

The Multiple Meanings of Place: Deep Mapping Welvanpas from an Insider-outsider's Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Within the context of Welvanpas, the Retief family farm, I explore the multiplicity of meanings that places hold. Welvanpas is a small wine farm within the Boverlei region of the Western Cape that has been within my family, the Retiefs, for generations. Using deep mapping as a creative method, I explore Welvanpas's rich historical depth – the resonance of layers of history inscribing it with meanings. Through various printmaking techniques, multiple facets of its history (physical, archival, oral) are mapped in relation to one another. This Fine Art practice-based research project argues that this method of deep mapping uncovers the density of meanings that places hold. Drawing from auto-ethnographic methods, I unpack how deep mapping draws together fragments of history, as well as how the process is further layered with meaning by my personal perception and experiences. Two case studies, the artworks of Ighsaan Adams and William Kentridge, are used to contextualise the creative process. Ultimately the creative output is left open-ended so that viewers may continue the process by mapping out their own meanings.

Binne die konteks van Welvanpas, die Retief-familieplaas, ondersoek ek die veelvoudige betekenis wat plekke besit. Welvanpas is 'n klein wynplaas in die Bovlei-area van die Wes-Kaap wat al geslagte lank in my familie se besit is. Aan die hand van 'diep kartering' (*deep mapping*) as metode, ondersoek ek Welvanpas se ryk historiese diepte – die resonansie van lae van geskiedenis wat 'n verskeidenheid van betekenis daaraan verleen. Die aanwending van verskeie drukkunste tegnieke stel veelvuldige fasette van die plaas se geskiedenis (fisiek, argivaal, mondelings) in verband met mekaar. Met hierdie Skone Kunste prakties-gebaseerde navorsingsprojek argumenteer ek dat die diepkarteringmetode die digtheid van betekenis wat plekke dra, uitlig. Deur gebruik te maak van outoetnografiese metodes, ondersoek ek hoe diep kartering verskeie fragmente van die geskiedenis saamtrek, asook hoedat my persepsie en ervaringe verdere lae van betekenis inbring. Twee gevallestudies, die kunswerke van Ighsaan Adams en William Kentridge, word gebruik om die kreatiewe proses te kontekstualiseer. Uiteindelik bly die kreatiewe uitset onafgehandel sodat die kyker daaraan kan voortbou deur hul eie betekenis te karteer.

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 references. This thesis is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for Master of Fine Art at Rhodes University. I declare that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at another university.



Daniel Retief

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INTRODUCTION

Mapping Welvanpas

There is the clarity of hindsight, but what I want to track down is more than this. I want to see whether the starting principles of the piece hold. Can the making, the process itself, be a way of arriving at an understanding [...]?

William Kentridge – *Thirty Thoughts on The Head & the Load* (2018)

Places hold much deeper history than we often realise. When I visited Ouma, my grandmother Andrenette, in January 2024, I learnt a great deal about our Retief family farm, Welvanpas. It was the first time I visited Ouma on my own (without other family members). We regularly sat in the living room for tea, and she would tell me volumes of stories. My family has a rich history intertwined with Welvanpas. The farm has been within the Retief family for generations and its old stories have been passed down over many years. In many ways, Welvanpas forms the centre of our family history, the soil within which we are rooted. As my great aunt, Tannie Helene, expressed within our book of family stories (*The Chronicles of Krakeelhoek*), “[...] it is the place that makes the story of my forebears come alive [...]” (Retief-Lombard, 2008: 18). Ouma has lived the greatest part of her life on Welvanpas and knows a wealth of stories. To her, everything on the farm has a past and a story to tell. I struggled to keep track of all her stories and could not follow everything. I realised that Welvanpas held much more history than the few family stories I was familiar with. I was overwhelmed with the density of its meanings.

I soon realised that I was an insider-outsider to Welvanpas’s deep history. Someone who lacks a deep understanding of the area and the experience of living there, but not completely at a distance that comes with being an outsider (Kydd-Williams, 2019: 249). This practice-based research stems from my interest in the complexly layered and nuanced meanings that the Retief family farm holds for me. While I have never physically lived on Welvanpas, I visit about twice a year and am very familiar with the farm. I have been given the family name, Daniel Retief, and thus I feel that Welvanpas forms a part of who I am. As a member of my family, I also feel that I form a part of Welvanpas.

I make sense of Welvanpas’s past by constantly navigating between the snippets of stories told by family members and glimpses of its past (old buildings and heirlooms) I encounter while wandering around on the farm. In this process, I attempt to map my own relation to the farm

and its deep history. The task of mapping, according to the critical cartographer Jeremy Crampton (2010: 12), can be broadly understood as an activity of finding one's way within one's environment. This research project unpacks my process of finding my way by mapping my own story of Welvanpas and its deep history.

Using Welvanpas as a research locus, this practice-based research project aims to explore strategies of mapping the historical depth of a place from an insider-outsider perspective. Deep mapping is used as a creative method of exploring Welvanpas's rich historical depth – a resonance of layers of history inscribing it with meanings (Ethington and Toyosawa, 2015: 75). Within the context of Welvanpas, this project questions how the deep mapping process can uncover the density of meanings places hold. The creative output from my deep mapping process culminates in an exhibition titled *Familie spore*. This exhibition maps the historical depth of Welvanpas and aims to express its complexity of meanings.

A place contains many dimensions that give it meaning (Bodenhamer, 2015; Springett, 2019; Reitz, 2022). This research project frames places as spaces which hold meaning, entailing their physical environment, our experience thereof, and their history (Bodenhamer, 2015: 15; Reitz, 2022: 234). Following Ethington and Toyosawa (2015), places are explored as spaces shaped by historical depth. Mapping my present-day encounter with Welvanpas involves mapping “a topography of *inscribed places*”, as Ethington and Toyosawa (2015: 75) describe it. Welvanpas contains many layers of meaning, as a small wine farm situated within the Bovelei region of Wellington, South Africa – a community of old family farms. The area is rich with stories, and the older families are all deeply interconnected through family ties and shared history. Narratives of farm owners and farm workers intertwine and juxtapose. Their histories are complexly layered, with some voices more audible than others and some tales lost in time. My research project maps the topography of meanings that weave through the physical geography of the area, the archives of old buildings, photographs and books, as well as through family stories.

Familie spore, the title of my exhibition, refers to the many facets of Welvanpas's past. It is Afrikaans, which is my family's home language¹ (several words within this paper are also Afrikaans, including the titles of my artworks). The exhibition title plays with the ambiguity of the word '*spore*' and can either mean 'family tracks', 'family traces', or 'family footsteps'.

¹ The majority of my immediate family speaks Afrikaans. Some of the members of my broader family, such as Tannie Helene, also speak English. A medley of Afrikaans and English names and phrases thus appear throughout this project.

It references how I map the ‘pathways’ of my family history as it has inscribed Welvanpas with layers of meaning. These may be physical *tracks* on the farm, *traces* such as heirlooms or photographs, or the metaphorical *footsteps* of people’s legacy. My creative practice mainly uses printmaking as a medium since it lends itself to layering and working with traces.²

In my practice, I draw from the concept of deep mapping since it entails a multilayered process which incorporates several factors – geographical and historical (Bodenhamer et al., 2015; Roberts, 2016; Springett, 2019; Reitz, 2022). Deep mapping visualises how these factors conflate, intersect, and contradict, creating a conversation from which new insights can be drawn (D. J. Bodenhamer et al., 2015). Understood broadly, maps are platforms through which relations are drawn between various elements of any sort of topography (Ethington and Toyosawa, 2015: 73). Deep mapping stresses the interpretive nature of maps – as I will argue in Chapter One – by searching for creative strategies to represent places (Bodenhamer et al., 2015; Springett, 2019; Reitz, 2022). It delves into the history and character of places (Springett, 2019), creating a conversation on the many meanings that places may hold (Bodenhamer, 2015).

Deep mapping is never static, but a continuous process that develops along with the multiple meanings of places, a concept I elaborate on in Chapter Three (Roberts, 2016; Humphris et al., 2021). Deep mapping entails a shift from an approach to maps as representations to an approach situated in mapping practice (Roberts, 2016: 3). While Bodenhamer et al. (2015) may use the term ‘deep map’ to refer to a finished product, I use the term ‘deep mapping’ to describe a performative engagement with the environment (Springett, 2019; Humphris et al., 2021; Reitz, 2022). In my creative practice, deep mapping is the process by which I draw together my experiences of Welvanpas to map my version of its stories. Deep mapping acts as a method, platform, and product of my project. Focussed on the process of working (Roberts, 2016; Humphris et al., 2021; Reitz, 2022), the concept of deep mapping suits my practice-based study, which explores the process of my creative practice. Its approach leads the focus away from the functioning of creative output as representational devices, to the dynamics of the creative process (Reitz, 2022: 326-327).

As practice-based research, my creative output acts as the research vehicle from which new knowledge is generated (Savin-Baden and Wimpenny, 2014; Skains, 2018). In addition, this

² Printmaking entails printing images from a matrix (mainly) onto paper. Inherently prints are traces of the original matrix from which they were printed.

thesis flows from the same process as an exegesis that accompanies the exhibition. The thesis maps my process of thinking through my creative practice and discusses what I have learnt from it. It aims to provide insight into the creative process of mapping historical depth, unpacking how it uncovers the multiplicity of meanings that a place holds. It unpacks how multiple stories can intersect with a place, exploring how these stories connect, diverge, and contradict within my artworks. The thesis also explores the impact that the perspective of the mapper, as insider-outsider, has on the mapping process. Two case studies that resonate with the creative project also form part of this research project – the work of South African artists Igshaan Adams and William Kentridge.

The two case studies will contextualise my creative practice within the greater artistic domain. They will be analysed in comparison to my artworks as their approach, methods, and techniques serve as a springboard for my own creative practice. This thesis will particularly focus on Adams's *Desire Lines* (2022) body of work, which has been exhibited at the Art Institute of Chicago (AIC). It will also focus on Kentridge's stage production *The Head & the Load* (2018), which was created in collaboration with Phillip Miller, Thuthuka Sibisi, and Gregory Maqoma. I will mainly focus on the associated artworks created by Kentridge for this production. Both artists draw together traces within the environment, their community, or archives to map a sense of historical depth.

Adams's *Desire Lines* explores the history of his childhood community, Bonteheuwel (a township within the Cape Flats area of Cape Town, South Africa), through traces within the environment (AIC, 2022b). Specifically, he maps tracks, referred to as 'desire lines', which cut through the open fields surrounding Bonteheuwel (AIC, 2022b). These tracks reflect individuals who have followed their aspirations or desires to forge their own pathways in defiance of set boundaries³ – hence the name 'desire lines' (Malik, 2022; AIC, 2022b).

Kentridge's stage production *The Head & the Load* explores the neglected role of Africans during the First World War (Maltz-Leca, 2018; Kentridge Studio, 2018). The title borrows from the Ghanaian proverb "the head and the load are the troubles of the neck" and refers to the burden that African people had to carry (The Centre for the Less Good Idea, 2023: 1h:5min:9sec): the literal load of military equipment they had to carry as porters, as well as the

³ Bonteheuwel was established in the 1960s as a coloured township as part of the apartheid regime's segregation laws, which forcibly divided communities according to race (AIC, 2022b). Coloured people were ranked as second-class citizens who were considered neither white (Caucasian), first-class citizens, nor black (African), lower-class citizens.

burden of history that rested on their shoulders (The Centre for the Less Good Idea, 2023: 1h:5min:9sec). Performed along the long spine of New York's Park Avenue Armory Drill Hall, *The Head & the Load* presents the painful march of history (Maltz-Leca, 2018; Krauss, 2019). The production consists of layers of fragments of projected shadow backgrounds, noises, music, and dances thrown together across the hall's panoramic stage (McCoy, 2019; Krauss, 2019; Kentridge, 2020). *The Head & the Load* tracks the traces of a scrambled and unrecognised history by drawing connections across fragments of splintered memory (Maltz-Leca, 2018; Kentridge Studio, 2018). As with Kentridge's work, the imperfections of memory, along with emotional experience, and the unavoidable unknown, have their place within my creative process (Skains, 2018; Humphris et al., 2021).

My personal influence on the creative process plays a significant role in this project. Humphris et al. (2021) point out that personal influence plays a large part in the deep mapping process. The artist as mapper and researcher has particular interests within the project and influences it through their approach and choices (Humphris et al., 2021). In the case of an insider-outsider, hidden motives and false perceptions play a role (Kydd-Williams, 2019). There are also many things that one may be unaware of or do not know (Humphris et al., 2021). I elaborate on this point in Chapter Two. This project does not view this subjective position as a negative aspect but rather follows the argument of Humphris et al. (2021: 385) that it provides a productive entry point into connecting with people's life experiences.

