

Elizabeth Goodall and Walter Battiss: Inspired by the art on the rocks

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ABSTRACT

In this article I compare the research methods of two visually trained artists: Elizabeth Goodall and Walter Battiss. Both were working at the beginning of the 20th century in an emerging field of rock art studies in southern Africa. Independently of each other and for different reasons, Goodall and Battiss devoted considerable time and energy to studying and recording the rock art at sites they visited in the landscape. In pursuit of their endeavours, neither researcher strayed far from the visual while examining and copying the images they saw. In this article, I trace the impact of their formative years working in collaboration with scientists and consider the routes they followed to pursue methods that prioritise the aesthetic elements of the rock art. Through this exploration of copying methods unfolding at a time when rock art scholarship remained somewhat peripheral to formal academic study, I argue that a focus on art history and aesthetics revealed in the semi-biographical narratives of these two artists, might enrich engagements with rock art in the present.

KEYWORDS

Creative practice; rock art; Zimbabwe Museum of Human Sciences; recordings; hand-painted copies; Rock Art Research Institute; Bushman; Frobenius Institute.

The paintings and engravings scattered on rock formations across the landscape compelled many European settlers and explorers who happened upon them to record them in some way, often descriptively in text or through a visual engagement. As has been documented in both scholarly literature and popular media, the figurative and naturalistic expressions of these marks, especially those of the finer painted variety, have for centuries held the attention of European explorers and researchers in the region (Kirby 1942; Rudner and Rudner 1970, 245; Willcox 1963, 1; Wintjes 2012, 23 – 41; 2013). Across southern Africa, tens of thousands of painted panels and engravings have been documented and as Ann Solomon (2006, 77) points out; “[t]he paintings are now a cherished, if minor, part of contemporary culture”. Scholars and interested people from around the world continue to embark on journeys into the landscape, trekking to what can often be remote locales, in order to visit these “pictures in place” (Chippendale and Nash 2004, 11).

Since first experiencing the paintings in the landscape, recorders have responded to the visuality of the primary rock art panels in various creative ways in order to capture the pictorial attributes of the markings in the landscape, thereby creating copies that become movable objects standing in for the originals away from the site (Skotnes 2008 and 2010; Wintjes 2012; 2013 and 2016). The experimentations of early researchers have resulted in an array of secondary images ranging from watercolour copies on large canvases, to line tracings made on sheets of cellophane and pencil sketches in field notebooks. Rock art recording has sometimes been carried out by trained artists, believed to be equipped with the skills required for picture making and processes of mimesis. Furthermore, artist-painters have a particular affinity with the medium of paint, providing them with insights into ways to translate the images from rock surface to canvas or paper copy. However, even with art training, the translation and imitation of original to copy is not straightforward and required what artist and art historian Pippa Skotnes refers to as “creative exploration” (Skotnes 1994, 319).

As an art historian and practicing fine artist, I have some insights into mark making as well as the layers of complexity that pursuing “accurate” copying adds to the image making process. In this article, adapted and extended from my doctoral research, I consider the contribution made to the field of southern African rock art by two trained artists working in the early part of the 20th century.

I compare the rock art related research methods of the German born Elizabeth Goodall¹ (b. 1891 – d. 1971) and that of her contemporary, the acclaimed South African artist Walter Battiss (b.1906 – d.1982), both of whom began their careers as visually trained artists working for and collaborating with more scientifically minded archaeologists to forge interpretations of rock art. The original rock paintings and the interpretation thereof is central to the interdisciplinary study of rock art. This article examines the copying work of early researchers from an art historical point of view, rather than the contribution and oeuvre of the original rock painters and engravers.

Goodall undertook her formative training under the German ethnographer and explorer Leo Viktor Frobenius (b. 1873 – d. 1938) and Battiss corresponded passionately on rock art related matters with his friend and colleague, the director of the Bureau of Archaeology based at the University of the Witwatersrand, Clarence (Peter) van Riet Lowe (b. 1894 – d. 1956). I consider the influence of these collaborations on each artist-researcher and trace the impact of these experiences on the careers each went on to carve out for themselves as independent researchers, Goodall in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and Battiss in South Africa. I rely on a close reading of each artist-researcher's published work (Battiss 1939; 1941; 1948; 1950 and Goodall 1944; 1946a; 1946b; 1946c; 1947; 1949; 1957a; 1957b; 1959; 1960; 1962a; 1962b; 1962c; 1962d; 1965; 1970) and primary research conducted in archives in Zimbabwe and South Africa. Goodall's documents and other papers are held² at the Zimbabwe Museum of Human Sciences (ZMHS) in Harare, Zimbabwe, and the collection of Battiss's rock art related materials at the Rock Art Research Institute (RARI) in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Apprenticeship: Visual recording

Goodall was born Elisabeth Amanda Margarethe Mannsfeld, on 7 July 1891 in Hamburg, Germany (Raath 1971, 1). The daughter of a schoolteacher, she completed her early formal

¹ Following her involvement in Frobenius's ninth expedition in southern Africa from 1928 to 1930, Elisabeth Goodall (working under her maiden name) relocated to Southern Rhodesia, where she married Leslie Goodall. In addition to her last name changing, it appears that her first name was 'anglicised' to become Elizabeth (with a z).

