

Rebellious Uniform

by

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VOLUME 1

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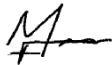
Abstract

In this thesis, I focus on adolescent teens at Kingswood College High School, where I am currently employed as a student assistant in Grahamstown. I form part of a networked hierarchy at Kingswood College whereby I am expected to perform duties which require me to uphold discipline, forge respect and act as a mentor to students. Within this complex role I am mindful of the power dynamics within the school and my focus is on how the students at Kingswood College in some instances challenge them.

Regulations in regard to uniforms and in regard to the arrangement of each learner's belongings insist on the sublimation/sacrificing of an individual identity in favour of an institutional one. Thus tiny departures from those norms, slight transgressions, might be understood as small rebellions which the boarder stages against disciplinary structures and the conformity demanded of him or her. I am particularly interested in these transgressions. In this thesis I attempt to unravel the complexities associated with such idiosyncrasies and how they play out amongst adolescent teens.

Declaration of Originality

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



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Introduction

The departure point for this Master of Fine Art study is a private boarding school in Grahamstown. The school uniform, in particular, has been a central pre-occupation of my research thus far. This, accompanied by my lived experience in the boarding house, has driven my art practice and theoretical research. My research into this area has developed through my experience of being employed as a 'stooge' (student assistant) at Kingswood College for the last three years. As a stooge I have been required to live in a boarding house and perform certain duties such as homework supervision, weekend duties and coaching. The role of a stooge at Kingswood College is not only to perform these duties but also act as an intermediate between housemaster and student. The stooge in the boarding house is meant to be approachable and vigilant as to what is happening within the house that the housemaster might not always be aware of. This role is intended to be more 'hands on' than that taken by the housemaster. The stooge is assigned a certain amount of power to be able to perform his or her duties adequately. I explore the power dynamic between student and stooge in this mini-thesis.

As a school boy I attended a day school in Zimbabwe, thus the experience of living in a private boarding school and being able to stooge at a traditional boarding school in South Africa was entirely new to me. The impetus behind most of the conceptual ideas for the works I have produced has evolved from my experiences at the boarding school. For the last three years I have lived a 'double life' of sorts, with a large part of my day being spent interacting with scholars on the school campus. I am expected to instil authority whilst also serve as an 'example' to the students. As a stooge, I form a part of a broader hierarchy (of

power and control) established to enforce strict structured regimes for the supervised ‘development’ of young school boys entering adulthood. I have often found myself questioning my role: employed to maintain discipline in the boarding house, I nevertheless recognise that I committed the exact same offences a few years ago when in school. I have also realized the pervasive effect of the foundational ideals of the institution in enforcing discipline. According to the *Rules and Regulations & Code of Conduct* (KC1: March 2011) the discipline code at Kingswood College reads as follows:

It is expected that all pupils at Kingswood College will maintain the highest standard of behaviour and conduct in their relationship with others whom they meet at the school. Respect for the individual, for property and the environment is the guiding principle on which these rules are based. Students are expected to ensure the appropriateness of language, tone, behaviour, and dress on all occasions. These rules have been designed to be fair to all and they are underpinned by the Christian values¹ for which Kingswood stands.

The key elements in this discipline code are “respect for the individual” and correct “language, tone, behaviour and dress”. The code of conduct speaks specifically about respect for the individual, but is this ‘respect’ truly accomplished in boarding school structures? The wearing of a uniform, the strict use of structured time and the constant presence of staff or scholars all provide various methods for controlling school children but in doing so suppress the individuality of the scholar. Wendy Parkins (2002: 206) explains that “it is often the private school sector that insists on complicated uniform codes, as a way of distinguishing their students, and insisting on an exclusive presence for their values and standards.” The prescribed uniform establishes the ‘desires’ of the school and often in the case of the private school there is a drive to be viewed as exclusive and ‘distinguished’. Stringent dress codes which are constantly enforced leave little room for individuality. It is intended that the

¹ Students who attend Kingswood College come from various countries and have different religious beliefs. It is hard to believe that the ‘Christian values’ which are underpinned by the code of conduct are still a prescribed rule.

‘individuals’ all dress alike, therefore suggesting that all individuals will behave ‘appropriately’. For instance, listed below are some of the dress-codes required of students by the school as stipulated in the *Rules and Regulations & Code of Conduct* handbook at Kingswood College:

2.1.3 Blazers must not have buttons missing.

2.1.5 Ties must not be damaged in any way.

2.1.6 When wearing a tie, the top collar button must be fastened.

2.1.7 All items must be standard regulation.

Dress codes such as this form a fundamental part of instruction in traditional boarding schools in South Africa such as Kingswood College. Certain rules (often those of a pedantic nature) have remained in place for a number of years. Through my observations I have noted that despite the continued existence and enforcement of stringent ‘rules and regulations’, one can detect moments of subversion. These small rebellions are made visible through subtle infringements of the dress code by the students.

On a daily basis I am faced with the complexity of a ‘double life’ of being an artist, as well as an authority figure. On the one hand my employment means that I ought to enforce certain strict dress codes, but as an artist I have found myself questioning and being reluctant to adhere to this power structure. My day to day interactions with students over the last three years has given me numerous opportunities to record the micro-transgressions of certain students against dress codes and thus the overacting discipline structures. Even prior to my master’s study, I found the subtle rebellions that a learner at Kingswood College would stage to impress his or her colleagues interesting. The act of ill-discipline was considered by students as ‘chic’ and to adhere to the discipline structures as ‘conformist’.

In Chapter One I begin with an explanation of a series of charcoal drawings entitled *Belongings*, which make up my third body of work. I discuss this aspect of my practice first as these pieces lend themselves to consideration of the Panopticon, the primary concern within all of my works. The charcoal drawings are derived from my experience of living in amongst the boys at Kingswood College in one of the boarding houses. The drawings focus on the ‘private’ spaces of the individuals within the boarding house. I interrogate these spaces as potential sites of observation and the meaning behind such pervasive monitoring. I use the Panopticon as a metaphorical example in my understanding and articulation of the hierarchies within the boarding school and in particular Kingswood College. With reference to Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* (1975) I discuss how the architectural design of the Panopticon serves as a metaphorical example for hierarchies in schools. To expand this concept further, I will explain how the regulatory bodies that form part of the hierarchical institution serve the purpose of permanent surveillance whilst also creating a discourse of control. In light of Foucault’s panoptical observation, I make reference to the work of South African photographer Mikhael Subotzky and in particular his panoramic photographs of Pollsmoor prison. I will examine how the Panopticon shifts from being an architectural mechanism deployed in prisons to a social hierarchy in schools: in the latter, it is people integrated at various levels of power who act as the ‘panoptic lens’. I will explore how the use of school uniforms might be interpreted in light of this idea.

In order to facilitate discussion, I will examine Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* as the key text in understanding Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon as a structuring mechanism, revealing its implications for an understanding of the hierarchy of a boarding school. I will acknowledge that the concept of linking the school to the idea of the Panopticon is not new. A key text by Joseph M. Piro, *Foucault and the Architecture of Surveillance: Creating Regimes of Power in*

Schools, Shrines, and Society (2008), explains how the school and its regulatory bodies create a panoptic environment. Thus in addition to examining Foucault's work, I will analyse Piro's text as well as identifying and exploring writings by other authors who may have also made such a connection.

Hierarchies infiltrate all aspects of boarding school life at Kingswood and provide a strict regime to monitor students. This emphasis is based on the notion of an 'omnipresent' 'gaze' which towers above its subjects and its implicit outline which creates self-discipline. The boarding house at Kingswood College is architecturally designed to work hand in hand with the hierarchical observation. These two 'frameworks' combine to economize the perpetual supervision of students at Kingswood College. I attempt to challenge the extent of this permanent 'gaze' of which I in fact form part.

