

Practicing Peace: Towards a Radical Response to Racism Education

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Abstract

Racism education for university students and staff is usually left to the ‘cultural awareness’ activities run by Equity & Diversity Offices, Student Services, Faculty or Indigenous Centres. Their persistence and ‘hit and miss’ success rate would suggest the need for a re-think if only because they embed the problem with the potential ‘victims’ to convince the potential ‘perpetrators’ what they should or should not be doing. Racism education needs a more subtle approach, almost a mongrel cunning to move people into different ways of being in the world. The creation of a learning community which fosters an understanding and embracing of justice and peace is a whole of program approach. Beliefs and habits need to die the death of a thousand strokes rather than one crushing blow.

There is always a danger of over intellectualising ‘racism education’. The language, the grand theories, the plethora of books and articles all give a certain distasteful perspective of ‘racism’. The educational responses from such discourses provide a formalised dance of naïve thought and theoretical thought that dulls the participants into a comfortable and comforting context of academic rigour with which even a racist would be happy to engage. The educational responses at best address ‘racism’ and not the ‘racist’.

What is generally understood as racism is taught in a complex societal dynamic, sometimes intentionally, sometimes unintentionally, and usually by well meaning ‘educators’ including family, friends, school, media, clubs, and pubs and by unpleasant experiences of people considered ‘different’ enough to form prejudices. There is a view that a person becomes a racist through a downward decline starting from the creation of derogatory stereotypes, which form prejudices, which in turn promotes ethnocentrism and feeds racist beliefs (Pattel-Gray 1998). I consider it more a dynamic interaction (Oates, 2005) where the racist can be fed, supported and shaped by any of the four conceptual frameworks depending on the context of engagement.

In higher education it is not uncommon for Aboriginal staff and students to be sensitive to issues of ‘race’ and ‘racism’. We have no hesitation to draw the ‘racism’ card at the slightest provocation; but is it always racism and is the perpetrator a ‘racist’?

A topic of discussion around the staff room at our Centre was the brouhaha surrounding a racial ‘slur’ made by a ‘white’ Rugby League player against an Aboriginal opponent; “get off me you black c...” he was allegedly heard to say in the rough and tumble of a tackle. The

incident made headlines nationally; racism in sport always sells papers. But was it 'racist'? When did being called 'black' become offensive? Most Aboriginal people are proud to be called 'black' but obviously not by non-Aboriginal people. Why is it more offensive than being called a "c..."? The perpetrator was trialled by the media, admonished by the League, apologised, fined and given 'cultural awareness' training concurrently with community service.

It would be a foolish person to utter the 'colour-word', offensively or inoffensively, in a university. The occurrence of racism in our university is more subtle than the emotionally driven responses often found on a football field.

Universities have clear policies to deter racism; government legislation also acts as an effective deterrent, but are these enough? Top down approaches create a false sense of existence, a veneer of uniformity and conformity. The policies actually suppress any discussion around the issues of 'racism' so much so that in a lecture or tutorial a student who raises such issues can be quickly squashed, reminded that the university has clear policies and if they are not careful the equity office will be notified; gasp, shock, horror! The unintended outcome of the 'clear policies' is racism by stealth and the only place 'racism' is discussed is in the few discrete courses offered during the year, all of which are electives and chosen by the already converted. Whether by stealth or over actions racism is a form of violence. The hurt and the pain entrap the victim and perpetrator in a cycle of violence and revenge.

