

Political imaginings in the visual art of South African Indians

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During times of pain, trauma and disempowerment, the creative field of fine art affords an opportunity for communication and self-empowerment. In the 1980s, which was one of the most turbulent decades in South Africa's political history, art students from the University of Durban-Westville used their creativity to engage with these struggles. The artworks presented here are a small sample extracted from a broader corpus of work, approximating 1 000 pieces, which have been identified over a research period of four years and which have yet to be located within a more inclusive space in the art history of our country. This article attempts to engage with this marginalisation in our art history and intends to bring into the dialogue those South African artists who have been consigned to invisibility. This dialogue and narrative are vital nationally as South Africa embarks on the process of regeneration and affirms both national and cultural pride in the South African histories and heritage. Further, at a time when the South African Indian community has just celebrated their 150th year in this country, the space has arrived through the post-colonial discourse to write back to the centre those who have been consigned to the peripheries of our society.

Key words: Indian, political identity, resistance,

'n Politieke voorstelling in die visuele kuns van Suid-Afrikaanse Indiërs

In tye wanneer pyn, trauma en ontmagtiging ervaar word, bied die skeppende gebied van die beeldende kunste geleentheid vir kommunikasie en selfbemagtiging. In die 1980s, wat een van die onstuimigste dekades in Suid-Afrika se politieke geskiedenis was, het studente van die Universiteit van Durban-Westville hulle kreatiwiteit gebruik om tot hierdie stryd toe te tree. Die kunswerke wat hier verteenwoordig is, is 'n klein keur uit 'n groter werkskorpus van ongeveer 1 000 kunswerke wat in die loop van vier jaar se navorsing geïdentifiseer is en waaraan daar nog 'n meer inklusiewe plek in ons land se kunsgegeskiedenis toegeken moet word. Hierdie artikel het dit ten doel om met hierdie marginalisering in die geskiedenis van ons kuns in gesprek te tree en die Suid-Afrikaanse kunstenaars wat tot onsigbaarheid gedoem is, te betrek. Hierdie gespreksvoering en narratief is van nasionale belang noudat Suid-Afrika met die proses van hernuwing begin het, en bevestig sowel die nasionale as die kulturele trots op die Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedenis en erfenis. Buitendien, op 'n tydstip dat die Suid-Afrikaanse Indiërgemeenskap pas hulle 150ste jaar in hierdie land gevier het, is die ruimte danksy die postkoloniale diskoers geskep om diegene wat na die randgebied van ons samelewing uitgedryf is, weer terug te bring na die middelpunt daarvan.

Sleutelwoorde: Indiër, politieke identiteit, weerstand

Cultural critic, Ziauddin Sardar (Araeen et al. 2002: 11) proposes that not only do we make history, but we are also made by our history. He states that individuals and societies constantly move in history and use it as a reservoir of experience, allegiance and ideas that craft identities and outlooks. However, Pather (in *Scratches on the Face*, 2008:8) avers that, conventionally, history as taught and studied is hopelessly selective. He says there is as much at stake for those excluded from narratives as there is for those with interests inscribed in them. In South Africa, our recent past is a sobering reminder of ways in which slips and silences in history can empower and marginalise people (ibid). The post-apartheid utopian vision of an integrated society has necessitated the writing of an inclusive history imparting a sense of coherence and integrity to the nascent "rainbow nation" (ibid).

Post-apartheid South Africa bears witness to considerable portions of histories yet to be remembered. Cultural production or cultural activity during the days of apartheid has not been systematically documented in the post-apartheid years and has, as a result, been marginalised.

The birth of the *new* South Africa has scripted the demands of a new country seeking out new strategies for engagement, new identities, new histories and new images. The Indian community in South Africa is one such community whose general historical narrative is well-documented, yet whose art history is minimal and almost, one could argue, invisible. Where are these artists? Who are these artists? What kinds of artwork are they creating? And how do we create spaces for them in this new art history that is being written?

