Exploring Illusion in the work of Robin Rhode and Lauren Moffatt through the investigation of truth, reality, and perception.

By

Claudia Brown

Research submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the

MASTER OF ARTS

Degree in

Fine Arts

In the

SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

VISUAL ARTS

FACULTY OF HUMMANITIES UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

August 2022

Supervisor: Magdel Van Rooyen

Co-supervisor: Prof. Lize Kriel

Plagiarism Form

FORM

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
DEPARTMENT OF VISUAL

I (full names)   Claudia Brown

Student number   17084629

Subject of the work   Exploring Illusion in the work of Robin Rhode and
                       Lauren Moffat through the investigation of truth,
                       reality and perception.

Declaratio

1.   I understand what plagiarism entails and am aware of the University's policy in this
      regard.

2.   I declare that this _____Dissertation_____ (e.g. essay, report, project,
      assignment, dissertation, thesis etc) is my own, original work. Where someone
      else's work was used (whether from a printed source, the internet or any other
      source) due acknowledgement was given and reference was made according to

3.   departmental requirements.

4.   I did not make use of another student's previous work and submitted it as my own.
      I did not allow and will not allow anyone to copy my work with the intention of presenting

Signature_____ Date   31/08/22

i

Summary

The body of the research centres around how illusion is utilised in art as a visual and cognitive technique in art and practice. The study of illusion has centred around optical illusion and tricks of the eye but in this study, illusion will be looked at and described alongside perception, truth, and reality. The research will specifically explore how art is a form of communication and illusion is possible through the manipulation of truth, reality, and perspective. Considering how cognition processes operate, and knowledge is formed through symbols in relation to cultural, societal, and environmental traditions. The artworks within this study will be analysed to highlight different patterns and trends within art and art practice and how these trends have been influenced by technological advancements. The artist Robin Rhode and Lauren Moffatt have been chosen to investigate the use of illusion through the frameworks of perception, truth, and reality.

They come from a variety of socio-cultural backgrounds and were chosen for the scope of the research as well as the nature of their work to provide a diverse point of view on how perception, reality and truth can be understood in a variety of contexts. Both Rhode and Moffatt use their art to negotiate and create narratives to engage with perception, reality, and truth and in doing so offer new ways to interpret and engage with illusion. In this body of research, I intend to add to the discourse by exploring the importance of art as a means by which to navigate this complex social landscape through illusion.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background to the Research

The research sets out to explore illusion in contemporary art through the investigation of truth, reality, and perception in the art of Robin Rhode, a South African artist and Lauren Moffatt, an Australian – both based in Berlin. Art can be defined as a form of communication, which entails engagement between the viewer and the artwork. Therefore, understanding how an artist interprets and presents themes in their work is crucial. Through the incorporation of technology, artists have been given a new and dynamic platform to express themselves through topics which they deem important. This study aims to explore and exhibit how illusion, a distortion of the senses, is used as a tool within art and art practice to communicate.

The research will centre around the way artists create successful illusion within artworks. The changes that illusion in art have undergone will be highlighted with reference to different art styles and movements. The way artists, specifically Rhode and Moffatt, create works that speak of their own experiences while allowing viewers to interpret them through their own realms of knowledge, will be investigated.

1.1.1 Historic Overview

1.1.1.1 Classical

Plato (428/427 or 424/423 - 348/347 BCE) was a Classical Greek philosopher and the founder of the Academy in Athens, the Western world's first institution of higher learning (Gotshalk 1962:8). In his 4th century BCE work *The Republic* he presented lengthy discussions on justice, wisdom, courage, as well as the duality of power and responsibility. Plato also began to broach the comparison between painting and a mirror (Gombrich 2000:98), exploring the differentiation of reality and appearance through an artifact's function. Plato believed that the aim of art was to put forth information of a third order. It was considered the copying of nature or more formally put by Plato, mimesis (Gotshalk 1962:33). He described art as the re-consumption of certain aspects of nature that did not express the 'ideal form' according to The *Theory of Forms* (Gotshalk 1962:134).

The Theory of Forms is part of Plato's third period of writing where he discussed the roles of art, morality, and ethics. In this he put forward that art aims to promote scientific and

philosophical truths that neither the artist nor the art possesses but merely offers an imitation of. (Gotshalk1962:35). Plato argued that art functions in thought rather than in reality. Through the use of mimesis art is connected to the basic form of the human past and the basic pattern through which this drives their reality (Gombrich 2000:97). Therefore, pleasure taken in ideal form was due to reminiscence. Art presented ideal forms and therefore associations related to thought and memory and not reality (Gotshalk 1962:134).

Plato influenced Aristotle (384 – 322 BCE), just as Socrates had influenced Plato. Aristotle unlike Plato did not separate art and the aesthetic experiences that art aroused (Gotshalk 1962:8). Aristotle noticed that aesthetic experience was described as detached from all practical action, which he did not agree with (Gotshalk 1962:5). In his ideas he put forward that an experience of a phenomenon, that of art or not, is not by virtue of the detachment of action but rather the separation of control and the amplification of intrinsic perception (Gotshalk 1962:5). Aristotle saw art as a rule-changing creativity rather than something governed by specific prescribed concepts and therefore he believed it formed part of knowledge transferring (D'Angelo 2018:118). Art as understood by Aristotle was a productive tendency associated with well-founded knowledge. Art explored how the possibilities of different answers to questions provided indications to different ideas and thought patterns (Spranzi 2011:1).

Whereas Plato believed that concepts had a universal, ideal form, leading to his idealistic philosophy, Aristotle believed that universal forms did not have to be attached to every object or concept, and that each instance of an object or concept had to be examined independently. This way of thinking lead to Aristotelian Empiricism. Plato believed that thought experiments and reasoning were sufficient to 'prove' a concept or establish the properties of an object, but Aristotle rejected this in favour of direct observation and experience. Plato preferred inductive reasoning in logic, whereas Aristotle preferred deductive reasoning. Aristotle invented the syllogism, a fundamental unit of logic (if A = B and B = C, then A = C) (Gombrich 200:359).

Thoughts, according to Aristotle and Plato, were superior to the senses. However, whereas Plato believed that the senses could deceive a person, Aristotle believed that the senses were required to accurately determine reality. Plato's allegory of the cave is an example of this distinction. To him, the world was like a cave where one could only see shadows cast by outside light, leaving only thoughts as reality. The obvious solution, according to the Aristotelian

method, was to walk out of the cave and directly experience what was casting light and shadows, rather than relying solely on indirect or internal experiences (Gombrich 2000:98).

The period is visually notable for large-scale marble kouros (male youth) and kore (female youth) sculptures (Strong 1965:58). Using ancient Egyptian sculpture as inspiration. Though experiments with realistic movement began before the end of the Archaic Period, it wasn't until the Classical Period that two and three-dimensional forms achieved naturalistic proportions and postures. The Early Classical Period (480/479-450 B.C.E.) was a transitional period in which some sculptural work exhibited archaizing holdovers alongside the so Severe Style. The Severe style is the result of extensive experimentation. The Archaic smile and plank-like poses were replaced by sculptures with sharp facial features and precious stone-encrusted eyes. Clothed sculptures now wore simplified drapery, bodily forms were significantly more defined as artists of this era paid attention to anatomical details (Strong 1965:77). There was a great artistic success during the High Classical Period (450-400 B.C.E.) in visual and cerebral manifestation of idealisation in addition to a new figural aesthetic known for its longer torsos and limbs and smaller heads in the fourth century (Strong 1965:11)

1.1.1.2 Medieval to Enlightenment

This period represents the shift from the Medieval ages into the enlightenments period during which reason and rationality were being advocated. The history of mediaeval art is extensive, spanning several centuries and genres. Medieval art was popular in Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa, and some of the most valuable examples of Middle Ages art can be found in churches, cathedrals, and other religious buildings. The use of valuable materials such as gold for objects in churches, personal jewellery, backgrounds for mosaics, and as gold leaf in manuscripts was also prominent. Though the Middle Ages do not begin or end on a specific date, art historians generally divide mediaeval art into three periods: Early Medieval Art, Romanesque Art, and Gothic Art.

The Early Medieval art period was based and controlled by the Catholic Church and wealthy oligarchs commissioned projects for specific social and religious rituals. Many of the earliest examples of Christian art can still be found in the city's Roman catacombs or burial crypts. Artists were commissioned to create works for churches based on Biblical stories and classical themes, and interiors were lavishly decorated with Roman mosaics, ornate paintings, and

marble incrustations. A large portion of the art produced during this period was also influenced by Byzantine work from the Eastern Mediterranean. Glass mosaic, wall painting, metalwork, and carved relief in precious materials were among the media used. Paintings were flat, with no shadows or hint of three-dimensionality, and the subjects were typically more serious and sombre (Gardener 1970:278).

Romanesque art emerged first in France and then spreading to Spain, England, Flanders, Germany, Italy, and other countries followed Early Medieval Art period. It symbolised the growing wealth of European cities and the power of church monasteries as the first style to spread across Europe. Semi-circular arches, thick stone walls, and long-lasting construction were hallmarks of Romanesque architecture. Sculptures were also popular at this time, with stone used to represent biblical subjects and church doctrines. Stained glass and the continuing tradition of illuminated manuscripts were also important media during this period (Gardner 1970:300). This was followed by the late Medieval period which consisted of Gothic Art style.

Gothic architecture pioneered structural innovations such as ribbed vaults, flying buttresses, and decorative pinnacles, all of which contributed to taller, lighter building designs. Similarly, because it was primarily used to decorate the exteriors of cathedrals and other religious buildings, Gothic sculpture borrowed motifs from the period's architecture. Figures in Gothic sculpture became more realistic and resembled those found in mediaeval cathedrals. Paintings also became more realistic, and with the growth of cities, the establishment of universities, the expansion of trade, and the creation of a new class of people who could afford to commission works, artists began to explore more secular themes and non-religious subject matter (Gardner 1970:352).

Baroque art and architecture were produced during the 17th century in the history of Western art. The first manifestations occurred in Italy in the latter decades of the 16th century. Work from the Baroque period is stylistically complex, if not contradictory. However, the desire to elicit emotional states by appealing to the senses, often in dramatic ways, underpins its manifestations in general. Grandeur, sensuous richness, drama, vitality, movement, tension, emotional exuberance, and a tendency to blur distinctions between the various arts are some of the qualities most frequently associated with the Baroque (Kitson 1966:8).

This led to the Renaissance period which saw the revival of classical inspiration and sources.

The movement began in Florence Italy a rich city that allowing more freedom and optimism in artistic expression after the Medieval period. This led to emphasis on learning, intellectualism, and growth (Grzymkowski 2014:186). The use of perspective and other techniques was used in painting. Greece and Rome served as inspiration as the use of mathematics and biology science became intertwined. Religion, specifically Christian ideas were still highly influential in this period. It was only until enlightenment period which religion and art began to be separated. The enlightenment is often linked with the Scientific revolution (Gardener 1970:556).

The overarching goal of Francis Bacon's (1561 – 1626) 17th century philosophy was to reform human knowledge in order to put it into practice and use it for the benefit of humanity. He criticised Aristotelian-Scholastic[1] philosophy because its method was incapable of bringing about progress (Rusu 2018:17). He preferred experimentation to disputation and suggested the possibility of scientific knowledge through observation and deductive reasoning (Mathews 2008:86). Bacon's *Advancement of Learning* (1605) proposed a new science of observation and experimentation to replace traditional Aristotelian science. Bacon's method of induction was an antidote to previous philosophies' idleness, and it served a dual purpose. First, it was intended to purge errors and idols from the human mind, transforming it into a polished mirror in which nature could reflect itself, resulting in the cultivation of virtues and the abolition of vices. Second, it was supposed to figure out the inner structure of matter and how it worked (Mathews 2008:102).

This was accomplished through gradual abstraction and, most importantly, with the assistance of experiments. Bacon's emphasis on experience and the use of experiments as appropriate tools for studying nature influenced future generations of philosophers, and it is regarded as a cornerstone in the establishment of the societies of knowledge founded in the second half of the 17th century. Bacon argued that his method of induction should be applied outside of the study of nature, such as in ethics. He believed that this venture would bring about not only knowledge, but also welfare and happiness (Rusu 2018:18).

---

[1] Scholasticism is best known for its use in mediaeval Christian theology, particularly in attempts to reconcile the philosophy of ancient classical philosophers (especially Aristotle) with Christian theology (Spranzi 2011:5).

5

Despite his enthusiasm for gathering facts, Bacon recognised that providing absolute proof of inductive generalisations based on a finite number of observations is impossible. Because a few negative instances can invalidate an induction, experimental results that contradict a general theory may reveal more about nature than another piece of data that appears to support the theory (Mathews 2008).

René Descartes (1596 – 1650), a French philosopher, shared Bacon's belief that new science would lead to new knowledge and inventions that would benefit humanity. Like Bacon, he opposed scholastic Aristotelianism and advocated for new approaches to science and philosophy. Descartes claimed that applying his methods to science, philosophy, or any other rational inquiry would not only solve problems but also lead to the discovery of useful philosophical knowledge. Descartes began by methodically questioning authority, the senses, and reason. Finally, he discovered certainty in the intuitive knowledge that he was thinking, and thus he had to exist. This insight was expressed in his famous statement, "I think, therefore I am". Descartes devised a dualistic system that distinguished mind, the essence of which is thinking, from matter, the essence of which is a three-dimensional extension (Minissale 2013: 80.

Unlike Bacon, Descartes was a gifted mathematician who was credited with inventing analytic geometry and advocating for a deductive, mathematical approach to science. Descartes believed that his scientific approach would enable humans to master and possess nature's abundance, as well as establish a new medical science capable of eliminating disease and extending human life. Unlike Bacon, whose work he had studied and criticised, Descartes prioritised a priori principles over observations and experimental findings (Minissale 2013:88).

While Rene Descartes was a rationalist, the Scottish philosopher David Hume (1711 – 1776) David Hume was an empiricist. The distinctions boil down to specific senses. Rene Descartes believed that thinking was the only true way to gain knowledge. When it comes to learning, our physical senses can deceive us. For example, when stranded in the desert one begins to hallucinate. That is an excellent example of how our senses can deceive us into believing in thoughts or images that do not exist. David Hume based his decision to learn on previous experiences and observations. For example, we know the moon will rise because we can see it physically rise every night (Edubirdie 2021).

To understand Hume's mindset, we must first understand what empiricism is. We can see in David Hume's *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748) that he considered the acquisition of knowledge important. In this work he discussed his thoughts on ideas and impressions. Ideas, according to him, could be mental concepts such as beliefs, memories, or even thoughts. He tried to connect our knowledge with our emotions or anything that stimulates our brain in impressions. As we see throughout *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding,* the two points of view interact with one another because common knowledge is gained through experience. He explained that we cannot reach a conclusion or develop a theory about anything related to the future without first considering the past. That is why, according to Hume, we cannot make predictions about the future based on experiences without considering the past and its importance (Edubirdie 2021).

To understand Hume's views, it is important to see what he meant by the attempt to introduce the experimental method of reasoning into moral subjects. Hume intended to provide a naturalistic account of humans; to approach human study in the same way that the natural sciences approached their subjects. Hume's treatment of free will and determinism is an example of this type of procedure. Hume was a determinist in the sense that he believed human behaviour is predictable, and that this predictability is the same as that of any natural phenomenon (Hume 1748:107). When discussing ethics, Hume concluded that there are no moral truths to be found in the world, and that reason cannot provide a foundation for ethics either. Morality for him was a matter of feeling, or sentiment, in determining the wrongness of an action.

Whereas Hume attempted to demonstrate how experience limits our valid conceptual contents to certain types of ideas while eliminating others, John Locke attempted to demonstrate how experience is of the world. Any account of experience is already a conceptualization of experience: it must be constructed at the reflective level. However, the account need only be a meticulous record of how the organism achieves consciousness. Of course, such an account cannot be a simple description because we cannot directly observe all the processes involved in the creation of awareness. Extrapolation and conjecture are required in the psychology of awareness (Yolton 1963:53).

1.1.1.3 Postmodern

The French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1930 - 2004) coined the term deconstruction, with his work moving away from singular truths towards ideas that pure argument and logic are flawed and problematic in nature (Wortham 2011:4). Derrida (as explained by Ringger 2014:1) recognized that signs have indexical, metaphorical, and connotative qualities referring to the idea that meaning is never indexed and often dependent on time, content, and the individual. These oppositions are 'binary' and 'hierarchical', involving a pair of terms, one of which is assumed to be primary or fundamental and the other secondary or derivative. Nature and culture, speech and writing, mind and body, presence and absence, inside and outside, literal and metaphorical, comprehensible and sensible, and form and meaning are just a few examples. Exploring the tensions and contradictions between the hierarchical ordering assumed or asserted in the text and other aspects of the text's meaning, particularly those that are indirect or implicit, is what 'deconstructing' an opposition entails. Such an examination reveals that the opposition is a product, or 'construction', of the text itself, rather than something natural or necessary (Wortham 2011:3).

1.1.2 Artists

Lauren Moffatt and Robin Rhode are contemporary artists who explore elements of identity, social issues, reality, and memory in their work. The works that they produce encompass a wide range of mediums and techniques that support the desired conceptual topics of their work. Having both begun with traditional mediums such as drawing and painting, these artists have subsequently reinvented their use of mediums in unique ways. This reinvention becomes a process through which dynamic narratives can be documented and displayed. The experimentation within the art and art processes is influenced by the need to engage with their viewers in interesting and complex ways. This reinvention makes the artist interesting to investigate as illusion to is constantly shifting and being reinvented and defined.

Robin Rhode is a South African artist who explores social and personal issues through his art (Intili, Pembleton & Lajevic 2015). Rhode takes inspiration from art history and youth culture specific to South Africa. Rhode tries to navigate his past and that of the country of his birth. Unusual mediums, such as urban walls, become Rhode's canvases. Static images become animated, and the artist transforms into a performer and street interventionist (Fusaro 2018). Themes defying reality, time, imagination, and urban poverty have all been tackled in Rhode's

8

work (Intili, Pembleton & Lajevic 2015). To build a narrative, he frequently negotiates between himself and his surroundings, paying close attention to how his precise body posture and positioning relate to the sketched items. Illusions are documented using verbal and visual puns to generate a second meaning (Plagens 2015).

Australian artist Lauren Moffatt, currently living in Berlin, explores multiple mediums through video, performance, and immersive technologies. In 2020 she won the first prize for Virtual Reality Art, a competition that was co-presented by Deutsche Kreditbank and the Contemporary Arts Alliance Berlin. Moffatt was one of five finalists who received funding to make new works. In the spring of 2021, these were shown at the *Resonant Realities* exhibition at Haus am Lützowplatz, Berlin, as part of the Contemporary Arts Alliance Berlin's formal welcoming event for a new medium on the contemporary art scene. Her artworks explore themes through multiple forms of presentation and paradoxes, creating an illusion that is both experiential and referential. She produces the impression that what is being seen is not just an image, but reality. She intends to investigate how our physical bodies link us between worlds – specifically virtual reality and physical reality. Moffat builds complex realms populated by misfits and recluses, as well as weird inventions and objects. These speculative fictions and settings are inspired by the history of cinema and television and created with a mix of antiquated and cutting-edge technologies (MOSAIC 2020).

Current research done on both artists centre around their constant investigation on how to take their art further. However, research has not specifically been done on how they use illusion as a tool as will be described in this study. These artists have been chosen because they have integrated technology within traditional mediums such as drawing and painting. The integration of technology and traditional media in Lauren Moffatt's work encourages participation versus a mere passive experience. Allowing for broader interpretations to the experiences she creates within her work. While Robin Rhode's use of technology allows him to take his work to broader audiences around the world. Allowing him to experiment with is traditional medium of drawing without taking away the impact that his themes and ideas generate.

This study aims to explain that illusion is a key aspect of how artists, specifically Robin Rhode and Lauren Moffatt, create their works and create interest in their work. The research intends to investigate how illusion is not limited to tricks of the eye. Illusion is a tool by which artists

can use perception, truth, and reality, to influence the reading of their art. This highlights the importance of understanding the use of illusion as a tool in art and art practice. The gap between how illusion is understood through visual perception and cognitive perception within art and art practice needs to be bridged. The objective is to understand and analyse how artists make use of illusions to create communicative artworks.

Earlier research done about illusion within art has centred around optical illusion, specifically, the use of illusionistic techniques such as linear perspective, foreshortening and trompe-l'oeil to create depth and three-dimensional objects on a flat surface. These themes can be seen in the use of geometric linear perspective within the Renaissance and in Baroque art which is centred around decorative compositions. More recently, illusion was experimented with by Surrealist artists like Salvador Dali and René Magritte to raise thoughts and ideas around the alternative world situated in our unconscious. The research will explore how Rhode and Moffatt make use of these techniques in altered ways to create illusions within thought and not just in the reproduction of specific realities.

The writings of art critic E.H Gombrich are of great value in this research project, especially his *Art and Illusion: A study in the psychology of pictorial representation* (first published in 1960 and reissued in 2000). Gombrich highlights that art is not a mere representation of an object and emphasises that artistic effect is successful when unity can be established between the artist and the viewer. Art is, therefore, the interpretation by a viewer of the reality brought forward by an artist. This imitation is a mediation between making and meaning. Therefore, the research will take inspiration from and be informed by secondary literature from cognitive psychology while still remaining firmly in artistic research.

Because of the broad ways in which illusion can be understood the research will help narrow down these understandings to explain the need for illusion in the art-making process and the final artwork. The aim is to help understand the process through which artists choose to express their ideas, specifically how artists construct and deconstruct elements within their work to create concrete themes through repetition, deconstruction, and abstraction.

Understanding the cognitive underpinning of perspective and how artists manipulate these, will help explain how artworks can guide the imagination of the viewer. Art is a form of communication (as stated previously) and the ability of an artwork to guide a viewer to different responses can be achieved by the artist's understanding of how to distinguish between relevant

and irrelevant information. This is an active process that can be achieved through trial and error. Therefore, it is important to focus on the relationship between artist and art and viewer and art. These relationships are dynamic, constantly changing and evolving. This is important as it creates a dialogue between the artist, art and viewer that allows for reflection, connection and transportation to other or similar experience within the viewer and the artist lives.

Because of these dynamic changes within art through style, technique and vision, artists are constantly adapting to changing environments to create successful work. However, the underlying concepts of illusion, truth, reality, and perspective are constant. They are constant in the way that they are always adaptable to different styles and themes. For that reason, understanding these themes is crucial not just for the artist but also for the viewer. The viewer is the key that is necessary to complete an artwork. Without one or the other a dialogue and relationship cannot be formed to create experienced based on their (the artist or the viewers) perception.

Perception is a process that allows the brain to categorise, organise, and create patterns in the real world. These processes allow artists to conceptualise ideas from lived experiences within different social and cultural environments. These experiences can be explored using different art styles such as optical art, impressionism, or abstraction. It is important to remember that human perception is predetermined by the available concepts within the realm of a person's specific knowledge. Therefore, an artist needs to create art that is ambiguous enough to allow viewers to come to their own conclusions about the meaning of the artwork.

The ambiguity viewers see in the successful creation of illusion in artworks is what keeps viewers wanting to see more. For this reason, understanding how artists use perception within their practice can allow us to understand the process by which successful illusions in art are made. The manipulation of perception requires an artist to create different illusions by making use of connotations and denotation in form, line, and colour.

To construct a perceptual guide through their art, artists are required to understand 'which truth' and 'which reality' will be explored in their works and how they will define and identify these concepts. This is crucial for how the artwork will be viewed.

Truth and reality are complex concepts that are heavily intertwined with one another. To define either would limit the understanding of both. Due to their enormity truth and reality can be

seen as transparent and dynamic. Artists, therefore, do not aim to portray exact truths but rather highlight the possibilities that can arise from the different forms of truth. The forms that truth can be taken on are dependent on the reality in which the artist wishes to place them. Thanks to emerging technologies and new media, artists can explore illusion in more abstract ways, including ideas of reality and how one can create and manipulate different realities. Which will be highlighted and investigated in Rhode and Moffatt's work.

The study will define perception and the mechanism through which it functions. Further, it will explain how perception can be used by artists to create successful illusions within artworks. While perception is being defined, key points on truth and reality will also be highlighted, investigating the different forms of truth and reality taken on in art and art practice and the role these concepts play in the art-making process. Illusions in art and art practice will be explained through definitions of illusion and their role in different art styles and movements. The contemporary trends within the art world and the influences these trends have on artists' processes and the making of their art will be explored. Finally, these findings will be used to discuss the practice of Lauren Moffatt and Robin Rhode, arguing that their styles and processes are heavily reliant on illusion and how they manipulate truth, reality, and perception to create these illusions.

1.2 Research Questions

1. How do artists Robin Rhode and Lauren Moffatt use illusion as a tool to explore the complexities of truth, reality and perception within their art and art practice?
   a. What is illusion in art and how can it be used in the art-making process?
   b. What are the similarities and differences between appearance and reality?
   c. What effect do different historical and cultural approaches have on the way an artwork is viewed and understood?
   d. How has the development of new media and technology influenced the use of illusion in portraying truth and reality in art?
   e. How have technological advancements influenced the use of illusionistic techniques within art and the art-making process?

1.3 Aims and objectives

The research aims to illustrate that illusion is more than just a trick of the eye. The investigation will show that illusion is a meticulously thought-out, multifaceted tool. It impacts on the

12

meaning and understanding of truth and reality in art and the art-making process – specifically, how truth and reality are perceived, and therefore influence how artworks are made. It will be highlighted how, due to the constant shifts in visual culture, artists need to grow and change accordingly to create novel, exciting and thought-provoking works. This study will show how artists who understand illusion as a tool in their artistic process are able to adjust to their ever-changing artistic environments. Art according to Gombrich (2000), as stated previously, is a form of communication and is a tool for artists to communicate their thoughts and ideas. Therefore, this study, through the investigation of concepts such as reality, truth, and perception, will allow one to understand the processes that enable illusion to communicate different forms of truth and reality within different artworks.

Highlighting the importance of illusion in the relationship between art and technology, the research will further question the developments in technology and their influence and advancements on art and art practice. Technological advancements have influenced illusionistic techniques and how they are used to advance the perception of truth through illusions of reality.

The objectives of this research are to explore the differences and similarities between truth and illusion, appearance and reality as related to historical context and cultural approach. Looking at how the digital age is affecting art, how it's made, and distributed. Conceptions such as truth, reality and perception will be defined and explained through writing on aesthetics, aesthetic illusion, and perception. Highlighting how technology can allow art to transcend different social and power relation structure. Once defined, these terms and concepts will be used to analyse the artworks and art practices of artists Robin Rhode and Lauren Moffatt. Throughout the research, other artists will be identified, and their work explored, to help define concepts and how these artists interrogate different concepts within their works.

The study aims analyse how artists use perception to influence the reading of their artworks and explain the cognitive process involved that allows the artwork to create a successful illusion. In the process, the importance of illusion in the relationship between art, technology, truth, and reality will be emphasised. This analysis will be supported by investigations on how technology influences society and the importance of combining art and technology in the work and practice of Rhode and Moffatt.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

According to E.H Gombrich in Art and Illusion (2000) art is the interpretation of reality brought forward by the artist. Consequently, to understand the use of illusion in art and the art-making process focus will be placed on the concepts of truth, reality, and perception. Gombrich (2000) highlights in his work the relationship between perception and the way art is expressed and interpreted. This relationship is interlinked to our understanding of the world (being both artist and viewer). The world is perceived through different frames of reference and conventions. Therefore, it can be understood in this study that the interpretation and expression of art is fluid and dynamic. Therefore, theories including deconstruction theory and realism will be defined and explained to aid in understanding their implications on the art; and the art process will be discussed in the research through a postmodernist approach. Thus, a basis will be created to understand the different relational qualities, themes and content within Robin Rhode's and Lauren Moffatt's work.

Since the 1960s, several artistic movements have challenged the philosophy and practices of modern arts and literature. This has resulted in a reaction in literature against an ordered view of the world, and thus against fixed ideas about the form and meaning of texts. Postmodern writing and art emphasise devices such as pastiche and parody, as well as the stylised technique of the anti-novel and magic realism, as a reaction to Modernist ideals such as autotelic art and the original masterpiece. Postmodernism has also resulted in the proliferation of critical theories, most notably deconstruction and its offshoots, as well as the dismantling of the distinction between 'high' and 'low' culture (Gryzmkowski 2014:164).

Postmodernism emerged in a complex political context, following the end of World War II, particularly in the context of the Cold War and the spread of nuclear weapons, and the declaration of the birth of human rights. deconstruction was expressing president to move from the stage of Modernism to Postmodernism. As a result, Postmodernism's philosophy has adopted questioning and as well as revisiting many of the central principles and arguments by Western thought in the past and present (Elaati 2016:2).

According to the postmodernist theory, there cannot be objective truth. Rather, truth, or our understanding of truth, is a social construct. Therefore, every construction constituted of facts cannot necessarily be taken as truth. Instead, truth must consider the impact different groups in society and culture have on knowledge and belief. All knowledge is based on a reality that is influenced by human culture, personality, and biology. Therefore, it is important to understand

14

that groups' different needs, wants, interests, prejudices, and traditions construct their realities and in turn affect their understanding of truth. Truth and knowledge in a postmodernist view are interactive. As a social construct reality, and therefore truth, cannot be determined fully. But rather, truth is a concept that can be determined as the premise of a particular group and culture in a specific circumstance and time (Berlin 1992:18).

Postmodernism in Western culture is based on a set of intellectual, artistic, aesthetic, and moral foundations. Postmodernism created unique new ideas about history, time, and place, viewing history as a separate discipline or as a starting point for many social sciences, humanities, and applied sciences. Truth is relative and not absolute, and Postmodernism believes that the pursuit of the ultimate truth is the greatest human error made in the pursuit of scientific and practical goals, and the basic idea of Postmodernism is that reaching the truth is impossible (Elaati 2016:3).

Postmodern art delves into complex ideas about subjective reality. Postmodern art, in contrast to the idea that art should highlight objective truth, focuses on the artist's unique perspective. Individual experience—and the individual's interpretation of that experience—is more valuable, according to postmodernism, than abstract principles from science, religion, or politics. Postmodernism rejects the idea that there is a correct way to create art and blurs the distinction between high and low art. Postmodern artists use imagery from popular culture to create art that comments on everyday mass media trends such as comic books, advertisements, social media, and television. Intermedia, installation art, conceptual art, multimedia, and performance art are examples of postmodern art that reject traditional modernist values in favour of experimenting with new media and art forms. The attribute of postmodernism is its rejection of aesthetics as understood by modernism. This was aided by movements such as deconstructionism (which will be discussed below) alongside the simultaneous development of new technology. With the rise of Feminism, the Civil Rights Movement, Queer theory, the fight for LGBT rights, and postcolonial theory in the West, a call for a more pluralistic approach to art arose (Carter 2012:120).

Jacques Derrida is also one of the most important Postmodernist philosophers, who seeks to dismantle Western culture's distraction and delay, as well as to undermine the central arguments of criticism and anatomy, to expose the dominant Western institutions, exposing the white mythology based on domination and exploitation, colonialism, alienation, and exclusion (Elaati 2016:4).