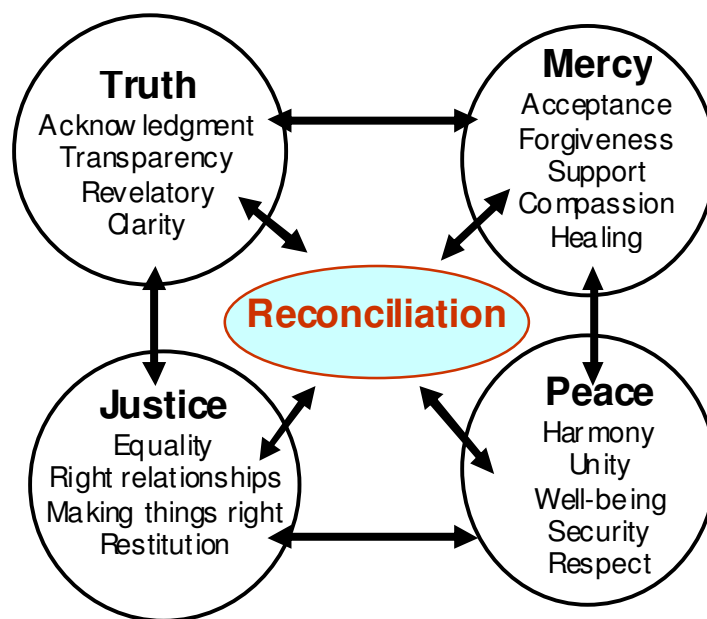
Racism education wears the 'cultural awareness' mask and unfortunately such activities fail to adequately address racism let alone the racist. At best it is an exercise in addressing ethnocentrism and as most professional development activities are voluntary those who need it rarely attend. The activities are not usually an integral yearly event in the professional development or staff induction calendar.

Most Professional Development activities become part of the program as an organisational response to a perceived problem, need or risk management exercise. Staff may injure themselves so we need to run an ergonomic training day; harassment is an issue then make sure everyone knows the university code of conduct policy; there is a perceived problem with many international students in the organisation then a workshop on respecting diversity is the go.... even better let the 'internationals' run it. Adhoc, incidental, add-on training programs run by Equity & Diversity Offices, Student Services or Indigenous Centres of universities further embed the problem with the potential 'victims' to convince the potential 'perpetrators' what they should or should not be doing. These artificial insemination approaches to professional development in the hope that such injections will increase fecundity seem too haphazard and more wishful thinking than anything else. Certainly not as much fun as the 'real thing' but it is a safe, comfortable and less messy approach.

The persistence of cultural awareness programs and their abject failure would suggest a re-think. Ethnocentrism is certainly addressed but does it address racism? Racism education needs to show a rat cunning approach to changing not only the approaches to professional development but also views of the university curriculum.

How should a university address the issue of racism education? Some Australian universities have developed Reconciliation Statements and policies and procedures to help promote the process of reconciliation. Such statements provide signposts for negotiating journeys with like minded colleagues in developing new programs, courses/subjects, focussed student journeys, employment opportunities and community engagement around reconciliation.

Reconciliation is not a destination; it is a journey, a process, a way of being in the world, a way of relating to other creatures sharing spaces and places. There are four indicators of the process occurring and achieving a semblance of right relations; when mercy, truth, justice and peace are embracing one another. There is movement towards reconciliation with others, whether a person, group or country, when there is a dynamic interaction between the four aspects of the reconciliation process. Practising peace is an integral part of the reconciliation process and in a university context provides an opening for engaging others in formal and informal learning contexts. Reconciliation as a university wide policy provides a pathway for radical responses to the social life of the workplace and educational context. In our university the practice of peace is in the dynamics of reconciliation.



(based on Lederach, 1997 p 30)

Racism can be addressed through the practising of peace. A problem with a market/industry driven curriculum is that 'pieces' do not necessarily make 'peace'. The odd discrete course/subject on racism may not create better people, more thoughtful and caring relationships, a more ethical and just learning community. Universities and the workplace mirror one another where anti-racism and anti-discrimination policies and procedures exist creating in both organisational cultures a veneer of conformity to externally imposed rules which hold in check the overt racist. While the policies are intended to protect the vulnerable

it does make it harder for racism to be addressed. Where will racism be discussed and addressed in a thoughtful engaging manner if not in a university?

If racism is a part of social life as everyday lived experience, maybe racism education needs to be addressed in the everyday lived experience of the university or organisation. Creating social life whether at work or in the home is something we do every day. Creating social life could be a whole of faculty/division issue and in that case should be a whole of faculty/division responsibility where the beliefs and habits that administration staff, lecturers and students bring into the university need to be interrupted; insightful interjection needs to occur.

