

Avitha Sooful: Allegorical embodiments of the local landscape

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Abstract

This article offers a critical reading of a number of artworks by Avitha Sooful, mainly dating from the period 1980 to 2004. Readings of other relevant works that illustrate either continuities or disjunctures with her artistic practices and world views are included. This is part of a larger study that investigated the constructs of identity, place and displacement in the artworks of female artists who were employed at Vaal University of Technology (VUT) during that time.¹ The first ten years of democracy and transformation in South Africa tacitly underpin the scope of the article, which focuses on Sooful's cultural exchange and interchange with the changing political and social realities in a new South Africa. The theoretical underpinnings of this article are embedded in the discourses of geographically and historically specific events in South Africa, and cultural studies theories. They are framed by postcolonial readings of identity, place and displacement. The artist's work is used to demonstrate how her subject position inspired her to produce artworks that reconfigured the local Durban and Free State regions over the 20 years concerned.

In the early 1980s, the artist, painter and printmaker, Avitha Sooful, began representing the local Durban landscape in KwaZulu-Natal. She advanced her artistic tradition at the University of Durban-Westville (UDW), a historically disadvantaged university, in the small intellectual groups of partisan Indian artists and academics. The academic status and positioning of UDW possibly contributed to their low-key exhibitions, which may have further underrated the academic and political merit of her artworks (Pather 2004:1). She is seemingly marginalised from mainstream literature by virtue of her location in the Vaal region and her positioning at VUT. But, her exclusion dates back to her early work produced in the late 1980s and early 1990s, which could have been a result of being part

of a marginalised Indian minority community (Pather 2004:1).

Sooful's oil paintings on canvas are composed in her studio but they are recordings of her travelling and lived experiences with the landscape. In *Fence (1)* Sooful provides a snapshot of a domestic space in Mayville. The iconographic display of a narrow strip at the top illustrates the whitewashed wall and a blue framed window behind a washing line with red pegs. She depicts Mayville as a raced and gendered place, which allows her to respond to the act of dislocation and forced removal of Indians by the apartheid government to rezone the city space. Today, this space is referred to as Grey Street in Durban's city centre (A. Sooful, pers. comm.). In this way, Sooful alludes to the fraught notion of 'grey areas' in South African political history by painting the greater surface of the canvas in *Fence* grey (A. Sooful, pers. comm.). The use of allegory as a tool to deconstruct cultural practices is a common practice in Sooful's artworks.

Sooful's recurring role as the surrogate voice of underprivileged women (such as domestic workers) is signified by the painted washing line. Her surrogate voice echoes the agenda of the United Democratic Front (UDF), which is to disrupt normalcy, i.e. a policy of white privilege. The depicted fragments of the home further suggest sub-economic housing, the *Group Areas Act*² and the plight of the disenfranchised in South Africa. Sooful notes that washing lines in historically disadvantaged communities also define the physical boundaries of individual properties and the legislated boundaries of separate development (A. Sooful, pers. comm.). Despite the location of the painting in Mayville, the spatial history depicted in the painting could refer to any one of the three disenfranchised ethnic groups in an apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa.

The negotiated political settlement in South Africa, leading up to the inauguration of the new democracy in 1994, was a source of frustration and disillusionment for Sooful. Her contributions and activism in the struggle for liberation seemed to be in vain because of the government's failure to redress the historical imbalances in South Africa, particularly in decreasing the ever-widening divide between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Although Sooful is of Indian extraction she classifies herself as black, but there are no obvious



1 Avitha Sooful, *Fence* (1989). Oil on canvas, 80 x 120 cm. Location unknown.

signifiers of her ethnic origins or identity in the artworks discussed here. This is notable because the general artistic and academic practice at UDW during the apartheid years was to promote ethnic identities. And Sooful's affiliation with the UDF allowed her to redefine her identity in political terms. Her art production seems to focus on her political identity and refers, for example, to the enforced exclusion of Indians from the Free State prior to 1994.

