

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1. Growing up barefoot in Africa

My earliest memories are of growing up barefoot in Africa and feeling the earth-sand-land under/beneath the soles/souls of my feet. This is how I knew where I was – by the feel of the beach-sand-road-gravel-garden-soil-bushveld<sup>1</sup> and *duwweltjies*<sup>2</sup> – my feet firmly on the land, on *terra firma*. I loved the outdoors. Being in nature, being part of nature, gave me the feeling that I belonged. I had a nomadic childhood and young adulthood, as our family, and later myself, moved around the southern African region fairly regularly. So, I grew up and lived in many places, often leaving, and returning to some of them. For me, the sand became the signifier of identification with these places. There was a consistency to it – it was always there when I returned – to my many homes. I recognised them through the sand. I belonged to all of these places. The following memories tell of childhood, forming a palimpsest of layers of memories of sand/land and of my relationship with sand.

I was three or four years old and I was told to go and play outside in the yard. It was hot and sandy as the yards were and often still are here in Eros, Windhoek, Namibia – then South West Africa. The gardener was raking patterns in the sand, as they still do today, long after the end of colonialism. I was watching a long line of ants, carrying sand out of the hole of their nest. I was amazed at each tiny creature and their place in the consistency of carrying sand and tiny pieces of quartz and mica, grass and sticks, often larger than themselves. I was intrigued at their building a home in the sand, infinitesimally, grain by grain, ant by ant. Time stood still.

I was five years old and playing in the sand with my baby sister at the Mole<sup>3</sup>, a beach in Swakopmund, then South West Africa. The sand is crystalline and shelly, filled with chips of quartz, semi-precious stones and agates from the diamondiferous gravel washed up from the seabed by the Benguela current. There was a small stream of water coming out of the pier wall, making everything shiny – the grains glistening in the sun. We were trying to collect the bigger grains of coloured semi-precious stones and were called away by our parents from the incoming tide.

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<sup>1</sup> Afrikaans for bush and savannah.

<sup>2</sup> Afrikaans for thorns, literally ‘little devils’.

<sup>3</sup> The pier is commonly referred to as the Mole.

I was six or seven years old. My sister and I were staying temporarily with our grandparents in Port Alfred, then Eastern Cape, South Africa. We were playing on the beach, building sandcastles with the fine golden sand and decorating them with shells and seaweed. I felt happy and secure. Port Alfred had and arguably still has some of the most beautiful and untouched golden beaches. We had some of our most idyllic growing up years here. Later, every Christmas holiday from kids to teens, was filled with sand and sea and sun and fun – our annual family highlight and holiday to family. After running barefoot each summer, putting on stiff hard new school shoes and going back to school, felt like an uncomfortable captivity, clomping around with ‘shod’ feet. Not feeling where you were. All freedom constricted. This golden beach sand from Port Alfred will always represent happiness to me – my source – even today as I visit regularly. It embodies layers and layers of experience and memories throughout my growing years, creating a palimpsest of life experiences and identity.

My little sister and I were helping our grandfather in the vegetable garden in Port Alfred. He had one and a half arms; the right being amputated during the Second World War. But he could still do everything from lighting his pipe, boiling eggs for our breakfast, and working in the garden. We had pawpaw and banana trees, granadilla, vines, mealies, spinach, potatoes and tomatoes. We were helping Grampa dig up the potatoes from the sandy soil. It was warm and dusty. When we worked in the garden, he would explain to us how the different plants grew in different places in the plot. I can still see the different types of soil and plants in my mind.

I became a young adult and had just returned to a newly independent Namibia, after studying at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa. I was a freshly graduated artist, beginning my career. I rediscovered Namibia after thirteen years of absence, travelling sand roads, gravel roads, climbing mountains and exploring the veld<sup>4</sup>. I experienced the desert, and looked for rock pools in the granite kopjes<sup>5</sup> during the rainy season. I had discovered the freedom of the open road. This land was my inspiration and my outdoor studio. I was overwhelmed by the sense of freedom and vast spaces of the deserts, the infinity of their sand, the red Kalahari, the golden Namib, and the light of the huge cerulean blue sky. It was here in the desert that I realised the “infinity in a grain of sand”, in the words of William Blake. I also quote them at the beginning of Chapter 3 where I on sand.

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<sup>4</sup> Afrikaans for bushland.

<sup>5</sup> Afrikaans for small mountainous outcrops.