² Goodall's lifelong involvement with the Queen Victoria Museum (now the Zimbabwe Museum of Human Sciences) has resulted in a collection of materials, some of which were assembled posthumously, being preserved in one of the museum storerooms. In my doctoral thesis, *Elizabeth Goodall: A quiet contribution to rock art research in southern Africa* (University of the Witwatersrand, 2019), I noted that these materials have received little engagement in the nearly 50 years since Goodall's death in 1971. As a result, there is no delineated cataloguing system, giving the impression that the archive is somewhat chaotic and neglected.

schooling in Hamburg where her artistic talent was recognised and likely encouraged early on, perhaps contributing to her decision to pursue a vocation as a drawing teacher (Raath 1971, 1; Stappert 2019, 205; Stoll 2021, 2). After attending the Hamburg Drawing Teachers' Seminar from 1908 to 1911, Goodall was unable to find employment as a drawing teacher. Instead, she began work at the Hamburg Museum of Ethnology as an unskilled technical worker, joining a team of young women trained in precision drawing who were employed to illustrate museum catalogues and books and to produce ethnographic drawings (Stappert 2019, 205; Stoll 2021, 2). In February 1919, shortly after the end of World War I, Goodall relocated to Munich, where she worked as a freelance teacher and draughtswoman while refining her skills by taking an anatomy course at the Ludwig Maximilian University (Raath 1971, 1). Some years later, around 1923, Goodall met Frobenius and began working for his Research Institute for Cultural Morphology as a scientific draughtswoman. Goodall relocated with the Research Institute to Frankfurt am Main in 1925 when Frobenius joined his headquarters to the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University. It was reportedly during this time that Goodall became interested in rock art (Raath 1971, 1), an interest she likely cultivated alongside Frobenius's growing absorption in the art, which he considered to be the "oldest tangible records of humanity" (Frobenius 1931: ii. 7 in Wintjes 2013, 169).

Reflecting on the ideas he formulated as a "young Frobenius" living in Germany and eager to establish himself in an intellectual milieu concerned with the "science of culture", Frobenius quoted his own proposal that "the most difficult obstacle to our understanding of culture is our ignorance. We do not know enough" (Frobenius 1937, 16-17). His solution to the problem, was "Work! And more work!" and further, that:

Every fact, object and belief which can help us to understand the growth of human culture should be recorded and indexed for use. It is a pure question of application, first to get the material together and then to see how much we can learn alone from the geographic distribution of certain culture elements (Frobenius 1937: 16-17).

In pursuit of gathering as much evidence as possible, Frobenius's travel style was of the general survey variety, never staying in one place for extended periods, but moving quickly to cover as much ground as possible.

In 1928 Goodall (Fig. 1) travelled with Frobenius to southern Africa as one of the artists employed on the Institute's ninth expedition (1928 – 1930). Over some 20 months, from August 1928 to March 1930, the German expedition visited hundreds of places of interest across the Union of South Africa. They visited rock art sites in Natal, the Cape Province and the Orange Free State, before heading north to Northern and Southern Rhodesia, Basutoland and South West Africa (Wintjes 2013, 172). After the end of the expedition, Frobenius and Goodall produced *Enthält den katalog der Südafrikanischen felsbilderkopien der D(IA)FE 1928 - 1930* (1930) where they outlined four primary objectives. The fourth objective: "To locate and copy the thousands of so-called 'Bushman drawings', i.e. rock art, spread out across the land" (Frobenius and Mannsfeld 1930, 87, translated by Wintjes 2013, 171; De Harde 2019, 48) was by far the most time consuming, challenging, creative and experimental of the expedition requirements.



Fig.1: An image from one of the albums (Volume 8) housed at the Frobenius Institute shows Elizabeth Goodall working at the rock art site recorded as "Aberdeen Farm" by the German expedition (FoA 09-12207 1-2). Photograph: Justine Wintjes.

For Frobenius, this task of accumulating material would not only be carried out “linguistically, descriptively and philosophically, but also graphically”, requiring “every expedition [to] be equipped with a staff of artists who will transfer to paper and canvases that which cannot be recorded with the camera” (Frobenius 1937, 17). In most instances, especially where the recording of rock art was concerned, Frobenius favoured the engagement of artists over the mechanical technique of photography. He acknowledged the difficulty associated with photographic recording methods and considered the camera to be, in his own words, “generally useless for one thing because the paintings are nearly always executed on oblique or much-angled stones, and then, too, because most of them are done in those colours which it is most difficult to photograph” (Frobenius 1929, 333). He therefore preferred the participation of trained artists and the laborious method of hand-drawn copies in his quest for documenting and recording the many painted panels he and his teams visited on the various expeditions. For Goodall, the time spent working under Frobenius’s tutelage was significant; I show how she went on to incorporate the skills she learnt in these formative years into her life-long professional practice while also adopting Frobenius’s work ethic (Fig. 2). Through a close reading of her published work and archival documents I reveal what I argue is the quiet, unassuming way Goodall adapted what she learnt from Frobenius to develop and establish the unique methodology she applied to her research (De Harde, 2019).



Fig. 2: Elizabeth Goodall (centre) is photographed at work at a site in Harrismith during the Orange Free State leg of the Frobenius expedition c. 1929, with her colleagues Adolf Jensen (left) and Maria Weyersberg (seated at right). (FoA 09-12210) © Frobenius-Institut an der Goethe Universität, Frankfurt am Main.