During the apartheid era she was a political activist who subscribed to the ideological definition of 'black', which included black (African), coloured and Indian people, and which is also the official position in the new

democracy. This 'hierarchy' of blackness is invoked in several pieces of post-apartheid legislation that redress past imbalances. Steyn (2004:2–4) argues for the recognition of 'shades of black' in contemporary South Africa. A number of Sooful's artworks, produced during the period 1994 to 2004, reveal continuities with her politicised ideology and also speak to disjunctures in the redefinition of the idea of blackness. The iconography signified in Sooful's artworks (discussed here) continues to refer to the segregating practices of the apartheid era. Her artworks resonate with her 'surrogate voice' and a moral agenda that comments on dislocated identities in a postcolonial landscape. After the ushering in of a new democracy, politics in the new South Africa revisited the idea of 'black' to consider a more nuanced reading of the term. Contested differences, related to the historical imbalance of privileges to Indian, coloured and black people, framed the interrogation of the notion of blackness in South

Africa. Politically motivated benefits that were distributed to all non-whites were hierarchically devolved, thus Indians and coloureds were the recipients of far more benefits than black people.

In subsequent work by Sooful, her artworks shift along two allegorical levels: first, landscape as an embodiment of life; and second, landscape as reflecting the socio-political context of South Africa and Sooful's ambivalent response to democracy. She absorbs and reflects on the scenery that she believes is an honest response to recording her dialogue with the landscape. The landscape represents how she sees life in abundance, with a positive

future, as well as with boundaries that are literal and self-imposed. The sky represents emotions and thus places her in a particular personal space; she views personal emotions as storms of varying intensities (A. Sooful, pers. comm.). Sooful maintains the following in relation to her reading of the loaded notion of landscape:

Landscape is about time and place. It's about history and ownership. I believe they [*sic*] are also about the historical reflection. I found it important to paint exhibitions of memories of landscape to parallel the memories I have of apartheid's separateness – a time when Indians by law were not allowed to live or sleep over in the Free State. My paintings reflect and celebrate the landscape but also concentrate on the lack of the human element. (Sooful, pers. comm.)

Deur die Vrystaat (Through the Free State) (2) represents a rural Free State autumn scene that is also a fenced landscape. The rusty fence is flanked by intermittent green blades of grass that create a contrast with the autumn veld. The tactile landscape blends into the quiet and turbulent sky and constructs a sense of smouldering angst or disquiet. The geographical place represents Sooful's memories of a racialised landscape that spoke to the ideology of white privilege and domination based on the grand narrative of whiteness. Foster (2008:67), who investigated the role of ideological territorialisation in South Africa during the early 20th century, draws attention to the manner in which the veld was postulated as a distinctly

white South African landscape. He reasons that the cult of the veld reflected a new iteration of South Africanism, in that 'the veld mediated a growing social spatialisation of the national territory to embrace *all* regions inhabited by white South Africans' (Foster 2008:67). This type of empty landscape, depicted by artists such as J.H. Pierneef as a place 'to which one could retreat ... uncomplicated by the presence of other inhabitants' (Beningfield 2006:44), takes on a different political associative value in the hands of Sooful. The title of the artwork and the artist's communicated intent support the impression of a politically charged landscape.

In the previous political dispensation, people of colour were prohibited from residing in the Free State, as noted above. This painting, according to Sooful (pers. comm.), highlights concerns with the misrepresentation of the neoliberal ideology in post-apartheid South Africa and reflects the first ten years of democracy as the nation patiently waited for government to deliver on its promises (Ramgolam 2008:7). *Deur die Vrystaat* arguably supports the notion of the representation of knowledge that is negotiated from the past and from below, or for the illiterate masses (Nuttal and Michael 1999:56).

Sooful's initial interest in landscape as a socio-political vehicle transforms to personify a metaphysical presence. Her vast landscape canvases could easily be construed as 'Africana' paintings, similar to the 'myth of the empty landscape' works produced under



2 Avitha Sooful, *Deur die Vrystaat* (Through the Free State) (2004). Oil on canvas, 100 x 150 cm. Artist's collection, Vereeniging.