Accounting for this personal perspective that informs the research, this project draws from autoethnographic methods and techniques (Skains, 2018). Autoethnography is the study of one's personal experience to gain insight into broader cultural experiences (Skains, 2018: 88). This approach enables a greater insight into the nature of places to be extrapolated from my personal creative explorations. Autoethnography aids in being reflexive of my creation process, which involves cycling through ideas, tangibly working with printmaking materials, experimenting and discovering new avenues, and ultimately stepping back and reviewing what has been created (Skains, 2018). Notes are made while working in the studio or when reflecting on created artworks. This technique illuminates the ideas that informed the work and what insights were gained and challenges were encountered in the process (Skains, 2018). Journaling is a crucial technique used when visiting Welvanpas, as I record my encounters, conversations, and the texture of my experiences (Skains, 2018; Humphris et al., 2021). Draft materials and process work from the studio are kept as insights into the creative process (Skains, 2018). Lastly, critical reflexivity is required to make sense of the creative process without being

distracted by the experience of the moment (Skains, 2018: 88). Analysis of the works post-creation will be conducted within this thesis in relation to the notes, journal entries, and process work to set out the mapping process.

This thesis unpacks the creative output along the themes of historical depth, mapping, and place. These themes also form the spine of the thesis's structure. The first chapter will discuss the concept of historical depth. The study will be contextualised by unpacking the concept of historical depth in relation to Welvanpas. Deep mapping is then introduced as a method of exploring this historical depth. Strategies of deep mapping historical depth will then be investigated within the context of my creative practice. Looking at my practice in relation to case studies, this chapter aims to uncover how places may hold a rich historical depth.

The second chapter focuses on the dynamics of the deep mapping process. Using my position as an insider-outsider, this chapter will explore how perception and experience affect the deep mapping process. It will foreground how the mapper's influence on the process impacts a place's sense of historical depth. Within the last chapter, the findings of the previous chapters are brought together to explore the multiple meanings held by Welvanpas. This chapter explores how people relate to places and continually forge new meanings from them. Reflecting on my creative practice, the chapter will investigate the interaction between the mapping process and Welvanpas. The research evidences that places, such as Welvanpas, are nuanced and complexly layered with a density of meanings.

CHAPTER ONE

Deep Mapping Historical Depth

Entering the farmyard at Welvanpas, one is greeted by a host of old Cape Dutch⁴ buildings sitting firmly in the shade of ageing oak trees (figure 1.1). With their thatched roofs and whitewashed stucco walls, they recall a Dutch heritage stemming from the time of the VOC (Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie, the Dutch East India Company)⁵ at the Cape (Coetzer, 2003). One immediately gets a sense of a deeply rooted history.

Following the gravel road, one is led up the hill to where the old farmhouse sits imposingly, its gable towering through the trees. Majestically, it stands against the backdrop of the rugged Cape Fold Mountains, a testament to the Retief family's roots. Walking up to the house, three flights of stairs ascend to its large wooden front door underneath a towering gable with a stucco façade. The name Daniel Retief, the house's first owner, is inscribed on the gable along with the year the house was completed – 1817. With Daniel Retief being a family name, the house upholds our family's roots and lineage. As generation after generation of the Retief family has lived within the old house, it is as if the gable marks the point of origin from which we all descend.

In this chapter, I discuss the notion of a linear descending history, in contrast to William Kentridge's notion of history as converging and expanding from a place (Mahindra Humanities Centre, 2020). This chapter explores strategies of mapping historical depth, exploring these strategies in relation to Welvanpas. It begins by first laying out the historical context of Welvanpas. I then unpack the concept of deep mapping and how it can be used as a method for exploring historical depth. The concept of deep mapping is then applied to my practice, also drawing parallels to my two case studies – Igshaan Adams and William Kentridge.

⁴ Cape Dutch is a vernacular style of architecture which developed roughly during the period of Dutch occupation of the Cape Colony, today known as South Africa (Coetzer, 2003). While the style is mainly seen as an adaptation of a Dutch building style, it is also influenced by other European as well as Malay styles (Coetzer, 2003).

⁵ The VOC was a Dutch trading company which traded Asian goods, especially spices, in Europe (Schutte, 2017b). The company dominated the Asian trade route from around 1650 for an entire century (Schutte, 2017b: 20; 29). At its height it was a powerful multinational corporation with several trade posts across Asia (Schutte, 2017b). The VOC used Cape Town as a refreshment station from 1652 (Schutte, 2017a). Through their colonial enterprises, this developed into the Cape Colony, which they occupied and governed until 1795 (Schutte, 2017a).



Figure 1.1: The old farmhouse on Welvanpas, as seen from the bottom of the farmyard. Photographed in September 2024. Photo: Daniel Retief.

1.1 Convergence and Expansion: The Historical Depth of Welvanpas

Welvanpas holds deep sentimental value within my family as the place where our history is rooted. Being passed down from father to son over several generations, its history is deeply intertwined with the patrilineal line of my family. *The Chronicles of Krakeelhoek* (2008), our book of family stories, narrates its history in chapters following the male line of the family. This extensive book, written by Tannie Helene Retief-Lombard, my great aunt, covers the entire lifespan of the farm, tracing its history to the family's first connection to the farm. She begins with a chapter on François Retif,⁶ the progenitor of the Retief family within South Africa, and his connection to the farm Krakeelhoek, as Welvanpas was formerly known (2008: 15-22). From these roots, Tannie Helene traces the branches of our family tree. With each

⁶ François spelled his surname according to the French spelling – Retif. While specific reasons are unclear, circumstances within the Dutch colony led the family to later adopt the Dutch spelling – Retief.

chapter dealing with a proceeding generation, the history of Welvanpas is traced to its current existence as our family home.

François Retif was a French Huguenot who came to South Africa in 1688 through the VOC. He settled as a free burger⁷ within the VOC's Cape Colony in South Africa. His father-in-law, Pierre Mouij, was the first European person to own the land that became Welvanpas,⁸ and thus the first Retief connection to the farm was made. The farm was subsequently sold and only acquired by François' grandson, Jacobus Retief, in (circa) 1780.⁹ Jacobus passed the farm down to his son Daniel, who became the first Daniel Retief to own Welvanpas. The farm has remained within the family ever since. With Daniel Retief being a family name, the farm has been passed down to a Daniel Retief for five consecutive generations (Retief-Lombard, 2008: 18; 21; 39). My uncle, Oom Dan (Daniel), currently farms on Welvanpas and lives there with his family. Ouma (my grandmother) also lives on the farm and stays in the old farmhouse.

Following generation upon generation, Welvanpas's history can be laid out linearly. Like the farmhouse with its gable, Welvanpas seems to be inscribed with a point of origin which seems to tower over us as we stand small within the present. But history does not follow a neat chronological line leading us to the present (Schutte, 2017a; Mahindra Humanities Centre, 2020). As historian Gerrit Schutte (2017a: 471) argues, history lives forth in fragments, in our memories and culture, and objects, places, and archives. History is not a clear picture, but rather a subjective interpretation coloured by our personality, social norms, and beliefs (Schutte, 2017a).

William Kentridge, who regularly works with the theme of history within his work, likewise argues that history is fragmented. For Kentridge, neither memory nor the landscape is a reliable witness (Mahindra Humanities Centre, 2020). During his third lecture of the series *Six Drawing Lessons*,¹⁰ presented at the Mahindra Humanities Centre (MHC), he explains that as memory fades over time, likewise does the landscape alter and change, erasing the history that took place (30:59-33:00).

⁷ The VOC allowed European immigrants to settle within the Cape Colony as free burghers, who mainly became farmers selling their products to the VOC's refreshment station (Schutte, 2017a).

⁸ While undoubtably there were other people who lived on the land before Pierre Mouji, he is the first European to own the land as a farm under the VOC (Retief-Lombard, 2008).

⁹ Often the title deeds to farms were provided much later than the time at which the farms were acquired and occupied (Retief-Lombard, 2008).

¹⁰ *Vertical Thinking – A Johannesburg Biography* is the third lecture of a series of six lectures, *Six Drawing Lessons*, which was presented as the 2012 Charles Eliot Norton Lectures at the Mahindra Humanities Centre, Harvard University.

For Kentridge, places are not the product of a neatly ordered chronological history but are rather points of convergence and expansion of history. Similar to Michel Foucault's (1977) concept of genealogy, Kentridge views history as contingent, the product of various factors meeting by chance. Like Foucault (1972), Kentridge retraces the past by reconstructing various fragments of events that have converged to shape the present. Looking at an early map of Johannesburg as an example, Kentridge notes the geological features on the map. The geology of the area has developed over hundreds of years as several factors played out. Kentridge also notes the urban features, human construction, and mining activities that followed the discovery of gold. All these factors have shaped the modern-day city. Along with these features, Kentridge also points out town planning on the map. These features are not part of the factors that have shaped the city, but rather a vision of what the city might become. They expand the city through a dream of how it can develop. Places thus find themselves at the intersection of histories, as factors converge to shape places, and our visions expand from them new trajectories (MHC, 2020: 18:47-26:40).

Within my practice, I also attempt to map Welvanpas as a place of convergence and expansion, rather than a product of a linearly developing history. I draw together many facets of Welvanpas's past,¹¹ looking at the physical environment, archives, and the stories of people. As the title of my exhibition, *Familie Spore*, indicates, I map out the *spore* of Welvanpas, the traces, tracks, and footsteps of its past. I also expand on Welvanpas's past by mapping out my own story. As argued by Ingold (2000), the activity of mapping itself becomes a form of telling a story of one's journey – an idea I further unpack in chapter three. Through the mapping process, invariably influenced by my insider-outsider position (Humphris et al., 2021), I map out my own story of Welvanpas's past.

In telling this story, I attempt to foreground the nuanced nature of history, challenging the idea of a linear progression. The dominant narrative among Afrikaner nationalists during apartheid was that the Dutch colonial history of South Africa directly contributed to the formation of the Afrikaner nation and to the civilisation of the African continent (Schutte, 2017a). Afrikaners are Afrikaans-speaking Caucasians seen as the descendants of the free burghers. Especially those Afrikaners descending from French Huguenots are seen as inheritors of a great history, as the Huguenots were seen as salt-of-the-earth people contributing to the building of a great nation (Schutte, 2017a: 470). The sentiment of such arguments is still prevalent today. These

¹¹ I distinguish between 'history' and 'the past', seeing 'the past' as events that have previously occurred versus history as the specific versions of those events that have been recalled and/or recorded.

narratives tend to ignore or gloss over many other facets and versions of history, such as the role of the Khoikhoi or slaves (Schutte, 2017a). Like Schutte's (2017a: 473) position, my research project is consciously positioned uncomfortably with such arguments and acknowledges that the past is loaded and multifaceted.

There is more than one way to view the past, and several stories form part of Welvanpas's past. Places hold meaning through the layers of various stories (Bodenhamer, 2015; Spissu, 2015; Humphris et al., 2021). As Bodenhamer (2015: 9) explains, places are inscribed with meaning through the stories of events that have shaped them. In the case of Welvanpas, the farm forms part of the Bovlei community, an entire network of old families that have farmed there for generations.

The Bovlei families share family bonds as well as a common history, making all their stories intimately intertwined. This includes families of farm owners as well as farm workers. Some of the farm worker families, such as the Cedras and Davids families of Welvanpas, have lived in the Bovlei for generations, descending from slaves from West Africa or Asia (Retief-Lombard, 2008).¹² The VOC brought slaves from their trading posts further East to the Cape Colony, mainly to meet the colony's labour demand (Schutte, 2017a). Many indigenous peoples also served as labourers (Schutte, 2017a). The Khoikhoi peoples¹³ have lived within the area long before European settlers arrived, or the VOC colonised the land (Hattingh, 2017). These clans inhabited the area and were forced off their land as the free burghers expanded the borders of the Cape Colony (Schutte, 2017a). As discussed in the following chapter, there are several unfilled gaps within my story, gaps of histories that I am unfamiliar with or that have been lost. Some of the more painful parts of the past are spectres that haunt the present and disrupt one's sense of official history (Jonker and Till, 2009). All these stories converge to shape Welvanpas and its sense of historical depth.

¹² The old farm worker families, mainly descended from slaves, in the Bovlei were the Faraa, Cedras, Davids, Julies, Morkel, Cupido, and Sameuls families (Retief-Lombard, 2008: 259).

¹³ Khoikhoi is a collective name created to group various clans of nomadic herders who lived mainly along the coast of South Africa (Hattingh, 2017). Clans such as the Goringhaicona, Corachouqua, Goringhaiqua, and Gorachouqua lived around the Cape peninsula area (Hattingh, 2017). While these clans did not see themselves as part of a unified people, I use the term Khoikhoi to refer to how they were historically grouped.

1.2 Situating Deep Mapping

Places are multifaceted in nature and shaped by a multitude of converging factors. For scholars such as David Bodenhamer (2015), Edward Casey (2005), Susan Maher (2014), Talitta Reitz (2022), and Selina Springett (2019), deep mapping serves as a method to explore this multifaceted nature of places. Deep mapping arose amid the development of critical cartography as a shift towards a personal investigation of place (Crampton, 2010; Reitz, 2022). Gaining academic attention during the 1990s, critical cartography as a discipline foregrounded the constructed nature of maps (Crampton, 2010; Reitz, 2022). The discipline critically reflects on cartographic maps and the way they are created (Crampton, 2010; Reitz, 2022). Cartography is purely focused on precision and accuracy in representing space: the physical, geographic features of the world (Crampton, 2010; Harley, 2011; Reitz, 2022). It presents the task of map-making as an impartial process of categorising and abstracting the world into spatial projections (Harley, 2011). In contrast, deep mapping developed to feature the personal, objective experiences of places (Bodenhamer, 2015; Spissu, 2015; Humphris et al., 2021; Reitz, 2022). As Maher (2014: 52) argues: “The deep map exists to support the many off-grid or ambiguously gridded realities.”