Marginalising this site of art making could result in one of two things. First, that the memory of cultural activity would be forgotten, or, second, that it would never enter the public domain. However, Edward Said, in *Invention, Memory and Place* (2000:191) proposes that the “art of memory”, for the purposes of liberation and co-existence between societies, can be a potent instrument. Despite some attempts to produce an inclusive memory, like the *Tributaries* exhibition (1985) or the *Revisions* exhibition (2004) or more recently the *Scratches on the Face* exhibition (2008/9), the visual fine art production of the Indian community in South Africa has not been dealt with in a meaningful, critical or challenging way. Groundbreaking texts like Sue Williamson’s *Resistance Art in South Africa* in 1989 does not include any of these images either and creating spaces for these works in a post-apartheid South Africa could reawaken the memory of artist/activist interrogating what it meant to be an Indian South African living through apartheid and indeed what it means to be an Indian living in post-apartheid South Africa, as well. At this point in our history when the Indian population have just celebrated their 150th year in South Africa, there is still no coherent response to cultural production reflecting the South African Indian experience.

The aim of this article is to expose and reflect on the polemics and presumptions around issues of race and identity that still form part of the cultural debate in post-apartheid South Africa. The article will focus on the visual art produced by South African Indian artists who graduated from the University of Durban-Westville (UDW),¹ which was established through the Extension of University Education Act² of 1959.

The artworks discussed in this article were produced in the turbulent 1980s, at the height of apartheid and amidst many states of emergency. Some of these works were never exhibited and are subsequently largely unknown in South Africa. These images are responses to the unique experiment of apartheid, and readings of these works emerge from an embedded collective memory. These visual explorations are invaluable in understanding the silences of the past and critical in opening up an inclusive dialogue on ideas about race and the construction of identity in a pluralistic post-apartheid South Africa.

Strategies in constructing identity

Since 1994, South Africa has undergone a radical transformation and socially constructed identities are still being contested and redefined. This debate around the construction of identity is being extended to include identity discourse about ethnicity and race in minority groups around the world. Redefining and positioning the constructs of identity and the notions of displacement and marginalisation at the forefront of the transformatory agenda form part of the process of transformation.

As the country moves from the legacy of an apartheid state towards a nation-building state, it requires a constant negotiating of identity. This process of nation-building occurs against the historical background of colonialism and apartheid in which it was embedded in a context defined by power relations. As a result of these power relations, the marginalised or minorities

have great difficulty in shaking off a legacy of disenfranchisement and expelling feelings of powerlessness. Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin (2000: 192) have valuable insight here when they highlight the postcolonial framework, which essentially illuminates the effects of colonialism on the recording of history. They expose the contestations in the underlying assumptions of identity, place and displacement and reveal the inherent dominant ideologies of the coloniser. According to postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha (2008: 90), this experience of dislocation speaks directly to the condition of the marginalised and alienated and in this regard mirrors the South African Indian community.

The social, cultural and political construction of identity in this country is fragmented because of the plural, fractured, multicultural society. As Govinden posits (2008: 34), the tendency to maintain separate identities in the post-apartheid era is ironically celebrated for the very freedom it affords to do this. She adds that the slogan *One nation – Many cultures* creates a sense of unity-in-diversity and national identity, and is embraced by the present government. However, with the use of this slogan, the African National Congress appeals to the idea of a unitary nation, yet, ironically, at the same time it foregrounds the different racial population groups created during apartheid and thereby reinforces racial difference, which impacts significantly on identity construction. Further, the bureaucratic requirements of this country still demand that we as a people define ourselves through the labels of African/Black, Coloured, Indian/Asian or White – interestingly without a category for “South African”. Hence, in South Africa, expressions of identity were and often are still linked to the specificity of communities living in an oppressive society, and created South Africans who are still label-carrying citizens today.

