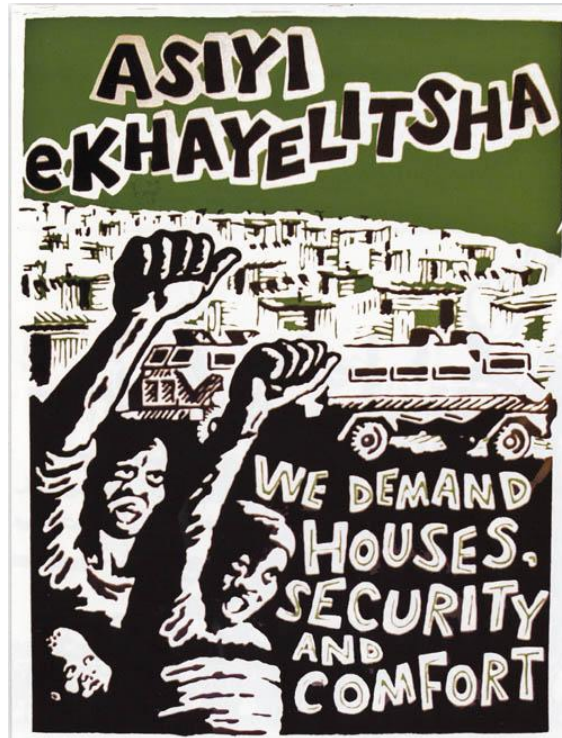


Fig. 10: Artist Unknown, *Asiyi eKhayelitsha* (1982),
Silkscreen, dimensions unknown.

Political posters generally emphasised heroic and defiant imagery abroad and in South Africa, yet the figure that appears in *Tell my people that I love them . . .* (Fig. 9) and again in *The Struggle* (Fig. 6) is depicted with his head downcast; the figure is captured in a quiet moment beside his weapon. The fact that the figure is a silhouette in both versions of the poster removes any individual facial features and thus leaves the figure unidentified. Due to the laws banning the printing of images of people in jail, the only references to Mahlangu in the poster are the words attributed to his name and the gun he holds, both of which identify him and contextualise the circumstances leading up to his imprisonment and execution. Seidman (2007: 203) points out that during apartheid portraits were mostly generic, and that the number of portraits depicting anti-apartheid Leader-Figures was limited for a number of reasons. In addition to being unable to print images of people in jail, up-to-date photographs or images of such Leader-Figures were unavailable, and the Leader-Figures either in exile or underground did not necessarily want their image distributed. Besides conserving the safety of Leader-Figures, much emphasis was placed on collective leadership, and those who daily resisted and struggled with apartheid were considered heroes. In the original poster, then, the figure could either represent Mahlangu uttering his last request or it could represent the community hero contemplating Mahlangu's words. The ambiguity of the identity of figure in the image is perhaps its strength, playing into the 'grey areas' of the apartheid system.

The very nature of the poster was ephemeral, its purpose to be the banned voice on the walls of the city and a temporary site for expression. Relief prints²² on the other hand, according to Williamson (1989: 5), were “carefully non-confrontational” as more time could be spent planning them, and they were often not as politically blatant as protest posters. Though relief prints did not always contain the typical struggle imagery, they constituted a different type of resistance art. Relief prints tended to be more thematic in terms of ‘township’²³ scenes and rural landscapes, also showing an inclination towards religious and mythological narratives (Hobbs and Rankin 2003: 205). These themes and narratives were used both metaphorically and literally to portray the everyday life and the socio-political realities of the day. Ruth Simbao (2011: 39) suggests a broader understanding of the types of resistance art, an understanding beyond overt political activism or portrayals of weaponry, one “reflecting the ubiquitous, domestic and intimate responses to a struggle that is part of daily resistance”. Throughout her essay, Simbao argues the potential of “traditional” imagery to be subversive in the apartheid context:

Certain portrayals of ‘Africanness’ (particularly African traditionalism), ‘Pan-Africanism’, ‘ethnicity’ and ‘blackness’, particularly when produced by black artists, can be read as shrewd challenges to dominant white discourse even though they are sometimes read – across the political spectrum – as regressive (Simbao 2011: 39).

The legislation of the regime homogenised different ethnic groups into a single collective group, which it defined as ‘black’, stripping African people of their ethnic identities. The types of images that expressed African tradition and ethnicity, and that also expressed personal struggles in everyday life, in addition challenged the repressive apartheid system. John Muafangejo, an artist well-known for his relief prints, was born in Namibia, and came to South Africa in 1967 and studied at Rorke’s Drift, where he received his art certificate in 1969.

²² A relief print uses a process of cutting an image out of a surface or matrix. When the surface is inked, the raised, uncut areas hold the ink and therefore provide the positive image when printed, and the areas cut away provide the negative of the image as there is no surface for the ink to be transferred on to.

²³ Judin and Vladislavić (1998: 25) define the term ‘location’, or ‘township’, as the “areas set aside for Africans at some distance from white towns and provided with limited housing”. Pdraig O’Malley (2013a: Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory) writes: “By definition a ‘Bantustan’ was an area set aside for African self-government and eventual independence. Later the word Bantustan was replaced by the less offensive but inaccurate term ‘homeland’. Many people had over the years abandoned their ethnic regions and made their homes elsewhere in South Africa – a factor which the government refused to take into consideration”. Up until the end of the 1980s, movement beyond these areas was restricted and heavily monitored by apartheid officials. These demarcated areas were integrated back into South Africa at the end of apartheid in the early 1990s.

During apartheid, access to institutions such as universities and colleges for formal art training²⁴ was restricted for members falling in the 'non-white' racial category. Consequently, a number of community arts centres were established as an alternative place where the creative arts could be taught to those who were marginalised by the education system. In her paper titled 'The Ideology of Community Arts' (1992), Lize van Roebbreek complicates the notion of community arts centres. Van Roebbreek (1992: 51) writes that "community art centres place the emphasis on maximising skills and minimising expenses and specialised technology". She (1992: 52) also explains that emphasis is placed on collective action, that resources and equipment are shared, and that there is constant commentary and feedback concerning artwork. Examples of community arts centres include Community Arts Project (CAP) in Cape Town and Rorke's Drift, also known as the Evangelical Lutheran Art and Craft Centre, in KwaZulu Natal.

Muafangejo is perhaps best known for his combination of text and image, which was a predominant feature of his work. His text often referred to the title of the print and was an integral part of the image, explaining the overall narrative. Hobbs and Rankin (1997: 43) write that in South Africa "the use of titles has been important in works with a social agenda", and that this use of text ties in with a "strong tradition of didactic content in printmaking practice at Rorke's Drift". Muafangejo's *The Battle of Rorke's Drift* 1981 (Fig. 11) includes the text and title at the top of the print and it reads "The Battle of Rorke's Drift about 1879 between Zulus and British. Started the Battle of Rorke's Drift. Ovansilisa no MaZulu oualua 1879". The text then already gives a clue to what the content of the image is – a historic battle scene between Zulu warriors and British Soldiers²⁵. Although Muafangejo sets Zulu warriors up against British soldiers in his composition and refers to a battle that took place in 1879, one could argue that he used this historic event as a metaphor for the prevailing political conditions during apartheid. The Zulu warriors are armed with spears and shields, traditional Zulu weapons and also two powerful symbols alluding not only to the official ANC logo, but also to the military wing of the ANC, Umkonto we Sizwe, which means "spear of the nation" when translated into English. Though there is no way of certifying that Muafangejo intended this association with the ANC and the armed struggle, his reference to the historic battle

²⁴ The Bantu Education Act (Act No. 47 of 1953) "established an inferior education system for Africans based upon a curriculum intended to produce manual laborers and obedient subjects. Similar discriminatory education laws were also imposed on Coloureds, who had lost the right to vote in 1956, and Indians. The government denied funding to mission schools that rejected Bantu Education, leading to the closure of many of the best schools for Africans. In the higher education sector, the Extension of University Education Act (Act No. 45 of 1959) prevented black students from attending 'white' universities (except with government permission) and created separate and unequal institutions for Africans, Coloureds, and Indians respectively" (2012c: South African History Online).

²⁵ The Battle of Rorke's Drift took place in 1879 and was one of the battles of the Anglo-Zulu war.

nuanced the armed struggle and brutality of the political climate of the 1980s. He produced this print in the early 1980s, a few years after the Soweto Student Uprising²⁶ in 1976 when violence escalated and the struggle against apartheid was reaching its climax.

The notion of a relief print as “a site of resistance” (Hobbs and Rankin 1997: 3) is pertinent not only to the nuanced messages of resistance it was able to express; it also refers to the relief print as a site of physical resistance when one takes into account the manual labour involved when working into the surface of the block or matrix of the wood or linocut. Metaphorically, the struggle against a resilient system is represented by the physical resistance of the wood or linoleum surfaces against the tools during cutting. This eventually gives way to a surface of elevated and cut-out contours, which display positive and negative areas that are usually, but not exclusively, printed in black and white. Tonal variation, for example visual greys, may be introduced into the stark black and white scheme to complement it. Hobbs and Rankin (1997: 35) explain that grey areas can be achieved by creating fine clusters of cuts, stipples, short lines or cross-hatching:

When the block is inked, in these heavily textured areas, only the tips of the surface are acknowledged by the roller, creating, in the print, an optical blend of black and white fine enough to read as grey.

This effect brings to mind Pepper’s (2009: xxi; 2011: ‘Post Apartheid Art’, with Jayawardine) mention of ‘grey areas’, which he describes as “the place outside of apartheid ideas”, and as something that “contradicted the separatist mentality”. Grosz (2001: 92; 91) argues that the “space in between things is the space in which things are undone”, explaining that the in-between space “is the locus for social, cultural, and natural transformations: it is not simply a convenient space for movements and realignments but in fact is the only place . . . where becoming, openness to futurity, outstrips the conservational impetus to retain cohesion and unity”. According to apartheid policies, cohesion and unity in this sense would have been applicable only to the notion of separate development, that is, cohesion and unity strictly amongst members belonging to the same racial category. Earlier it was mentioned that these ‘grey areas’ were the ambiguous aspects of the apartheid regime. These undefined areas were neither inside the apartheid regime nor outside of what was beyond the apartheid regime; ‘grey areas’ were ‘the in-between space’.

²⁶ The Soweto Student Uprising took place on 16 June 1976. What initially started out as a peaceful protest against the Bantu Education system ended in an uprising when the students were met by heavily-armed police officials who fired teargas and live ammunition into the crowds.



Fig. 11: John Muafangejo, *The Battle of Rorke's Drift* (1981), Linocut, 608 x 859 mm.

1.4 Mis-Guide

The physical wall is an in-between space – literally. As mentioned earlier, walls played a significant part in collaborating with the apartheid system by creating physically-divided spaces. However, in contrast, walls also provided a surface for resistance art – physical walls were canvasses for protest posters, graffiti and murals. The metaphorical and contradictory notions of walls during apartheid may also be extended to the concept of leadership. Just as walls function as main exterior faces of buildings, so too do Leader-Figures exist as the public face of the institution to which they belong. The ‘façade’, defined in architectural terms, is the main exterior face of the front of a building, whereas when ‘façade’ is used in reference to the certain public behaviour and countenance of a person (and even more so a person of authority), it lends itself towards notions of ambiguity. Central to my thematic and conceptual concerns is the question of how Leader-Figures are portrayed in contemporary African socio-political art. In my studio work I depict current Leader-Figures, keeping in mind the ways that these types of figures have been portrayed in older images of resistance and protest. That is not to say that my work is protest or resistance art. Rather, it plays into the ‘grey areas’ of leadership in the contemporary South African moment, dealing with what I perceive to be contradictory and ambiguous aspects of leadership within the political institution.

Often the *process* I follow in my practical work (the cutting of wood and linoleum and digital scanning) and the *source material* and *content* I accumulate (archived apartheid footage belonging to my grandfather and images and footage from official press media) convey serious and sinister undertones, whereas the manner in which the content is treated results in bizarre imagery. I juxtapose the sinister and absurd, for example in *Position 1 – 6* 2011 (Figs. 12 to 17), to demonstrate my own questions relating to leadership ambiguities, regarding the Presidential Office in particular. The figures in the *Position* (Figs. 12 to 17) series are outlines of images of a dancing current President of South Africa, Jacob Zuma. However, there is no way of identifying the figure as a President or as Jacob Zuma as I have purposefully omitted any identifying features. Further, because the figure cannot be identified as Jacob Zuma, identification relies on the viewer's recognition and association of the President's charisma displayed by his singing and dancing in public.



Fig. 12: Carmen Koekemoer, *Position 1* (2011), Digital print, approximately 200 x 130 cm.

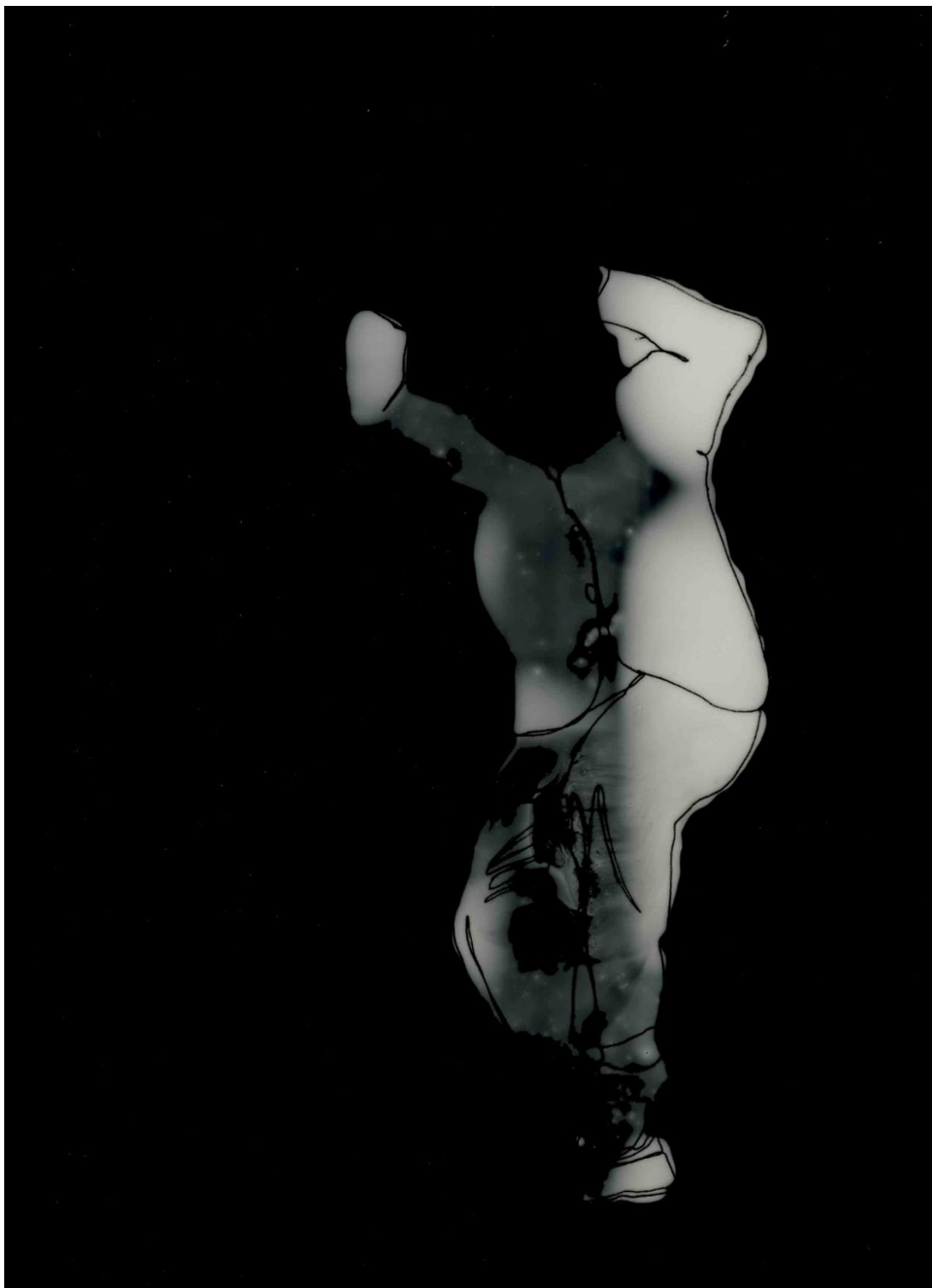


Fig. 13: Carmen Koekemoer, *Position 2* (2011), Digital print, approximately 200 x 130 cm.