Deep mapping investigates places as points of convergence and expansion. It draws together the many fragments that converge to shape a place. As Roberts (2016) points out, it entails as much a mapping of the physical features on the surface of a place as an archaeological digging into the many layers of its past. It further expands from these layers a personal story of the meaning that the place holds. Within his manifesto on deep mapping, Clifford McLucas (2000: n.p.) states: “Deep maps will not seek the authority and objectivity of conventional cartography. They will be politicized, passionate, and partisan. They will involve negotiation and contestation over what is represented and how.”

1.3 The Depth within Deep Mapping

The field of deep mapping is a loose and diverse constellation of academic genres, and scholars, artists, and mapmakers approach it from different disciplines. One can observe this simply by the different understandings they have of what ‘deep’ within deep mapping entails. For Denis Wood (2015), depth implies a palimpsest view of the layers of networks (from the streetlights above to the waterlines below) that make up a place. For others, depth entails more than a

spatial depth, but also a historical depth (Maher, 2014; Bodenhamer et al., 2015; Ethington and Toyosawa, 2015).

Ethington and Toyosawa (2015: 96) state that “The metaphor of ‘depth’ speaks to the length of time that has passed since the earliest detectable human (or even non-human) actions inscribed into a particular landscape.” For Ethington and Toyosawa (2015), as for Pearson and Shanks (2001), historical depth is an accumulation of layers of traces inscribed with meaning. These scholars view places as being layered with traces that hold meaning from their past (Pearson and Shanks, 2001; Ethington and Toyosawa, 2015). On the other hand, Bodenhamer (2015) and Harris (2015) frame historical depth as the accrual of stories. They break the historical depth of places down into sequences of spatial stories (Bodenhamer, 2015; Harris, 2015). My practice-based research explores the tensions between these different approaches as they elaborate on the multiple ways in which places hold historical depth.

In the most general sense, the depth in deep mapping refers perhaps to Reitz’s (2022: 340) explication of the term as a depth of qualitative data, and depth in the use of multilayered and multimodal forms of representation. This reflects deep mapping’s roots as it mainly lies in psychogeography and ethnography’s embodied and performative approach, and the approach of juxtaposing and layering of content in geography and archaeology (Harris, 2015: 31; Roberts, 2016: 2-3). I return briefly to this point in Chapter Two. While there are an endless number of ways to approach deep mapping, Roberts (2016: 5) explains that the field is roughly united by a couple of common approaches, some of which are given precedence in my practice.

1.4 Practical Approaches to Deep Mapping

Deep mapping is polyvocal and can dive into the depth of places by layering and interweaving multiple voices (Humphris et al., 2021; Reitz, 2022). Its polyvocal nature brings forth multiple perspectives that illuminate the multiple meanings that places hold (Spissu, 2015; Bodenhamer, 2015; Humphris et al., 2021). I explore Welvanpas’s historical depth through several stories told by various people. Michel de Certeau (1984: 116) describes stories as “organised walks”, metaphorical ways to map journeys through places. Stories bring together the geography and history of places as they weave through space and across time (Bodenhamer et al., 2015). As a point of departure, our Retief book of family stories, *The Chronicles of Krakeelhoek*, forms the foundations for my project. The book narrates the history of Welvanpas by walking through

the family stories of people, places, and events or incidents on the farm (Retief-Lombard, 2008). By relating the book's narrative to the stories I hear, I map over and through its narrative.

Through informal conversations with Ouma, I gained a different perspective on Welvanpas's past. Unlike Tannie Helene, who wrote the book of family stories, Ouma did not grow up on Welvanpas. She grew up on Vrugbaar, a neighbouring farm in the Boverlei, which her family had also owned for generations. She moved to Welvanpas only after marrying my grandfather. While Tannie Helene has gone to great lengths to gather, record, and collate the original versions of the family stories, Ouma has a wealth of personal knowledge of the area and its people and history. As she starts telling, her stories jump from one event to another and organically weave their way across time and space.

Ouma's stories take different, and sometimes unfamiliar, paths and tracks. Reitz (2022: 347) states that deep mapping does not attempt to provide an absolute picture, but "focuses on the common, untold, unnoticed stories." Through conversations, Ouma guided me through Welvanpas. Her stories provide different avenues through which to delve into the historical depth of Welvanpas, bringing a different perspective than the narrative told by Tannie Helene.

Some of Ouma's stories I have heard before in different versions from other members of my family. In my practice, I attempt to plot these various voices in relation to one another. By layering a variety of stories, scholars argue that deep mapping breaks away from single overarching narratives to present multifaceted views of places (Harris, 2015; Spissu, 2015; Humphris et al., 2021). In my practice, I draw together the various fragments of stories I can find to express the multifaceted nature of Welvanpas. These fragments are mapped in relation to one another by harnessing printmaking as the primary medium.

Printmaking enables me to integrate and layer materials. I use collagraph printing¹⁴ to print physical impressions of objects, allowing the physical traces of items to be incorporated into the artworks. This technique is used, for example, to incorporate doilies in some of the prints as traces of the home environment. As traditional items within my family, doilies used to be common in homes and they recall a part of my family's cultural heritage. They were produced by women and speak of their labour and leisure activities. Using chine collé,¹⁵ I further incorporate photographs and maps of the farm. I also integrate text along with the images,

¹⁴ Collagraph is a printmaking technique whereby found objects are used as a matrix. The relief of the objects is used to imprint an impression onto paper.

¹⁵ Chine collé is a technique used in conjunction with printmaking whereby a thin, semi-transparent layer of paper is pasted over the printed area.

bringing people's words into the work. In this manner, I map the fragments of people's stories in relation to the physical environment, family archives, and heirlooms.

1.4.1 Montaging Stories

My work *Kanetfontein* (figure 1.2), for example, makes use of montage to combine a jumble of fragments of names and phrases. Spissu (2015: 229) argues that a multifaceted perspective of a place can be mapped through the technique of montage: the collaging of snippets of different people's stories. *Kanetfontein* features a montage of scattered fragments of information I could find related to the farm known as Kanetfontein.

Kanetfontein is a small farm that lies directly next to Welvanpas. It can easily be accessed from Welvanpas via a pathway through a grove of trees. Some of the farm's previous owners have been close family friends and their stories intertwine with Welvanpas, with some having been passed down for generations. My work montages fragments of these stories gathered from snippets of conversations, maps, and our book of family stories. Similar to Kentridge's *Drawing for the Head & the Load (Tondo 1)* (2018) (figure 1.3), my work *Kanetfontein* uses a tondo structure¹⁶ to draw together fragments of information.

Drawing for the Head & the Load (Tondo 1) (2018) features a circular composition. In the centre is a collage of fragments of scattered material like the centre of an explosion. Revolving around this is a sequence of images passing through an open grassland. The open field is a recurring background within *The Head & the Load* and perhaps refers to the open landscape through which African porters had to march during the First World War.¹⁷ Its vastness may also reference the lack of evidence of their contribution to the war. Inserted into this landscape is a portrait of Frantz Fanon (whose ideas informed the piece), loudspeakers, a red flag, as well as other items related to the war (Maltz-Leca, 2018). The pieces revolve around the central explosion, like shards that were scattered by the destruction of warfare. Kentridge montages these disparate pieces of information to give voice to the unrecognised deeds of African people (Kentridge Studio, 2018). His tondo becomes a point of convergence and expansion, where the events and forces of history clash and disperse.

¹⁶ A tondo is a circular artwork.

¹⁷ During the First World War African people were mainly recruited as porters, who had to carry military equipment on foot across vast distances (Olusoga, 2020: 281).

Kanetfontein (figure 1.2), on the other hand, features a doily as the centre point around which other elements revolve. Shards of a topographic map of the Kanetfontein farm and its surrounding area sit in the middle of the doily. Crochet material spreads from this centre, creating a network of interconnecting threads, reminiscent of the topographic lines on a map. As the threads spread from the centre, they draw the map of Kanetfontein in relation to various other bits of information: bits of stories of artists (Allerley Glossop, Gregoire Boonzaier, and Ruth Prowse) who have lived on Kanetfontein, and of events that have occurred there. Some passing remarks made by Ouma and Oom Dan about the current state of the farm are also included. By montaging the words of different people, the layers of various meanings attributed to the place are provided (Spissu, 2015). The montage maps out a network of facets part of Kanetfontein.

Like Kentridge's *Drawing for The Head & the Load (Tondo 1)*, *Kanetfontein* maps out a fragmented history (Goodman Gallery, 2018). Taking from Kentridge's drawing, *Kanetfontein* also features torn pieces at its centre. I chine colléd the topographic map of the Kanetfontein farm onto my print to represent the physical place. The map provided an aerial view of the farm in relation to its surrounding area. My original intention was to keep this map intact to provide a detailed view of the farm. Since the map consisted of thin tissue paper, it quickly started to tear during the process of pasting it down (figure 1.4). Drawing from the fragmented nature of Kentridge's work, I decided to embrace the tearing to show the elusive nature of Kanetfontein as a place that only features in fragments of Welvanpas's stories. The fragmented map also challenges the idea that a singular representation can fully capture a place.



Figure 1.3: William Kentridge, *Drawing for The Head & the Load (Tondo 1)* 2018 (Collage of drawing, printed text and red pencil on paper, 128 cm diameter). Source: William Kentridge Studio.



Figure 1.4: *Kanetfontein* in progress. Topographic map pieces being chine colléd onto a doily. Photographed in my studio space in July 2024. Photo: Daniel Retief.

I created a series of small prints, *Kanetfontein se mense* – Kanetfontein’s people (figure 1.5), to unpack the montage of meanings of *Kanetfontein*. Focussing on select stories, the series provides viewers with different avenues through which to navigate *Kanetfontein*’s montage of fragments (figure 1.6). Each anecdote ‘walks’ the viewer along a different path through the network of meanings (de Certeau, 1984). In this sense the larger work functions as a portal through which multiple lanes of stories intersect.¹⁸

The series extends the doily motif, using it as a focal point to focus on individual stories of artists who have resided at Kanetfontein. Every print references an artwork by one of these artists. Their artworks can all be seen on the walls of the old farmhouse on Welvanpas. The prints thus map lines of connection between Welvanpas and Kanetfontein. The deep mapping process provided a platform for me to discover new connections between these two farms.

Humphris et al. (2021: 364) explain that deep mapping can act as a type of action that is performed to generate new questions and conversations about a place. As a layered project, it brings together multiple stories in relation to one another, creating a conversation that discovers new pathways leading to new insights (Bodenhamer et al., 2015). By mapping the various stories related to Kanetfontein, I was surprised to discover how interconnected it is with Welvanpas. Ouma told me several stories about the artworks in her home (the old farmhouse) on Welvanpas. When I drew a connection between these stories and the Kanetfontein artists and their relation to the Retief family, I discovered a network of intertwined histories: people, stories, and artefacts cross between these two farms. It made me realise that the historical depth of Welvanpas did not develop in isolation, but that various people and places contributed to it.

1.4.2 Narrating Through Storyboards

Similar to the *Kanetfontein se mense* series, the series *Wolf/Hiëna/Luiperd* (Wolf/Hyena/Leopard) (figure 1.7) also maps lines of connection. This series does so by fanning out layers of meaning into a narrative sequence. *Wolf/Hiëna/Luiperd* accompanies a larger piece, *Die wolf van Welvanpas* (figure 2.4 discussed in Chapter Two), which is inspired by a tale of a wolf on Welvanpas. I created the series to zoom in closer on the tale and break down different versions of it as it has developed over time: Some versions refer to a wolf, another to a hyena, and one even to a leopard (Retief-Lombard: 89). The series consists of five

¹⁸ A similar technique of having a large work with multiple lanes is discussed by Harris (2015).

prints featuring fragments of prowling wolves, hyenas, and leopards. Like Kentridge's *Drawing for The Head & the Load (Twelve Birds)* (2018), a sequence of images is created like a storyboard for an animation.

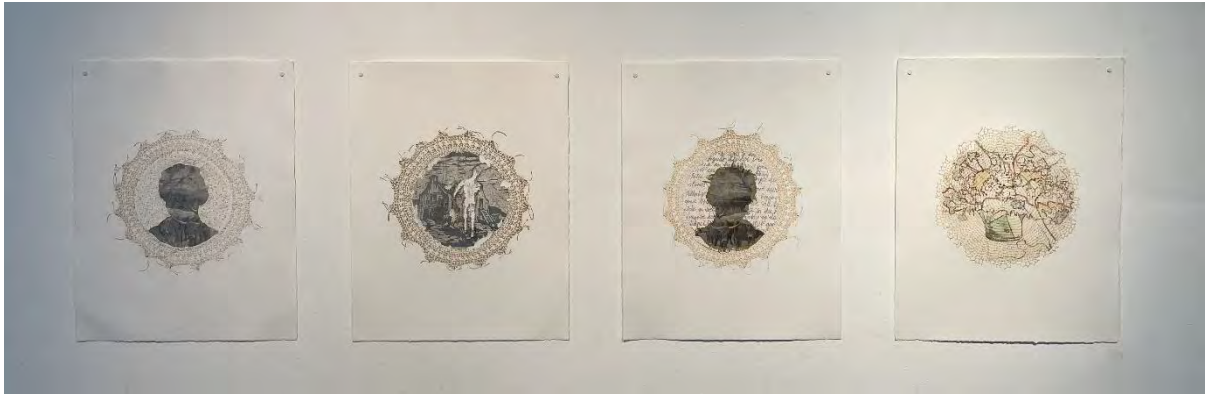


Figure 1.5: Daniel Retief, *Kanetfontein se mense* series 2024 (Collagraph, chine collé, and drypoint, 36 x 28 cm x 4). Photo: Daniel Retief.