15

Deconstruction theory examines the language and logic of philosophical and literary texts to question the fundamental conceptual divisions, or 'oppositions', in Western philosophy. Deconstruction theory is the exploration of cause and meaning through the deconstruction of parodies, repetitions and distortions that can be found in different thought, knowledge and idea structures, insinuating that to grasp unifying themes and content, one must investigate how they work with one another. Deconstruction theory focuses on the conceptual and figurative implications of these comparisons between different structures of ideas, thought and knowledge. Therefore, this theory is based on differences and how these differences are responsible for meaning (Culler 2008:131). To understand deconstruction, it must be perceived as relative to the differing standpoints and predisposing intellectual frameworks of the judging subject.

Postmodernism and deconstruction theory can be used in the interpretation of symbols, representations, ritual discourses, and linguistic systems in the examination of artworks derived from artists of numerous different cultures and backgrounds. This will be illustrated during the course of this research essay with reference to various artists, before a more intensive analysis will follow in the chapters focusing specifically on Robin Rhode and Lauren Moffatt. Through theoretical investigation and critique, the artworks and the practices adopted by relevant artists, will be explained as products of experience and articulation – specifically concerned with the causation, agency, and structure of the artworks. Thus, the characteristics of social reality and the way artefacts, events and social interaction affect human interaction, will be mapped out. The methodology makes it possible through the artworks to refine and improve the knowledge and information they provide about reality; these claims of reality are thus relative, justified, and historical. These theories will make up the model by which the artworks and the art practices can be made sense of and interpreted.

1.5 Research Methodology

To gain insight into illusion and how it may be used as a tool within art a qualitative research method has been adopted, specifically, highlighting the use of cultural research through an art historical analysis. Through the exploration of texts about perception concepts such as cognition, memory and knowledge will be explained in relation to art and artistic practice. Texts on truth and reality will also be presented and explained alongside artworks. Illusion will be defined and explained with the aid of texts and artworks.

Cultural Research as a field of inquiry is concerned with culture and its impact on individuals and society (Gray 2011). This study will be structured around "the interest and interplay between lived experience, texts, artworks or discourses and the social context" (Saukko 2003:11). Human culture is made up of signs, each of which stands for something other than itself, and the people who make sense of that culture (Bal & Bryson 2014:174). This methodology allows for the collection and analysis of qualitative data concerned with the subjects of language and cultural interpretation (Goertz & Mahoney 2012:8). Pulling from semiotics and the processes involved within cultural activity to understand the use of signs and the creation of these signs (Bal & Bryson 2014:174). Specifically, the way illusion is used in art conceptualization and production will be investigated. How works of art are intelligible to the viewer and the conventions and conceptual operations that shape a viewer's understanding (Bal & Bryson 2014:185).

Qualitative research is multi-faceted and filled with contradictions and different perspectives (Leavy 2014:2). The purpose is to examine phenomena that impact the lived reality of individuals or social groups in a particular social context or environment (Mills & Birks 2014), resulting in different interpretations and evaluations of events or phenomena (Goertz & Mahoney 2012:150). The conceptual tools used to interpret sign making and the context produced through social factors that frame the conceptualisation of the contexts produced (Bal & Bryson 2014:175)

Terms and relevant art movements will be described and explained to aid with the explanation of illusion within art. Besides scholarly literature in the fields of art history and visual cultural history, catalogues from exhibitions will also contribute to forming a basis for this study and the interpretations and evaluations to be made.

Artworks will be analysed by using an art historical analysis: looking at how artists and make use of symbols to comment on social patterns and practices (Mills & Birks 2014). While several artists' work will be referred to, these references will all serve to inform thorough investigation in the chapter on the artworks and practices of Robin Rhode and Lauren Moffatt by identifying and examining these patterns through an art historical analysis, a basis will be created for understanding the cultural and historical significance of the artworks. The process and medium of each selected artwork will be explored. The importance of illusion in the relationship

between art and technology will be traced with the help of the theoretical frameworks introduced in the previous section of this study.

1.6 Literature Review

The ability to create an artwork that is both engaging and thought-provoking rests on the relationship between the different elements, their interplay and the entirety of these elements together within the artwork. Several different aspects such as, (but not limited to) perception, knowledge, illusion, cognition, truth, and reality can be considered in the creation of such an artwork. Through the combination of elements, these aspects become key points for an artwork to communicate various truths that define various forms of reality through illusion. Understanding concepts such as truth, reality and perception helps artists transform their works into compelling pieces, by using illusion as a communicator. This has been done throughout the history of art. Earlier, in the Western art historical canon, we saw this mostly through the use of linear perspective and trompe-l'oeil and, more recently, in advanced new media artworks that make use of virtual reality and new technology. Both of these will be investigated further on in this study.

Art practice is a creative and critical form of human engagement (Sullivan 2006). Artistic phenomena include the documentation of human, social, cultural, and evolutionary interaction. Changes and development within art and art practice have formed a collective of individual and community mentalities and intentions throughout time, allowing the artist to place artistic objects within different frameworks of space and time (Preziosi 2009).

1.6.1 Reality

Reality is the totality of a system, known and unknown. The distinction between known and unknown lies in the incomplete knowledge of the real (Rescher 2012:3). The knowledge of the real is something incomplete not because of incoherence but because the enormity of the real is far beyond what the human mind can conceive (Goldstick 2009:5). Because of this enormity, reality can be seen as somewhat transparent and as a result the mind can perceive objects independent from itself (Wisnewski 2012:28). Therefore, the real may carry connotations and denotations not seen by its physical appearance but rather by how it may be situated within a socio-cultural context. This situation allows the artist to manipulate and transform symbols within their art and art practice to communicate relevant themes and ideas.

18

The philosopher Robert Kirk (1999) reminds us that the empiricist philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (like John Locke and David Hume) argued that the reality conceived by the human mind is the result of high processes of cognitive abilities. John Locke suggested that reality can be separated into two different sets of qualities, which an object possesses independently from its power to produce effects (primary), and which produce distinctive effects (secondary). This line of thought suggests that reality is not just based in the mind but may also exist outside of the mind through its physical qualities (Kirk 1999). This suggests that the human mind contributes to much that we take to be real but not the entirety of reality. The ability for the human mind to make relations through sensation allows the object of the sensations to be seen – but not in isolation, however. This ability rather allows the mind to place its hold within reality. This argument was supported by Locke's opponent, George Berkeley, who suggested that secondary material qualities would not exist without the engagement of cognitive human perception (Kirk 1999).

Also, in the seventeenth-century, Immanuel Kant argued against the idea that reality can be separated into two distinct qualities. Instead, Kant postulated that the reality perceived is entirely attributed to the mind, because of the fact that reality is unknowable (Kirk 1999). This means, according to Kant, that without human engagement none of the reality we know would exist, as it exists solely for engagement with cognitive processes within the mind, thus reality could not exist independently from engagement (Kirk 1999). However, in this study, the theories on reality put forward by John Locke and David Hume will be followed as it is a continuation of the thoughts argued by the classical philosophers Plato and Aristotle.

Plato (ca. 429/8–347 BCE) claimed that art was a copy or representation of something in the real world. Aristotle (384–322 BCE) saw art as grasping human life and recreating it to imitate reality (Rockmore 2013). Both Plato and Aristotle defined the nature of art as the creation of imitations of the real world and therefore creating a copy of reality[2] (Shimarnura 2013). This could be constructed through the precision of details, lighting, perspective, and colour (Grau 2003). These precise imitations are possible through techniques such as chiaroscuro[3], and the already-mentioned linear perspective and trompe-l'oeil. Techniques such as these provide a

---

[2] This imitation of real-world subjects is known as mimesis (Shimarnura 2013).

[3] Chiaroscuro is the technique by which high contrast of light and dark colouring is utilized to create three-dimensional volume (Grzymkowski 2014).

full comprehension of a particular space in time which produces the effect of complete immersion[4]. This is a particularly strong way to create an experiential and referential illusion, creating the feeling that what is being perceived is not a mere image but reality (Wolf, Bernhart & Mahler 2013).

1.6.2 Illusion

An illusion is an instance where the perception of a sensory experience can be misleading (Grau 2003:219). Artists make use of these experiences in their art and art practice. Illusion can be seen as a form of manipulation by the artist of cues from everyday life to communicate ideas, themes, and opinions. Understanding how these manipulations create misleading experiences is integral to comprehending an artist's practice and process of making (Gombrich 2000).

The visual arts have been concerned with the depiction[5] of the world and the conceptual make-up of the world for many centuries. An integral part of this is illusion. According to philosopher William Fish (2009), illusion can be considered as situations that have been created to be familiar with the forms of everyday life. Fish continues to explain that illusions contain cues from everyday life to form images that can often appeal to or mislead its viewer (Fish 2009:148).

E. H. Gombrich was one of the most widely known art historians of the twentieth century. His scholarly research and interventions influenced many domains of research including, but not limited to, psychology and creative research. Gombrich's ideas and writing on visual perception influenced many philosophers, and psychologists, through his articulation of perception in his book *Art and Illusion* (Konzbelt 2008:93).

Gombrich was inspired to investigate areas like information theory and psychology after learning about other artists' methods, particularly to comprehend visual perception and problem-solving techniques in representation (Konzbelt 2008:96).

---

[4] The plain where one is faced with intuitive mental and participatory simulation involving emotions and sensory perceptions (Wolf, Bernhart & Mahler 2013).
[5] The concept is used when the configuration of lines and colours describe an object, an event, or a scene (Hyman 2006:1).

Gombrich (2000) proposed in his work *Art and Illusion* that artists create works through the manipulation of inherited representations that are controlled by social conventions. Therefore, the viewers of such art make connections between what has been depicted and their knowledge (Wood 2013:837). Through the use of schemata, artists can create a space for viewers to correlate what they see with conventions they know about the world (Wood 2013:836). However, Gombrich did receive critique for his writings because he described illusion as an external image that allows the viewer to generate perceptions, enabling the viewer to merge with the environment that the work depicts. However, Wood (2013:837) refers to Norman Bryson's argument in *Vision and painting: The logic of the gaze* (1983) that art delivers not reality, but rather a coded message about reality.

Schemata are used by artists to create accurate depictions and innovative solutions, and they are mostly learned from the experiences of the artists in their environments (another nod to the logic of situations). Each time artists draw on a tradition, they investigate how these traditions can be reimaged within the artist's own time and socio-cultural setting. Making initial plans and markings, testing these 'hypotheses,' and using feedback for change are all steps in the process of creating an original work (Gombrich, 1991:92–130). Artists develop the analytical, motor, and perceptual abilities necessary for mastery and the establishment of traditions over time.

Within his work Gombrich massed a lot of evidence to show the way things are viewed is dependent on varieties in experience, practice, interest, and attitude. Art and culture reflect on one another simultaneously because of how each is understood through society in a specific time and place. Art can be understood as a catalyst through which culture can be visually represented, deconstructed, criticised, and understood (Wood 2013: 836).

The viewer, therefore, becomes an integral part of how an image is seen and understood. The viewer brings the artwork into contact with the real world or the reality which the viewer believes to be true. With illusion, the body is once again reaffirmed as the primary concern of art. The body creates perceptions and memories that it subsequently imitates by creating representations that are beyond its natural range, such as what is seen in visual art. The illusion is simply an external image that appears to be an inside monologue generated by an artist and then interpreted by the viewer (Wood 2013:839).

21

As an art historian, Gombrich understood that his role was to investigate how artists select and construct, recombine and add to reality (Wood 2013:837). Gombrich acknowledged that the complexity of art places restrictions on what researchers can learn. Because "there can never be enough well-defined terminology to analyse particular works of art, and even less can there be an exhaustive definition of the precise problem a certain work of art was meant to address," he claimed that analysis could never fully explain great artworks or artists (Gombrich, 1979:48). Since mastery is not only multifaceted but also eternally flexible and inventive, he believed that "the manner a great artist accumulates his points is not accessible to quantification" (Gombrich 1979:153). Gombrich continued to look for reasons, he just looked in different places like the fields of science and psychology (Konzbelt 2008:93).

For Gombrich, a multidisciplinary approach was necessary to comprehend the intricate logic of circumstances in art history (Konzbelt 2008:96). Typically, in his opinion, "what we term disciplines are, at most, concerns of organisational convenience in academic life," and "an observant and industrious researcher can acquire the abilities to investigate nearly any question" (Gombrich 1991:67).

Gombrich was intrigued by how art and science could become collaborators through the interweaving of history and psychology and specifically, how art could be seen as an expression of scientific knowledge. Art forms part of the documentation of different narratives and history, with one example being cave paintings. Art makes use of a pictorial schema that is based on direct observation of the world and society which is often viewed through specific lenses of perception and culture. Both art and science become concerned with the exploration of the unknown and how this can be communicated and understood (McGrath 2002:11).

From the writings by Gombrich illusion can be referred to as the umbrella term for several different types of illusion such as optical, cognitive, and physical. Optical illusion places emphasis on perception and form, specifically geometric shapes, and their relation to one another. It takes key points from Gestalt theory on group patterns including proximity, similarity, and good figure. The Gestalt principles (assimilations and contrast) help to define how images group, fluctuate and move to become new entities (Gombrich 2000:310). Cognitive illusion is when something is viewed and is not what it appears to be. It specifically deals with how a viewer responds to specific information (Fish 2009:149). The cognitive apparatus places stimuli in prearranged slots which involves perceptual relations to the object

22

and the real world (Mitrovic 2013). Physical illusions involve perceptual situations in which physical objects are indeed perceived but appear other than the reality they are in. This can be colour illusions that appear at the surface of a form involving our veridical perception (Fish 2009:149).

1.6.3 Perception and cognition

Kandel (2016:5) states in his book *Reductionism in art and brain science: bridging the two cultures* that perception is an active process that contains cognitive underpinnings that allow the brain to organize, create and categorize patterns within the real world. Through cognitive processes, the mind can interpret factual details within ongoing situations. These processes allow an artist to conceptualize perceptual experiences within different social, cultural, and environmental domains of knowledge. Through different art styles, practices and movements artists can challenge perception through the manipulation of effects, problems, and paradoxes (Minissale 2013).

Today it is known that perception is a function within the brain that allows visual stimuli to be organized and categorized (Kandel 2016:5). Visual perception can be defined simply as the detection of features such as line, colour, movement, or texture within the visual field (Minissale 2013:86). It incorporates the information the brain receives from the external world with the knowledge it has gained from past experiences. This allows art to be read and understood by a viewer through perceptual and emotional involvement (Kandel 2016:5).

Gregory Minissale's research explore transcultural encounters in art as part of his dissertation work at the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London. His current research explores how vision and other types of awareness are involved in the creation and reception of art. This background has influenced new approaches to studying and interpreting art and the visual experience. *The Psychology of Contemporary Art* looks at a broad range of contemporary artworks to show how meaning creation involves a dynamic complexity of different thoughts and feelings (Minissale 2013).

To understand perception fully one needs to understand the cognitive underpinning of perception and how the brain works to create and organise these underpinnings. Minissale (2013) explains that the early stages of perception happen unconsciously, known as the bottom-

up process[6]. This stimulation will then activate what is known as the top-down process[7] which is linked to relational knowledge[8] and how one may make sense of the world. Cognition aids in one's ability to interpret factual details and ongoing situations. The involvement of both the bottom-up process and the top-down process aids viewers in identifying factual knowledge and interpreting specific details (Minissale 2013:132).

The method used here brings together two fields of study that don't often collide: cognitive psychology and modern art history and theory. It navigates between two psychological polar extremes: strong embodiment theories, which contend that all knowledge derives from sensory perceptions, and cognitive psychology, which contends that the logic of cognition is 'disembodied'. It does this by demonstrating how modern artworks offer contexts where feelings, sensory perceptions, and ideas come together in novel ways to form meaning (Minissale 2013).

From a psychological perspective, Minissale's work offers an assessment of popular conceptual integration models that are used to explain how relational knowledge is developed, and it makes the case that such knowledge is supported by the collaboration of numerous resources dispersed throughout the brain, body, and situations in the real world. A piece of art is a scenario that places restrictions on the emergence of ideas, deeds, emotions, and sensations; it can also inspire us to think about these restrictions. The psychology involved in the creation and consumption of modern art offers a significant window into how we come to form new understandings about who we are and the world in which we live today (Minissale 2013).

Minissale (2013) analyses relational knowledge through psychological techniques to help define its' sensory and intellectual structures. Offering new insights into how art fosters original thought, problem-solving, and metacognition. We can better grasp our emotional ties to the textures, colours, tales, and people depicted in art thanks to the study of art history and aesthetics, which has also made us more aware of the social and political contexts that these works of art seem to reflect. These studies have also demonstrated how we develop moral

---

[6] The bottom-up process is believed to drive the goals of an event or situation. It is the initial spark that creates interest in the viewer and results in further cognitive processing (Minissale 2013:132).

[7] Your brain uses what it already knows to fill in the gaps and anticipate what will happen next.

[8] Relational knowledge within art can be understood as the categorization and conceptual integration of themes within an artwork (Minissale 2013:132).

reactions to art. While this is going on, neuroscience and the psychology of art have provided some insight into how our brains interpret colour, form, rhythm, and tactile aspects of art, as well as how evolution plays a part in how we react to faces, gestures, and bodies (Minissale 2013). Art history and aesthetics have helped us understand our emotional attachment to the textures, colours, stories and myths of art and the characters they depict, and they have sensitised us to the social and political settings these artworks appear to reflect (Minissale 2013).

Minissale's *The psychology of contemporary art* does make an effort to explain how our reactions to art can vary and be psychologically intricate. The connections we make between memories, feelings, ideas, and emotions—connections that are frequently sparked by the visual signals of the artwork—are examined in this study. This intricacy of reaction might be passionate and even chaotic, or it can be quite measured and orderly. Sometimes creating concepts and relationships between concepts gives us a certain kind of joy that can put our search for meaning to rest (Minissale 2013).

These dynamic relationships allow art and art practice to become equally important in the development of an overall artwork. Several trends can be highlighted to show how contemporary art has developed. Including but not limited to surprise-and-shock-value works deliberately offend and digress from aesthetic convention, forcing the viewer to appreciate freedom of imagination and test set social norms (Minissale 2013). This could be use of bodily fluids within the artowrk such as blood. Kitsch has become a popular trend that highlights commodification within art and our social-cultural environment. Often works that are kitsch in style emphasise important concerns about the environment and political agendas, forcing viewers to look at the reality of the world around them (Minissale 2013). Once-off works including performance art and installation works are often installed or performed in non-traditional spaces such as parks and public spaces (Minissale 2013).

Works of art are no longer static but rather dynamic in the way in which they need viewer participation to be fully explored and appreciated (Minissale 2013). Works can become part of a game or puzzle that needs to be completed by the viewer in order to be fully seen and understood (Minissale 2013). For example, works that use Virtual reality head gear and require the viewer to interact with the virtual environment can be seen in both participation works and works that require the solving of puzzles. These trends create a space for hybridity and

pluralism to become popular as works are no longer restricted to one type of style, design or creation (Minissale 2013).

Each trend is dependent on the configuration of the artwork and the perceptual cues provided by the artwork. The materials used within these works of art often carry significance and add value and meaning to the work. This means that often the work requires the viewer's full attention to understand the significance and thoughts behind the work. Artworks will, therefore, have details tied to sensory stimulation and other aspects that will only be revealed by cognitive processes. Contemporary art encourages us to look past the mere style and technique within the work and allows us to reflect on how viewers' engagement can bring together conceptual wholes (Minissale 2013:110).

A broad range of interconnected brain areas allow one to make sense of and understand details and engagements one makes with one's environment. This detection involves cognition. Cognition and perception are interconnected and allow one to "personalize" or conceptualise perceptual experiences within one's own dynamic world (Minissale 2013:3). Perception allows the mind to understand phenomena and create meaning in abstract ideas and concepts (Speed, O'Meara, San Roque & Majid 2019).

Arthur Shimarnua (2013:107) adds that art must be experienced by a viewer through the realm of their own cultural and personal knowledge. This means that perception is an active process in which there is no innocent eye[9] (Mitrovic 2013). Human perception is predetermined by available concepts which are acquired because of one's membership in a specific culture group within society (Mitrovic 2013). The active process allows one to create resemblances of reality and in turn generate an interplay between the expected and unexpected (Wood 2009).

Specific styles and movements within art and art practice can challenge viewers to make them aware of their perception by exploiting effects, problems, and paradoxes within the visual field (Minissale 2013:3). One example is Op Art, which is art that creates a perceptual illusion or visual disturbance on the surface of the work. Parks (2014:122) explains that these illusions and disturbances are created using geometric lines and shapes. The lines and shapes are

---

[9] Historical articulation of conceptual thinking, beliefs and experience predetermines the totality of human perceptual experience (Mitrovic 2013).

arranged so that they appear to shift and move in a three-dimensional way. This can be seen in the work *Zephyr* (1976) (Figure 1) by Bridget Riley. This work contains closely packed lines, which are chromatic[10] and arranged in a wave formation to provoke a sense of movement (Parks 2014:118). As the lines become thicker, they create the illusion of a bulge even though the surface is flat.

Figure 1: Bridget Riley, *Zephyr,* 1976
Acrylic on linen
224,5 x 107,3 cm
(Image from cloudfront.net)

Hartman and Kelly (2014), in their book *Aesthetic*, state that perception is the foundation from which aesthetic acts occur. It allows a viewer of an artwork immediately to unify and interconnect experiences and visual stimuli. By doing so a viewer can identify and remove an object entirely from reality and isolate it, allowing the viewer to embed it into a new framework (Hartmann & Kelly 2014). This new framework allows underlying themes to be revealed and investigated. Through perception one can go beyond that which is known and accessible, breaking the limits of understanding. The key concept of aesthetic perception is that it provides the viewer with a question; through this engagement, the viewer can develop an answer and therefore an understanding of conceptual cues within the artwork. Artists will often highlight specific details so that they may become expressive or revealing (Hartmann & Kelly 2014).

---

[10] Coloured shapes or lines that are made to appear as if they shimmer, particularly when the colours are saturated and when colours of similar tonality are juxtaposed (Parks 2014:122).

1.6.4 Aesthetics

Aesthetics can be understood as a set of principles that guide a certain artist's work or artistic practice (Allen 2008), particularly the knowledge of appreciation and judgement of taste. Through an artist's work, emotional involvement and the cognitive process can be guided through different objects, their composition and how they may be situated in a specific socio-cultural context. Artists compose line and form to create experiences through the manipulation of representation and context.

Aesthetics is a form of knowledge in which the object of this knowledge is appreciation. Aesthetics allows art to attempt to unveil mysteries and preserve opinions, themes, and ideas. It is important to understand that aesthetics deals with more than just beauty and amusing pleasure. Aesthetics along with beauty relies on the representation of an object and not the object itself. Therefore, the manipulation of technique and conceptual thinking can make a work of art aesthetically pleasing (Hartmann & Kelly 2014).

In Wolf, Bernhart and Mahler's book aesthetic illusion is discussed as a particular response to representational objects. It is transmedial and manifests itself into a pleasurable feeling, often creating a form of imaginative and/or emotional immersion (Wolf, Bernhart & Mahler 2013:34). Objects may elicit many different emotions such as frustration or excitement, referencing the aesthetic quality of the artefact (Wolf, Bernhart & Mahler 2013:35). However, authors Wolf, Bernhart & Mahler (2013) continue, it must be understood that emotion is an integral part of aesthetic illusion although it is not aesthetic illusion itself. The viewer of the object must cognitively contribute to the experience. Therefore, it can be understood that the contents and symbols that are within the object guide the cognitive process of the viewer (Wolf, Bernhart & Mahler 2013:35).

1.6.5 Truth

Truth is a complex interdisciplinary concept that contains no fixed boundaries (Fromm, Rekdal & Golding 2014:6). It forms part of our faculty of judgement and is heavily reliant on cognitive processes. As a concept truth is used to detect the relation between the mind and reality so as to ground thought within reality (Hinzen 2007:199). Inquiries into reality are the aim of truth and its different forms, allowing the agreement between truth and its object (Burgess & Burgess 2011:12) and creating a link between what is seen and how the seen is interpreted. Thus, the

mind is helped to grasp the meaning of objects within reality (Hinzen 2007:14). Several different trains of thought have been argued to explain truth and its relevance.

Modern philosophical thought on truth derives from medieval Aristotelianism which is that truth is an agreement of thought with its object. From this thought, three interpretations have arisen: realist or correspondence theory, idealist or coherence theory and pragmatism or utility theory (Burgess & Burgess 2011). For the purposes of this dissertation, something is considered true if it corresponds with reality, and therefore correspondence theory will be adopted. Coherence and utility theory will not be argued for, as each invites objections through their definitions. According to coherence theory a belief is true in coherence with other ideas and according to utility theory a belief is true if it is useful in practice. Both these theories raise questions that place more importance on certain truths than others (Burgess & Burgess 2011).

As a concept truth makes use of many sources of knowledge, such as beliefs, facts, socio-cultural context, and the interplay between these (Hinzen 2007:14). It therefore can be understood that the concept of truth is limitless as it is constantly affected by outside ideas and themes. Therefore, placing a higher value on certain beliefs can result in inconclusive ideas (Burgess & Burgess 2011).

Truth used within art, therefore, aims not to persuade us into believing something as true but rather to highlight the possibilities that can arise from different forms of truth (Kieran 2005:2). These different forms of truth include subjective[11] and objective truth[12] (Goldstick 2009:6). Art and artistic creation attempt to represent the appearance of things both concrete and abstract. Therefore, art can be subject to many forms of the truth as it can focus on only specific details and omit irrelevant details (Kieran 2005:142). The actual truth of the themes and ideas placed into an artwork is irrelevant, but rather what is important is how these concepts become cues for the viewer to understand the complexities of the artwork (Kieran 2005:46). Art aims to lead the viewer into grasping general truths about experiences. Truth becomes a form of inquiry that creates relations between the viewer and the world that surrounds them (Hinzen 2007:199).

---

[11] A subject is true because the viewer believes it to be so (Goldstick 2009:6).
[12] A subject is true because it has been proven factually correct (Goldstick 2009:6).

1.6.6 Technology

Art and technology are mediums that need surfaces on which to communicate and disseminate ideas and record data. Therefore, both art and technology become essential models for communication (Mealing 2007). Art has become a form through which artists can express themselves (Rieser 2011). Artists are constantly looking for new and dynamic ways in which to conceive and represent the world and its changing cultural consciousness. It was the introduction of technology that allowed more people to engage with different cultures and societies and therefore explore expanding themes through art and art practice. This new form of global communication has impacted on how social and cultural conventions are viewed and therefore, explored through art (Rieser 2011).

New Media and programming are both concerned with attaching meaning to symbols (Mealing 2007). Art is more than just copying what is in one's eye-line, it has become the process of regenerating and representing what one knows about the world. It is an active process of interpretation and generation – active processes that have been advanced by technology, by increasing viewer engagement. Similar to art, technology is ever evolving, and new media devices can become a tool or a material for artists to create intimacy and collaboration with their audiences, increasing the themes of play and curiosity in contemporary art (Mealing 2007).

The combination of art and technology has become reflective and influential in both the art world and the science world. It is through the appropriation of media through the arts and sciences that society can meet its ever-changing needs, desires, and institutions. The political and economic shape and development of society mould the narrative of the contemporary world, and these narratives are reinforced and used within the art and science fields (Rieser 2011). Through technology, there has been an acceleration of production, distribution and consumption that allows the arts and sciences to keep up with changing attitudes and events of the world and society. By increasing the use of technology and new media within art institutions they can display and promote ideas that aim to create new and unique experiences for their viewers (Samdanis 2016).

The experimentative culture that has risen through the introduction of new media and technology allows artistic creations to become immersive spaces and compositions (Rieser 2011). Artists are now able to use concepts such as illusion, knowledge, and perception to help transform their works into compelling pieces.

The evolution of illusionistic art from trompe l'oeil Roman wall paintings to 3D computer-generated worlds. Grau uses art history, media history, and visual culture to present an archaeology of 'immersive' images—specifically, those that make use of 360-degree spaces—in quest of a more comprehensive history of technology. Reviewers Bryan-Wilson (2004) and Pugh (2003) wrote insightful reviews of Grau's book. Bryan-Wilson (2004:670) points out that, from nineteenth-century panoramas to contemporary digital art, enclosing settings have a common goal of enclosing spectators within the framework of the image itself. These environments range from ancient Roman frescoes to contemporary digital art. Instead of putting the advancements of computer-based art in a separate category, Grau tries to situate the latter into art history more broadly. In doing so, Pugh (2003:126) explains, he starts the important task of analysing the influence of this art, not just in terms of technology but also in terms of art history, and of situating these artists and their works within the framework of the social and historical changes that preceded them.

Pugh (2003:128) points out that Grau highlights how the technology behind these works questions ideas about discrete objecthood and 'original' vs. 'copy'. These difficulties have caused the discipline of art history, in general, to pause and reconsider what art is and hiw it may hold value. Considering how young computer-generated and experiential art is, it was considered too tangential to be looked at and too difficult to tackle. However, Pugh (2003:128) asserts that Grau's book unequivocally demonstrates that these difficulties have been ignored for far too long although they were present in the technological advancements that came before more recent breakthroughs

According to Bryan-Wilson (2004:671) Grau's detailed exploration of the ethical and political ramifications of virtuality enables him to examine how immersion affects our perception of the phenomenology of seeing. This, Bryan-Wilson (2004:671) points out, brings rise to questions such as: Do illusionistic settings encourage coercive and authoritarian visions, or may they provide models of critical distance? Grau attempts to maintain a dialectical approach while acknowledging that virtuality could posit both acquiescence and resistance.

The work of artists who employ computer technologies has received little attention, however is gaining, in the field of art history; in fact, as Pugh (2004:126) emphasises, little has been published about the kinds of illusionist work Grau discusses in the first half of his book. In general, art history, which is generally described in terms of avant-garde ruptures rather than what is sometimes referred to as 'kitsch' ignores works of art that exist exclusively to 'fool' the viewer or to produce an illusionistic experience. This is a mistake, as Grau's book demonstrates. There has been some aspect of artistic practice that seeks to produce experiential art that takes the audience to a place and time outside of that in which they are viewing the art virtually throughout the whole history of Western art. In Grau's work, an attempt is made to classify, unite, and link the growth of this art to modern practices (Pugh 2004:126)

1.7 Outline of Chapters

The current chapter has provided background to the research, the aims and objectives of the project, the theoretical framework and research methodology that were identified, as well as a review of the relevant literature. The following outline gives a brief overview of what each subsequent chapter intends to describe and investigate:

Chapter two will consist of an in-depth analysis of perception and its role in art, including how it is used and understood within the context of specific artworks and art practices. This will include a description of cognition. Emphasis will be placed on the different processes involved in cognition. Related to cognition are topics that include memory and knowledge. The chapter will investigate how these concepts are understood through past experience, stereotypes and cultural influences.

Chapter three will investigate reality and truth, their make-up and the specific theories that are used within the context of the research to define these concepts. The use of reality and truth in art will be investigated, and how technology has impacted on this. It will be illustrated how these concepts are used to create dynamic artworks.

Chapter four will define and investigate what illusion is and how it can be used in the context of art production and the viewing of art. It will be exploring the use of illusion to provoke viewer participation. It will specifically look at how illusion is made successful through the

understanding and use of reality, truth, and perception. Furthermore, the impact of technology on ways to manipulate reality, truth, and perspective within art and how this creates a domain for artists further to explore and make use of illusion within their artworks, will be discussed.