The idea that students are perpetually being watched and evaluated is a key trope in this mini-thesis. I argue that perpetual surveillance is achieved through regulation of the body at various levels in the school. The actual or implied presence of 'surveyors' in this school context creates a tension in the lives of the learners between conformity under their 'gaze' and transgression when notionally being 'unobserved'. The intended consequence of disciplinarian interventions is the instilling of 'self-policing' mechanisms within the psyche of the learner.

In the second chapter of this mini-thesis entitled *Rebellious Uniform* I focus on the school uniform and in particular how learners at Kingswood College arrange garments such as the tie to stage a subtle rebellion against the arguably permanent 'gaze' of the school hierarchies.

In focusing on the school uniform I discuss its historical legacy in South African schools, its military influences as well as its religious roots.

I also discuss my first series of paintings entitled *In Line* which consists of the painting of a series of ties worn by students at Kingswood College in relation to the variety of 'transgressions' as well as 'requirements' of dress codes. This series initiated the direction in which my other works have followed. The subsequent series of paintings entitled *Leap* comprise several paintings of students physically 'leaping' off school desks. The series juxtaposes the static and clinical nature of *In Line* with imagery of uniformed bodies in motion - which in itself can be read as a paradox of constraint and freedom. The visible 'disruptions' that occur in a frozen split-second of flight point to an innate desire of the clothed bodies to be 'free' from the constraints that bind them. I argue that school uniforms are a means to not only control students but also provide a tool to help achieve the ideals of the senior members of the school hierarchy.

Chapter One: The Panopticon and the boarding school

My experience of living amongst learners prompted several charcoal drawings. These drawings from the series *Belongings*, of learner's living areas and personal property at Kingswood College, reveal how these spaces become dirtied and cleaned at various times of the day. The drawings which consist of shoes on a window sill (Fig 1), some files and notes stacked on a shelf (Fig 1.1) and metal trunks (Fig 1.2), for example, all record items which would commonly be found in boarding schools in South Africa. These drawings capture the students' interior living spaces in the boarding house. The visuals consist of moments during the day when the rooms are neat and clean and when they become disordered. The continuous cleaning and dirtying of the rooms fits between the specific inspection times. There are two daily inspections, one in the morning at seven o'clock and the second in the evening at seven o'clock. In between these times the cleanliness of the rooms fluctuates. The inspection is carried out by a senior pupil and is strict and meticulous. I have chosen charcoal as the medium for the drawings. The technical process of applying charcoal to a white sheet of Fabriano and 'dirtying' it arguably helps link the conceptual theme. Charcoal might be considered a 'dirty' medium: I have noticed when using it in my studio I tend to leave a trace of my presence wherever I rest my hands or place my feet. The trace left behind after using charcoal and the act of application and erasing technically, also applies to the conceptual meaning behind the drawings.

The drawings reveal the idiosyncrasies that occur in the rooms of individuals. Their personal space is normally shared with other students and only when they reach Grade Twelve are they assigned their own rooms. Their 'private' space provides an unconventional method of portraiture, by allowing the objects in their living spaces to

reveal the potential struggles undergone in a controlling regime such as a boarding school. I examine in my art practice these spaces as potential sites of ‘hierarchical observation’ and the challenging thereof, by drawing attention to what may be interpreted as subtle rebellions. The charcoal drawings of these rebellious statements/utterances become symbolic of a brief moment when discipline has lapsed and the site of observation becomes disordered. In one drawing (Fig. 1.3), the clothes hang uncomfortably, pulling the hangers in different directions creating a disordered cupboard. These slight utterances are an extension of the micro-rebellions by students when wearing their school ties.

A symbolic aspect of my uniform when I was a student in Zimbabwe was my school shoes. The standard black school shoe which formed part of the school uniform arsenal has provided the most emotive memories for me. I wore my school shoes five days a week and remember the constant pressure from my father and school authorities to keep them polished and clean. This was extremely difficult living in dusty Bulawayo where there was little if any green grass on the school premises. I used to ride to school and I remember having to tuck my trousers into my socks so as not to get them torn in the chain of the bicycle. I would pack some shoe polish in my bag so that when I arrived after the ten kilometre cycle I could re-polish my school shoes. The prefects were constantly harassing me about the condition of my shoes. I would often play soccer with my friends during break and our school shoes would get scuffed and dirty. It was considered ‘cool’ to have scuffed shoes. The brand of school shoe you wore was also important. The popular brand at the time was a Bata shoe called ‘toughees’. You were not considered part of the ‘in-group’ if you did not wear a pair of ‘toughees’. School shoes which appear in my larger paintings are in some instances scuffed and damaged

to quote this experience and the ideals that the school shoe represent; to be part of an ‘in-group’ but also to interrogate the tension of intentionally scuffing school shoes either out of frustration inside a schooling regime or merely to rebel against it.

When capturing the stills for the drawings I would not walk into the ‘cubes’ of the students and ‘create’ a scene to draw. I would capture what was already present in the room and try not to interfere with the contents. This was an important aspect of compiling the imagery for the series. I did not want to move or re-place any of the objects in the room. I wanted the traces of the students to remain as they had left it, as I had left traces of charcoal in my studio. I often found shoes, books and stationary scattered around the rooms and I would use these exact compositions in my drawings. One of the drawings in the series (Fig 1.4) is of a school bag I discovered hanging off the top of a cupboard and which interested me because it seemed to almost at the point of falling off the edge. The gravity and weight of the drawing in many ways resembles the burden young children face within boarding school structures. The drawings focus on discarded objects in the room and in some occasions give an indication of the boundaries set out in the dormitories.

When I began looking at the living spaces of the students there was also discomfort about my presence in their dormitory, probably because they feared repercussions if things were not ordered². They would attempt to conceal the untidiness in their dormitories, and I again had to remind them that I was not carrying out an inspection and that I merely wanted to draw the ‘mess’. Their discomfort caused by my presence made me realise that I was in some ways exploiting my power within the hierarchical

²There was similar discomfort on the part of the students when I took stills of their ties for the series *In Line*.

structure, but in doing so I could nevertheless also critique the system of which I was a part.

I. The Panopticon

The word Panopticon literally means ‘all seeing’ (Gallagher 2010: 262). The connection between the Panopticon and controlled institutions such as schools is not a new concept; Foucault unravels the complexities of discipline and power and how the design of the Panopticon increases surveillance in institutions such as schools, hospitals, asylums and prisons. Piro also observes how schools can be considered panoptic through a continuous ‘gaze’ of regulating bodies. Michael Gallagher (2010: 262) also argues that “Foucault’s well-known writings on the Panopticon outline a model of power which can seem strikingly familiar to those who have spent time in modern schools.”

The Panopticon was a prison design created by the philosopher Jeremy Bentham. Bentham constructed the idea of the Panopticon prison as an improved method of surveying prisoners, as Andrew Hope (2005:360) explains:

Published in 1791 the panopticon was a design for a prison that its creator, the utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham, claimed would ‘invigorate industry’, ‘reform morals’ and ‘facilitate education’. In Bentham’s design exposed, backlit prison cells situated around the periphery of the building face inwards towards a darkened central watchtower. The prisoner in Bentham’s design is subject to permanent display.