These are some layers of some memories – a palimpsest of different sands and different places. And so, we read the land as a transcript or a text. Later, as a developing artist, I worked more and more with found media and natural objects from my environment. I began to use sand as an artistic medium, not only for its aesthetic quality, but also as a complex signifier of place. For example, the performative installation *Desert Rain* was produced for the Land Matters in Art Exhibition (2013). See Figures 1-3 below.



Figure 1: Kay Cowley. *Desert Rain*. Kinetic mobile installation and performance. 2m x 3m. 27 March 2013, 18h00. National Art Gallery of Namibia (Land Matters in Art 2013:16).



Figure 2: Kay Cowley. *Desert Rain*. Kinetic mobile installation and performance. 2m x 3m. 27 March 2013, 18h00, National Art Gallery of Namibia (Land Matters in Art 2013:16).

*Desert Rain* is a multi-media, interactive, kinetic installation inspired by the title of Jackson Kaujewa's autobiography *Tears over the Desert*. It is a mobile sculpture, comprised of a two-meter-wide armature from which various sizes of sand drops are suspended. The sand drops are made from the different colours and types of sand from different areas of Namibia: Kalahari sand, Sossusvlei sand, Karibib marble dust, Namib Desert sand, Oshana sand, Mahangu field sand, etc. (see Figure 3, Sand Key below). It also includes sand from outside Namibia, which has historical and political relevance, such as sand from the southernmost tip of Africa and the sand of Robin Island. The sand is a metaphor for all the various cultures, peoples and places of Namibia and the drops represent the tears of joy, happiness,

loss, frustration, and laughter of each and every ordinary person making up the nation of Namibia. The tenuous link between water and desert, land and culture, is also evident. The installation is kinetic, and the drops move and create shadow shows under various lighting effects. On completion the project was launched as an art happening – an interaction between shadows of dancers and shadows of drops, set to African percussion and original poetry, creating a multi-media interactive, kinetic installation which was recorded on DVD.



Figure 3: Sand key for *Desert Rain*, indicating the different types of sand found in Namibia (Land Matters in Art 2013:16).

And so, I collect sand for aesthetic and emotive reasons, and I often do this because of the origin of the sand. In this, sand is for me a signifier for both personal and narrative meaning.

What is it about the idea that within its minuteness a grain of sand encapsulates greater things, that it is a metaphor for a grander scale, that it has a story to tell? There is a temptation to anthropomorphize, to gaze into the weather-beaten face of a sand grain and see ourselves reflected, our own life stories, our own journeys, our own worlds, to see the grain as an individual with a *character*, as well as a member of a family and larger clans, extended global tribes (Welland 2009:iii).

Now as a mature artist, having travelled and explored the deserts and savannahs, I rediscover Namibia in terms of the oasis, of water in the desert. Waterberg, Namibia, made of fossilized sandstone, is just such a place, with water coming out of the mountain all year around, and not just in the rainy season.

By now, when I work with sand creatively, it is as complex identifier of place. As an adult I realise that my memories of sand and the freedom therein are but one stratum in the palimpsest – there are many deep layers of history that embody and bespeak a story of life, settlement and colonial violence, for example. In this study I explore the Waterberg, through identified sand sites in the area, and discover their ecology, geology, culture, and the history of each. Every research trip, each write-up and the related research create layers of identity – palimpsests – for each site and the Waterberg as a whole.

As part of my methodology I collected sand samples from the different sites, took photographs, drew and wrote notes in my artist's notebook, made sand palimpsest scrolls, and conducted interviews with numerous individuals who crossed my path during my studies, including poets and experts in the field. These interviews take the form of conversational transcripts where the stories and reflections of people of the Waterberg are being relayed. I constructed an artist's workbook of the Waterberg, exploring the different sites, continuously deconstructing and reconstructing, inscribing and erasing the written and visual information. Finally, I created an installation of rows of layers of sand people, created from the sand from ten selected sand sites and based on the geological layers of the Waterberg. I animate this through video and sound in the form of poetry and chants. Together, these creative outcomes form the material components of the study – my artifacts, and the practice-based research component which weaves throughout the study.

## **2. Practice-based research**

This study explores the journey of practice-based research. It reflects a performative practice-based approach woven throughout the submission. Fitzpatrick (2016:1) defines practice-based artistic methodology in research as:

an original investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge partly by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice. Claims of originality and contribution to knowledge may be demonstrated through creative outcomes which may include artifacts such as images, music, designs, models, digital media or other outcomes such as performances and exhibitions.