The impact of this instrument of racial definition on the people of South Africa is significant. The many laws of apartheid institutionalized racial divisions and gave South Africans their identity. This imposed identity, whether racial or ethnic, objectified the people in this country by denying South Africans the right to define who they were themselves. In this way, the apartheid government dispossessed its citizens of their own identity. The implications of this dislocated sense of identity for the South African Indian will be explored later in the interpretation of the artworks.

The apartheid regime harnessed various tools to ensure a separatist state where even the notion of “one” people was denied. One of these tools was the segregation of education, where each race and ethnic group was afforded its own site for tertiary education. For example, the Coloured South Africans attended the University of the Western Cape and the Tshivenda, Xitsonga and Sesotho-speaking South Africans attended the University of the North. For the Indians it was the University of Durban-Westville. In order to appreciate the content and context of the visual articulation discussed in this article, it is imperative to position the university in its unique context.

The University of Durban-Westville: a site of protest

Amidst growing pressure for access to tertiary education by Indians in Natal, the University of Durban-Westville was established at the height of political repression in 1960 (Oosthuizen et al, 1981: 32) This coincidentally happened to be exactly 100 years after the first Indians arrived in Durban on the east coast of South Africa. It was established as the University College for Indians in disused naval barracks on Salisbury Island in the Durban Bay. More colourfully, in the parlance of resistance politics, it was also known as a “bush college” or a “tribal/ethnic” university (Oosthuizen et al, 1981: 35-37). These terms all referred not only to the institutions

that limited their student intake to a particular race or group, but also to institutions that were “characterised by closedness, authoritarianism and hostility to any innovation that did not emanate from the top” (Morrell 1991: 53-54). Morrell called this university a state university where “styles of management reflect state bureaucracy and University administrators are known to co-operate with the SAP and the security policy” and further because it “embraces the world view of that state”. At the ethnic universities, slogans such as *Liberation before Education*, *People’s Education*, and *Intellectual Home of the Left* popularised and symbolised the struggle against apartheid education (Reddy 1991:3). As an already marginalised community, the isolation of the geographic location of the campus, that is, on an island, further marginalised the Indian students and enabled them to fully experience the extent and parameters of racial and political segregation.

Ten years later, in 1971, the university was granted academic autonomy (Oosthuizen et al, 1981: 49) and was relocated to a hilltop in Westville, which further isolated the campus from the centre of Durban and from its target population. Being locked on that hill gave impetus to the projection of the university as a “bush college”, a popular reference to this university. Students attended this university under protest and it soon became a political hotspot in the South African landscape of protest and resistance politics. These developments were a central feature of UDW life for most of its early years. In the 1980s, this strategically isolated location also allowed the police to establish a presence on the campus to monitor political activities and often brutalise student protestors (Ganess 2011, Govender 2011). Hence, at UDW, like at other education sites around the world, the consequences of a position of struggle were severe – expulsions, bannings, detentions, tear gassing, beatings and closure of the university were commonplace, as noted by Professor Jairam Reddy (1991: 3), who was the first non-white Indian rector of the university. In his words, the “campus became an area of free reign for the security police and its allies”. The Black Consciousness movement, for example, made its presence felt on campus even in the early days and protest actions and boycotts were already visible in 1972. The Indian students at this institution were also “very critical of the white society which provided them with education on a separate basis ... by discriminating against them in many spheres because they were Indian (Oosthuizen et al. 1981: 161).

In protest against apartheid, students and some staff at UDW, for many years functioned within a spirit of non-cooperation which prevailed among the Indian community in general (Pillay 2011). One example of such noncooperation was the boycotting of graduation ceremonies by most graduands themselves, while another was the refusal of Fine Art students to exhibit in Durban. Showing their work, according to Pather (in *Scratches on the Face*, 2008: 10), would have lent credibility to the apartheid education policy of separate yet equal education. Professor Olivier, the first rector of the institution, appealed to the cultural identity of the Indian community, thereby positioning the South African Indian as a separate entity and thus foregrounding the post-colonial dialectic relationship between “us” and the “rest”.