A certain definite spirit

In 1931, once her work on the expedition was complete,³ Goodall returned to Southern Rhodesia where she began work on a life-size copy of the paintings at Makumbe Cave (today recorded as Mawanga in the NMMZ database). The newly married Goodall spent three weeks camping in the field and produced a magnificent copy spanning nearly 10 meters in length (Raath 1971, 1). This watercolour painting (Fig. 3) was sent to Germany where it became the central focus of an exhibition the aim of which, according to Frobenius, was to display “spectacular stylistic samples of ancient South African culture” (Frobenius in Schulz 1933, 11). Today, residual soot from fires lit deep within the cave has blackened the walls of the shelter, entirely obscuring the paintings (Nhamo 2018, 58 - 75; Zimfieldguide.com 2019) (Fig. 4). Goodall’s copy therefore remains the only comprehensive record of the panel, showing in painstaking detail all aspects of the original. In my reading of Goodall’s career, her work on the Makumbe panel marked a professional milestone, signifying her progression from apprentice or secondary specialist employed by Frobenius, to an independent archaeologist with a clearly defined research agenda. In the four decades that followed, Goodall produced copies in excess of 500 paintings, most copied between 1940 and 1943 (Garlake 1993, 15).



Fig. 3: Large scale watercolour copy by Elizabeth Goodall of the painted panel at Makumbe Cave, Chinamhora Communal Lands, Zimbabwe c. 19310 (950 x 150 cm; FBA-D3 02972) © Frobenius-Institut an der Goethe Universität, Frankfurt am Main.

Decades after Goodall’s death, the influential post-independence Zimbabwean archaeologist Peter Garlake (1993, 15) remarked on Goodall’s ability to sensitively capture and transfer the aesthetic qualities of the original art into a different medium:

³ In addition to compiling the expedition catalogue, Goodall was primarily involved in producing the ‘beta’ copies, 374 in total, which was the set of copies of the expedition’s body of work shipped to South Africa in 1931 and bequeathed to the South African Museum (now Iziko South African Museum) where they are held today (Keene 2010, 66).

Her main concern was to reproduce their aesthetic qualities. She was happy to adjust compositions to strengthen their effect and to transpose the thick, dry, opaque pigments of the artist into the much more fluid and transparent medium of watercolour. Despite the primitive materials she had to use in tracing and the techniques these imposed on her, her copies succeed in capturing the character of the art in a different medium while retaining accuracy, precision and detail more successfully than any other copyist, copying system or photography.

While Garlake conceded that no copy could be entirely accurate, he acknowledged that Goodall “never entirely misread an image” (Garlake 1993, 17). He recognised the particular “skill” and “care” she applied to her copying practice and believed the accuracy of her copies would “probably never be matched” (Garlake 1995, 35). Yet he did not see her as a fully-fledged scholar in her own right, describing what he saw as “[h]er few contributions” as “a celebration, and not an analysis, of the art” (Garlake 1995, 35). For Garlake (1993, 17) Goodall “remained primarily an artist”, implying that she was not a serious, scientific researcher in her own right, but rather he saw her as someone who remained absorbed by the aesthetic properties of the art and therefore did “little to advance the plot” (Garlake 1993, 1). Frobenius, on the hand, recognised early on the value of artists in copying rock art, suggesting that artists shared a “certain definite spirit”, which resonated with his notion of an underlying spiritual theory of “Paideuma” (Frobenius 1972 [1937], 18-19). His view that artists gained the capacity to copy rock markings through a kind of experiential learning and repetitive practice by being “immersed in the material” (Frobenius 1972 [1937], 18-19) resonates with a disciplined studio practice facilitating creative practice as a research methodology. As Creative Writing and Digital Media researcher Lyle Skains (2018, 84) explains

Practice-related research is an accepted methodology in medicine, design, and engineering (where it is often called “action research” [Reason and Bradbury 2001] referring to field-based research and participatory experiments as opposed to laboratory tests). While it has always been present to some extent in the arts and humanities, recently artistic practice has developed into a major focus of research activity, and several

recent texts as well as discourse in various disciplines have made a strong case for its validity as a method of studying both the process and product of art.

This contemporary perspective placing an emphasis on artistic practice as encompassing stand-alone research methods resonates with Frobenius's idea of a sympathetic relationship emerging between copyist and first artist through re-enacting an act of painting (Frobenius 1972 [1937], 18-19). However, Frobenius's idea that there is some kind of fundamental spiritual principle in the art that is accessible through its visual attributes alone, that the copyist can somehow connect with intuitively because of a connection shared as visual practitioners, is romantic, essentializing and reductive. Yet Frobenius was not the only rock art researcher to consider artists as capable of offering a privileged source of insight as researchers in the realm of creative practice assisting archaeologists in their interpretive, problem-solving endeavours.

In the 1940s, a decade after Frobenius carried out his research in southern Africa and published its findings, the director of the Bureau of Archaeology based at the University of the Witwatersrand, Clarence (Peter) van Riet Lowe, shared in Frobenius's enthusiasm for collaborating with artists, referencing his friendship and professional relationship with the artist Walter Battiss, who shared his passion for the paintings on the rocks (Mason 1989, 137-166; Wintjes 2012, 124). Van Riet Lowe observed the valuable insights Battiss's approach could bring to the study of rock art, a perspective, he argued, that "has always and essentially been that of an artist and a draughtsman" (Van Riet Lowe 1948, 13). Van Riet Lowe went on to acknowledge the emphasis Battiss placed on materials, saying that "technique, form, line and colour never escaped him" (Van Riet Lowe 1948, 13).