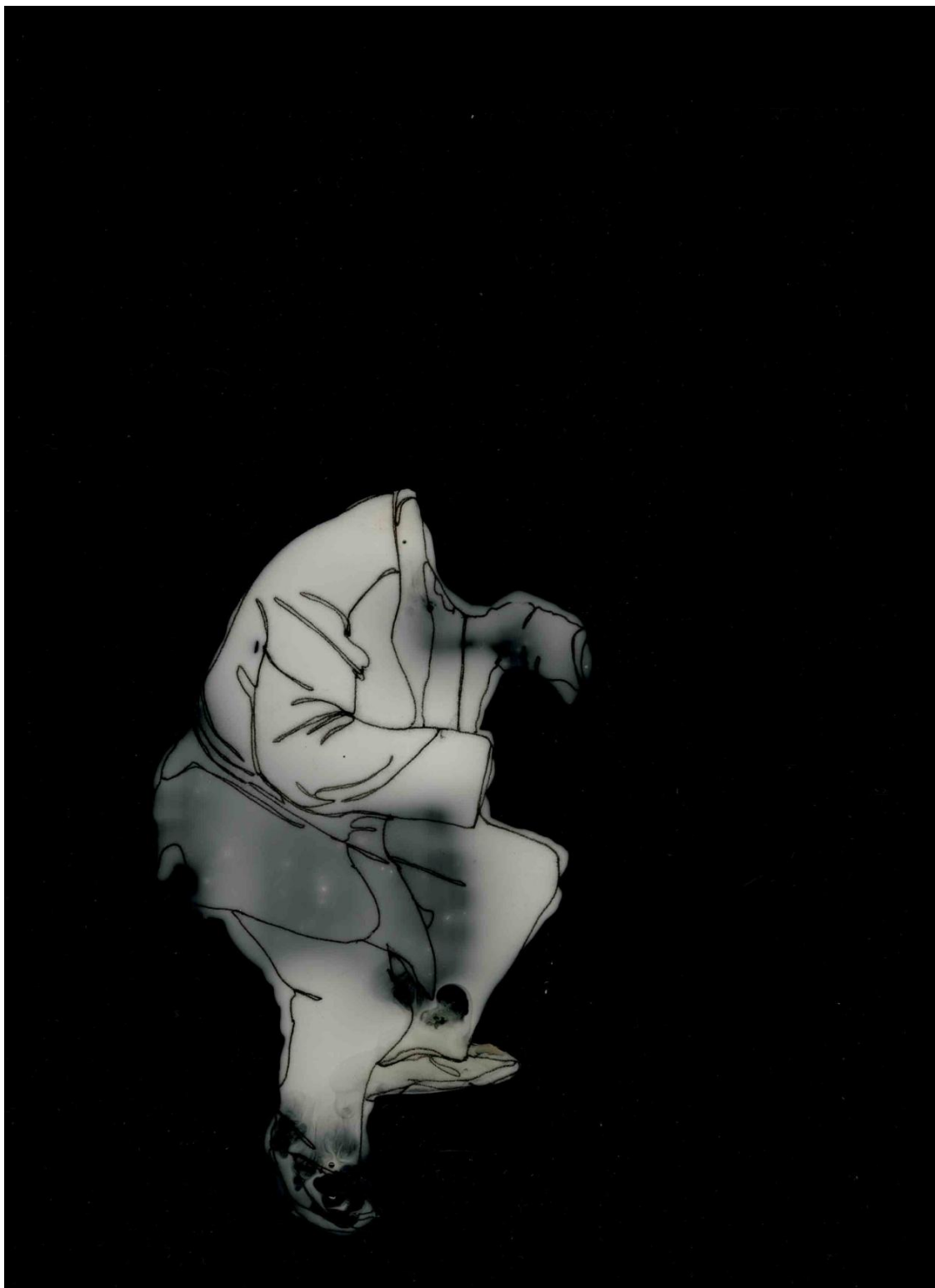


Fig. 14: Carmen Koekemoer, *Position 3* (2011), Digital print, approximately 200 x 130 cm.



Fig. 15: Carmen Koekemoer, *Position 4* (2011), Digital print, approximately 200 x 130 cm.

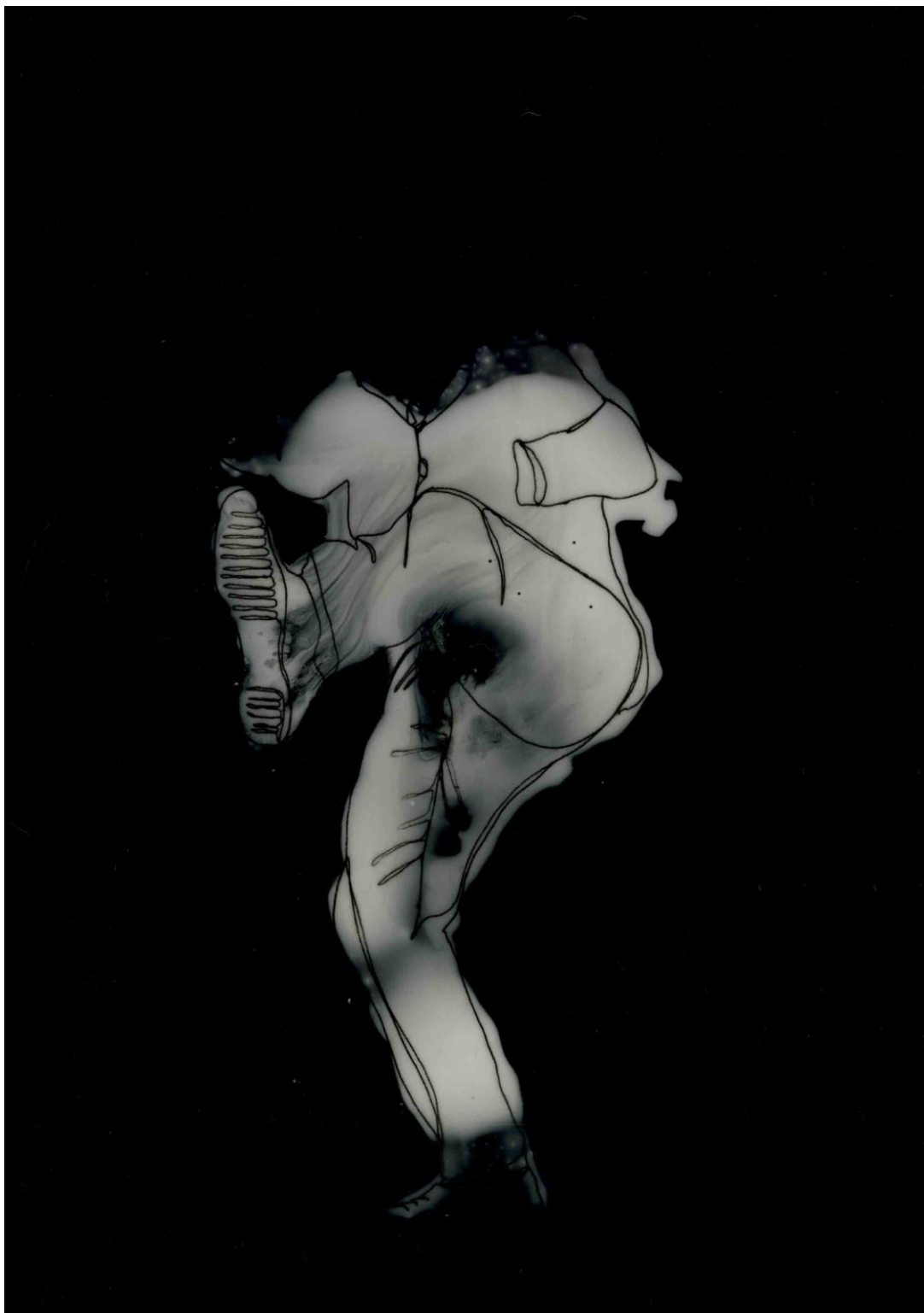


Fig. 16: Carmen Koekemoer, *Position 5* (2011), Digital print, approximately 200 x 130 cm.



Fig. 17: Carmen Koekemoer, *Position 6* (2011), Digital print, approximately 200 x 130 cm



Fig. 18: View of *Positions* installed in the Gallery-in-the- (2013). Photograph by Paul Greenway of 3PP Photography.

In addition to the commemorative poster-portrait of anti-apartheid leader, Solomon Mahlangu, a lithograph print by Paul Stopforth of President P.W. Botha is an example of how an apartheid Leader-Figure was depicted using both the genre of portraiture and medium of printmaking. My choice to include portraits of Leader-Figures as part of my discussion here extends to my own work, much of which is also portrait-based. The 1980s saw consecutive States of Emergency declared throughout South Africa; a time during which the Government and its police force had total authority over any activity they deemed a threat to the state. In 1987, as tensions were peaking, Paul Stopforth²⁷ produced a monochromatic portrait simply titled *The Leader* (Fig. 19), depicting a person one can assume to be P.W. Botha, the Acting President during the various States of Emergency and the last Leader-Figure to enforce the apartheid system²⁸. The title of Stopforth's work is effective in that it singles out the leader, and the status of the leader. The title emphasises the leader as singular, in contrast to the notion of collective leaders of the anti-apartheid movement, juxtaposing the concepts of a skewed minority rule versus democratic rule by the majority. It is unclear whether the image depicts a beheaded figure, or a crumpled up and discarded

²⁷ Stopforth is most well-known for the controversial work he produced during the apartheid era in South Africa. Though his work has shifted, today he continues to create work that is incisive in its social commentary.

²⁸ F.W. de Klerk replaced P.W. Botha in 1989 and announced a programme to reform apartheid.

poster or photograph. During major social and political revolutions, the overturning and decapitation of statues of leaders is common practice to demonstrate social and political overhaul and the introduction of a new regime. One example is the monument to Tsar Alexander III, which was 'beheaded' and brought down in Moscow in 1918 in an attempt to "replace the memorials to the Tsar and members of their court with memorials to socialists and revolutionaries" (White 1988: 19). In 1991, a statue of Lenin was dismantled in East Berlin, 2 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the 'Iron Curtain'. In South Africa, numerous busts and statues of H.F. Verwoerd have been removed from public display. Sean O'Toole (2011: Mail and Guardian online) writes: "a 4.3- metre bronze statue of Verwoerd, which had stood in front of the headquarters of the Free State provincial administration since 1969, was removed from its pedestal [in 1994]. The steady removal of Verwoerd busts from council offices in the ensuing period has, for the most part, happened unnoticed". The visual aggression of Stopforth's image is paramount, and the uncertainties of the origins of the aggression are equally significant. The disfigured face that confronts the viewer could metaphorically represent the corrupted and violent regime of which the Leader is a representative. It could perhaps also be a portrait of a Leader-Figure fallen to the retribution of his institution's victims, or an image borne out of frustration of misconceptions and uncertainties relating to the then current institution of leadership and the public expectations of Leader-Figures. The print is visually inaccessible and geometrically fragmented, jarring the picture-plane and limiting access to the figure, and indirectly playing off the dwindling security of the apartheid system itself.

Stopforth's decision to represent the Leader-Figure as semi-unrecognisable also requests to be considered in relation to the portrayal of anti-apartheid community heroes and leaders in images by cultural workers. Both types of representations of Leaders depicted as unrecognisable were for similar reasons²⁹. It was as much of a crime to accurately represent an anti-apartheid leader as it was to represent an apartheid Leader in a way that could be deemed offensive by the Governing state. The Publications Act (Act No. 42 of 1974) established a Government-appointed body of individuals who were responsible for deciding whether publications, films, objects and public entertainments were undesirable (2013: Beacon For Freedom; 2013a: Pádraig O'Malley for the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory). John Dugard (1978: 196) writes that "In determining whether a publication is undesirable, the author's motive is irrelevant . . . [and] a work may be found to be undesirable if 'any part of it' is undesirable". Anything was deemed undesirable if it was obscene, offensive or harmful to public morals; if it was blasphemous or offensive to the religious beliefs of

²⁹ Earlier in this chapter I explained the reasons for masking the identity of anti-apartheid Leaders (p. 20).

individuals of the Republic; if it brought any persons in the Republic into ridicule or contempt; if it was harmful to the relations between individuals of the Republic; or if it was prejudicial to the safety, peace or welfare of the State (Dugard 1978: 195). Stopforth avoids any obvious identification of who the figure depicted is, save for the title and the year the print was made, which allude to the identity of the man³⁰. Stopforth's reasons for these actions could have also been out of preservation of his safety; the representation of an apartheid Leader-Figure that could be interpreted as disrespectful or as a threat to the state would have had consequences.

The strategy of disfiguration is one I have employed in my own work depicting contemporary South African Leader-Figures, for example the video-scans which I have included in the video, *President 2013* (Fig. 20 and Fig. 21). The figure in my work is not immediately identified because of the interrupted facial features, which are further disrupted in my video playback, although, after the viewer looks more carefully at the figure and identifies the clues offered by the context of the images, the figure becomes recognisable as President Jacob Zuma. The jolted features in these video-scans were achieved by scanning real-time playback of a public broadcast of a meeting in the House of Parliament³¹. I have used a double-observation³² process of scanning real-time video playback, which results in a staggered image to disrupt the identifying features of President Zuma. The image of President Zuma in the House of Parliament travels from real-time video footage to fragmented still images when the video is scanned, and then back into a video format. Paradoxically, at each progressive stage that I interact and familiarise myself with the image, more information is lost. While this demonstrates a loss of recognition, it also comments on the great social distance between the President-Figure and me. The frames of the video, which are corrupted when scanned, result in a segmented image accompanied by fragments of broken words and sentences. This plays with the notion of information being 'lost in translation', in other words, either how official media are selective in what they release to the public sphere, or whether the

³⁰ In his artwork *The Interrogators* (1979), Stopforth depicted three male figures. *The Interrogators* is part of a larger body of work which criticised and questioned the death of Steve Biko in 1977. The real identities of the figures in *The Interrogators* are withheld and the only clue pointing to who they are is the title of the artwork. The three men depicted were part of the group of the security police who were present when Steve Biko died suspiciously in their custody.

³¹ On this particular day, President Jacob Zuma was defending the much debated renovations to his Nkandla Homestead in KwaZulu Natal.

³² The House of Parliament regularly broadcasts live speeches and debates, which, essentially, is meant to be an open and honest platform for public political discussion. Some of the camera angles, though, in the hall where the discussions take place, have a surveillance quality to them. More specifically, they provide a 45 degree view, with the observers watching on the televisions at home having the view from above. The fact that the observers, or rather those who are not in parliament, look down on to the Leader-Figures and Officials, subverts the sense of power, so that it is transferred to the observer.

information is being withheld by leadership officials. On another level, though, the idea of words being lost in translation also forces one to consider how many of the Leader's words are actually his own. For example, many Presidents have their own speechwriter, a person whose key job is to prepare speeches³³. One may heed the words of a Leader-Figure in order to establish some sort of interpersonal connection, even though it may be superficial; however this is compromised by the fragmented text and partially recognisable words which accompany these images, further commenting on the social distance between Leader-Figures and those who are led. My attempts have not been to undermine the position of the Leader-Figure, but instead to investigate this position in relation to the ambiguities of leadership as well as the social distance between President Zuma and myself. This also is a consideration of the ways in which Leader-Figures become the face of the institution of leadership to which they belong.

³³ For example, the White House in the United States of America employs speechwriters.



Fig. 19: Paul Stopforth, *The Leader* (1987) Photolithograph, 45.7 x 31.7 cm.

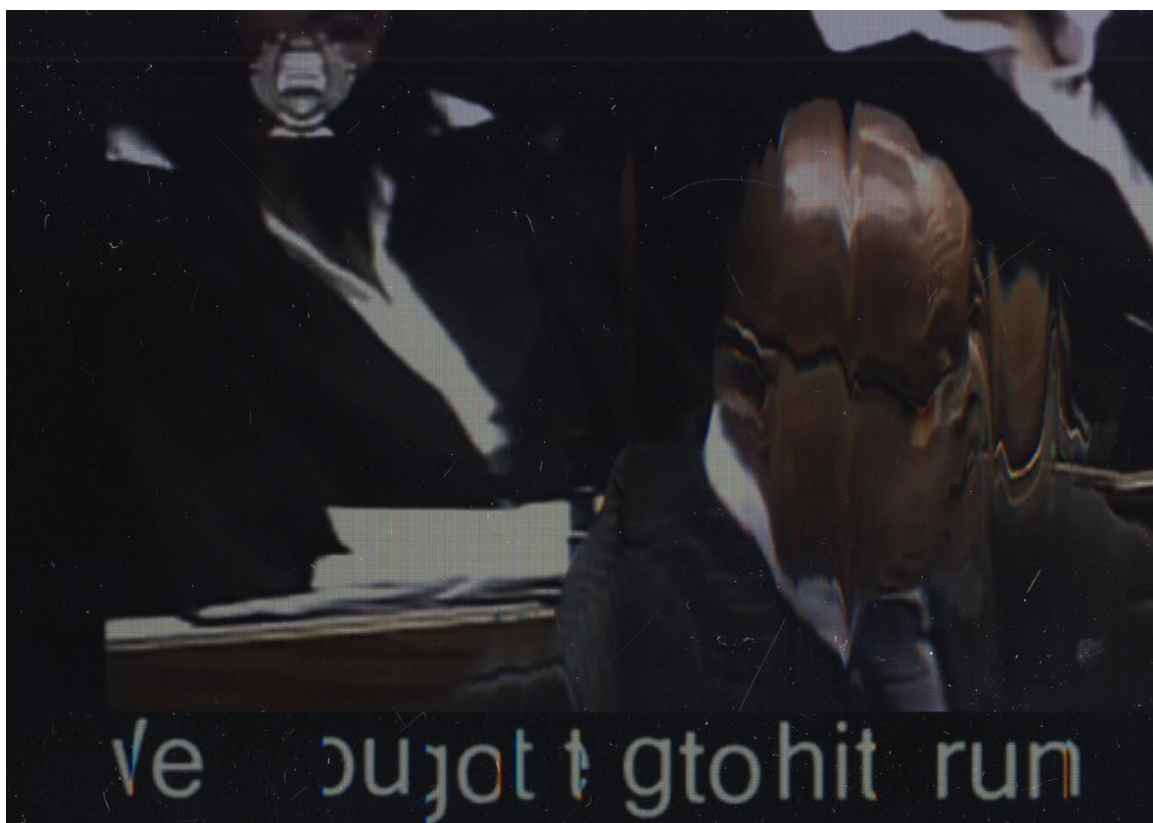


Fig. 20: Carmen Koekemoer, Video-scan included in *President* (2013), video.