How? Possibly a conscious attempt to create social life through considered action is required (Kemmis et al., 1983); it could be as simple as making engagements of tough issues the stuff of professional conversations in the corridors. The ordinariness of life needs to be extraordinarily experienced (Shor 1980); this is the art of teaching and teaching need not be in a classroom/lecture context. It may require embedding racist and anti-racist views and people in the curriculum. Where are the academic anarchists when you need them?

If we keep suppressing dialogue in the academy where will we be able to talk to a racist in a learning context? Do we need a racist in residence in the academy? Maybe an Aboriginal Centre needs to take the lead and invite a well known racist to be its 'racist in residence'.

It is no longer appropriate to take a 'stand' against racism; we have done that and are hamstrung by the very policies and procedures to progress the cause. A 'stand' gives the impression of being too fixed in one's position or responses; we need to develop a 'custodian stance' (Oates 2003). A 'stance' implies a readiness to respond in an appropriate manner depending on need, position or action. It allows for the emergent in caretaking creaturely existence (Oates 2002).

Addressing racism through a whole of faculty/division approach through creating social life through considered action implies doing it inside and outside the lecture theatre and tutorials. Peacemaking is an approach to subverting racism and reflects a custodian stance.

Peacemaking is a non-violent response to violence, our particular focus is racial violence. It is not just the threat of physical violence nor overt verbal abuse, it also includes indifference and exclusionary practices that inflict pain and hurt, even the denial of a person's identity. As Martin Luther King Jr. (cited by Hurst & Hurst 2005) reminds us:

The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it. You may murder the liar, but you cannot murder the lie, nor establish the truth. You may murder the hater, but you do not murder hate, nor establish love.

Responding in kind only maintains the level of fractured relations at best and at worst threatens to escalate into physical engagement. This cycle needs to be interrupted; racism needs to be subverted by a peacemaker:

Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. (Martin Luther King cited by Hurst & Hurst 2005)

There are many damaged people in universities, people who have been hurt by others, who carry that hurt with them, sometimes as suppressed anger and regret about what was done to them many 'yesterdays' pass. Peace is closely related to forgiveness and forgiveness is important in subverting racism; it is an important human response that aids well-being by disentangling the victim from the perpetrator. The path of peacemaking is being prepared to let go of the past; Kenneth David Kaunda of Zambia (cited by Dr. Chaiwat Satha-Anand in Herr & Herr 1998) suggests the peacemaker needs "a constant willingness to live a new day without looking back and ransacking the memory for occasions of bitterness and resentment".

Forgiveness is not a substitute for justice, the demands of justice need to be met, peace and justice need to embrace (Wolterstorff 1983) if there is to be a shalom: "To claim forgiveness whilst perpetuating injustice is to live a fiction; to fight for justice without also being prepared to offer forgiveness is to render your struggle null and void" (Kenneth David Kaunda cited by Dr. Chaiwat Satha-Anand in Herr & Herr 1998). The offender and the offended, the perpetrator and the victim are chained together by hate and revenge until one or both are prepared to forgive and find a new way to live:

Through the power of forgiveness people are freed from the burden of past guilt so that they can act boldly in the present. To forgive one's enemies is not only a moral or religious matter but necessary for one's own sanity. Finding a new way to live without being bound to your offender and all the pain, anger, guilt, and other junk that goes with being a victim. It is learning to leave all the junk behind and growing again as God intended. (Kenneth David Kaunda cited by Dr. Chaiwat Satha-Anand in Herr & Herr 1998)

The over intellectualisation of racism education eviscerates the possibility of moving forward. To help people in every day lived experiences to be peacemakers it helps if we are at peace in ourselves and that could mean giving up all hope of a better past:

Forgiveness is not absolution. It is not an act that frees people from the consequences of their action. Forgiveness is not done for the sake of the other person, the victimizer. Instead, it is a process by which the victim endeavours to free himself from the bondage of revenge. Forgiveness can be defined as giving up all hope of a better past. It is an act by which the victim moves out of the grip of the past and into an open and promising future. (Smoch 2002 p 82)

Forgiveness is not a one off event, it may take years to fully move out of the grip of the past and move on; it involves a present continuous act of forgiving so much so that at best we can say 'on most days' I forgive him/her/them. Forgiveness involves three stages (Hurst & Hurst 2005):