Both Van Riet Lowe and Frobenius believed that artist researchers shared an affinity with the original artists. Frobenius refers to this aspect of the paintings as the "spirit" (Frobenius 1972 [1937], 18-19), a characteristic imbued within the artwork, which transcended time and space. In his attempt to give words to the intrinsic knowledge of the artist, Van Riet Lowe explained it as Battiss's "deep understanding of and sympathy for the primitive" (Van Riet Lowe 1948, 13). He went on to elaborate on this assessment of Battiss's skills as

an asset which enabled him to get well under the skin of our prehistoric artists. This sympathetic approach and understanding have been all-important in his development. They have given him qualities of insight and discernment which no other published works have yet revealed; a fellow-feeling for the primitive in the humble recognition of the essential oneness of art (Van Riet Lowe 1948, 13).

Independent Problem Solver

When Goodall arrived by ship at the Port of Cape Town, in August of 1928, and in due course saw the rock art scattered across the landscape for the first time, she was already in her late 30s. Battiss, on the other hand, first encountered rock art as an 11-year-old boy, in the form of engraved or carved petroglyphs. Years later he commented on the profound and lasting effect this “revelation of early art” would have on his “creative subconscious” (Battiss 1973 in Schoonraad 1985, 40). From 1936, when he accepted a teaching post at Pretoria Boys’ High School, Battiss “commenced research [into rock art] in earnest” (Schoonraad 1985, 41). Battiss dedicated considerable time and energy into trekking to remote locales in search of new rock art sites where he would copy the art that he found. Schoonraad recounts Battiss’s dedication to his research, noting that he would “resort to any means of transport available, ranging from a schoolgirl’s bicycle to an expensive hire car” (Schoonraad 1985, 46). Battiss’s research was largely self-funded with little assistance from grants or awards; Schoonraad commented that “[o]ne cannot help but admire his tenacity” (Schoonraad 1985, 46). Michael Raath, who wrote one of the two memorial papers about Goodall noticed in her a similar commitment:

in spite of her age [she] still used to go on occasional brief ‘expeditions’ into the bush in search of new rock art sites, to make detailed copies of the paintings. These outings were simple and private, on which she was usually accompanied only by her husband, and they were largely self-financed. But the copies she made she generously deposited in the museum’s [QVM now ZMHS] archaeological collections (Michael Raath pers. comm. 2017).

Goodall’s large-scale, hand-painted watercolour copies can still be found on display in the Zimbabwean public galleries or dispersed in various localities in the storerooms of the ZMHS

where she worked until her death in 1971. The fragile records that survive Goodall are less a purposeful archive than a byproduct of the many years she spent working at the museum. Conversely, the documentary materials Battiss generated from his rock-art-related endeavours and field excursions were gathered and consolidated by Battiss's son Giles Battiss and donated as a single collection to RARI in 2008. Thus, each archive houses a collection of materials preserved for different reasons and in different ways. When studied alongside each other, the collections reveal divergences in the methods and perspectives of two practitioners who, as Wintjes and I have argued elsewhere, were “enchanted” (Gell 1992, 43-44) by the images they encountered on the rocks (Wintjes and De Harde 2020).



Fig. 4: A photograph from the website Zimfieldguide.com 2019, showing the extent of the smoke blackened Makumbe Cave with paintings obscured.

Armed with coloured pencils and paint, Battiss spent countless hours exploring the southern African landscape, with the primary objective of studying the rock art. Preserved alongside his fieldnotes in his pocket-sized notebooks or on loose sheets of white paper are a variety of quick sketches that he made of the environment in which he located the paintings. Schoonraad reflected

that Battiss's "own creations became intermingled with those done centuries before by other [artists]" (Schoonraad 1985, 41). From my reading of Battiss's published and unpublished work, I suspect that it is unlikely that Battiss saw a strict division between his "own creations" and those of the artists he studied. His perspective is conveyed in his writings: he saw the paintings as inextricably linked to the landscape, viewing them as site-specific works rather than images made in isolation (Battiss 1948, 23–39). From this it seems apparent that Battiss considered the environment holistically, taking into account the effects that environmental conditions such as the sun and the nuanced colour and texture of the rock surface would have on the paintings (Battiss 1948, 23–39). Moreover, he maintained that "the best engravers knew how to distort so that their work looked right when seen at the normal distance by a spectator standing before it and looking down at it" (Battiss 1948, 34). In support of this assessment, Battiss deemed it necessary to collect all the available evidence, inferring knowledge from the surrounding environment as well as in the paintings themselves (Battiss 1948, 67–71). Battiss's sketches, for example, can be interpreted as a visual representation of these sentiments. His atmospheric treatment of the landscape and the cumulonimbus clouds forming in the sky overhead creates the impression that the clouds form part of the mountains, integrating with the vegetation, therefore a component of the landscape and not segregated from it (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5: A sketch titled *Clouds rising up from the bay* by Walter Battiss (date unrecorded). Photographer: E. Wettengel. Walter Battiss Archive © Rock Art Research Institute, Johannesburg.