The permanent ‘gaze’ from an omnipresent tower creates a continual tension between the notion of being surveyed and surveying. The fundamental aspect of the Panopticon which renders it a powerful machine is not its ability to see all its subjects at once, but for all its subjects to believe they are always seen. The ‘gaze’ of the Panopticon does not allow for the surveyor to be seen. The surveyor is at the helm of visual power and this is enhanced by the surreptitious nature of the Panopticon design. The architecture of the panoptical surveillance ensures anonymity. Bentham’s Panopticon was also

appropriated for hospitals, schools, poorhouses and madhouses. Foucault (1975: 201)

describes the implications of 'Panopticism' as such:

Bentham laid down the principle that power should be visible and unverifiable. Visible: the inmate will constantly have before his eyes the tall outline of the central tower from which he is spied upon. Unverifiable: the inmate must never know whether he is being looked at at any one moment; but he must be sure that he may always be so. In order to make the presence or absence of the inspector unverifiable, so that the prisoners, in their cells, cannot even see a shadow, Bentham envisaged not only venetian blinds on the windows of the central observation hall, but, on the inside, partitions that intersected the hall at right angles and, in order to pass from one quarter to the other, not doors but zig-zag openings; for the slightest noise, a gleam of light, a brightness in a half-opened door would betray the presence of the guardian. The Panopticon is a machine for dissociating the see/being seen dyad: in the peripheric ring, one is totally seen, without ever seeing; in the central tower, one sees everything without ever being seen.

Foucault's description reveals the power associated with deception and the art of seeing without ever been seen. For Foucault the key element of the Panopticon is to create a belief for its subjects that they are permanently being watched and this is enforced by the "tall outline of the central tower". The tower perhaps metaphorically can represent many things: the 'state', government or a hierarchy within a school as illustrated in (Fig 2.). As Foucault (1975:202-203) explains:

He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection.

The power struggle by an individual under the panoptic 'gaze' is internalized and becomes a cognitive decision to conform. There is also another power struggle which is played out; I form part of the hierarchical pyramid as illustrated in (Fig. 2) at Kingswood College. Being a student at University and being employed as a stooge I find myself questioning this power dynamic that I fall between. I "simultaneously play both roles" - that of student and of stooge. I am aware of the frustrations of 'school life'

and feel a sense of discomfort when having to discipline students because of certain transgressions.

Harry Strub (1989: 41) reveals the detail with which Bentham had conceived of his Panopticon prison:

Acoustic inspection was to be facilitated by means of a narrow speaking tube running from each cell to the central tower. This tube was to be used to detect even small whispers. It could also function like a telephone permitting direct communication from inspector to inmate when necessary. Bentham intended that the Panopticon's design would provide no refuge from the "all-seeing eye." There would be no private space, no moment when one could assume that one was not being scrutinized, awake or asleep.

Prisoners under surveillance from Bentham's Panopticon were given no chance of a private moment. Their lives were constantly under supervision. The constant internalisation of self-discipline prescribed by the Panopticon through the overwhelming presence of a surveyor allows for no refuge from the 'all seeing eye'. The presence of audio receptors in Bentham's Panopticon design reveals that it was not only an all 'seeing' machine but was also aided with 'acoustic' equipment which added audio surveillance. Gallagher (2010: 268) refers to this as "panauralism". In boarding schools, children are monitored by panoptic structures such as strict roll calls, dress codes, rules and regulations, continual daily supervision and CCTV cameras in boarding houses and outdoors. All these 'panoptic devices' construct a discourse of control to maintain a constant level of supervision and discipline.

Foucault has critically examined the notion of Panopticon prisons and coined the term "Panopticism". As Hope (1995: 361) explains:

For Foucault a key element of Panopticism is that those on the periphery are never totally sure if they are being observed at any one particular moment. In this

situation, the rational individual seeking to avoid punishment for infringement of a social code must act as if they are the object of current surveillance.

The architectural design of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon prison or 'Inspection House' has been imitated metaphorically in many of society's major institutions.³ Garland (1986: 874) asserts that "Bentham's vision turns out to be a reflection of the very nature of things we live in a perfectly calculated, panoptic world - and Foucault urges us to recognise it as such". And as Strub (1989) explains, the key notion of the panoptical principle is that people will behave themselves when they know they are perhaps being observed. The lives of learners at a boarding school can be viewed in light of this idea. Such regulatory mechanisms explained by Hope (2005: 361) as "practices such as wearing uniforms, the strict use of timetables, the observance of a variety of rules and visible punishments for transgressors can all be seen as creating a discourse of control, whilst encouraging self-policing". These mechanisms deployed by the school are made evident in various aspects of learners' self-presentation and conduct. Regulations in regard to uniforms and in regard to the arrangement of each learner's belongings insist on the sublimation/sacrificing of an individual identity in favour of an institutional one. Thus tiny departures from those norms, slight transgressions, might be understood as subtle rebellions which the boarder stages against disciplinary structures and the conformity demanded of him or her.

This challenging of hierarchical systems can also be referred to as '*sousveillance*'.⁴ '*Sousveillance*', which literally is the inverse of Panopticon, is a 'form of 'reflectionism' and

³In popular culture J.R.R. Tolkien's (1954) book the *Lord of the Rings*, later produced into a blockbuster film, depicts an "all seeing eye": the eye of Sauron. The tall tower with the eye of Sauron hovering on top can be interpreted as a panoptic lens. The eye of Sauron is an appropriate metaphor for this chapter; the "all seeing eye's" constant watch manipulates the behaviour of those trying to evade it. Frodo Baggins who is the main protagonist of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and bearer of the ring suffers the constant presence of the eye of Sauron as the ring begins to take hold of him.

⁴"*sousveillance*" from the French words for "sous" (below) and "veiller" to watch.

a term invented by Steve Mann (1998: 333) “for a philosophy and procedures of using technology to mirror and confront bureaucratic organizations.” Examples of this type of rebellion are the photographing of police officers or government officials taking photographs in banks or shopping malls, where this is prohibited, or performances by activist groups such as Surveillance Camera Players (SCP)⁵ who stage public appearances in front of well-known CCTV camera sites in cities such as New York. This type of rebellion is seen by students in boarding schools although their techniques mirror a more subtle approach as they do not have the liberty of freedom of expression and are contained by a discipline code. However, their transgressions expose a conscious decision on the part of the students to challenge hierarchies and school discipline codes no matter the consequences. It can be suggested that this reveals their awareness that they are being surveyed by a teacher, prefect or a CCTV camera.

II. Hierarchical Observation

Each cubicle in which the students are ‘boxed’ is exactly the same. The rooms are bland and are predominantly painted in white and grey. Every student is assigned several items of furniture - a lamp, desk, chair, bed, shelf and cupboard. These belongings which are given to the students are also referenced in the drawings. These items are methodically installed and are immovable. The layout of the boarding house which I live in at Kingswood College is hierarchically formatted according to grade levels of students. The Grade Eights are placed together in a large dorm called the ‘baby’ dorm. The ‘baby’ dorm is divided by cubicles and each Grade Eight is assigned a small area surrounding his bed. The Grade Nines are split into four and three-man dorms located in the house. The Grade Tens are similarly distributed. In Grade Eleven, depending on your academic results, you are either placed in a single ‘cube’ or a two-person ‘cube’. The Grade Twelves (Matrics) are all placed in single dorms in the best location in the house. The Head of House, Deputy Head of House and College prefects are

⁵ Brown, B. 2003. Streets into Stages: an interview with Surveillance Camera Players’ Bill Brown. *Surveillance & Society* 1(3): 356-374.

assigned the biggest rooms. The stooges (student assistants), normally two per house, are placed at the entrance and end of the corridors in their own rooms. In this regard to this discussion, one can look to Foucault (1975: 149) and his articulations on the dynamics of ‘disciplined spaces’:

In organizing ‘cells’, ‘places’ and ‘ranks’, the disciplines create complex spaces that are at once architectural, functional and hierarchical. It is spaces that provide fixed positions and permit circulation; they carve out individual segments and establish operational links; they mark places and indicate values; they guarantee the obedience of individuals, but also a better economy of time and gesture.