both colonialism and apartheid, as depicted in paintings such as Thomas William Bowler's *View of Wynberg* (3), Thomas Baines' *The Landing of the 1820 Settlers* (4) or in any number of Pierneef's ideological landscapes. The notion of the 'empty landscape' signified the negation of settlement by indigenous/ first people, and justified the colonisation and 'discovery' of geographical regions through the imperial conquests of Europe (Delmont and Dubow 1995:183). Sooful holds that the absence of human beings is replaced by the

presence of the 'human element' that dispels the notion of 'virgin' territory which invites occupation. This is signified by the presence of gates, light poles, windows and fences in her paintings. Sooful's landscapes evolve to mirror the emotions, anxieties and frustrations experienced on a personal, social and political level (Ramgolam 2008:8) and point to a spatial history that is a record of multiple realities, a palimpsest of experiences, realities, historical subjects and identities (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1998:182–183; Cresswell 2003:269).



The implied human presence in *Deur die Vrystaat* suggests boundaries and the demarcation of a racialised rural landscape that still excludes settlement by South Africa's multiplicity of cultures. Iconographic details, such as corroded and rusted fences, possibly point to an entrenched colonial occupation of the land, and the vast autumnal landscape could signify a barren political place of discontentment. It remains notable, however, that Sooful's political analysis presumably remains in the discourse of Orientalism, whereby she represents the domination of the Other by the Occident (Said 1985:1) which is emphasised by her silence or non-representation of cultural integration, fusion or Bhabha's idea of 'third spaces' (Bhabha 1994:66).

The landscape paintings by Sooful, like the notion of identity, are unfixed and unsettling, and unfold with an inner logic. They are rendered in the conservative medium of oil on canvas and are sometimes aesthetically pleasing. Other canvases reveal an ominous burnt landscape and turbulent skies, as in *Untitled* (5). Sooful (pers. comm.) explains that

3 T.W. Bowler, *View of Wynberg* (1850–55). Watercolour. Fehr Collection, Cape Town. © Iziko Museums of South Africa Social History, Social History Collections.

4 Thomas Baines, *The Landing of the 1820 Settlers*. Oil on canvas. Fehr Collection, Cape Town. © Iziko Museums of South Africa Social History, Social History Collections.

with almost apocalyptic skies and agitated mark making with thick rich textures inviting one to experience this tactile quality. A landscape stripped of foliage becomes a field of ant heaps; life insignificant, life unearthed, initiating a dawning of a new landscape that's almost surreal.

The burnt landscapes have a resonance with spiritual cleansing and destruction before rebirth, and with new realities that reflect a return to nature. *Untitled* reflects the artist's metaphorical personal grappling with her identity in the new political dispensation. It is argued in this article that identities are not fixed and stable, but rather fluid and dependent on the variable of culture, which is also in a constant state of flux (Barker 2003:220–221; Hall 1996). In the new context of transformed political and institutional places and practices, Sooful seemingly contemplates the redefinition of her identity and her recovery of self.

The transition from the diasporic process of indentured Indian labour and the ideology of apartheid to a neoliberal democracy supports the perspective of a changing culture that

seems to underpin Sooful's cultural dislocation. New and evolving identities in a neoliberal democracy have therefore positioned Sooful in an unstable space that warrants a rereading and revisiting of her identity. As demonstrated in the discussion of the previous artwork, Sooful is still critical of the nuanced reading of black and 'shades of blackness' that are now premised on new, dominant ideologies of privilege that ignore the role of UDF activists in the struggle. Sooful's years of sacrifice and struggle in the liberation movements seem to be 'life insignificant' (A. Sooful, pers. comm.). The ethnic group of Indian origin is confronted with the dilemma of not being 'black enough' in the post-apartheid era, and people of Indian origin are still, in Sooful's opinion, subjected to subtle forms of racism. Accordingly, her artworks express her search for new identities, spaces and lived experiences in a fledgling democracy. Although Sooful is transparent about her obvious disillusionment with the status quo, she is optimistic about finding her place and identity in contemporary South Africa (A. Sooful, pers. comm.).