Fitzpatrick continues that, whilst words are used to explain “the significance and context”, it is the direct reference to the outcomes of the original creative work which leads to a full understanding of these claims.

R. Lyle Skains (2018:83), in his article titled “Creative Practice as Research: Discourse on Methodology, Media Practice and Education” notes that recently artistic practice, both the process and the product, has become important as a tool for research activity. He justifies this in that a variety of disciplines strongly support this as a valid method for both the practice and the study of art. Therefore, in creative practice, both the process and the product become a “primary method of knowledge development”. These do however differ with regard to the role played by the creative artefact. In practice-led projects the focus is on the *process* of creating the artefact, whereas in practice-based projects the key element is the *product* – the creative artefact itself which becomes the “basis of the contribution to knowledge” (2018:86).

This is supported by Fitzpatrick’s assertion that it is the “original creative work” that forms an “original contribution to the field” and that the creative outcomes arising from the research process, can form part of the examination submission. It is in this way that the practice-based PhD differs from the conventional one (Fitzpatrick 2016:1).

In addition to this, Fitzpatrick (2016:1) continues:

Practice-based doctoral submissions must include a substantial contextualisation of the creative work. This critical appraisal or analysis not only clarifies the basis of the claim for the originality and location of the original work, it also provides the basis for a judgement as to whether general scholarly requirements are met. This could be defined as judgement of the submission as a contribution to knowledge in the field.

In conclusion, the Birkbeck School of Arts (2008:1) maintains that it is within the academic context that art is assessed and validated “with a different set of expectations in mind” providing a change of focus in the legitimisation of the art object itself.

Therefore, in this creative PhD, my research and creative practice are interwoven in terms of methodology of both academic writing and creative production. My creative practice is material-based using sand from identified sites in the Waterberg, Namibia, as signifiers of meaning and identity. These sites are explored through their ecology, geology, and cultural

history. This inevitably gives rise to questions of land ownership resulting from and through various palimpsests of perception of the land, the material and its history.

The concept of the palimpsest is used as methodology in both the theory and the practical component. Therefore, the process is a cyclical and layered one of inscription – erasure and re-inscription, construction – deconstruction and reconstruction. It concerns the relationship between a variety of texts and forms, forms and text. This culminates in the exhibition which explores the relationship between these elements through the medium of sand, as well as the spoken word in sound overlaying the images. Thus the palimpsest is in itself a performative, practice-based approach which is woven throughout the study. The exhibition is documented in the catalogue and associated videos.

The concept of the palimpsest provides both a theoretical and aesthetic model for a multi-disciplinary approach. Sand as matter is never fixed – making the palimpsest an innovative and relevant methodology which provides a metaphor for the changeable fugitive character of orally transmitted knowledge.

### **3. Thesis as palimpsest**

Derrida's philosophy of deconstruction engenders an "archeological" approach of "excavation and discovery" in order to remove sedimentary layers of thinking and meaning, "past experience and present consciousness" (Jackson & Mazzie 2008:180). The concept of "erasure" and "trace" in Derrida's writing sets up the notion of the palimpsest. Intertextuality, as part of postmodern writing, "provide[s] a model for the function of writing" as the palimpsest foregrounds the fact that all writing takes place in the presence of other writings: palimpsests subvert the concept of the author as the sole original source of her work, and thus defer the 'meaning' of a work down an endless chain of signification (Ferreira-Meyers 2008: 204-214).

Thus, it provides a means of 'reading' palimpsests and peeling back layers of meaning, even as one has to stop and read through each overlay separately in order to comprehend them meaningfully.

Chapters 2 – 4 in this dissertation are each titled a story, and through progression, form layers of palimpsests. In terms of the composite copy, selected texts (maps, poetry, stories and images) transparent or semi-transparent, resemble palimpsestic overlays on top of



certain older/earlier inscriptions on pages, thus creating semblances of actual palimpsests which read through each other. In terms of softcopy, for readers experiencing the reading of the thesis on screen, this attempt to simulate the appearance of palimpsests visually is announced in blue, with an invitation to the reader to play along with this 'mental trick' and to visualize the announced pages on the computer screen as if they were layers of text and/or image imposed on one another. The use of this technique begins in Chapter 3.