Chapter five Robin Rhode's processes in art creation and the final product created. It will explore how, through different themes and concepts, the artist manipulates reality, truth, and perception. The ability to create these manipulations will be attributed to how each artist makes use of illusion within their artworks. Through an analysis of their processes the chapter aims to explain how art and illusion link to one another – specifically how multifaceted illusion is within different mediums and contexts.

Chapter six, similarly to chapter five, will examine the work and processes of Lauren Moffatt. It will investigate how the artist manipulates reality, truth, and perception through various themes and concepts. The ability to create these manipulations will be attributed to how each artist employs illusion in their works of art. The chapter aims to explain how art and illusion are linked through an analysis of their processes, specifically how multifaceted illusion is within different mediums and contexts.

Chapter seven will be the closing chapter and will consist of the findings and conclusions of the research in its entirety. These will include the answers to the research questions as well as an assessment of the successes and limitations of the research. Suggestions will also be made on how the study may be taken further or otherwise improved.

Chapter 2: Perception

This chapter will define and unpack key points and topics related to perception and how it is understood and used within this study. In its simplest form perception can be described as the

detection of line, colour, form, and movement (Minissale 2013:3). Perceptual experiences allow thought to be conceptualised and link perception to cognition and the different processes involved. Therefore, cognition and the processes that make up cognition will be defined and explained. Perceptual experiences are stored within memory for future use. However, over time distortion occurs through the addition of conceptual interpretations made by the mind (Shimamura 2013). These conceptual interpretations make up knowledge which can take on many forms such as aesthetic knowledge and episodic memory, which will both be discussed further within this chapter.

As stated above perception in its simplest form is detection and therefore it forms part of how we view and understand the world around us. According to art critic E.H Gombrich (2000) the beholder's share is the investigation of the relations between objects depicted and how these objects are seen in a specific context (Gombrich 2000:38). Illusion emphasises how we are closely linked to the regularities of our three-dimensional universe. Our brains become skilled in what we should see and yet our brains can be misled, and this notion is known as illusion (Shimamura 2013).

The concepts and key topics reviewed within this chapter will include cognition, knowledge, memory and aesthetics and their relation to perception. An understanding of these concepts is needed to grasp perception and how it functions, specifically, how perception is used for vision and how this vision can be affected by past experiences. Furthermore, the use of perception in the viewing and creation of art will be explored. Lastly, this chapter will include examples of artworks to explain the relationship between art and perception.

As mentioned in the first chapter, perception is a complex interdisciplinary concept that makes use of memory, knowledge, and cognition (Minissale 2013:4). It is an active process that contains cognitive underpinnings that allow the brain to organise, create and categorise patterns within the real world. Visual perception is simply the detection of features such as line, colour, form, texture, and movement within the visual field (Minissale 2013:5). Therefore, visual perception allows an individual to perceive what is two-dimensional as three-dimensional. Perception is the interpretation of different influences such as sensory stimuli. Through the perceptual process, incomplete information from the real world can be incorporated into prior knowledge gained from experience so as to create a complete view of the world and the information it provides (Minissale 2013:5).

2.1 Cognition

Cognition is the mental action or process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought, experience, and the senses (Minissale 2013:87). The primary function of any neurological system is to integrate various types of information and responses into coherent categories to maintain rational thought (Allen 2008). There are two different views on the organization of the human mind. According to philosophers John Locke, George Berkeley and David Hume all knowledge derives from sensory experience and therefore is learned. However, according to philosophers Rene Descartes and Immanuel Kant individuals are born with prior knowledge that forms a framework that allows received information to be understood. Therefore, in this study, it will be kept in mind that the brain is complex and both views are relevant (Minissale 2013:88).

Cognition is a function that allows the brain to detect different kinds of information and then regulate how this information is categorised and organised so as to provide an appropriate response (Wolf, Bernhart & Mahler 2013:135). In order to do this, the brain uses two processes, the bottom-up process and the top-down process.

The bottom-up process refers to the early stages of perception that are unconscious (Minissale 2013:132). This process allows sensory stimuli to trigger the brain's associations with memories and prior knowledge. These stimuli form part of computations inherent within the brain's circuitry (Kandel 2016:22), enabling the brain to extract key elements from stimuli within the real world and to discover these stimuli's placement within time and space (Kandel 2016:23). This is the start of perception within the brain's cognitive processes.

Once the bottom-up process is complete the top-down process begins. The top-down process involves relational knowledge which is said to be flexible and explicit, and it can be organised into complex structures like lists and propositional networks. Relational knowledge is essential to basic human reasoning mechanisms such as logic and design (Minissale 2013:133). This process involves analytical procedures that manipulate sensory information and perceptions received from the bottom-up process (Minissale 2013:132). This cognitive function is part of higher-order mental functions within the brain. This allows images and stimuli to be placed

into a personal psychological context (Kandel 2016:22), essentially guiding imagery and stimuli through prior knowledge in order to direct what is being perceived (Shimamura 2013).

The vast interconnectivity of cognition through these processes allows the brain to make sense of the world. This is how the brain dynamically engages with the world, how individuals personalise and categorise the significance of perceptual experiences. The brain is able to manipulate complex symbols, allowing it to make connections and links. Thus the brain creates structures that build content and allow for the mental representation of concepts both concrete and abstract (Minissale 2013:87). These structures provide the brain with links between concepts leading to meaning-making and understanding.

2.2 Knowledge

With knowledge, individuals are able to store and communicate information (Hartmann and Kelly 2014). Aristotle suggested that knowledge is made up of associations we make. These associations help individuals link conceptual thoughts with physical properties within the real world. Therefore, through our knowledge of the world, concepts and phenomena, individuals are able to group and categorise information to guide us in future experiences (Shimamura 2013). Knowledge is therefore tied to how people experience the world and organise the experiences within the world (Shimamura 2013).

The brain makes use of schemata to organise knowledge into cohesive structures so that individuals may be ready to apply it to ongoing experiences. These schemata can take on forms such as stereotypes and conventions. These help the brain to create detail within situations allowing for further understanding and comprehension. These structures within the brain act as formulas for familiar experiences and prepare us for novel experiences that may be encountered (Minissale 2013:23).

Similar to stereotypes[13] the brain makes use of metaphors to help link concrete and physical experiences to abstract concepts (Shimamura 2013). Metaphors can be used to link two different concepts that may share an association that is not obvious at first. This provides the brain with meaning to allow the new information to be categorised with the correct schemata.

---

[13] A widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing (Shimamura 2013).

Cultural beliefs, conventions, and traditions also affect knowledge. What individuals perceive in the real world is largely determined by where and when they lived. Cultural practice can determine what an individual thinks and feels as these practices and traditions influence what is seen and learnt. It is through cultural knowledge that moral guidelines are set and followed. Through acquired cultural knowledge conflicts, concepts and experiences can be evaluated and learnt from. Therefore, perception is tied and integrated through pre-given knowledge derived from experience. It is through different domains of knowledge that we are able to communicate and comprehend concepts within the real world (Shimamura 2013).

The introduction of technology has allowed more people to engage with different cultures and societies (Rieser 2011:65). Technology is a contextual history of artificial facilitation techniques (Allen 2008). It has given individuals the opportunity to access vast amounts of information. This has led to diverse thinking and learning and allowed for the intermixing of traditions, beliefs, and ideas. Technology has allowed individuals to store and communicate huge quantities of knowledge that can be accessed at all times, providing more accurate accounts of different categories of knowledge. How this knowledge is stored and accessed is important as it influences our perception of subjects or objects.

2.3 Memory

Memory is part of the knowledge that the brain stores from past experiences. Therefore, memory becomes a foundation through which understanding is obtained. Memory, like knowledge, can help personalise information and add context (Shimamura 2013). The brain has become specialised to make use of memory alongside knowledge so that individuals may interact with the real world in appropriate and successful ways. Such combined use of memory and knowledge helps individuals to make educated guesses about how to approach situations and concepts. All knowledge is based on cultural evolution and is therefore based on memory. Memory is linked to emotion and allows the brain to link knowledge with appropriate mindsets and sentiments with stimuli from the real world (Kandel 2016:29).

Personal memory is known as episodic memory (Kandel 2016:50), which consists of events and knowledge anchored in an individual's past. These memories are often linked to a specific time and place. These become sensory cues that help individuals to learn from them and use them as anchors in their current conscious state (Shimamura 2013).

37

However, as Shimamura (2103) reminds us, it is important to remember that memory is not accurate. It is filled with distortions, additions, and deletions. These changes occur because of external forces from the real world and internal forces from within the brain. This is because the brain chooses what to highlight as important so that, as previously stated, categorisation and organisation can be done efficiently. Therefore, memories are often redesigned, redefined, and reconstructed as part of this categorisation process (Shimamura 2013).

2.4 Aesthetics

Aesthetics is a form of knowledge in which the object of this knowledge is reliant on the attitudes an individual places on them (Allen 2008). It is a highly specialised form of knowledge, unlike universal logic. Aesthetics is a concept based on appreciation and how an object may reflect different conceptual ideas within a specific context and time. As already mentioned in the first chapter, aesthetics is not just about beauty and pleasure (Allen 2008) and not just about the object itself either, but about the representation of the object (Hartmann & Kelly 2014).

Aesthetics is linked to perception because an object's aesthetical appeal is based on how it is perceived and how this makes one feel, think, and react (Allen 2008). An aesthetic object requires attention from an individual and therefore is reliant on knowledge based on prior experience retrieved through memory. The word aesthetic comes from the Greek word for sensory perception (Hartmann & Kelly 2014). Therefore, an aesthetic object needs to be recognized through its structural similarities to other objects. Objects are not seen, but rather, perceived as aesthetically pleasing (Kelly 2014). It is important to note, therefore, that in order to understand any aesthetic underpinnings within an object one must be able to make references to other objects and concepts. The object is not pleasing because of its structural qualities but rather because of how these qualities interlink with other qualities and concepts to create the entirety of the object. This, therefore, requires perception, which requires cognition and prior knowledge (Wolf, Bernhart & Mahler 2013).

38

Aesthetics allows art to unveil mysteries and make opinions, themes, and ideas preserved (Hartmann & Kelly 2014). Aesthetic illusions can also be seen as quasi[14]-experiences (Wolf, Bernhart & Mahler 2013:12). It is through cognitive processes and emotional engagement that represented worlds and elements of these worlds can form imaginary spaces which not only induce one to view them but also create awareness of one's own perception and how it can be manipulated (Wolf, Bernhart & Mahler 2013:13). Therefore, it allows the viewer to become a part of the artwork and occupy the imaginary reality the artist has created. It is through aesthetic illusions that artists are able to induce emotions such as disbelief and are able to create links between the real world and their imagined reality (Wolf, Bernhart & Mahler 2013:267).

Within contemporary art perceptual processes are still highly used and valued. The perceptual processes and the factors that contribute to them are still an integral part of how art is viewed and experienced. Numerous examples from contemporary art can be shown to demonstrate that perception is far from objective or unaffected by our personal biases. Graffiti and street art are two good examples. Instead of being viewed as another art form, graffiti, which still elicits mixed reactions today, was once associated with a decaying urban environment, and the urgency from officials to eradicate it, stemmed from a desire to bring order to a chaotic social reality (Minissale 2013:22).

Susanne Kriemann's 80-piece slide projection – *277569* (2021) (Figure 2) is another example of the complexities inherent in perceptual understanding. This intriguing piece consists of photographs depicting an unspecified wooded area. The number that represents the title also reveals little about the content. According to the artist, the photos are from an archive and depict the area that was flown over 277569 times during the Berlin Airlift in 1948/49. They are historical markers of the Cold War's beginning, but this information is buried beneath the numerous, almost abstracted forms of trees that serve as their main protagonists. The artist's interpretation of these photos as historical evidence, as well as the viewers' frequently uninformed guesses, places this artwork between the contrasting understandings that inform every practice of meaning-making. *277569* is a good example of how perception and social conditioning affect one's views of art, as it belongs to the domains of abstract photography and historical document (Wolf, Berhart & Mahler 2013).

---

[14] Used to form adjectives and nouns that describe something as being in many ways like something else, without actually being that thing.

Figure 2: Susanne Kriemann, *277569*, 2021
Screen print on monoprint-dyed museum board
33 9/10 × 27 1/5 in
86 × 69 cm
(Image from kooness.com)

2.4.1 Neuroaesthetics

Neuroaesthetics is the study of aesthetic stimuli and the aesthetic experience from a neurobiological perspective (McClure & Siegel 2015). The focus is on the material aspects of the brain and the activity of neurons during the aesthetic experience. The basic assumption of neuroaesthetics is that phenomenal aspects of experience can be linked to activity in the brain and specific areas of the brain (Minissale 2013:75). Neuroaesthetics is not only concerned with the experience of art but also with artists' practice and how they might develop themes that allow for aesthetic experience (McClure & Siegel 2015). Art is a form of experience that is altered or different from current realities in time and therefore artists become the link that allows understanding between the two. Artists are encouraged to discover new techniques that allow them to create representations by using perceptual shortcuts that make it difficult for a viewer to differentiate one reality from another (McClure & Siegel 2015).

Neuroaesthetics also links aesthetic experience to emotion (McClure & Siegel 2015). The writer Semir Zeki wrote, "Art is able to furnish us with rich feelings of ambiguity and beauty.

40

These emotions bring into play perceptual constants or ideas dependent on stored inner representations" (Zeki, Bao & Pöppel 2020:428).

Therefore, it can be understood that artworks rely on a varied range of signifiers and conventions to allow for the understanding of emotional complexity. Emotion is not single-faceted but a multi-faceted concept relying on context and stimulus. Emotions and therefore perceptual and aesthetic experiences are mediated by moral beliefs, cultural prejudice, social context, and many other factors (McClure & Siegel 2015). Neuroaesthetics' attempt to explain emotion within perceptual experience is linked to the notion that an artwork can function as more than a conceptualization of an idea, but also as a trigger that allows for dynamic development during the experience (Minissale 2013:77).

2.5 Perception in Art

Mitrovic (2013) suggests that art is a form of human experience incorporating all the characteristics of what makes up the human condition (Mitrovic 2013). Therefore, art similarly to perception conceptualizes perceptual experiences within different social, cultural, and environmental domains of knowledge. Through different art styles, practices and movements artists can challenge perception through the manipulation of effects, problems, and paradoxes. Artists make works that explore the visual boundaries of perception (Kandel 2016:50).

Any form of art or art practice makes use of cognition to create understanding within a specific realm of knowledge. According to Alois Rigel (as quoted in Kandel 2013:178) art is incomplete without the perceptual involvement of the viewer, which he coined as the 'beholder's share'. The viewer, therefore, takes the information provided by the artwork and completes it within their own prior knowledge. This knowledge could be from past experience, or it could be more specific to the artist, their style or the medium that is being used in a specific artwork.

It is important to highlight that because perception is integral to viewing and understanding, an artwork should contain some form of ambiguity, balancing information between what is known and what is novel. Kandel (2016:178) refers to the Austrian psychoanalyst Ernst Kris who believed that a successful work of art is reliant on its ambiguity. An artist creates work from their own knowledge and experience and presents it to the viewer to complete their own knowledge and experience. In my opinion the ambiguity and room for interpretation is

important, but I know of a few artists who do want to be clear about their intent. This does not mean it makes such an artist less of an artist.

This balance between similar and novel can be seen in Meret Oppenheim's artwork *Object* (1936) (Figure 3). In this work, viewers are confronted with known objects, a cup, saucer, and spoon. However, these objects are depicted with fur. Fur and a teacup are known things that one is confronted with regularly in daily life, therefore separately these objects mean little and have little in common. When placed together, however, the artist creates a juxtaposition: a novel sensation from two sensual objects. By combining these two objects the artist conveys a metaphorical reference that the viewer must unpack and decipher. The metaphor acts as a symbol for specific emotions, such as discomfort in the case of this specific artwork (Shimamura 2013).

Figure 3: Méret Oppenheim, *Object,* 1936
Fur-covered cup
(Image from moma Website)

Philosophers Nelson Goodman and Suzan Langer (as discussed by Shimamura 2013) suggest that artists convey metaphorical references so that the viewer may decipher what the artwork's intentions are. Therefore, art becomes a gateway or guide to allow the viewer to make associations between different styles, movements, and concepts (Shimamura 2013). In this way

42

art functions as a channel that transports viewers to different times and contexts. The viewers are provided with time capsules of the artist's life that may link to their own.

The presentation of concepts[15] within an artwork also allows an artist to highlight paradoxes and influences within their artwork. When a viewer perceives an artwork, their perception will be influenced or acted upon by various concepts (Minissale 2013). Works such as these are known as conceptual art. The idea and concept become the most important aspect of the artwork and often become the driving force of its creation. This form of art makes use of audience engagement to allow for imaginative contemplation (Parks 2014:46).

2.5.1 Relational knowledge

Relational knowledge within the arts can be understood as categorising and conceptual integrating of themes within an artwork. Relational knowledge is the cornerstone of perception and cognition as it involves relational roles of objects rather than just literal features of that specific object. Conceptual integration is crucial to this as many artworks may encourage a viewer to shift the processing of perceptual features to using those features as symbols for abstract concepts (Minissale 2013:110). Concepts within artworks provide a basis by which a viewer can identify and communicate emotions, memories and imaginary scenarios. Therefore, art can be defined as conceptual as it invites the viewer to interact with an enthymematical phenomenon whereby the viewer is responsible for providing the 'missing' conceptual links (Minissale 2013:111).

For example, Sherrie Levine's work *Fountain (Buddha)* (1996) (Figure 4) is an almost exact copy of Duchamp's urinal however, the urinal itself only became the basis of her exploration within her work. The urinal that is presented by Levine is cast in bronze and clearly carries many different connotations to that of Duchamp's urinal (Buskirk 2012). By recasting the sculpture in bronze Levine is able to place Duchamp's work in a critical light and challenge the acceptance of his work (Buskirk 2012). She recasts Duchamp's work in a critical light, challenging the nearly universal acceptance and celebration of Duchamp's early twentieth-century radicalism. Levine removes many associations within this work, as the low-culture urinal is presented as a bronze masterwork. The title points to the visual similarity of the

---

[15] A concept is a mental representation of a particular entity that may be abstract or concrete (Minissale 2013).

upturned urinal with Buddhist relic sculpture, offering many different associations and connotations for reconsidering the original work. Levine's intent of referencing artists such as Duchamp is to highlight and carve out a space of her own within a historical art tradition which is driven by male artists (Buskirk 2012).
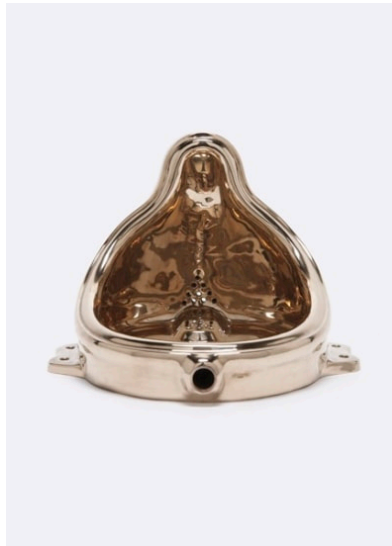
Figure 4: Sherrie Levine, *Fountain (Buddha),* 1996
Bronze casting
31 x 43,2 x 40,6cm
(Image from icaboston Website)

2.5.2 Reductionism

Reductionism helps artists, similarly to scientists, to explore the visual boundaries of perception by investigating how singular elements integrate, link, and influence one another to create a dynamic whole (Kandel 2016:5). Artists do this by reducing figuration and focusing on a single element such as line or colour. By isolating these elements artists are able to stimulate the imagination of their viewers. This stimulation allows or forces viewers to take on different perspectives and views when confronted with these artworks. This allows artists to create new perceptual and emotional responses from their viewers with elements that are known but have been deliberately taken out of context so as to produce a new experience. For this kind of experience viewers may need to search their prior knowledge and understanding to fully comprehend and appreciate the work fully (Kandel 2016:189).

The use of reductionism can be seen in abstract art and its removal of figuration, with artists taking inspiration from science to achieve their goals of creating new thought-provoking art.

Until the 20th century artists were concerned with real-life depiction and representation through three-dimensional rendering. However, with the rise of abstraction artists began to turn from this form of representation. Instead, artists began to focus on the links and relationships between line, colour, and form and how these different elements may evoke emotional experiences (Kandel 2016:189).

Abstract art relies on the top-down cognitive process. The art that is created stimulates the mind through its imagination and creative process. This makes the viewer a key component of appreciating the artwork. By isolating line and colour, abstract art allows the artists through their art to make the viewer aware of the functions between line and colour (Kandel 2016:189). Abstract art does not intend to create pictorial representations but creates conditions that enable the viewer to complete the visual experience through their own unique knowledge (Kandel 2016:189).

The reduction of figuration and the emphasis on line and colour as singular elements can be seen in the work of Piet Mondrian (1872-1944). Through his art Mondrian investigated the universal aspects of form. In doing so he created works that were completely non-representational and consisted of only straight lines and minimal colour, which often were the primary colours (Kandel 2016:84). Through his investigation, he was able to create a new language through which his art communicated. By making use of reductionism, he was able to persevere in the essence and nature of the elements he focused on. He constructed his own perception of an image and freed it from any form of content. This created a space for viewers to construct their own perspectives and thoughts on the image (Kandel 2016:189).

2.7 Technology

Technology has given artists the ability to further manipulate perception and how the viewer may think or feel. The influences of technology have led to the intermixing of disciplines and mediums providing a larger platform to integrate their artworks.

The experimentative culture that has risen through the introduction of new media and technology has allowed artistic creations to become immersive spaces and compositions (Rieser 2011:40). Dynamic environments could be created which made use of bodily and sensory experience (Rieser 2011:40). Groups such as *Experiments in Art and*

Technology (E.A.T) created a space for the collaboration of artists and engineers inspiring the binding of creatives and technologists long before the art world had become accustomed to new media and technological art. The *Pepsi Cola Pavilion* for the World Exhibition of 1970 in Osaka is a project by E.A.T. The immersive structure stimulated every sense (Rieser 2011:42). It was an attempt to create a non-hierarchical theatre venue with a 'live responsive environment'. It was a reprogrammable venue that included a massive 'mirror room' full of interactive sound zones, a massive fog sculpture, and motorised outdoor sculptural components or 'floats' by Robert Breer (Rieser 2011:56). This unique endeavour brought together 63 artists, engineers, and scientists from the United States and Japan (Rieser 2011:56). Individual wireless handsets for usage in the mirror room, as well as programmed laser displays, were used in innovative ways. Visitors oversaw their own experiences. (Rieser 2011:57).

It was an effort to make a 'living responsive environment,' or non-hierarchical theatre space, and was sponsored by Pepsi. It was a programmable area featuring a sizable "mirror room" filled with interactive sound zones, a sizable fog sculpture, and motorised outdoor Robert Breer sculptures or floats. On the first design, Robert Breer, Robert Whitman, Frosty Myers, and David Tudor collaborated with Robert Kluver, co-founder of EAT. A water vapour cloud sculpture made by Fujiko Nakaya that could create a fog circle 150 feet in diameter was placed on top of the geodesic dome's roof. Seven of Robert Breer's Floats, six-foot-tall sculptures that moved slowly and made noise, were displayed on the terrace. They would change their course when they ran into something or when they were pushed. The Pavilion's primary area was upstairs and included a 90-foot-diameter, 210-degree spherical mirror constructed of aluminized Mylar. Visitors could see their reflections in this thanks to an optical phenomenon that created a true image that seemed like a hologram. A person watching an image in the mirror could move around and observe it from all angles due to the size of the mirror. The sound systems in the dome were incredibly advanced and transmitted spatial sound through a vast number of speakers and mobile devices that resembled early mobile phones (Rieser 2011:56).

With 32 inputs and 37 speakers set in a rhombic grid on the surface of the dome below the mirror, David Tudor designed the sound system as an 'instrument'. Throughout the dome and in rings around it, sound might travel at varied rates. Any speaker could rapidly switch from one speaker to another. making sound point sources. An identical sound might be produced by any speaker. From a console on one side of the dome, the artists could pre-program the lights

46

and sound or control their live. There were ten distinct places on the floor, each composed of a different substance, including Astroturf, rough wood, slate, tile, and asphalt. Visitors might hear particular noises on each type of floor material through handheld devices. Horse hooves and breaking glass on the filthy floor; ducks, frogs, cicadas, and roaring lions on the artificial turf. Wire loops buried in the floor were the source of these sounds. Under each of the floor pieces were implanted twenty 100-turn wire coils or loops that were 1 foot in diameter and fed by tape recorders. The visitors' handheld devices picked up and amplified the low-frequency magnetic field they produced. The utilisation of several coils for each location to provide a uniform distribution of the sound and prevent it from leaking into adjacent spaces was an innovation in this system (Rieser 2011:57).

Exhibitions such as these were what influenced contemporary trends with new media and digital art. These trends include Algorithmic Art, which aimed to create new forms of representation, and interactivity, allowing the viewer to take control. It could manipulate the order of display, context, colour and narrative (Mealing 2007:53). For example, Brian Reffin Smith created artworks based on photographs. Each shade and tone were put through a computer algorithm and rendered as different short lines at different angles and densities. This can be seen in his work *Mummy-Daddies* (1986) (Figure 5).
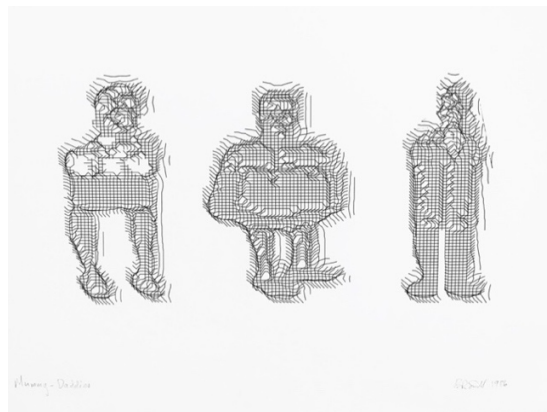
Figure 5: Brian Reffin Smith, *Mummy-daddies,* 1986
New media interactive art
Dimension's variable
(Image from computer-arts-archive.com)

2.8 Conclusion

Perception is a highly dynamic process that involves several cognitive factors such as knowledge, emotion, and memory. These factors impact the way an artwork may be read or even seen. The understanding of how perception works and can be manipulated has allowed artists to create novel experiences for their viewers. The use of perceptual manipulation in art

47

has been integral to many practices and movements within the art scene. It allows artists to create thought-provoking work that integrates the viewer into the work in new and inventive ways. By understanding how perception and the cognitive processes that underpin it work, artists can create works that no longer just depict a singular thought, but many – that are dependent on how the artwork is perceived by the viewer.

Chapter 3: Reality and Truth

Through the creation, manipulation or reproduction of an appearance or presence within an image or object in order illusion aims to form a reality: either one that took place, or a version that does not exist or cannot exist (Minissale 2013). Through the manipulation of different forms of reality different truths are brought forward which create a distinction between visible objects and invisible concepts (Rockmore 2013:41). Through the use of illusions images and objects provide reference points to suggest the juxtapositions of concepts (Minissale 2013).

What is read into different forms is dependent on the capacity of the viewer to recognise these forms within their own minds (Gombrich 2000). Through the use of illusion forms can be conceived as signs referencing imagined realities that represent different truths (Minissale 2013). Therefore, in order to understand the different capabilities of illusion, reality, and truth need to be understood and defined.

This chapter is an in-depth study of reality and truth and the perspectives that will be adhered to within this study. The aims are to highlight what truth and reality are and how they function in numerous ways. The chapter offers an exploration of how truth and reality may be understood and perceived within different contexts and, furthermore, how culture has impacted the understanding of specific realities and truths. Importance is placed on understanding that reality and appearance are not the same concepts. The focus is on how digital reality has impacted communication, art, and knowledge and on how these in turn affect the use of illusion within art and art practice.

3.1 Reality

Reality is a complex and interchanging concept that is interlinked with concepts such as truth, appearance, knowledge, culture, and belief. It is a dynamic concept that is constantly adapting, changing, and evolving. It is part of the branch of philosophy known as metaphysics (Burbidge 2013). This entails the study of the fundamental nature of reality and the principles that underlie it, such as identity, being, change, space, time, causality, and possibility. Its complexity lies in the involvement of inquiry of facts and the clarification of ideas and concepts (Kirk 1999). Therefore, it can be understood that the reality that the human brain conceives is mediated by meaning and experience.

49

Reality is made up of all known and unknown and therefore the real. The actual, or existing, is the real. The term refers to things or events that are part of the natural order or exist in their own right, as opposed to fiction. The term "real" refers to "what is". In contrast to "what appears", reality is the state or quality of being real or existent. Therefore, it is important to understand that appearance and reality are two different ways in which to understand or consider modes of being (Rescher 2012:5).

Before exploring the concept of reality further, the theoretical framework through which reality is understood in this study must be distinguished. Realism, in a philosophical sense, states that objects experienced through the senses are real and independent of the mind. Realism is the positioning that the reality perceived by the brain does not constitute the entirety of reality (McDermid 2008:49). Because one can never know an object unless one knows or experiences it, the object being known or experienced is an integral part of the object known. As a result, knowledge and experience tend to modify or constitute the object to some degree. The fact that these entities are known has no bearing on their being and nature. As a result, things can exist unchanged when they are unknown, or they can pass into and out of knowledge without affecting their reality (Goldstick 2009:167).

The Scottish philosopher David Hume (1711-1776) maintained that external reality does not exist in the mind. This suggests that the reality that is engaged with, forms impressions in the human mind that allows for the development of ideas and conceptions. The mind, therefore, takes in specific versions of what is experienced in reality to fit its current beliefs and justifications. Kirk (1999) points out this has been supported by the notion put forward by sociologists Peter L. Berger (1929-2017) and Thomas Luckmann(1927-2016), that reality is a social construct. For that reason, the reality perceived by humans can be understood through the objects, places, and people they interact with. These interactions allow space to create links between what is believed and what is perceived.

Knowledge is a unique type of relationship that can exist between a mind and any entity. According to John Locke (1632-1704), objectives are perceived by the qualities of the physical object rather than the physical object itself (Goldstick 2009:247). Therefore, the nature of the object is unknown. Metaphysical realism states that the world exists independently of the thinking process of the mind and inquiries into the world. This can be understood simply as that objects can exist outside of perceived experience and that the experience of this object

50

does not dictate its existence (Rescher 2012). Through knowledge and past experience, these interactions can be placed within socially and personally constructed systems of value and systems of importance (Rescher 2012:109).

Rather than looking at appearance and reality as two distinct entities, reality can be considered as the practice through which seeing and understanding 'the Real' is a cognitive process and appearance as how reality presents itself (Rescher 2012:12). The metaphorical space between reality and appearance allows for interpretation. It allows the brain to comprehend what may or may not be possible in accordance with its current knowledge and experience. The lack of knowledge or ignorance can distort what is deemed possible and not possible. This distortion can create misconceptions and manipulations in the brain's perceived reality (Rescher 2012:100).

3.2 Culture

As stated previously the reality perceived and actual reality are two different things. They differ due to factors such as culture, environment, and beliefs. The network of practices that individuals partake in within society constitutes culture which in turn influences and reflects upon the perceived realities of individuals and specific groups of individuals. These practices create a framework upon which versions of human reality form and exist. Therefore, contrasts in perceived reality can occur because sensory experience links the brain to reality and the relationships made between reality and concepts (Hanna 2014:4).