Figure 1.6: *Kanetfontein se mense* series displayed with the work *Kanetfontein* in the middle. Photo: Daniel Retief.

Drawing for The Head & the Load (Twelve Birds) (figure 1.8) storyboards a scene of birds being blown apart. It consists of three rows of ledger pages filled with tables of information relating to warfare (lists of troops and inventory). Every page contains a charcoal drawing of a bird in a different stage of being blown apart. One drawing of a pigeon with a cylinder on its back references the First World War, during which messenger birds were often used for communication. As a unit, the rows of pages form a storyboard of birds lining up like soldiers and then exploding into fragments.¹⁹ The quick and violent progression of the images may comment on the futility of life during war.

Bodenhamer (2015) and Harris (2015) argues that storyboarding can act as a form of deep mapping that links materials in a manner that walks the viewer across time and space. Kentridge's storyboard does not walk the viewer on a linear path but like his signature stop animations²⁰ creates a fragmented sequence. The images do not follow a linear progression with one image directly following onto the other. Rather, wonky sequences are created as the pages jolt between fragments of various birds. Kentridge challenges the concept of time progressing linearly and maps a fragmented sense of history (Maltz-Leca, 2013). *Wolf/Hiëna/Luiperd* similarly breaks down information into a fragmented sequence of images as I attempt to track the contrasting versions of the tale of the wolf across time and space.

Similar to Kentridge, I have broken up the tale into frames, with each print focusing on a different figure or a different stage of development of the same figure. Like Kentridge's series, a fragmented sequence is created: fragments of predators appear along with text extracts of the tale, a map of the area where the animal was seen, and zoological information about hyenas. To emphasise the lack of a coherent narrative, I sew together one print from torn fragments of paper. Aligning the series of prints, the different versions of the story of the wolf are mapped out as it has been told at various points in time. My series creates a non-linear sequence which tracks the non-linear development of the story as it has been altered and retold over generations.

¹⁹ *Drawing for The Head & the Load (Twelve Birds)* formed part of the material Kentridge used for his stop animation element of the production *The Head & the Load*.

²⁰ Kentridge's charcoal stop animations consist of a rudimentary process of drawing, erasing, and redrawing charcoal images frame-by-frame to form wonky sequences of moving images: "stone-age animations" as he refers to it (Maltz-Leca, 2013: 152).



Figure 1.7: Daniel Retief, *Wolf/Hiëna/Luiperd* 2024 (Collagraph and photocopy transfer, approx. 25 x 29 cm x 5). Photo: Daniel Retief.



Figure 1.8: William Kentridge, *Drawing for The Head & the Load (Twelve Birds)* 2018 (Charcoal and red pencil on found ledger paper, 85.5 x 130 cm). Source: Artsy.

1.4.3 Layering a Palimpsest

Igshaan Adams also maps out stories in his work using multiple people's voices. In his case, he co-opts people in his community's stories to tell his own story (Nowness, 2021: 1:36-1:41). Growing up in the working-class community of Bonteheuwel, in the Cape Flats area of Cape Town, Adams explains that a lot of turmoil surrounded him as a child (Nowness, 2021). Bonteheuwel was established as an area exclusively for coloured people under apartheid, which meant its inhabitants were designated as second-class citizens (AIC, 2022b). His work tells a story of attempting to resolve conflicting parts within himself in an environment challenged with poverty, unemployment, and gangsterism (Davy, 2018; Nowness, 2021). One of his tapestry works, *Mapping Yvonne's Kitchen* (2021) (figure 1.9), for example, maps a kitchen floor as a reflection of the sort of life people live within Bonteheuwel (Nowness, 2021: 1:12-1:31). *Mapping Yvonne's Kitchen* uses the linoleum kitchen floor of a family friend, Yvonne, as a blueprint (AIC, 2022a: 18:27-18:52). Adams maps the worn-out pathways that have formed in the linoleum, tracking the life within her kitchen (AIC: 2022a: 18:44-20:18).

During a talk at the Art Institute of Chicago, Adams explained that linoleum is a common material within his community, associated with poverty. As a layer of the linoleum would wear off, inhabitants would add a new layer on top, creating a palimpsest of worn layers. The pattern of worn layers that forms over time reflects the movement of people within their homes as they go about their lives. *Mapping Yvonne's Kitchen* weaves together the patches of different layers. A bright beige colour frames the composition, lying on top of an earthy green background. A grid pattern of grey squares is unevenly distributed across the composition and touches of bright blue, from an even deeper layer, peek through cracks. The layers merge to form a unique pattern telling the stories of Yvonne's daily struggles (AIC, 2022a: 19:00-21:20).



Figure 1.9: Igshaan Adams, *Mapping Yvonne's Kitchen* 2021 (Polyester and nylon rope, fringe, fabric and cotton twine, 282 x 336 cm). Source: Artsy.

Similar to Adams's approach, my print *Bovlei se mense* (Bovlei's people) (figure 1.10) weaves together layers of the past. *Bovlei se mense* explores the relations among the old families within the Bovlei area. I wanted to make sense of the historical depth of Welvanpas as it ties in with the entire Bovlei. Over the years families intermarried, members moved from one farm to another, and some farms went through various hands. Layers of history are mapped to tell a story of an intertwined community. Within the work, the Bovlei area is mapped as a jagged tree-like landscape branching across the length of the composition. Its gravelly ochre surface is populated with hints of place names, paths, and buildings. Pencil annotations note the names of the old family farms and their families. The landscape becomes a metaphorical family tree, with the annotations drawing connections among the branches of old families. Like the linoleum floors of *Mapping Yvonne's Kitchen*, layers of the past are overlaid in a palimpsest.

Within the work, a modern topographic map of the Bovlei area overlays an old map of the original farms within the area. I first used the shapes of the original Bovlei farm properties, dating from a map of the 1700s (figure 1.11), to construct the tree-like landscape. I arranged

these shapes like a family tree to reflect the intertwining family relations. Topographic map pieces were then chine colléd on top (figure 1.12). With the aid of digital tools, the topographic map precisely superimposes over the old map, pinpointing the exact areas of the original farms on the modern map. An earlier version of this work only featured the original farm properties printed as flat surfaces without any other layers. This work mapped the Bovlei's past but did not map its layers of historical depth. Layering the old and new maps, a palimpsest of histories is created. The historical depth of the area can thus be excavated like the layer of linoleum featured in *Mapping Yvonne's Kitchen*.

When I started mapping the Bovlei's layers of history, I discovered that the old families are not only deeply intertwined, but that their relations have altered significantly over the years. As with Adams's work, the physical traces within the environment are used to document the lives of people. One can reflect on the changes in family ties as one tracks how the landscape has altered. The different map layers of *Bovlei se mense* sit awkwardly on top of one another and one can see how the area has changed since the 1700s. Properties have shifted, and place names have changed as new people moved to the area. The town of Wellington has expanded and a section of it cuts across a farm branching to the left of the composition. Modern development, such as buildings, roadways, and dams, sprawls across the entire surface of the work, reflecting how the community has changed.



Figure 1.10: Daniel Retief, *Bovlei se mense* 2024 (Collagraph and chine collé, 136 x 82 cm). Photo: Daniel Retief.

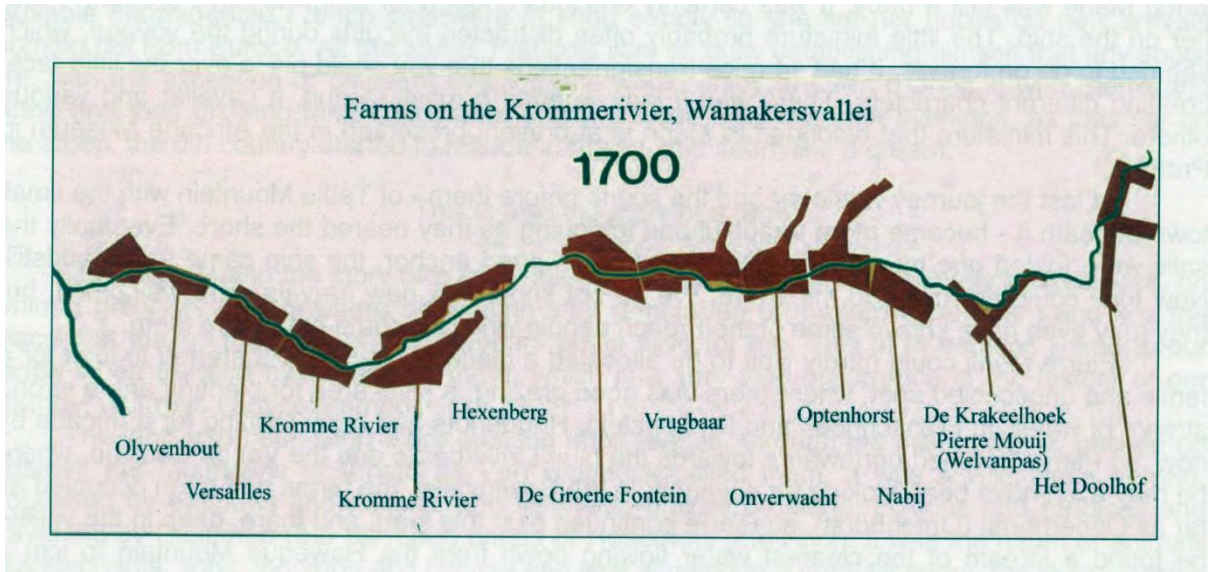


Figure 1.11: Map representing the original farm properties dating from the 1700s within the Wamakersvallei, including the Bovlei region featuring on the right-hand side. Source: Retief-Lombard (2008: 20).



Figure 1.12: *Bovlei se mense* in progress. Layers of topographic map machine colléd onto the old farm properties. Photographed in my studio space in August 2024. Photo: Daniel Retief.

The different approaches of Adams and Kentridge act as a springboard for the two different strategies within my practice. Both artists make use of multiple voices, whether in their community or within the archives, to map the complex geography of the past. Kentridge, however, draws together the fragments of the past very differently from Adams. Maltz-Leca (2013) argues Kentridge is concerned with “sequencing historical time”. Kentridge attempts to storyboard the jolting unfolding of history one frame at a time (Maltz-Leca, 2013), similar to Bodenhamer (2015) and Harris’s (2015) approach to historical depth by sequencing spatial stories. Adams, on the other hand, maps historical depth as the sedimentation of layers of traces. Aligned with the views of Ethington and Toyosawa (2015), the past inscribes layers of meaning that are woven together into a story.

Harnessing printmedia techniques, I map Welvanpas as a point of convergence of several facets of history. Various voices and stories are drawn together. I used Ouma’s stories as an initial guide to map the “common, untold, unnoticed stories” of Welvanpas (Reitz, 2022: 347). Using printmedia’s ability to layer materials, I combined these stories with other facets of the farm’s history. Facets of the physical environment and archival materials are combined with the stories. Printmedia enables layers to be overprinted, allowing for an archaeological ‘digging’ into the historical depth of Welvanpas. Like Adams’s tapestries, a palimpsest of layered histories can be created. But printmedia can also function as a series. This allowed me to create sequences of stories mirroring Kentridge’s “sequencing of historical time” (Maltz-Leca, 2013).

By drawing these materials together, a montage of various voices is created. As argued by Spissu (2015), this opens a conversation around the multiple meanings that the place holds. Approaching the mapping process from an insider-outsider perspective, however, adds a further layer of meaning to places. In the next chapter, I will explore my own influence on the process as the mapper-researcher.

CHAPTER TWO

Deep Mapping as an Insider-outsider

Listening to Ouma's stories, I realise that places do not merely consist of tangible locations, but also the memory, imagination, and personal experiences of people (Bodenhamer et al., 2015). Ouma tells very different stories, and with less coherence, to those I am familiar with in the Retief book of family stories – *The Chronicles of Krakeelhoek* (Retief-Lombard, 2008). Ouma's stories mainly start from a memory of a particular event, place, or object. They will then branch into different directions, jumping from one family connection to the next. I often do not follow who she is referring to or exactly where the places she talks about are located. The Bovlei farms and community have also changed rapidly since Ouma was a child. Some places have new names, and some people have long since moved away.