Goodall's work for the Frobenius expedition shows a corresponding regard for the paintings as site-specific artworks. However, where Battiss sketched the places he visited and the people he met (Fig. 6), Goodall appears to have preferred the use of photography to capture both people (Fig. 7) and the vegetation surrounding some of the rock art sites. The Frobenius Institute's online database features at least 30 photographs with subjects ranging from portraits of people to landscapes, crediting "Mannsfeld" as the photographer (Bildarchiv.frobenius-katalog.de 2019).



Fig. 6: Walter Battiss captured the essence of his subject in a few quickly sketched pencil marks, as can be seen in this example of a man he presumably encountered while conducting his rock art research (date unrecorded, subject's name unrecorded). Photographer: E. Wettengel. Walter Battiss Archive © Rock Art Research Institute, Johannesburg.



Fig. 7: A photograph titled *Alte Batongafrau bei Mtoko, Südrhod* (Old Batonga woman at Mtoko, Southern Rhodesia), taken by Elizabeth Goodall (date unrecorded, subject's name unrecorded EBA-B 01605 ~ a). © Frobenius-Institut an der Goethe Universität, Frankfurt am Main.

Similarly, at the beginning of his career in the late 1930s and early 1940s when rock engravings held Battiss's attention, he experimented with different techniques, utilising his artistic training and incorporating unconventional methods such as wood and linocut, to record the art. Schoonraad observed that Battiss saw an affiliation between his artistic practice and the engravings on the rock surfaces he studied saying: "they were so closely akin to his own graphics" (Schoonraad 1985, 43). Furthermore, Battiss tested a variety of mark-making including rubbing, a technique that Goodall had employed at a site in Klerksdorp in the Transvaal (now North West Province) as well as at Koffiefontein. At Afvallingskop in Koffiefontein, in what is now Mpumalanga province, Battiss extended his representation of the visual image to include an embodiment of the action that he imaginatively conjured was required to produce the original engraving. In this instance, he worked with a piece of linoleum, cutting and scraping away at the surface to create an intaglio image incised into the linoleum surface, echoing the activity by which the petroglyph had been engraved into the rock-face (Schoonraad 1985, 44). While this demonstrated the scope of Battiss's creative experimentation, "scientifically minded" (Schoonraad 1985, 43) critics such as the archaeologist Berry Malan were less enthralled:

Your method of reproducing rock engravings in linocut is interesting and artistic, but I am afraid the technique in which the originals were produced is lost. Various styles and techniques were used, e.g. we have lines or true engravings, peckings, silhouettes in either method, the interiors rubbed, etc. and these differences, which are scientifically important, are lost in the linocut (Malan 1937 in Schoonraad 1985, 43).

In his translation of the images from immovable surface to a portable cellophane or paper format, there can be little doubt that Battiss sacrificed some finer detail and other aspects of the appearance of the original. However, in my view, it is important to remember when examining Battiss's work that he was not only concerned to mimic the original paintings visually but also to capture something of their essence, style, and production. In other words, Battiss's immersion in the art was multifaceted; he enjoyed re-enacting and embodying the process that he imagined the original artists had employed in the creation of their images. His commitment to this aspect can be inferred from an incident that occurred a decade later, in 1947, at a farm near Gladstone's Nose in the uKhahlamba-Drakensberg, today part of the Maloti-Drakensberg World Heritage Site. According

to Schoonraad (1985, 43–46), Battiss retrieved a rock from the garden of his guest house accommodation and composed a painting on it inspired by the rock paintings he had been studying. Ironically, in this case the style and patina of the work was convincing enough to trick the French prehistorian, the Abbé Breuil (b. 1877 – d. 1961), who visited the farm later that year and pronounced it an original “bushman” painting (Schoonraad 1985, 43–46).

By comparison, Goodall’s “creative explorations” (Skotnes 1994, 319) did not encompass the range or extent of mixed media experimentation nor the use of an unconventional canvas. Unlike Battiss, Goodall remained, throughout her career, committed to refining her copying practice (Fig. 8 – Fig. 10). Furthermore, while Battiss wrote extensively about rock art and the theories that underpinned his investigations, Goodall seldom articulated the motivations behind her commitment to her scholarship. However, there are some documents that provide glimpses into the thoughts of this private person. For example, Goodall believed the copies to be a “necessity for the museum” (excerpt from “General Aspects of rock-paintings”, n.d.⁴). She explained that reproductions were necessary “in order to get the whole picture gradually more complete”, as well as to “enable those who cannot themselves make journeys and climb around the rocks, to see and study the reproductions of important paintings” (excerpt from “General Aspects of rock-paintings”, n.d.). Here, she demonstrates two concerns: first, the aim of making a comprehensive archive, and second, the idea of making rock art accessible through copies. These concerns are consistent with Frobenius’s motivation for his ninth expedition. It is therefore likely that Goodall perpetuated what she had learned on the expedition and dedicated her career to refining her practice in pursuit of these objectives. Goodall diverged from Frobenius in important ways, for example she dismissed the general survey approach in favour of a close reading of the paintings in Rhodesia, an area accessible to her from where she lived and worked in Salisbury (now Harare, Zimbabwe). Her proximity to the paintings meant that she could revisit the sites⁵ with a view to achieving what I argue is “an unattainable accuracy” (De Harde 2019, 41). Her systematic and close reading of the images she studied has meant that her recordings can easily be connected to their site of origin, whereas in spite of Battiss’s technical prowess as an artist and draftsman, researchers (such as

⁴ Archival document found in a box-file in one of the storerooms in the ZMHS. The contents of the box-file inspired me to create a digital archive that I relied on for my doctoral research.