The architectural plan of the boarding house is designed for the efficient supervision of students. The hierarchical layout is specifically designed to aid discipline in the boarding house. The architecture and hierarchical structure are linked together and provide the ‘considered’ amount of permanent supervision. Foucault refers to ‘cells’, ‘places’ and ‘ranks’. These terms could quite easily be substituted with ‘cubes’, ‘dormitories’ and ‘hierarchies’ which are all found in the boarding house. Foucault (1975: 171) describes the operation of ‘hierarchical observation’ in relation to military camps as follows: “The geometry of paths, the number and distribution of the tents, the orientation of their entrances, the disposition of files and ranks were exactly defined; the network of gazes that supervised one another was laid down.” This hierarchical structuring is arguably replicated in schools, as Foucault explains they were later modelled on the same concept - the distribution of rooms or cubicles in rows creating an efficient layout for monitoring adolescent school children. A mentor or student assistant is located at the beginning and end of the corridor and the systematic layout of each cubicle, divided by low partitions, provides minimal privacy for the learners. The architectural mechanisms all improve visibility for the ‘omnipresent gaze’, enhancing the ability to monitor and control the subjects.

As the diagram (Fig. 2) of the hierarchical pyramid at Kingswood College indicates, the head teacher (traditionally termed a ‘headmaster’ or ‘headmistress’) of a school is more or less at the apex of the boarding-school hierarchy, just one level below the governing Council. His or her disciplinary procedures filter to the lower subordinate members who become in effect representations of the headmaster or headmistress. The housemasters, teachers, prefects, and senior school members all carry a means of power which represent the apex of the hierarchy. As Caputo and Yount (1993: 128) explain, “everyone in that system becomes an eye that sees what the institution asks it to see, in a request so naturalized that it is often little more than subliminal echo”. In other words, every member of the hierarchy becomes implicitly a part of the system of effecting control through surveillance – indeed part of the panoptic lens. The network of ‘gazes’ established hierarchically effect surveillance by acting as moveable bodies in a boarding school environment, establishing their continuous ‘omnipresence’. These architectural mechanisms and hierarchical bodies all implement an efficient way of discipline whilst also serving the purpose of performing the roles required of them from the ‘mini-state’, or school governing body, in establishing their ideals.

III. Artistic Precedent

South African photographer Mikhael Subotzky first began making work about South African prisons in 2004 with his series called *Die Vier Hoeke* (The Four Corners). According to Subotzky (2008: 78) this approach was intended to look “at the historical role of South Africa’s prisons, and the role they were playing in society ten years after the country’s first democratic elections.” Subotzky published his first book entitled *Beaufort West* (2008). The book attempts to capture the lives of everyone who lives in this small town in the Karoo and the iconic location of the Beaufort West prison in the

centre of the town. When travelling from Johannesburg to Cape Town, Beaufort West would seem as nothing more than a ‘blip’ on the N1 highway. The irritation of driving through this small town is the extremely large roundabout you encounter. Unknown to many travellers, enclosed in the circumference of this abnormally large roundabout, is the Beaufort West Prison which locates itself as a central point within the town. In Subotzky’s aerial photograph of *Beaufort West Prison*, 2006 (Fig. 3), one can make out that there is an octagon shaped wall with a high fence enclosing the prison from the rest of the town. The central prison appears as somewhat of a Panopticon prison design – imposing discipline not only on inmates but in a certain sense also on the citizens of the town. Located at the centre of the town and including a tall central watchtower, it is visible from wherever in the town one might drive. The Beaufort West high fence acts as a sombre reminder to all that populate this small town and, indeed, transit travellers, of the consequences of committing crimes, while also enforcing the presence of a guarded state who watches over and governs their society. The inmates behind the walls of the Beaufort West prison are constantly reminded of the reality of life outside of the reformatory boundaries; this is triggered by the acoustic rumbling of transport trucks and the odd horn of town traffic. The only hope of freedom for the prisoners enclosed behind the walls of the prison is their acoustic imagination.

Subotzky works with the notion of the Panopticon in his panorama photographs of prisoners in their cells such as *Cell 508b, A Section, Pollsmoor Maximum security Prison*, from the series *Die Vier Hoeke, (The Four Corners)*, 2004-2005 (Fig 4.). Hilde Van Gelder and Helen Westgeest (2010:136) explain: “In a 2007 interview Subotzky refers to the panoptical observation in prisons Michel Foucault wrote about, discussing power relations in society and specifically the meaningful relations between looking

and places.” Subotzky’s focus on the cells of the inmates and the congested manner in which they live is heightened by the use of panoramic photography. In amongst the congestion there is clearly an organised layout of gang hierarchy. The higher ranked gang members are seen lying on beds whilst their subordinates are packed tightly together on the floor. Some of the gang members engage with their ‘surveyor’, Subotzky, and flaunt in front of the camera, raising their chin or glancing away showing their discomfort at his presence. Others seem to carry on with their daily routines uninterested by Subotzky and his camera. The scattered bunk-beds, used to economise in little space, reference a sense of boarding school melancholy. The poignant message Subotzky conveys in his panoramic photograph is the life of the individual contained in this place of dystopia. Subotzky’s panoramic photographs of inmates at Pollsmoor prison are important in creating a setting that would otherwise not be seen by the public. His ability to capture the inmates and display them seemingly in panoramic format provides a unique insider’s perspective of the reality of prison life.

In Chapter One, I have discussed the idea of the Panopticon in relation to a traditional boarding school in South Africa. The architectural and hierarchical structures at Kingswood College as mentioned earlier in the Chapter work hand in hand in creating a discourse of control. In Chapter Two, I continue to examine the notion of surveying in terms of dress codes and uniforms and in particular how these combine as controlling devices to further extend the role of the Panopticon in this thesis. Through this ‘policing’ of sorts certain idiosyncrasies occur which I highlight as subtle rebellions against the hierarchies and the ideals set out by the school.

Chapter Two: Rebellious Uniform

When will you get it into your heads
That wearing a suit and school tie sets
You on the way to social status,
Wealth, career, success?
The school tie focuses the mind
It helps you learn, retain and find
The knowledge for your TEE
To which you are consigned.
So as your years at school pass by
Your sport, your uniform, your tie,
For some office high.

(Poem by Volker Mattar, Australian Broadcasting Corporation [ABC] 1996 cited in Craik 2005: 51)

The first works I produced at the outset of this degree were a series of paintings of school boys' ties. The seven panels are in 'portrait' format and have been reproduced to approximately life-size scale, focusing on the student's neck and upper chest area. The positioning of the tie on the wearer's body is the focal point of each painting. The paintings have been derived from snapshots I took of schoolboys wearing their ties. I intentionally excluded the face of the sitter so as to force one's reading of each tie as an individual representation of its wearer's psyche. The arrangement of the ties provides the viewer with an insight into the individual's character.

As part of my responsibilities at Kingswood College I am expected to remind students to correct their ties according to the discipline code, which states, "when wearing the tie, the top collar button must be fastened" (KC1: March 2011). This particular rule creates a fair amount of tension. The majority of schoolboys' shirts often do not fit correctly and nothing short of strangulation will result from getting the top button fastened. I began to notice that after some time correcting learners' dress that I had begun to focus only on the neck area surrounding

the tie, completely disregarding the individual's face. The students in my eyes had become faceless. This provided the motivation to create a series of faceless portraits. I wanted to emphasise this experience and through this process perhaps a loss of identity.