The university highlighted its difference by designing a curriculum catering specifically for the Indian students. In this way it attempted to support the Indian community and to curry favour with that community, as it operated within a diaspora locale. Oosthuizen (1981: 125-130) explains that the establishment of particular departments was well placed to develop meaningful relationships with the Indian community. One such department was Speech and Drama, which included in its scope of traditional teachings opportunities to study Eastern and Indian theatre, Sanskrit drama and classical Indian dance. The Music department, teaching in a Western paradigm, offered Indian music history and offered tuition in some Indian wind instruments as well. The Fine Art Department included in its programme the unique study of

Indian art history, including Buddhist, Hindu and Islamic art, as well a unique module on South African Hindu temple architecture. Other subjects on campus with a distinct Indian flavour were Indian philosophy, Oriental Studies and a variety of Indian languages, which complemented the Indian ethos of the university and theoretically appeased the opposing Indian community at large (Oosthuizen et al. 1981: 125-130).

However, the ethnic nature of the institution was deplored by the very community it was intended to serve, as Dr G.M. Naicker, President of the South African Indian Congress, said:

...fundamentally the institution of a tribal university is a bad and retrogressive concept. The Indian people have every right to fear this monstrosity... We do not regard the tribal university as a place of learning; indeed it is a centre for the indoctrination of the Indian mind (with Nationalist ideologies)" (Daily News, *Natal Indians still reject varsity*, 19 November 1960).

But the agenda was evidently, as Said (1978: 36) points out, the acquisition of knowledge of subject races in order to make their management easy and profitable – an increasingly profitable dialectic of information and control.

Control was a critical tool that authorities attempted to implement at the university. At UDW, power was wielded by “Admin”³ (Morrell 191: 54-56), which had arrogated power to itself and concentrated this power in itself. On many occasions, Admin would “visit” the Fine Art Department in a covert attempt to monitor the creative output of the students. However, during the 1980s when the national political climate changed, greater militancy erupted in the student body and any attempt to control their art practice proved to be futile.⁴ It is interesting to note that, during this time, power structures at the university were undemocratic, highly centralised and bureaucratic (Morrell 1991: 52-53).

Tools of resistance

It was during the political uprisings in the late 1970s and 1980s that students at UDW, like at other universities around the country, frequently expressed their solidarity with the political climate via numerous mass meetings resulting in varied forms of resistance. Hence, student protest action was commonplace and in the 1980s, particularly, the frenzied political landscape gave impetus to the creative energy of the fine art students who used socio-political subject matter as a natural outcome of this experience. It was commonplace to use social trauma and abjection as subject matter and some staff members encouraged students to engage with material that was accessible and close to their personal experience.

Many of these artists/art students asserted their political and resistance identity by trying to break down the physical and psychological walls built around them. The artworks display their determined efforts to resist apartheid divisions and depict a more unified vision of the South African landscape. This direction was given impetus by the call from the African National Congress directing all artistic energy and output into the struggle. It was therefore commonplace for art to be used as a weapon of the struggle, where a culture of resistance was used to rouse and embolden the oppressed. This direction vilified the artistic output of many art students who positioned themselves as cultural workers accepting their social and political responsibility as artists.

Imaginings of resistance

The following discussion of artworks was extrapolated from the process of engaging with these artists over a period of three years. The overarching research project was concerned with interviewing 42 artists who had graduated from the University of Durban-Westville's Department of Fine Art. The artworks produced by these artists have been documented and photographed systematically and number approximately 1 000. Thematic considerations were identified in this sample of artworks created in the 1980s, resulting in three broad categories, which will be outlined below. However, within these categories there are subcategories that will be explored in the following analyses.

In the art production of UDW the thematic considerations move through a spectrum of identities and their mediated constructions. These themes, as mentioned briefly above, include a gendered identity, a resistance or political identity and a religious or cultural identity. The works presented in this article and produced during the 1980s fall in the ambit of examining a resistance or political identity that considers specific issues, as they are related to poverty, resistance politics and concerns of dehumanisation. This selection highlights the period of the 1980s when the country experienced two states of emergency and the ensuing chaos and turbulence fuelled the artists of the country and the art students at UDW. However, it is worth noting that the student output reflected a great awareness of liberation imagery and offered more than the militant rhetoric of clenched fists and barbed wire.