1. We rediscover the shared humanity of the person who wronged us,

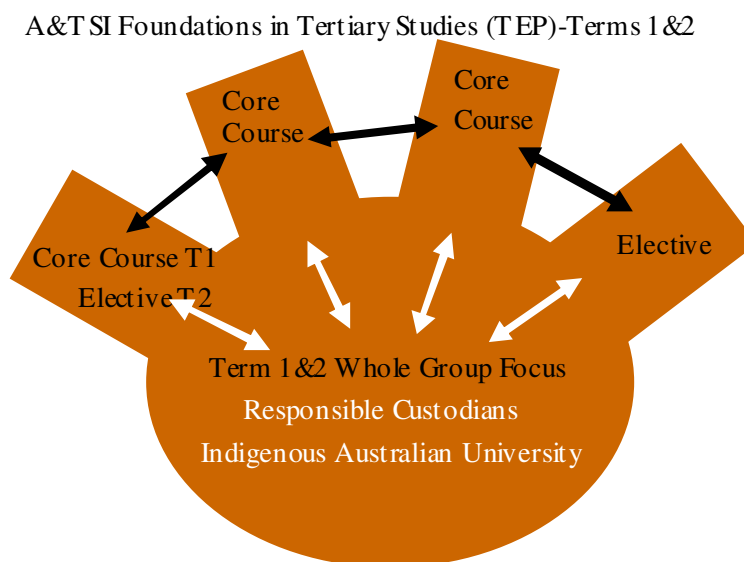
2. we surrender our right to get even, and
3. we wish that person well.

To be at peace and to move forward as a peacemaker involves restoring the dignity of the person who wronged us, recognising our shared humanity, stop nurturing our hurt (Hunt 2005 personal communication). We will find it easier to let our vengeance rest (Manx, 2002) and give up our right to get even once we recognise the humanness of the offender. One of the hardest things to do is wish some bastard who done you in 'well' and truly mean it!

Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. (Martin Luther King cited by Hurst & Hurst 2005)

Peacemaking and the creating of social life is about real people dealing with the joy, happiness and sense of connectedness together with the hurt and pain and dislocation of self from place. Practising Peace has an earthiness about it; restoring right relationships (reconciliation) between people and between people and other creatures sharing spaces and places; the things, plants and animals.

An approach to subverting racism at Central Queensland University is the practise of peace in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Foundations in Tertiary Studies –Tertiary entry Program (TEP) which is an attempt to educate people for responsible custodianship. The program is an 'integrated-whole' that equips students for engagement with university, work and the community through the practice of peace.



A student needs to successfully complete eight academic board approved courses (6 credit point each). A student could be enrolled full time for two terms, part time, all either internal or by flexible delivery. The program is offered in correctional centres and is currently being delivered in two states. The courses are discrete yet inter-related through their assessment tasks and the term's focus group activities. Students in each course while having a lecture/tutorial format also come together with students from the other courses in a whole

group focus on the term's themes. The 'integrated-whole' (integral) approach to our curriculum enables a whole of program approach to issues relating to the creation of a social life and building a learning community respecting creaturely existence, to practising peace. To develop a custodian stance and an understanding of university culture takes time and time needs to be allocated in the focussed-structured learning experiences allowing for playfulness in exploring the issues. Our rat cunning approach is to ground people in their strengths and the earthiness of being human; the fun and joy of learning by looking at things from a pythonesque angle. Humour has a healing effect.

The program is a process of developing a relationship between staff and students, a learning community in actuality and when there is a sense of trust and friendliness we are more willingly share our experiences and at times, and as appropriate, the hurt and damage we are burdened with. Racism education is a whole of program approach that aims to enable the development of a custodian stance where peace is practiced, where forgiveness and reconciliation is encouraged and where the integrity of creaturely existence is respected, regardless of the colour of the skin and the cultural beliefs and practices.

Racism in a university is formally raised in the focussed group sessions as well as the discrete courses where relevant. We confront our own racist beliefs and actions. The racist in residence could be one of our own.

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Racist Discourses and Their Impact on Indigenous Australian Students in Higher Education: When and How should Academics Respond?