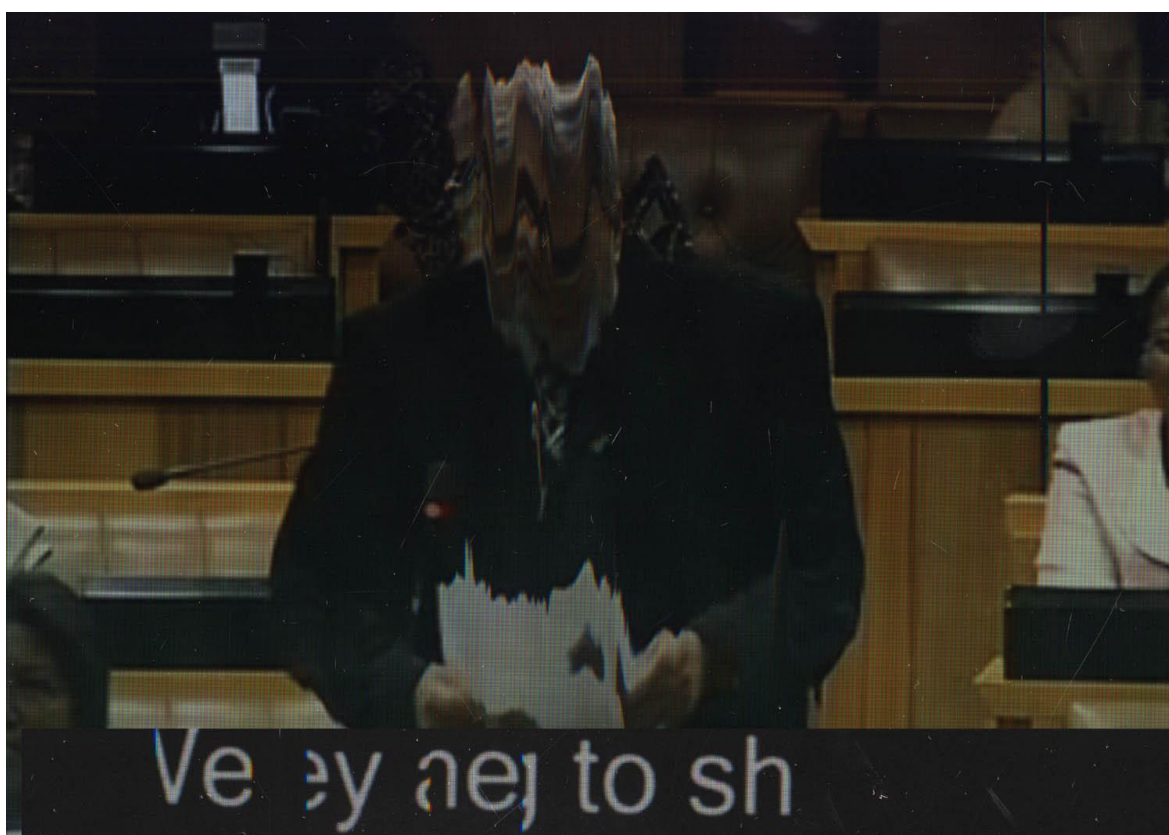


Fig. 21: Carmen Koekemoer, Video-scan included in *President* (2013), video.

1.5. Culmination

There comes a time when a drastic change takes place not only in one's perception of things, but also in how art expresses this change (Araeen 2011: xi).

As the 1980s drew to a close, and with the official end to apartheid drawing nearer, the call to ban art as a weapon of struggle came as a surprise to many who had invested themselves in creating a graphic language of resistance specific to South Africa. In 1989, Sachs delivered the paper 'Preparing Ourselves for Freedom', which, according to Ashraf Jamal (2005: 1) "rocked the mainframe of resistance culture", and according to Oliphant (2011: 181) "marked the terminal point of what many considered the blunt instrumentalist approach to art". The paper questioned the very necessity of resistance art in a historical moment on the verge of political transition. Sachs's first, and probably most significantly contested, proposition was to ban "saying that culture is a weapon of struggle" (1990a: 19). One could imagine the impact this had when, only a few years before at the Culture and Resistance Festival, culture was officially encouraged to be used as a weapon of struggle. According to Ingrid de Kok (1990: 9), the paper "stimulated an unprecedented level of discussion about South Africa's cultural imperatives, current progressive practice and the dangers of a too narrowly defined political expectation of and prescriptiveness about art". Sachs, however, was not the first to warn that the over-utilisation of art as a weapon could lead to it becoming obsolete; writers and critics like Njabulo Ndebele warned of the futility of protest art even before and during the resistance movement of the 1980s (Rampolokeng in Oliphant 2010: 22; Oliphant 2011: 181). In Sachs' (1990a: 20) request to ban reference to the blunt instrumentality of art, he cautioned that the graphic language of resistance and protest could simplify the struggle into a narrow range of themes, threatening to homogenise it while shutting out ambiguity and contradiction. However, the poster *Tell my people that I love them . . .* (Fig. 9.) is a case in point that there was actually more ambiguity present in protest imagery than Sachs had suggested was absent from it.

The paper was initially delivered at an in-house ANC seminar 1989 and eventually evolved into a public debate, and consequently, in 1990, a book including the various responses to Sachs's paper was published – *Spring is Rebellious. Arguments about cultural freedom by Albie Sachs and respondents*. The book concludes with another paper, 'Afterword: The taste of an avocado pear' by Sachs in response to all the debates. In the afterword, Sachs (1990b: 147) cites Lindiwe Mabuza: "Comrade Albie Sachs contradicts himself – his very paper is an instrument of struggle". Sachs

contradicts himself in the way that the ideas and suggestions in his paper conflicted with his call to mobilise people away from culture as a weapon of struggle. The debates that ensued following the paper arrived at no consensus, yet perhaps this 'grey area' is the strength of his paper – to encourage people to talk. As Sachs (1990b: 146) recalls: "Samora Machel used to say that to know the taste of an avocado pear, you had to cut it in half – in other words, let the contradictions come out; we should welcome crisis rather than run away from it". To begin to understand the qualities of something, one needs to expose the centre, or, in other words, something may be better understood when its inconsistencies are taken into account. According to Machel, a crisis, or conflicting circumstance, should be welcomed because it could potentially aid the understanding of a greater concept.

In this chapter I have touched on the context of apartheid during the 1980s as well as resistance art, especially the print medium. The medium was discussed in terms of the ways in which it was used for political activism in the form of protest posters as well as for expression of the narrative of the everyday struggles through relief prints. In South Africa now, how do contemporary artists communicate socio-political messages pertinent to a historical moment that is no longer primarily defined by the apartheid regime which necessitated the active involvement of cultural workers to produce protest and resistance art in opposition to the system in South Africa now? How have artists with socio-political commentary continued the use of archetypal struggle imagery and the print medium, if at all, after Sachs's (1990a: 19) proposition to ban referring to "culture is a weapon of struggle"? The following chapter is contextualised by the continued use of the printmaking medium as well as the extent to which it has been used for socio-political commentary.

Chapter Two: Leaders of the Future – Representations of Contemporary Leader-Figures

Up until the first democratic election in 1994, South Africa was immersed in a series of negotiations concerning its political future. Influenced by a number of determining factors and the apartheid Government's long-held paranoia of Communism, negotiations for a democratic country commenced around the same time as the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, which contributed to the shift in South African politics in the early 1990s (Peffer 2009: xx; Oliphant 2011: 177). This chapter is contextualised by the moment after the official end to apartheid and the initial transitional years since the introduction of a democratic constitution. This current temporal moment is one which defies any exact definition – a 'grey area' itself. Terms like 'transformative', 'transitional' and 'post-apartheid' have all been used in attempts to describe the period up to and including the present moment, but a new term has been introduced – 'post-transitional'. The chapter will begin with the unpacking of this term proposed by Ronit Frenkel and Craig MacKenzie (2010). Additionally, the concept of leadership, and how inconsistencies within this domain are visually portrayed by contemporary artists, will be discussed. This is not to say that these contemporary artists explicitly use art as an instrument for political struggle *per se*, but instead as a means of questioning and complicating current socio-political affairs. In the introduction to her book titled *The Royal Arts of Africa* (1998), Suzanne Blier writes about the concept of leadership and how it has been portrayed in classical African art. Although she focuses on traditional royal African art practices and representations of kings, her conceptual argument is still relevant for my thesis. Examples will be taken from my own work, which I locate in the creative practice of postproduction as theorised by Nicolas Bourriaud (2002), and that of other contemporary artists practising in South Africa – namely Brett Murray, Vulindlela Nyoni and Kudzanai Chiurai – who also comment on the broader concept of leadership in an African context.

2.1. Uncertainty

It would be a misunderstanding to view the legal structure of apartheid, or its psychological and social effects, as beginning suddenly and fully in 1948 or as ending abruptly with the change of the regime in 1994 . . . It is equally difficult to establish a firm end date (Peffer 2009: xvi).

The current moment is obscured by the definitions of its rate of transformation, or lack thereof. Years of forced physical and psychological separation and inequality were not suddenly undone in a single moment or event. In the early 1990s, when the entire nation was equal in law for the first

time, the apartheid infrastructure remained intact, along with an inheritance of a divided society (Saunders 2004: 83; Oliphant 2011: 177; Araeen 2011: xi). The very notion that South Africa is still rehabilitating itself rejects the idea that it is somehow beyond the major transitional discourse of transformation. According to R.W. Johnson (2009: 574-5) history cannot be eliminated, and “just as with every other country, the South Africa of today is organically built on what went before This is not to defend apartheid; it was indefensible The new is built upon the old”. The idea of using that which already exists as a base upon which to build the new, or transforming the old to serve the agenda of the new (Oliphant 2011: 177), is one which extends to a number of concerns throughout my thesis, namely the institution of leadership as well as the technical processes I have used which, in turn, include the process of postproduction and the continued use of a medium associated with resistance culture. At the core of this concept, then, are the different ways that the old is used and adapted by the new and, further, how aspects of the past can be used to comment on the present.

Frenkel and MacKenzie offer a term – ‘post-transitional’ – which, in its own way, is an attempt to build upon that which has already been. The term was introduced in a paper titled ‘Conceptualizing “Post-transitional” South African Literature in English’, and was presented in 2010. Although the paper deals with English Literature, it raises a number of points pertinent to the wider cultural sphere, and South Africa at large. Frenkel and MacKenzie identify three distinctive yet interconnected eras in South African history: apartheid, post-apartheid and post-transitional, and note that the post-transitional is that which emerged after the first fifteen years of democratic rule in South Africa, when the transitional period began to wane (2010: 4; 7). The term ‘post-transitional’ poses some contradictions in terminology and definition when used to describe the current moment in South Africa.

The prefix 'post' suggests something previously attained, which is true to the degree that South Africa has reached the point of transition from the apartheid Government to a democratic Government, but this is then contradicted by the notion that this transformation has not been completely realised in parts of society³⁴. Chris Thurman (2010: 91) explains: "we have done away with legally enforced segregation, but we certainly cannot claim to be 'beyond' apartheid. Ongoing social, racial and economic divisions are evidence that even terms such as 'post-apartheid South Africa' are problematic". Although South Africa has witnessed change, it has not changed according to some expectations. The frustration of the rate of 'transformation' is picked up by Hobbs and Rankin (1997: 3) and applied to printmaking:

. . . the process of transformation may seem to new stakeholders to be disappointingly slow, the expected outcome withheld through lengthy procedures of trial and error. This too finds its parallels in printmaking: the print is a product of delay, the process laborious and time-consuming, and the result of each technical step withheld until the final moment of ink discharge and the generation of the print from the matrix.

Arguably, neither the print nor the notion of transformation is an immediate process; both inherently involve a number of relatively lengthy steps: the various points at which challenges are carefully considered and solutions negotiated. And while there are guidelines or a suggested sequence of steps, they are not definitive. The post-transitional does not claim to be unique, but rather an accumulation of histories and referent signalling to the past as well as to the present. Frenkel and MacKenzie (2010: 3) caution the uniqueness of the post-transitional, and acknowledge

³⁴ South Africa is alert to its transition from and since apartheid, and its present moment is one still caught in the motions of transformation. This notion of awareness is expanded on by David Medalie (2010: 36) when he explains that "in historical periods which feel strongly their own transitional status . . . there is an inclination to look at the present with dismay, the future with trepidation and the past with nostalgia". Medalie also cautions against nostalgic tendencies in South Africa and goes on to say that "backward glances are suspect because there is a possibility that they may be deemed a reactionary response to change. This is, of course, even more so when the past which provides the source of nostalgia is apartheid South Africa". Nostalgia, described by Linda Hutcheon (1998: University of Toronto online): "Is less about the past than about the present. It operates through what Mikhail Bakhtin called as 'historical inversion': the ideal that is *not* being lived now is projected into the past . . . the invocation of a partial, idealized history merges with a dissatisfaction with the present". To point nostalgic impulses in the direction of a South African context: Jacob Dlamini (2009: 12) writes that it would be a difficult task to "take seriously these sentiments as one possible way through which we can understand the past and contemporary South Africa. The [nostalgic] sentiments confirm that people's lives have changed – though not in the way often imagined". To clarify, Dlamini (2009: 14) states that to be nostalgic for life under apartheid is not to desire the immorality, but "it is to yearn, instead, for order in an uncertain world". Further, Aubrey Masango (2012: Daily Maverick) expands on this certain type of nostalgic narrative as a reflection on the current government and not a desire for apartheid: "There is an interesting narrative emerging in South Africa's general societal discourse, and it's connected to the phenomenon of corruption. The narrative makes a comparison between the corruption and service-delivery failures of post-apartheid governance and the 'efficiency' of the apartheid state . . . It is precisely the fact that such an evil system was so well executed that further emphasises the pathology of the current one. The present, manifested in light of this, is absurd and intriguing".

that it is not wise to assume that it is “somehow dramatically different from what came before it as if it were ruptured from the past”. However problematic the term ‘post-transitional’ is, it remains helpful in that it forces a consideration of this specific moment. The issues of terminology and definition of the term ‘post-transitional’ also confront the challenges of accurately defining the current moment and, more specifically on a societal level, it forces a consideration of the contradictions and ambiguities of the current historical moment. Consequently, this period cannot be defined as being totally liberated from the past, but what it does suggest is a new and different realm of conflict and change.

2.2. Posts

In their paper, Frenkel and MacKenzie (2010: 7) write about the notion of ‘newness’ in relation to the post-transitional, and point out that “newness does not necessarily mean that something has not existed before”. Similarly Bourriaud (2002: 17; 18) contextualises the artistic means of postproduction³⁵ as “no longer a matter of starting with a ‘blank slate’ or creating meaning on the basis of virgin material”. This notion – creating new forms that are not necessarily unique – is similar to the strategy of appropriation in resistance art³⁶. Postproduction, though, is beyond appropriation, in that appropriation supposes ownership while postproduction seeks out the collective ideal of sharing (Bourriaud 2002: 11). Bourriaud (2002: 17) states that the prefix ‘post’ “does not signal any negation or surpassing; it refers to a zone of activity”, and if the post-transitional signals more of a conceptual rather than a temporal shift (Thurman 2010: 91), and is characterised by what Frenkel and MacKenzie (2010: 4) name a broadening of concerns and styles that reach both backwards and forwards whilst not claiming to exceed transition, it too can be considered a zone of activity (Jamal 2010: 15).

The current historical moment in South Africa has been complicated in terms of its orientation to apartheid by referring to the concept of the post-transitional; neither is the present completely determined by the history of apartheid since its official end, nor is it beyond the consequences of

³⁵ Postproduction is a technical term from audiovisual vocabulary used in television, film and video. It refers to the set of processes applied to recorded material: montage, the inclusion of other visual or audio sources, subtitling, voice-overs, and special effects. As a set of activities linked to the service industry and recycling, postproduction belongs to the tertiary sector, as opposed to the industrial or agricultural sector, i.e. the production of raw materials (Bourriaud 2002: 13).

³⁶ Appropriated graphics formed a significant portion of the visual language of resistance art. Resistance artists used these imported graphics as their own, yet, due to the nature of printmaking and the struggle of the anti-apartheid movement, these graphics were also collectively shared. Refer to Chapter one (pp. 12-15) for examples of how South African artists appropriated graphic symbols for a May Day poster from a Soviet May Day poster and the design of the COSATU logo.

apartheid. The concept of leadership may be situated within the framework of the post-transitional because it also experiences flux, motion and 'grey areas' of definition. 'Grey areas' constitute the space of ambiguity and contradiction where definition becomes a blurred concept. Grosz (2001: 93; 90) writes that the space of the in-between is shared by politics, culture and architecture, and she defines it as "that which is not a space, a space without boundaries of its own". Further, Grosz (2001: 92) argues that the in-between is the space where things become undone. The notion of the in-between constitutes the grey and ambiguous areas within the institution of leadership, expectations of Leader-Figures, and even the space between past and present as suggested by the 'post-transitional'.