Culture takes the form of a web made up of practical and institutional arrangements that support human society and influence one's perception of reality. Meaning is given through specific beliefs and judgements that are maintained and adapted to social and personal institutions. Human culture creates many possibilities to form character, personality and moral choices depending on experience. Experiences are valued and categorized as important based on collective beliefs held by a specific group and the group individuals choose to situate themselves in. Consequently, what is perceived as reality is actually the result of the existence of specific structures, frameworks, and practices within society (Hanna 2014:85).

Since the brain's perceived reality can be mediated over time through meaning, it is important to highlight that meaning along with knowledge can grow and change–making what was once

relevant, irrelevant (Kirk 1999:10). It is important to understand that reality can only be understood clearly through the correct context and time. The environment can influence thoughts and therefore reality (Kirk 1999:10). The relation between what we know, and reality is constantly under review as reality is experienced in the realm of certain cultural and societal conventions. The way the 'the real' is perceived is highly dependent on point of view. Hence, culture, heritage and past experience create parameters through which reality is seen and understood. The way the brain classifies 'the real' is dependent on the current reality through which it is being processed. This includes the belief one might hold and the theories that one might believe to be true (Kirk 1999).

3.3 Truth

Truth, similar to reality, is a complex notion that is closely tied to concepts such as belief, knowledge, judgement, reality and thought (Engel 2014:2). It is a form of inquiry that aims to make sense of different conceptions both abstract and concrete. Goldstick (2013:39) aptly summarises Aristotle's useful take on truth as the relation between what is said and what reality presents. Therefore, in these terms, Goldstick (2013:39) explains, truth can be understood as the agreement between thought and reality.

The understanding that truth is the agreement between being and intellect is owed to thirteenth-century scholar St Thomas Aquinas (Long 2011). Aquinas was committed to biblical truths that surpassed human understanding and thinking (Rockmore 2013:91). He can be argued to be one of the most influential medieval scholars who made a distinction between cognition and production (Rockmore 2013:101). The distinction between these two concepts was brought forward through the synthesisation of medieval Christian though and Aristotelian thought.

This agreement forms an equation between intellect and thing (Long 2011). Therefore, truth is only possible through the mutual correspondence of thinking and how something resonates with this thinking (Long 2011:25). It can be understood that what makes something true or false is not the thing itself but the thought surrounding that thing (Long 2011:26). Consequently, whether a statement can be true or false is dependent on what it signifies and how that can change over time or through context (Elsby 2016:70).

52

The concept of truth is indefinable. However, theories centred around truth have made it possible to gain some understanding of the concept (Khatchadourian 2013). As explained in chapter one, correspondence theory will be adopted and used in this study, because it states that truth consists of correspondence or agreement of contingent or factual statements or propositions of the reality of fact (Khatchadourian 2013). Often known as realism, it means that truth is a relation between the contents of our thoughts and the reality in which we live (Engel 2014:11). Truth is what can transcend, and is only possible through our knowledge of a particular subject (Engel 2014:12). This is the link to a realist view of reality which is that truth involves an appropriate relationship between a statement and some portions or aspects of reality (Goldstick 2013:69).

Correspondence theory can be divided into two types of inquiry, namely congruence and correlation. Congruence states that truth and that which it corresponds to are both structured elements that are complex and when compared the likeness of structure is similar. Therefore, the statement and reality correspond in their components. The statement which is said to be true corresponds with the current state of affairs, suggesting that truth is established through the investigation of connotations and denotations, when evidence can be given that the belief is true. Correlation on the other hand suggests that a statement is made true when it corresponds with the current state of affairs, without further investigation. This proves troublesome as it does not take into account the flexibility of truth and its ties to perception and knowledge. Therefore, it would just allow statements to become fact without proven reasoning or investigation (Burgess & Burgess 2011:59).

Correspondence theory has two different abilities. Firstly, it has the intellectual ability to provide justice to that which it encounters and secondly, the ability for that which is encountered to object and provide a form of expression (Long 2011). This means that truth is marked by dialogue and is dependent on narrative and context. Long (2011) continues that this corresponds with Homer's truth as Aletheia[16] which states that truth emerges from and is ultimately concerned with human beings' tangible lived experiences with one another. Long (2011:29) emphasises that things are not mute and therefore, the intelligibility of things

---

[16] Homer's Aletheia suggests that truth develops from the investigation between concrete experience and the human mind (Long 2011:29). This investigation became a dialogue that explains how experiences correspond with appearance and thought (Long 2011:104). Furthermore, it explores the unity between the human mind's capacity to understand objects and the real world (Long 2011:105).

depends on their capacity to express themselves objectively. Truth can be understood then as to how an object affects things around them.

Correspondence theory can be traced back to Aristotle and his writings in his work *Metaphysics* (Long 2011:16). It states that truth involves our engagement with things around us and being able to respond appropriately to the ways these things express themselves (Long 2011:16). However, there are many different branches of inquiry into what truth is and how it can it be understood. Hence truth can take on many forms depending on the vantage point from where it may be examined. This means that there cannot be a single unifying conception of truth and what it means (Burgess & Burgess 2011:41).

Furthermore, everyone's experience of the world is a little different. Individuals all have different life experiences, background beliefs, personalities, and dispositions, and even genetics that shape their view of the world. This makes declaring an 'absolute' impossible – according to postmodernists, at least, because their view of the world is a product of their individual perspective. Interpretation and perspective are central concepts in postmodern thought, and they are contrasted with 'simple seeing' or a purely objective view of reality. Postmodernists believe that simple seeing is impossible (Pardi 2015).

Postmodern thought encompasses a broad theoretical area, but it informs modern epistemology, particularly in terms of truth. Postmodernists define truth as a product of belief rather than a relationship outside of the human mind to which one can align belief (Minissale 2013). This encourages the pondering of schemata that appear within the 'real' and how these are experimented with as forms within an image or object (Minissale 2013). The correspondence theory of truth is linked with postmodern thought as both attempts to correspond the real and belief through the format of different versions of truth. Through the manipulation of the real, beliefs and perspectives can change and shift, therefore revealing different versions of truth relevant to the time, form, and context (Minissale 2013).

It thus seems that the ideas put forward by postmodern thought have some parallels with the coherence theory of truth, with its web of interconnected and mutually supported beliefs. According to the coherence theory, belief coherence gives us reason to believe that what is believed corresponds to some external reality. In postmodernism, there is nothing for beliefs

54

to correspond to, or if there is, beliefs never extend beyond the confines of the mind to allow it to make claims about that reality (Pardi 2015).

3.4 Reality and Truth in Art

Originally (some would argue there are situations where it is still the case) art was a form of representation of nature that thrived to imitate what was seen within the world as accurately as possible (Grau 2003:14). Art can now, some would argue that there has always also been this view, be seen as a form of communication, representation, and experience. In the essay 'The dematerialisation of art' Lucy Lippard (1968) proposes five categories that describe the disposition of art within time, based on a notion initially spelt out in the American painter Joseph Schillinger's book *The Mathematical Basis of the Arts* (1943). Schillinger categorized art history into five types of aesthetic phenomena in his work (Lippard 1997).

Schillinger emphasized that the 'pre-aesthetic' phase of mimicry, which consisted of a replicating of the 'real', began first; then there was ritualistic or religious art, which made use of symbols and schemata to explore religious narratives and customs. This also included the visualization of religious figures in ways that resonated with the 'real' so as to be recognizable. Then there was emotional art which consisted of artists' expression of emotions through their work as a form of self-expression. This period also consisted of the art for art's sake thought process. Then there was rational aesthetic, empirically grounded art which included experimental art and novel art. The fifth and ostensibly 'last' aesthetic phase outlined by Schillinger was scientific, or post-aesthetic art. This phase placed art in production through the manufacturing of the perfect art object, which is characterized by the integration and fusion of art materials and science. He anticipated that the last phase would result in the 'freedom of the thought' and the 'disintegration of art' (Lippard 1997).

The reoccurring thread among these five stages is their link to aesthetics. As stated previously in chapter two aesthetics is a form of knowledge where the object of this knowledge is reliant on the attitudes an individual places on them (Allen 2008). These attitudes are dependent on what an individual considers as truth, which (as stated above) can take on many forms due to cultural beliefs, traditions and biases. Aesthetics is a concept based on appreciation and how an object may reflect different conceptual ideas within a specific context and time (Allen 2008)

by drawing from the 'real' through the use of physical properties, to bring forward the essence that form may hold (Goldstick 2009:138).

Reality and its numerous forms have been in debate for many years in many different fields of study including art. Therefore, it is understandable that many artworks and artists explore reality and its different forms. The intersection between art, truth and reality has been investigated by artists through many media throughout time (Rockmore 2013:12). Similarly, truth, which may or may not be due to its connection with reality, has been seen as an underlying topic within many artworks and art practices. Artists attempt to find their own truth and forms of truth within their art through different forms of reality.

Truth implies that we distinguish between appearance and reality (Hinzen 2007:164). Reality and truth are, therefore, concepts that are interlinked and together can be used to create dimensions within an artwork both technically and conceptually. It must be understood that reality and appearance are two different things, as stated previously in this chapter. Reality as presented in art creates a space which consists of both the perspective of the artist and of the viewer. Reality and the impressions of reality rely on the ability to create familiarity between the artist and the viewer. Therefore, symbols and conventions that the viewer is accustomed to are used so that they may create links and understanding in the artwork they are viewing (Hyman 2006:161).

Abstract representations within the art can be seen as mirroring a complex social reality in the form of distinct appearances (Fromm, Rekdal & Golding 2014:12). Reality can be seen as the social structures and power relations associated with a specific time period (Hyman 2006:60). Artists can vary in the truths they feel need to be presented within their works. The various forms of truth and reality presented within art and art practice comply with what is believed to be the popular disposition of that specific time and context (Hyman 2006:61).

Therefore, it can be understood how, at this time, an individual is a tool for seeing reality, but the individual is also a tool for interfering with and diminishing it. It is art when an individual sees reality without meddling with or diminishing it. Art can be defined as reality seen 'correctly' by a self-seeing correctly. Reality, including its possibility of being viewed 'correctly', is also reality; so, reality, including its possibility, is art. To put it another way, reality is always actuality since it has the capacity of being viewed 'correctly'; nevertheless,

56

the subjectivity of a viewer and their perception of reality can alter this. Art is successful when it presents a reality that can be read 'correctly' in accordance with its intentions which are navigated and created by the artist (Fromm, Rekdal & Golding 2014).

For reality to be complete, seeing creatures are required. Beings who see, require reality to be complete. When a person uses reality 'correctly' to complete a task, the art and state of the individual's state of mind harmonize. Complete reality and complete art are indistinguishable. Siegel (1953) suggests that every object has a drama inside it, as well as a drama in relation to everything else. The object is not fully realized until the drama within it and the drama of its relationship with all things are fully realized. Until an object is completely viewed in this way, we are not just a means of seeing, but also a means of not seeing; just as the eye is a means of seeing, we may use it as a means of not seeing by squinting or closing it (Fromm, Rekdal & Golding 2014).

3.3 Reality, truth, and Technology

Technology has impacted and will continue to impact art, artistic processes, and distribution. It has become an integral part of society and how knowledge is transferred and stored. Art and technology have a long and profound history of collaborating and influencing one another. They have evolved alongside each other in numerous ways to get to their current position in the world; a digital age where they continually overlap and portray new concepts.

New technology has resulted in artistic advancements, either by progressively modifying the content of existing artistic mediums or in the establishment of new ones. One example of how the emergence of the video camera resulted in the formation of a new art form is video art (Samdanis 2016). As technology improves, new art forms emerge. Database art, internet art, satellite art, and big data art are just a handful of the art forms that emerge as artists incorporate digital technologies into their artistic practises. The conflict between fine art and new media art remains unresolved, as the latter is frequently seen as a science rather than an art form, and partially as a subset of contemporary art (Samdanis 2016). Because science focuses on quantifiable data such as measurements, this objective view is thought to be more accurate than the subjective vision found in art. This may make artworks created using photography and the internet appear more 'authentic'. Because of this technological breakthrough, artists' illusions

can be perceived to be closer to the truth and thus reality. This underscores the notion that imagined realities have become more real as a result of technological advancements.

The rapid advancement of digital technology, as well as the incredible improvement in the introduction of new, more appealing, and more durable materials with which artists can work, has had a tremendous impact on modern art. Both these developments have expanded creative options and opened up new artistic realms. They have also allowed contemporary artists to devote less time to actual artwork execution, allowing them to devote more time to contemplation, inspiration, and the generation of revolutionary ideas, as well as sound preparation for their artwork.

As artists, spectators, and institutions have become more interconnected as technology has advanced, international contemporary art has prospered. However, technological advancements can have a negative impact on art and artists. The tremendous array of options now available to artists as a result of new technologies can be extremely damaging at times, precisely because technology allows artists to express themselves in ways that they never thought possible. When faced with a plethora of options, the artist may feel overwhelmed, bewildered, and perplexed, and these emotions are immediately reflected the work. An artist's work may become boring and lack imagination or spirit over time. As a result, an artist's creativity may wane, leaving gaps in their inspiration.

Taking inspiration from Socrates and Plato, we are reminded via Heidegger, Derrida, and Stiegler that all the forces shaping an individual's ability to conceive of the world are, in the broadest sense, technical. According to Heidegger (1977), *techné* originally conveys tooled craftsmanship as a mode of influencing the world through the manual manufacture of items or through expression in both functional modes of communication and artistic expression.

We have both mental and physical energy in our bodies. Strutt (2019:236) discusses Bernard Stiegler's[17] (1998) perspectives on this: Extending Heidegger's ideas, Stiegler believes that even the biological becomes part of a technological process when control structures are imposed on physical gestures to construct meaningful systems. Since the invention of the first

---

[17] Bernard Stiegler is a critical theorist who has extended and further developed the thoughts of Heidegger that digital medias can become dangerous. As current technology dictated our rationality of reality and our own humanity

tools, the body has been regarded as a technological cyborg because it adapts and evolves in response to the technological systems with which it interacts. For Stiegler, being human first and foremost means being a technological being.

Accepting this, the reality is formed by technical methods, both in the mind's ability to engage with the environment and in its ability to understand and communicate about it. But, just as the technology created shapes the world, it also shapes the human condition. Humans have traditionally believed that the technologies used are there to help acquire control of surroundings and shape the environment and offer subtle constraints to our life (Strutt 2019:35).

Digital technologies have a long history as a medium of creative activity, dating back to the creation of computers and their appropriation in the 1960s in the first exhibitions on art and technology.[18] New technology has resulted in artistic developments, either by gradually altering the content of artistic mediums or by spawning the formation of new ones. Video art is one example of how the introduction of the video camera resulted in the development of a new art form (Samdanis 2016).

3.5 Conclusion

Truth and reality are very complex and diverse topics of investigation. They are interconnected and can maintain a variety of meanings and uses. These uses vary from individual to individual. Due to the nature of reality and truth, it is near impossible to pin them down in definitions. However, in this chapter, it has been highlighted how they may be understood and used in relation to how we perceive them using art as technology. Reality and truth are ambiguous and can be understood through a number of theoretical frameworks, however, the theories and concepts discussed in this chapter – such as realism and correspondence theory – pertain to the aims and objectives of this specific study and its intentions.

---

[18] *Cybernetic Serendipity* (London, 1968), *Les Immateriaux* (Paris, 1985), *Data Dynamics* (New York, 2001), *Incheon Digital Art Festival* (Incheon, 2010), and *Electronic Superhighway: 2016-1961* (2016, London) are examples of interdisciplinary explorations at the intersection of art and technology (Samdanis 2016).

Chapter 4: Illusion

This chapter will explain what illusion is within the context of art and how it may be used through different mediums, styles, and conceptualization. The focus will be specifically on the way truth, reality and perception are used to explore illusion within art. The concepts reality, truth, and perception have been described and addressed in the previous chapters. This chapter will touch on how illusion was used as a literal tool in the past and how it has developed into a conceptual tool within art practice. The question of how the manipulation of truth, reality and fiction can aid artists to create illusionary works, will be addressed.

4.1 Illusion

The use of techniques such as perspective and chiaroscuro may have been understood by early Greek and medieval artists, however, they may have ignored them to suffice their own needs and points of view within their art (Grzymkawski 2014:59). But it was not until the Italian Renaissance that our current understanding of geometric perspective began to be seen. The work of fifteenth century Italian artists including Filippo Brunelleschi, Masaccio and Lorenzo Ghiberti show how perspective was used to create the illusion of depth and form (Grau 2003:37). Perspective was used as a tool by these and several other artists of that time as an effect to create distance and depth. This effect was created by the manipulation of object size. Objects in the foreground were depicted as larger than those in the background. Perspective became a tool through which conventions were forged so that they would mimic the natural vision (Grau 2003:40).

A further important development was the chiaroscuro method, which is the use of delicate shading to enhance the perception of three-dimensionality in objects (in Italian, *chiaro* means 'bright' and *oscuro* means 'dark') (Grzymkawski 2014:59). Contoured surfaces actually reflect light in a variety of ways, and those that do so more directly toward the eye appear lighter while those that do not appear darker. As a result, excellent shading rendering can reveal details about the shape and position of objects (Shimamura 2013:82).

Further on the Renaissance artists such as Alberti and Leonardo DaVinci translated their understanding of perspective and chiaroscuro as a metaphor through which an image becomes a window into a different reality. This reality could be similar or completely different to that of the natural world which surrounded them. The discovery of perception within the

60

Renaissance period introduced distance and breaks within an image to create the perspective of depth whereas, images prior to this were orientated towards exact representation of the object within the natural world (Grau 2003:37).

Over time perspective, specifically linear perspective, became more than just representing depth on a flat surface it evolved to contain symbolic meaning (Grzymkawski 2014:59). Shimamura (2013) refers to the art historian Erwin Panofsky's essay 'Perspective as Symbolic Form' in which he debated whether linear perspective defines the way we perceive the real world. He justified this through his investigation of the curve of the human eye violating the true constructs of liner perspective (Shimamura 2013:81). This agrees with what was previously said about how perspective enhanced depth over the exact representation of the natural world (Grau 2003:37) and therefore, perspective becomes a window through which different realities can be seen.

Panofsky proposed that perspective in art be viewed as a symbolic form to address this line of thought. This implies that perspective is not somewhat arbitrary or is just a convention that painters have created to communicate spatial depth but rather a device to reflect meaning. However, perspective is essentially a representation of space. Our understanding, of space within a specific time, enables us to make sense of how space is shown, and images take on the labels or metaphors of well-known situations, places, and/or scenes. Perspective is merely a series of guidelines or symbols that tell us how to interpret images. Others disputed the idea of perspective as solely symbolic and asserted that the linear perspective approach and real-world physics naturally coincide, meaning that realistic images must respect how light rays are projected onto a two-dimensional plane and that linear perspective is neither random nor only symbolic or representational (Shimamura 2013:82).

As was previously mentioned, the term 'chiaroscuro' is used by painters to describe the careful use of shading and highlights to show objects' form realistically. This method describes the gentle changes in light that occur as it reflects off objects. Both psychologists and computer scientists refer to the same process as 'shape from shading'. A form's feeling of depth is created by shading, which emphasizes three dimensional outlines (Shimamura 2013:5).

More recently, computer models of chiaroscuro have been used to create digitally imagined sceneries. These models have successfully produced realistic animations for usage in movies

61

and video games. Commercial web design endeavours rely on bringing in and keeping them to their websites. People typically find it offensive when websites that are often frequented change their colour or style. This sentiment is shared by web designers, who use cognitive science research to lessen the impact of design changes (Shimamura 2013).

For instance, cognitive research on change blindness demonstrates that subtle, feature-by-feature modifications to visual displays might go unnoticed. By slowly adjusting features throughout the day in 2008, Yahoo.com gradually changed the appearance of their home page. The transition from a grey to a white background on eBay.com took 30 days. It is possible that most people were unaware of these developments. Cognitive science can explore how we interpret sensory events, such as our interactions with art (Shimamura 2013).

The French phrase trompe l'oeil means 'to fool, mislead, or cheat the eye'. Trompe l'oeil makes use of chiaroscuro and perspective to create extremely realistic images to temporarily fool the observer into thinking the painted items they were looking at were real. Trompe-l'oeil was commonly used by famous artists during the Renaissance (Shimamura 2013).

The trompe l'oeil illusionistic method has origins in antiquity. It is frequently quoted from Pliny the Elder's *History of Nature* that the ancient painter Zeuxis had created such a life like painting of grapes that they drew ravenous birds, and that Parrhasius, a competing artist, was so fascinated that he invited Zeuxis to his workshop a few weeks later. When Zeuxis arrived at Parrhasius's workshop, he saw the artist's work covered by a curtain. Zeuxis approached the picture and when he tried to draw back the curtain to expose the artwork, he discovered that the curtain had been painted. Zeuxis was duped by his competitor artist because he was so intrigued by the anticipation of a painting that was 'behind' the scenes (Gombrich 2000:206).

Following Aristotle, the seventeenth-century philosopher Francis Bacon argued that illusion can be considered as leading to incorrect understandings or misinterpretations of external stimuli which create flaws within one's cognition, and obscured realities (Grau 2003). It can be argued that illusion is a distortion of reality through different manipulated stimuli (Gombrich 2000).

Illusion seeks to create the appearance of the real within images and objects (Grau 2003:239). The adoption of illusionary techniques and information composed through lines, colour, and

62

form, known as mimesis, allows an image or object to contain realistic physical appearances (Grau 2003:15). The composition of different elements can serve a representative function. However, this combination of elements can also constitute the quality of presence within an image or object (Grau 2003:14). Through use of illusion an image or object can serve as an immersive effect. Illusion therefore can also be understood as the assembly of elements to create a synergetic effect within an image or object (Grau 2003:45). Illusion itself does not contain materialistic characteristics but it is rather through illusionary techniques and conceptual manipulation that illusion is allowed to come into existence (Gombrich 2000:349).

4.2 Illusion in Art

Plato claimed that art was a copy or representation of something of the real world. Aristotle saw art as grasping human life and recreating it to imitate reality (Rockmore 2013:94). Aristotle defined the nature of art as creating imitations of the real world and creating a copy of reality (Shimarnura 2013:3). This imitation of real-world subjects is known as mimesis. It is developed through precision of lighting, perspective, details, and colour (Grau 2003:16). These precise imitations are possible by techniques such as chiaroscuro, liner perspective and trompe-l'oeil. They can be applied to produce the effect of complete immersion, the plane where one is faced with intuitive mental and participatory simulation involving emotions and sensory perceptions (Wolf, Bernhart & Mahler 2013:255).

Although trompe-l'oeil, the genuine fooling of the eye into thinking that a painted item is real, is without a doubt illusionism in a specialised form, illusionism is not trompe-l'oeil. For practical reasons, trompe l'oeil is typically limited to still-life objects, whether they are included in a painting or are placed on a surface where one might anticipate seeing such objects. The main goal of illusionism is to shock and move people rather than to trick them. Its anticipated reaction is comparable to how a theatre audience might react to a play. Even though audience members are aware that the drama they are experiencing is not genuine, they still react to it emotionally almost as it is (Kitson 1966:33). From one perspective, the viewers are aware that what is being witnessed is art; however, willingly suspend disbelief and allow themselves to become involved in the situation. The same is true of illusionism in the visual arts. Indeed, all representational art can transport viewers out of themselves to some extent, but illusionistic art is more calculated than that (Kitson 1966:33).

63

The temporary illusionist effect appears to occur in trompe-l'oeil art, where the reality 'contained' within a picture spills over onto the frame - if the viewer accepts this level crossing as an intensified illusion. Pere Borrell del Caso's 1874 work *Escaping Criticism* is an example. It initially implies that a boy virtually leaves the frame of the painting of which he is a part and thus appears to be even more real than the painting and the painted frame together, before the recipient realises that such metaphoric border crossing is in fact only possible in representations such as illusionist paintings - which eventually breaks the illusion and transforms it, possibly into an amused admiration for the painter's trompe-l'oeil skill (Wolf, Bantleon, Thoss & Bernheart 2009:55).

Escaping Criticism (1874) (Figure 6) by Pere Borrell del Caso may be an example of why such techniques have resurfaced in contemporary art. The work caption, like the representation, is double-coded. At first glance, *Escaping criticism* appears to refer to the world depicted within the painting. The poor, terrified boy is fleeing from the interior of the represented world. However, upon closer inspection and reflection, one may notice that he is looking with a scared expression at some object to the right of the picture. This could be the location of criticism, rather than some fictional 'criticism' that scares him. where real-world critics are ready to condemn him as a painterly representation and thus the painting as a work of art. This can then be interpreted as the boy's motivation for avoiding the painting entirely (before being rejected as impossible since a fictional boy cannot be aware of real critics). When we read the caption in this manner, it becomes clear that this understanding of double coding is used in modern trompe-l'oeil examples (Wolf, Bantleon, Thoss & Bernheart 2009:55).

A contemporary example of this successful effect of trompe-l'oeil as a form of illusionism can be seen in the works of Leeah Joo who works with oils on canvas to create windows through which the viewer becomes a voyeur. Joo's most recent works investigate the various connotations of fabric as a still life subject (Figure 7). In some ways, it honours the simple beauty and tradition of Korean brocades saved for special events such as birthdays and New Year's celebration. The drapery then turns into mountains and oceans, suggesting stories from the past that are overpowering the present. Stories of family, folklore, and history unfold in these paintings of wrapped, packed, and swathed landscapes of silken brocades (Artner 2005).

Figure 6: Pere Borrell del Caso,
Escaping Criticism, 1874
Oil on canvas
50cm x 70cm
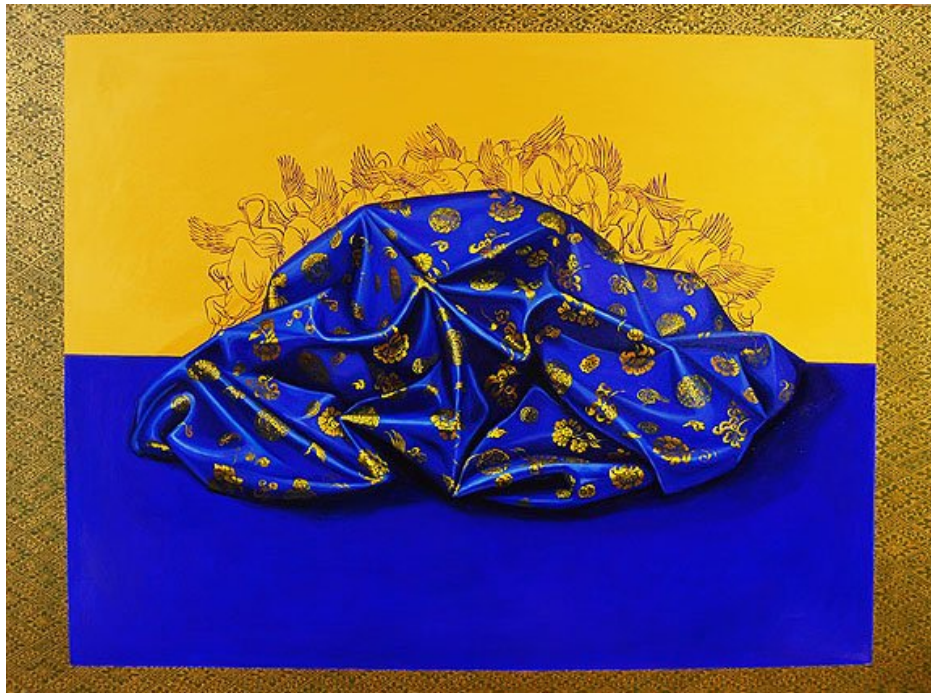(Image from aestheticreflectionsofart.blogspot.com)

Figure 7: Leeah Joo, *crane dance,* 2014
Oil on canvas
40x54"
(Image from leeahjoo.com)

Within art, illusion can be used as a process or effect. Effects include the above-mentioned chiaroscuro, liner perspective and trompe-l'oeil. Illusion as a process involves the interaction of logical and empirical considerations. This requires the artist to create a roadmap through which cues become triggers for a viewer to conceive or interpret the intended idea or theme (Gombrich 2000). The notion of putting the onus on the audience to bring the piece to life is a defining aspect of much of modern art. This can be seen in the work of Alicja Kwade's large-scale installation *WeltenLinie* (2017). It consists of an assemblage of steel grids and mirrors that the viewer may walk around and through (Figure 8). Objects within the building appear and disappear as the viewer moves around the space, or morphs from one substance to another. A rock is a rock in one moment, and then it lines up exactly in such a way that the same rock seems cast in bronze the next. The viewer may think one of the panels is a mirror, but the viewer does not see their reflection. It is a disturbing succession of illusions kept together by a complicated system of double-sided mirrors and meticulously positioned, matched objects.

Figure 8: Installation view of Alicja Kwade's
WeltenLinie, 2017
at Space Shifters, Hayward Gallery 2018.
(Photo: Mark Blower)

Illusionary artworks make use of schemata[19] and schematics[20] to create the desired results. The viewing of art activates certain schemata that correlate with certain objects and juxtapositions. Often artists will make use of visual dissonance, which is a state of psychological tension caused by a viewer experiencing disparity between what is expected to be seen and what is actually seen. Artists are able to do this because much of the subject matter within their works of art are more than literal depictions but innuendos to main concepts the work aims to represent. Artworks create tension that viewers resolve with their own knowledge of the subject matter (Solso 2003).

Illusion's ability to create tension is attributed to its ambiguity, and the power of suggestion (Wolf, Bernhart & Mahler 2013:275). This means that illusions can be used to create artworks that can be interpreted in several different ways. Artists make use of these ambiguities to create a space that encourages viewer participation. This allows viewers to interpret artworks in a frame of reference that best suits their own knowledge and experience. The knowledge and experiences used as frames of reference are influenced by culture and communication and the interplay between expectation and observation (Wolf, Bernhart & Mahler 2013:269).

Art can be described as the interaction between narrative intent and pictorial realism. This means that as a viewer, the ability to read an image's shape and form is dependent on the capacity to recognize and interpret these forms in relation to images and concepts stored within the viewer's own knowledge and experiences. The ability to read into images allows the viewer and the artist to form a relationship so as to transform conceptual images into likenesses of the real world. This type of relationship allows the viewer to form interpretations of the artwork in reference to their own reality through the use of different symbols and representations (Solso 2003).

The difference between symbolization and representation is central to the use of context and metaphors. The interplay between contextual cues and metaphorical cues allows for illusion to be used as a tool to represent concepts, ideas, and opinions. Through the reduction of representation and imitation, one is able to capture specific points in time or points of view. All representation relies to some extent on what is guided projection (Gombrich 2000:195).

---

[19] Part of one's mental framework for representing specific categories of knowledge (Solso 2003).
[20] Provide a context in which every day experiences are structured and understood (Solso 2003).

When looking at artworks that reject a complete and conclusive story or meaning, we automatically engage in what Gombrich called 'directed projection'. 'Guided projections' emerge from a combination of familiarity and scarcity (Gombrich 2000:212).

4.2.1 Types of illusion

Illusion within art explores the fluency of reality and its interconnected concepts and how it can be manipulated and distorted (Solso 2003). This is done through different types of illusions including perceptual, visual, and cognitive illusions. These different types of illusionary effects can be used singularly or collectively with one another. Each form of illusion triggers different responses in the viewer's mind (Solso 2003).