Jennifer Craik (2005:54) explains that “the adoption of school uniforms ... entails the elaboration of techniques of surveillance and monitoring of uniform behaviour”. School uniforms are designed to regulate the behaviour of young students. They provide a tool for institutions such as schools and their hierarchies to order their pupils, potentially placing them under permanent surveillance. When I began documenting adolescent boys at Kingswood College for source material, I noticed how uncomfortable these students became at my interest in the way they wore their ties. The students would immediately begin to re-dress their ties, tightening and adjusting the length. This almost automated action reminded me of the significance of wearing a tie correctly and what this means in the school regime, as well as the consequences of wearing it incorrectly. At this very juncture I was exploiting my power as a hierarchical figure to accomplish my artistic practice. I began to capture the students' ties before they would re-dress them, reassuring that they were not going to get into trouble. I was regarded by the students as an authority figure enforcing dress codes. One may argue that had I not occupied a position of power within the school institution my sitters may not have been so compliant. According to Craik (2005:57) school uniforms normally derive from either “ecclesiastical- influenced smocks originating in France and then spreading to other countries” or “military-influenced uniforms emerging in England and adopted in neighbouring countries and most colonies”. These ecclesiastical and military roots are relevant to a garment associated with discipline and self-management.

School uniforms worn in South Africa are not only the product of ideas about discipline and conformity; they are also bound within a British imperialist history. Helen Callaway (1992: 237) notes how the wearing of uniforms entrenched allegiance to the British Empire:

The schoolboy retained the heightened values of correctness of dress far longer than his declensions of Latin verbs. His education included both compulsory uniforms and compulsory games, encouraging military virtues and the obligations of empire. From uniforms of schools and military academies, young men graduated to those glorifying imperial rule.

It is evident today that the values and ideals of the British Empire affected the designs of school uniforms. The history of the Kingswood College uniform provides an example of this, as Howard and Joyce Kirkby (1994: 23) write in *Still Upon a Frontier*:

In his 'Historical Notes' Graham Hepburn (1911-1919) discloses valuable insights into life at early Kingswood: 'Before 1911 the uniform was Eton jackets with trousers to match in blue serge, Eton collars and mortar boards with red and black tassels. From 1911 Norfolk jackets of navy blue serge, black stockings for juniors. Mortar boards were retained for quite a long time before going over to straw hats....

Kingswood College adopted the British uniform based on the English school Eton. This adoption reveals the importance of the indoctrination of countries through the use of uniforms. Craik (2005:63) suggests that "as Britain expanded its empire, school uniforms followed and were instituted — with climatic concessions — in most British colonies and dominions". It can be argued that British imperialism extends control over its colonies through religion and education and thus the uniforms associated with these institutions. The uniforms utilised by the British Empire symbolise conformity and reference allegiance to its authority. The extent to which Kingswood adopted the uniform of Eton illustrates the penetrative nature of British Imperialism. Craik (2005: 63) states:

Perhaps the most generic type of uniform to develop was derived from the so-called Eton suit, the uniform of younger students at Eton College near Windsor.

This emerged during the nineteenth century and became popularized in Edwardian times as the 'best wear' of young boys - hence its celebrity.

The powerful nature of the uniform is not just its associative qualities but also its ability to make the wearer believe that they are in fact accountable for their actions. The garment represents a certain code of conduct and students must act accordingly. Craik (2005:55) explains: "The school constructs a particular habitus that is formally articulated in the specialist training offered by the school and reinforced by informal codes of conduct." The layout of schools, the methods of teaching and the codes of conduct which include dress codes are designed to nurture a student who conforms to the ideals of the school. Craik (2005: 64) reveals: "Ties became a shorthand means of indicating class, status, educational pedigree and distinctive body training- qualities embodied in the term 'old school tie'".

According to Craik, the wearing of an old school tie resembles an association to a life-time membership of an exclusive and distinctive club. School ties worn after school at special occasions or functions create a camaraderie and brotherhood amongst 'old-boys'. This also creates a tension as Craik (2005: 63) explains, "creating a hierarchy of 'in' groups and 'out' groups." The distinction of 'old-boys' educated at 'prestigious schools' is made clear by the wearing of their school ties. The act of wearing a tie associated with your school attaches a sense of history, not only with a school, but also with a generic assumption that the 'old school tie' symbol is one of stature, success and ultimately power. In referencing the leading poem by Volker Mattar there is a clear association between the school tie and business. This association is part of the shaping of young boys into 'adulthood' and the responsibilities of having to wear a suit one day. This leads the reader to believe that school attire is in effect the first introduction to sophisticated dress. The referred 'social status' will help you to a life of wealth and a successful career. The central theme is that the school is a 'factory' and its product is the successful entrepreneur.

Although my initial intention was to provide a critique of the power relations within which I am embedded, I have come to realise that these paintings could be read as re-enforcing the very power struggles I am looking to subvert. Whilst gathering the visual material for my art practice I was unaware that I might in fact be exploiting my influence as a stooge. After this realisation I started to question the ethical nature of my practice, concerned with the possibility that I may be enforcing precisely what I initially intended to expose.

I. In Line

This series of painted ties is entitled *In Line* (Fig. 5). There are seven paintings in all, named *Zuko* (Fig. 5.1), *James* (Fig. 5.2), *Michael* (Fig. 5.3), *Jack* (Fig. 5.4), *Fanie* (Fig. 5.5), *Alon* (Fig. 5.6) and *Cuan* (Fig. 5.7). The faceless portraits represent a tie for every day of the week and no tie is the same. The title of each individual in the series is important. I have intentionally identified the sitters' first names and not their surnames. I wanted to reverse what is traditionally done in boarding schools, i.e. calling students by their surnames and thus subjugating individuality, and to rather emphasise individuality by using first names. This again was prompted by my experience in the boarding house as a stooge. I discovered a more personal connection with the boys by using first names as opposed to their surnames. The series *In Line* is rendered using only three colours— grey, black and red. These three colours are predominant colours at Kingswood College; tonally the greys and blacks are subdued. There is a hint of skin colour in the neck area of the sitters. The red, for example, in the tie in *James* (Fig. 5.2) is illuminated through its contrast with the muted black and grey tones of the shirt. The tie's length is unknown in *James* (Fig. 5.2), but it is perfectly fastened. *James* can read as an illustration of what is required by the code of conduct. At the same time, one may argue that this could be an example of a student who has only corrected his tie because I showed an unwarranted interest in his appearance. The extent to which the snapshot has been framed creates a very flat perspective in the painting. The composition varies from panel to

panel. *Zuko* (Fig. 5.1), for example, is tightly cropped and the tie is enlarged in comparison to *Fanie* (Fig. 5.5), where there is far more body in the image and the tie appears smaller. I did this to emphasise the un-fastened tie, foregrounding the transgression. The tie as a component of the school uniform can be arranged in one's own stylistic manner, potentially rebelling against the discipline code in an effort to underpin individuality. On the topic Nicholas Cambridge (2011: 180) asserts:

Expressions of individuality have not been effaced by the prevalence of uniforms in the [...] education system. The 'resistance' that Michel Foucault maintains is an inevitable by-product of the flow of power manifests most visibly in the customisation of regulated dress.

The individual alteration of the school tie is a subtle departure from conformity and an opportunity for school pupils to stage their own micro- rebellion against a system designed to contain them and establish a standardisation of appearance and conduct.

The school pupils are aware that they are being watched and tend to behave as if they are under surveillance. Sandra Miller (2007: 37) explains "that the Freudian notion of the "gaze," whereby interest in appearance is caused by the recognition "that one is seen, that one is – among other things an object of others' sight, others' cognition – that is, passive within the binary opposites masculine/feminine, active/passive". In a sense the alterations of the school uniform by school children is arguably a conscious decision to be seen by members of a school hierarchy but also an opportunity to be noticed by their fellow peers. It also allows for an element of play, the risk of being caught or the thrill of being able to get away with breaking the rules. This is emphasised by their 'customisation of regulated dress' which is in effect a rebellion against the dress code providing an opportunity to flaunt in front of a hierarchical figure. The pupils arguably become exhibitionists. An awareness that they are transgressing is substantiated by their continuous effort to test the discipline code. It is important to understand how the individual in an organising institution such as a school is

possibly able to emerge as such. The effort by the individual to 'free' themselves from the constraints of the garments that bind them and the 'subtle' resistance formed, stems from an arguably intrinsic response. When does the human being first develop his or her own identity? When does the person become an individual? Is it the first bodily separation from their mother as the umbilical cord is severed? On the other hand could it be the moment the child takes their first gulp of air, or is it when the child is considered 'independent' and sent off to boarding school? This symbolic separation from child and mother is emphasised by the continuous growth outward from maternal care towards an individual identity creating a boundary between the 'individual' and the 'other'.