In the introduction to her book *The Royal Arts of Africa* 1998, Suzanne Blier (1998: 11) introduces the concept of leadership, stating that very few other subjects are as interesting and complex as kingship. She (1998: 14) points out that royal African art reveals that "inherent contradictions exist between individual rulers and the institution of kingship" and that "the institution of kingship was shown to be more important than the individual ruler". For example, Blier (1998: 234) explains that, in the African Kingdom of Kuba, a royal portrait sculpture (known as *ndop*) of the ruler is seen as that of someone who, through his office of kingship and association with the spirit world, is perceived "to be above the fray". However, avoidance of using the king's individual features alludes to the notion that the office of leadership was honoured above the individual who acted as king. Blier's introduction is divided into subsections respectively titled: 'The Sacred King as Sinner King'; 'The King as All-Knowing and the King as Fool'; 'The Model King as an Idiom of Royal Imperfection'; 'The Healing King as Sorcerer and Transsexual'; and 'The Progenitor King as Royal Appropriator', each pointing to an ambiguity of kingship. Each subsection describes the various contradictory aspects pertaining to kingship and royal African art. Although Blier's discussion is removed from the contemporary South African moment, her conceptual concerns are relevant to my consideration of current authoritative figures. In the context of South Africa, Leader-Figures are looked upon in relation to the democratic political discourse, emphasised by the rate of progress of political, economic and social transformation since the end of apartheid. Public expectations regarding the individual Leader-Figure are also associated with the principles and assurances of new legislation. Likewise, leadership is also built on what has preceded it. In terms of South Africa, the first democratic election demonstrated that the majority of the nation was not, and never had been, in favour of apartheid and its leadership. The negotiations leading up to the official end of apartheid

left certain infrastructures intact, and the official end of apartheid did not necessarily mean a fresh start or a blank slate, but rather a building up and altering of what was left behind.

The physical post of leadership may be considered a space of ambiguity in many aspects. At the same time as occupying a space to which one is appointed, Leader-Figures often carry the burden of being regarded as disgraceful or with great disapproval (Blier 1998: 28). This suggests that Leader-Figures are simultaneously held in high and low esteem.

The heavy regalia that many African kings wore in public festivals to underscore their supernatural sanctioning and control of vast resources also evoked ideas of incarceration. Iconically and aesthetically complex royal art conveyed ideas not only of extraordinary opulence and social distance but also of imprisonment within this lush surround. Symbolically, rulers became the captives of the subjects whom they “served” (Blier 1998: 28).

Sometimes the title and status of a Leader-Figure not only convey ideas of opulence and indulgence, but also of imprisonment within this encasement of privilege and authority. In the Cameroon, titles that were used when addressing the king suggested the vast power of the ruler, and subjects were expected to avert their gaze from the king (Blier 1998: 169). Because it removes the Leader-Figure from society by implementation of its structures of power and influence, the institution of leadership can be thought of as a bleak place for the individual who occupies the space it offers. At the same time that the Leader-Figure is accessible in terms of what they represent and what they convey, they also become inaccessible through social distance. Blier (1998: 28-9) offers an interesting paradox that rulers succumb to their subjects, becoming the servant. On the one hand, a ruler’s priority task is to rule, but, in the custody of the institution of leadership, the Leader-Figure becomes socially distant, inaccessible and ruled by the demands and expectations of those they serve as well as the institution which holds them accountable. On the other hand, the notion of service is open-ended, for example the Leader-Figure and subjects are both concurrently the served and the servant. Writing about the court masquerades in kingdoms of the Cameroon grasslands, Blier (1998: 190) indicates that court masking societies – who were also influential political groups – symbolised different major lineages in the kingdom, as the king represented his own lineage. Members of these societies dually performed the role of being ally to the king as well as enemy to the king because, according to tradition, they possessed the power to demote the king if they thought he was not fulfilling his duties properly. Hereditary leaders were surrounded by these societies, obligating the leader to both rule and be obedient to these societies and the

people. The institution of leadership and its influence over Leader-Figures can then also be defined as a 'grey area' in which expectancies, status and power relations are ambiguous.

The present South African moment encourages the consideration of the contradictions of its definition, and also what this means on a societal and socio-political level. The post-transitional reveals the contradictions at hand – contradictions in the linguistic and conceptual definitions of this moment as existing after apartheid yet not beyond it – and that within these contradictions the broader society and its Leader-Figures are also implicated. My studio work considers the concept of leadership within this context. The source material accumulated includes images, photographs and video footage from both the apartheid past and present day. All of the material has been re-formatted and re-arranged into new compositions using either the archetypal print medium or digital techniques. Bourriaud (2002: 17) explains the strategy of postproduction artists: "Artists today program forms more than they compose them: rather than transfigure a raw element (blank canvas, clay, etc.), they remix forms and make use of *data*". In most cases, I have worked with found images and footage that I reconfigure to suit my conceptual concerns. Much of the material was sourced from official media³⁷ (or mass media outlets that cover official matters), publically produced, and which specifically contained political content. The media *in general* contribute significantly to the public perception of Leader-Figures, and may be considered a facet of what Blier (1998: 25-26) terms "master fictions", which she explains as the "paradoxical beliefs that are held by society". 'Master fictions' help determine how the figure in a leadership position is viewed by the public, which in turn is important because these views often reveal contrasts between what is expected of the Leader-Figure and what the Leader-Figure represents. Often direct and personal access to Leader-Figures is limited, so how I perceive these individuals is not based on personal knowledge, but is rather directly dependent on how these figures are portrayed through the media³⁸. I have focused mainly on who I consider to be the primary Leader-Figure, the President-Figure, and have drawn on certain political elements pertinent to my conceptual concerns, constructing my own narrative based on my perception of leadership and the institution of

³⁷ I have chosen to use the term 'official media' to specify the type of media and to distinguish it from other types such as popular media and mass media. 'Official' denotes content that is political and relates directly to the State. Considered examples of official media include video footage from the South African Broadcasting Corporation (screenings from the House of Parliament and The State of the Nation Address) as well as clippings (that contain information relating to the political interest of the State) from newspapers such as *The Sunday Times* and *The Mail and Guardian*.

³⁸ Although the accuracy of the media's representation of Leader-Figures is not always dependable, its status as a source of official information is important to consider at the present moment because of the Protection of State Information Bill, which, in summary, seeks to control the output of state information to the public sphere, thereby monitoring any undesirable representations.

leadership. This has permitted me to work through my conceptual concerns, allowing me the freedom to pull-out, exaggerate and play with the specific content in a way that crosses temporal borders as well as the ambiguities of leadership.

2.3. New Resistance

In his call to ban culture as a weapon of struggle, Sachs claimed that, as a result of the simplified range of themes in protest and resistance art, all humour, curiosity and tragedy were excluded. Sachs (1990a: 20) wrote that “ambiguity and contradiction are completely shut out, and the only conflict permitted is that between the old and the new, as if there were only bad in the past and only good in the future”. By overlapping temporal borders and investigating ambiguities of leadership, the notion of a future consisting only of good and a past consisting only of bad is complicated. Sachs warned against the blatant use of culture as a weapon of struggle, and consequently instrumental political art. Taking his concerns into consideration, the conceptual shift of the post-transitional is characterised by dominant features such as “politically incorrect humour and incisive satire, and the mixing of genres with zest and freedom” (Frenkel and MacKenzie 2010: 2). Mandisi Majavu and Mario Pissarra (2011: 13) recognise that “with new terrains of struggle emerging, it is too early to tell what role, if any, art will play in engaging the evolving struggle for human rights”.

While the role of art, if there is to be any, in a contemporary moment of conflict and change is still unknown, artists like Kudzanai Chiurai, Vulindlela Nyoni and Brett Murray have taken to using their creative production to comment on the present political moment in Africa whilst paying special attention to Leader-Figures and the institution of leadership. I have selected these artists based on their creative production and their thematic concerns, and the fact that much of their work contains pointed socio-political commentary pertinent to the current moment. Perhaps one could define such work as post- or neo-resistance. Once again the prefix ‘post’ signals a fulfilment, which in this case is apartheid resistance art, whereas ‘neo’ implies a ‘new’ resistance, which, too, is also fitting for the “new terrains of struggle” (Majavu and Pissarra 2011: 13) emerging in South Africa and surrounding African countries.

I am, however, cautious to include ‘resistance’ as part of the definition as it has such strong connections with the phrase “culture as a weapon of struggle” and the instrumental use of art³⁹. Oliphant (2006: 174) states that “while resistance art is irreducibly historical, its importance *as art* resides in how it gestures towards what once was the future and now is the present”. Similarly, perhaps the importance of ‘post- or neo-resistance’ art is that it points towards the present as it gestures to the past, as a reminder of what was fought for, and against, as it brings to light the questionable progression of transformation. In South Africa, now, it is possibly more challenging, and it may even seem contradictory⁴⁰ to some, to oppose the current State institution – the very democratic institution which was fought for in the past. By producing work that includes socio-political commentary, these artists contribute to public discussion and knowledge, and perhaps also challenge ‘master fictions’.

The artists mentioned above and I have used types of portraiture as a means of socio-political commentary. In Chapter one I spoke about portraits of leaders that were made by cultural workers and artists during the anti-apartheid movement, namely the poster of Solomon Mahlangu (Fig. 9) and the lithograph of President P.W. Botha (Fig. 19). The portraits of leaders in my discussion were either commemorative, taking the form of protest posters (Fig. 9), or disfigured (Fig. 19), to show the corruption of the apartheid regime. Titling was also a crucial factor that contributed to the recognition of the figures portrayed – figures that could not be personally identified because of the restrictive legislation. In this contemporary moment, a moment of new conflict and change, the above artists and I have continued the use of the print medium – whether through imitating its aesthetic, using digital print technologies or other types of traditional methods – for commentary that is both context-specific and transnational. In addition to this, types of portraiture are used to depict specific Leader-Figures, types of Leader-Figures, or political institutions that defy the ideals fought for in the past.

The relationship between portraiture and power can be traced back to different cultures and historical moments. Portraiture, as a means to represent Leader-Figures, is also connected to printmaking – the medium is able to produce large numbers of images to be disseminated in the

³⁹ Hlongwane (2005: kush online) writes that “Post-Apartheid Arts in South Africa continues to lack the commitment and conviction to human and political rights issues which characterised the decades of art leading up to the first democratic election. [Art produced prior to 1994] was more sensitive and responsive to the people’s plight and collective aspirations. It was a barometer; gauging and charting the people’s march towards the inevitable”.

⁴⁰ Aubrey Masango (2012: Daily Maverick) points to the phenomenon that “people are beginning to compare what they fought for with what they fought against, a previously unimaginable proposition”.

public realm, to further and expand ideas, power and recognition of authority⁴¹. Jean Borgatti (1990b: 35) describes portraiture:

A portrait depicts a specific person, and the idea of portraiture springs from a common impulse to remember and be remembered, whether the reasons are personal or political, ritual or social. The nature of portrayal differs from culture to culture, however, subject to concepts of individualism, the prevailing aesthetic, and a host of social or ritual beliefs particular to a given time period, people, or place.

In Western culture, portraiture has historically favoured naturalistic and realist representations of the face. Joanna Woodall (1997a: 1), who refers to naturalist portraiture, writes that it means a “physiognomic likeness which is seen to refer to the identity of the living or once-living person depicted”. Further, individual identity is emphasised, communicating the personality of the sitter “through facial features and expression” (Borgatti 1990b: 35). African portraiture, on the other hand, emphasised social identity, and the general and ideal, in place of individual identity (Borgatti 1990a: 31; 1990b: 37). For example, the Yoruba created terracotta and bronze sculptures of heads between the 12th and 15th centuries for the royal Ifa court. These sculptured heads are “highly naturalistic and appear to be somewhat idealized portraits of individuals” (Annenberg Learner: Art Through Time 2013: 272). Further concerning idealisation, “African portraits, therefore”, says Allen Wardwell (1990: 9), “reflect the way in which the subject was regarded by members of his society”. Portraiture’s relationship to rulers and Leader-Figures throughout different cultures is observable. For example, in the West there is a connection between portraiture and nobility (Woodall 1997b: 76), and in African royal art, portraiture enabled identification not only with a specific king, but also all kings (Borgatti 1990b: 57). Portraiture, however, despite its ability to convey ideas of power and authority, is also misleading and ambiguous. For example, the Persian ruler Fath ‘Ali Shah, who reigned over Qajar between 1771 and 1834, used the arts to express his vast power and wealth,

⁴¹Take propaganda posters for example. See Lincoln Cishin and Ann Tomkins. 2007. *Chinese Posters. Art from the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books; Philippa Hurd (ed.). 2009. *Chinese Posters*. Munich: Prestel; and Melissa Chiu and Zheng Shengtian. 2008. *Art and China’s Revolution* 2008 catalogue for the ‘Art and China’s Revolution’ exhibition organised by Asia Society Museum in New York. Beyond the conventional definition of printmaking being a two-dimensional medium, portraits of leaders are also printed on to currency, either as commemoration (the new South African bank notes with Nelson Mandela’s face) or to increase recognition of the leader. “The brilliant military strategist Alexander the Great (356-326 BCE) also understood that his image could be used as a powerful political tool, so he developed an innovative means to circulate it. Driven by his ambition, he conquered most of what was then the civilized world and was, but then was faced with the problem of governing the many disparate peoples in his empire. He disseminated the message of his rule by flooding his kingdom with coins imprinted with his own portrait, many of which carried images of mythological figures and deities, or bore symbols of his conquests in faraway lands. With their powerful image and recognizable symbolism, Alexander’s ‘portrait coins’ carried his message wide and far, influencing the future of all subsequent coinage on three continents” (Annenberg Learner: Art Through Time 2013: 269).

suggesting his success as a leader. However, in truth, his reign was marked by a loss of territories due to a succession of military failures (Annenberg Learner: *Art Through Time* 2013: 272). Richard Brilliant (1987: 172) argues that it is the “coincidence of perception”, and not the truthfulness of likeness and representation, which constitutes the “validity of portraiture”. It is the subversive and misleading aspects portraiture, both of which complicate the authority and power conveyed, that contextualise the depiction of Leader-Figures in my own work as well as that of Murray, Chiurai and Nyoni.

2.3.1. Brett Murray

Cape Town based artist Brett Murray is no stranger to pointed political comment. During apartheid he worked in the cultural sector of the anti-apartheid struggle, creating satirical images that attacked abuses of power⁴². Today he continues to produce work that is thematically similar. He writes (2011: 10): “parody is part of the satirist’s arsenal and it is through this that I hope to expose the new pigs at the trough”. Murray’s appropriation tactics recollect the struggles of the past as he re-configures history to comment on the present, while he parodies and satirises familiar struggle imagery. On the one hand, he achieves this in his work by directly using Soviet propaganda which was used and adapted during apartheid for protest and resistance purposes, as well as using actual apartheid-era posters (Fig. 5 to Fig. 10). On the other hand, he achieves this by continuing to work in the archetypal print medium (Fig. 5 to Fig. 7) or by quoting its poster aesthetic through other mediums like painting, for example *The Spear* 2010 (Fig. 22). Lloyd Pollack (2011: *African Colours*) describes the artist’s revival of this imagery and how it relates to his broader conceptual concerns:

During the 80’s, the forces of resistance appropriated [Soviet propaganda] and made it the visual language of the Struggle. Brett resuscitates it once again with purely parodic intention. The artist exploits the apparatchik’s⁴³ tool of mass manipulation, swindle and hoax to pull the wool away from, rather than over our eyes, filling the space with sarcastic triumphalist monuments to ANC nation building and transformation whilst pointing up the party’s ideological mendacity and emphasizing the hollowness of its supposed achievements.

One of his most recent works, *The Spear* (Fig. 22), which was included in the ‘Hail to the Thief II’ exhibition at the Goodman Gallery in Johannesburg in 2012, is a near life-sized painting of President

⁴² Charl Blignaut (2012: 6) writes: “Murray’s first major show was in 1989 at The Market [Theatre’s] gallery. He made sculptures of buffoon-like Afrikaners and soldiers, depicting the state president as an archetypal Boer leader with a target on his hat, slumped forward after being struck by a missile. The show raised the ire of a right-wing group, which threatened to disrupt it”.

⁴³ The Merriam-Webster dictionary (2013) defines ‘apparatchik’ as “a member of a Communist apparat [an administrative system]” or “a blindly devoted official, follower, or member of an organization (as a corporation or political party)”.

Zuma – who is President of South Africa and the ANC – dressed in a suit with his genitals exposed. The President's stance is reminiscent of a Soviet poster of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, titled *Lenin – zhil, Lenin – zhiv, Lenin – budet zhit*⁴⁴ 1970 (Fig. 23) by V.S. Ivanov. Murray uses appropriation as one of his creative strategies. From the dividing line in the background which separates the black and red colour planes, to the predominant colours used (red, yellow and black)⁴⁵, and even the shadows cast on to the President reference the Soviet poster. In much of his recent graphic work⁴⁶, Murray appropriates popular Soviet propaganda and imagery to support his political concerns as he signals towards failure in the transition from the past to the present. On the one hand, his work recalls the apartheid-era Communist paranoia. On the other hand, it draws attention to the relationship between South African struggle imagery and Soviet graphics, as well as to the support received by the Soviet Union during the anti-apartheid struggle in the form of organisations such as 'Friends of the Soviet Union'⁴⁷.

Murray's Soviet-styled painting – if one recognises that it references a poster of Lenin and Communism while potentially equating President Zuma, his government and the ANC with this – carefully draws to remembrance apartheid's restraint against Communism, possibly unsettling present-day extreme rightists who continue to strongly oppose Communist ideology. The title of the painting also references Umkonto we Sizwe (MK), the military wing of the ANC, which means 'Spear of the Nation' when translated into English. In 1960 MK "was formed in co-operation with the South African Communist Party (SACP) to fight against the apartheid government by means of [guerrilla] attacks" (2012f: South African History Online). MK was formed soon after the ANC had been banned under the Unlawful Organisations Act (Act No. 34 of 1960) for disrupting public order during the Sharpeville Massacre⁴⁸. Dugard (1978: 163) states:

The net of the Internal Security Act [Act No. 44 of 1950]⁴⁹ does not extend only to communists and those whom the Minister designates as communists. It also enmeshes members of the popular African political parties, the African National

⁴⁴ Translated into English, the title reads *Lenin Lived, Lenin is Living, Lenin will Live*.