Vicki Pasco

Abstract

Higher education institutions in Australia would immediately condemn any racist discourse on campus. In practice however what do institutions do to address racism in the classroom? Do academics possess sufficient knowledge and skill to refute racist statements? Racist classroom discourses can be ignored or hidden within the higher education context under the guise of freedom of expression. Universities would also argue however that every student has the right to learn in a non-threatening setting.

Many Indigenous Australian students experience racist discourses at university. Do academics challenge students' responsibility for their statements or do they engage in a discourse of denial?

Introduction

This paper begins with reflection upon the very human side of racism. Various theoretical constructs can be advanced in an attempt to unmask and explore racism. Of course this can be extremely useful as we try to understand and deal with such a powerful and debilitating force. The sheer impact however on the individual or group on the receiving end must not get lost somewhere in theoretical deliberations. The horrible lived reality of racism often has its ugly beginning in the experiences of our children.

I will never forget the day a colleague of mine told me about the suicide of her friend's son. The boy had an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander father and a white mother. He had been experiencing racism at school and felt that he did not 'belong' anywhere. His suicide note proclaimed that it was: "a shitty world". He was 11 years old. Many children from diverse backgrounds encounter racism in Australian schools. I will never forget reading the comments of an Australian school girl (with Vietnamese ancestry), also 11 years old. She was glad they had been taught about racism because she had always thought it was just her they did not like (Board of Studies NSW, 1997). Our children are suffering yet over the years I have had university students, some of whom were studying an education degree, inform me that there is no racism in Australia. I guess we have to expect this kind of naïve ignorance when even the nation's Prime Minister in response to the recent violence at Cronulla announced: "I do not accept that there is underlying racism in this country"

(Howard, 2005). In the country the rest of us live in, racism survives and thrives. Our children should not have to endure the demoralising effects of racism. I believe that education is the best weapon to combat this insidious enemy and that our universities constitute

good potential settings for anti-racism education. Although we also need to educate our children, it is adults who influence children and who initiate social change.

The state of affairs

While there is an urgent necessity for us to discuss and explore racisms in the new world order, the focus of this paper is on 'old' racisms, the racisms which this country is still to fully acknowledge and address and in particular, the ones experienced by Australian Indigenous students in higher education settings. As far back as 1988 the Aboriginal Education Policy Task Force outlined the educational position of Australia's Indigenous people as follows:

...Aboriginal students frequently face discrimination and alienation within schools and other educational institutions... Racism is a key factor in the alienation of Aboriginal people experienced within the various education institutions. Because of these and other adverse circumstances, the outcomes for Aboriginal people are substantially lower than for other Australian students (*Aboriginal Education Policy Task Force 1988, p.1*).

Many Indigenous people of all ages have experienced racism directly or indirectly in formal education settings. The incidents have ranged from subtle covert expressions, perhaps made in a whisper or read in body language, to overt full scale verbal attacks. These attacks often made wild accusations and seemed to transfer all things about Indigenous people which annoyed the perpetrators to the Indigenous students in the classroom. The most common slur attacks were connected to the idea that initiatives directed towards Indigenous people constituted a waste of time and government money. The students subjected to this racism tended to feel either totally powerless, wishing that they were invisible or became tired of having to justify and argue all the time. Unfortunately some students found the hostile environment so intimidating or overwhelming that they withdrew from their studies altogether.

One of the dreadful repercussions here is that students can internalise racisms and as a result, the racisms can become self-fulfilling. Huggins (2003, p.2) in her discussion on the practical and symbolic sides of reconciliation asserts:

...If you believe you're an outsider, you are an outsider. If you believe you're beaten, then you're beaten. If you believe that the rest of Australia has no respect for you or your culture, then for all intents and purposes it doesn't...

In her conference paper, Indigenous university student Tanyah Hosch (1998, p.147) shared an aspect of her education experience:

...How do you think you might feel when you go into a tutorial or lecture and face ignorance about your life, your identity and who you are and what you deserve is discussed as though you don't exist?...