My position and experience also play a large role in how much I follow. My sister and I grew up in Makhanda (formerly Grahamstown), in the Eastern Cape, and would visit Ouma during the December and April school holidays. I therefore lack in-depth knowledge of the area and its people. In this chapter, I will discuss the impact of my insider-outsider position on the mapping process. I discuss my creative process of navigating between the stories, memories, and imaginations of people and attempting to make sense of them through my limited understanding. I encounter several gaps in my knowledge, which forces me to acknowledge absence as part of the terrain I am mapping. I first unpack my personal relation to the project and then discuss the strategies I have employed within my practice.

2.1 An Insider-outsider's Perspective

Over the course of my visits to Welvanpas, I was surprised to learn that Ouma does not know the popular stories of the Retief family so well. She knows a wealth of stories and yet is not as familiar with the ones I have read about. As I became more familiar with our family stories, I began asking her more specific questions. Often, she would respond by saying that she does not really know the story and that I should rather consult our book of family stories. I was perplexed but eventually realised that she had her unique knowledge and perspective of the farm. My misperception was that everyone who lived on Welvanpas knew the same stories. Memory is also unlike a folder that can simply be retrieved from a neatly organised cabinet. It is often sparked by one thing (an object, subject, or place) and is then recalled in fragments

branching from that initial spark (Maher, 2014). I learnt that by simply letting Ouma's stories guide me through Welvanpas according to her own experiences and memories, I gained a unique perspective.

By bonding with Ouma and sharing life experiences, I gained a much richer understanding of Welvanpas. As Humphris et al. (2021) advocate, personal connections enrich deep mapping projects. I would tell Ouma of my own experiences on the farm, or some of the things I have heard from other members of my family. This opened the space for her to then share her experiences.

This personal connection shaped the form that my project takes. As Humphris et al. (2021: 385) point out, deep mapping reflects not only the lifeworld of the people one speaks with, or the information one reads about, but also one's own identity and experiences. Likewise, Kitchin and Dodge (2007: 338) argue that all forms of maps are contingent and relational because they are shaped by the decisions and practices of the mapper. The sort of questions I ask and the approach I take are all influenced by the position I hold.

In Kydd-Williams' (2019) sense, I am an insider-outsider: I am neither someone who has a deep understanding of the area and the experience of living there as an insider, nor at the complete distance that comes with being an outsider (Kydd-Williams, 2019: 249). Although I do not visit often, I do connect to Welvanpas as the home of my close family which I have visited since I was a baby. I speak the same language, Afrikaans, and I have heard some of the stories of the farm since I was young. I have a sense of the broad layout of Welvanpas and the Bovlei, but my approach reflects my lack of knowledge. Listening to the stories, I often have to ask for clarification. Or I have to ask who a particular person is. Often, I have to go read up or google the places that Ouma is talking about. My approach is similar to what Kentridge describes as being "at the edge of a tradition" (MHC, 2020: 49:51).

Kentridge describes a scenario in which one has a loose affiliation to a tradition or discipline. A case where one has access to materials but not a clear understanding of what they mean. Like an insider-outsider, it is a scenario where there is a vague understanding but a lack of in-depth knowledge of how everything fits together. According to Kentridge, this can be a productive situation as it allows for the freedom to improvise. By "improvising with traditions" ideas can be reshuffled, and new meanings can be created (MHC, 2020: 49:44-51:02).

2.2 Practical Approaches as an Insider-outsider

2.2.1 Improvising with Fragments

Kentridge describes this “improvisation with traditions” as a collage process of reconstructing images (MHC, 2020: 50:23-50:28). This approach was taken when producing *The Head & the Load*. Kentridge states, “We needed to be led not only by books and texts. There was a loose gathering of possibilities to see how different fragments could talk to each other” (Kentridge Studio, 2018: n.p.). This is apparent in works such as *Drawing for the Head & the Load (Afrika-Africa-L’Afrique)* (2018) (figure 2.1), which presents an image from a reconstruction of fragments.

The drawing consists of a reconstructed map of Africa, with various pieces of map in different languages being stuck together. Black blotches and red lines run across the continent, mapping the movement and sites of conflict taking place during the First World War. The forces appear to rip the continent apart as the European colonial powers fight over territory. The word Africa appears in three different languages within the work and title, indicating its divided possession. In this sense, the work presents the First World War as a rearrangement of the map of Africa (Kentridge, 2020: 283). Alternatively, one might read the fragments as being pulled together and the work as attempting to recompose the many facets of the war.

In my practice, I have also dealt with facets of information. The collage of fragments within works such as *Kanetfontein* (see figure 1.2) and *Wolf/Hiëna/Luiperd* (see figure 1.7), discussed in the previous chapter, reflect my process of attempting to draw together bits of information. However, I particularly encountered a disarray of stories about one ancestor within my family – Tant Molly (Aunt Molly). My print, *Tant Molly*, improvises with the facets of her life.

Tant Molly actively resisted the British colonial government during the South African War. There are different stories and perspectives about her life and involvement in the war: I once heard my father, Joubert, light-heartedly tell a story about her to his friends. This same story I heard in a very serious tone from Ouma. And another story I once heard is even considered a family secret. Although I had an insider’s privilege to hear some of these stories, I certainly do not know all of them. The various facets left me with several questions about who she was and what her life truly was like.

The print *Tant Molly* (figure 2.2) features a figure of a woman roughly constructed from fragments. Between the fragments appear hints of information that reflect on her life. The piece

was printed from scrap copper shards, leftover materials from another artist's process. Like the facets of stories about Tant Molly's life, the found copper shards had to be improvised with and reconstructed to create a coherent image. Several gaps remain between the shards, leaving the image incomplete – like my knowledge of Tant Molly. Originally, I used the shards to construct a face for the figure (figure 2.3). During the printing phase, however, I felt it was too particular a feature to add, especially since I did not have a clear idea of what she looked like. I then decided to leave it as a vague, faceless figure. *Tant Molly* thus improvises with fragments of stories to map my vague impression of her.



Figure 2.2: Daniel Retief, *Tant Molly* 2024 (Engraved copper shards, 100 x 70 cm). Photo: Daniel Retief.



Figure 2.3: Construction of copper shards for the creation of *Tant Molly*. Photographed in my studio space in April 2024. Photo: Daniel Retief.

2.2.2 Memory and Imagination

As narratives grow vague over time, they can morph through memory and imagination and thereby foster a personal sense of meaning to places (Maher, 2014; Bodenhamer et al., 2015; Reitz, 2022). Bodenhamer et al. (2015: 2) argue that “For the humanist, space is not only physical space but occupied space, or place, and the concept, like that of time, exists not simply in a real world but in memory, imagination, and experience.” Some of the stories about Welvanpas are rich in memory and imagination, and the truth cannot be established.

The old tale of a wolf lurking around on the farm at night, for example, is vague in memory. I attempted to track the possible origins of the tale, as wolves do not naturally occur within South Africa. One possibility is that the animal was what is colloquially referred to as a *Strandjutowolf*, the brown hyena. However, brown hyenas are not typically found within that area. The tale has been passed down for generations and has been exaggerated into various versions that make the truth indiscernible (Retief-Lombard, 2008: 89). As discussed within the previous chapter on the work *Wolf/Hiëna/Luiperd* (see figure 1.7), the wolf has morphed to take on various forms over time, at one point even being a leopard (Retief-Lombard, 2008: 89).

Based on this tale, *Die wolf van Welvanpas* (The wolf of Welvanpas) (figure 2.4), depicts a large shadow figure of a wolf stalking across sheets of old maps. Neither present nor absent, the mythical figure gradually fades into the topography. As the tale grows out of proportion, the figure stretches across the map sheets. It bleeds over the borders of the maps, challenging the impulse to contain or encapsulate the tale. *Die wolf van Welvanpas* forms part of a group of prints that explore mythical tales about Welvanpas. Drawing from Kentridge’s shadow projections, they were created by projecting shadow figures.

Within the Kentridge production *The Head & the Load* (2018), large shadow figures loom over projected backgrounds (figure 2.5). A procession of porters features carrying oversized cut-out shapes of various military hardware. Burdened under the weight they reflect the thousands of African carriers who had to transport military hardware between Cape Town and Lake Tanganyika (McCoy, 2019: 21). The illuminated procession casts large shadows, blowing up the history of the African carriers (McCoy, 2019: 24). For McCoy (2019: 25), the shadows occupy a realm between the conscious and subconscious as a shameful and suppressed memory of the First World War. By blowing up their shadows larger than life, this history is brought to the fore. My work similarly employs shadow projections to enlarge and distort figures out of proportion.

To map the elusive tales of Welvanpas, silhouette cutout figures were projected. A strong light source was shone on cutout figures so that they projected enlarged shadows on a wall (figure 2.6). The outlines of these shadows were then used as a basis to create the group of prints. The shadows created an exaggeration and distortion of the figures, reflecting the warping of memory and imagination. Similar to a map projection, the shadow projections distort reality and are a metaphor for how our perception of the world is never neutral but distorted by the filter of our own emotions and experiences (Elkins, 1996; Springett, 2019; Reitz, 2022).



Figure 2.4: Daniel Retief, *Die wolf van Welvanpas* 2024 (Collagraph, 97 x 153 cm). Photo: Daniel Retief.



Figure 2.5: Workshop for *The Head & the Load* at MASS MoCa, North Adams, Massachusetts. Photo: Stella Olivier. Source: William Kentridge Studio.



Figure 2.6: Silhouette cutout being used to project a shadow for *Die wolf van Welvanpas*. Photographed in February 2024. Photo: Daniel Retief.

2.2.3 Absence

Unconscious assumptions are another aspect that leads to the distortion of stories. In the case of an insider-outsider, there are “shadows of influence” that tempt one to “fill in the gaps” about what one knows (Kydd-Williams, 2019: 426). Kydd-Williams (2019) explains that an insider-outsider’s interest in a particular research topic may seem natural. This interest, however, can likely be laden with influences the researcher is unaware of or has not acknowledged (Kydd-Williams, 2019: 426). Likewise, Humphris et al. (2021) relay how the personal memories and experiences of a researcher influence their approach to a deep mapping project. These “shadows of influence” impact the research and, according to Kydd-Williams (2019: 426), may cloud the entire project if one is not critically self-reflexive.

I have encountered “shadows of influence”, unacknowledged presuppositions that affect my project. It seems natural that I would be drawn to my family’s history as a research topic as I have been brought up with a keen awareness of it. Our family history provides a sense of identity and even pride. However, when I set out to start this project, I was unconsciously set on telling how deep and rich our family’s history is. There are so many stories and recorded history that it feels as if my family knows almost everything about where we come from. It seems as if we are still closely linked to our French Huguenot ancestry. I neglected the fact that there are several things about the past that my family might not know about, or that there might be very different perspectives on it. One of the first pieces I attempted to create (figure 2.7) aimed to exhaustively layer information, as if everything about the subject matter could be known.

The piece I created aimed to map connections between the stories of Ouma and Oom Manus (Uncle Manus), an elderly man who used to be a labourer on Welvanpas. I wanted to map relations between their perspectives as they both lived in the Bovlei their entire lives. Both grew up on the neighbouring farm Vrugbaar and later moved to Welvanpas. The work was intended to have two sides, mapping out each perspective. I set out to create an elaborate set of details which would be composed together to map out one grand narrative. Different sorts of materials were to be collaged together to create a layered depth.

I discovered a significant contrast between the two sides I wanted to represent. While Ouma’s stories of her childhood years provided a wealth of information that would be impossible to incorporate into a single artwork, Oom Manus’s story was sparse. I realised that I did not know much about Oom Manus at all. For example, I recently discovered that he has been staying on

Welvanpas for a much shorter than my initial impression. There are many gaps within the bit of information that I have about his life. Some things I did not know how to represent because I had never encountered them. The world Oom Manus speaks of is very different to the one of Ouma's stories. I do not know what his house is like, or the hard labour he speaks of performing as a young man. I also do not know who his family is or where they stayed.