⁴⁵ White (1988: 80) writes about the importance of the symbolism of colour in Soviet graphic propaganda: "all Rosta [the Russian Telegraph Agency] work, as a matter of principle, was carried out by a collective of writers, painters and stencillers, and a number of conventions that applied to all the work they undertook. A form of colour coding was employed throughout: workers were red, capitalists were black, and the Polish nobles were either green or yellow".

⁴⁶ Recent work that has featured in his two solo exhibitions 'Hail to the Thief I' 2010 and 'Hail to the Thief II' 2012.

⁴⁷ See Jonathan Berndt *The Spectral Life of Posters in the Archive* 2010.

⁴⁸ On the 21 March 1960, protesters gathered outside a police station in Sharpeville to demonstrate against the Pass Laws which required them to carry 'pass books' – documents identifying them as 'non-white' and regulating their movements in and out of restricted areas. The protest began as a peaceful demonstration, but as the crowd got bigger and tenser during the day, the police became more hostile and opened fire on the protesters. After the massacre it was discovered that most of the victims had been shot in the back.

⁴⁹ It was previously known as the Suppression of Communism Act (Act No. 44 of 1950).

Congress (A.N.C.) and the Pan-Africanist Congress (P.A.C.), which are outlawed and subjected to the same legislative strangulation as the Communist Party by the Unlawful Organisations Act [Act No. 34 of 1960].

The Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB)⁵⁰, a ‘white’ supremacist group, states in its official website (2013) that it is firmly anti-Communist, anti-Marxist and anti-liberalist. The AWB was established in 1973 by Eugene Terre’Blanche and its main objective was to establish a new ‘Boere-staat’ or independent state for ‘white’ Afrikaners. During the 1980s and early 1990s, the AWB opposed the political reform in South Africa (2013: Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging), maintaining the same apartheid and supremacist ideology today. *The Spear* (Fig. 22) was painted in 2011, a year after Terre’Blanche was murdered on his farm⁵¹, and the timing of the exhibition of Murray’s painting coincided with Terre’Blanche’s murder trial, contributing to aggravated racial tensions. The Soviet-styled painting of President Zuma with its Communist nuances had potential to unnerve the psychologies and paranoia of extreme rightists who have long associated the ANC and Communism, but the depiction of the President was also seen as objectionable, a “racist attack”⁵² and disrespectful of his character.

The ANC claimed that both Murray’s painting and the Goodman Gallery infringed and disregarded the President’s basic human right to dignity⁵³. Conflicting with the attempts to censor and deface the painting⁵⁴ was the fact that this also infringed the artist’s right to freedom of expression. Phylcia Oppelt raises a relevant question regarding the sensitivity of portraying a Leader-Figure the way that Murray has. She asks (2012: 5): “Did the Murray portrait attack the president’s right to dignity; does his office include an automatic right to respect”? When someone becomes a Leader-Figure does their status as an ordinary civilian become irrelevant? And when they take up this position, does it bring with it an assumption that respect should be automatic from those being led? On the one hand, in a democratic South Africa, everyone, theoretically, should have equal

⁵⁰ ‘Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging’ translates as ‘Afrikaner Resistance Movement’ in English.

⁵¹ Chris Mahlangu was accused and sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder of Terre’Blanche. Karyn Maughan (2012: Daily Maverick) summarises the case: “Prosecutors maintained throughout this trial that a pay dispute drove Terre’Blanche’s murder, calling witness after witness to testify about how Mahlangu would tell anyone who would listen that he had killed his boss over money. He was paid R650 a month, the state argued. Witness evidence suggested that he wanted the money so that he could go home for Easter. When he didn’t get it, he unleashed his rage on his boss – and ignited fear and loathing on the quiet town of Ventersdorp”.

⁵² See Ndebele (2012) ‘The Emperor is Naked’, Unknown author ‘Zuma painting is racist: ANC’ (2012: News24) and ‘The Spear an attack on blacks – BMF’ (2012: Times Live).

⁵³ See the official Press Statement by Jackson Mthembu, the ANC National Spokesperson, on 25 May 2012 (<http://www.anc.org.za?show.php?id=9636>). Also see the article ‘Zuma’s lash out at artist’ by Monica Laganparsad and Suthentira Govender reporting for *The Sunday Times* 20 May 2012.

⁵⁴ The Film and Publication Board placed a classification rating of ‘16N’ on the painting on 1 June 2012, after it had already been defaced with black and red paint by two individuals, acting separately, on 22 May 2012.

rights irrespective of their social, economic or political status. What happens when a 'subject' (in this case Murray) depicts a Leader (President Zuma) in a way that could be interpreted as either legitimate socio-political comment or as a disrespectful opinion? Paradoxically, it raises questions as to whose rights are more privileged: the artist's right to freedom of expression or the President's right to dignity? Additionally, a Leader-Figure should not expect to be treated without criticism when stepping into a public position⁵⁵. On the other hand, if a ruler demands authority and respect, do they assume themselves to be more important than the subjects that they lead? This expectation of respect, though, is not only between Leader and those ruled, but also between subjects who willingly respect the leader and those who do not. Oppelt, therefore, points out an ambiguity – she refers to how a leader is (or expects to be) perceived by those under their authority, and also how different people perceive the President-Figure. Blier's (1998: 28) observation that "rulers became the captives of the subjects whom they 'served'" further complicates this ambiguity, because she understands the pressures placed upon rulers to be the servants of their subjects. In as much as a Leader-Figure may have expectations of loyalty and respect, subjects also have certain, and different, expectations of service from their leader. In the South African context, this was revealed in the various responses to *The Spear* (Fig. 22). Loyalty and support for President Zuma was shown by those, like the ANC, who sympathised and objected to the painting because it was, according to Mthembu (2012: ANC Press Release), "an indecent depiction . . . which violates his right to human dignity [and the constitution]". Others would disagree with Mthembu and be of the same mind as Murray, referring to the painting as a metaphor for power, greed and patriarchy. Murray explains his case for *The Spear* as follows:

As our democracy developed, cracks began to show in the way that the ruling elite [were] implementing the ideals of the Freedom Charter and our constitution. From my perspective as an artist I felt a sense of betrayal, where heroes of the struggle now appeared to be corrupt, power-hungry and greedy, or where ideals that many had died or made sacrifices for were abandoned on the altar of expedience (2012: Zapiro online).

⁵⁵ President Zuma has often been publically portrayed as the centre of scandal, ridicule and media attention which also saw him as the recipient of the Newsmaker of the Year award twice, in 2005 and again in 2009. The Newsmaker of the Year Award is registered property of the National Press Club. Nominations for the award are judged "scientifically in terms of news value and the resulting media coverage created by nominees" (<http://www.nationalpressclub.co.za/newsmaker/index.php>). Further, President Zuma is neither the first nor last powerful state figure to be publically represented in the nude. Mike van Graan (2012: 09) gives examples of other leaders who have been exposed in the nude: "Canada's Conservative Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, was painted in the nude as a satirical statement . . . Other political leaders who have garnered the unwanted attention of artists include a naked Barack Obama riding a unicorn".

There are those who identified with Murray's "sense of betrayal", rejecting the present as the ideal which was fought for during apartheid. There were numerous different opinions of the painting and responses to the debate opened up by the artwork, which implies that there as many different expectations and perceptions of the current South African President and constitution. Murray's painting further realised the demand (or lack of demand) for privacy for President Zuma as well as how this conflicts with the demand for transparency in his office of leadership. By using a representation of President Zuma to comment on his broader socio-political concerns to do with the institution of leadership, Murray also alludes to how Leader-Figures are the representatives of the institution to which they belong. Lastly, Borgatti (1990a: 31) writes: "Regal representations manifest command in stance, orientation, and relative symmetry; well-being in fullness of body and elaborate regalia; and perfect control over transient emotion in dignified countenance". While Murray's portrait of President Zuma subverts the manifestation of command and the President's ability to convey well-being and wealth to his country, Chiurai's work playfully recontextualises it.



Fig. 22: Brett Murray, *The Spear* (2011), Acrylic on canvas, 185 x 140 cm.



Fig. 23: V.S. Ivanov, *Lenin – zhil, Lenin – zhiv, Lenin – budet zhit* (1970), Coloured lithograph, 118 x 79 cm.

2.3.2. Kudzani Chiurai

Kudzanai Chiurai is a Zimbabwean-born artist. Chiurai left Zimbabwe in 2000 and was based in Johannesburg, South Africa, until 2013. Chiurai is a professional artist and activist as he exhibits his work in the formal gallery space and also extends his skills to more informal networks and situations. The exhibition listing on the Goodman Gallery's website (2013) for his solo exhibition, 'Dying to be Men' in 2009 in Cape Town, describes his strategy of extending his work into the public informal sphere. It states that "in the lead-up to the 2008 Zimbabwean elections Chiurai distributed stencils highlighting its political situation at solidarity meetings, creating a viral campaign in the streets of Johannesburg". Then, *during* the 2008 Zimbabwe elections, he staged a mock election complete with a voting station and an exhibition of his agitprop⁵⁶ posters, for example *We always have reason to fear* 2009 (Fig. 24), in the Johannesburg central business district. Storm Janse van Rensburg and Zach Viljoen (2011: Storm Projects online) write that Chiurai's endeavour "not only [provided] the Zimbabwean refugees in the city an opportunity to participate in the election they were excluded from, but also [gave] the general public a chance to register their desire for change". Hecker (2011: 19) argues that, in the post-apartheid era, Chiurai recontextualises the poster. He has taken the poster, the archetypal and preferred medium for the circulation and dissemination of political content, and used it to comment on current political affairs. Additionally, he included these posters in an exhibition, subverting their nature of being ephemeral public objects. The graphic poster aesthetic is sustained by the both the posterization⁵⁷ effect used on the repeated figure of a riot officer and the inclusion of direct text, demonstrating the continued use of the archetypal print medium for socio-political commentary.

⁵⁶ The Merriam-Webster (2013) dictionary defines agitprop as "political propaganda promulgated chiefly in literature, drama, music, or art". The word originated in the 1930s in Russia and is a combination of agitation and propaganda.

⁵⁷ The Merriam-Webster (2013) dictionary defines posterization as "the obtaining of posterlike reproductions having solid tones or colors and little detail from photographs or other continuous-tone originals by means of separation negatives".

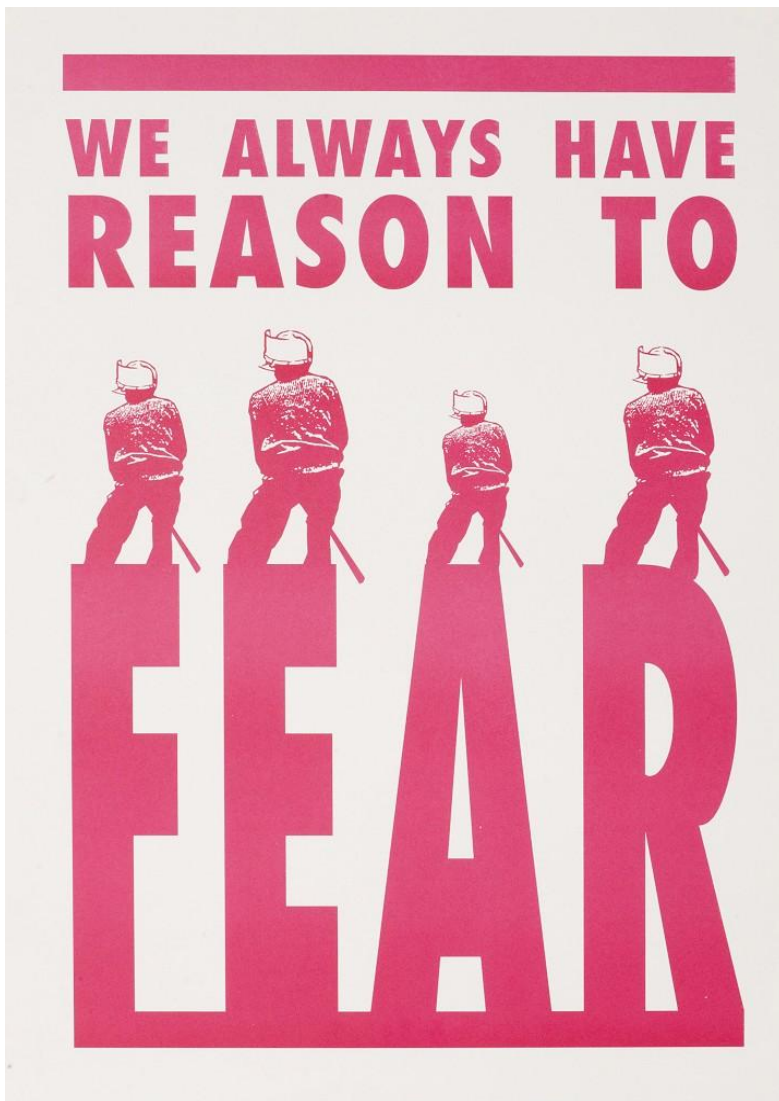


Fig. 24: Kudzanai Chiurai, *We always have reason to fear* (2009), Lithographic print, 64 x 45.5cm.

Chiurai's 2009 photographic poster series, collectively titled *Ministers*, depicts an imaginary parliamentary cabinet of Ministers⁵⁸ and a President. The cabinet of Ministers forms part of his 2009 exhibition, 'Dying to be Men'. Percy Zvomuya (2010: 184) sums up the series as featuring "various ministers whose roles have been overblown by the satirist's hand and gaze". Chiurai has used both Western and African portrait conventions, combining symbolisms and traditions. In the series, one person plays all the characters⁵⁹, suggesting practices of traditional African portraiture. On the one hand, the same figure assumes the role of all the Ministers, including the President as the Head of State, alluding to the idea that all the different roles convey the diverse identities of the

⁵⁸ The list of ministers includes: *Minister of Health, Minister of Arts and Culture, Minister of Defence, Minister of Education, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Enterprise and Minister of Finance*.

⁵⁹ The character is played by Siyabonga Ngwekazi, a television presenter who also owns his own clothing range – 'amakikipki t-shirts'. In an interview with Katharine Jacobs (2012: Artthrob) Chiurai says that he "was interested in what he stood for. A younger generation It was easier for Siya to play out those roles, those stereotypes, than anyone else".

Head of State. For example, the President also holds the Office of Arts and Culture, the Office of Defence, the Office of Education and so forth, implying that he is both capable of such a task and also creative, protective and intelligent. Blier (1998: 183) explains that, in the Cameroon, the Bamileke king was portrayed in a number of different poses on portal sculptural reliefs. For example, he was shown as a musician, priest, judge and warrior or executioner, which all meant to convey the various identities of the king. On the other hand, the fact that we recognise the individual as the President by identification of his regalia, attire and title, instead of his individual features, alludes to generalisation and idealisation in African portraiture: the image of the ruler represents a particular ruler and all rulers at the same time (Borgatti 1990a: 57). Chiurai (2010: 184) portrays a generalised President-Figure, and comments that the series represents “a kind of collective psyche of how we in Africa see our leaders”. Additionally, Hecker (2011: 19) explains this in Chiurai’s work when she states that he “takes a transnational look at politics, using the corruption and violence in Zimbabwe as a way to explore the trajectory of barbarous leaders throughout Africa”. Though Chiurai does not visually depict the barbarity and corruption in this specific series, this kind of portraiture which conveys authority, power and wealth, recalls the story of the Persian ruler Fath ‘Ali Shah who, despite the failure of his kingdom under his reign, portrayed himself as wealthy and powerful. Further subverting the power a Leader-Figure holds is the fact that the Leader-Figure becomes the ‘subject’ of the artist and the artwork. Consequently then, this series subverts and questions the supposed authority imbued in portraiture of Leader-Figures.

In African portraiture, writes Borgatti (1990a: 31), “regal representations manifest command in stance, orientation, and relative symmetry; well-being in fullness of body and elaborate regalia; and perfect control over transient emotion in dignified countenance”. Though this is suggested in *The Black President* 2009 (Fig. 25), we know by the title of the artwork and real identity of the person who is photographed as the Leader-Figure that this is not a portrayal of a particular President-Figure, thus the command, well-being and control are nothing more than a charade. Nonetheless, Brilliant (1990: 20) writes that three-quarter angles broaden the psychological distance between the observer and image. Distance from the President in this image, then, is maintained socially, physically and psychologically. Blier (1998: 169) writes that, in the Cameroon grasslands, subjects were expected to avert their gaze and speech when in the presence of a king, to the extent of preventing even one’s breath or saliva from reaching the ruler. In Chiurai’s artwork, there is no way of making eye contact with the President-Figure, for his gaze rests above the observer, looking towards what lies beyond. Perhaps the Leader-Figure looks ‘ahead’, and contemplates the distant

future and all that he anticipates to conquer, as subjects wait to follow him. Or perhaps he looks to that which has already passed as a means of justifying the present position of power he finds himself in.

Another artistic strategy which lends itself to the expression of the level of importance as well as probable distance from the Leader-Figure portrayed is the notion of scale. Brilliant (1990: 16) distinguishes between two different effects that scale has in portraiture:

Similarly, the scale of presentation, the sheer size of the portrait itself as an object, usually bears some relationship to the importance of the subject portrayed Colossal sculpted portraits of 'great leaders' have their place even in democratic societies; the immense size gives a special aura of authority to the image In modern totalitarian societies, however, colossal size does not give distance to the image but rather establishes an overwhelming immediacy. Their defacement or destruction is taken very seriously, as a political statement, putting would-be vandals or revolutionaries at great risk.