The art practitioners

The artists selected for this article graduated from the University of Durban-Westville during the 1980s. Some of these artists practise as artists today, while others are no longer engaged in directed and concentrated art-making, but function on the peripheries of the art community in South Africa. Clive Pillay who was an activist in the structures of the African National Congress, is still a political activist who is involved in social reform in the Indian township of Chatsworth in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. Ujala Sewpersad was an educator for 17 years, after which she resigned in order to pursue a career as an artist. Rufus Lutchmigadu and Dianne Naicker are educators in Port Shepstone, south of Durban, who are involved in the practising of art only to fulfil the social needs of the community designing and painting backdrops for theatre productions and banners required for various religious activities. The artworks of these artists fall in the broad thematic considerations of the political/resistance identity and various subcategories, as highlighted in the discussion below.

Poverty

In the artwork of printmaker Clive Pillay, the concepts of a resistance or political identity are mediated through his interrogation of the political dialogues as they occurred in the country. With a body of work that reflects both symbolic and social realist imagery, much of his explorations were the outcome of many photographic shoots that documented the ravages of apartheid (Pillay, 2009). In *A South African Stamp* (figure 1) we are presented with an image focused on the plight of abandoned young children living in dilapidated buses and shacks.



Figure 1
Clive Pillay, *A South African Stamp* 1984, screen print, private collection.

Traditionally, a stamp provides the receiver with a brief view of the country of its origin. South Africa would generally depict the presidents and the flora and fauna. However, in *The South African Stamp*, Pillay used this image as a tool to create awareness of the appalling conditions in which our children lived, abandoned by parents, family and society. A glimpse of a bright future is suggested with the slightest hint of light and life that awaits the children beyond the tragedy of their simple, stark shack dwelling. His skilful use of the medium of silkscreen is successful in foregrounding the plight of these children and together they align in setting up a powerful indictment of the social order of this country during the 1980s.

In that period it was commonplace to find art forms inextricably bound to politics; in this regard often used and viewed as a weapon of the struggle. Hence, creativity in all its diversity could not, in South Africa, be abstracted from its particular context.

To resist

Another print by Pillay (figure 2) illustrates the political theme of resistance. As mentioned earlier, security police and state spies operated covertly on the campus. As a result, many students and staff were often intimidated by the interrogators of the apartheid state. In *Untitled*, the image of an interrogation presents a security policeman focusing directly on the viewer with a cool, uncompromising glance. This image recalls many other similarly styled images from the same time frame. Perhaps one of the most recognisable images is *Interrogators* by Paul Stopforth.



Figure 2
Clive Pillay, *Untitled*, 1986, screen print, private collection.

Subsequently, as highlighted by Professor Reddy (1991: 3), the university became a crucial site of struggle within the ambit of education in particular and the liberation movement in general. From the moment of its conception this university was seen by the Indian community as an instrument for the implementation of the government's policy of separate development aligned to the apartheid ideologies of this country. And ever since then it consistently challenged the monolithic apartheid order. Challenging the system had various consequences, as reflected in the work of Ujala Sewpersad (figure 3).



Figure 3
Ujala Sewpersad, *Detainee*, 1980s date unknown, oil on canvas, private collection.

Sewpersad produced many paintings with imagery of detainees that was extrapolated from the experienced reality of the many activists at the university, including her own. Once again, the notion of artist/activist is revived by these works as critical reflections on the political situation by artists who were directly affected by apartheid, yet absent from the art historical narrative of this country. These artists sought to transform their communities and were instrumental in affecting many changes in their respective townships. Their work speaks to a broader South African community rather than just their Indian community and could therefore be engaged as part of the greater awareness of art making from within minority communities.