Hosch (1998) expected lecturers to address racist statements but challenged how this would be done if, as in her experience, academic staff were not confident to deal with, or totally ignored these issues. In addition, she also asked how and when the university would educate students to understand what constitutes discriminatory behaviour?

Academics often find identifying and addressing racism in the classroom difficult. Thibodeaux (1997, p.37) acknowledged that: "Racisms are tricky little buggers to pin down." Similarly, Malin (1997) experienced student resistance to the racism component of a university unit and found that dealing with student comments: "... was a wobbly tight rope between avoiding legitimising prejudice and allowing student autonomy" (Malin 1997, p.56). In addition, something considered racist by one academic may not be considered racist by another. Moreover, just to complicate things, there is still the fundamental problem of how what constitutes the racism is itself the product of complex and situated negotiations between people in a particular social setting (McKenzie, 2003). Perhaps it is far easier for some academics to enter into the denial discourse.

Roles and Responsibilities

What then is the role and responsibility of the institution and the academic in dealing with racisms? Universities have policies in place which stipulate that racism will not be tolerated. For example Central Queensland University's Racial Issues Policy Statement (1996) maintains:

...Racism and its manifestations including racial prejudice and racial discrimination, constitute unacceptable behaviour... examples may include:

Ridicule (e.g. name calling, use of derogatory slang, racist jokes).

Physical and emotional intimidation (e.g. physical threats or abuse, display of threatening or offensive slogans or graffiti).

Verbal racist comments made in the course of lecture or class meetings or interviews.

The above seems to cover what the institution considers unacceptable but how does the average academic apply policy to a classroom racist? We need anti-racism education in our educational institutions and we need to equip educators to teach and model anti-racism. Pattel-Gray (1998, p.97) argues:

As educators teach about racist role models, they become racist role models themselves...Others take the easy way out and avoid "the issue", developing an attitude and practice of total carelessness about

our People and our culture. Both approaches propagate all kinds of warped versions of reality, not the least of which is what teachers themselves represent. If educators do not care about teaching truth (or as close to complete truth as is possible), why should students be worried about learning it?

Towards Anti-Racism Education

I agree with Baez (2000) that academics must see themselves as deeply involved in the struggle with racism and view the classroom as a local site for that struggle (even if many would see the struggle as having nothing to do with their professional area). Thibodeaux (1997) argues that racisms within educational institutions cannot survive in a vacuum. Rather, the institutional environment either works to help construct or deconstruct racial discourses. Universities therefore must actively work towards and model anti-racism or, they are condoning racism and operating in contradiction of their own policy, and in the case of most universities in terms of Indigenous students, in contradiction of their reconciliation statement. The ultimate desired achievement is the construction of an anti-racist environment. The development of anti-racism education seems an obvious vehicle to this end, but it is not without complexities and problems. For example, Santas (2000) warns that anti-racism education as taught by many white educators often fails due to the paternalistic tendencies in teachers, anti-racists and ultimately in white teachers of anti-racism. These people can perceive those who experience racism as needing the protection afforded to children. Successful anti-racism education then must have strategies for overcoming what Santas (2000, p.350) calls the: 'paternalistic impulse'.

Santas (2000) (an American educator) took Dewey's *Democracy and Education* (1944) and Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972), and applied them to the task of turning classrooms into models of anti-racist communities. This model provides a useful guide in an Australian context.

Developing an Anti-Racism Education Model

Where do we begin? We begin with the development of a compulsory course. Who should access this education? All university staff and students complete the course. I would argue that if universities desire to seriously and genuinely prioritise an attack on racism and make an active contribution to practical reconciliation in this country via anti-racism education, it needs to be done with a whole of institution commitment.

The first essential element in an anti-racism education model is to confront and address the ignorance in our shared history (Santas, 2000; Harris, 1997). Anti-racism is embedded in respect for the voice of Indigenous people within all contexts and identities. One would hope that this would lead to the acceptance of alternative voices as legitimate. The second essential element is the teaching of the history of racism itself which would allow 'race' to be understood as a social construct, one which has been constructed in stages over time. As Santas (2000, p.354) argues:

Once we see that since it was **done**, that it can be **undone**, we can begin to consider how we can undertake the task of undoing racism. And once we understand this history, we will be able to see how we continue to live it out in our lives...