5 Avitha Sooful, *Untitled* (2004). Oil on canvas, 60 x 85 cm. Author's collection, Johannesburg.

Sooful's rereading and imagined reality of her identity in a new dispensation demonstrate similarities with certain practitioners of the African Renaissance debate. Makgoba (1999:xi) and Prah (1996) argue that an African identity does not consider the ideas of colour and geography, but rather the process of creolisation. To be African implies an association with diverse cultures that display a common history. For Sooful, the broad definition of 'black' seemingly also ignores the determinism of the variables of colour and geography in favour of the diverse and shared political histories of South Africa. Furthermore, Sooful's struggle with repositioning her identity in *Untitled* is possibly complicated by superficial, unrealised expectations of the 'rainbow nation' and cultural interchange (Nuttal 2003:2-7).

In *Seeds of Democracy* (6) and *Address Redress* (7), Sooful demonstrates continuities with political and ideological underpinnings of a black identity and the unity of a shared political history. In these two prints, Sooful

represents her individual reality in a raced geographical place that demonstrates colonial displacement, exclusion, white domination and black oppression. These prints also suggest a recovery of her displaced self by negotiating new readings of critical historical events in South African history. In these two works, she provides more signifiers of the land and its associations with lived experiences and a palimpsest of spatial histories (Ashcroft et al. 1998:182-183; Cresswell 2003:269) than in *Untitled* and *Deur die Vrystaat*.

On 21 March 1960, PAC-aligned protest action at Sharpeville was organised to demonstrate black people's resistance against the carrying of passes and restrictions on their freedom of movement. The peaceful protest was brutally curtailed by the carnage of bullets that killed mainly women and children. Before the inauguration of the new dispensation, the Sharpeville massacre was commemorated by all liberation movements as Sharpeville Day. In contemporary South Africa, this historical event has been officially renamed Human

Rights Day and is a public holiday. The Government of National Unity³ (GNU) acknowledged the significance of signing the new South African constitution at Sharpeville in 1996.

In *Seeds of Democracy*, silk-screened images of newspaper clippings, the photographic image of Cyril Ramophosa, and a pair of discarded glasses have allowed Sooful to revisit the significance of the Sharpeville massacre in the liberation struggle (Ramgolam 2008:8-9). In the print, the discarded pair of glasses indicates the possible death or injury of a hero by the police during the protesters' march to Sharpeville police station. Racial and cultural fallacies are possibly referred to in the anonymity of the owner of the glasses, further highlighting the belief amongst black people that 'black life is cheap'. During the struggle years, thousands of children, women and men lost their lives violently at the hands of the state. The discarded glasses may also allude to the intelligentsia, associated with leftist academics and individuals who wore glasses and infiltrated resistance movements.



6 Avitha Sooful, *Seeds of Democracy* (2004). Etching and silkscreen, 26 x 31.5 cm. Sharpeville Remembered Print Portfolio. c/o Vaal University of Technology, Vanderbijlpark.

Sooful has placed newspaper headlines such as 'Last Sharpeville victims buried' and 'Sharpeville funerals today' with images from the heyday of apartheid alongside the pictorial documentation of the signing of the new constitution in 1996, rendered in red. Although these acts are noted as catastrophes, the protestors' sacrifice was not in vain – the majority of the people in South Africa now have access to basic human rights, such as the freedom of movement and the official end of discrimination based on race, gender and physical disability. Evidence of the human experience and atrocities suffered under the nationalist government is suggested in the final layer of the print, by the poignant image of the glasses.

Retributive justice supported copious forms of iniquity in the transformation process in South Africa post-1994. By 1996, the ANC had addressed the stance of the privileged white minority. Transforming the public sector was essential for the smooth and efficient transfer of power. Within this context, discussions of redress were on the table at the ANC conference in 1997 at Mafikeng. Thereafter, the ANC leadership issued a formal mandate to bring all sectors of government under their control, under the banner of transformation, and to appoint ANC-aligned candidates in key positions. The rhetoric in these early years was marked by statements such as 'leveling the playing field' and 'addressing historical imbalances'. On a fundamental level the black–white struggle for economic and political control revolved around the country's resources, and their unequal and discriminatory allocation. The minority of the country's population (the whites) had benefited economically and politically by virtue of their racial classification under the grand narrative of whiteness.