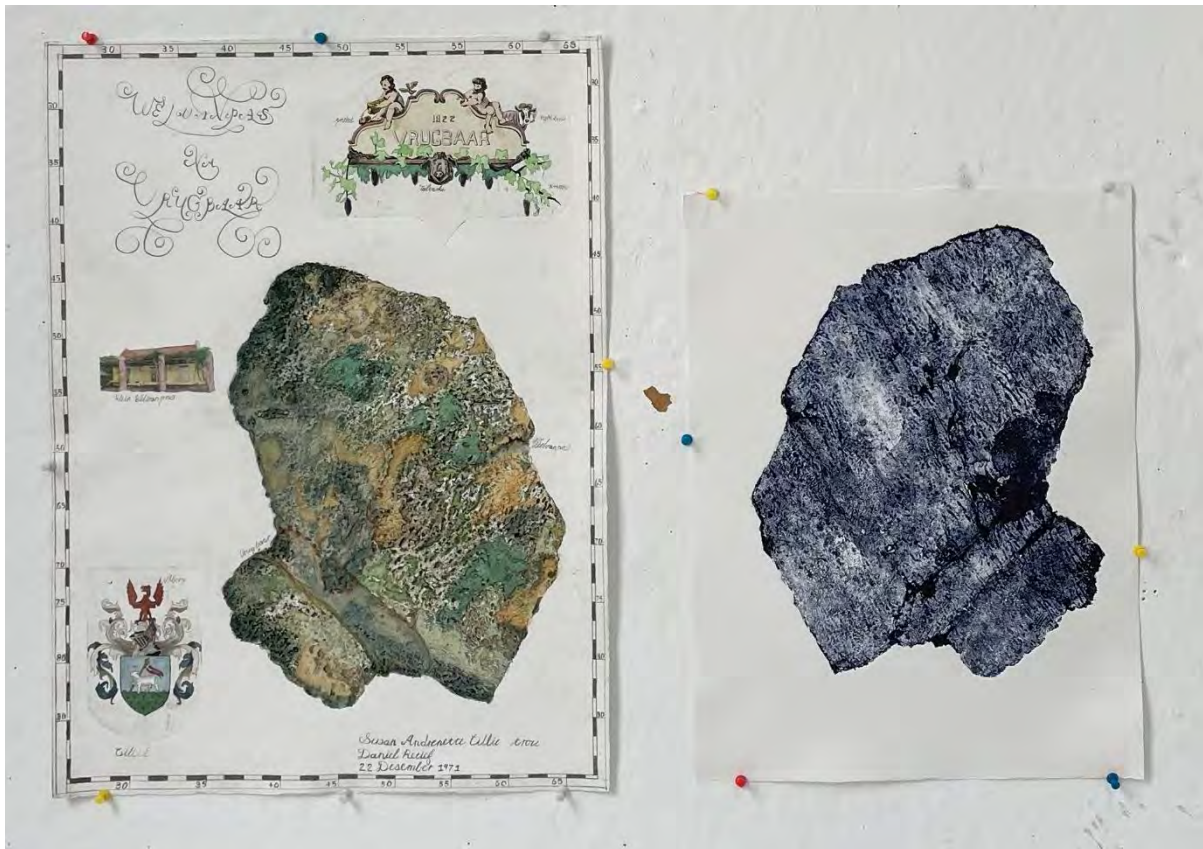


Figure 2.7: Planning for a work that aimed to compare the stories of Ouma (on the left) and Oom Manus (on the right). Photographed in my studio space in March 2024. Photo: Daniel Retief.

I had to acknowledge that I could not source everything about Welvanpas's past and that some aspects would remain unknown. Absences needed to form part of my mapping project. My experiences contrasted with the arguments of certain scholars. Clifford McLucas (2000) advocates for multilayered, detailed, and high-resolution deep maps. Similarly, Springett (2019: 102) advocates for deep maps with a depth in scope which provides a "cumulative understanding". In contrast to this neat layering of history, I have found gaps and absences in the historical depth of Welvanpas. I followed Humphris et al.'s (2021: 382) argument that it is "necessary to represent 'absence' itself as a critical component in the mapping process". For

the final work, *Die gesig van Welvanpas* (The face of Welvanpas), I decided to simply express the contrast between the two perspectives. I juxtaposed the known versus the unknown (absent) perspective as opposed to attempting to capture everything.

Die gesig van Welvanpas (figure 2.8) features two topographical figures facing each other. The figures read as either aerial photographs of rugged landscapes or as the outline of two heads. Like opposing day and night scenes, the two mirror figures are contrasting bright green versus dark blue hues. The work attempts to express the great difference in perspective two people may hold about the same place. Mapping the contrast between Ouma's world and the unknown world of Oom Manus, I drew from the mirror images in Adams's *11B Larch Weg* (i) and (ii) (figure 2.9).

11B Larch Weg (i) and (ii) consist of two mirror tapestries of a jagged pathway. An ochre pathway runs across the gallery wall, while a dark, shadowy doppelganger lurks on the floor. The work is based on the gap trodden within the linoleum floor of a family friend's (Priscilla) house (AIC, 2022a: 25:30-26:30). The worn-out pathway maps her movement through the house on 11B Larch Weg, from which the title emanates (Art Gallery of NSW, n.d.). The pathway reflects her walking up and down her narrow house, from the front to the back door (AIC, 2022a: 25:30-26:30). Adams isolates this absent segment within her floor, rendering it into a positive space. He explains that the decision to "fill in the blank spaces" and make it a positive shape was to foreground the absence of knowledge one may have about a person (AIC, 2022a: 26:35-28:35).

We profile people, states Adams, tending to fill in the gaps about what we know about them. Bringing the gap within the linoleum to the fore highlights the absence within the material. It reflects the absence of information about Priscilla's daily life within her house. The contrast between a person's public façade and unknown private life is illuminated by the contrast between the two mirror tapestries. The piece on the wall is a bright ochre and highlights the blank space within the linoleum. The piece on the floor, on the other hand, is a dark grey and stresses what is absent from our perspective (AIC, 2022a: 26:35-28:35).

Like Adams's work, *Die gesig van Welvanpas* contrasts two mirror images. Reflecting day and night scenes, the mirror images contrast the visible (Ouma) to the invisible (Oom Manus) faces of a place. The two figures were collagraph printed from a scrap piece of material I found lying around my house in Makhanda. Imagining what Oom Manus's world might be like, I printed

the ‘opposite side’ – the verso of the material. The mirror figures thus depict metaphorical and literal opposite perspectives of the same thing.



Figure 2.8: Daniel Retief, *Die gesig van Welvanpas 2024* (Collagraph, 70 x 100 cm). Photo: Daniel Retief.



Figure 2.9: Igshaan Adams, *Desire Lines* 2022. Installation view at the Art Institute of Chicago (AIC) featuring *11B Larch Weg (i)* (2019) on the wall and *11B Larch Weg (ii)* (2019) on the floor. Source: AIC.

In contrast to *Die gesig van Welvanpas, Kortpad agter die huis* (Shortcut behind the house) (figure 2.10) only emphasises what is absent. *Kortpad agter die huis* depicts a narrow track meandering across a blank composition. Being a blind embossed print,²¹ the track is merely a granular, colourless impression on the paper. The only indication of its presence is its slight cast of shadow. The work is based on a secluded shortcut of the farm workers on Welvanpas. It runs from the vineyards, behind the old farmhouse (hence the title), to the workers' houses. *Kortpad agter die huis* hints at this pathway but keeps it hidden from sight. Like Adams's *Desire Lines* series, this work maps the pathway people have trodden in the landscape.

Adams's *Desire Lines* series explores footpaths on the open fields that segregate communities within the Cape Flats (blank projects, 2022; Malik, 2022).²² *Langa* (figure 2.11), for example, explores the footpaths forged by individuals between Bonteheuwel and Langa. Based on a Google Maps aerial photograph of the footpaths (blank projects, 2022; Malik, 2022), the work presents a vast field worn away by two thin tracks. The vastness of the open landscape,

²¹ Blind embossing is a technique where the matrix is printed without any ink on it. The relief of the matrix thus leaves an embossed impression on the paper, but no ink is printed onto it.

²² During apartheid, highways and open fields were used to segregate communities of different races.

reflective of the segregation of the two communities, is challenged by the two tracks. Although thin, they cut across the open landscape, determined to connect the two communities.

Similar to Adams's *Desire Lines*, the shortcut on Welvanpas reflects determination. Workers have forged the path for ease of access. Running under a canopy of trees, it is secluded. This affords the workers privacy and the freedom to move around the farm without being supervised. Unlike Adams's work, which highlights the track in celebration, my work keeps the track hidden.

As an insider-outsider, especially one coming from a privileged background, I am unfamiliar with the lived experiences of the workers on the farm. This is an aspect that remains invisible to me. *Kortpad agter die huis* resists filling in the gaps of this aspect through a surveyor's perspective. De Certeau (1984: 92-93) explains that cartographic maps often reflect the privileged perspective of the surveyor. The surveyor views at a distance, attempting to encapsulate the landscape, yet is out of touch with the lived reality of the place (de Certeau, 1984: 92-93). *Kortpad agter die huis* resists the attempt to encapsulate the landscape. It keeps the pathway invisible, acknowledging the absence within the terrain.

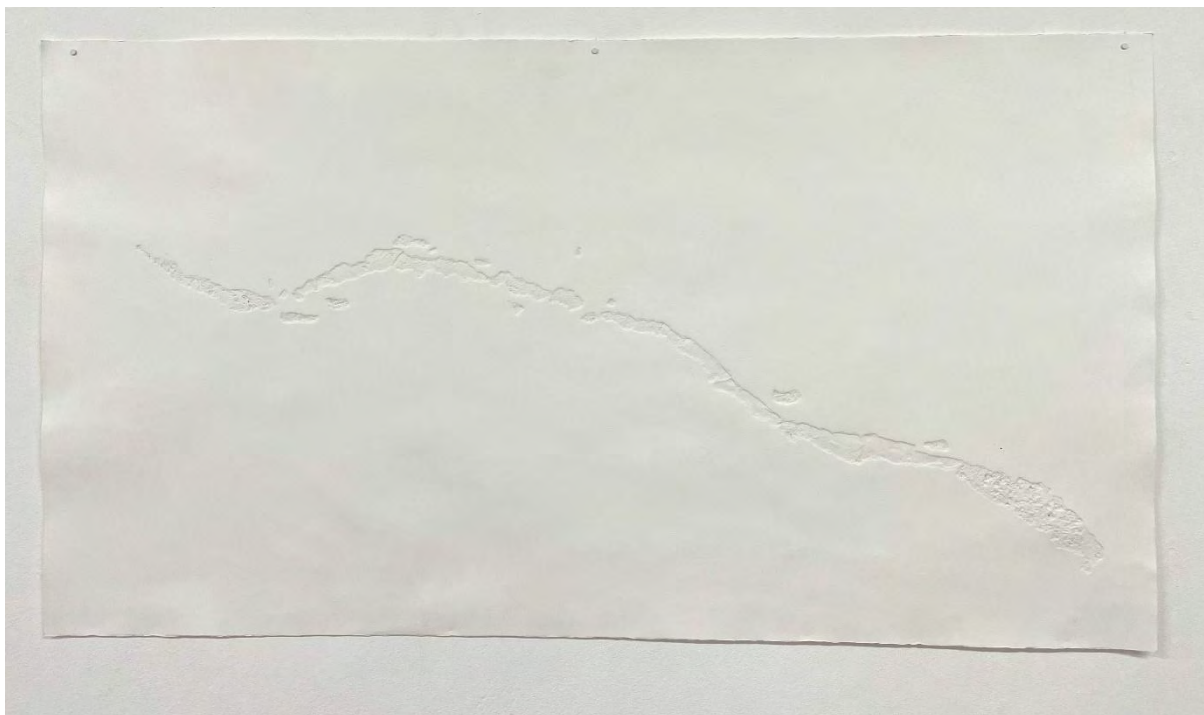


Figure 2.10: Daniel Retief, *Kortpad agter die huis* 2024 (Blind embossed print, 54 x 100cm). Photo: Daniel Retief.



Figure 2.11: Igshaan Adams, *Langa* 2021 (Paint on wood, plastic beads, glass beads, stone beads, bone beads, polyester rope, nylon rope, cotton fabric, chain, wire, cotton twine, 237 x 305 cm). Source: blank projects.

2.2.4 Spectral Traces

In some cases, absences may surface and completely disrupt one's understanding of that place (Jonker and Till, 2009). A couple of years ago, the oldest building on Welvanpas caved in after heavy rains (figure 2.12). The old brick walls cracked and collapsed. The building unfolded itself to present the raw brick from underneath the plaster. Seeing this, suddenly the building was not the dilapidated storeroom I used to know. It came to light that the building was the old slave quarters on the farm. As the raw bricks became exposed, I uncovered the farm's history of slavery. It revealed glimpses of what the lives of the slaves were like. Like spectral traces, it disrupted the image that I had of Welvanpas.

According to Jonker and Till (2009), spectral traces disrupt space, as they bring an eruption of a suppressed past into the present. They disorder history and alter the way we interact with spaces (Jonker and Till, 2009). While Welvanpas's history of slavery is not suppressed, it is something that is rarely mentioned and not much known about.²³ The spectre of the collapsed

²³ The names of the slaves owned by the Retief family are known. There are also a handful of stories about the slaves on Welvanpas. My project focusses on my experiences and the stories I encounter and thus

old slave quarter abruptly brought Welvanpas's history of slavery tangibly into the present. It tore a hole in the image that I had of the farm and surfaced a part of its past I tended to gloss over.



Figure 2.12: Collapsed old building on the farm. Photographed in September 2020. Photo: Daniel Retief.

does not have the scope to delve into this history. However, this area may be rich in history for another project to explore.

Verlore spore – meaning either ‘lost traces’, ‘lost tracks’, or ‘lost footprints’ (figure 2.13) searches for the traces left behind by the history of slaves. The work is a tondo, a circular image, and mirrors the composition and size of *Kanetfontein* (see figure 1.2). Similarly, it has a series of smaller works, *Opspoor* (Locating) that accompany it (figure 2.14). Unlike *Kanetfontein*, however, it does not present a montage of stories. It presents a lack of stories, a black hole within the history of Welvanpas.

Verlore spore features a large, dark circle zooming in on Welvanpas from above, like a view through a microscope. The muddled and textured surface creates an otherworldly looking landscape. Dark engraved lines map the outline of the farm. Sparse in features, the landscape reflects the loss of the slaves’ history. Small white tracks meander through the foreign landscape, attempting to imagine the unknown world the slaves inhabited. Created through a reduction process,²⁴ the tracks are absences within the print, reflecting the lack of their stories. *Verlore spore* looks at the farm from above, reimagining and reimagining what traces or tracks the slaves may have left behind.