Perceptual illusions[21] explore how reality is filtered and distorted by our sensory cognitive prism (Solso 2003). Cognitive illusions engage a viewer's knowledge base. How much the viewer knows of the subject depicted can either help or hinder the viewer's understanding of the work. This technique allows artists to broaden the horizon of how artworks can be interpreted and read by their viewers. Visual illusions allow artists to demonstrate the incongruity between the real world and the world within the mind. This technique allows artists to call their viewers to supply the missing information. This is often done through fragmentation. These fragments become cues through which the artwork can be read and understood (Solso 2003).

Judith Butler's 'performativity theory' explored how our identities and realities are evolving constructs created through illusions (Butler 2015). These illusions are mase up of different mechanisms, such as language, gestures, and symbols. The mechanism influences how people may say or do things within their respective perceived realities, specifically, through the strength of authority given to specific words (Dino 2015). Words of authority not only enforce generated mechanisms such as laws but also allow for them to stay in places of authority. Therefore, it is through the performance of specific mechanisms that the illusion of control, power and understating is established (Dino 2015).

The formulation of these illusions can be explored through the way language is constructed and used (Dino 2015). Through the repetition of specific ideologies and conventions one

---

[21] See again the example of *Zephyr* by Bridget Ryley in chapter one.

reinforces their purpose within reality. Reality can then be seen as a social construct that is performed by the incorporation of language, symbol and gestures (Dino 2015). By performing these mechanisms, we create a platform for them to become necessary and natural. By enacting conventional social constructs, the artwork makes theses constructs more real and less artificial (Dino 2015).

The use of illusion and illusionistic tools within art and art practises can vary not only in their appearance but also according to the technique through which the illusion is created. Illusion within art can take on many forms. These forms can contain many aims and objectives such as tricking the eye, defying reality or challenging perception.

Perception and the nature thereof have always been of interest to artists. Artists across time have constantly explored the many different ways in which perception can be manipulated (Pantelic 2016). This was often done through effects that tricked the eye known as optical illusion. The rise of optical illusions in art created a space for artists to explore new ways of investigating science and psychology within their work. This created a platform from which artists presented their audiences with new and different vantage points through which to look at, dissect and understand the world around them (Pantelic 2016).

The themes of illusion and optical effect adopted by artists are phenomena that are termed Op Art and Kinetic Art. Op Art, which is an abbreviation for "optical art", refers to artwork that alters the viewer's perception of the canvas's surface. This is typically accomplished by using different types of geometry that cause the viewer's eye to get disoriented when figure/ground relationships conflict or when unlikely perspectival distortions are presented. Op Art, already briefly introduced in chapter one, emerged as a movement of artists in the mid-twentieth century in Paris and New York. These artists were concerned with investigating various forms of perceptual effects. The works created made use of abstract patterns with a high contrast between background and foreground. These contrasts often tricked the eye and forced the viewer to take a second look. The artwork became an invitation for the viewer to participate. Op Art made use of materials such as mirrors and light to create virtual movement in the artworks. Kinetic art however, made use of actual movement to create its images. Works were often motorized and suspended to create dynamic and infinite variations of an image (Eimert 2016:288).

Op Art and Kinetic Art and their practices laid the foundation for the exploration of ways in which art became a tool of engagement and investigation (Pantelic 2016). With the new advancements in technology many contemporary artists have dedicated their practice to the creation of artworks that, through the use of illusion, challenge one's conceptualisation of space, time, and reality.

The interdisciplinary approach to contemporary art is a result of the merging of art, science, psychology, and mathematics (Pantelic 2016). The developments of technology have removed boundaries and provided new spaces for art to be created and reimagined (Pantelic 2016). By pushing these boundaries artists are able to use illusion as a tool to challenge one's perception of the world and one's reality (Pantelic 2016).

Street art is a major art movement that takes advantage of the dismantlement of boundaries. Already mentioned in chapter two, we now take a further look into it in anticipation of the discussion on Robin Rhode's work in the next chapter. Street art ranges from simple graffiti works that are stencilled, pasted, or painted on walls to performance and theatre art (MacDowall 2019:22). Street art is experimental in nature and makes use of innovative ideas and techniques to depict realities, aesthetics, and attitudes (MacDowall 2019:27). This form of art transforms spaces to challenge views and perceptions. This transformation allows for different audiences to engage with the space, creating different mechanisms of understanding. The success of street art lies with the role of the audience. By mastering both two-dimensional and three-dimensional techniques that evoke optical illusion street art captures attention and intrigue. On many of the street pavements in different cities, elaborate chalk art question and challenge the perception (MacDowall 2019:27).

With the increasing advances in technology street art can be taken further than just merely site-specific works. Street art, through photography and social media, become a digital backdrop for the continuation of audience interaction (MacDowall 2019:27). The circulation of the images of artwork can not only immortalize it but challenge its conceptualisation. Furthermore, they are challenging ideas of reality, space, and time and create a dialogue that can be taken further. This dialogue reimagines the idea that an artwork is an object through which an artist bestows meaning (Simonowski 2016).

Through technology, an artwork rather becomes a platform which can be understood, challenged, and dissected through multiple dialogues (Simonowski 2011). Therefore, not only do artists challenge perception but they also create questions about perception through which one can examine one's own reality.

4.2.2 Performance art

Performance art makes use of the body to highlight specific concepts (Simonowski 2016). As seen in the video clip by Marina Abramović: 'What is performance art?' (2010), performance art often makes use of motion and interaction to construct ideas that are perceptual into concrete images to highlight gaps or unseen spaces within reality. Performance art constructs a physical reality that is temporary with ideas and concepts that are often permanent or of great controversy in a specific period. It is through performance art that the boundaries and limits can be broken down. It gives space for artists to explore new ideas without the constraints which mediums such as paint could hold. However, an audience is what gives the artwork purpose; without an audience the reality that the work creates has no interaction and therefore ceases to exist. Performance art explores how collective action can challenge oppressive regimes. As seen in the video clip 'Unlock Art: Frank Skinner on Performance Art' (2013), performance art's strength is in its ability to bring about a strong social critique. It asks important questions about how we may perceive the world around us and our place within it.

Through technology, video art and new media allowed artists to recreate realities. The recreated realities are illusions of time and space that once existed (MacDowall 2019:101). Often these spaces are reimagined and manipulated to invent new relations between individuals, spaces, and time. Increasing the interactions between artist and viewer, the viewer became part of the art process and not just a consumer of art (Simonowski 2016). The innovations in art and the production of art have reimagined its place in the world. An artwork no longer needs to be fixed in a specific space or time. This means that space is made for new audiences to engage in the work (Rieser 2011).

4.2.3 Hybrid art

The engagement between audience and artwork has led to artists creating hybrid art. Hybrid art is more than just the combination of different art materials, styles, and techniques. Hybrid art has dimensional multiplicity in its conceptual framework and setup. The artwork itself can

71

be broken down and accessed from many viewpoints, creating inclusivity and a more diverse audience engagement (Rieser 2011:145). Hybrid art allows for increased interactivity providing more individual positions and receptions from the audience (Rieser 2011:146). Technology has led to an increasingly multifaceted world, meaning that roles and the existence of these roles are constantly changing and evolving. This evolution means that identity and reality are constantly changing and are making way for the expansion of limits and boundaries (Rieser 2011:145).

4.2.4 Aesthetic illusion

Aesthetic illusion is a particular response to representational objects, it is transmedial and manifests itself into a pleasurable feeling often creating a form of imaginative and/or emotional immersion. Objects may elicit many different emotions such as frustration or excitement, referencing the aesthetic quality of the artefact. However, it must be understood (as previously stated) that emotion is an integral part of aesthetic illusion, but it is not aesthetic illusion itself. The viewer of the object must cognitively contribute to the experience. Therefore, it can be understood that the contents and symbols that are within the object guide the cognitive process of the viewer (Wolf, Bernhart & Mahler 2013).

Aesthetic illusion is the experiencing of imagined worlds. These worlds are created through rational engagement, emotional involvement and cognitive activation which are all guided by an object. Aesthetic illusion is dependent on three factors: the representation, the viewer, and the context. The representation offers the viewer interesting material through which context can be formed (Wolf, Bernhart & Mahler 2013). Aesthetic illusion activates a viewer's emotional, intellectual, and imaginative reactions through the use of visual stimuli. The ability to do so is attributed to the viewer's awareness that what is seen is a medial construct. This means that a major part of the reading of art is observations and experiences that are preconstructed by media, attitudes, interpretations, and conclusions already built in. This gives aesthetic illusions two different planes on which to operate: distance and immersion (Wolf, Bernhart & Mahler 2013:22).

Distance allows for space so that the viewer may rationalize what is being put out through the work and allows the viewer to create a predisposition of what to expect on further investigation into the work (Wolf, Bernhart & Mahler 2013:11). Immersion is the intuitive mental and

72

participatory stimulation within the work of art that activates the viewer's emotion and intellect (Wolf, Bernhart & Mahler 2013:12). The balance between these two planes assists artists in creating works that can be rationalised and understood. This is the reason why, as previously stated in chapter two, aesthetic illusion requires context, the viewer, and the artwork. The interaction between the three results in a close analogy or correspondence between representation and basic ideas of reality and perception. The aim of this is to create a space in which a viewer can be immersed in a representation that can be experienced or perceived as a form of reality (Wolf, Bernhart & Mahler 2013:12).

4.3 Perception and illusion

The ability to view an image is a distinct form of perception and is triggered by the presence within the field of vision of a differentiated surface. A differentiated surface allows the viewer to become aware of the surface as well as decern forms residing and standing out. In the depiction of an object, when marks on a surface successfully represent a scene or an event the marks allow viewers to become aware of a surface and how the marks create forms that may stand out while other marks may recede. Therefore, the object, scene or event being depicted is not what creates an illusion. Rather, the marks the artist uses on a surface are what allows for illusionary imitation to take place. This means that an artist's technique or style influences how an image can be read and therefore, activates emotional, imaginative, and intellectual mindsets. The subject of the image is a starting point to which artists add their own conceptual thoughts, ideas, and references (Hyman 2006:167).

The mind weaves sensations or perceptual signals into perception, resulting in a conscious representation of the world based on experience and knowledge. An example of this can be seen in the different shades and hues that create depth, shadow, and light points within an image. The image only consists of flat colour but through experimentation and previous knowledge, the effect can be seen and understood. Artists devised this reduction experiment and discovered that the components of visual experience may be disassembled and reassembled to the point of illusion (Gombrich 2000:50).

To give an example Maurits Cornelis Escher was a graphic artist whose works combined mathematical and perceptual properties to create striking artworks. Escher's work included symmetry, transformism, and duality. Duality refers to Escher's arrangement of neighbouring

73

shapes that results in a dual perception which can be seen in *Sky and Water* (1938) (figure 9). Specifically, the figure-ground assignment of neighbouring shapes can be reversed depending on the viewer's focal attention. These dual figure artworks were aimed to expose the ambiguities (arising from categorizations and generalizations) in the viewer's visual perception. Transmutation depicted in the artworks of Escher serve as a visual stimulation to create narratives within the artworks. The combination of different stimuli and elements such as duality and transmutation allowed Escher to showcase the individuality and relationships between these two stimuli. The unique and artful thinking influenced by mathematics allows Escher's artworks to have continuous and deep influence in the fields of computer graphics, art, psychology, and commercial design (Lin, Morace, Lin, Hsu & Lee 2018).
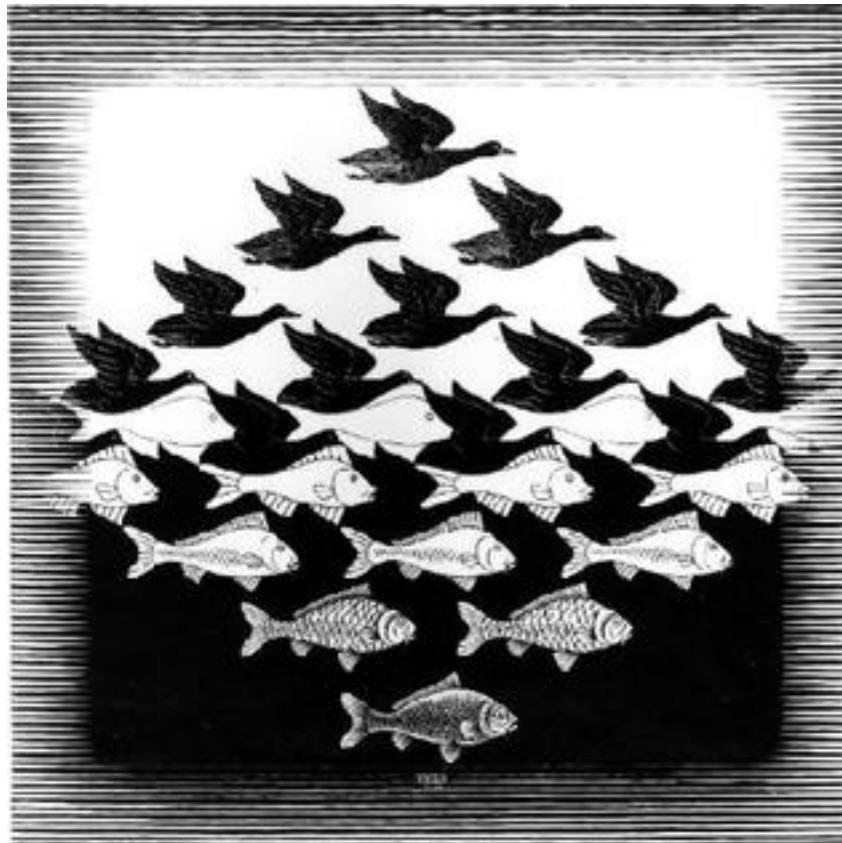

Figure 9: Maurits Cornelis Escher, *Sky and Water 1,*
1938
Woodcut printed in black
52,5x49,6cm
(Image from National Gallery of Art website)

John Locke (1632-1704) believed that objects have main and secondary properties. Primary attributes are those that he believed inherent to the object: size, solidity, shape, number, and

position. Secondary qualities are not inherent, but rather the product of 'a power in the thing' to make a sense-impression in our minds: to create colours, sounds, tastes, aromas, and feelings (Rickless 2014:19). How elements such as line and form are read is dependent on the viewer's capacity to recognize in them things or images they have stored within their own mental framework. In the arts, the style must rely on a vocabulary of forms, and it is an understanding of this vocabulary that distinguishes the skilled from the incompetent. Reading an artist's painting involves mobilising human memories and experiences in the visible world and testing this image through preliminary projections, the systematic comparison of previous accomplishments and the current motif, the preliminary project of works of art into nature, and efforts to demonstrate how nature might be seen in different terms (Rickless 2014:21).

As previously explained in Chapter Two on perception, knowledge can be affected by convention and stereotypes made within the brain to keep order. Cultural beliefs and traditions also affect knowledge (Shimamura 2013). When these conventions depict an object within an image certain qualities or characteristics within the image can create representations that may not be linked to the object itself but are linked to the depiction of said object. This is because representation has two links that allow for these effects to occur. Firstly, representation is forged by convention and therefore objects and their depictions have set ideas that surround them. This can include their shape or even their use within society (Shimamura 2013). Due to these conventions, artists can depict specific visual stimuli to create specific reactions or objectives. Secondly, cause and effect allow representations of objects to influence how they may be read. This is also known as causality which is the influence that one event has on the production of another event. Therefore, the cause is partially accountable for the effect and the effect is partially dependent on the cause (Hyman 2006:63).

Illusion is a complex phenomenon that is interlinked with perception and judgement. From our previous chapter on perception, it can be understood as a concept that is influenced by memory and personal biases and therefore illusion can be influenced similarly (Yang *et al.* 2021).

4.4 Truth, reality and illusion
As stated in the previous chapter reality is a complex and interchanging concept that is interlinked with notions such as truth, appearance, knowledge, culture, and belief. It is a

dynamic concept that is constantly adapting, changing, and evolving. In this chapter the objective is to relate the concept of reality to our understanding and experience of illusion.

Properties that in reality do not exist but can be contained within an illusion through the psychological mechanisms it reflects, imitates and configures the objective world. Through the psychological mechanism of imitation, reflection and configuration illusion of different realities and experiences can be generated with the same consistency seen in the common biological laws of human perception. Therefore, illusion is used as a tool to allude to different aspects of human experience. How these experiences are interpreted depends on how the viewer interprets reality and truth (Gombrich 2000:127).

Art is the combination of elusive elements that go through a transformation to create the desired effect (Gombrich 2000:128). The intentions of the artwork will define the style through which the artist chooses to represent different concepts. Artists explore the relationship of different concepts and the psychological adoption of the eye through their works of art. This is done firstly through defining a concept or idea and drawing on different forms of reality, which may be truthful or not, however remains truthful to the central concept or idea within the work. The ability for artists to draw from reality and its different forms allows art to copy and represent appearance (Hyman 2006:19). This is, as stated in Chapter Three, due to the central idea that, although reality cannot be re-represented, its viewable qualities and elements can – through the depiction of colour, line, and form (Gombrich 2000).

The ability to recognize the dimensions of the real world within an image is caused by the physiological and psychological mechanisms that produce the overall illusion (Schuter 2015). Therefore, these images contain the appearance of the real and the physical or primary properties of the object, but rather their essence (Schuter 2015). As stated previously, according to John Locke, within reality objects can be separated into two different sets of qualities: primary qualities which an object possesses independently from its power to produce effects, and secondary qualities that produce distinctive effects (Kirk 1999:92). Therefore, through illusion objects can take on the appearance of an object in reality, and they can contain secondary qualities that make up the essence of that object within objective reality. The image is now able to allude to this essence without taking on its physical form because of the illusion of appearance (Gombrich 2000).

The subject matter or cues artists use within their work are triggers, not from any form of reality, of realities that consist of world elements similar to those of everyday life. The elements used to represent different subject matter in art often draws from real world experiences so that the viewer may use their own frame of reference to fill in the gaps. Therefore, the work of art itself is not the illusion but rather what it may allude to. This can be done through the use of narratives and points of immersion. Points of immersion are representations of concepts through real objects or subjects; they ground the work in a reality that can be identified. Illusionary artworks can be linked to the working of some underlying narrational principles which allow the artwork to produce the typical features of such works in conjunction with historical and other factors. This allows the work to be read across a variety of different frames of reference which suit viewers of all cultural and historical representation. It is through facilitating access, consistency, genre, and participation by the viewer that illusionary works can succeed (Wolf, Bernhart & Mahler 2013)

Therefore, reality and illusion are the correlation between what is seen and what is known (Schuter 2015). The sentiments through which illusions are viewed, work in conjunction with the perception of apparent surface, volume, and motion (Schuter 2015). Artists are able, through the representation of motifs, to create likenesses which take on the appearance of real objects; these appearances bring memories forward and the memory of these images of spatial perception allow for the illusion to seem real. The illusion allows the two different realities, the past and the present, to collide through pictorial and visual arrangements (Schuter 2015).

4.5 Illusion and technology

According to Platonic and Aristotelian doctrine, the term 'art' refers to mimesis and the portrayal of reality (Rockmore 2013:14). As seen in the research paper so far, the concept of art has evolved over time. It acquired new definitions connected to cognition and the stimulation of emotion, or it was characterised as a vehicle of expression and communication (Wolf, Bernhart & Mahler 2013:53). The concept of art has become linked to acquiring abilities, and the manner these skills are communicated is clearly linked to the technologies utilised by artists. The fact that art is a product that must be transmitted in order to be seen or heard – in theory, sensed by and shared with others in order to exist – may have various social consequences that we must always consider when discussing or creating art. The merging of

77

art and technology is an unavoidable by-product of modern cultures' efforts to meet their needs (Grau 2003:279).

However, virtual reality and technologically driven art were not the first attempt that artists made to create illusionary spaces. The painted illusionism of the panorama represents how painting was taken to its limits to create the most sophisticated forms of illusion and suggestive power (Grau 2003:45) using techniques such as linear perspective and foreshortening.

The core idea of the panorama was to represent nature in service of an illusion. These illusionistic landscapes surrounded the viewer with pictorial images that aimed to immerse the viewer into the landscape as if actually being witnessed in real time (Grau 2003:16). The assumption of being bound in the real is the panorama's essence. The deceit and manipulation allowed the work to gain attraction, whether the observer was unaware, as in the early years, or subsequently, knowingly succumbing to the illusion as a source of artistic pleasure (Grau 2003).

A panoramic perspective is combined with the sensorimotor exploration of image spaces to create the illusion of a 'live' environment in virtual reality. A multisensory interactive environment has been created through interactive media of experience with a temporal frame. The adjustable dimensions in the virtual workspace allow it to be changed at leisure, creating a space that can be utilised for modelling and experimenting. The venues allow artists to communicate globally via networks of data and create opportunities for artists to explore new possibilities through telepresence techniques. Visuals from the natural world are incorporated into artificial images to create 'mixed realities', where it is often impossible to tell the difference between the original and the simulation (Grau 2003:245).

Similar to other illusionary artworks, such as the panorama, the development of technology has allowed artists to take a step further in creating alternate realities (Grau 2003:347). And thus, they are transforming the image so that the viewer may 'enter' it. Through innovative design and experimentation with technological advancements in virtual reality systems, artists are now able to enhance the interactional facets of their work even further.

With the increasing advancements in technology the world of images that surround us is changing extremely quickly. The way images are produced has changed fundamentally. Images

can be generated at a rapid speed and resources are as easily accessible to the public as to artists. The media artist represents a specific kind of contemporary artist who scopes out new options of perception and artistic position. This is due to the art world experiencing a rise in computer-generated works (Grau 2003:200). Images are capable now of autonomous change and they can formulate life-like experiences that embrace all the senses. The evolution of illusion in media has allowed the artist to generate new techniques for distributing, creating and presenting images. As a result, create environments with immersive effects are created (Grau 2003:34).

Immersion can be a mentally exciting procedure; yet, in most circumstances, both now and in the past, according to Grau (2003), the process is psychologically absorbing. Immersion is transformative in nature and creates a passage from one mental state to another. It is distinguished by a decrease in critical distance to what is revealed and an increase in emotional involvement in what is happening. Most virtually experienced realities seal viewers off to enable them to expand their perspective so that they can fully embrace the created environment. Sealing off the observer from external visual impressions allows the viewer to observe scale and colour correspondence, similarly to the panorama, using indirect light effects to make the image appear as the source of the real (Grau 2003:59).

The aim of creating an artificial environment is to enclose the entire field of observation for the audience. Unlike a cycle of frescoes, which portrays a sequential temporal series of images, these images immerse the observer in a 360-degree space of illusion, or immersion, with unity of time and place. Because image media can be understood in terms of their intervention in perception, of how they organise and structure perception and cognition, virtual immersive spaces must be classified as extreme variations of image media that, in their entirety, offer a completely other reality (Grau 2003:229).

On the one hand, immersive spaces provide shape to the media's 'all-encompassing' objectives, and on the other, they provide viewers with the option of fusing with the image medium, which impacts sensory impressions and awareness, particularly through their wholeness. This is in stark contrast to the non-hermetic effects of illusionistic painting, such as trompe l'oeil, where the medium is readily identifiable, and images or image spaces are delimited by an apparent frame to the observer, such as the theatre or, to a lesser extent, the diorama, and especially television (Grau 2003:157).

79

Although traditional Western art—painting, literature, drama, sculpture—served the eye as the locus of perception, the interface in interactive art engages the full body and transforms it into a privileged place for experiencing. Boundaries between the body and the outside world disappear in favour of emotive contact. *Untitled 5* (2004) (Figure 10) by Camille Utterback employs body-tracking software to generate abstract paintings based on the interactor's movement across space, transforming their body into 'a painterly tool for an ever-changing visual feedback system'. The body's status as an instrument and tool strengthens its role in the perception process (Simanowski 2016).

Figure 10: Camille Utterback, *Untiltled 5,* 2004
Variable dimensions
Interactive installation: Custom software, video camera,
computer, projector and lighting.
(Image from camilleutterback.com)

Shezad Dawood's massive project includes a ten-part film cycle, paintings, sculpture, commissioned speeches and research, and a virtual-reality trilogy. The project explores

technological advancements in the creation of art and alternate realities. These inventive forays, created in partnership with oceanographers, marine biologists, and neurologists, are totally based on scientific study. *Leviathan Legacy: Part 1* (Figure 11) is an immersive experience set 150 years in the future. You put on the VR headgear, take the controls, and find yourself on a night-time beach. To the right, a luxury marina is out of reach, a digital tablet newspaper is tossed on the ground, and a flying automobile glides overhead. As events unfold, you will realise that the sea life, not you, is in command. As humans, we frequently act without regard for other animals or the environment; Dawood's universe serves as a reminder that this type of anthropocentric thinking will not serve us well. We are left with the knowledge that the moment for change is now as we gaze into a dystopian future and remove our headsets into an uncertain present (Simanowski 2016).

Figure 11: Shezad Dawood, *Island Pattern,* 2017
Neon
129.5x200 cm
Installation view from *Leviathan,*at The Atlantic Project
and Plymouth Arts centre
(Image from corridor8.co.uk)

Through the development of new media and technology the differentiation between illusion and the real has been revolutionized. The result of this influx of new media and technology has led to the creation of complete imagined worlds which make use of illusions to manipulate our visual perception and alter our understanding of what reality can be. This suggests that through technology not only imaginary worlds are created but alternate forms of reality can be brought

81

forward to form a basis for critique of the modern human condition. That which was seen as impossible or unimaginable is now possible through the manipulation of visuals by technology and new media (Grau 2003:173).

The new constructed visual realities can be seen as expanded forms of our own realities, exploring how subtle changes in reality and the truths we pull from them can alter complete worlds in ways that did not seem possible. This acceptance of apparent worlds, of virtuality, sees the overarching and mingling of cultures in ways that that did not seem viable before (Goldstick 2009:261).

Artists are now able to experiment with this new virtuality to broaden the spectrum of multi-sensory perception. This allows artists the opportunity to create illusion that depict contrasting effects that allow for a broadened range of critique within ideas and themes. This new virtuality creates a space for the imagined worlds, achieved by the illusion of the real through appearance, to overlap with actual objective reality, blurring the borderlines between them (Grau 2003:248).

4.6 Conclusion

Illusion is a highly transformative concept, and it is strongly influenced by understandings of perception, truth, and reality. This chapter has confirmed that, with their tools and materials at hand, artists are well equipped to employ illusion. Illusion has long been hinted at through practical techniques such as linear perspective and trompe-l'oeil, but as media has advanced, illusion can now also be used in a more elusive sense. This can be seen through the conceptual use of illusion in contemporary art. Through the exploration of technology, topics such as reality can be pushed furthered to explore the 'real' and 'unreal'.

Chapter 5: Robin Rhode

5.1 Background and practice

Robin Rhode, who was born in Cape Town in 1976, moved to Johannesburg in 1984, where he studied art from 1995 to 1998, and later film. Rhode has primarily lived in Berlin since 2002. Berlin, once divided by a wall, now thrives in an atmosphere of freedom and creative possibility. After years of unification, the city is still rebuilding and healing, grappling with its complicated and layered political history and trauma. However, it is a city that encourages personal and historical dialogue. It is unavoidable, with memorials, pockmarked buildings, museums, and that long scar running through the city where once stood a wall. It seems natural that Rhode would find a place to create narrative driven art in Berlin as he does in South Africa (d'Arenberg 2015).

However, Johannesburg has remained his primary creative inspiration to this day. The city serves as both a 'stage' and a 'canvas' for his works. This is where Rhode began interacting with his chalk drawings of objects on walls and floors. His performances were often spontaneous actions that just seem to happen. Drawing is the foundation and constant departure point for his work: making marks, drawing with his own body in space, drawing with chalk and paint on the floor, on a wall, on paper. Drawing is always self-contained, but it also serves as (or represents) a counterpoint to his performances. Rhode appropriates external surfaces, such as a wall section, a courtyard, or a riverbed. The protagonist is his own human body and/or, since around 1999, his Doppelgängers (Rosenthal 2008:10).

Rhode creates drawings, paintings, photographs, and films that are inspired by adolescent street culture and art history. In Rhode's work, urban walls serve as canvases, static pictures are animated, and the artist takes on the role of performer and street interventionist (Rhode, Bedford & Hobbs 2001). Rhode tackles the processes of drawing to explore different drawing techniques. Walls become a site of intervention in his art, which is inspired by early cave paintings (Rhode, Bedford & Hobbs 2001). The walls and floors Rhode uses for his drawings are never just blank canvases. They bring their own history, nature, textures, and colours to the composition and are crucial to its success.

Rhode struggled with the formal structure and discipline required to create art within a traditional studio space (O'Toole 2013). As a result, he became dissatisfied with that system and decided to embrace the outside, the street, as a new context for his work. And part of the reason for doing so was to take a political stance in terms of shifting the role of the viewer of contemporary art in South Africa away from the educated and informed white eye and towards the unassuming, the uninformed, the passer-by, the pedestrian, the homeless, and the labourer. And to expose the public to a contemporary art process in some way. Not the finished work, but entire the process of making (Bishai 2021).

Everyday spaces and materials spoke to him and with this the rejection of the studio (Sey 2013:6). This realisation allowed him to reflect on what his art spoke for. He looked to his youth in Cape Town and a specifically to his time at RW Fick High. In interviews, lectures, and discussions, Rhode has stated numerous times that as a child, he was forced to ride a drawn bicycle or blow out a candle drawn on the wall of the boy's bathroom with the other young boys as a type of sub-cultural initiation rite at his high school. Rhode re-creates this situation in his works, where he plays not only with the memory of this boyhood initiation, but also with memory itself (O'Toole 2013).

Rhode's use of illusion becomes a language through which he can communicate different realities and experiences. In his work he makes use of personal symbols, for example, drawing with chalk was inspired, as stated by high school initiations as a rite of passage. Bicycles become a symbol of this rite of passage as they represented youth and freedom. This ritual inspired Rhode to use this as a starting point within his art practice to explore the engagement between the action and his identity. He used the movement and interaction of the bicycle to explore it dynamism and a form of performative art. The bicycle became a static symbol that could be transformed through performance. The combination of the static image and performance allowed Rhode to explore how this illusion of riding a bicycle could transcend time and space (Bellini 2005).

This leads Rhode into the inquiry of the absurdity of the ritual and the irony in which it holds. The desire to engage with a world just past their own grasp. The initiation at the time was performed for both humour and to humiliate the younger students. However, most of these students had never owned a bike themselves, both initiator and initiated. Fundamentally the

ritual made reference to consumer objects that were unrideable available to them due to Apartheid (O'Toole 2013).

The investigation of life within his community is intended to reflect on cultural stigmas, seeking to visually reinterpret the 'street' life he has experienced visually. The juxtapositions between negative and positive connotations allow the artist to render subjects which are ironic, absurd, and humorous (Rhode, Bedford & Hobbs 2001). He encoded everyday spaces with aesthetic experiences reflecting on power of simplicity in a message or narrative (Sey 2013:6). Rhode transforms walls and public spaces into aesthetic objects that demand attention and therefore places the viewer in a space to feel, think, and act. He makes use of cultural coding to explore the makeup of the human condition.

Historically, wall drawing has lineage with the history of the Khoisan's cave paintings and political murals covering townships in South Africa during Apartheid. This further informs Rhode's practice in how he redefines the 'real' through aesthetic evolutions (Sey 2013:7). Through viewer interaction and the process of creation, Rhode uses walls to mirror or reflect ideas onto society. The wall (and the marks he create on them) become part of a documentation process through which he comments on the evolution of different responses to the specific contexts and environments.