Beginning in Chapter 2 with written documentation on and exploration of the palimpsest, each following chapter starts developing into a tangible palimpsest of layered images, texts and concepts, transparent and semi-transparent, building up until the culmination of the Waterberg itself, is revealed as a palimpsest. The creative exploration as process is conducted throughout the study, and is documented in Chapter 5 on studio work comprising the artist's workbooks, more specifically the artist's *Book of the Waterberg* as an object, sand palimpsests and the installation of different sand people. This culminates in the documentation of the exhibition, and installation with performance **“EHI” WATERBERG, NAMIBIA Ehi - Sand/Land Rights/Rites**. This installation of different sand people from the different sand sites together with the sound of poetry and traditional Herero chants showcases the concept of the Waterberg as an eco-geo-cultural historical palimpsest of identity.

The thesis begins with an inquiry of a descriptive mode into the palimpsest in Chapter 2: “The story of the palimpsest” with regard to origins and methodology. Exploring ‘sand’ as ‘land’ in terms of a cultural metaphor for a sense of place, the English writer William Boyd refers to WG Hoskins’s book *The Making of the English Landscape* as describing layered stretches of sedimentation to ‘read’ a landscape as a “historical *palimpsest*” (Boyd 2013a:1). This created the initial visual inspiration for this study. A documentary and historical approach explores the palimpsest itself as a material reality, as well as transitions into booknesses and information technology. Images support the text. Examples of artists creating artworks that explore the concepts of both palimpsest and booknesses are showcased by tangible visual examples of their work.

Chapter 3 “Stories of sand” forms the next layer of the palimpsest. It begins with an inquiry into the geological origins and material nature, as well as the sentiment of sand. Most sand consists of quartz grains, and places such as beaches contain sand which is formed from crustaceans. Sand has also evolved from rock and volcanic lava (Welland 2009:3). Over and above this, it is fascinating to find out that a grain of sand can evolve through many lifetimes over eons:

The whole process is cyclic, over and over again, each time the grains carrying with them microscopic evidence of their parentage, their genetic origins. The majority of quartz sand grains are derived from the disintegration of older sandstones; perhaps half of all sand grains have been through six cycles in the mill, liberated, buried, exposed, and liberated again ... reborn repeatedly (Welland 2009:6).

The concept of the palimpsest occurs not only in history, but also in ecology and geology, as time rewriting the terrain continuously. And sand plays a crucial role in this. *Ehi* is the word for *sand* and also for *land* and *Motherland*, in the Herero culture, relevant to the Waterberg, Namibia. The use of transparent and semi-transparent pages for appropriate components of the thesis to give material and visual expression to the notion of the palimpsest, starts in this chapter. It begins with a contemporary poem on land rights “This Land ... a poetic intervention” by Namibian poetrepeneur, Prince Kamaazengi Marenga, which is printed on a transparency to overlay my own text printed on paper underneath it. A recent handwritten rewrite of this poem for the performance part for my exhibition forms a next layer of overwriting and features further on in the thesis.

The chapter then proceeds to explore sand both as a signifier of eco-geo culture and identity as well as an aesthetic material. The latter is supported by visual examples of artists and their artworks using sand as an aesthetic medium. The ecological and geological origins of sand are explored. Within a contextualisation of Ashcroft’s post-colonial approach *The Empire Writes Back* (1989), the way sand is used and described amongst Namibian cultures is explored. The politics of palimpsest emerge as Land Rights/Rites of appropriation, misappropriation, and re-appropriation which occur and re-occur. Culture and identity emerge with creation myths concerning sand as the source of life and origin in different cultures. Section 4.1.2, “Sayings of Sand” focuses on Otjijhero proverbs and idioms featuring sand.

The types of sand in Namibia, and the uses of sand globally and locally, are reviewed in sections 3.1 and 3.2 respectively, with structures of sand such as termite hills and sand roses occurring in my country, discussed in section 3.3. Individual stories of sand, collected in the Waterberg area from a number of persons living and working there, are printed on transparent and semi-transparent pages and overlaid to resemble the layers of narration and collective consciousness through which sand as a signifier of identity within the Waterberg region may be meaningfully understood. In some parts the interlocutors’ approach is anthropological in its excavation into geology and ecology. In some parts it is environmental and political with reports on environmental destruction, and ecological exploitation, layered

with political and capitalistic standpoints on illegal sand mining, clearly hinting at the complex question of land rights.

The underlying emphasis is on ecological awareness from a post-colonial feminist perspective. Inspiration is drawn from eco-feminists such as Elizabeth Grosz (1994, 2008), Donna Haraway (2014), Val Plumwood, (1993) and Karen Barad (2007), overturning viewpoints from male-dominated perspectives of the earth as resource.