The accompanying series, *Opspoor* (figure 2.15), magnifies the spectres of the past. The series continues the doily motif of the *Kanetfontein se mense* series (see figure 1.5), with every doily in the series encircling the history of the slaves. One doily contains a photo of the collapsed old building, while another includes a photo of the exposed brick walls. Like Jonker and Till’s (2009) haunted archaeology, these traces are treated as witnesses to the past. Between the layers of brick, the names of some of the slaves are written, bearing testimony to their presence. The other two doilies in the series are torn apart. I wanted to represent the hole within the façade of Welvanpas’s image and decided to tear the crocheted threads apart. Through the tears peek the names of the slaves, like loose threads in the façade of Welvanpas.

²⁴ Reduction monotype is a printmaking method whereby ink is removed from the matrix to create an image. In this case, thread has been used to block out certain areas of the matrix from printing onto the paper.



Figure 2.13: Daniel Retief, *Verlore spore* 2024 (Engraving into mounting card, 100 x 70 cm). Photo: Daniel Retief.

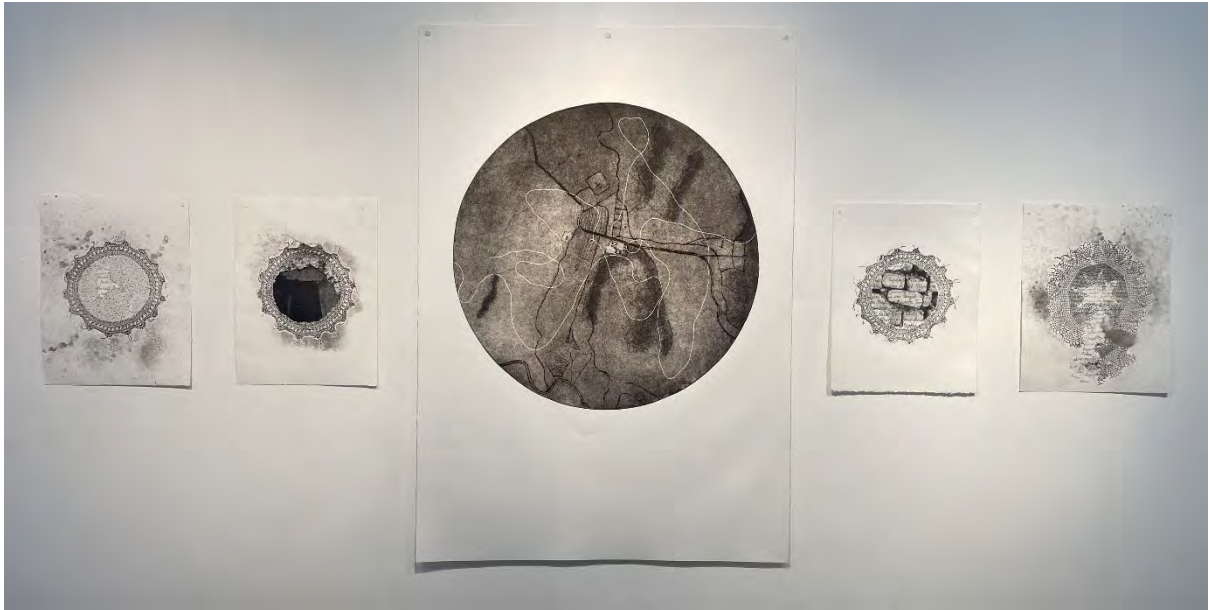


Figure 2.14: Installation of *Verlore spore* with accompanying smaller works, *Opspoor*. Photo: Daniel Retief.

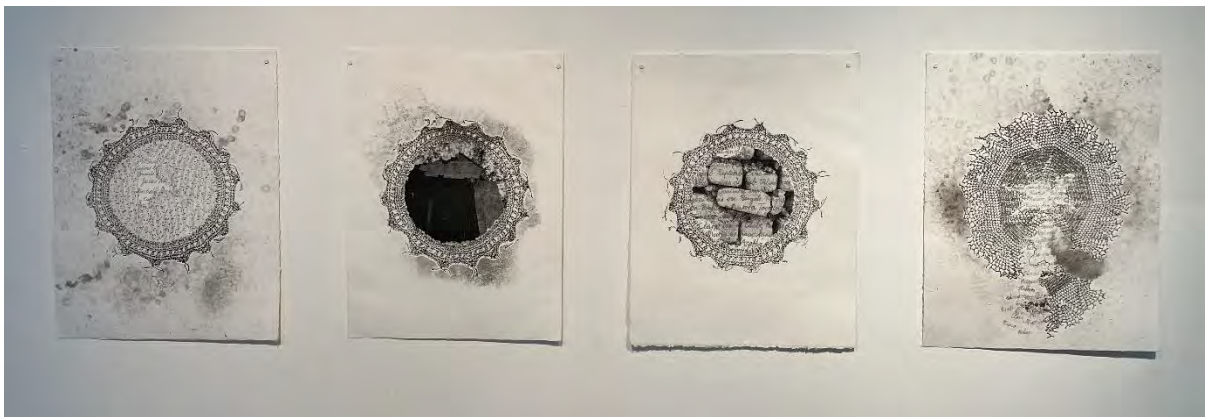


Figure 2.15: Daniel Retief, *Opspoor* series 2024 (Collagraph and chine collé, 4 x 35 x 27 cm). Photo: Daniel Retief.

One can never fully map out the historical depth of a place and there will always be “loose threads” (Humphris et al., 2021). The field of deep mapping is torn between the desire to capture place through a limitless depth of content on the one hand, and a situated gaze which captures experience on the other (Roberts, 2016: 5). As an insider-outsider, both strategies come with challenges. At times I find that I lack enough information to create a deeply layered mapping and I am relegated to improvising with fragments. At other times I am too far removed from the site to express an immersive experience. Some aspects of the farm remain elusive to me. In these cases, the absences become part of the terrain I map. Spectres and myths further create holes in the layers of historical depth so that I end up mapping my perception as much as the world outside me. In Chapter Three, I will discuss how my practice culminates in a body of work that maps the multifaceted historical depth of Welvanpas, as perceived from my insider-outsider position.

CHAPTER THREE

The Multiple Meanings of Place

Welvanpas is actively shaped by various perspectives. Whenever I visit it, my younger cousins grab me by the hand and dash off outside. Across the *werf* (farmyard), down the road, into the garden, then to the vineyards... They are usually on a mission to show me something exciting they have discovered since the last time I visited. As they are growing up on the farm, they have a very different relationship to it than I do. They know all the nooks and crannies. They are familiar with what is happening and easily navigate their way around. They know of the ‘uncle’ who lives two farms down the road and the pigpen on his yard. The farm is their home, which they make their own. The big tree in the distance becomes their treehouse or the garden their secret hideout. Running along the gravel tracks, they map out their own relationship to the farm.

By observing them, I realised that although Welvanpas is a family farm, everyone forges their own relationship to it. This chapter investigates deep mapping as a method of exploring the multiple meanings that a place may hold. While the previous chapters have discussed my artistic process of mapping the historical depth of Welvanpas, this chapter focusses on how multiple meanings can be forged through this process. I unpack the relation between the mapping process and the place, and how their dynamic shapes the place's meanings. Mapping is framed as a continuous process impacted by various people’s different perspectives. Through this continual process, multiple meanings of Welvanpas are mapped out.

3.1 Mapping the Matrix of Place

For Spissu (2015) and Humphris et al. (2021) there are a multiplicity of ways in which places can be perceived, as I have touched on in the first chapter. Each person’s experiences of, and associations with, a place are different, and they attach a different meaning to it (Spissu, 2015; Humphris et al., 2021). Tim Ingold (2000) argues that places are intersections of the different lives of people, like nodes within the matrix of various people’s life stories. In this sense, place occupies an in-between space, for Biggs (2010), as each person is not fully defined by a place, and the place is likewise not defined by one individual.

Several scholars agree that in mapping this matrix of life stories, maps are never complete in their meaning (Ingold, 2000; Del Casino and Hanna, 2006; Kitchin and Dodge, 2007). For

example, Kitchin and Dodge (2007), as well as Del Casino and Hanna (2006), argue that mapping is a continuous process of creation. Attempting to make sense of their environment, the map user reinterprets the map within the context of their surroundings (Del Casino and Hanna, 2006; Kitchin and Dodge, 2007). Both the creation and use of maps can thus be seen as an act of mapping (Del Casino and Hanna, 2006; Kitchin and Dodge, 2007). Mapping is an interactive process of finding one's way in and around a place (Ingold, 2000; Spissu, 2015).

Ingold (2000: 230-231) argues that the map itself can merely be seen as a stepping stone to the process of mapping. For Ingold (2000) mapping is a gesture towards movement through space, rather than a static set-out route. Illustrating this point, Spissu (2015) describes the case of the deep map of District Six²⁵ within the District Six Museum in Cape Town. This map is a large topographic map of the District Six area with ex-residents' annotations included on it (Spissu, 2015: 227). Annotations were made of the community that used to live there, people's homes, shops, and schools (Spissu, 2015: 227). This large map was placed on the museum floor so that visitors may walk their own paths upon it and discover the multiple meanings that the place holds (Spissu, 2015: 227). For Spissu (2015: 227), "walking on the map can be understood as 'making place' in which the urban territory's space takes on meaning and substance."

3.2 Practical Approaches to Mapping Place

3.2.1 Mapping as a Wayfinding

Similar to the deep map of District Six, the installation of Adams's *Desire Lines* tapestries provides visitors with an opportunity to 'make place'. The *Desire Lines* exhibition (2022) at the Art Institute of Chicago maps the environment of his childhood community, Bonteheuwel, to document its stories (AIC, 2022b). Like the annotations on the District Six map, Adams's work takes visitors through the depth and breadth of the place. *Desire Lines* maps the lives of people from the intimate spaces of their homes to the pathways they walk in open fields. The traces of their movements are woven together to outline their life stories (AIC, 2022b).

Walking through the exhibition, visitors are drawn into the intimacy of people's homes. The installation *When Dust Settles* (figure 3.1), for example, allows viewers to walk through a narrow passageway filled with worn-out linoleum sheets. Sourced from the homes of people

²⁵ District Six was a multiracial, multicultural community within Cape Town which was demolished during the apartheid era. The destroyed community is memorialised as an act of defiance against the apartheid regime's racial segregation policies.

in the Bonteheuwel community, the linoleum sheets speak of the inhabitants' private lives (AIC, 2022a: 17:29-20:17). The sheets are layered on the walls and floor so that visitors can both view and walk on them. They are invited to engage with the layers of personal stories inscribed within the linoleum and map out their own meanings as they walk over it. As a passageway, *When Dust Settles* acts as a point of departure leading visitors into the following exhibition room.

The exhibition transitions from a personal space to the public 'desire lines'²⁶ pathways as one steps into the next room. *Epping II* (2021) (figure 3.2) lies stretched out across the floor and immediately puts visitors in the footsteps of those walking the 'desire lines.' Like pieces of dusty earth, large red oxide tapestry fragments are laid out across the floor space. Pathways form in the negative spaces between the arranged pieces, inviting visitors into an immersive landscape. Visitors are drawn into a single pathway, which then diverges into several directions.

During an interview, Adams explained that the work is titled after the industrial area Epping, neighbouring Bonteheuwel. The work's pathways represent the pathways that lead in and out of Epping's local train station. The train station is an area of convergence and departure, as many people from the surrounding working-class communities walk there in search of work. *Epping II* invites the viewer to become a participant. Visitors may walk the pathways and decide for themselves which path to take, placing them in the footsteps of Epping's daily visitors. The open landscape allows them to map out their own sense of the place (AIC, 2022a: 39:53-41:51).

²⁶'Desire lines' are the pathways which cut through the open fields surrounding Bonteheuwel (AIC, 2022b). These tracks reflect individuals who have followed their aspirations/desires to forge their own pathways in defiance of set boundaries (AIC, 2022b).



Figure 3.1: Igshaan Adams, *Desire Lines* 2022. Installation view at the Art Institute of Chicago (AIC) featuring the linoleum sheets of *When Dust Settles* (2018) in the foreground and the work *Epping II* (2021) on the floor in the background. Source: AIC.



Figure 3.2: Igshaan Adams, *Desire Lines* 2022. Installation view at the Art Institute of Chicago featuring *Epping II* (2021). Source: AIC.

Within my own practice, visitors are also encouraged to map out their own paths. Installed together, the body of work maps the historical depth of Welvanpas. As visitors walk through the space, they need to find their way among the different stories and voices and map out their own sense of Welvanpas.