While Brilliant's first point is applicable to the scale of Chiurai's *Black President* (Fig. 25), which shows the figure as a little larger than life-size and dressed to convey his importance and therefore social distance from the viewer, the second point proposed by Brilliant, that large scale Leader-Figures establish an overpowering immediacy, is shown by the figures in my series, *Position* (Fig. 12 to Fig. 15). The figures in my work are in actual fact President Jacob Zuma, and were taken from photographs of him dancing at political events. Protest dancing in South Africa is historically significant, and the figures' poses here can be interpreted as movements of the toyi-toyi dance⁶⁰. The figures are headless, which associates them with the beheaded monumental statues of overturned Leader-Figures and political regimes, but also negate individual identification of the figure. While the scale of these works of mine is meant to suggest an "aura of authority" and a sense of "overwhelming immediacy", this is subverted by the absurd and non-authoritative and ambiguous stance of the Leader-Figure as well as by the omission of recognisable individual features. The distance between the observer and the image is also ambiguous because the shadowy image both emerges from and disappears into the dark background. This suggests that, though the viewer may sense an overpowering and perhaps imposing presence, the figures cannot be easily identified, and therefore the agency to express the authority possessed and exuded in images of Leader-Figures is lost.

⁶⁰ The toyi-toyi is described in the Collins Dictionary (2013) as "a dance expressing defiance and protest". In South Africa, both past and present, the toyi-toyi with its high-stepping movements is commonplace during marches and protests.

In Chiurai's image, the imagined Head of State is dressed in a tailored red blazer that is haphazardly decked with medallions and badges. He also wears a bowtie, a pocket-watch, and a gold wrist watch, and rests a flywhisk in his right arm. Brilliant (1990: 15-16; 20) argues that dress is a valuable indicator of social status among the elite and that the way an individual is 'dressed' in a portrait expresses their position in different social classes. Chiurai's President's garb, says Zvomuya (2010: 184), is the "meeting of ostentation and bad taste with a bit of tradition thrown in for the masses". The figure in the red jacket (Fig. 25) is portrayed as a young, healthy and composed man. The regalia on the blazer further suggest a man with many achievements, a man who has a high official and social ranking as well as a man who is authoritative. Power and high status are additionally communicated by the flywhisk resting on his right arm, which is a traditional African symbol of authority that belongs to a ruler⁶¹, as well as by the title of the artwork. This image expresses supremacy and plays on both African and Western royal portraiture and representation. As much as regalia and attire signal the status and importance of an individual, colour is equally significant to convey symbolism. Certain colours hold significant symbolic value which can mean different things in different contexts. Red, for example, is often associated with life and blood. In the context of burial and marriage rituals of the the Cameroonian grasslands kingdom, Kom the colour red continues to be interpreted as being associated with youthfulness, good health, well-being and morality (Blier 1998: 188). It can also suggest importance and authority in the sense of laying out a red carpet for someone important to walk on.

⁶¹ The flywhisk can also refer to the spiritual power of a diviner.

Chiurai manages to capture the humour of the ostentatious façade of State Leaders through his titling and overall aesthetic in his *Black President* (Fig. 25), playing into the perception that the title and status of Leader-Figures both convey ideas of opulence and indulgence, but also imprisonment within the confines of authority and privilege. Referring to the Dahomey⁶² monarch, Blier (1998: 27) writes about the significance of regalia and what it implied of the king: “looking generally plump in full court regalia if not in body, African rulers often conformed to the dictum that if the king was well fed, the kingdom would necessarily prosper”. As editor of *Lines Magazine*, Chiurai (2010: 6) explains:

More often than not the African black president is looked upon as the father figure and liberator, not to be questioned, and what is good for his family is the law of the land. The Presidency is seen as a rightful position and some have overstayed their welcome by manipulating constitutions and elections. They have all soon forgotten the rights-based governments they formed and the ‘One Man, One Vote’ principle they signed up to and even fought for.

A Leader-Figure, then, seen also as a father-figure, is supposedly the accumulated and sole representative and reflection of a family-society. Given that the Leader-Figure is responsible for the well-being, wealth and health of the people, then a prosperous Leader-Figure, for example, could be seen to extend the same good fortune to those who are being led. A contradiction in this case is that the institution of leadership will almost always guarantee good fortune for the Leader-Figure, even to the extent of exploiting the office of Leadership and its benefits, thereby not necessarily conveying the actual same good fortune to those in society. Blier (1998: 128) describes the exploitation by those in a position of power. In the Asante kingdom of Ghana, temples had proverbial bas reliefs. For instance, a crocodile shown eating a mudfish refers to the proverb “whatever the mudfish acquires ultimately will go to the crocodile”, which suggests both the exploitation of the weak by the powerful and also that the rulers benefited from the success of their subjects (Blier 1998: 128). A Leader-Figure is simultaneously able to ‘share’ his welfare by projecting his lifestyle on the public, while at the same time he rejects the notion of expressing the same good fortune by exploiting his power.

⁶² The West African kingdom of Dahomey flourished in the 18th and 19th centuries in what is today southern Benin.



Fig. 25: Kudzanai Chiurai, *The Black President* (2009), Ultrachrome ink on photo fibre paper, 150 x 100 cm.

2.3.3. Vulindlela Nyoni

Vulindlela Nyoni is also a Zimbabwean-born artist who now lives and works in South Africa. He is currently based in the Western Cape at the University of Stellenbosch Fine Art Department, where he teaches. Nyoni is an accomplished printmaker, producing work that reflects his major interests – personal narrative, self-representation and the politics of representation. His work is an amalgamation of various layers of codes and symbols which form part of his unique graphic language, which is pertinent to his expression of the socio-political concerns he holds with regards to his country of birth. These narrative layers, however, also convey much broader socio-political concerns which extend beyond Zimbabwe, and as Simbao (2012: 36) writes, “Nyoni’s cutting representation of society and leadership reveals a stale script of leaders who overstay their welcome, making way for little else”. The idea of overstayed welcome is further complicated by Nhamo Rupare (2010: 18) who, in a poem referring to President Robert Mugabe and his regime in Zimbabwe, writes, “the man in charge repels change”. Nyoni’s work titled *King of Voëls* 2009 (Fig. 27) is an example of how he has used his own developed graphic language and the print medium to articulate his view of Leadership as well as the Office of Leadership in a different moment of conflict and change.

Wardwell (1990: 9) writes that, in traditional African portraiture,

Emphasis or exaggeration of certain physical features, depiction of a specific pose or stance, accurate re-creation of an individual’s body ornamentation or hairstyle, inclusion of *actual objects* associated with the person’s life, and the *naming of a piece* are various techniques employed by African artists to make portraits. These embodiments are regarded by those who see and use them *as transmitting more information about the true nature of a person* than can be given by a superficial likeness. Even if they may not look like the individual, they are thought to be accurate portraits through their *incorporation of carefully chosen details and symbols* [my emphasis].

The cock-fowl is an example of a symbol that Nyoni uses repeatedly in his work. He either depicts the bird realistically or alludes to the creature through clues offered by a title or by visual suggestions such as a rooster’s comb. For the artist, on one level the cock is a direct reference to the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF)⁶³ political party, led by President

⁶³ The ZANU-PF has been the ruling party in Zimbabwe since 1980 with President Mugabe as its sole leader. The period between 2008 and 2013 saw the ZANU-PF lose sole control of parliament to a intermediate power-sharing agreement with the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), led by Morgan Tsvangirai.

Robert Mugabe. The cock is a significant feature of the party's emblem⁶⁴. Further, President Mugabe has also been referred to as “the cock (jongwe)” by his supporters (2010: Radio Voice of the People). Nyoni uses a realistic depiction of the bird to allude to President Mugabe in his work titled *The Honourable Mr M*⁶⁵ 2008 (Fig. 26). In the linocut a mature male cock stands on the seat of an upholstered chair. In this work, the title offers a significant clue regarding whom the image symbolically refers to, and the cock too alludes to the ZANU-PF and its Leader, President Mugabe. The fowl assumes position on the seat of the chair, a space that is not its normal environment and a space away from the ground. Under the sub-section titled ‘The Model King as an Idiom of Royal Imperfection’ in her book's introduction, Blier (1998: 32) explains that in many historical African contexts kings were often not allowed to touch the ground as they were considered by society to be too sacred or dangerous, which is why they were transported around in hammocks or given a footstool when seated on their throne. The fact that the cock assumes its position on the chair, the metaphorical throne, and away from the ground, expresses its self-proclaimed sanctification as ruler and unwillingness to move from the position it guards. The fact that the rooster is not comfortably seated on the chair, but instead stands alert and in a seemingly territorial stance, hints at its confidence and also its readiness to retaliate if dispossessed of the chair.

⁶⁴ The rooster symbol can be seen at the top of the ZANU-PF headquarters in Harare, Zimbabwe.

⁶⁵ This artwork was included in an exhibition titled ‘A solo exhibition of prints by Vulindlela Nyoni’ 2011 at the African Art Centre in Durban.



Fig. 26: Vulindlela Nyoni, *The Honourable Mr M* (2008), Linocut, 100 x 70 cm, edition of 15.

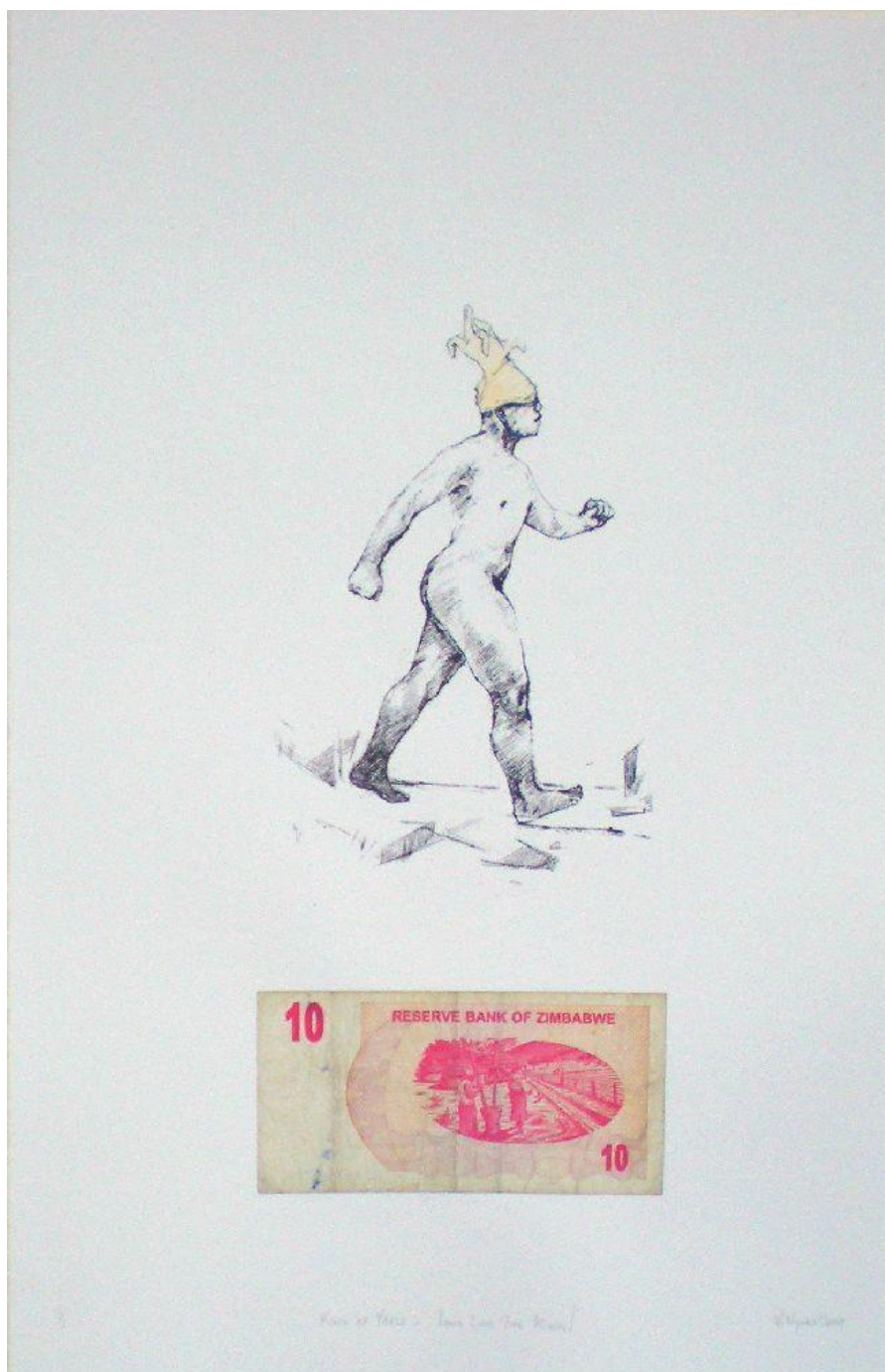


Fig. 27: Vulindlela Nyoni, *King of Voëls* (2009), Screenprint, etching and chine-collé, 100 x 70 cm.

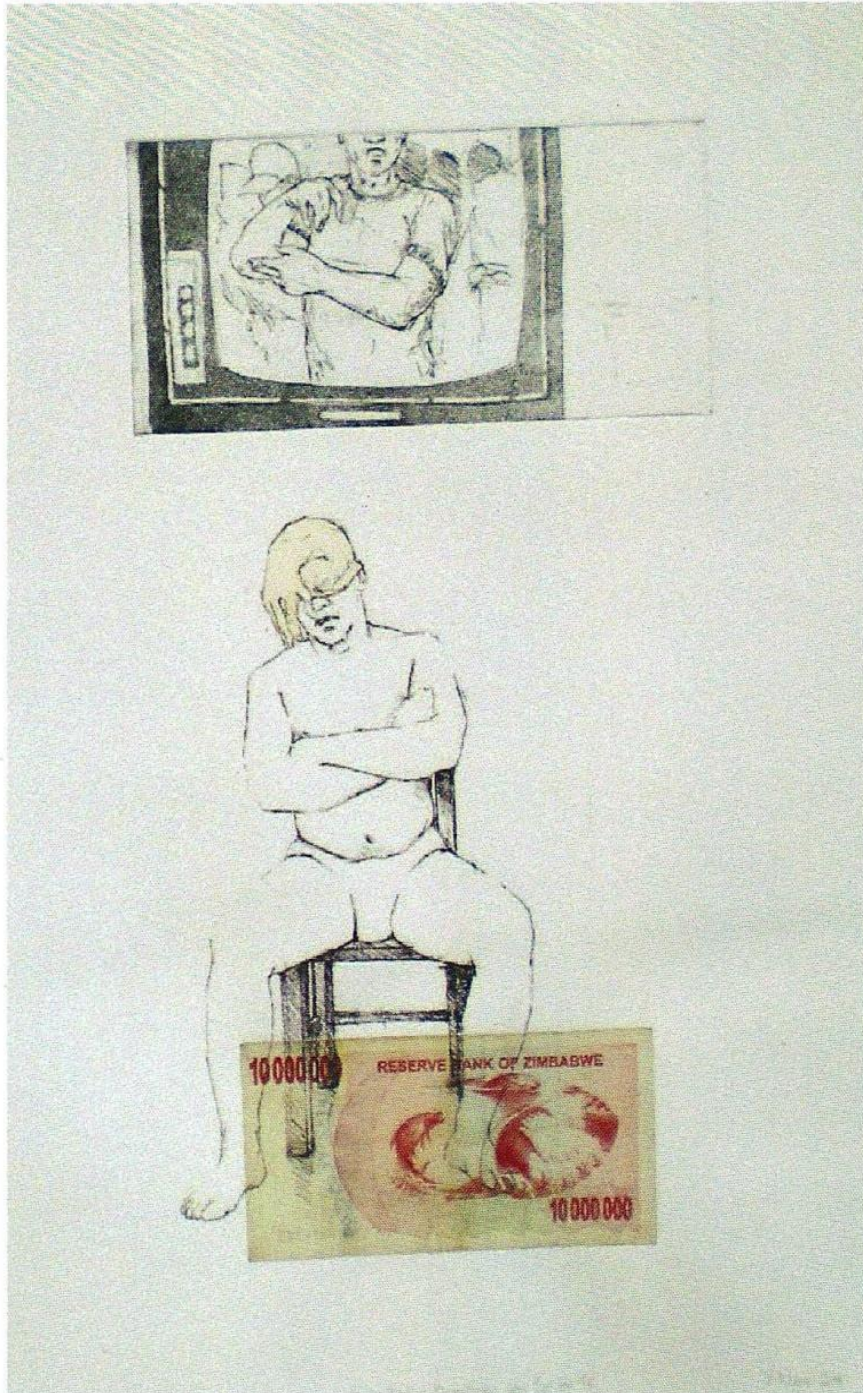


Fig. 28: Vulindlela Nyoni, *Don't Believe Everything You See* (2009), Screenprint, etching and chine-collé, 100 x 70 cm.

In other work, Nyoni morphs a male figure with a rooster's crown that fits over the top of the figure's head and eyes, obliterating his vision, for example, *King of Voëls* (Fig. 27). The title of the work strategically plays with the identity of the figure depicted. 'Voël' is the Afrikaans word for bird, thus alluding once again to the rooster, and phonetically the title sounds like 'king of fools'. The double word play as well as the glove-like rooster crown both tease out the relationship between ZANU-PF, the cock emblem and President Mugabe. They simultaneously suggest President Mugabe as the king of ZANU-PF and as 'the king of fools', an imposter and joker that cannot be taken seriously in his position of leadership. In the print, the figure purposefully marches through the picture plane over a surface scattered with ruins – evidence of disintegration and failure over time. A Zimbabwean ten-dollar paper note has also been chine-colléd below the walking figure, further pointing in the direction of a failure⁶⁶. Though he purposefully marches, he is blindfolded by the crown and thus cannot see where he goes. Further, a crown⁶⁷ suggests royalty and power, conveying that the figure in Nyoni's print is somebody important. But the idea of sovereignty is subverted by the suspiciously coxcomb-like (jester's cap) type of crown, suctioned on to the figure's head. With clenched fists, the figure, depicted in profile, stalks through the picture plane, refusing contact and interaction, and thus distances himself from the viewer. The profile portrait, according to Brilliant (1990: 20), is "psychologically the most distant of all".