Elizabeth Grosz's *Volatile bodies. Toward a corporeal feminism* (1994) bears direct reference to the notion to the palimpsest – as body, as surface, as metaphorical inscription and erasure. Grosz's focus is on the inscriptions of race, gender, and sexuality on the body. Examples are the branding of the slave as determination of ownership, the classification of white dominated viewpoints on blackness, and the derogatory objectification of the woman. It is this patriarchal domination and exploitation of people of colour, of those of 'lesser' gender and of 'ownership' and exploitation of natural resources, rather than a holistic matriarchal nurturing of the land, that is relevant to this study.

Within the framework of eco-psychology, this approach is supported by eco-feminist Val Plumwood's (1993) concept of nurturing the land through symbiosis (feminist), versus dominating – exploiting – “developing” (male). In this, she highlights the link between nature and women, and the relationship between feminist theories and ecological feminism. Plumwood (1993:19) encourages us to question male domination of nature, and how feminist theory can contribute towards a green consciousness and a more enlightened environmental philosophy:

Both rationality and nature have a confusing array of meanings; in most of these meanings reason contrasts systematically with nature in one of its many senses. Nature, as the excluded and devalued contrast of reason, includes the emotions, the body, the passions, animality, the primitive or uncivilized, the non-human world, matter, physicality and sense experience, as well as the sphere of irrationality, of faith and of madness. In other words, nature includes everything that reason includes.

This is supported by Karen Barad's concepts of Agential Realism and of “quantum entanglements”. In *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (2007), she provides the framework for an eco-feminist viewpoint, while also supporting an interdisciplinary approach. She views the interrelatedness of everything as holistic instead of 'separated-ness'. This is expressed in the preface of this book where Barad (2007: viii) introduces her interpretation of entanglements:

This book is about entanglements. To be entangled is not simply to be intertwined with another, as in the joining of separate entities, but to lack an independent, self-contained existence. Existence is not an individual affair. Individuals do not pre-exist their interactions; rather, individuals emerge through and as part of their entangled intra-relating.

These realisations inevitably lead to questions of identity with the land, and how it is formed, and how ownership and our relationship with it, is viewed through history as a layered palimpsest of time. As Donna Haraway in the article “Material feminisms – otherworldly conversations, terrain topics, local terms” (2008: 157-8) so succinctly puts it:

Excruciatingly conscious of nature’s constitution as Other in the histories of colonialism, racism, sexism, and class domination of many kinds, many people who have been both ground to powder and formed in European and Euro-American crucibles nonetheless find in this problematic, ethno-specific, long-lived, and globally mobile concept something we cannot do without but can never “have.” We must find another relationship to nature besides reification, possession, appropriation, and nostalgia. No longer able to sustain the fictions of being either subjects or objects, all the partners in the potent conversations that constitute nature must find a new ground for making meanings together.

And so, the relationship with the land, in this case the Waterberg, Namibia, from past to present perceptions, forms palimpsests of differing perception. The very nature of a multi-disciplinary study such as this, is palimpsestic in the sense of layering multiple facts as well as viewpoints into a multi-dimensional whole of knowledge and perception. And one questions whether (or not) the only way of preserving nature is by turning it into protected areas – how do we establish a symbiotic relationship with nature?

Chapters 2 and 3 form a layer of palimpsests and a layer of sand, then culminate in Chapter 4: “The story of the Waterberg, Namibia”, my chosen oasis, as a manifestation of a palimpsest – sand sites of ecology, geology, culture, history and identity. The chapter begins with the historical and cultural background to the Waterberg plateau. In doing so, I attempt to understand the history through the eyes of the first known people to live there, and then through those of the pastoral nomads’ oral ‘ownership’ of the land, then colonialism, the Battle of the Waterberg (1904) and the subsequent genocide of the Herero people, forming palimpsests of ‘ownership’ and ‘disownership’ of the land. [To question how political and cultural ownership overwrites the perception of land, creating a palimpsest, the manipulation of this part of the thesis is also done to resemble a palimpsest: taking the ‘deeper’, older account of Native American Chief Seattle, in which he asks: “\[H\]ow can you buy or sell the sky? The warmth of the Land?” the text is produced as a transparency to overlay the text](#)

beneath it. The perspective here is one of a symbiotic relationship with the land, because in essence humanity does not own the earth, but is owned by it.