Once shared history and the history of racism is taught, the next phase seeks to ensure students engage with each other, hold each other accountable and accept personal responsibility, particularly in terms of how their work and speech may impact on their peers. The next three essential components in teaching anti-racism according to Santas (2000) are:

De-centring dialogue: The traditional classroom has the teacher as centre. Control and power rests with the teacher. To teach anti-racism we need to change the rules and de-centre or democratise the dialogue away from the teacher or centre. This is constructed by discussions of content in small groups, followed by larger group discussions and then whole group discussions. Santas (2000, p.358) explains:

Real dialogue requires radical equality, a breaking down of barriers in such a way that painful truth will invariably come out...taking the class instructor out of the initial discussions and keeping the working groups small helps the participants sort out their differences on a personal and human level.

Building classroom community: The discussions foster and build a classroom community. Teachers take every opportunity to facilitate relationships between students. Trust plays an important part here as it is an issue in honest dialogue and has to be channelled through community. Classroom community cannot come to fruition unless there is peer accountability.

Institutionalising peer accountability: Students are accountable to each other through routine group tasks. The tasks should be regular and ongoing. The teacher must also de-centre accountability where students are required to be full citizens of the classroom community. They must be responsible to each other for selecting and completing tasks and for the evaluation of each other's work. Santas (2000, p.359) argues:

These stages are not formulas for guaranteed success. Preoccupation with control, after all, is symptomatic of the mind-set anti-racism seeks to change. Thinking in terms of these stages, however, does help undo racism and other forms of domination insofar as this way of thinking addresses the need to confront the problem as form and content.

Specifically in terms of Indigenous Australian students, Harris (1997) suggests that teachers need to accept cultural difference but not allow that difference to manifest in stereotyping. This may not be an easy task however, especially for the inexperienced. Nevertheless, the adoption of post-structuralist thought must take place in which Indigenous people are not

viewed as 'the other', that is as different people, but rather as 'the centre', as ordinary, every day people who have multiple identities such as neighbour, mother and teacher. Also working with the theoretical construct of 'centre' and 'other', if we can successfully deconstruct the notions of Indigenous Australians as they have been constructed in Anglo-Australian academic discourses, then ideally, we can transform academic spaces, so that Indigenous people can, when they desire and on their terms, re-structure or re-claim their location in those spaces (Thibodeaux 1997).

Problems with Implementing an Anti-Racism Education Model

While there is merit in the Santas (2000) model, the type of class room advocated would require a high level of class room management skill. Many university academics are not trained in this area and may have difficulty managing a process which could very easily become unmanageable and actually do more harm than good. Consequently our anti-racism education course may also need to incorporate pedagogical training. This could result however in quite a lengthy course which would have resource implications and commitment issues for the institution.

Some academics and students would be ambivalent, somewhat reluctant, or opposed to completing the course. In fact, some people are resistant to even the most basic cultural awareness training and many really do not have any interest in or desire to learn about the thoughts and feelings of Indigenous Australians. As for the students who engaged with the course, the goal is that engagement with peers and confrontation with real-life issues leads to enhanced awareness which leads to modified behaviour and reduced incidents of racism. Ultimately, the success of such a course would be measured by the ability of academics to manage racism in their classrooms. We must also bear in mind of course that academics often have high workloads and a good deal of content to deliver to a class within a semester time frame, the anti-racism education course could be seen as almost an intrusion or at least an inconvenience in an already stressful environment. However, possibly the most difficult challenge would be, what to do with the racist academic?

Conclusion

Racism in the classroom is still part of the education experience for many Australian Indigenous students. Unfortunately, sometimes this experience impacts adversely on Indigenous student retention. While higher education institutions purport that racism is not tolerated, what have they put in place to assist and equip academics to implement anti-racism policy in the classroom? There is no place for the denial discourse in our education system, and institutions following their own policies, must assume responsibility to educate staff and students.

There is a real twofold opportunity for the higher education sector here, firstly to actively and meaningfully contribute to an anti-racism agenda and secondly, to make a significant contribution through anti-racism education to practical reconciliation in this country. While there is no ideal anti-racism education model and there will be difficulties, problems and resistance there is also no excuse to allow this ignorance to continue.