Julia Kristeva in her (1980) book *Powers of Horror* coined the term 'Abjection' which defines the process of freeing oneself from the dependence of what is not of the body in an attempt to become an 'individual'. Noelle McAfee explains:

The infant begins to separate itself from others in order to develop borders between the "I" and other. The infant develops these by a process she calls abjection, a process of jettisoning what seems to be part of oneself. The abject is what one spits out, rejects, almost violently excludes from oneself: sour milk, excrement, even a mother's engulfing embrace. What is abjected is radically excluded but never banished altogether. It hovers at the periphery of one's existence, constantly challenging one's own tenuous borders of selfhood. What makes something abject and not simply repressed is that it does not entirely disappear from consciousness. It remains as both an unconscious and a conscious threat to one's own clean proper self. The abject is what does not respect boundaries. It beseeches and pulverizes the subject (McAfee 2004:46).

The 'abject' referred to by Julia Kristeva is the body's internal, almost violent, repulsion of foreign objects which don't belong. This repulsion is argued to establish some sense of 'selfhood'. The behaviour by students at Kingswood College towards their uniform can be viewed in light of the concept of 'abjection'. This can be further deployed in understanding the 'resistance' to school hierarchies and strict regimes of power. The student at Kingswood College expels, rejects, and in some instances, abolishes dress codes to appear different as well as establishing identity within the 'group' or grade. Judith Butler (1999: 169) refers to

“the construction of the ‘not me’ as the abject establishes the boundaries which are also the first contours of the subject”. The response to the first boundaries encountered in early childhood can later be echoed in the boundaries set out by society in institutions such as schools. These boundaries and borders are continuously testing the individual’s ability to resist revolt or conform. As Lynda Nead (1992:32) notes, “for Kristeva the body’s margins are primary as the site for the subject’s struggle for attainment of identity”. In this struggle there is an internalisation of borders which are generated through the process of ‘abjection’. McAfee (2004: 49) explains the paradox associated with this internalisation:

The abject continues to haunt the subject’s consciousness, remaining on the periphery of awareness. The subject finds the abject both repellent and seductive and thus his or her borders of self are, paradoxically, continuously threatened and maintained. They are threatened because the abject is alluring enough to crumble the borders of self; they are maintained because the fear of such a collapse keeps the subject vigilant.

The struggle between conformity and subversion is in continuous flux when students wear uniforms at Kingswood College. The student questions the boundaries laid down and, by subverting their dress, they arguably recall the process of ‘abjection’. This process is not necessarily a conscious action but can also take place as a result of their bodily actions throughout the day; carrying school books, sitting down at a desk or participating in lunchtime sport all place the perceived ‘ideal’ of the Kingswood College uniform at ‘risk’. The school uniform shifts between two distinct poles—tidy and untidy. *In Line* consists of seven painted Kingswood College ties and each tie in its different form displays the stages between tidy and un-tidy and conformity versus subversion. According to Nead (1992: 32), “for Kristeva, the most significant border is that between the subject and the object, the distinction between the inside and the outside of the body”. In light of this the school tie and the school uniform can be regarded as the ‘object’ and the student the ‘subject’. The effort to maintain ‘correct dress’ by tightening or re-adjusting the school tie challenges this boundary

between 'object' and 'subject' and defines the student by their appearance according to the dress-code.

Whilst attending school in Zimbabwe I took great pride in my appearance. I enjoyed forming part of a disciplined system in which I could challenge the boundaries set out by the dress codes and the hierarchies within the school. I would purposefully un-tuck my shirt before walking past a prefect to see how they would react. When asked to correct my shirt I would pull my shorts up high towards the middle of my torso, exposing my long white skinny legs. This exaggerated 'correction' would infuriate teachers and prefects. I enjoyed getting into trouble for not obeying the rules and regulations and, after a subsequent caning, would show all my friends outside the stripes left behind on my rear. I enjoyed this power struggle which I am now able to extract material from. My position has shifted from that of a school boy inside a system of regulation and surveillance, to that of the surveyor, a rule enforcer, assisting in the implementation of the structures I once rebelled against. One could argue that I now occupy a type of outside position, yet remain within the internal workings of the school. I have access to aspects of the intimate lives of young men negotiating their identities, yet in many ways I am still an external observer.

My focus at Kingswood College has mainly been male adolescent learners or emerging adolescents. This developmental stage in a young male learner's life, as I have witnessed at Kingswood, presents not only a struggle to maintain identity but also at times the effort to come to terms with their bodily changes, these changes which in some sense the school uniform and stringent dress codes seem to partially obliterate. It is interesting to note how the male learners in particular are able to nevertheless find their own ways to signal and highlight their identities as sexualised beings. I have noticed in particular how male learners at Kingswood at the ages of 11 to 14 wear clothing that may be too small for them to accentuate changes in their body and specifically alter their clothing. For example a common

trait noticed in young learners at Kingswood is the rolling up of their sleeves to expose muscle development in their arms. Adolescent males at Kingswood also refrain from shaving and attempt to grow longer sideburns to express their sexual identities. There is a sense of vanity that arises when they reach the ages of 11 to 14. Male learners start to style their hair using various gel products. Male learners also douse themselves with strong cologne to emphasise their presence within a group as sexualised beings.

It can be suggested that the series *In Line* illustrates a paradox. In the first sense it reveals how a tie which should epitomise conformity is in fact the least uniform article of clothing. I have discovered that no tie is the same as another, either in the way it is worn or in its manufacture. The Kingswood tie, which is a crimson, red and black, seems to change over time. It fades as the silk ages, the thread seems to constantly differ and the fabric used also seems to be different from one article to the next. The way in which students wear these garments is also vastly un-uniform. The ties are either worn too short or too long. The knot near the collar is seldom tightened correctly and never consistent in a group of students. The thickness of the tie also varies. As Artemis Yagou (103: 2011) explains “a major theme may be recognized in the complex interplay between conformity and individuality, the axis along which the design history of uniforms seems to oscillate”. There is a tension between conformity and subversion that is created through a process of rebellion by a group of learners. If all the learners wear their ties in a disordered fashion, collectively appearing untidy and scruffy, they effectively form a new ‘dress code’. The challenging of conformity through subverting ‘regulated dress’ reveals how the uniform seems to oscillate between what is desired by the school as a small ‘state’ and the individual as a ‘citizen’. The uniform wearer becomes conscious of their peers’ rebellion and begins to mimic this, creating uniformity once again. Today in many public schools in England the tie has been abolished as

a part of the school uniform because it was so often worn incorrectly, thus only making the students look ‘untidy’.