The chapter then introduces the different sand sites selected in the Waterberg with visual documentation and brief descriptions of both the history and geology of each site. In addition, to create a palimpsest of politics of place, I overlay my own artists' drawn 'map' of the area and other contemporary and historical maps of the Waterberg by layering them on transparent and semi-transparent pages. These are the current Waterberg Park map and H. Meyer's 1905 map of the German occupation of the Waterberg as a German police station after the Genocide. Added to this is my own palimpsest scroll of a geological sand map.

The focus then shifts back to the present, where the Waterberg is now a protected national Namibian Wildlife Resort (NWR) which in theory belongs to the nation, and I briefly explore the fauna, flora, ecology, geology and sand of the area. For me, as mentioned, the emphasis is on ecological awareness from post-colonial, feminist perspectives on that which will save us: an interconnected and interdisciplinary approach to symbiosis with our planet-earth-land-sand.

Section 7 on the history of the Waterberg is introduced by visually overlaying the text of the Herero and English versions of the *Omitandu/Chant of the Waterberg*, creating a palimpsest indicating an oral and cultural view of land ownership. Spiritual colonisation is also evidenced here, during the time that Waterberg was a mission station, prior to the Genocide. Once again, artists and writers exploring the Genocide as a theme, support the study.

Chapter 5 of Elizabeth Grosz's *Volatile bodies* (1994), "Nietzsche and the choreography of knowledge" covers the history of the concept of the palimpsest and its applications. As already mentioned, the term can be applied as a concept with regard to eco-feminism and the corporeality of the female body. Grosz (1994:14) writes that "[p]atriarchy is viewed as culturally inscribing on female corporeality a sexuality which is both foreign to it, and also shows a limitation in notions which align themselves with male perceptions and desires". This concept can be applied to the German history of colonialism and genocide in Namibia, as culturally inscribing upon the colonised body and landscape an identity and value system which is alien to it:

[T]he determining condition of what we refer to as post-colonial cultures is the historical phenomenon of colonialism, with its range of material practices and effects, such as transportation, slavery, displacement, emigration, and racial and

cultural discrimination. These material conditions and their relationship to questions of ideology and representation are at the heart of the most vigorous debates in recent postcolonial theory (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 2006: 7).

Consequently, today, contemporary cultures of the Waterberg area are comprised of geomorphic layers of colonial sediment and post-independent sentiment.

#### **4. Exhibition as palimpsest**

The thesis culminates with the resultant focus on the palimpsestic processes and material production of the artistic exploration – the artifacts – of this journey in Chapter 5, “**EHI**” **WATERBERG, NAMIBIA**. *Ehi* – Sand/Land Rites/Rights. This is supported by the catalogue and video recordings of the exhibition and the artist’s *Book of the Waterberg*. Chapter 5 documents the process of the creative production and the visual results of this journey. The catalogue itself showcases the final visual outcomes of the exhibition, while the videos support this in terms of documenting the resultant exhibition of the *Book of the Waterberg*, palimpsests of sand scrolls and the installation “*Ehi*” Land/Sand Rites/Rights together with sound recordings of the poems and chants of the Waterberg. In this performative installation, the sound overlays together with the moving images create an audio and visual palimpsest, with a strong emphasis on (the question of) ‘ownership’ of the land. Uncannily, parts of the imagery render the sand people as visually reminiscent of San paintings – yet animated and kinetic. This brings us back to reflecting on the role of the first people in the Waterberg, and their symbiotic relationship with the land – which is not spoken or recorded here.

#### **5. The significance of the study**

This study contributes towards the following areas:

- I contribute towards a practice-led approach that can be implemented in future studies.
- I explore sand as material: There currently exists a dearth of documentation on the exploration of sand as an artistic medium and little on the use of sand as an art form, other than in site-specific art, sand sculpture and craft applications (see Chapter 3).
- I compile documentation on the use of sand as an artistic medium. This includes a thorough documentation of the development of techniques for uses of sand as an art medium.

- This study contributes to primary research directed to the question: what is the history of sand within Namibian context? There is no other study that looks at sand in the Waterberg, Namibia in this way. To date there is no cultural study of sand as signifier of identity in Namibia. It is here where the palimpsest as a methodology accomplishes the vital task of connecting otherwise seemingly disparate ideas and thoughts from a variety of knowledge sources and disciplines including books, oral histories, anthropology and artworks.