The third category identified is related to issues of dehumanisation (see figure 4), which is directly related to a brutalised society.

Dehumanised



Figure 4
Rufus Latchmigadu, *Untitled*, 1988, cement, private collection.

These sculptured heads of death by Rufus Latchmigadu represent a tactile manipulation of the South African society. The reflected angst and simultaneous pathos are stimuli that cause the face to contort into disembodied reflections of forms that once reflected humanity. This piece comments fleetingly on the murders later known as the Sharpeville Six. For Latchmigadu, “the real struggles behind those apartheid killings are often lost and through overexposure death becomes glamorised by history” (23 August 2011).

The images emerge from the rough-hued concrete reflecting on the burden of death in the turbulent climate of the 1980s. The dehumanisation of the apartheid regime created moments of liminal conflict embedded within the art production of these students who practised their art on the periphery of the South African art world. Their position of marginality questions what Stuart Hall (Araeen et al. 2002: 74) calls “belongingness” within the new inclusive South Africa. He points out that national heritage is a powerful source in creating such meaning for communities and those who cannot see themselves reflected in its mirror cannot properly “belong”. For

Hall, heritage is a discursive practice in which a nation constructs for itself a collective social memory. In this regard, the construction is under constant reconstruction and its meaning can only be known through the objects, artefacts and artworks that eventually symbolise the essential characteristics and values of the nation. Within this construct the role of inclusivity in the new South Africa is an imperative. Artworks and artists who are seen as valuable commodities in representing their nation and history ought not then to be excluded from the greater collective narrative.

South Africa's art history seems to have suppressed much of the experiences and creative outputs of the Indian artists. As Sardar (Araeen et al. 2002: 11) points out, most of human experience shows the interplay of power politics. Perhaps this is also the case with the dialogue of our art history.

Dianne Latchmigadu, who graduated from UDW in 1989, also located her creative voice within the political ambit of South Africa, focusing on the dehumanising effects the political climate had on a traumatised society. Fear and mistrust were common features of this society and in figure 5 she explores these concepts alongside the symbolic notion of a university and a country in transition, as evidenced in the crossing-over in the use of the bridge.