The title of my exhibition, *Familie spore*, refers to how the body of work maps the traces, pathways, and footsteps on Welvanpas. Navigating the farm, the exhibition plots the traces of artefacts and tales along with the life stories (‘footsteps’) of my ancestors, taking visitors along various pathways: from the intimate space of Ouma’s house, in works such as *Spore in die vloere* (figure 3.3), to places on the farm, and further to the entire Bovlei area. *Kanetfontein* (see figure 1.2) and *Verlore spore* (see figure 2.13), for example, focus on particular areas of the farm. These two works are also complemented by smaller series – *Kanetfontein se mense* (see figure 1.5) and *Opspoor* (see figure 2.15) – which unpack specific stories. On a larger scale, *Bovlei se mense* (see figure 1.10) draws together stories of the entire community

surrounding Welvanpas. *Familie spore* draws together the strands of Welvanpas to map the place as a point of intersection of various people's stories (Ingold, 2000). By traversing Welvanpas through its depth and breadth, visitors can map out their own sense of the place (Spissu, 2015).

Drawing the viewer into Welvanpas, *Spore in die vloere* (figure 3.3.1 and 3.3.2) maps out the hallways of Ouma's house. Like *When Dust Settles*, this piece takes visitors into the intimate space of the home. The title means either 'footsteps on the floors' or 'traces in the floors', a reference to the wearing of the wooden planks by foot traffic. The house was built in 1817, and although the wooden floors have since been replaced, they are still very old. Like the linoleum sheets in Adams's work, these old planks map the lives of the people within the old house. The wearing of the floors reflects the lines of movement of people walking up and down the house as they go about their lives, a mirror of all their activities (Ingold, 2000). Projected in the centre of the exhibition space, *Spore in die vloere* aims to immerse visitors within the intimate space of the old farmhouse. Bringing their own history and stories, visitors are invited to map out their own journeys along the lines of foot traffic. Pamphlets (figure 3.4) are available upon entry, acting as roadmaps for navigating the rest of the exhibition.

The pamphlets can be unfolded and used as a guide en route. They consist of a compilation of snippets and fragments of stories I have heard that informed my artworks. By bringing a more narrative element to the exhibition, they assist with guiding and unpacking the many facets of history it encompasses (Bodenhamer, 2015; Harris, 2015). Visitors are left, however, to make sense of these excerpts in their own way. By unfolding the pamphlets, visitors slowly unfold the historical depth of Welvanpas, discovering it as they are guided through the exhibition space. Like Adams's *Epping II*, the pamphlets leave multiple lanes through which to navigate the exhibition.

According to Harris (2015: 42), having multiple lanes through which to access information is critical to prevent the domination of a single overarching narrative. Ingold (2000) elaborates on this point by distinguishing between the activity of mapping as purely following a route and mapping as "wayfinding". Wayfinding is a journeying through space, in which one discovers as one goes along (Ingold, 2000). It is an open-ended process which leaves room for multiple understandings (Ingold, 2000). My aim with the pamphlets is not to explain the work and set out a specific 'route' for visitors. Rather, to present them with the footsteps of my own journey as stepping stones for their own wayfinding. My exhibition, like Adams's *Desire Lines*

exhibition and Kentridge's *The Head & the Load*, calls the audience to find their own way among stories mapped from various perspectives.



Figure 3.3.1: Daniel Retief, *Spore in die vloere* 2024 (Video; 8min:14sec). Screenshot: Daniel Retief.



Figure 3.3.2: *Spore in die vloere* at the opening of *Familie spore* on 8 February 2025. Photo: Lara Betz.



Figure 3.4: Pamphlet handout for the exhibition *Familie spore*. Designed by Daniel Retief. Photo: Daniel Retief.

3.2.3 Scale and Perspective

Adams's *Desire Lines* exhibition employs scale to contrast an outsider's perspective with an insider's perspective (AIC, 2022a: 38:52-40:00). Some works map areas up close while others depict them from a vast distance: *Epping II*, for example, immerses visitors within an insider's world, while other works such as *Langa* (see figure 2.11) take a bird's-eye view from above, providing an outsider's perspective from a Google Maps image (AIC, 2022a: 38:52-40:00). Adams contrasts these perspectives to explore the difference between the public façade and the overlooked private life of his community (AIC, 2022b; Malik, 2022). My practice, on the other hand, complicates how places are accessed by presenting an insider-outsider's perspective.

Variation in scale and detail within *Familie spore* reflects my position as an insider-outsider. Some of the aspects of Welvanpas are mapped up close, while others are presented at a distance. Notably, *Spore in die vloere* is created from photographs I was able to take while visiting Ouma. The work takes a detailed and close-up view of an area which is familiar to me. In

contrast, *Kortpad agter die huis* (see figure 2.10) presents a distant aerial view, with its pathway barely discernible, as discussed in Chapter Two. *Kanetfontein* (see figure 1.2) lies in between these two extremes. I have never visited the farm Kanetfontein and the work notably lacks any representation of the farm's physical features. It only features fragments of a map of the farm. Despite this, I have heard a great deal about the farm and became broadly familiar with it. The work *Kanetfontein* is therefore detailed and includes several descriptions of the farm.

Unlike Adams's *Desire Lines*, I do not solely focus on mapping physical traces. There is a contrast between physical traces and representations across my body of work. Through collagraphs, the physical traces of objects are present within my works. While photographs are not physical traces, they capture traces of particular moments in time. *Opspoor* (see figure 2.15), for example, contains photographs of a dilapidated building on the farm as I encountered it at the time. The work thus presents traces of my encounter with the old building. In contrast, the text and topographic maps found in some of the works are a step removed from the physicality of the place, as is the case with *Kanetfontein*. Maps and text are representations of the place rather than impressions of it. This variation in proximity reflects my position, being on the inside in some respects but also being an outsider in others (Kydd-Williams, 2019).

The tension between impression and representation perhaps exemplifies the contrast between Ethington and Toyosawa (2015) and Ingold's (2000) argument. For Ethington and Toyosawa (2015), deep mapping *represents* places as the past inscribes meaning into them. Ingold (2000), on the other hand, argues that meaning is not inscribed into a place, being a mere addition to it, but rather develops as an *impression* of it. As an insider-outsider, both these viewpoints have validity. I rely on representations – the meanings other people attribute to Welvanpas, but also develop my own impression of the place from experiencing it first-hand. I do not focus on one particular aspect or individual perspective within my body of work. Like *The Head & the Load*, I shift between areas of focus and value several stories of a place rather than a single narrative.

The Head & the Load uses shifts in scale to move the audience's perspective from broader to more particular stories (McCoy, 2019: 6). Kentridge states that they were “looking both for the broad strokes, the broad shapes of what happened, but also for the surprising thoughts, for particular turns of phrases; for the idiosyncratic” (Kentridge Studio, 2018: n.p.). Visually, layers of shadows within the theatre piece bring depth and focus to its various components.

The Head & the Load consists of various fragments presented simultaneously on stage. Actors, dancers, and musicians move across the stage in a procession along the spine of New York's

Park Avenue Armory's Drill Hall (Maltz-Leca, 2018; Krauss, 2019). Projected backgrounds further present fragments of maps, photographs, and text about the First World War. As performers move across the stage, they cast shadows upon the projected backgrounds (figure 3.5). Moving in the breadth of the stage, either closer or further away from the light sources, performers cast different sizes of shadows (The Centre for the Less Good Idea, 2023: 20min:56sec). A layering of shadows occurs as both larger and smaller shadows operate within a scene (McCoy, 2019: 122). This allows the focus to shift as larger shadows draw the attention to certain characters or moments within scenes. *The Head & the Load* does not focus on a particular character (protagonist) and resists presenting a single perspective on the First World War (Kentridge, 2020). Rather, it presents a fragmented history, with the focus shifting from one fragment to the next on the stage (Kentridge, 2020).



Figure 3.5: The opening night of *The Head & the Load* at the Park Avenue Armory, New York, in December 2018. The scene includes multiple performers spaced out across the width of the stage to cast variously sized shadows. Photo: Stephanie Berger. Source: William Kentridge Studio.

Similarly, *Familie spore* includes some works which map more broadly while others focus on more specific locations or aspects of Welvanpas. *Bovlei se mense* focuses on the entire Bovlei area whereas *Opspoor* focuses on a specific building. Likewise, I do not focus on one particular

aspect but shift between various facets of the farm to break away from centralising one aspect. Every print presents only a part of Welvanpas's historical depth, and together the prints form a fragmented (incomplete) map of its past. A network of various facets is drawn together and left to the visitors to navigate. Unlike *The Head & the Load*, however, *Familie spore* presents fragments obtained through personal experience.

Familie spore presents the many facets I have encountered, reflecting my perspective on Welvanpas's complex set of meanings. The exhibition maps the historical depth of Welvanpas as I relate closely to some aspects of the farm while being less familiar with others: my close relation to Ouma, versus my distant relation to Oom Manus; the many stories I hear about the farm from Ouma, versus the little I know about Oom Manus's life (see figure 2.8). Some things are presented with many layers, being richly documented and familiar – as is the case with *Bovlei se mense*. Other aspects are elusive and are vaguely mapped – like in the case of *Verlore spore*. Some aspects are concrete and are located on a map, while others are infused with imagination – like *Die wolf van Welvanpas* (see figure 2.4). *Familie spore* also maps my sentimental attachment to the farm (like the old farmhouse with its floors and paintings in works such as *Spore in die vloere*), versus my uncomfortable relation to the farm's history of slavery in works such as *Opspoor*.

Familie spore maps out my journey exploring the historical depth of Welvanpas. Ingold (2000) describes mapping as a story, a re-enactment of one's process of wayfinding. Like stories, mapping presents the stepping stones, one's footsteps, for the future journeys of others (Ingold, 2000). *Familie spore* is my story, it presents the footsteps of my journey as I traverse and excavate Welvanpas. Like all mapping projects, the task is never complete (McLucas, 2000). It presents a point of departure from which numerous other journeys can be taken (figure 3.6.1 to 3.6.4).



Figure 3.6.1: Entrance to *Familie spore* with pamphlets available to visitors. Photograph taken on the opening night, 8 February 2025. Photo: Daniel Retief.



Figure 3.6.2: Visitors navigating the exhibition space of *Familie spore* during the opening night. Photo: Leroy Payne.



Figure 3.6.3: Visitors engaging with the *Familie spore* exhibition on the opening night, with some using a pamphlet as a guide. Photo: Leroy Payne.



Figure 3.6.4: Visitors interacting with and discussing the artworks of *Familie spore*, mapping out their own journeys. Photograph taken on the opening night. Photo: Leroy Payne.

CONCLUSION

Arriving at a Point of Departure

This research project explores strategies of mapping the historical depth of a place from an insider-outsider perspective. I explore the historical depth of Welvanpas, attempting to navigate its many facets from my insider-outsider position and perspective. Through the method of deep mapping, I draw together the fragments I can gather. I visualise how they connect, diverge, and contrast, unravelling the multiple meanings that Welvanpas holds. The resultant exhibition, *Familie spore*, reflects my journey. It presents the many traces and pathways I have encountered on Welvanpas. It provides a map, the stepping stones, to the dense meanings it holds. In this context, I argue that places cannot be defined by a single narrative, but that they hold a multiplicity of meanings.

Welvanpas's past is deeply intertwined with my family and is a part of who I am. Having the family name, Daniel Retief, I am proud of who I am and where my family comes from. But I also recognise that our past cannot be defined by one grand narrative. It is tempting to think of myself as descending from a great heritage deeply rooted in Welvanpas. But as history has shown, multiple times, there lies danger in validating ourselves through our heritage. In a world of diverse people, it is necessary to recognise the nuanced and diverse nature of the past that has shaped us. This project is my attempt at mapping a multifaceted story of Welvanpas, exploring its historical depth through the "common, untold, unnoticed stories" (Reitz, 2022: 11).

Using deep mapping, I bring together several voices telling various stories. I draw together photographs, archival material, and maps to track the stories across time and space. Through printmaking, these elements are integrated into a montage of stories. In some cases, printmaking's ability to layer materials is used to map a palimpsest of histories. In other cases, its serial nature is used to storyboard history. The strategies of layering and storyboarding complement one another, as the former condenses the multiple meanings of Welvanpas, while the latter unpacks it through narration. Mapping at various scales, I visualise my journey through a network of people and places. As argued in Chapter Two, my perspective and experiences as an insider-outsider complicate the idea that places are simply layered with history. Misperceptions, absences, spectres, and imagination distort Welvanpas's sense of historical depth. I acknowledge these as unavoidable and shape-shifting aspects within my

project and embrace them within the terrain I am mapping. Through these strategies, the complex and nuanced nature of the historical depth of Welvanpas are mapped out.

Recently, however, the meaning of Welvanpas took on a new dimension for me. In December 2024 Welvanpas was sold by the Retief family. Within the next two years, the Retief family have to vacate the farm on which they have lived for generations. The decision comes with great sadness since it brings significant losses. I started my project as a response to Welvanpas, mapping over and through its existing layers of meaning. As the farm disappears from the picture, it raises the question of how much of our sense of place is connected to its physical location. Without the farm itself, *Familie spore* becomes an archive, a map of pathways through the memories lodged within the minds of me and my family.

Familie spore presents the network of traces, tracks, and the metaphorical footsteps of people's legacy on Welvanpas. As an open-ended conversation, it leaves viewers to navigate this network for themselves and map out their own paths. Welvanpas is not static but continues to grow and develop as new meanings continue to expand from it. In the telling of stories, we may keep places and their past alive.

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