Rhode's strength is his ability to make his mark, to bring objects and abstract forms to life. His performances are immortalised in photographs and animations. Even the recent sculptures and paintings he has created could be described as spontaneous. He is motivated by the ephemeral rather than the eternal. Rhode creates art that is creative, determined, and devoid of whimsy. Humour and play are utilised to dismantle the art world's formal structure as well as to make the weighty subject matter of his work more palatable. The absurdity of painting an object on the wall and pretending it's real, even though it's painted in a crude manner, provides the basis for humour. Throwing trash at a drawn trash can, on the other hand, is a very critical way of looking at what we perceive to be reality and what is not, what is three-dimensional and what is abstract. Then humour becomes a very effective tool for overcoming trauma. Humour is used as a coping mechanism to reject the reality of trauma (Bishai 2021).

Rhode employs different drawing techniques to interrogate the site and create work that encourages a form of a dialogue between the mark in situ and the physical interaction that

85

occurs with the drawing. Rhode does this by using 'real' figures to interact with the drawing (which is static). This interaction is photographed to create the illusion of the drawing and the performance happening in real time. Rhode's artworks often read as storyboards of stop action increments of everyday activities. The storyboard setup captures 'real' events and situates them in a different time and context. The sequence of these storyboards is made up of series of still images through which Rhode and the drawing become one. The simplicity of Rhode's collected frames capitalises on the ability of both the viewer's and the performer's imagination to fill in the gaps by using simple procedures and materials (Williamson 2009).

Rhode's fascination with photography stems from his understanding of how a piece of performance art is captured and exists as a document—proof of the action that occurred. Rhode has said that Yves Klein's *Leap Into the Void* (1960) is an inspiration for Rhode. That set him on the path of thinking about the body being placed inside a frame or a picture frame and becoming the protagonist or medium for what is happening inside the frame (Bishai 2021). Over time, he realised that by considering props, he could add additional layers of meaning to the image. By examining objects that have inherent meaning in and of themselves. Recognizing the significance of aesthetic experience and art production, he believes that cinema contains all of these levels and layers of construction, and he strives to have his work function as cinema does, to give it depth and multiple dimensions. Dimensions that are used to create meaning (Bishai 2021).

Rhode is on a quest to find the infinite. Aware of the potential for art to transcend the boundaries of its medium. Rhode is fascinated by how geometry, form, and colour can lead to a higher, more universal aesthetic realm. Rhode uses form and geometry to expand conventional narratives of place and community (Bishai 2021). Rhode's search for the infinitive inspired his interest in geometry. He has created a lot of work that deals with the infinitive, such as the figure-8, in order to demonstrate how the concept of the infinite can exist as an aesthetic. Also, infusing the idea spirituality into the work, sacred geometry, forms that have a sacredness in their perfection or symbolism. It's the organic body versus Rhode's representation of geometry, but the body can also be seen as a representation of geometry (Wainwright 2014:63).

Rhode believes that geometry and nature are inextricably linked. Nature and evolution are linked to the geometry of the infinitive. Nature is the source of all life. Rhode finds life in

86

geometry, which very mechanical and structured, Rhode aims to project a spirit into that mechanism and bring life to it. That is the major test: allowing the mechanical body to evolve into something spiritual and humane. Rhode makes use geometry as a template to project human spirit onto objects or props within his art. To create a form of the 'real' (Wainwright 2014:63).

As seen in previous chapters, Gombrich (2000:104) states that illusion is described as a world of symbols that distinguish 'the real' from the metaphorical. Through lines, form, and colour Rhode is able to create the appearance of 'real' objects within his drawings which serve as reference points. The use of a 'real' figure photographed against a drawn scenario creates an environment that interplays between expectation and observation (Wolf, Bernhart & Mahler 2013): what we as viewers expect from a drawing, as well as what we observe will happen if the drawing were to be real. Rhode's drawings imitate objects from the 'real' that allow the marks on the surface to create an experience normally caused by the actual object of that kind (Hyman 2006:64).

Through visual dissonance, which is the state of tension experienced by a viewer when interplay between expectation and observation occurs, the drawings he creates become symbols which bridge the gap between a created image and reality. Rhode's enforcement of contextual and metaphorical cues allows illusion to become a tool within his work to represent concepts, ideas, and opinions (Gombrich 2000:105). Through the imitation of the appearance of real objects Rhode creates interaction between narrative intent and pictorial realism. The ability to read into images through these imitations allows Rhode to form a relationship with his viewer so as to transform conceptual images into likenesses of the real world. This type of relationship allows the viewer to form interpretations of the artwork in reference to their own reality using different symbols and representations (Solso 2003), placing a large emphasis on illusion in his art.

Let us now look back at what was discussed in the previous chapters: the theories of John Locke on how objects contain primary and secondary properties and E.H Gombrich's belief that the world can be described through symbols that differentiate the 'real' from the metaphorical. These theories rely on an understanding that illusion can be an imitator of reality. Visual illusion can be defined as the incongruity between the real world and the world of the mind. Artists use this to demonstrate how symbols and signifiers can be used to help viewers

supply and apply the missing information (Solso 2003). Therefore, it can be argued that visual illusion is present in all of Rhode's work. The work selected will compare and highlight how illusion can be used within perception, reality, and truth. Technology and how it has influenced Rhode and his practice will be discussed.

5.2 Perception

Perception, as stated previously by Minissale (2013), is an activity in the brain that organises, creates, and compartmentalises patterns in the real world. Robin Rhode uses a form of knowledge which is part of the perception process. Through drawing and interaction with the marked surface, Rhode creates an aesthetic illusion, part of the perception process, through which imagined worlds may be created. As stated in the previous chapters, aesthetic illusion activates a viewer's emotional, intellectual, and imaginative reactions through the use of visual stimuli. Aesthetic as well as cognitive illusion can be described as something being perceived and it is not what is appears to be. It directly addresses the viewer's reaction to particular information represented in an image or an object (Fish 2009:149). The process within cognitive illusion organises stimuli into slots that have been predetermined and involves perceptual relationships with the object and/or image and the outside world (Mitrovic 2013). These creations are successful through rational engagement[22], emotional involvement[23], and cognitive activation[24]. Rhode achieves this through an ability to create a narrative within his work, either using a real person or a stop frame, which pulls from the site's original history and his added representation that draws in viewer participation (Wolf, Bernhart & Mahler 2013).

The ability to do so is attributed to the viewer's awareness that what is seen is a medial construct. As stated previously in Chapter Four, aesthetic illusions operate on two different planes, namely distance, and immersion (Wolf, Bernhart & Mahler 2013). Rhode achieves distance through added representations and immersion by placing drawing in specific areas that contain their own history. Rhode achieves tension between immersion and distance by making use of real figures to interact with static drawn images. The figure adds a narrative to the drawing. The drawings are recognisable objects but not realistically drawn. They therefore

---

[22] Rhode understands his role as a creator whose narrative can impact himself and others.
[23] Rhode's works are based on his own experience and understanding of them.
[24] Rhode wants his work to be engaging on a deeper level, understanding that knowledge is reliant om different cognitive processes and construction which are influenced by social constructs.

become symbols which provide context to the viewer and to the narrative the viewer adds to the drawings and the figure interacting with it.

Through the examination of distinct pieces that interact, connect, and influence one another Rhode is able to explore the visual limits of perception (Kandel 2016). Rhode does this by reducing his subject matter in his drawings into single components. This single component could be a line, form, or colour. These reduced representations become the backdrops of his performances. By separating the object and the action associated with the object Rhode is able to pique audience interest. When exposed to this separation, reduction, and dismantlement the viewers are compelled to search for different perspectives and reference points to understand the work. Rhode intentionally removes conventions from the context to create a new experience that can elicit novel perceptual and emotional reactions from his audience. The deconstruction of elements reflects the bottom-up and top-down cognitive processes which were investigated and explained in Chapter Two.

Rhode breaks down his work into distinct components. The drawn image becomes the stimulus to provide background and context. Similarly, the bottom-up process makes use of these stimuli to trigger certain memories and forms of knowledge. Rhode's drawings speak to our unconscious stages of perception. The figure in his works, the action and movement, piques the audience's interest. This interest can be seen by the top-down process. Through relational knowledge, which is part of the top-down process, the viewer can make sense of the image and figure combination. This combination transforms the work into a form of reality capturing the essence of experience.

In the *Park Bench* (2000) (Figure 12) we can see how Rhode makes use of distinct images and stimuli to speak to a wider psychological context. In this work Rhode, dressed in black, drew a bench on the wall of Cape Town's House of Parliament. The bench, which was very realistically drawn, was miraculously standing on its own with one of its legs lifted from the ground as Rhode repeatedly attempted to sit on it. If Rhode failed to do so, he did manage to recall the not-so-distant history of Apartheid-era legislated segregation, in which public benches were demarcated along colour lines. The bench's dysfunction and Rhode's failure to sit on the bench speaks to the unviability and inherent flaws of such a political system. After a security guard informed him that he was degrading government property, Rhode was marched to police headquarters (Tancons 2003:67).

89

Figure 12: Robin Rhode, *Park bench,* 2000
Performance art
Dimensions variable
(Image from ArtThrob)

The simple yet effective use of drawing and situ allow Rhode to manipulate symbols so as to give them weight and complexity. His use of play and attempts to physically interact with an inanimate object speaks to the absurdity through which Rhode aims to highlight South Africa's past. Through play he is able to tap into the perceptual experiences and how over time these experiences are distorted through different realms of knowledge and conceptual interpretation. He is also able to highlight that regularities of our universe can be slighted altered and changed to manipulate connections and links between complex symbols. He does this through reduction to highlight the visual boundaries of perception. Rhode relies on humour and play to isolate elements to stimulate the imaginations of his viewers to bring forward different perspectives that may have not been seen or understood before.

Another work that highlights play in in Rhode's practice is *Upside Down Bike (Red, Yellow, Blue)* (2000) (Figure 13), a reiteration of an earlier bicycle performance, Rhode performs countless handstands and hand-jumps reminiscent of break-dance moves in an attempt to get onto the seat and pedals of a bicycle drawn upside down on the wall of the South African National Gallery in Cape Town (Tancons 2003:68). He used the movement and interaction of the bicycle to explore it dynamism and a form of performative art. The bicycle became a static symbol that could be transformed through performance. The combination of the static image and performance allowed Rhode to explore how this illusion of riding a bicycle could transcend time and space (Bellini 2005).

90

Figure 13: Robin Rhode, *Upside Down Bike (Red,
Yellow, Blue),* 2000
Performance art
(Image from studio international)
Dimensions variable

As previously stated, bicycles become a symbol of this rite of passage as they represented youth and freedom. This locates Rhode's practise in the realm of children play and call to mind Benjamin's 1933 reflection on the revolutionary potential in children's mimetic capacity to 'play at being not only shopkeeper or teacher but also a windmill and a train'(Benjamin 1996:720). Toys inoculate and anticipate the desire for consumer goods, and Rhode adopts the persona of a character enamoured with consumer culture. Rhode's performative persona, blinded by the desire to possess the object drawn on the wall, almost deludes itself in the field of drawing by blending the boundaries of two-dimensional and three-dimensional. Rhode has admitted to wanting to enter the 'drawing field', and his performances are very much linked to his desire to acquire the objects he draws or to incarnate the characters he plays (O'Toole 2013).

The fact that Rhode has chosen to dress in primary colours (a red cap, a yellow sweater, and blue jeans) demonstrates his above-mentioned interest in mimetic representation. Rhode employs mimicry as a powerful strategy to mock the illusions of the spectacle society as well as to confuse preconceived notions about what a young, coloured man represent. His works speak to how perception is conceptualised through different perceptual experiences within different social, cultural, and environmental knowledge domains. His work becomes a narrative through which intent and pictorial realism collide. He is able to recreate forms from the real world to create a relationship between symbolism and conceptual images. To create tension between what is expected and what is actually seen. Through the use of visual illusions Rhode is able make literal depictions into demonstrations of incongruity within the real world and the world through perceived by the mind.

91

In more recent works Rhode makes use of colour and geometric patterns in his work has become more dominant. These patterns and form create triggers to represent different subject matter which draws from real world experiences so that the viewer may use their own frame of reference to fill in the gaps. These triggers become points of immersion that are representations of concepts through real objects or subjects, grounding the work in a reality that can be identified (Wolf, Bernhart & Mahler 2013). An interesting visual reference is chosen, something that could be drawn quickly and speaks to Rhode and certain ideas in a very clear and comprehensive way. He then searches for a colour palette that best fits the composition and complements whatever costume or prop he is using. There must be a sense of unity between the colour, the costume, and the wall drawing. His work is not haphazard; it is carefully considered and planned, but he also attempts to work across the spectrum of possibility. All this ultimately governs his aesthetic decisions (Wainwright 2014:57).

Colour vibration, according to Rhode, is a type of visual animation on the retina of the eye. In a work like *RGB (Red Green Blue)* (2015) (Figure 14), he began by looking at these colours that are associated with a type of digitisation, but by having to create them by hand, the process becomes analogue. He revels in the clash of ideals, forms, and language. His wall process creates a conflict between not seeing the hand or touch and attempting to depict a digital or mechanised aesthetic (Wainwright 2014:58). This process speaks to how perception is a representation of space within a specific time and how it provides a series of cues to guide our interpretation. *RGB*, employs digitised pixilation reference from television sets, but is created using acrylic paint. The three-dimensionality of the work is attributed to a more painterly opacity during the painting process. Revealing Rhode's curiosity for juxtaposition in both process and the final art work.

This process can be seen more readily in the work *Evergreen* (2016) (Figure 15). Rhode was imagining a football field's grass and how the varying degrees of a lawnmower blade create different shapes. He wanted to investigate how he could recreate the effect of the grass on the pitch changing and catching the light differently. The green which seems to have ignited the idea was from a prop. The prop was a shirt and trousers he wore to work, which were originally powder blue, but had been washed and accidentally resulting in this pale pastel green due to the mixing of colours in the washing. Rhode spray-painted the lawnmower matte black and treated it like a sculpture. Rhode becomes unidentifiable as he tries to conceal all aspects of his

identity. It takes the form of an anonymous body through which viewers can project themselves into the work of art (Wainwright 2014:59).
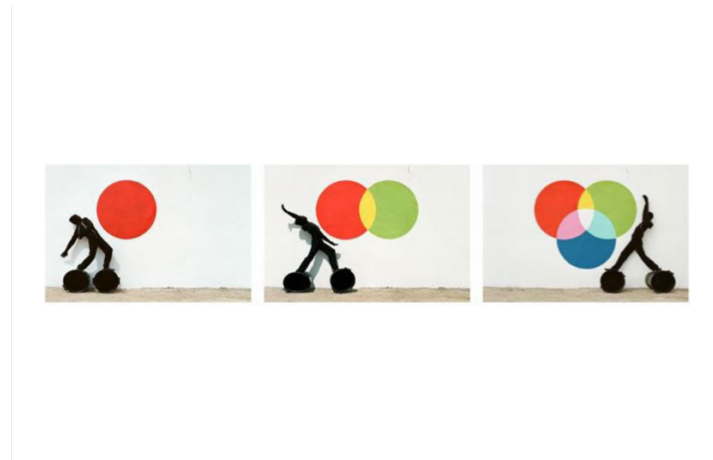

Figure 14: Robin Rhode, *RGB,* 2015
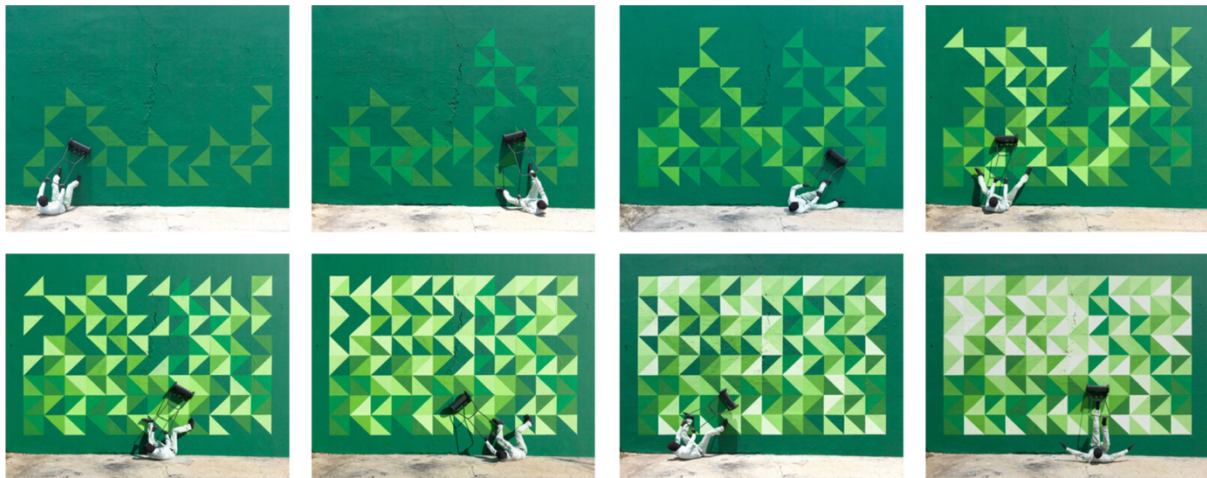Performance art/photograph
(Image from Artsy.com)

Figure 15: Robin Rhode, *Evergreen,* 2016
Performance art/photograph
(Image from Wentrupgallery.com)

The removal of identity is a strong reference to Rhode's youth Growing up in a society where identity is central to daily life, if not survival. His goal is to place the body in a colour field. To reposition the body, and the politics it represents, in an undefined and abstract world. By doing so, he attempts to redefine the parameters of identity politics. The work is transformed into a democratic idealisation for 'everyman' and 'everywoman' to experiment with and reinvent

93

their identities. As a result, the removal of identity becomes a political gesture, subtly realised without shouting, only whispering (Wainwright 2014:60). Exploiting how cultural practices can influence and determine knowledge, experience, and therefore perception.

Rhode transforms walls and public spaces into aesthetic objects that demand attention and therefore places the viewer in a space to feel, think and act. He makes use of cultural coding to explore the makeup of the human condition. Through this he comments on the evolution of different responses to the specific context and environment. Through the reduction of representation and imitation, Rhode is able to capture specific points in time and create illusions (Gombrich 2000).

5.3 Truth and reality

Employing a playful blend of satirical humour and self-reflective political commentary, Rhode is able to test the limits of representation and reality (Rhode, Bedford & Hobbs 2001). Because reality is a dynamic concept that is constantly adapting, changing, and evolving Rhode succeeds in creating a progressive and transcending narrative that employs satire to bring light to serious topics in an unchallenging way so that they may be understood and recognized in a less intimidating way. Through mark-making and other drawing techniques, Rhode is able to form an impression that allows for the development of ideas and conceptions within his viewer's mind. Illusion encourages the viewer to bridge the gap between represented reality in an image and the 'real' (Gombrich 2000) and to negotiate between different realities such as the past and the present (Hyman 2006:61).

Photographs are a medium for capturing and mapping human behaviour and physical characteristics. It's all about the heart, soul, spirit, existence, and humanity. Photography explores existence and how different aspects of the world fall and fit into the world. Rhode investigates questions such as: How do we get around in the world? How do we coexist with the objects in the world, as well as the signs and symbols that surround us? Exploring the lineage between appearance and reality and the many interpretations that can be drawn from them. Investigating how the brain comprehends what is possible and not in accordance with network of practices within that reality. The frameworks for which the different versions of the 'real' can exist.

Under the Sun (2017) (Figure 16), a large artwork (36 panels), Rhode depicts the sun rising and setting through a variety of colours. Exploring a palette of yellow tones with dark and light variations, as if each tone were a piece of mosaic glass. Rhode discusses narratives and sonographies, so there is this lingering idea of the interior and the exterior, revealing and concealing, body language, the use of signs and symbols to establish identities, and the appropriation of dominant cultures into forms of subculture (Wainwright 2014:57). In this piece we see Rhode has reimagined our life-giving star in geometric proportions, distilling it into a series of squares, like jumbo digital pixels. The performer is perched on a car tyre to simulate being adrift at sea in a tiny lifeboat as the performer basks in the light of a rising sun. But, while Rhode strives for a higher realm of metaphysics, he is also drawn to the low: to the material, humble, everyday object. (Thackara 2018).

Figure 16: Robin Rhode, *Under the Sun,* 2016
Performance art/photograph
(Image from Artspace.com)

The abstraction of representation in Rhode's work demonstrates how visual illusions create a space for exploration of truth and reality. This work in particular highlights the ability for an artwork to demonstrate the incongruity between the real world and the world in which we create for ourselves in our minds. The abstraction and pixel like representation can be seen as the mirroring of complex social realities in the form of distinct and different appearances.

95

Highlighting the social structures through which reality is guided through within specific power relations and time periods. If these works provide an imaginative escape, or metaphysical transcendence, from the broader chaos of human societies worldwide. His works' impermanence alludes to the more universal experience of time. "I'll build the monument, but I'll also demolish it," Rhode says. "The works exist for a brief period of time and are related to the concepts of life and death" (Thackara 2018).

The exploration of memory and how memory is affected is a critical aspect of Rhode's work (Rhode, Bedford & Hobbs 2001). Rhode makes use of his episodic memory to link artefacts and projections to a specific time or place. Memory is distorted by external stimuli and internal forces that influence how the world is seen and understood. Through categorisation, specific details are prominent in memory and evoke specific emotions. The memories explored through Rhode's work can be read through many lenses as these memories are often shared by a community or group of people with similar past experiences (Shimamura 2013). A big part of the works' success relies on the memories triggered by the drawing for the viewer. The drawings may elicit different experiences but allude to similar experiences, allowing for communication to take place. According to Gombrich artistic effect and therefore illusion succeed because of the unity between artist and viewer. The work of the artist is a form of communication with the viewer. Rhode uses illusion as his tool to communicate ideas, different realities, and different truths.

Robin Rhode's work *Re-setting Getaway* (2000) (figure 17) is a good example of how re-enacting a moment (or even an experience for some) can evoke emotion relying on a collective memory and site of communication. In this work Rhode enacts an escape from the Slave Lodge in Cape Town. Formerly slave quarters for the Dutch East India Company in the 17th and 18th centuries, the Slave Lodge is now one of the city's museums (Tancons 2003). Rhode ran, only stopping to strike appropriate runaway poses, torso bent forward, arms and legs rhythmically fighting against air and ground, falling at times. As he did this, he continued to draw lines behind him, representing the speed of his evasion, mimicking as seen in cartoons, carefully avoiding confinement as he escaped the Slave Lodge as much as the museum itself (Tancons 2003). In so doing Rhode seems to be building the necessary bridge between architecture as a site of memory and as a framework for a public space only recently re-appropriated by formally segregated populations (Tancons 2003).

96

Figure 17: Robin Rhode, *Getaway,* 2000
Performance art
Dimensions variable
(Image from ArtThrob)

Rhode also investigates images in their physical reality, in the form of sculpture. He begins drawing with that object from there. In his work *Chalk Bicycle* (2011) (Figure 18), where a life-sized chalk bicycle is installed, surrounded by chalk-drawn bicycles. In this work we can see how the static symbol of a bicycle has transformed in Rhode's work from a mere a symbol of youth and freedom but a metaphor communicate different realities and experiences. He performed a physical action in which he pushed the chalk bike around the space, and the drawing was a shadow of the chalk bike itself. black-pained gallery walls and white window frames act as a canvas for the bike 'drawings' etched onto the interior surroundings as though the faux-vehicle has been ridden on the walls. *Chalk Bicycle* appears so new and alive on the wall that it was painted just moments ago. Drawing on the wall is a performance for Rhode; it involves his entire body in a vigorous acrobatic dance, so quick and virtuous that the drawing is there before you realise what he is doing. A real bike and the artist's paint-covered shoes left on the floor give the impression that the performance is still going on, but without the artist. Rhode is an illusionist who can make us see and imagine things with only a few visual cues. Through mark making, he creates physical tension within the environment (Norman 2021).

Figure 17: Robin Rhode, *Chalk Bicycle,* 2008
Installation
Dimensions variable
(Image from Artsy.net)

97

5.4 Technology

As technology becomes integrated into aspects of human life, the merging of art and technology is inevitable. Artists, with the aid of technology and science, have been able to enhance successful illusions and novel experiences in their work. Robin Rhode has achieved this by animating his drawings. His work creates the perception of a film. This does not only provide different perceptual experiences, but the connotations of the animation also feel like a documentation of reality and therefore, the truth. As will be explained below, Rhode now also has an additional medium through which he makes flat drawing come alive: by capturing the essence of his drawings in an NFT (Non-fungible token).

With increasing advances in technology, Rhode is beginning to explore how he can reinvent his style and further draw his viewers into an alternate reality. Drawing serves as the foundation for Rhode's debut NFT[25] *Gusheshe* (2021) (Figure 19), but this time the canvas is virtual. The NFT VR (Virtual Reality) video material was created during the artist's stay at the Google Arts and Culture Lab in Paris in 2018 (Jones 2021). Rhode's first NFT features a BMW E30, a car that achieved cult status in his hometown of Johannesburg in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Rhode captures the essence of the BMW by imitating the box shape. The box shape becomes a stimulus that triggers engagement between what is 'real' and not.

Gusheshe, the title of the work, is a colloquial name for an automobile, derived from the word Akusheshe, which is slang for 'fast'. For Rhode, the car's cultural significance serves as a lens through which to examine ownership, social position, and identity. Under white minority rule in South Africa the appropriation and modification of automobiles represented more than just mafia flamboyance; it also represented the destabilisation of status symbols. Rhode's NFT alludes to Afrofuturism[26] by reinventing a commonplace object rooted in a black experience in a virtual future (Jones 2021).

---

[25] A NFT is a type of crypto currency that differs from others as it contains intrinsic features that make each one unique. The unique quality of this cryptocurrency is because of the value it is given and represented by its creator. It gains value through its scarcity as a digital object (Wang, Li, Wang & Chen 2021:2).

[26] The term Afrofuturism was termed by Mark Dery in 1993. It emergened because of the lack of diversity within futuristic works, such as sci-fi. Afrofuturism combines underground and popular culture to be reflective and a form of entertainment. The combination of underground and pop culture allowed for the intersection between investigation and education. It became predominant with the rise of the internet, intersecting imagination and technology as narratives from diverse areas of the world could be more easily accessed. It strives to break down social conformism and limitations that affect minority groups (Womack 2013:6).
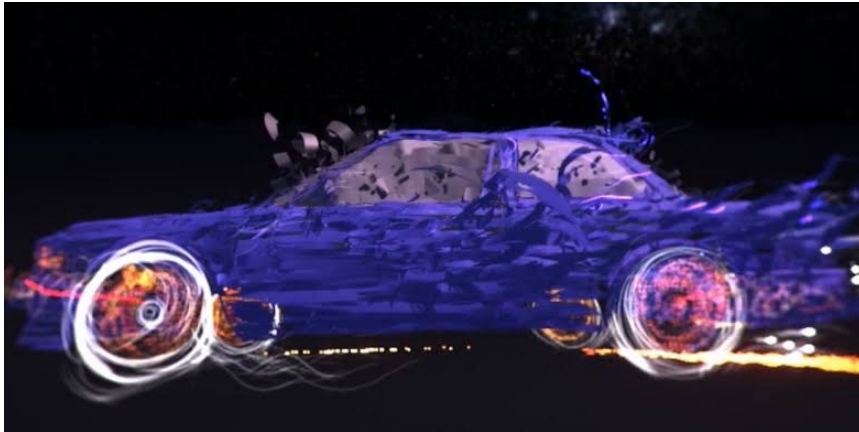
98

Figure 19: Robin Rhode, *Gusheshe,* 2021
NFT
(Image from Verisart)

An automobile becomes a status symbol. It denotes economic and social structures. As a result, over the years, Rhode has attempted to draw and steal his own cars, occasionally removing the tyres and replacing them with bricks. Rhode even washed his vehicle drawing in front of a live museum audience to undermine ownership of his work. As a result, there has been a continuous conversation between himself and the automobile (Jones 2021).

Rhode's *Gusheshe* is not inextricably related to the apartheid era since everything in South Africa may be linked to or entrenched in that period of history (Jones 2021). Rhode is arguing that certain subcultural behaviours were founded in that political era but received wider mainstream support throughout the decades of democracy that followed apartheid's demise. The Gusheshe (BMW) became the vehicle to reflect on this new economic empowerment and social expression as a new generation began to reclaim public space. Afrofuturism is associated with an imaginary future or world in which the terrain might be proactive in developing a society's technical and cultural resources. It is a fictitious world that can be recreated, as Rhode has done with his most recent NFT. He attempted to envisage the Gusheshe flying over space and time rather than the dusty streets of townships in the not-too-distant future. The vehicle's exterior transforms into energy lines (Jones 2021).

The use of technology, in this instance a stop frame NFT, assisted Rhode in creating the illusion that the drawing is real. The drawing comes alive as it imitates a form of reality, immersing the viewer into the moving images. The NFT format has allowed Rhode to share a different mode of perception that distances the viewer from the image through a screen on a device. However,

99

without the viewer there would not be any appreciation for the illusion of brush strokes and the action of movement of the painting and drawing. Rhode with the help of technology creates a new aesthetic that pulls from both the old, traditional drawing, and the new, active movement.

5.5 Conclusion

Rhode is heavily reliant on his past as driving force for his art and creation process. He makes use of these as points of reference for different schemata within his work to communicate narratives. His storyboard set-up creates a space for Rhode to explore the different possible appearances of reality. By doing so in a humorous and playful way Rhode is able to make commentary of difficult politically driven topics. Rhode is able to break down complex narratives into cues and guidelines for his viewers to provide them different points of truth and allow them to challenge their own perception. He exploits memory as he understands that it can be defective and change overtime to create tensions between the viewer and the work. Rhode creates new perceptual experiences within his viewers and stimulate their imaginations, so that may critically think about what is being said in his works through symbols, abstractions, and reductions.

Chapter 6: Lauren Moffat

6.1 Background and practice

Lauren Moffatt is an Australian video, performance, and immersive technology artist. Her works, which are frequently exhibited in numerous formats, investigate the paradoxical subjectivity of connected bodies and the friction between digital and organic life. Her work sets out to explore how the 'real' within digital interfaces exploit the appearance of the objective 'real' within our lived reality. Moffatt's works typically take the shape of speculative fictions and settings that are created with a mix of outmoded and cutting-edge technologies and frequently inhabit both physical and virtual spaces (Sauerlander 2021).

Moffat's works transport its viewer to parallel worlds where online and offline personas collide and mix. She does this because of her fascination of how the web can nullify our geographical limitations and project ourselves into a parallel realm. Juxtaposing and comparing both realities that created and lived through the same person but represent different truths. Through these mental spaces in Virtual Reality (VR) or film Moffat's art shifts and reinvents our perceptions of time and space. Moffat is fascinated by the 'Cartesian Theatre fallacy', which holds that there is a second, smaller self-inside the body called a 'homunculus', a mini version of the person, perceiving the person's reality as if it were a little cinema. The term is derogatory, and the concept, which originated with Descartes, is scorned by modern theorists because it implies a duality between mind and body. Moffat likes the idea that our bodies are architectural structures, and that something within us is attempting to make sense of the story that is being fed to us through our senses (Etienne 2020).