Blier (1998: 29) writes that royal African art depicted "the king as simultaneously all-knowing and out of real knowledge". She uses the kingdom of Dahomey as an example. On the one hand, a king expressed his knowledge in regalia and objects that incorporated a rich display of exotica, such as the peacocks and Scottish sheep that wondered through his palace. On the other hand, a provocative connection existed between the king and acceptable ignorance. In many ways the king's attire and ceremonial rituals were distorted and destabilised by the figure of the court jester. With regards to Nyoni's *King of Voëls* (Fig.23), rather than the figure representing a Leader-Figure, perhaps it represents a type of jester who mocks and distorts the office of Leader. Instead of being dressed in elaborate attire to mark his status, he is naked; instead of wearing signifying regalia or a

⁶⁶ Since President Mugabe's reign began, the Zimbabwean dollar has significantly devaluated to the point of being worthless. Steve H. Hanke (2009: CATO Institute) writes: "Ashes are all that is left of the Zimbabwe dollar – a remnant of paper money. During Zimbabwe's hyper inflation, foreign currencies replaced the Zimbabwe dollar in a rapid and spontaneous manner. This 'dollarization' process was legalized in late January 2009. Even though the Zimbabwe paper money remnant circulates alongside foreign currencies, its real value is tiny, its use is limited, and its value against the US dollar is cut in half every two days".

⁶⁷ In the Kongo, rulers were thought to reinforce ideas of health and longevity by wearing their crowns. These were made up from a single thread that was worked in a helical pattern that started in the centre. The spiral shape symbolised long-life (Blier 1998: 214).

crown to signify authority and rule, he has a rooster's comb; instead of having vision, he is blinded; instead of being seated in a chair or addressing the public, he stands and walks alone. From this perspective, the leader is stripped of all the recognisable signifiers and is exposed for all to see.

The same figure, which is depicted in underwear in Nyoni's other work, for example in *Don't Believe Everything You See* 2009 (Fig. 28), is depicted in the nude in *King of Voëls* (Fig. 27). Nudity simultaneously alludes to contradictory symbolisms; on the one hand it suggests confidence and on the other hand it suggests vulnerability. Nyoni's artwork subverts the idea that "dress and royal paraphernalia reinforce royal identity" (Borgatti 1990a: 62). His image of the naked figure walking confidently across the picture plane also alludes to Hans Christian Andersen's *The Emperor's New Clothes* (1837)⁶⁸. It is a tale about an ignorant king, blinded by his obsession with elaborate and extravagant garments, who is conned into believing two travelling merchants who claim that they can weave a magical fabric:

They pretended to be weavers and said that they knew how to weave the most beautiful clothes you could ever imagine. Not only were the colours and patterns extraordinarily beautiful, but the clothes that were sewed from this material had the peculiarity of being invisible to anyone who was unfit for his position or was hopelessly stupid.

Despite the fact that the emperor himself cannot see the garment once it is completed, he pretends he can see it; he is convinced by his fearful subjects that the fabric is beautiful and assumes that if they can see it, then it must be real, for he is afraid to acknowledge that he may either be unfit for office or stupid. The emperor marches through his kingdom, not entirely persuaded of his garment at first until his subjects all look on and exclaim how beautiful the garment is, for fear of the king and of admitting their own stupidity, until finally a child exclaims: "but he hasn't got anything on!" This satirical story of a king who is too proud to acknowledge his vulnerability allows for an interesting interpretation of Nyoni's print. Perhaps the figure in Nyoni's artwork believes that the 'garments' he wears cover his proud intentions, or perhaps he does not know that he is naked and exposed because he is blinded by his crown, the only garment he wears. Because in this image it is implied that the figure has some sort of relationship to power and royalty by the inclusion of the 'crown', the figure is associated with the ability to convey health, prosperity and well-being (using examples of traditional royal African art). However, because he does not wear any clothing or

⁶⁸ *The Emperor's New Clothes* was first published in 1837 in Danish. The text quoted in this thesis was translated from the original Danish into English by Benjamin Kurzweil in 2009.

have any regalia that could suggest and reinforce his position, his title as king and Leader is an illusion until somebody points out that he is not fit for his position.

The story of the emperor who spent more time admiring clothing than caring for his people takes the discussion back to *The Spear* (Fig. 22). Both Njabulo Ndebele (2012: Mail and Guardian online) and van Graan (2012: 9) agree that Murray's painting revealed something similar to this satirical story. Ndebele (Mail and Guardian: 2012) writes that "a reincarnated Hans Christian Andersen may have painted *The Spear* (Fig. 22) for those denying the testimony of their eyes" while van Graan (2012: 9) argues that "The role of the artist is no different from that of the child: to expose the vanity, the pretence and the excesses of those who inhabit positions of political power". Through their different strategies, both Murray and Nyoni question the evidence that sight provides, as well as the extent to which art (both the artist and artwork) is able to expose and reveal the façade of Leader-Figures and the office that they hold.

2.3.4. Positions

Bearing in mind the difficulty of defining the current moment and its ambiguity as well as the contradictions of leadership, the thematic and conceptual concerns regarding Leader-Figures have been approached carefully, so as to also consider the ambiguities within a position of leadership. My work is both conceptually and visually portrait-based: it is a representation of the President-Figure as a specific example of a type of Leader-Figure (Fig. 34 to Fig. 36; Fig. 29 to Fig. 32); it is a representation of Leader-Figures as a group in work that is generalised and that avoids or limits individual identifying features (Fig. 12 to Fig. 17; Fig. 20 to Fig. 21); and it is also a representation of the system of power and leadership (Fig. 45 to Fig. 46). In my work, President Zuma features as a type of Leader-Figure, and the reference to him as acting President of South Africa contextualises my body of work in the current moment in South Africa. In works in which I do not necessarily identify the figure as being President Zuma, broader aspects of leadership such as dominance and vulnerability are suggested.

I have selected the Gallery-in-the-Round at the 1820 Settler's Monument (Fig. 43), situated on Signal Hill in Grahamstown, as the site of my exhibition titled 'Positions'. The circular gallery, found on the basement level of the Monument, suits the notion that the institution of leadership is cyclic, not only in terms of how Leader-Figures replace each other (and consequently change the regime) over time, but also in terms of the Leader-Figures who "overstay their welcome" (Chiurai 2010: 6),

repeating their term in office, defying a time for change. With the concrete walls and industrial piping furnishing of the interior architecture of the space, it comes to resemble a sort of subterranean bunker or bomb shelter – often a requirement of the residential and official premises of Leader-Figures. The unconventional, rough and unfinished walls on the one hand subvert the notion of a formal gallery space where one would normally expect to find images of ‘great leaders’, and on the other hand, they reference Pepper’s ‘grey areas’, the space of ambiguity where things are not strictly defined.

The overall colour palette of my work ranges from monochromatic black and white, typical of relief printing, to subdued shades of blue, grey and red with accents of gold and silver (or metallic grey). Woodall (1997a: 5) writes that, in Western portraiture, “an authoritative palette of black, white and neutral shades dominated masculine imagery”. Importantly, the darker backgrounds in some of the works (Fig. 12 to Fig. 17) point to the more sinister and unknown aspects of Leader-Figures, while the content and composition are treated with ambiguity and irony, pointing out the absurdity and contradictions in each context. In the Asante Kingdom of Ghana, Blier (1998: 141) describes how the king represented “the soul and vitality of the nation, an idea reinforced by the extraordinary quantity of gold in his regalia”. Gold had an aesthetic and symbolic function in the display of “rulership” in this context and was associated with bearing and protecting life in many different contexts. While gold is symbolic of wealth and life, it is also associated with wealth and greed. In my monotype, stencil and chine-collé⁶⁹ series titled *The Way (Forward) i – iv* 2012-2013 (Fig. 29 to Fig. 32) and my linocut series titled *Observe: Hear Nothing; See Nothing; Say Nothing* 2013 (Fig. 34 to Fig. 36), the use of gold complicates the space between the colour’s different symbolisms mentioned above. Gold ink has been used selectively on the road in each of *The Way (Forward)* prints and different accessories in the *Observe* prints.

⁶⁹ Chine-collé is a printmaking technique in which one transfers the image to a thinner paper which is then bonded to a heavier paper or support.



Fig. 29: Carmen Koekemoer, *The Way (Forward) iv* (2012-2013), Monotypes with linocut stencil, 100 x 70 cm.



Fig. 30: Carmen Koekemoer, *The Way (Forward) ii* (2012-2013), Monotypes with linocut stencil, 100 x 70 cm.



Fig. 31: Carmen Koekemoer, *The Way (Forward) iii* (2012-2013), Monotypes with linocut stencil, 100 x 70 cm.

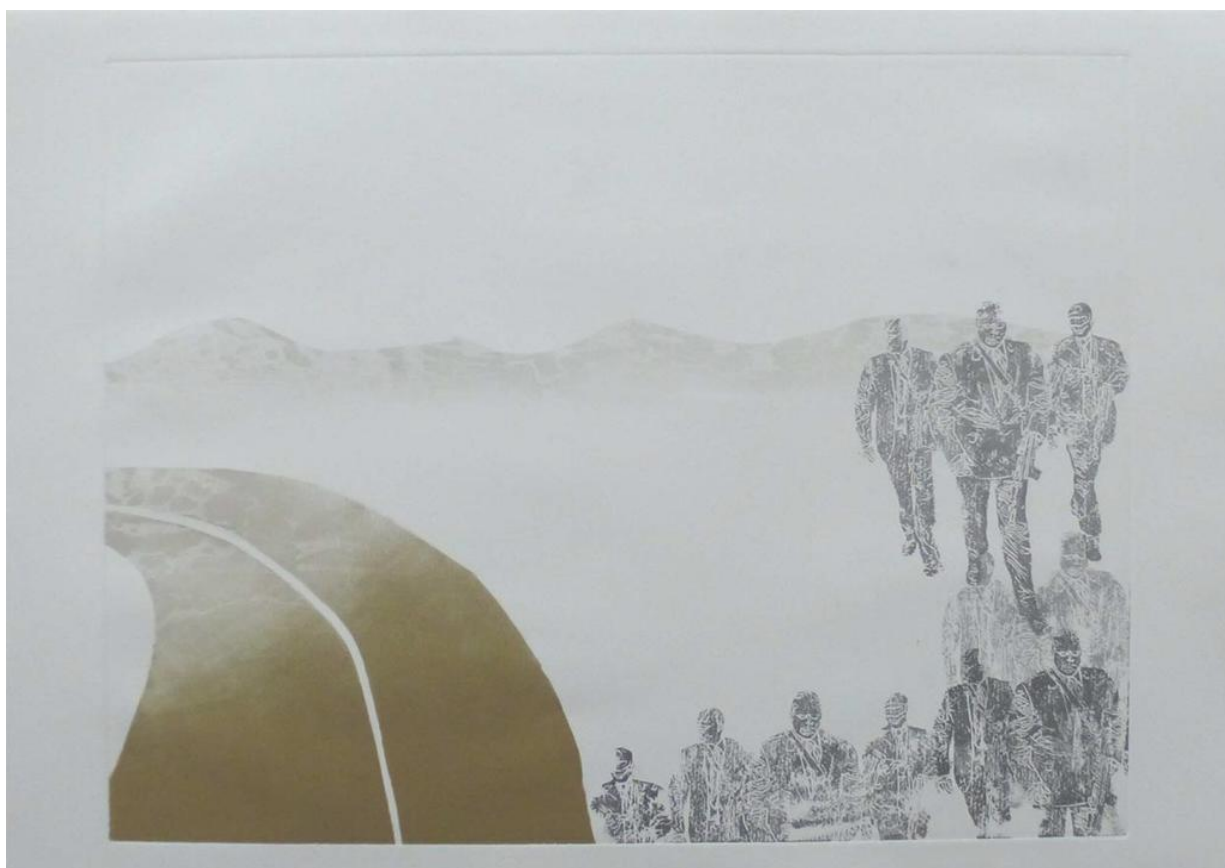


Fig. 32: Carmen Koekemoer, *The Way (Forward) v* (2012-2013), Monotypes with linocut stencil, 100 x 70 cm.



Fig. 33: View of *The Way (Forward)* series installed in the Gallery-in-the-Round (2013). Photograph by Paul Greenway of 3PP Photography.

Both *The Way (Forward) i – iv* 2012-2013 (Fig. 29 to Fig. 32) and *Observe: Hear Nothing; Say Nothing; See Nothing* 2013 (Fig. 34 to Fig. 36) were printed using traditional techniques, linocut and monotypes with linocut stencils respectively. Both these series are more directly linked to President Zuma whilst bearing reference to resistance and protest art in the medium used. *Observe* (Fig. 34 to Fig. 36) is a series of linocut bust-portraits of President Zuma, parodying “Hear no evil. See no evil. Speak no evil”. The proverbial saying is often animated by three wise monkeys, each gesturing the appropriate signal of instruction. In each portrait I have shown President Zuma, dressed in the formal attire expected of a man of his social and political stature, gesturing with his arms as he demonstrates the opposite for each evil. In seventeenth century Western portraiture, the head and hands of a figure were associated with “the execution of thought, spirit [and] personality” (Woodall 1997a: 4). The depiction of President Zuma with his hands gesturing around his head not only draws attention to his face and identifying features, it also draws attention to his head as the origin of his actions, while the title of each of the artworks suggests the opposite of each of his actions, as if he is looking to cast blame or choosing to be ignorant of his actions. The attention drawn to his head also identifies him as the Head of State. His importance and status is accentuated by the selective

use of metallic gold ink and red chine-collé, which reinforces the notion that a Leader-Figure who is well-off is a good reflection of the rest of society, even if it is to its disadvantage.

The Way (Forward) (Fig. 29 to Fig. 32) references the pictorial logic of propaganda and protest posters, especially those depicting a Leader-Figure portrayed in larger-than-life scale and overlooking the picture-plane as seen in Chinese posters (Fig. 38). The landscape background is a textured monotype and the figures arranged within the landscape are linocut stencils, with the President-Figure dominating the landscape in two of the images. The composition is made up of collected and rearranged data (photographs and news reports) relating to the section of the road built to Nkandla, President Zuma's highly contested homestead⁷⁰. A road is symbolic of a journey, and in this series the road indicates the golden highway leading to the President's Promised Land, the land of abundance and prosperity. The road has been selectively printed using gold ink – the colour symbolising wealth and also paradoxically both life and greed. In the two images that include chine-colléd linocut prints of President Zuma (Fig. 30 to Fig. 31), the road leads directly to him, referring to him as a source of wealth and abundance. President Zuma, printed in silver, or rather metallic grey, exudes a presence over the landscape. His presence is 'separated' from the rest of the figures in each image, and is reinforced by the fact that his image has been chine-colléd to the surface of the print as well as by the metallic shine of the silver ink.

The title of this series also implies that it could be a way to the President's land that is not 'forwards' or progressive, but rather that it is to the detriment of the rest of society. The linocut-stencil figures that are positioned within the landscape are based on rearranged compositions of media photographs of the ongoing national saga surrounding the building of this road and President Zuma's renovated homestead⁷¹. The scale of dominant Leader-Figures becomes important once again, represented larger than life and imposing authority over the land. The scale of Leader-Figures becomes a territorial element in both this work and *Position* (Figs. 12 to 17) because the title of each work does not name the Leader-Figure.

⁷⁰ Security upgrades to the Nkandla homestead, which were started in 2010, reportedly reached R206-million, a monetary figure criticised by opposition political organisations.

⁷¹ For example, a human barricade of police officers obstructing political-opposition and vehicle traffic to the Nkandla homestead.



Fig. 34: Carmen Koekemoer, *Observe: Hear Nothing* (2013) detail, Linocut and chine-collé, 100 x 70cm.
Photograph by Paul Greenway of 3PP Photography.



Fig. 35: Carmen Koekemoer, *Observe: See Nothing* (2013) detail, Linocut and chine-collé, 100 x 70cm. Photograph by Paul Greenway of 3PP Photography.



Fig. 36: Carmen Koekemoer, *Observe: Say Nothing* (2013) detail, Linocut and chine-collé, 100 x 70cm. Photograph by Paul Greenway of 3PP Photography.



Fig. 37: View of *Observe* series installed in the Gallery-in-the-Round (2013). Photograph by Paul Greenway of 3PP Photography.