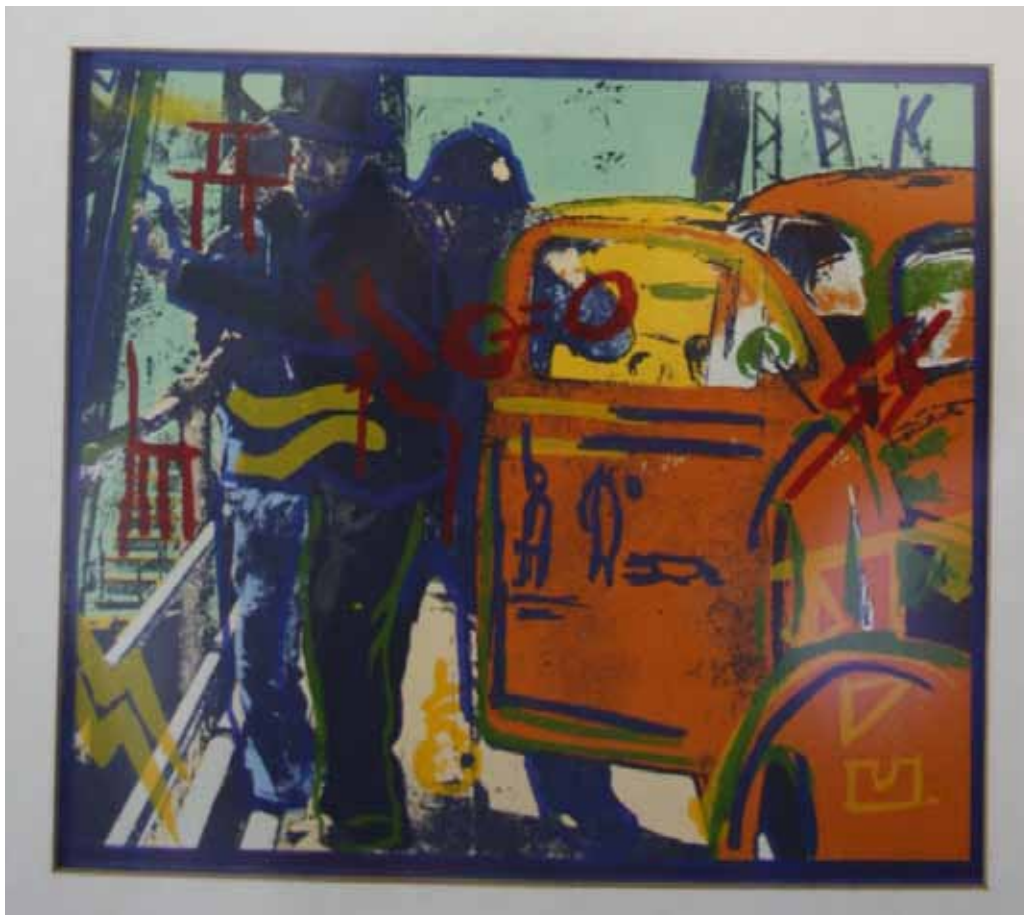


Figure 5
Dianne Latchmigadu, *Untitled*, 1989, silkscreen, private collection.

This diptych by Latchmigadu in 1989 expresses the brutality of the 1980s through the commonplace harassment and detention without trial that were experienced by activists throughout the country. The image emerged from personal experiences with police during the 1980s, who would often stop students at UDW's boom gates and search their cars and bags, and confiscate the art students' main tool for commentary, their cameras. The web of deceit and injustice of the nationalist regime permeated all corners of the country and in a time and space when the notion of "innocence" was inconceivable; the outcome of a position of activism had severe implications. The silkscreen is overlaid with impermeable symbols as can be seen in the detail (figure 6) reinforcing the chaotic times that many described as "a country on fire". Here, pale hued and simply constructed images are surrounded by and embedded in a blood red background that implicitly draws attention to the brutality of that time in our history. These symbolic, somewhat primitive, renditions also "hark back to different forms of execution throughout history" (Latchmigadu 2011).



Figure 6
Dianne Latchmigadu, *Untitled*, 1989, silkscreen, private collection.

The traumatic events of our history as represented in the works of these Indian artists question their position of marginality in the post-apartheid South African art narrative. It is perhaps Homi Bhabha's (2008: 7) suggestion that the "boundary becomes the place from which something begins its presencing" that will generate a space for the Indian artist in the new histories that will be written. Furthermore, it is from the perspective of the minority that the questions of cultural inclusivity and historical transformation become critical sites of engagement in the new dispensation.

Heritaged vs. heritage-less

The visual art discussed in this article reflects just a small body of work from a more substantial corpus produced by South African artists of Indian origin. However, owing to the debilitating effects of segregation, job reservation and the cultural boycott, these artists were unable to sustain careers as professional artists in this country. The position of resistance taken by students of the Fine Art Department at the University of Durban-Westville also did not afford them public exposure and turned them into internal exiles. As a result of denying credibility to the institutions and the status quo within the structures of empowerment in the art world, they exiled themselves from a space of contribution which for them would demand exhibiting and thereby collaborating with the system. The act of excluding these artists from contemporary art discourse has serious

implications as it reproduces the exclusionary manner in which these artists were educated and in which they practised during the apartheid era. This is an attempt to write back those who have been excluded into the contemporary arts and cultural discourse of South Africa.