Moffat takes inspiration from elements of the nature, specifically autumn and the melancholic end the season represents. She is drawn to the varying colour palates, rather than focusing on the vibrant colours, Moffatt is intrigued by the desaturated palates of the darker shades and hues that occur alongside them. Making use of repetitive and lengthy processes in order to mediate her work. She is trying to make peace with the fact that there are so many things our own minds and our intersecting experiences we do not know about. Those mysteries drive her work to a considerable extent where she grapples with how the mind and perspective work and play a part in life as well as in her art. The gloomier parts of some of her works may be

confronting for some people, but that is how she is able to juxtapose the different experiences she aims to evoke within her work (Etienne 2020).

Moffat is overcome by her awe of nature. She became engrossed in landscapes or ecosystems that evoke emotion. She is constantly on the lookout for ways to describe or recreate it using audiovisual language. Many of her works are inspired by Apichatpong Weerasethakul's films. For example, when watching his films, the sound and images engage senses such as smell and touch that aren't normally involved in the film experience. Allowing the viewer to become immersed in the experiences that the story becomes a location. Time moves differently in the film, in a way that is unique to it. Moffat attempts to unpack and recreate this maze and experinces in her own works (Etienne 2020). Moffatt constructs complicated universes inhabited by outcasts and recluses and filled with odd inventions and artefacts. These speculative fictions and settings are created with a blend of old and new technologies and are inspired by the history of cinema and television (Schoenegge & Sauerlander 2019).

Moffat also takes inspiration from literature and how authors are able to characters or entities that can exist within paradoxical connections. The characters can be both seduced and disgusted by one another, or they can rely on one another while simultaneously feeling proud and terrified of one another. This juxtaposition and inspiration are central to how Moffat brings her own characters and stories to life in work (Etienne 2020). She does this by blending old and new technologies creates a space for artworks to connect with people on a physical level, inviting them to experience their bodies differently (MOSAIC 2020). Moffatt's understanding of perception allows her to manipulate how things are seen and felt by her viewers.

Through her use of technology, she creates impressive spaces and compositions (Rieser 2011). This allows her work to encompass new forms of representation that can be controlled by the viewer (Mealing 2007). Because technologies are frequently amplifications of some portion or function of our bodies, Moffatt finds it fascinating to construct images and stories with them (MOSAIC 2020). This fascination explores the complexities and dynamics of reality and how it can be shaped and formed to create an environment that is understood and can be communicated about (Strutt 2019). She communicates through forms of truth that correspond with that specific reality she created. This speaks towards the fragility of the other worlds that we have as a society built to live in both online and offline (Teira 2022).

102

The works that Moffat creates can be described as 'walkthrough' pieces because her VR works are immersive and mobile, seen and felt in motion. Unlike film the audience is seated and passive but with VR they actually perform their experience of the story through movement. It becomes part of the narrative and you can see that the person is transformed by the experience, not just because of what they saw and heard, but also how they moved. Moffat believes that there is an instinct in our species to use our bodies to tell stories, and VR is able to engage with that part of our minds (Etienne 2020).

The Lauren Moffatt works selected for discussion, similar to those of Robin Rhode, incorporate visual illusions. The discussion that follows will demonstrate how Moffatt uses illusion through her understanding of perception, reality, and truth. Specifically, it will be illustrated how she makes use of technology to achieve successful illusion and novel experiences in her work through different curated environments and ecosystems.

6.2 Perception

Moffatt uses virtual reality to create 'real' looking worlds by combining traditional artistic techniques and cutting-edge technology. Moffatt paints and collages images together and creates the environment which will situate the viewer and the narrative. With the help of virtual reality, she can transform her world into an imitation of the traditional methods of trompe-l'oeil that makes use of linear perspective and chiaroscuro. As stated previously, trompe-l'oeil creates realistic images that lead the viewer to believe they are 'real'. By combing old and new Moffatt can create worlds that deceive the viewer's perception and engages the viewer's knowledge and memories.

Not Eye (2008) (Figure 20) is a black-and-white digital stereoscopic film about the relationship between the eye and the camera, as well as the body and the machine. The film is ten minutes long. The decision to shoot the film in stereoscopic three-dimension creates a kind of mise-en-scene that reflects the binocular gaze of human visual perception. This inherently subjective experience of three-dimension projection with glasses serves to highlight and reflect the film's themes. The masked woman's relationship with her interviewer serves as the starting point for an examination of the relationship between the gazes of the subject and the gazes of the institution, between the mechanical eye of the camera and the organic human eye (Gonzalez 2014).

103

The film begins with a long shot of a studio, gradually moving past stage lights, microphones, and tangled cords before zooming in on a frail middle-aged woman poised on a couch. The unnamed woman, speaking in French to an off-camera documentary filmmaker, reveals her paralysing fear of others' intrusive gaze. "I can't take it any longer—I feel constantly violated," she says, helpless against the people, security cameras, and mobile phones that follow her every move. Her only solution, she says, is to cast that violence back when she goes out in public. The woman wears a helmet that appears to be from a science fiction film or a hazmat facility. Two Go Pro cameras serve as substitute eyes on it, recording her day with a tiny but ominous red light (the only hint of colour in the otherwise black-and-white film). The helmet shields her likeness from view while also recording the events around her. When the interviewer asks her to put on the mask, she readily obliges, reversing the camera so that we, the viewers, are now the ones wearing the helmet (Gonzalez 2014).

Moffatt controls what we see while asking us to think about sight and power. The concept of sight is central to *Not Eye* asks: how do we perceive the world? Who decides what we see? These are questions that filmmakers and photographers have pondered since the invention of the camera. In this work Moffat evokes the beholder's share and the relations between depiction and participation in an artwork. She manipulates the viewers perception breaking down cohesive structures and turning the viewer into a voyeur.

Figure 20: Lauren Moffat, *Not Eye,* 2008
Video
10 Minutes
(Image from Bieff.wordpress.com)

104

The work *Image Technology Echoes* (2020/2021) (Figure 21/22) which is part of the Resonant Realities show is a strong example of how Moffatt makes use of technology and memory to create a dynamic narrative, which in turn forms documentation of the lives of the people with the artwork. Users of the VR artwork encounter an older man and a younger woman standing in front of a painting in a virtual museum room. Their physical appearances are warped as a result of the three-dimension scanning technique used to convert them into digital space. They are looking at a seascape, which is a massive expressionist artwork with a stormy ocean pattern. They talk about the painting, but their words are difficult to grasp (Sauerlander 2021).

Unless the viewer steps inside one of the two figures' bodies. This action transports them to the character's mental space. The person's doppelgänger homunculus is reciting their stream of consciousness, which the artist generated using a neural network and the painting looks very different from what the viewer originally just saw in the gallery. The work explores how we experience perception and embodiment, as well as how much may be going on beneath the surface of those, we meet every day.Once in the character the viewer observe their personal perspectives on what they see, but their words are not human. They are the result of artificial intelligence (AI).

Figure 21: Lauren Moffat, *Image Technology Echoes'*
2020/2021
Virtual Reality
Duration Variable
(Image from deptique.net)

Figure 22: Lauren Moffat, *Image Technology Echoes'*
2020/2021
Virtual Reality
Duration Variable
(Image from deptique.net)

Moffat achieves the lifelike appearances in her work by inserting enough recognizable objects from the actual world so that the viewer may think that it is real. These details thus allow the viewer to believe the possibility that everything within the work may be real. Moffatt's use of three-dimensional images and figures, both drawn and photographed, plays with the viewer's perception. This makes the viewer believe the documentation of events could be 'real'. Moffatt's work contains enough information for the viewer so that they make their own conclusions through relational knowledge.

Lauren Moffatt's *Image Technology Echoes* demonstrates how things and people appear differently in a variety of actual and virtual surroundings, implying that we perceive, classify, and comprehend them differently in each scenario. As the characters' conversations and monologues in virtual reality demonstrate so vividly, how we communicate with other creatures is dependent on different surroundings and our comprehension of them (Sauerlander 2021).

This work also reveals how Moffatt uses the human gaze as ammunition within her work (Westall 2022). She explores how technology influences how we read, see, and interpret things or images, particularly how cues used in her work activate the imaginations of her viewers. She intentionally places her viewers in an environment that allows them to draw conclusions from

106

her work through the integration of their own personal knowledge. However, these views are challenged as the viewer digs deeper into the work Thus, her viewers are allowed to have subjective points of view but these views are confronted with different perspectives that were not expected creating a new perceptual and emotional response in her viewers (Westall 2022).

Moffatt has constructed environments and ecosystems through technology and its illusionistic techniques to create a new visual language. This language needs to be engaged with and is part of an additive process that makes her artworks successful. Through the use of collage and the integration of painting and technology, her works form time loops. These time loops allow her to create realities that have no beginning or end. Her works can be viewed in constant and provide numerous perspectives that engage the viewer intensely (Westall 2022). This allows Moffat to control the focus of her viewer as well as the narrative in which they engage.

6.3 *Reality and truth*

As stated previously reality and appearance are two distinct modes of being. Reality is independent of the human mind. However, the 'real', what exists, can be understood through different points of reference, memories, and experience. This understanding is what the mind perceives and is appearance rather than reality. The differentiation between reality and appearance is what artists use to create successful illusions. In art, artists attempt to reproduce appearance or presence within different contexts. The imitation of appearance become reference points for the viewer to inquire into. The manipulation of appearance allows artists to create alternate realities that are familiar and novel at the same time. These alternate realities provide a space for viewers to engage and communicate different perspectives and truths that may or may not be possible.

Beyond the Rubicon (2018) (Figure 23) is a work made up of painting and digital fragments. There are two parts to the installation: the gallery with the physical paintings and the virtual space where the paintings fly around. In the virtual world, you can play with these fragments, move them, and do a variety of other things with them - until they vanish and self-destruct. Before entering the virtual reality environment in *Beyond the Rubicon*, the viewer encounters seven enigmatic paintings arranged around the VR headset. In the Virtual environment seven digital sculptures slowly rotate in the same coordinates as the paintings within the experience. The space's grainy black and white walls suggest movie-like texture, while binary code

107

scrolling across the ceiling reveals the virtual world's digital makeup. The sculptures are distorted 3D representations of bodies created by scanning moving images from film and television, with hand-painted UV textures for their skins. Based on the erratic success of the scanning process, the objects change from familiar representations of powerful young heroines to conjuring up grotesque cubist portraits depending on the visitor's point of view (Kühl 2018).

In addition to their shifting visual composition, the objects have distinct aural signatures that contribute to the piece's soundscape, emphasising the multisensory fabrication of space. Hand controllers rumble as visitors virtually touch and interact with these objects, assembling them into sound sculptures or holding them up to light to study their surface textures, producing momentary static and finally silence. The virtual space vanishes as each of the objects disintegrates, and the viewer is returned to the beginning of the piece (Kühl 2018).
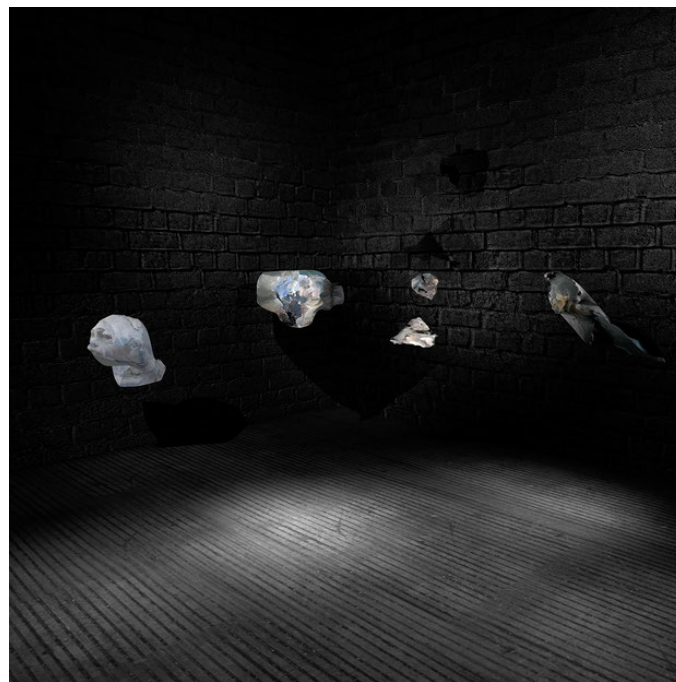

Figure 23: Lauren Moffat, *Beyond the rubicon,* 2018
Virtual Reality
Duration Variable
(Image from Radiancevr.com)

The work is based on the fragility of emotions, feelings, and memories. And how to keep this in the digital age. Every day, we transfer our lives to the digital realm. Our phones serve as extensions of ourselves. Everything is stored and remembered by our phones. Every day, we

108

pour our lives into it. There is no way out. All of these are cybernetic collectives. What exactly is a corporation? Nothing but a group of people and computers. That is where the link to Virtual Reality is found. VR provides an expanded, parallel, visual, and alienated world and provides limitless freedom in theory and practice. It is a multi-sensory, mind-bending medium, which distinguishes it from other artistic mediums (Kühl 2018).

The installation of the video *The Tulpamancer*[27] (2017-2019) (Figure 24) tells the narrative of a person who builds a personal mythology and brings it to life using automated processes in the hope that it will alleviate her fears about both her online and offline life. The principal person, known as the Tulpamancer, is a reincarnation of the artist Lauren Moffatt's younger self. The Tulpamancer, like Lauren at 17, is the host of five tulpas. The Tulpamancer's creation is a thought experiment, prompted by the ambivalence Moffatt feels today when considering the positive and negative potential of the web: what would have happened to her and her tulpas if she were 17 years old in 2019 rather than in 1999? Would the web, with its social media, avatars, self-publication and fan fiction have given her and her tulpas a home and a community? Made her feel less lonely? Or would the depth and width of the internet, with its trolls and scammers and people traffickers lurking beneath the surface have magnified her fears and transformed her tulpas into monsters rampaging the web? (Schoenegge & Sauerlander 2019).

Figure 24: Lauren Moffat, *Tulpamance*r, 2017-2019
Web performance and Immersive Video
Duration Variable
(Image from deptique.net)

---

[27] A tulpa is a mental companion created through focused thought and recurrent interaction, like an imaginary friend. However, unlike an imaginary friend, tulpas have their own will, thoughts, and emotions, allowing them to act independently.

This work seeks to inquire into the fundamental nature of reality and the principles that underlie it, through the influence of identity, time, space, causality, and possibility (Kirk 1999). The work specifically explores how knowledge and experience can modify how reality is seen, understood, and lived (Goldstick 2009). It offers up different versions of reality and therefore creates different forms of truth and what is considered factual (Goldstick 2009). *The Tulpamancer* highlights how the networks within society reflect and impact how culture is perceived, expanding on the possibilities of how different social makeups correspond with reality. The work highlights how through manipulation of societal and cultural structures different forms of the 'real' may appear when placed into a different time and context (Hanna 2014). Through technology Moffat has been able to reshape environments to suit specific truths that correspond with what is seen (Strutt 2019).

Moffatt tells stories using landscapes and constructions populated by spatialized sounds and movements that respond to visitor engagement. Moffat can decide on every detail of the spatial narrative she intends to tell, but visitors also contribute to the story through their interactions and how they live and perform it (MOSAIC 2020). Following technology, Moffat, uses art as a tool for study by creating VR stories that seek new understandings of our human existence in relation to non-human beings. Moffat is attempting to transform that relationship into something that the body can experience; it is about experiencing the body as being related to and affected by the world real or not. People are separated from their bodies and everything of the physicality that traditionally defined humanity (MOSAIC 2020).

In these environments she creates properties that, within these new reality, cannot or do not exist within our objective reality. The environment is contained within an illusion through the psychological mechanisms it reflects, imitates, and configures (Gombrich 2000). Through the use of technology, Moffatt is able to manipulate reality to create, what Gombrich (2000) calls, the illusion of a different human experience which can only exist in the boundaries of the illusion. Drawing from aspects of the 'real' the elements within this created reality create recognition within the viewer, which allows the illusion to read through known references and frameworks (Wolf, Bernhart & Mahler 2013). This manipulation constitutes how differently illusion have been experienced and expressed through art and the different mediums it can be held within (Gombrich 2000).

110

6.4 Technology

The way images are produced has changed fundamentally. Images can be generated at a rapid speed and resources are easily accessible to the public and artists. The media artist represents a new kind of artist who sounds out new options of perception and artistic position. The art world is experiencing a rise in computer-generated works. Images are now capable of autonomous change and formulate lifelike experiences that embrace all the senses. The evolution of media of illusion has allowed the artist to generate new techniques for producing, distributing, and presenting images (Grau 2003). Technology has allowed artists to generate three-dimensional environments that imitate real life and the possibilities of different forms of engagement and communication.

Modern technology is more than just a tool; it provides us with new perspectives on ourselves, our culture, and what we value and find valuable. It creates objects that bear witness to our activity (Mealing 2007). Art uses these artefacts to produce proof of our sentiments and attitudes. Moffat's work falls in this line of new exploration as she uses AI (artificial intelligence) technology to explore human interaction (Mealing 2007). Her collection of work investigates how humans engage with machines and non-human beings, as well as new augmented reality artworks developed in direct response to the exhibition space (Westall 2022).

Through the experimentation with different media and technology the assemblage and disassembling can create points of illusion due to the mind's attempt to weave perceptual signals through the juxtaposition of different representations. These representations pull from prior knowledge and experience to create intrigue in how these points of reference are reinterpreted (Gombrich 2000). They create a space for the comparison of different motifs and accomplishments within human experience (Rickless 2014). These comparisons bring to the forefront what links organic life to digital life, highlighting what is similar and different (Westall 2022).

The history of art demonstrates a longing for human immersion (Grau 2003). The goal of church interiors embellished with murals, central-perspective trompe-l'oeil paintings, or large-format projections is to fill the viewers' field of vision to the greatest extent possible, allowing them to immerse themselves in the fabricated visual realm. Nonetheless, the frame of a painting, or the screen of a tablet, separates the viewer from the illusionary area on its surface.

111

The virtual reality headgear now allows users to be entirely immersed in an illusionistic unframed world (Sauerlander 2021).

Viewers become the center of this reality, as they would only be in physical reality. Furthermore, individuals can now comprehend their surroundings from their own perspectives. They can finally sense scale based on their own presence in the environment, rather than comprehending proportions by comparing pieces on the surface of an image that serves as a portal to another reality. The viewers have crossed the virtual reality threshold and are now, for the first time in human history, directly 'present at the image site' (Grau 1999:14). The 'era of windows' (Friedberg 2006:244) is coming to an end with the introduction of virtual reality. Experiencing areas, even entire universes, outside of physical reality necessitates a shift in our perception of reality, creating an illusion.

Moffatt is curious about how we interact with digital environments like the web. In this area, we coexist alongside other individuals as well as automated systems (such as chatbots). We are detached from our bodies and everything of the physicality that has traditionally defined us. We can develop illusions about ourselves and our lives, and we can curate our own life stories. With the help of technology illusion can be used as a tool to distort and reinvent reality. Unlike traditional modes of illusion, this form of illusionistic technique allows for numerous viewers to engage in a reality together. Traditional modes of illusion making such as painting required viewer participation. However, it was confined within the mind of the viewer whereas the use of virtual reality technologies not only promotes viewer engagement with the work but also between the viewers (Sauerlander 2021).

Among the Machines is a major new exhibition of works that examines how people engage with machines and nonhuman beings, including new augmented reality artworks developed in response to the gallery space. This exhibition asks: how will we adapt to a stage of evolution beyond the human as artificial intelligence (AI) grows potentially to exceed us? The work *Hybrids and strings* (2020/2021) (Figure 25) by Lauren Moffatt is being shown at this exhibition, exploring the entanglement between the natural and digital world. The work considers how relatively close machines are to surpassing human skills, as well as how mysterious the workings of human awareness remain (artlyst 2021).

112

Figure 25: Lauren Moffat, *Hybrids and strings,*
2020/2021
Virtual Reality
Duration Variable
(Image from Fabbula.com)

Hybrids and Strings is a cross-species experience in which we slow down and become entangled with both human and non-human beings. The experience calls for viewers to expand their sense of belonging in their infinitely complicated and unpredictable present, by facing apocalyptic visions like those haunting science-fiction of the 1960s. *Hybrids and Strings* is a virtual area where you can practice a new way of being in the world and gain new abilities. *Hybrids and Strings* consists of two parts: a digital narrative setting that can be viewed as an interactive VR experience or as a projection, and a series of painted book covers credited to a fake author named Suzanne B. Clair. Suzanne Clair is a writer who lives in a parallel universe to our own. The sole difference between her universe and ours is that in Suzanne's universe, speculative fiction by authors who are not white heterosexual males has been published indiscriminately from the twentieth century to the present (Fabbula 2021).

This work highlights how Moffatt is able to set up narratives that are created into three-dimensional documentation. The success of this documentation is Moffatt's use of memory as a tool to create intrigue. It is crucial to remember, however, that memory is not perfect. It is full of alterations, additions, and deletions. These changes occur as a result of both external and internal influences from the real world and the brain. This is because the brain picks what to highlight as vital in order to categorize and organize information efficiently, as previously indicated. As a result, memories are frequently altered, revised, and reconstructed in accordance with these categories (Shimamura 2013). The manipulation of memory is a key element of how Moffatt creates her works through virtual technology.

113

For Moffatt's work *Local Binaries* (2022) (Figure 26) Everyone you meet has a world inside them; how does yours look? Moffatt posed this question to nine women from around the world in order to define the blueprints for the collectively written universe inside Local Binaries. This is a virtual space that the viewer can explore in miniature scale via augmented reality (this version already exists in a first iteration) or in replica via virtual reality (the virtual reality adaptation is in progress) The work makes use of VR to design an environment that is site-specific. Participants were asked to focus on their inner state and interpret it as a landscape, drawing inspiration from therapy techniques that encourage embodied mindfulness, such as body mapping. To describe the physiological and psychological sensations they felt, they imagined geological forms, sounds, plant life, weather systems, and architectures. They then described the scene to the artist as if it were a physical location.

Moffatt used a game engine to recreate elements from each testimonial, then worked with artificial intelligence to visualise, hand-paint, and digitise the described elements before interweaving them into a sprawling landscape that audiences can interact with via handheld devices. The characters are chatting but cannot be heard until you get close to them. Once up close their concerns and experiences are communicated. Each figure expresses a particular dread: fear of being observed, profiled, judged, followed, objectified, making mistakes, and doing nothing. The visitor in the VR environment can jump from place to place in the countryside using a teleportation technology, discovering new figures, and hearing their confessions. Moffatt transforms inner states like emotions, ideas, or feelings into landscapes that can be inhabited by more than one individual as the virtual environment opens to be viewed by an audience. *Local Binaries* is a reference to Local Binary Patterns utilized in object recognition frameworks in applications such as face profiling. Moffat explains: "Binary pattern recognition algorithms analyse the darkness or lightness of pixels in comparison to their neighbours[28], assigning a binary value of 1 or 0 to each in order to recognise common features, such as the corner of a mouth or a cat's ear." (Androić 2020).

---

[28] The People's Republic of China's mass surveillance and profiling program, or the reconstruction algorithms used to produce 3D reconstructions of landmasses for Google Maps, are examples of binary pattern applications (Androić 2020).
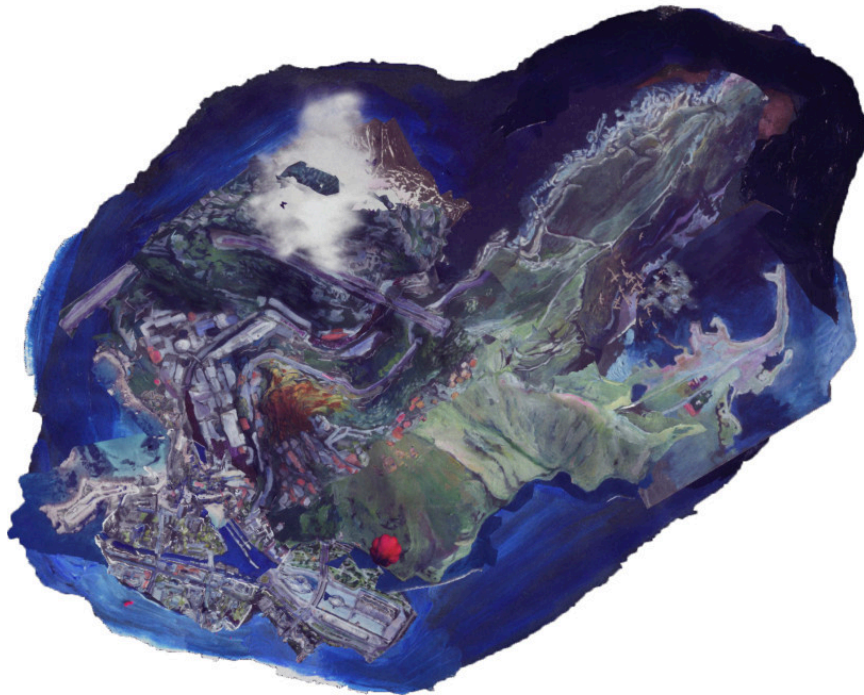
Figure 26: Lauren Moffat, *Local Binaries* 2022
Virtual Reality
Duration Variable
(Image from artfacts.net)

The only certain requirement of this work (and even this will vary) is that of the interface - in order to see and hear and be aware of both our real body position and that of our virtual existence via the proprioceptive senses. In the real world we know how our bodies feel and behave, having learned throughout our lives, but for the VR user anything imaginable is possible. Strange and different bodies will be 'tried on' and psychological experiments will explore physical self-perception, but we will not leave our flesh behind. All new virtual physicality can only be experienced through our knowledge of our real bodies (Mealing 2007).

Art has always been made with the technology of its age and with any means available. It has pushed frontiers in technology where industrial research had neither the time nor the inclination to explore. Design projects have goals and aims that, for reasons of speed and commerce, don't normally allow meandering exploration-artworks that unfold differently. What artwork has

115

always done differently is to reflect, dwell on the mystery and give time to ideas which have no immediate return or reward. It looks at the long term, it changes course, and it asks questions (Mealing 2007).

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter highlights the use of technology and traditional mediums as a source of inquiry into perception and the human mind. The combination of old and new media creates points of reference in understanding how we view reality and its makeup. The work seeks to take on the appearance of the 'real' to serve as representative functions for deeper abstract ideas and meanings. Moffatt creates immersive worlds through the assembly of many elements to create a synergetic effect. She pushes the boundaries of knowledge and realities by exploiting her viewers perception in specific directions. She makes use of Gombrich's beholder's share so as to investigate the themes and break down regularities seen within the 'real' world.

116

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Throughout this study, the argument was made for the importance of illusion as a tool that can be used in a variety of dynamic ways within art and art practice. This was done by expanding on the thoughts of art critic E.H Gombrich, that artistic effect is most successful when unity is formed between art, artists, and viewer. Throughout the investigation, it was highlighted that illusion expands further than a mere optical illusion or a trick of the eye. Instead, the research placed focus on art as a form of communication and engagement. Specifically, attention was called to how artists make use of and understand perception, truth, and reality to create successful illusions within their art. Therefore, the investigation into these concepts shows that illusion is a meticulously thought-out, multifaceted tool that continues to remain relevant with the growth and change of visual culture. Furthermore, the research illustrates how illusion not only shifts with visual culture but how it works as an important factor in the relationship between technology and art.

The research aimed to explain how illusion forms part of the framework that artists use in their practice and artworks. Through the analysis of the works and practices of Robin Rhode and Lauren Moffatt, it was demonstrated that illusion in art is not limited to visual tricks but rather encompasses a variety of phenomena and how these can be communicated. Specifically, highlights the understanding of how perception, truth and reality play a part in the creation of Rhode and Moffatt's works. Rhode and Moffatt's investigation and analysis expanded how illusion is used and understood. Emphasising illusion's capacity for manipulation as a visual and cognitive tool in art and art practice.

The research shows that the dynamic changes in art styles and techniques are due to the constant shift in time and context through which artist portray their ideas. The underlying idea of most work is to communicate and engage the audiences with different topics in unique ways. Rhode and Moffatt show that it is through illusion, whether that be visual or cognitive, that is key to creating dialogues. These dialogues between art and viewer are formed through narratives which each artist creates through symbols and cues.

Theories such as deconstructionism were applied to the interpretation of symbols, representations, ritual discourses, and linguistic systems in the study of the artworks created by

117

Rhode and Moffatt who come from different cultures and backgrounds. This was used to map out how these social characteristics of their realities played a part in the making of their art. The artefacts, events, and social interaction they chose to explore comment on the effect. The methodology allows the artworks to refine and improve the knowledge and information they provide about reality; thus, these claims about reality are relative, justified, and historical. Rhode and Moffatt's ability to work in dynamic ways is attributed, to not only their work but their use of technology as a tool to take their art further. Using technological advancements Rhode and Moffatt have been able to push visual illusions in their art. They also have done this without sacrificing their vision and trademark techniques.

The main objective of the study was to investigate how Lauren Moffatt and Robin Rhode use illusion through their understanding of reality, truth and perception in their art and art practice through cultural research. However, to achieve this, concepts specific to illusion, truth, reality, and perspective were described and explained before the investigation of these artists. This expansion created a basis for the investigation so that a comprehensive overview could be given.

6.1 Summary of chapters

Chapter Two discussed perception and its links to cognition, memory, knowledge, and aesthetics. The discussion of perspective is imperative to understanding how the mind makes sense of the world. Minissale (3013:5) explains that perception is a process that allows the brain to actively organise, create, and compartmentalise patterns within the real world. This process is similar to art in its attempt to conceptualise experience within different socio-cultural times and spaces. Both art and perception are reliant on mental actions that integrate stimuli from the real world to make sense of and display these stimuli in dynamic and creative ways. The mental actions and processes described in this chapter were the bottom-up process and the top-down process and their integration with art and the use of illusion in art. Artists' understanding of these processes and their link to memory, culture and experience allow them to create successful illusions that allude to different ideas and themes. By using various schemata and categorisations artists can add context within their artistic representations that play with the distortions within memory and how cultural practices and traditions determine how we think and what we deem valid and invalid stimuli and information. The context represented draws from experiences that emerged through emotion, specifically making use of

118

aesthetic illusion alluding to what an object may represent through essence rather than physicality.

Chapter Three introduces the concepts of reality and truth as approached for this study. The theoretical framework within which reality is understood in this study is based on realism and plural realism. Therefore, within this study reality is based on the understanding that realism constitutes that the world and physical objects that inhabit this world are independent of the human and their processes. The human mind's understanding of the world relates to different reference points from experience. The framework that these experiences are based on is influenced by the socio-economic structure and cultural traditions. It is the unification between these reference points and frameworks that form representations within the mind that can be reflected in the world. These representations become resources that allow the mind to make sense of the world. However, due to different interests and influences within society, these resources differ between individuals and therefore, reality cannot be singular. Reality is a dynamic and constantly shifting concept that is dependent on different individuals' understanding of the world and how they engage with the world.

Because reality cannot be described as singular and unchanging it is important to accept that what is seen (appearance) is different from reality. Reality is independent of the cognitive mind, but appearance is not. Rather, appearance and reality are two ways in which to understand or consider modes of being. The actual that exists is understood as 'the real' whereas what the mind perceives, is what appears. David Hume describes external reality (the real) as an entity that does not exist in the mind. Rather, the appearance of reality is what exists in the mind. This reality perceived in the mind takes in a specific version of what is experienced in reality to match its current beliefs and dominant modes of thought at the time and within a specific context. Reality can be considered as the practice through which seeing and understanding 'the real' is a cognitive process. Appearance, then, can be considered as how reality presents itself.