II. *Leap Series*

After finishing *In Line* I decided to extend the uniform motif. While remaining focused on similar themes and concerns, I took a different approach to the subject matter, technique and format of the paintings. In studying the school uniform as I encountered it at Kingswood College I decided to develop a series which would reveal how the bodily form and the uniform could possibly be disrupted. The best method for this disruption was movement. I decided to approach a number of students who were ‘neatly’ dressed and asked them to jump off school desks onto a mattress in their uniform. The paintings attempt to deconstruct the notion of control and conformity through the situation of what appears to be a hanging or free-fall. In this series the uniform is manipulated by a potentially jumping, floating or falling figure. The movement of the figures allows for the fabric of the garments to crumple, crease and fold, following the disorderly behaviour of the students. The idiosyncrasies that begin to take place whilst the body is in flight, illustrated by a trailing shoe lace or an un-tucked shirt, reveal how the displacement of the uniform begins to mimic previous rebellions against disciplinary structures. The students’ shirts would become un-tucked, their ties loose and their laces untied in flight. These are all transgressions against the dress code. I captured the students’ jumping via stills and after shooting numerous photographs, I carefully edited the specific ones I intended to paint. Often the student would leap too early or too late and I would capture them in a crouching position about to jump or having landed already. After checking the LED on the camera it would take several attempts to capture the floating or

falling figure in the frame. It was an extensive process of trial and error. The behaviour of the uniform in relation to the body and the space surrounding the body interested me. In my mind, movement against the predominantly white background illustrated a disruption of the body and uniform through space.

Technically, the *Leap* series shifted away from *In Line*, which had been painted in a very controlled manner, to an active, more gestural approach. The vertical format of the paintings attempts to emphasise the movement of the falling figure. Apart from one painting, *Dylan*, I continued to exclude the face in the series, as I wanted to continue with the theme of headless bodies, reinforcing the loss of individuality through uniformity. Similarly to *In Line*, I have named the individual panels by the first names of the students. The series consists of seven large panels capturing the entire length of the body except the head. I have intentionally placed the figures in substantial negative space to highlight bodily movement. For instance, in *Michael* (Fig 6.) there is substantial movement as his hands and feet become distorted. There is a considerable amount of paint worked into the background to create the sense of vibration and movement. This was also done in *Dylan* (Fig 6.1.). The tie in *Michael* (Fig. 6) is contrasted against the grey shirt as it swings with the movement of the torso. *Michael's* arms and hands create the momentum of movement and are distorted in this process.

Whilst painting the series *Leap* I realised that the works required a different approach to *In Line*. In executing them, I recognised that I should not allow the paint to dry but, by completing them as quickly as possible, allow the background to remain wet – and thus merge the figure with the surrounding space. By highlighting the space between the body and the background and the space between the body and the uniform, I could develop the overall concept within which I was working. The bodies in the pictorial frame are airborne, free from their geographical location and therefore, even though in uniform, are free from their physical and environmental containment. When the students are suspended they are not only free from

their physical environment but are also free from rules, punishment and the ‘hierarchical’ box that contains them. The act of taking a ‘leap’ to a place of refuge and escaping from the constant pressures of being at the bottom of a ‘hierarchical system’ emphasises a struggle to survive and maintain a sense of identity. The *Leap* is a metaphor for a release of sorts. The *Leap* paintings attempt to explore how a fleeting moment can be frozen in time as a painting. This type of painting method would not have been possible or at least extremely difficult without contemporary technology. Capturing movement in a split second with a paint brush is nearly impossible. The advances in technology and in particular photography, have aided this process significantly. The pieces also attempt to explore the merging of a traditionally ‘old’ medium such as painting and a considerably more ‘contemporary’ medium of photography. In my artistic practice the translation of the ‘leap’ photographs into paintings allows for a certain amount of inventive licence to enable the capturing of slight glitches that occur as a body travels through space and to highlight these moments within the format of a painting.

It was a difficult transition moving from working on *In Line* to the *Leap* series. I was specific about the attention to detail in *In Line*, particularly the tie area, as I wanted to focus on this aspect of the work; the arrangement of learners’ ties in my mind was the exact juncture between discipline and transgression. My technical and conceptual approach to *Leap* shifted from ultimately motionless, singular moments to gestural ‘leaps’. It was a continual battle to refrain from ‘overworking’ the paintings, so as to keep the painting ‘fresh’ thus resisting the stasis of so many ‘fixed’ portraits.

The conceptual and technical impetus for the *Leap* series was to serve two purposes. The first was to investigate how a uniform in relation to the body can become disrupted and tangible at the same time. I wanted to focus on areas that I felt would necessitate attention: the tie area or a specific shoe; it would be an area that was in focus. My particular interest had metaphorical

reasoning as well as technical. Some areas of the uniform are in focus and some are distorted or blurred by movement. The blurring of these areas merges the uniform with the background. Other areas I dealt with quickly and left intentionally ‘unfinished’. It was important that the series evolved and did not become stagnant. Each individual painting in the series *Leap* is different in its cropping, type and arrangement of uniform. The flight of the students also presents different outcomes in the positioning of hands, arms and legs. For example *Trompie* (Fig. 6.2) is at the top of the vertical canvas and his feet and left arm become blurred as he is in flight but *Dylan* (Fig. 6.1), on the other hand, is at the bottom of the vertical canvas, falling off the picture plane. *Dylan* (Fig. 6.1) is also far more blurred than other panels in the series and it is difficult to distinguish features in his face. The uniform becomes disembodied and separates into its own being. There is often a shadow or break in light as the bodily movement rotates through the space. The figures appear ghostlike and provoke a metaphysical augmentation. The significance of the paintings lies in the interaction of the painting medium and the relationship between the student and the space they occupy. The student moves into a liminal zone and is then frozen within this space. The viewer is presented with figures which, trapped by the picture plane, seem to hover, float or fall.

III. Artistic Precedent

The North Korean Artist Do- Ho Suh produced an installation titled *Uni-Form/s: Self-Portrait/s: My 39 Years* (Fig. 12). The installation displays all of the uniforms Do- Ho Suh has worn in his life from childhood to his two years of compulsory military service. The installation reveals the power of the military influence in North Korea, as Hwa Young Caruso (2008: 4) observes:

Until the 1980s, Korean middle and high school students were required to wear a school uniform on which a student’s name tag and school identity badge was usually affixed. The school uniform code was a legacy of the 36-year-long

Japanese colonial occupation of Korea (1910-1945) and was abolished in the late 1980s as part of the Korean national pride movement.

The uniforms previously worn by Do- Ho Suh are supported by a stainless steel rack with casters in the installation. The suit-like garments are arranged in perfect symmetry from the front of the row to the back. One can view the uniforms as a series of multiple portraits, each representing a different stage in the artist's life, starting with junior or middle school and ending with military service. These junctures symbolise the development from infant to boy to young man and the complexities of such transitions.

The works induce a sense of nostalgia and illustrate the complex tensions between individuality and sameness. The uniforms appear to contain a hidden armature which creates a sense of the bodily shape inside the clothing. These works have been made in such a way that the upright stance or posture of the absent form implies a sense of the figure in attention or under inspection. The uniforms do not suggest movement; instead they hover like the hollow shells of individuals waiting for instruction. Presented on the rack in pristine condition, the works evoke sales in high end clothing stores. The cropping of the uniforms to only include the shirts and their headless forms serves as a precedent for my own practice. One can propose that Do-Ho Suh's uniforms represent the artist's struggle under an oppressive regime and the fight to maintain his identity and individuality whilst climbing his own 'hierarchical ladder' from boy to man. The singular presentation of each uniform, as if picked out as tokens of their groups, makes them unique as individual garments.