Evidently, the impact of the national imperative to 'address redress' impelled the artistic community to provide a visual response, and in 2004, Sooful participated in a print exchange entitled 'Address redress' in Bloemfontein in the Free State. In her etching *Address Redress*, she uses elements such as the overriding

white pillars to symbolise the ideology of apartheid, white dominance and privilege, and black barbed wire to signify the dispossessed and disenfranchised people of South Africa (Ramgolam 2008:8–9). As already discussed in relation to Sooful's previous artworks, the landscape metaphorically articulates the national and political struggle for the country's resources and for a sense of belonging. In *Address Redress* she uses symbols and imagery to provide a narrative of the apartheid legacy. Representing the white, three-pronged towers or pillars signifies decades of white supremacy ideology towering ominously over the land, calling up images of surveillance and monolithic control by the state and the Dutch Reformed Church.

The presence of the barbed wire fencing⁴ symbolises the oppression of black people by the construction of physical and metaphorical boundaries during the segregationist and apartheid eras; inclusion and exclusion are



7 Avitha Sooful, *Address Redress* (2001). Etching, 21 x 30 cm. Address Redress Print Portfolio. c/o Oliewenhuis Museum, Bloemfontein.

suggested by the pillars casting long shadows over the land. The various *Land Acts*, the *Group Areas Act*, the carrying of passes and a segregated education department are examples of some of the strategies and policies implemented in South Africa to maintain a divided and unequal system of governance. The history of the land in terms of ownership and the settlement of colonised and coloniser is therefore signified by the presence of the overriding pillars and the black fencing (A. Sooful, pers. comm.), and there seems to be no possible middle ground between them.

Sooful's current artworks continue to address and visually comment on the plight of humankind and social justice in a global context. The highly political and contested place of the Vaal Triangle is invoked to extend the discourse of place and identity to the plight of the subaltern and the contentious chemical interventions of genetic modification. The installation *A-maizing* (8) was produced for a site-specific exhibition entitled 'Inside Outside', to mark the opening of VUT's Bodutu Gallery in 2009. Sooful, together with other members of staff from VUT and artists such as Gordon Froud and Brent Record, participated. Vanderbijlpark is surrounded by the rural areas of the Free State which produce a significant amount of South Africa's maize – a staple food for many. Therefore, the positioning of the three organic silos on the campus grounds of VUT addresses the exhibition brief of site specificity. In *A-maizing*, Sooful has once more revisited the iconographical explorations of the theme of gendered and racialised landscapes that is so prevalent in her *oeuvre*.

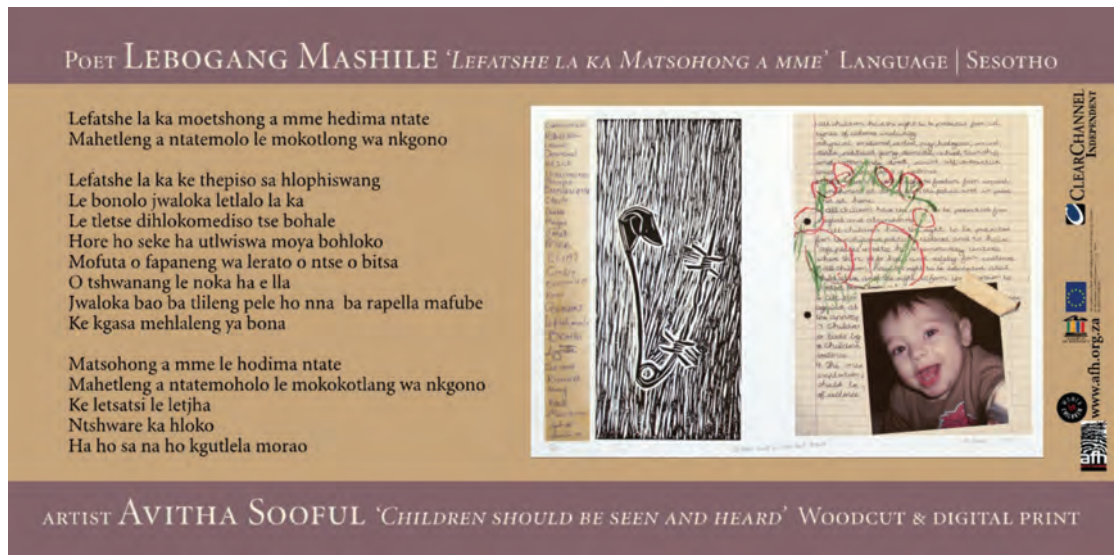
The installation provides a representation of three organic silos of stacked dried maize cobs (A. Sooful, pers. comm.). Silos signify