⁵ One example is the many iterations she produced of the “Makumbe Cave” as I discuss in the fourth chapter of my doctoral thesis (De Harde 2019, 133 – 171).

Marias 2015; De Harde 2019) have found it challenging and sometimes impossible to connect the copy with the original.



Fig. 8: Elizabeth Goodall's watercolour from a site recorded as "Macheke". The copy is titled *Group of irregular forms and small, ghost-like creatures emerging from clefts in the rocks* (1959: Plate 32). Justine Wintjes and two students at the ZMHS hold the rolled-up copy open. Photograph: L. de Harde, 2016.



Fig. 9: Elizabeth Goodall's copy featured on the ZimFieldGuide.com website (ZimFieldGuide.com 2019).



Fig. 10: A photograph taken by one of the contributors to ZimFieldGuide.com, who was able to match the original painting with Goodall's copy of the site (ZimFieldGuide.com 2019).

In her project *'What they have so freely given I take': A study on the relationship between Walter Battiss and San rock art* (2015), Ivonne Marais tried to find a clear causal sequence between Battiss's rock painting-tracing/redrawing/freehand drawing/creative work but was largely unable to do so for reasons cited previously. This difficulty in matching original with copy reinforces my contention that Battiss deviated deliberately from the original rock art, even though his process involved elements of close observation and accurate copying. I managed to find one incidence where I was able to connect one of Battiss's early works, a cluster of three antelopes with partial human figures, illustrated in *The Amazing Bushman* (1939), with a photograph taken of a single antelope motif that I found on the South African Digital Archive (SARADA) website under the 'site ID' RSA LEL2 for Aliwal North (SARADA 2019). Battiss recorded the site where he found the original paintings as The Valley of the Art, Jamestown, in the then Cape Province.

I matched the painted copy with one of Battiss's tracings on transparent cellophane in the collection at RARI. By comparing the three iterations, tracing (Fig. 11) – copy (Fig. 12) - photograph (Fig. 13), I noticed that Battiss traced (Fig. 11) with more sensitivity and accuracy in relation to the original rock painting (Fig. 13), than the subsequent copies show (Fig. 12). For example, the antelope at the top of the grouping in Battiss's copy of the painting is painted using

a thick stark white paint (Fig. 12). Yet the cellophane tracing (Fig. 11) provides a nuanced appreciation of the ways in which the colours blend into one another, shading the form and giving the antelope the appearance of being three dimensional, capturing the effects of shadow and pigment variation in the motif as it appears on the sandstone (Fig. 13).



Fig. 11: Preparatory tracing painted on cellophane. Photographer: E. Wettengel. Walter Battiss Archive © Rock Art Research Institute, Johannesburg.

In his copy (Fig. 12), Battiss appears to have filled in and completed the antelope at the top of the grouping whereas, in the original painting (Fig. 13), this figure seems to be somewhat distorted because it is painted on an uneven surface. There seems to be a crack in the sandstone but because Battiss did not typically represent the cracks and textures of the rock it is difficult to say with any certainty when the crack happened, before or after Battiss made his copy or even perhaps as a result of his copying technique.