Minority groups the world over have much to lose in allowing their histories to recede in the construction of a national history. There should be a revision of the writing of history. As Hall suggests, we ought to rewrite the margins into the centre and the outside into the inside (in Araeen et al. 2002: 80). This would ensure critical dialogue and inclusivity within the globalised world. The history of South Africa, having marginalised this group of art practitioners creates a new South Africa whose minority histories have been written out of history and glossed over without any serious attention. This exclusionary activity then, as Sardar (in Araeen et al. 2002: 11) proposed, “makes” our history, constructs our identities and determines allegiances in this country. Hence, in some groups an inclusive art history will empower while in other groups it denies and renders those groups invisible to the broader narrative of the country’s history.

Through the process of conducting this research the act of remembering has proved to be a critical aspect. However, the act of remembering is as Bhabha (2008: 90) states, never a quiet moment of introspection or retrospection. In fact, he says that “it is a painful re-membering, a putting together of the dismembered past” to make sense of the present. For those interviewees it was a remembering of a chaotic yet powerful sense of identity, a profound sense of cultural activism and the concomitant impression of racism (conversations with the artists). The remembering also included the conditions of marginalisation and alienation experienced under the surveillance of the signs of the times, namely the security police and many covert political operations conducted on the campus

Currently, as we speak of a “rainbow nation”, we realise that it is constantly shifting ground for the South African identity in general and the South African *Indian* identity in particular. These shifts exist alongside the dramatic transformations occurring in this country. Although apartheid South Africa located its citizenry through the device of race, which reinforced a sense of homogenised *Indianness*, post-apartheid South Africa locates its citizenry in the discourse of multiculturalism, yet still covets race as a tool in segregating and pigeonholing the diverse people of this land.

So, how do we ensure that our own personal narratives survive in the heritage of the new South Africa? Cultural theorist Stuart Hall suggests that we first ought to have a good idea of who *we* are. We secondly need to ensure the survival of the “creative explosion by contemporary practitioners” from minority communities in all the branches of art. Third, we need to preserve the record of the “migrant experience itself”. In the fourth place, we must make sure that the younger generation has access to the cultural repertoire of their traditions of origins and “can understand and practice them from the outside”. Only then will we have the requisite “cultural capital” and resources for our own heritage and be able to engage with other traditions (Araeen et al. 2002: 14).

The works discussed in this article seem to have resisted the racial definition that was prescribed by the apartheid government and implemented in the gate-keeping structures of the art world. This body of work could stimulate debate on what it means to imagine oneself as Indian, African Indian, Indian South African, South African Indian or South African and could also be remembered as a part of a broader corpus of visual articulation responsible for shifting consciousness, effecting change and tracking the social consequences of apartheid. These works need to be examined as part of the neglected histories in postcolonial communities. It is in these

spaces that the invention of a historical narrative could be located and the development of a new artistic idiom could be considered. Unless we open up a dialogue for more critical engagement in the narratives of the numerous minorities in this country the legacy of the separateness of apartheid will still bear heavily upon this country and the cultural capital will soon no longer be able to find expression.

Finally, this paper is part of a broader study embedded in “memory work” and viewed as a reclamation project that is sensitive to this new historical moment in South Africa. The artworks of the South African Indians need to move out of the ethnic enclaves within which they are located and move into the mainstream avenues, thereby ensuring that the communities’ creative output remains properly “heritaged” and is not left heritage-less⁵ in the new South Africa.

Notes

1. The present dispensation implemented a programme for the transformation of tertiary institutions which led to the merging of tertiary institutions nationally. The University of Durban-Westville has been integrated into the new University of KwaZulu-Natal in 2004, as a result of the merger between the University of Durban-Westville and the University of Natal. The apartheid implementation of a strategy of separate development was partly responsible for keeping the provocative art produced at UDW out of the public domain.
2. This Act implemented by the Nationalist government led to the establishment of racially based institutions that were an extension of the separatist and exclusionary act of the apartheid regime.
3. This Act implemented by the Nationalist government led to the establishment of racially based institutions that were an extension of the separatist and exclusionary act of the apartheid regime.
4. From personal discussion with graduates from the Fine Art Department.
5. The terms “heritage” and “heritage-less” are borrowed from Stuart Hall (in Araeen et al., 2002:81).

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