Do- Ho Suh's *High School Uni-form* (1997: Fig. 13) comprises three hundred precisely replicated Korean high school uniforms: there is no indication of uniqueness and the uniforms seem to disappear in their mass. Clinically aligned in a grid formation, it is almost

as if they have been stitched together side by side. Like *Uni-Form/s: Self-Portrait/s: My 39 Years* the bodiless monochromatic uniforms bring to mind a sense of a military formation awaiting orders or standing to attention. The dark shirts appear to be ghostly apparitions, floating side-by-side. The three hundred individual shirts are immaculate and precise, in perfect symmetry complemented by the grand scale of the installation. In comparison to *Uni-Form/s: Self-Portrait/s: My 39 Years* the scale and repetition of the uniform is far greater. The focus of *High School Uni-form* is multiplicity and sameness as opposed to portraits which allude to individuality. Perceiving the shirts as signifiers of individuals is difficult because of the vast numbers, and instead they appear as one large formation. There is nothing that marks or separates one item from another; it is a network of black shirts capped by white collars. Miwon Kwon (1998) describes the implications of *High School Uniform*:

For even as the installation encourages a critical reading of regimes that oppress difference to impose their power, it also registers the ambivalent desire and quiet pleasure involved in the submission of one's body and will to forces outside oneself. The abandonment of individual will can be a beautiful liberation of the soul, as many religions can attest. Meanwhile, the occasion for the gathering of Suh's 300 ghosts remains unclear - a funeral, a graduation, a quasi-military exercise? The fact that most Korean males have to trade in their high school uniforms for army ones upon taking up compulsory military service emphasises this ambiguity, locating *High School Uni-Form* at precisely the transitional juncture between boy and man, student and soldier, school and army. As such, the installation can also be seen as a marker for a particular moment in the life of a young man, defined not only by the repression of individuality but by homosocial camaraderie, friendship, togetherness, and affection that are all the more precious because they survive within the hidden crevices of the regimented, disciplinary organisation of state-controlled institutions.

Do-ho Suh's emphasis shifts from the allusion to multiple stages in *Uni-Form/s: Self-Portrait/s: My 39 Years* to a singular event, possibly a funeral, graduation, or quasi-military exercise that is suggested by *High School Uni-form*. The three hundred 'ghosts' are frozen at this point in time. Individuality is suppressed but a sense of brotherhood and belonging is evoked by the unity of the three hundred 'students' under the authority of 'regimented state-controlled institutions'.

With regards to the notion of disruption and disorder through movement such as jumping or leaping one can look to the French artist Yves Klein. Klein collaborated with photographer Harry Shunk to create *Leap into the Void* (Fig. 7). This well-known photomontage created substantial debate around the question of its authenticity. The image is authentic except for the removal of a tarpaulin which was used to catch the artist. The artist seems to float in mid-air. His leap is exaggerated by the white sky of the background. He is wearing a dark suit, the folds of which emphasize his movement as his hands are thrust outward. His body occupies a vertical position within the picture plane despite the fact that he has leapt out in an almost horizontal manner. This positioning of his body is peculiar as he looks upward into the open space – ‘into the void’. The space of the leaping artist is high above the ground. His body is rigid and his head is still, only disrupted by his outstretched hair. Another photographer that comes to mind in relation to my work is Latvian-born American portrait photographer Philippe Halsman. Halsman’s iconic photographs of famous people jumping and floating in mid air relate directly to my own practice. Philippe Halsman in (Fig. 8) is pictured in mid-air with Marilyn Monroe. It is one of the few photographs where he has included himself within the image. He seems ecstatic at the opportunity to be photographed with such a celebrity. Halsman has also photographed Salvador Dali jumping in his studio in *Dali Atomicus*, (Fig. 9). This iconic photograph captures the artist levitating whilst holding two paint brushes, three cats are suspended mid air as a stream of water flows past them. Every item of furniture in the studio hangs in the liminal space between floor and ceiling. In other works he has captured Harold Lloyd 1950 (Fig. 10), and Edward Steichen 1955 (Fig. 11). The cropping of these images and the choice of subject matter bears similarity to my own work, yet there is a stillness and sharpness to them that I have actively tried to avoid, particularly within the *Leap*

series. Within *Leap* I have refrained from giving the edges of the figures definition or sharpness as I wanted to emphasise a sense of the figures in motion.

The majority of the students I selected as sitters for *In line* and *Leap* are in Grade Eight, which is the entry level into high school after completing primary school. The Grade Eight boys are in a ‘cross-over’ period in their lives: they have just completed their junior school education where they would have worked their way up to the top of the first of many ‘hierarchical ladders’, but now they are placed at the bottom of a new hierarchy. This has been experienced by most of us in our lives at some stage or another. The ‘transitional juncture’ Kwon refers to is no different from the ‘cross-over’ experienced by adolescent teenagers at Kingswood College. It is at this point that adolescent students attempt to establish themselves within the hierarchy. The rules and regulations by which they are bound provide a framework for them to define themselves and the odd opportunity to be different. This ‘difference’ is not necessarily a negative attribute but could be viewed as a refusal of efforts by the schooling system to enforce conformity – a conformity that, if taken to extremes, would result in a society of ‘clones’.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this degree for a Masters in Fine Art my first visual interest derived from dress code transgressions which I became aware of as a stooge. This visual transgression was the altered arrangement of students' ties at Kingswood College. I could not understand why students so adamantly rejected and, in some cases, damaged this garment. As I contemplated the possibilities of this dilemma, I realised that it held the potential to develop into a body of work. I became obsessed with looking and paying particular attention to the way in which the school uniform at Kingswood College became a site for rebellion on a daily basis. My 'gaze,' so to speak, was driven not only by a desire to understand the phenomenon behind such transgressions, but in essence to try and incorporate this into my art practice. What I did not initially realise is the complex interplay between 'transgression and conformity' and 'discipline and punish'. I did not expect to unravel such a complex tension around the enforcement of stringent dress codes to inform a 'desired standard of behaviour' that exists in many schools in South Africa. Whilst engaging and reflecting on this process I questioned what I have described as a 'double life'. My role as once a student in a school regime shifted to that of an authority figure embedded in a system I once used to challenge. My interrogations of the boarding school as a theme for both my practical and theoretical master's submission prompted a reflexive approach to my personal experience within educational institutions. I found myself recalling many of my own memories of school in the effort to gain understanding as to what students at Kingswood might be experiencing. In many ways there is not much that has changed since my education in Zimbabwe, yet the opportunity to re-live school life in a boarding house as a stooge gave me the chance to view the boarding school establishment from a different perspective.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the process of gathering source material and visualising my exhibition entailed the utilisation of my power over the students. I made use of my influence as a hierarchical figure in the effort to examine, comprehend and comment on that which I was ‘seeing’. My creative practice became my priority. In an attempt to capture the ‘perfect’ photographic image or locate the most interesting transgression, I frequently found myself exploiting the power I held as a figure of authority. Through the process of self reflection I have developed an awareness of the ways in which I may have used my position to acquire the material I desired.

The intricate hierarchies which I have examined specifically at Kingswood College are an example of a specific kind of power dynamic which is found in schools all over Southern Africa. The hierarchies provide a constant method of maintaining discipline as Foucault (1975:187) explains:

Disciplinary power, on the other hand, is exercised through its invisibility; at the same time it imposes on those whom its subjects a principle of compulsory visibility. In discipline, it is the subjects who have to be seen. Their visibility assures the hold of the power that is exercised over them. It is the fact of being constantly seen, of being able always to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection.

These hierarchies, which I compare to the Panopticon prison design by Jeremy Bentham, form part of a pyramid structure in formation, but can also be used in understanding power structures within society. The hierarchy pyramid in (Fig 2.) illustrates the extent of the ‘networked gaze’ which functions at Kingswood College. The student at Kingswood College is under permanent surveillance accomplished by numerous regulating bodies. The model of the Panopticon prison acts as a metaphor for many state-governed towns, cities and countries.

Foucault (1975:223) describes the underlying power of panopticon models:

Although the universal juridicism of modern society seems to fix limits on the exercise of power, its universally widespread panopticism enables it to operate,

on the underside of the law, a machinery that is both immense and minute, which supports, reinforces, multiplies the asymmetry of power and undermines the limits that are traced around the law.

As members of these 'macro-Panopticons' individuals are subjected to the ideals, beliefs and laws governed by hierarchies. It is these 'states' that we occupy and often un-consciously become 'prisoners' of. The subtle and often playful gestures which Kingswood College students stage as rebellions within their confined existence reveals the significance of maintaining individuality in controlled institutions.

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