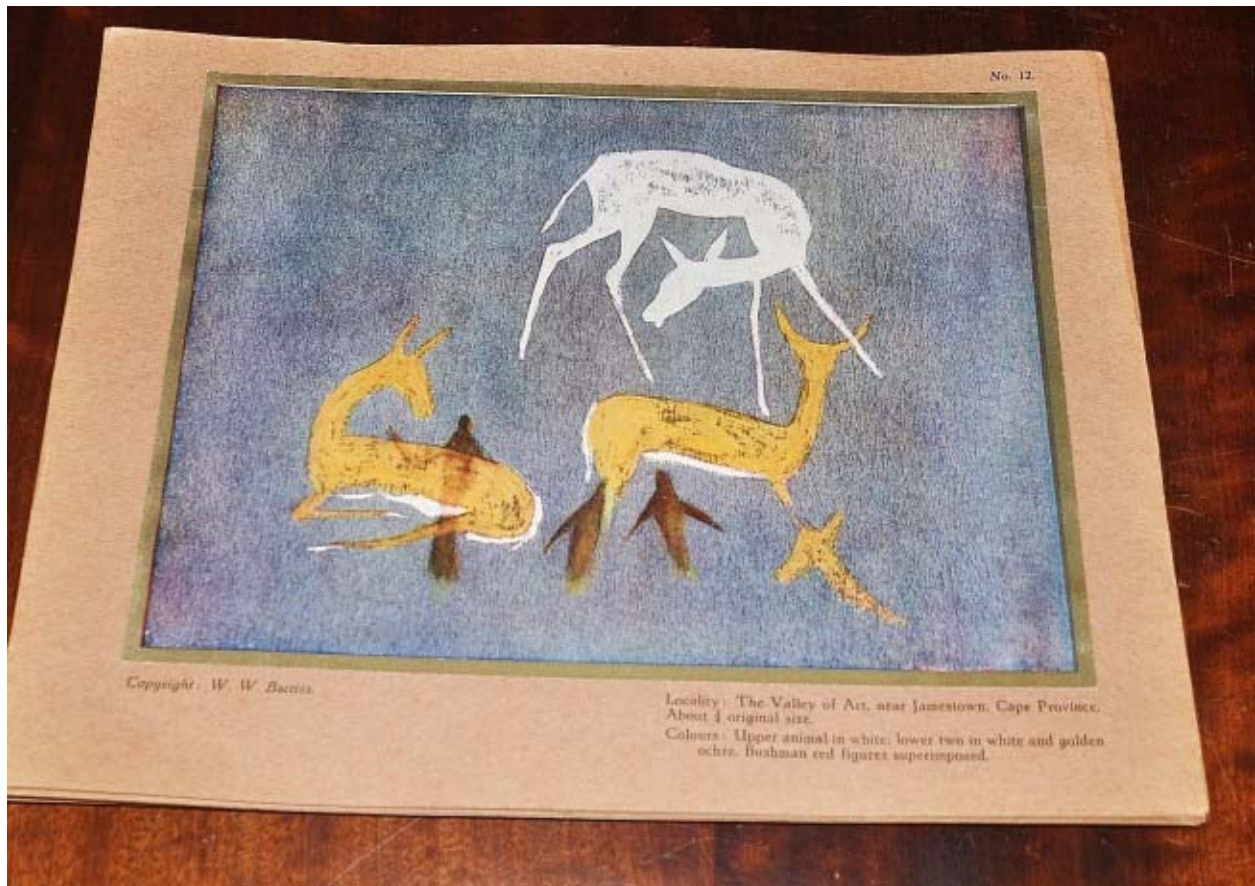


Fig. 12: Watercolour copy by Battiss of a site recorded as The Valley of the Art, Jamestown, in the Cape Province. Battiss recorded the colours for the 'upper animal' as white and the lower two as white and golden, with 'Bushman red figures superimposed' (1939: No 12).



Fig. 13: Photograph taken of the original painting showing a close-up of the antelope at the top of the grouping (date unrecorded, photographer unrecorded). RARI RSA LEL2 19 © The African Rock Art Digital Archive.

Over the years, Battiss experimented with a range of creative approaches in his engagement with the paintings. Some aspects of his copies capture visual information about the originals with accuracy while others depart from this into creative extensions; the distinction between these varying modes of practice/making is not always clear, especially if the original rock painting is not available for comparison. Yet Battiss developed innovative fieldwork methods in his placement, for example, of transparent sheets of cellophane over the paintings onto which he would transfer the traced images below using watercolours (Leibhammer 2009, 49 - 58). As the series of iterations discussed above demonstrates, he treated his cellophane tracings sensitively, mixing the colours with great care to mimic the originals both in the texture of the paint and the shading of the colours.

Battiss's final copies evolved and sometimes strayed some distance from these tentative and careful engagements with the original art. However, in some instances, his redrawings from those

initial tracings begin to deviate from the concern for close observation and accuracy, the lines encapsulating the forms becoming smoother and more polished, the colours often losing their painterly modulation and flattening out into blocks of a single colour. In general, it seems as though the tracings do often capture what appear to be aspects of the fragmentedness of the originals, and it is mostly in the redrawings that Battiss begins to fill in, extend and elaborate his own ideas.

Schoonraad believed that “[a]rtistically speaking, [Battiss’s] copies are the best ever made in South Africa” (1985, 43). He went on to explain that he would marvel

at the uncanny manner in which [Battiss] intuited the way the primitive artist⁶ had worked. Often, part of the painting or petroglyph had deteriorated or was partially obliterated, or invisible at first glance, because of a dark shadow. Yet Battiss would say what the painting or engraving originally looked like, and it would later be possible, after studying the work through a magnifying glass, or waiting for the sun to change its position, to fill in the missing parts (1985, 43).

Schoonraad’s statement is ambiguous. He may be saying that Battiss imaginatively filled in parts of the paintings that were actually missing in the original. However, Schoonraad could also have meant that those parts that were “missing” were simply not immediately apparent and could become visible when the light changed, or the viewer shifted their perspective. In my experience, the paintings can be visually unstable, particularly the faded or incomplete ones, changing throughout the day and also depending on the weather conditions.

Unlike Battiss, Goodall paid careful attention to the original rock surface, taking great care to copy the paintings as she saw them, recording cracks and exfoliation, and including as much of the original detail as possible in her compositions. There is evidence of this sensitivity in her early work for the Frobenius expedition. Battiss, on the other hand, was selective about the paintings he chose to copy. I found one example, published in *The Artists of the Rocks* (1948) and again in

⁶ While Schoonraad ascribes the title of ‘primitive artist’ to the rock art painters, Battiss’s use of this terminology is more complicated, as Anitra Nettleton explains in ‘Primitivism in South African Art’ (2011).

Bushman Art (1950), where Battiss admits to being selective in his copies of the original paintings, based on his aesthetic preferences, and his understanding of the paintings as layered over time:

The artist has miraculously combined a lively gift of colour with an imaginative conception of animals in perspective, so that we are here looking at one of the few perfect paintings in the world of art.

A Bushman artist of the Last Period painted over part of these animals with his own paintings of eland in flat yellow, ochre and white. These are omitted in this reproduction so that the full beauty of the earlier eland is not marred by the palimpsest (Battiss 1948, [no page number] Plate No. ix).