8 Avitha Sooful, *A-maizing* (2009). 100 x 150 cm. Photograph: by Anneke Laurie.

the interface of Sooful's economic and political concerns with subaltern rural women, and the disposition of the gendered working class in the Free State and other rural areas. She also engages with the increasingly prevalent practice of producing genetically modified products. The laborious task of piling dried maize cobs without any chemically produced adhesives or additives permits Sooful to communicate her discontent with the imposed processes of genetic modification (A. Sooful, pers. comm.).

Sooful's passion for eradicating social and political injustice in the struggles of the voiceless, both locally and globally, is also demonstrated in the final artwork discussed here. Art for Humanity (AFH) is a non-profit organisation based in Durban that provides an



9 Avitha Sooful, *Children Should be Seen and Heard* (2010). Woodcut and digital print, 33 x 50.5 cm. Partnered with poet Lebogang Mashile.

online webpage to deal with concerns around constitutional human rights, art and social development ('Art for humanity ... "the art of human rights"' 2010). Historical legacies of the silence of both women and children in the developing and global world underpin the AFH's 2010 artistic and moral project. Twenty-five artists and poets from South Africa, and from developing and international countries, were invited to participate. Compelled by a moral agenda, this exhaustive yet creative and political initiative covered a range of objectives, including promoting the agency of women and children, and involving the local and the global community in critical debates on the predicament of abused children. An additional call by AFH was embodied in the organisation's support for promoting professional artists who interfaced with interdisciplinary modes of creative output. Prominent artists such as Diane Victor, Judith Mason, Kim Berman and Berni Searle collaborated with poets in this project. Sooful's participation underscores her passionate social and political consciousness which began in the early 1980s ('About the dialogue project' 2010).

In her artist's statement, Sooful elucidates her views on the digital print *Children Should be Seen and Heard* (9). She recognises and joins in the awareness campaign promoting the innocence of children and in calls to protect them from exploitation. Her image includes and conflates the artistic practices

of digital images, the printmaking technique of woodcuts, snapshot photography and the therapeutic process of journaling. She has also given identities to victims of abuse by providing their names on the left-hand side of the digital print. A woodcut image of a barbed wire safety pin is inserted next to the names of the victims. The smiling snapshot portrait of a toddler is superimposed over a journal entry by a victim of abuse (A. Sooful, pers. comm.).

Sooful explains that the woodcutting technique is a subtractive process that leaves the mark of the engraving tool on the wood and the subsequent print. She draws a parallel between the mark of the engraver and the marks imprinted on a victim's body by the perpetrators of physical abuse. The implied meaning associated with a 'safety pin' is combined with barbed wire to draw attention to the innocent trust of children who are frequently defiled by trusted perpetrators (A. Sooful, pers. comm.). Sooful's focus on the plight of children and the nature of the abuse they suffer is combined with the call for other stakeholders for greater agency in protests against child abuse. While Sooful's digital print globalises the social cause, the poetry of Lebogang Mashile⁵ localises the catastrophe to South Africa through her inclusion of the Sotho word *gogo* (grandmother) and the Afrikaans word *oupa* (grandfather). The poem appeals to biologically related adults to protect their children from the legacies of abuse, to

recognise them as innocent and fragile human beings, and to guard their futures against the permanent damage of childhood abuse.

Almost 25 years into a transformed South Africa, its art still displays continuities in grappling with identity issues, as undertaken by artists in a transforming context. This article focused on a political reading of a number of artworks by Avitha Sooful that emanated from the microcosm of the Vaal Triangle, but also commented on the wider South African political and global context. As demonstrated here, Sooful reveals diverse, multiple and shared representations of identities and explorations of the postcolonial landscape. Her political and social identity has explicitly informed and permeated her artistic and cultural practice from the 1980s to the present. All her artworks disclose clear references to dominant ideologies and to the power relationships between the coloniser and the colonised, gendered differences, and the constitutional rights of humankind. Her artworks are representational and sociopolitical interpretations of the geographical, rural and constructed landscapes that inform the realities of life in contemporary South Africa. Furthermore, the works oscillate between disillusionment with the former National Party and current highly political environments, and are all underpinned by the moral agenda of a political activist.