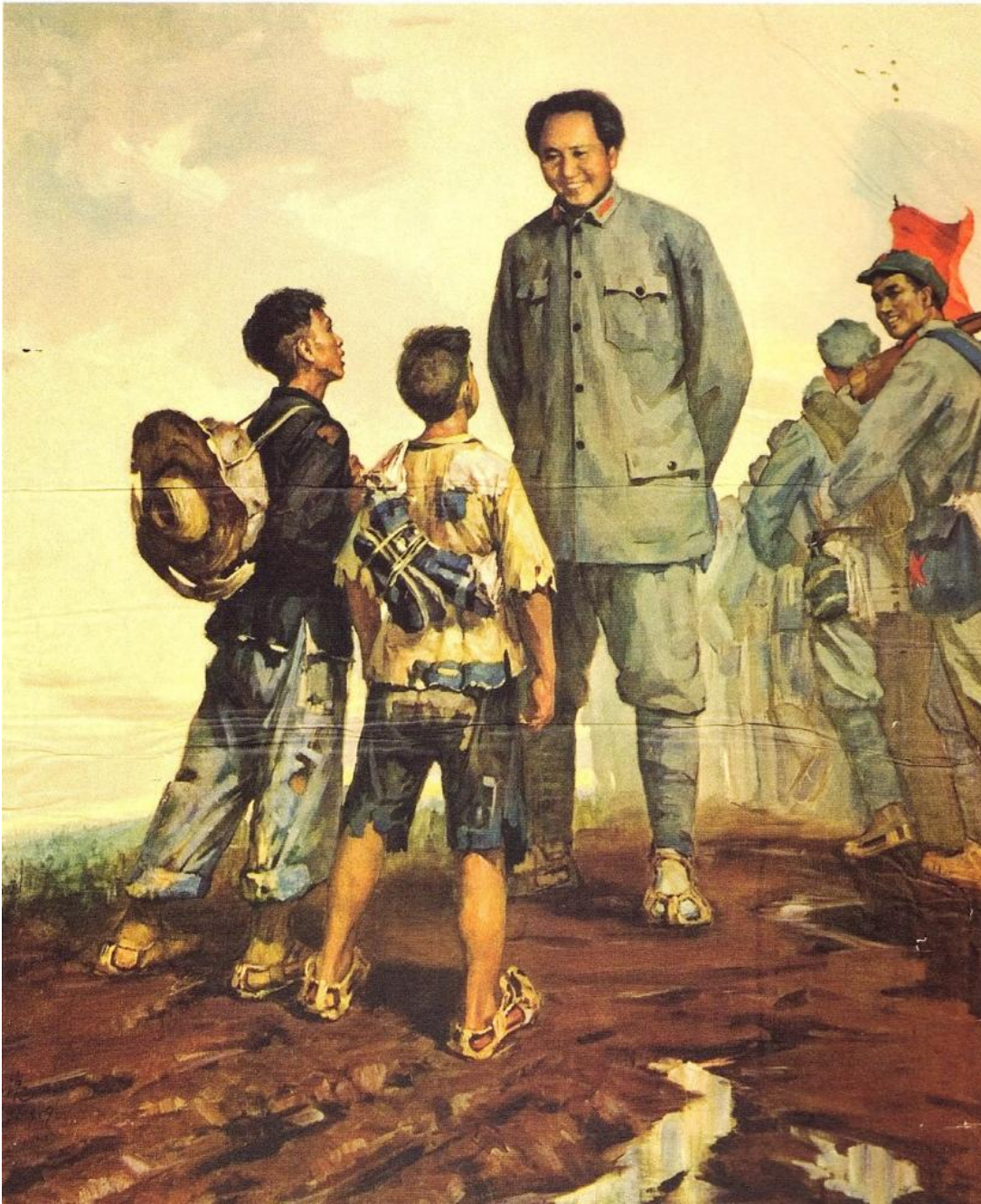


Fig. 38: Cai Liang, *Peasant Sons* (1965), Reproduced poster, 65 x 52 cm.

The *Position* (Figs. 12 to 17) images were created using the process of 'live scanning' – the action of scanning and capturing movement, similar to capturing a video on film except that the output or final product is a static image rather than a continuous sequence of frames. An outline of each of the figures is drawn on to a sheet of transparency and then placed on to a scanner bed. Milk and honey are carefully 'spilt' on to the surface of the transparency, filling the outlined figure before and while the image is being scanned. These figures bear figural similarities to South African artist Lawrence Lemaana's textile artwork, *Newsmaker of the Year 2008* (Fig. 39). Lemaana's artwork

appeared in his solo exhibition titled 'Fortune Telling in Black, Red and White' in 2008 at the Stevenson Gallery in Johannesburg. The artist's exhibition listing on the Gallery's webpage states:

In Lemaana's work the relationship between the 'People' and the media is problematized as a relationship of representation and control – who gets to control modes of representation; and who gets to represent those in control. The power of the media to act as didactic tool or propagandistic weapon, and the power of the media to reveal (and shape) the psyche, or group consciousness of the People, is taken up in Lemaana's work with the artist's trademark cynical satire.

Lemaana's approach is sensitive to the relationship of media, and how he has represented President Zuma indicates awareness of how the President-Figure is perceived through the media by the public. In the original material I used for *Position* (Figs. 12 to 17) series, the figure, President Zuma, is portrayed as a charismatic leader in public gatherings. This, however, has been destabilised by the background in each image, which is undefined (there is no recognisable context) and saturated in darkness (there is no sign of another figure). The removal of blatant resemblances and recognisable context generates an ambiguous puppet-like figure without identifying features. By withholding President Zuma's distinguishable facial features and freezing the animated movement, the figure becomes one that may be identified as any Leader-Figure. Therefore, as portraits, this series works by being a more generalised type of representation, implying that instead of depicting a particular Leader-Figure, it depicts the system of Leadership and its various representatives. This allows me to address the extent that Leader-Figures are willing to partake, or are forced to be partakers, in a sort of official performance directed by the institution of leadership, questioning the degree to which they are responsible or in control of all of their actions. On the other hand, the figures in *Position* (Figs. 12 to 17) seem vulnerable as they seem to be negotiating their way through a dark space. This is further implied by the fact that they are headless and handless. The unsure footing suggests that they are also far less grounded than the similar type of figures in Lemaana's work, as if each one might topple over or fall over backwards and disappear into the dark void.



Fig 39: Lawrence Lemaana, *Newsmaker of the Year* (2008), Textile and embroidery, 107 x 203 cm (Edition of 2).

*Titled*⁷² 2012-2013 (Fig. 40 to Fig. 42) is a mock graffiti installation of linocut stencils. Jets and aeroplanes, circulating the space above head height, have been pasted directly onto the gallery wall using the wall as a type of print surface⁷³. This installation strategy references the protest art of posters and graffiti, which both tended to use the wall as a sort of canvas. The name of this installation is a word-play on 'title' and the different word-forms it takes on, such as entitled and untitled. An individual with a title indicates high social or official standing, while entitlement refers to an automatic right to something, whether legitimate or not, while untitled refers simultaneously to something that is not named and something that does not have a high status. Air travel, represented by the different aircraft in the installation, is often the more favoured form of transportation for officials as well a status symbol of wealth, authority and also exploitation; for example, President Jacob Zuma's application for a customised private jet valued at R2 billion⁷⁴, as well as a holiday to a Mozambican island, which saw him transported by a Falcon 900 jet and two Oryx helicopters⁷⁵ earlier in 2013, amounting to R1.6 million. On the other hand, in my work, the

⁷² Images of this artwork will be inserted into this thesis once the installation has been completed in the gallery.

⁷³ Due to gallery-hire restrictions, I am unable to print directly on to the wall. Instead, the images have been printed on to newsprint and glued to the concrete surface.

⁷⁴ See Babalo Ndenze 'MPs fear Zuma jet costs cover-up' (2013: Independent Online); Aislinn Laing 'Jacob Zuma to buy presidential jet despite South Africa's poverty' (2012: The Telegraph online).

⁷⁵ See 'Zuma's R1.6m weekend break' by unknown author (<http://www.iol.co.za/news/politics/zuma-s-r1-6m-weekend-break-1.1563591>); 'President Jacob Zuma's recent holiday on Mozambican island cost taxpayers R1.6 million according to a report' by unknown author (<http://www.timeslive.co.za/politics/2013/08/16/zuma-takes-r1.6-million-bazaruto-holiday-report>).

helicopter in particular is a symbol I associate with power and anxiety, beyond its obvious mechanical power to the domineering presence it carries when stationary or in motion. The disorientation of flight, as well as the brute mechanical force, is evident in the manoeuvring and operating of these flight machines. The presence of these machines suggests someone important or privileged.

Wardwell's notion that the inclusion of objects in traditional African portraiture aids in "transmitting more information about the true nature of a person" is used in my work that includes various aircraft, for example, *Titled* (Fig. 40 to Fig. 42) and *President* (Fig. 45 to Fig. 46). I equate aircraft's presence with the presence of Leader-Figures. I regard both as having a domineering presence. These images of aircraft are not immediately identified nor associated with Leader-Figures or the institute of leadership in terms of portraiture, however, they do still suggest something of the nature of Leader-Figures or the institute of leadership at large as they stand in and represent power and supremacy. The simplified lines of the linocut jets, helicopters and aeroplanes downplay the authority I associate with these machines (and the high rank State Officials that they transport) while the Super-8 footage included in the video *President* (Fig. 45 to Fig. 46) underscores the domineering presence of a Leader-Figure. The edited Super-8 film, helicopter footage which constitutes part of the video *President* (Fig. 45 to Fig. 46), is ethereal and beautiful, yet it is also ghostly and frightening. The original footage comes from my grandfather's personal video collection. He filmed various events during apartheid – the vast majority of footage is of family and friends. However, he did manage to record official events as well, for example a public address by the then President Hendrick Verwoerd as well as a helicopter air show, presumably in his honour⁷⁶.

⁷⁶ During apartheid there was a method of torture named 'the helicopter'. The detainee was suspended and whipped repeatedly while being spun around. Paul Stopforth depicts this form of torture in his work titled *Suspended Figure (Helicopter)* from 1978, exhibited at The Market Theatre Gallery in Johannesburg.



Fig. 40: Carmen Koekemoer, example of linocut graffiti stencil (2013), dimensions variable.



Fig. 41: Detail of *Titled* installed in the Gallery-in-the-Round (2013). Photograph by Paul Greenway of 3PP Photography.



Fig. 42: View of *Titled* installed above *President video* in the Gallery-in-the-Round (2013). Photograph by Paul Greenway of 3PP Photography.



Fig. 43: View of the Gallery-in-the-Round before installation (2013). Photograph by Carmen Koekemoer.



Fig. 44: View of the *Positions* exhibition installed in the Gallery in the Round. Photograph by Paul Greenway of 3PP Photography.

Despite the lack of ink and print process, video can be considered a type of print because it involves the transfer of an image from one surface to another, in this instance, in the form of a projection on to the gallery wall. The video piece is projected directly on to the surface of one of the grey concrete walls in one of the gallery alcoves. The physical grey area on to which the video unfolds serves to prompt the ambiguities and uncertainties in the actual video. The inclusion of the Super-8 video footage may seem arbitrary because it was sourced directly from a different historical moment compared to the rest of my source material, which comes from various contemporary resources. However, my conceptual concerns relating to leadership are partially found in the 'grey area' of transformation since the official end of apartheid. This footage counts as a type of historical document. The idea of a portrait as a visual primary source, or *vice versa*, produces, according to Barlow (1997: 221), "a more ambiguous [idea], the suggestion that the viewer could in imagination stand in the place of the original artist as he had once looked at the sitter, and so travel back in time to the moment when the sitter lived". The 'sitter' in this case was the apartheid regime. The inclusion of this Super-8 video footage, then, not only serves as a sobering foil for the rest of the video as well as the rest of the work on exhibition, but its 'out of place' quality also challenges the orientation of the present in terms of the past. The footage of the helicopter is juxtaposed with

present-day imagery of President Zuma. This does not equate President Zuma and his political regime with that of apartheid. Instead, it suggests the presence of authority and its disruption which may further distance and isolate the society from the Leader-Figure. While the title of the video implies expectancy and a possible interpersonal relationship with the President Figure, what is actually received from the President is unclear and not defined. This plays into the notion that, though I may have expectancies of the President, there are always uncertainties as to what will actually be acquired. The sound for the video is an audio-loop of a helicopter in motion. The sound, which is similar to the playback of a Super-8 film projector, plays at a level just loud enough to identify as a helicopter and to suggest its presence around the space. Together with the video and the rest of the work on exhibition, the sound serves to add another presence to the space. Coupled with my imagery relating to Leader-Figures, the presence is then associated with authority and power.



Fig. 45: Carmen Koekemoer, Super 8 video still from *President* (2013), Video.



Fig. 46: Carmen Koekemoer, Super 8 video still from *President* (2013), Video.

In this chapter I have discussed the difficulty in defining the present moment by using Frenkel and Mackenzie's term 'post-transitional'. Though the term itself is problematic, it does reveal that the current moment in South Africa is one of new conflict and change. I then discussed the potential of a new type of resistance art which not only used printmaking as a medium, but also its aesthetic, to comment on contemporary political concerns. The various artists I included and discussed at length – Murray, Chiurai and Nyoni – all create work themed by their own socio-political concerns related to leadership. These artists also continue to work in the printmaking medium, whether by digital or traditional processes or by quoting the medium using painting, for example. Various issues and ambiguities pertaining to leadership, as they were conceptualised by Blier, were referred to in the work of these artists. The ways in which these ambiguities and contradictions related to my own research and practice was also mentioned. Additionally, the genre of portraiture was discussed in terms of how it has been used to represent Leader-Figures, as well as how and what it expresses about the Leader-Figure's authority. Lastly, this chapter finishes off with a discussion of my own conceptual concerns and how they have been expressed in both the print medium and portrait genre.

Conclusion

Our world today is built on the ruins of previous political formations (Joost Bosland 2010: 9).

The year 2013 marks approximately two decades since Albie Sachs called for the end of art as a weapon of struggle and since South Africa became a democratic country. What does one make of the contemporary role of socially- and politically-motivated art that no longer has the armrest of the apartheid system to oppose? For Thomas Hirschhorn (2010: 12 – 17), to do art politically (as opposed to doing political art) means to give form, not make it. On a practical level, this is what Bourriaud's 'post-production' is concerned with – to give form to one's own samples of data, whatever they may be. The notion of beginning on a blank slate is replaced by the objective to create new material based on, or influenced by, old material. The source material accumulated for my work – the images, articles and archived footage – has been reshaped whilst their different contexts were questioned, giving them a collective new form. Additionally, the print medium, which has typically been associated not only with the resistance and protest art of the anti-apartheid movement, but also international socio-political movements towards change, continues to be used today. Though I have looked at the medium's utilisation as an instrument for pointed political commentary within the Fine Art canon, and not in terms of it being a tool for contemporary political activism, the extent to which it is used by artists today reveals the ambiguities and contradictions which I believe Sachs was suggesting in his paper 'Preparing Ourselves for Freedom' (1990a). By revealing the ambiguities of leadership with the use of the print medium and portrait genre, not only have artists encouraged a better understanding of Leader-Figures, but they have also challenged public perceptions of Leader-Figures. Hecker (2011: 19) suggests that perhaps the most significant difference between art produced during and after apartheid is the

ambiguity, contradiction, and self-criticality that came into broader use in the 1990s, qualities that depart from political certainties to invite unstructured, unscripted responses from the viewer. Even printmaking, with its flexible qualities that make it so effective a political tool, has adapted, in open-ended works still informed by the past.

The resistance art medium of print has been given a new shape so that it is not only the source material and the processes that give new form in my work, but also the reconfiguration and re-contextualisation of this archetypal medium. Similarly, Murray recontextualises the apartheid protest poster as well as Soviet propaganda posters in his work, which aims to expose the

mismanagement and corruption within the new political state; Chiurai created agitprop posters for a mock Zimbabwean election and depicts a life-sized portrait of an imaginary President-Figure in his digital prints, which convey the indulgence of state figures; and Nyoni expresses the ignorance and resilience towards change held by a certain Leader-Figure, whose identity he hides in symbols and layers of codes. Not only is the print medium, with its resistance associations, re-used and re-shaped for contemporary political commentary, but also the portrait genre continues to be used both to portray Leader-Figures and to reveal the ambiguities and 'grey areas' within the institute of leadership. My work, and that of the above-mentioned artists, demonstrates that, though portraiture may be used to depict particular Leader-Figures, when the represented Leader-Figure becomes unidentifiable by lack of individual features, the ambiguities and concerns which are expressed become applicable to a broader range of Leader-Figures. In other words, though a portrait of a Leader-Figure may be generalised, it says something about a particular leader through a series of impressions that are specific to the individual as well as to the broader notion of leadership.

Reiterating Hecker's (2011: 17) point that "the productive tension between politics and art, reality and imagination, and the past and future makes itself felt in South African contemporary art", artists who choose to work within a socio-political framework are often conscious of the tension between the past, present and future, and seek original ways of approaching current affairs. It remains to be seen what can be made of the archetypal print medium and its entrenched resistance aesthetics in a different moment of conflict and change. Majavu and Pissarra (2011: 13) also remind us that it is too soon to tell what role, if any, art and artists will play in the new terrains of struggle. The artist's role, if he or she chooses to abide by Sachs's suggestion, is to expose contradictions and reveal ambiguities, to invite and work with them, and in doing so, to stir debate. By re-contextualising familiar mediums and histories in new ways, the past is recalled in order to question and complicate the present, and the future as imagined in the past. If one had to browse over daily news headlines for an indication of the current socio-political climate, a conclusion may be drawn that many opportunities exist for an art of protest, and inclined artists thus far have moved towards deeper levels of resistance, or rather pointed socio-political comment that purposefully agitates sensitivities. My approach to the socio-political climate in South Africa is cast between subtle confrontations of the sensitivity roused by misleading systems of power, and Leader-Figures and the complex institution they find themselves in. Neither blame nor responsibility can be solely assigned. Instead, an acknowledgement of the intricate relationship between the two could

possibly aid a better understanding of the concept of leadership, and then perhaps also the broader socio-political moment.

My thesis and accompanying body of work address the ambiguities and 'grey areas' within the institution of leadership. The thesis, which uncovers these ambiguities as they have been recorded and revealed in traditional royal African art in various historical contexts as well as in the genre of portraiture in the past, relates them to my conceptual concerns. My work is portrait- and print-orientated, and expresses the ambiguities which I perceive in the current South African Leader-Figures, particularly President Zuma. My re-contextualisation of the print medium, for political commentary as well as the exposure of contradictions and ambiguities within Leadership, demonstrates that this medium, together with its associations with resistance, is still relevant today.

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