Once this basis for an understanding of the difference between reality and appearance was established, the chapter could outline the use of illusion as a tool to depict the appearance of reality in multiple forms. The adaptability of reality based on heritage, culture, and experience was illustrated. When depicting reality through illusion in art the viewer's relationship with the work of art is vitally important. When illusions are used in an artwork they attempt to reproduce appearance or presence in different contexts, and thus representation becomes the reference

119

point for viewers to inquire into. This inquiry involves the understanding that reality is complex and interlinked to truth, knowledge, and belief. Therefore, illusions within artworks attempt to show alternate realities where different facts, forms and truths can exist.

The notion that truth can take on different forms is seen in the study through the relationship and the links that truth shares with reality. The study, therefore, suggests that for something to be understood as true it must reflect or correspond with the reality it is situated in. Truth shifts due to the current state of affairs within a particular reality. These shifts correlate with the dominant viewpoints of the time and space, and these viewpoints shift depending on different socio-cultural trains of thought and beliefs. The structures in which reality appears are not fixed and therefore, truth and what is understood as true become fluid and dynamic. The fluidity of both reality and truth allows artists to pose different forms of communication and experience based on the reality and truth they would like to represent in their art.

Chapter four investigates illusion as a concept as well as a tool within art and art practice. Illusion aims to give visuals and artefacts the appearance of being real (Grau 2003). The chapter gives a broad outline of illusion: how illusion came to be understood and has developed over time. Originally illusion was considered an effect that was attributed to chiaroscuro, linear perspective and trompe-l'oeil during the Renaissance (Gombrich 2000). These techniques were used to create realistic representations of nature. Over time these techniques took on symbolic representation. These symbolic representations became metaphors to communicate different ideas and themes relevant to that period (Lippard 1968).

The use of techniques such as chiaroscuro, linear perspective and trompe-l'oeil as forms of symbolism brought forward new ideas on how illusion could be used in art. Illusion became used as an immersive effect placing the viewer as an integral part of the understanding of the artwork and the success of the illusion. The development of Op Art and Kinetic Art shows how the participation of the viewer became more vital (Eimert 2016). Illusion became, no longer merely an effect for the artist to use, but also a process through which a dynamic engagement could be accomplished through the art and the viewer (Gombrich 2000). Chapter Four concludes by investigating how illusion has advanced in its ability owing to the influence of technology in art. Artists have learnt how to use virtual reality environments to further add to immersive effects.

120

Chapter Five is concerned with the analysis of the artist Robin Rhode to illustrate his use of illusion as an artistic effect. The chapter investigates how illusion is used as a technique regarding perspective, truth, and reality as discussed in the previous chapters. Robin Rhode can create an artistic illusion by sketching and interacting with the marked surface, allowing imagined worlds to be constructed. These inventions succeed because of rational involvement, emotional involvement, and cognitive activity. This is accomplished by Rhode's ability to create a narrative inside his work that draws from the site's original history, as well as his additional depiction that encourages spectator interaction (Wolf, Bernhart & Mahler 2013).

Rhode's art and creation processes are heavily influenced by his past. He employs these as points of reference for various schemata in his work to communicate narratives. His storyboard setup allows Rhode to explore the various possible appearances of reality. Rhode can comment on difficult politically charged topics humorously and playfully by doing so. Rhode is capable of breaking complex narratives down into cues and guidelines for his viewers, providing them with different points of truth and allowing them to challenge their perceptions. He uses memory because he understands how it can be flawed and change over time, creating tensions between the viewer and the work. Through symbols, abstractions, and reductions, Rhode creates new perceptual experiences in his viewers and stimulates their imaginations, allowing them to critically think about what is being said in his works.

Chapter Six consisted of an analysis of Lauren Moffat's works, which are widely shown in a variety of forms, exploring the "paradoxical subjectivity of connected bodies and the friction at the borders between virtual and physical worlds" (Androić 2020). They often take the form of speculative fiction and landscapes, are made using a mix of old and new technologies, and frequently occupy both physical and virtual space. Moffatt develops rich, sophisticated, and paradoxical realms full of misfits and recluses and strange technologies and artefacts (Androić 2020).

This chapter emphasises the use of technology and traditional mediums to investigate perception and the human mind. The intersection of old and new media creates points of reference for understanding how we perceive reality and its components. The work attempts to imitate the 'real' to serve as a representative function for deeper abstract ideas and meanings. Moffatt creates immersive worlds by combining many elements to achieve a synergetic effect. She pushes the boundaries of knowledge and reality by manipulating her audience's perception

in specific ways. She employs Gombrich's beholder's share to investigate themes and break down regularities observed in the 'real' world.

6.2 Recommendations

Illusion within this study is understood to be the misinterpretation of reality. This encompasses the idea that illusion can be based on the ideas of false beliefs and the distinction between what is considered true and false. However, to distinguish what is true and false a basic understanding of these concepts needs to be deciphered and explained. Within this research, truth is described as a complex concept that can be influenced by many factors, such as culture, tradition, belief systems and reality. Therefore, many of the concepts discussed in this research are based on the understanding that concepts such as truth, reality and perception are dynamic and fluid.

For this reason, the research begins by outlining the necessary concepts of illusion, namely perception, truth, and reality. By taking on an in-depth analysis of these concepts central ideas and understanding have been highlighted.

Perception is understood to include knowledge, cognition, and memory. Therefore, it involves numerous brain activities that allow for the visual process of perception to occur. To further this research an investigation into the neurological underpinning of perception can be done. This can allow for a further understanding of how the mind interprets visual stimuli. Once this is done further research can be conducted on how external stimuli through past experiences can influence the brain and how it stores knowledge and memory. Through the investigation of cognition, the research can further investigate how knowledge and memory can serve to create understanding. Going into further depth on how the perceptual process operates, incomplete information from the real world can be incorporated into prior knowledge gained from experience to create a complete view of the world and the information it provides (Minissale 2013).

Perception in art is the complex relationship between visual stimuli and the understanding of these stimuli. This part of the research can be further extended through interviews with both the audience and the artists. These first-hand accounts will provide more information on how the audience engages and interpret art within specific spaces and times. This will provide a

wider scope in understanding how art similarly to perception conceptualizes perceptual experiences within different social, cultural, and environmental domains of knowledge. This will also provide a basis for understanding which styles are successful in challenging the viewer with different juxtapositions and paradoxes.

Aesthetics is a form of knowledge which is based on appreciation. Aesthetics is linked to perception and an object's aesthetic appeal is based on how it is perceived and how this makes one feel, think, and react. Further investigation into neuroaesthetics can be done to broaden the research's understanding of aesthetics and how it is linked to cognition and knowledge development. As a result, artworks relying on a diverse set of signifiers and conventions will allow for the comprehension of emotional complexity. Emotion is a multifaceted phenomenon that is influenced by environmental stimuli. Moral views, cultural prejudice, social context, and a variety of other factors all influence emotions and thus perceptual and aesthetic experience. The attempt to explain emotion within perceptual experience by neuroaesthetics is linked to the idea that an artwork can operate as more than a formulation of an idea, but also as a trigger that allows for dynamic development during the experience (Minissale 2013).

Further research can be done on the concept of illusion itself, exploring the different types of illusion present in art. This includes photorealism, optical illusion, sculpture, and other art forms that have not been discussed in this research. Interviews with artists can help broaden the understanding of how illusions are used both consciously and unconsciously. The researcher can seek out specifically how artists want their audience to engage with the work and how they tackle the challenge of creating participation within their works or the environments where they choose to place their works. How galleries are run and curated can be investigated to find out how these spaces hinder or promote illusionistic artworks.

This research is limited as it only covers the two artists, Robin Rhode and Lauren Moffatt, in-depth. This was required in this research so that the broader meanings of illusion were not lost. However, in-depth research on several different artists from all over the world can assist in further developments within this research and the different components that make up the research. This can take the form of joining artists in their studios or during a specific residency to see how their work is conceptualised, made, and put on view for the public.

A higher emphasis in the research can also be placed on cultural and traditional practices and knowledge can also be placed on the research. This can encourage research into how artists from across the globe create illusions based on their belief systems. This will also create more interest in how traditional ideas and knowledge reflect on art and the art world. This can include performance works based on different cultural practices – as have been explored through Rhode's work (but can be taken further).

6.3 Conclusion

The research set out to explore illusion in contemporary art through the investigation of truth, reality, and perception in an analysis of art by Robin Rhode and Lauren Moffatt. The research exhibits how illusion is used within art and art practice. As art is a form of communication the research demonstrates how artists expand and explore narratives within their works.

The research centred around how the artists Lauren Moffatt and Robin Rhode used illusion within their artworks through the manipulation of perception, truth and reality. The research highlighted the changes that illusion in art has undergone over time through different art styles and movements. The writings of E.H Gombrich influenced and guided this research and emphasised how art is more than mere representation and that successful art bridges the gap between the artwork and the audience.

Previous research done about illusion within art has centred around optical illusion – specifically, the use of illusionistic techniques such as linear perspective, foreshortening and trompe-l'oeil to create depth and three-dimensional objects on a flat surface. These techniques could be seen in Renaissance and Baroque art, and in the twentieth century, illusion was experimented with by surrealist artists like Dali and Magritte. Because the topic of illusion is so broad, the research for the current study was narrowed down to arrive at an understanding of the need for illusion in the art-making process and the final artwork. The focus was on the process through which artists arrive at concrete themes to express their ideas.

Overall, this research explores how reality and truth are interlinked as complex concepts. These concepts are influenced by culture, knowledge and perception. These influences allow for reality and truth to be viewed through different aspects. These aspects are often established for a person through society without their conscious knowledge. It is this specific ambiguity within definitions of reality and truth that artists take advantage of by playing with perception as well

124

as artistic techniques. Artists have proven across time how they can manipulate specific truths and reality through illusion. The use of illusion and illusionistic tools within art and art practices can vary not only in their appearance but also in the technique through which the illusion is created. Illusion within art can take on many forms. These forms can contain many aims and objectives such as tricking the eye, defying reality or challenging perception. Illusion is proven to be essential to any artwork as it becomes a reference for the human mind to explain the complexities of its own perceived reality and truths.

Illusion is a successful tool used within the visual arts and art-making process to demonstrate specific types of knowledge, realities and truth. Illusion allows artists such as Robin Rhode and Lauren Moffatt to bridge the gap between physical reality and subjective perception. A visual illusion experience allows a viewer to perceive something that is not within their physical reality, such as a conceptual or theoretical framework. It provides a basis for investigation and critique of concepts unfamiliar and familiar. As a result, through the use of illusionistic tools, an artist can demonstrate specific truths and realities within their artworks.

We have thus seen how both Rhode and Moffatt manipulate and reconstruct realities through perspective shifts and changes to display different truths. By doing so, both artists create dynamic visual and cognitive illusions in their work. Rhode draws on symbols from his youth and background to create narratives, whereas Moffatt rather pulls from 21st century cultural phenomena that have risen due to the predominant role of technology within society and culture. Moffatt is drawn to how society functions and how it is limited by the realities created online versus the reality we live in; juxtaposing and comparing both realities that represent different truths and perspectives. Unlike Moffatt Rhode's works, which are motivated by play, makes use of irony to reflect and reinterpret cultural stigmas. Rhode creates work inspired by the realities and truths of the past, whereas Moffatt creates realities yet to be lived, and yet both create dynamic work based on traditional mediums reimagined with technology to create a narrative unique to their art and practices.

References

Allen, B. 2008. *Artifice and design: art and technology in human experience*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Artner, A. 2005. Leeah Joo's storytelling works. *Tribune Art Galleries* 25 March: 05.

Bal, M. and Bryson, N. 2014. Semiotics and Art History. *The Art Bulletin* 73(2):174-208.

Bellini, A. 2005. Robin Rhode: the dimensions of desire. *Flash art* 38(244), Summer: 90- 92

Berlin, J. A. 1992. Poststructuralism, cultural studies, and the composition classroom: Postmodern theory in practice. *Rhetoric Review* 11(1):16–33.

Benjamin, W. 1996. On the mimetic Faculty, in *Selected Writings: 1927-1934,* edited by Bullovk, M.P, Jennings, M.W, Eiland, H & Smith, G. Harvard university Press: 720-721.

Bryan-Wilson, J. 2004. *Virtual art: From illusion to immersion* (review). *Technology and Culture* 45(3):670-671.

Burbidge, J. W. 2013. *Ideas, concepts, and reality*. Montréal: McGill-Queen's University

Burgess, A. and Burgess, J. P. 2011. *Truth*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Buskirk, M. 2012. Sherrie Levine. *Artforum International* 50(7).

Butler, J. 2015. *Notes towards a performative theory of assembly.* Harvard: Harvard University Press.

Carter, D. 2012. L*iterary theory*. Oldcastle Books.

Culler, J. D. 2008. *On deconstruction: theory and criticism after structuralism.* London: Routledge.

Darda, K.M and Cross, E. 2021. Toward a general model of visual art perception. *Journal of Vision* 21(9).

Dreyfus, H.L. and Taylor, C. 2015. *Retrieving realism.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Eimert, D. 2016. *Art of the 20th century*. New York: Parkstone International.

Elaati, A.N. 2016. An introduction to Postmodernism Theory. *Research Gate.*

Elsby C. 2016. Aristotle's correspondence theory of truth and what does not exist. *Logic and logical philosophy*, 25(1), Summer: 57–72.

Engel, P. 2014. *Truth*. Hoboken: Taylor and Francis.

Fish, W. 2009. *Perception, hallucination, and illusion.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Friedberg, A. 2006. *The virtual window: Form Alberti to Microsoft.* Cambridge: Cambridge Press.

Fusaro, M. 2018. The Greeks of Venice, 1498–1600: Immigration, Settlement, and Integration. *The Renaissance Quarterly* 71(2).

Garner, H. 1970. *Art through the ages.* United States of America: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc.

Goertz, G. & Mahoney, J. 2012. *A tale of two cultures: qualitative and quantitative research in the social sciences.* Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press.

Golding, V., Rekdal, P.B. & Fromm, A.B. 2014. *Museums and truth.* Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Goldstick, D. 2009. *Reason, truth, and reality.* Toronto Ont.: University of Toronto Press.

Gombrich, E.H. 2000. *Art and Illusion.* Princeton University Press.

Gotshalk, D.W. 1962. *Art and the social order.* Dover Publications: New York.

Grau, O. 2003. *Virtual art: From illusion to immersion.* Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

Gray, A. 2011. *Research Practise for Cultural Studies.* London, SAGE Publications Ltd.

Grzymkawski, E. 2014. *Art 101: From Vincent van Gogh to Andy Warhol, Key People, Ideas, and Moments in the History of Art.* Holbrook: Adams Media Corporation.

Hanna, P. 2014. *Reality and culture: essays on the philosophy of Bernard Harrison.* Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi.

Hartmann, N. & Kelly, E. 2014. *Aesthetics.* Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter.

Hinzen, W. 2007. *An essay on names and truth.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hyman, J. 2006. *The objective eye: color, form, and reality in the theory of art.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Intili, A., Pembleton, M. & Lajevic, L. 2015. Defying Reality: Performing Reimagined Worlds. *Art Education* 68(3):40-46.

Kandel, E.R. 2016. *Reductionism in art and brain science: bridging the two cultures.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Khatchadourian, H. 2013. *Truth: Its nature, criteria and conditions.* Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter.

Kieran, M. 2005. *Revealing art.* London: Routledge.

127

Kirk, R. 1999. *Relativism and reality: a contemporary introduction*. London: Routledge.

Kitson, M. 1966. *The age of Baroque.* London: Paul Hamlyn.

Konzbelt, A. 2008. E.H Gombrich on creativity: A cognitive historical case study. *Creative Research Journal* 20(1): 93-104.

Leavy, P (ed.) 2014. *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lin, S.S., Morace, C.C., Lin, C.H., Hsu, L.F., & Lee, T.Y. 2018. Generation of Escher Arts with Dual Perception. *IEEE transactions on visualization and computer graphics* 24(2):1103–1113.

Lippard, L. 1997. *Dematerialisation of the Art Object.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Long, C.P. 2011. *Aristotle on the nature of truth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

MacDowall, L. 2019. *Instafame: graffiti and street art in the Instagram era*. Bristol, UK: Intellect, The University of Chicago Press.

Matthews, S. 2008. *Theology and science in the thought of Francis Bacon.* England: Ashgate publications.

McClure, S. & Siegel J. 2015. Neuroaesthetics: An introduction to Visual Art. *Impulse: The premier undergraduate neuroscience Journal* 12(1):1-7.

McDermid, D. 2006. *The varieties of pragmatism: truth, realism, and knowledge from James to Rorty.* London: Continuum.

McGrath, E. 2002. E.H. Gombrich 1909-2001. *Burlington Magazine* 144(1187):111-113.

Mealing, S. 2007. *Computers and art: Computers and art.* Bristol: Intellect Books Ltd.

Mills, J. and Birks, M. 2014. *Qualitative methodology: a practical guide*. London: SAGE Publications.

Minissale, G. 2013. *The psychology of contemporary art.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mitrovic, B. 2013. Visuality after Gombrich: the innocence of the eye and modern research in the philosophy and psychology of perception. *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 76(1):71-89.

O'Toole, S. 2013. *Wall Space*. Wanted: Stevenson Gallery.

Oliviera, A.B. de 2017. Journal of Uncollectable Journeys: Edson Chagas's Found Not Taken, *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art* 40(1):44–55.

Parks, J.A. 2015. *Universal principles of art: 100 key concepts for understanding, analyzing, and practicing art.* Beverly, MA: Rockport.

Plagens, P. 2015. *Fine Art: Exhibitions of Dan Ivic, Robin Rhode and Cristina Camacho; From paintings with some heft to a little eye candy.* New York, N.Y. Press.

Preziosi, D. 2009. *The art of art history: a critical anthology*. Oxford: Oxford.

Pugh. R. 2003. Reflections: thoughts that have made a difference. Ray Pugh

Rescher, N. 2012. *Reality and its appearance*. London: Continuum.

Rickless, S.C. 2014. *Locke*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.

Rieser, M. 2011. *The mobile audience: media art and mobile technologies.* Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Ringger, K. 2014. Deconstruction, Abjection, and Meaning in Contemporary Art: World Trends and the Byu Museum of Art. *Byu studies Quarterly* 53(1):152–167.

Rockmore, T. 2013. *Art and truth after Plato.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Rose, G. 2007. *Visual methodologies: an introduction to the interpretation of visual materials.* 2nd edn. London: SAGE Publications.

Rosenthal, S. 2008. *Who saw Who*. London: Hayward publishing

Samdanis, M. 2016. *Art Business Today: 20 Key Topics*. London: Lund Humphries.

Saukko, P. 2003. *Combining Methodologies in Cultural Studies. In: Doing Research in Cultural Studies, Introducing Qualitative Methods.* London: SAGE Publications Ltd

Sey, J. 2013. the art of lo-fi, hi-def Robin Rhode interviewed by James Sey. University of Johannesburg.

Shimamura, A.P. 2013. *Experiencing art: in the brain of the beholder*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Siegel, E. 1953. *Aesthetic Realism Essays About Life and Art*. Definition Press.

Simanowski, Roberto. 2016. Digital Anthropophagy: Refashioning Words as Image, Sound and Action. *Leonardo* 43(2):159-163.

Solso, R.L. 2003. The psychology of art and the evolution of the conscious brain. *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 47(1):97–99.

Speed, L.J., O'Meara, C., San, R.L., & Majid, A. (eds). 2019. *Perception Metaphors.* Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Spranzi, M. 2011. *The art of dialectic between dialogue and rhetoric: The Aristotelian tradition.* Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Strong, D.E. 1965. *The classical world.* London: Paul Hamlyn.

Strutt, D. 2019. *The digital image and reality: affect, metaphysics and post-cinema.* Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Sullivan, E. 1952. *The Book of Kells*. London: Studio Publications.

Tancons, C. 2003. David Hammons: Concerto in Black and Blue. *Nka Journal of Contemporary African Art* 18:94–95.

Tancons, C. 2003. Fugitive: Robin Rhode Drawings and Performances. *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art 18:66-71.*

Wainwright, J. 2017. *The Seductiveness of Endless Possibilities.* Jean Wainwright in Conversation with Robin Rhode. Berlin

Williamson, S. 2009. *South African Art Now.* New York, Harper Collin distributors.

Wisnewski, J. 2012. *Heidegger: an Introduction*. Lanham, Md.: Rowan & Littlefield Pub.

Wolf, W., Bantleon, K. Thoss, J. & Bernhart, W (eds). 2009. *Metareference Across Media: Theory and Case Studies*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Wolf, W., Bernhart, W. & Mahler, A. (eds). 2013. *Immersion and Distance: Aesthetic Illusion in Literature and Other Media.* Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Womack. Y. 2013. *Afrofuturism: the World of Black Sci-fi and Fantasy Culture*. Chicago: Chicago Press.

Wood, C. 2009. E.H. Gombrich's *Art and Illusion:* A study in the psychology of pictorial representation, *Burlington Magazine* 151(1281): 836–839.

Wortham S. 2011. Resistances—after Derrida After Freud. *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal* 44(4): 51–61.

Yang. C, Wang. B, Jiang. H & Meng. Q. 2021. Visual Perception Enabled Industry Intelligence: State of the Art, Challenges and Prospects. *Transactions on Industrial Informatics* 17(3): 2204-2219.

Yolton, JW. 1963. The Concept of Experience in Locke and Hume. *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 1(1): 53-71.

Zeki. S., Bao. Y. & Pöppel. E. 2020. Neuroaesthetics: The Art, Science and Brain. *Psych Journal* 9(4):427-428.

Video recordings

Judith Barter: Trompe l'oeil and Modernity. [Video recording]. 2016. The Art Institute of Chicago. Accessed June 2021.

Marina Abramović: What is performance art? [Video recording]. 2011. The Museum of Modern Art. Accessed June 2021.

Samson, L. 2017. *Robin Rhode talking on drawing, performance and artistic ownership.* [Video Recording]. Available: https://www.designindaba.com/videos/interviews/robin-rhode-talking-drawing-performance-and-artistic-ownership. Accessed 27 September 2022.

Unlock Art: Frank Skinner on Performance Art. [Video recording]. 2013. Tate. Accessed June 2021.

Internet sources

Among the Machines. 2021. [O]. Available: https://artlyst.com/whats-on-archive/among-the-machines/. Accessed 24 September 2022.

Androić, J. 2020. [O]. Interview with Lauren Moffatt: Among the Machines. Creative Europe Programme of the European Union, Rijeka 2020.eu, City of Rijeka, Ministry of Culture of Republic of Croatia. Available: https://mmsu.hr/clanci/risk-change-residency-meet-lauren-moffatt/. Accessed 17 July 2022.

Bishai, T. 2021. A CONVERSATION WITH ROBIN RHODE AND TREVOR BISHAI. [O]. Available: https://museemagazine.com/features/2021/6/9/a-conversation-with-robin-rhode-and-trevor-bishai. Accessed 6 February 2023.

d'Arenberg, D. 2015. Robin Rhode. [O]. Available: https://ocula.com/magazine/conversations/robin-rhode/. Accessed 7 February 2023.

Dino, F. 2015. Modules on Butler on Performativity: Introductory guide to critical theory. [O]. Available: https://cla.purdue.edu/academic/english/theory/genderandsex/modules/butlerperformativity.html Accessed 24 September 2022.

Edubirdie. 2021. [O]. The Views Of Rene Descartes And David Hume On Human Knowledge Process. Available: https://edubirdie.com. Accessed 8 February 2023.

Etienne, O. 2020. Parable of the Sower. [O]. Available: https://coeuretart.com/lauren-moffatt-a-parable-2-0/. Accessed 11 February 2023.

Gonzalez, D. 2014. How Sundance's New Frontier Section Confronts Age-Old Ideas and New Questions. [O]. Available: https://www.indiewire.com/2014/01/how-sundances-new-frontier-section-confronts-age-old-ideas-and-new-questions-30758/. Accessed 13 February 2023.

Jones, V. 2021. Interview with Robin Rhode: From wall drawings to VR videos. [O]. Available: https://medium.com/verisart/interview-with-robin-rhode-from-wall-drawings-to-vr-videos-e3cba5670646. Accessed 19 August 2022.

Kühl, L. 2018. Out of the box George Vitale on the first virtual reality gallery in Europe. [O]. Available: https://www.gallerytalk.net/out-of-the-box/. Accessed 12 February 2023.

MOSAIC. 2020. Interview with Lauren Moffatt. *Mosaic* [O]. Available: https://doi.org/10.7238/m.n183.2024. Accessed November 2022.

Norman, L, A. 2021. Robin Rhode. [O]. Available: https://bombmagazine.org/articles/robin-rhode/. Accessed 11 February 2023.

Of Hybrids and Strings by Lauren Moffatt. 2020. [O] Available: https://fabbula.com/artists/of-hybrids-and-strings-by-lauren-moffatt/. Accessed 24 September 2022.

Pantelić, K. 2016. How Optical Illusion Art is Represented today. [O]. Available: https://www.widewalls.ch/magazine/optical-illusion-art-today. Accessed 11 October 2020.

Pardi, P. 2015. *What is truth*. [O]. Available: https://philosophynews.com/what-is-truth/. Accessed 12 July 2022.

Research Paradigms: Postmodernism. 2016. [O] Available: https://www.intgrty.co.za/2016/09/20/research-paradigms-postmodernism/. Accessed 27 September 2022.

Rhode, R., Bedford, E. and Hobbs, S. 2001. [O]. *Robin Rhode*. Cape Town: South African National Gallery (Fresh). Available: https://www.stevenson.info/exhibition/5393. Accessed 19 August 2022.

Rusu, DC. 2018. [O]. Bacon, Francis. In: Sgarbi, M. (eds) Encyclopedia of Renaissance Philosophy. Springer, Cham. Available: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-02848-4_1-1. Accessed 10 February 2023.

Sauerlander, T. 2021. [O]. Resonant realities. DKB in cooperation with CAA Berlin. Available: https://www.unpainted.net/en/resonance-of-realities-vr-art-award-dkb-caa-berlin/. Accessed 2 March 2022.

Schoenegge, P. & Sauerlander, T. 2019. [O] COLLIDING HUMANS. Social Interaction on the Internet. Available: http://www.peertospace.eu/colliding-humans. Accessed 19 August 2022.

Susanne Kriemann, *277569*. 2021. Available: https://www.kooness.com/artists/susanne-kriemann. Accessed 20 July 2022.

Thackare, T. 2018. The Endless Inspiration Robin Rhode Drew from One Wall. [O]. Available: https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-endless-inspiration-robin-rhode-drew-one-wall. Accessed 7 February 2023.

Westall, M. 2022. [O]. Among the machines a show examining how humans interact with machines and non-human entities. Available: https://fadmagazine.com/2022/03/02/among-the-machines-a-show-examining-how-humans-interact-with-machines-and-non-human-entities/. Accessed 8 June 2022.

References to images

Brian Reffin Smith, Mummy-daddies, 1986. Available: https://www.computer-arts-archive.com/artists/brianreffinsmith. Accessed 30 July 2022.

Bridget Riley, Zephyr, 1976. Available: https://d3d00swyhr67nd.cloudfront.net/w944h944/collection/GMIII/MCAG/GMIII_MCAG_1977_3_1-001.jpg. Accessed 3 June 2021.

Camille Utterback, *Untiltled 5,* 2004. Available: http://camilleutterback.com/projects/untitled-5/. Accessed 20 July 2022.

Edson Chagas, *Found not taken Luanda,* 2013. Available: https://www.artsy.net/artwork/edson-chagas-found-not-taken-luanda-11. Accessed 20 July 2022.

Installation view of Alicja Kwade's *WeltenLinie*, 2017. Available: https://corridor8.co.uk/article/shezad-dawoods-leviathan/. Accessed 20 July 2022.

Lauren Moffatt, *Beyond the Rubicon,* 2018. Available: https://image.jimcdn.com/app/cms/image/transf/none/path/s1cb8d6527de0e9b6/image/icf9b2adf29f57bb5/version/1528884051/image.jpg. Accessed 31 August 2021.

Lauren Moffatt, *Hybrids and strings,* 2020/2021. Available: https://fabbula.com/artists/of-hybrids-and-strings-by-lauren-moffatt/. Accessed 20 July 2022.

Lauren Moffatt, *Image technology echoes,* 2020/2021. Available: https://iffr.com/en/iffr/2021/films/image-technology-echoes. Accessed 20 July 2022.

Lauren Moffatt, *Local Binaries,* 2022. Available: https://artfacts.net/exhibition/lauren-moffatt:-local-binaries/1017385. Accessed 20 July 2022.

Lauren Moffatt, *Not Eye,* 2008. Available: https://bieff.wordpress.com/2013/12/10/not-eye-interview-with-lauren-moffatt-because-of-the-role-the-camera-plays-as-the-conductor-of-plot-in-cinema-whoever-is-holding-it-essentially-has-the-power/. Accessed 16 February 2023.

Lauren Moffatt, *Tulpamance*r, 2017-2019 Available: https://www.mqw.at/en/institutions/q21/program/2019/11/lauren-moffatt-the-tulpamancer. Accessed 20 July 2022.

Leeah Joo, *crane dance,* 2014. Available: https://leeahjoo.com/dokkebi.html. Accessed 20 July 2022.

Méret Oppenheim, *Object,* 1936. Available: https://www.moma.org/collection/works/80997. Accessed 20 July 2022.

Maurits Cornelis Escher, *Sky and Water 1,* 1938. Available: https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.54215.html. Accessed 20 July 2022.

Robin Rhode, *Gusheshe,* 2005. Available: https://superrare.com/magazine/tag/robin-rhode/. Accessed 20 July 2022.

Robin Rhode, *RGB,* 2015. Available: https://www.artsy.net/artwork/robin-rhode-rgb. Accessed 16 February 2023.

Robin Rhode, *Evergreen,* 2016. Available: https://wentrupgallery.com/en/viewingrooms/robin-rhode. Accessed 16 February 2023.

Robin Rhode, *Under the Sun,* 2016. Available: https://www.artspace.com/robin_rhode/under-the-sun. Acessed 16 February 2023.

Robin Rhode, *Chalk Bicycle,* 2008. Available: https://www.artsy.net/artwork/robin-rhode-chalk-bicycle. Accessed 15 February 2023.

Robin Rhode, *Upside Down Bike (Red, yellow, blue),* 2000. Available: https://initiartmagazine.com/2010/10/31/robin-rhode/. Accessed 19 August 2022.

Robin Rhode, *Park Bench,* 2000. Available: https://artthrob.co.za/02feb/images/rhode03a.jpg. Accessed 19 August 2022.

Robin Rhode, *Getaway,* 2000. Available: https://art21.org/gallery/robin-rhode-artwork-survey-2000s/#3. Accessed 19 August 2022.

Sherrie Levine, *Fountain (Buddha),* 1996. Available: https://www.icaboston.org/art/sherrie-levine/fountain-buddha. Accessed 20 July 2022.

Shezad Dawood, *Island Pattern,* 2017. Available: https://frontrunnermagazine.com/posts/shezad-dawoods-leviathan-legacy/. Accessed 20 July 2022.