Notes

1 The thesis, entitled 'Identity, place and displacement in the visual art of female artists at the Vaal University of Technology (VUT), 1994–2004,' was completed at the University of Pretoria in the Department of Visual Arts. It examined the artworks of a purposive sample population of 13 artists from the VUT in the first ten years of democracy: Annelise Bowker, Grace Celica, Louisemarié Combrink, Barbara Hopley, Thea Luus, Reshma Maharaj, Tracey Rose, Avitha Sooful, Rita Tasker, Linette van Greunen, Maggie van Schalkwyk and Colette Vosloo. The study explored notions of identity, place and displacement in a transforming South Africa and their assumed influence on the artworks of the purposive sample population. The value of the research was manifold, in that it addressed gaps in contemporary art history literature in relation to artists located in the Vaal region – specifically with reference to gendered omissions. The study furthermore undertook original research to examine heterogeneous artworks by the

sample population during the first ten years of democracy, in the microcosm of the Vaal Triangle. The theoretical and methodological underpinnings of the thesis drew from the discourses of cultural studies, feminism(s) and postcolonial studies. The relevance of cultural studies and their fundamental underpinning of a moral agenda provided the theoretical positioning of political marginalisations in South Africa. The diverse strands of feminism were covered to interrogate the heterogeneous and gendered world views of the artists analysed in the thesis. The postcolonial context of the settler colony of South Africa and, on a micro level, the Vaal region, was framed by postcolonial discourses of identity, place and displacement. The selected artworks explored covered the themes of literal urban, rural and metaphorical landscapes, gendered visual commentary, ideological positioning in an apartheid and post-apartheid dispensation, and redress of the art and craft debate.

- 2 The *Separate Amenities Act*, 1950, entrenched the racial segregation of public facilities, while the *Group Areas Act*, 1950, divided the land into suburbs based on ethnic groups (radicalised urban landscapes). Black suburbs were contrived in their formation in terms of their proximity to white areas, in order to provide and exploit cheap labour (as illustrated in the geographical positioning and formation of the Vaal Triangle) and to monitor and control the majority of the population (Arnold and Schmahmann 2005:5; Ashcroft et al. 2000:17–18). The above Acts were premised on the dominant ideology of apartheid, adhered to by the National Party government, and served white interests by subjugating the majority of the black population.
- 3 The GNU was tasked to draw up the first democratic constitution within a period of two years of the democratic election of 1994. In 1992, Joe Slovo (then leader of the South African Communist Party) devised a strategy for the joint ruling of South Africa by the major parties. He recommended the 'sunset clause', which implied that the major parties would govern for a period of five years and that unsuccessful parties would not jeopardise the ruling party in government. Roelf Meyer (then Minister of Constitutional Development in the nationalist government) conceded that the GNU was a strategic initiative between two opposition parties and not a unity of parties premised on common grounds. In 1993, the sunset clause was supported by the National Party and was adopted, along with the agreement regarding the winning parties. A minimum of 80 seats allowed the winning parties to appoint a deputy president and winning 20 seats implied that the germane

- parties were allowed a proportional number of seats in the National Assembly (Giliomee and Mbenga 2007:406).
- 4 In *Children Should be Seen and Heard* (9), Sooful comments on the unequal relationship between victims of abuse and perpetrators, through the inclusion of the imagery of a barbed wire 'safety pin'.
- 5 **My world in Mama's hands**
Lebogang Mashile
- My world is in Mama's hands and in Papa's lap
On Oupa's shoulders and on Gogo's back
- My world is an unformed promise
As soft as my flesh
Laced with a ferocious warning
Not to harm a hair's breath
A different hue of love is calling
One composed of rivers wept
By those before me who prayed for morning
crawl on their steps
- In Mama's hands and in Papa's lap
On Oupa's shoulders and on Gogo's back.
I am a new day
Touch me gently
There is no going back.

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