Battiss studied the palimpsest of the paintings seeing in the layering of images three distinct styles which he attributed to three periods; “The Early Period” (Battiss 1948, 68 – 74) which Battiss credited to prehistoric painters, “The Middle Period” (Battiss 1948, 74 – 81) characterised by the artists’ skilful foreshortening of their animal subjects and the most recent layer of paintings; “The Genuine Bushman Paintings of the Last Period” (Battiss 1948, 81 – 98). Battiss explained:

It is not unlike a piece of weaving composed of ancient warp into which a Bushman weft has been woven. The warp acts as an underlying control but the Bushman weft makes a visible pattern. Where the weft is loosely woven the ancient warp can be spied and its texture and pattern examined

It is interesting to note the difference in approach between Battiss and Goodall here as well. In his translations from the original, Battiss was selective in his copying choosing at times to exclude aspects of the original panel in his reproductions, to copy in some instances only certain layers. In some examples he effectively erased (through omission) the uppermost layers of the palimpsest to reveal what he believed he could see hidden below. Goodall, on the other hand, closely scrutinised, and accurately copied, each of the various layers she observed, depicting their entanglements and taking care to show the stratigraphy of paint built up over time.

Goodall and Battiss shared the view that some of the paintings dated back thousands of years a view that was contested at the time by researchers, among them Dorothea Bleek, who believed the paintings were more recent (Weintroub 2015, 109). They were also both tentative in their attribution of authorship arguing that not all paintings were necessarily rendered by the same people commonly referred to at the time as the “Bushmen”⁷. Their reluctance in this regard has inspired critiques that Goodall and Battiss were among the researchers who believed that the paintings were made by Europeans or Phoenicians (Garlake 1993, 17). Art historian Anitra Nettleton (2011, 145) recognised that “unlike many other authors and copiers, [Battiss] did not suggest that they were made by anyone other than the San”. From my engagement with Goodall’s research while she may have referenced “an extraordinary eclectic range o[f] analogies” as Garlake (1993, 17) suggested, she, like Battiss, saw the artists as indigenous to Africa.

Dichotomy of identity

For many archaeologists, Battiss’s research endeavours remain confined under the label “rock art enthusiasts” (Henry 2007, 46), he nevertheless became one of South Africa’s most well-known and celebrated artists of the 20th century. Nettleton recognised him as the “first South African artist to similarly engage with European formal primitivism while searching for an African stylistic identity”, breaking away from “the primitivist tendencies in South African art in the period between 1945 and 1976 ... complicated by the racial segregation of apartheid” (Nettleton 2011, 145). Skotnes described Battiss as “the most important of South African artists to mediate and interpret the images of the San through creative exploration” (Skotnes 1994, 319).

In the early part of his career Battiss struggled with a “dichotomy of identity” (Schoonraad 1985, 46) plagued by the question “[w]as he Battiss, the student of prehistoric art, or was he Battiss, the artist?” (Schoonraad 1985, 46). In 1985 Murray Schoonraad explained that “Battiss, the creative artist was often overshadowed by the expounder of prehistoric [r]ock art” (Schoonraad 1985, 40) while by contrast, as Schoonraad went on to point out, his international persona “owe[d] his fame less to his studies of prehistoric art than to his creative work” (Schoonraad 1985, 40). Battiss’s

⁷ Goodall shared Battiss’s reluctance to ascribe authorship of the paintings to the “Bushmen” citing that insufficient evidence (one example skeletal remains) had been discovered to link the authorship of the paintings to the “Bushmen” (“General Aspects of rock-paintings” n.d.)

“ideas on interpretation and chronology have been largely overtaken by new research” (Wintjes 2012, 124), this notwithstanding in 2016, RARI went to great lengths to restore Battiss’s rock art archive and produced an exhibition of the materials in the collection. In the same year collector and philanthropist Jack Ginsberg, with curator Warren Siebrits, produced an exhibition at the Wits Art Museum (WAM) consisting of more than 700 of Battiss’s artworks from Ginsberg’s private collection (Siebrits et al, 2016).

In Zimbabwe, Goodall worked meticulously and systematically on organising her substantial collection of index cards and rock art copies as part of her work at the museum and her broader commitment to advancing knowledge (albeit in a colonial context). I have seen that in the decades since her death some of her rock art copies remain part of displays in the ZMHS, and the documentary legacy she left to the museum survives scattered across storage boxes and steel cabinets. Goodall has on balance “earned little recognition as a rock art researcher, and even less as an artist in her own right”⁸ (Wintjes and De Harde 2020, 67). Yet Goodall and Battiss each employed their artistic training to enabled them to make rich and unique contributions to rock art scholarship, different to the contributions made by science where the emphasis is placed on accuracy and objectivity. The scientists with whom Goodall and Battiss collaborated recognised and attempted to articulate the insights visually trained researcher could offer to the study of rock paintings. Frobenius and Van Riet Lowe saw the artist as able to add an affective or emotional layer of understanding to round out the scientific rigour that is emphasised by the many voices in the formal space of the discipline. Battiss’s achievements in this arena are perhaps more visible and easily recognisable because of the slippage throughout his career between the two disciplines (Rock Art Research [Archaeology] and Fine Art). On the other hand, Goodall’s contribution is subsumed within the broader work of the Frobenius Institute, therefore forming part of ethnographic studies and German anthropology. It is only lately that her work is moving across into the realm of Art and Art History.

⁸ In Europe, the copies Goodall made during the Frobenius expedition are regularly exhibited by the Frobenius Institute at museums including the Martin-Gropius-Bau in Berlin, Germany (2016), and at the Museum Rietberg in Zurich, Switzerland (2021).

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