The young in the school system are often the first victims of racism and often the perpetrators have most likely learnt racism from adults. Education is the key; can we view anti-racism education as the circuit breaker? By educating adults we can also educate children through those adults. While there is an urgent need to confront all racisms in this country, it is even more imperative that this country acknowledges and deals with its 'old' racisms the ones endemic in the lives of the first Australians. A small step forward via anti-racism education at least shows some potential for a positive and solid influence in this process.

Interwoven within the discourse, lies the humanness of racism and the horrible and tragic realities of its aftermath. After all, how can we continue to tolerate a country in which an 11 year old perceived his experiences of racism at school as so debilitating, and the world as so 'shitty', that he would take his own life?

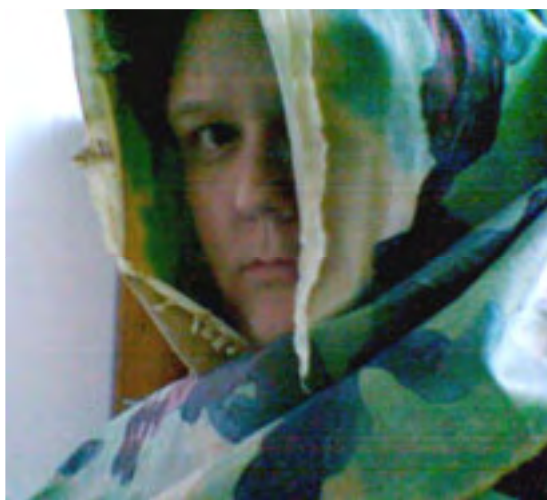
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Texts under surveillance : Art and fear

Freya Pinney

Queensland College of Art, Griffith University



Through my research I seek to explore the human impact of current global trends towards an increase in surveillance as a result of fear of terrorism, offering new insight into the range of discourses on security and identity. My work brings these discourses together and offers a new perspective for considering the political relevance of poststructuralist feminist theory in a contemporary context. Using performance to generate a range of artistic forms and installations, my work explores the impact of surveillance, as a result of the 'war on terror', on subjectivity within cross-cultural relationships. Working through a process of *tongue writing* I use blue liquid in my mouth and my tongue as a

brush to write in English onto glass, perspex and flesh. The resulting text is beautiful yet universally 'foreign', it can be interpreted as form or in the style of an inkblot but not translated. Throughout my work, I place this 'foreign' text under surveillance in video and photography and present tongue writing characters as voids - allowing an environment to be viewed through the text - or as illuminated scripts – backlighting the voids.

My work relates specifically to the 'War on Terror' through the notion of using text as a weapon. The use of terms such as 'War on Terror' and 'Axis of Evil' and the control of translation and often mistranslation of dissident voices manufacture consent for the 'War on Terror' by constantly reinforcing the fear of the terrorists within and using racial stereotyping to divide and instill fear within communities. The resulting national security and anti-terror campaigns, particularly in Australia have led to increased surveillance and encouraged scrutiny of the community, by the community. This has reinforced an approach of reporting difference, through the campaign slogan "Be Alert But Not Alarmed", rather than making an attempt to engage in, question or understand it. This style of national security campaigns respond to and reproduce fear of difference and the terror within both ourselves and our communities.

Within this context, I consider the role of art to be engaging in critical discourse in public spaces. The arts have always been spaces for difference and criticality as well as modes of expression. Visual arts have the potential to create environments in which people can be exposed to confronting difference and engage with it on a personal level. For this reason

there is great potential for creating positive cathartic experiences in terms of allowing people to work through their fear of difference without reacting in terror.



In this current climate of the 'War on Terror', and 'Anti-terror legislation', art galleries and public art projects are becoming fertile environments for discussion of the human impact of policy and the public use of words as weapons to conjure and perpetuate fear and racism, for example, 'axis of evil'. For example, in early 2005, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney held a large retrospective of Mona Hatoum's artwork. This celebrated her career and success as an Arabic woman artist working with issues such as cultural displacement and

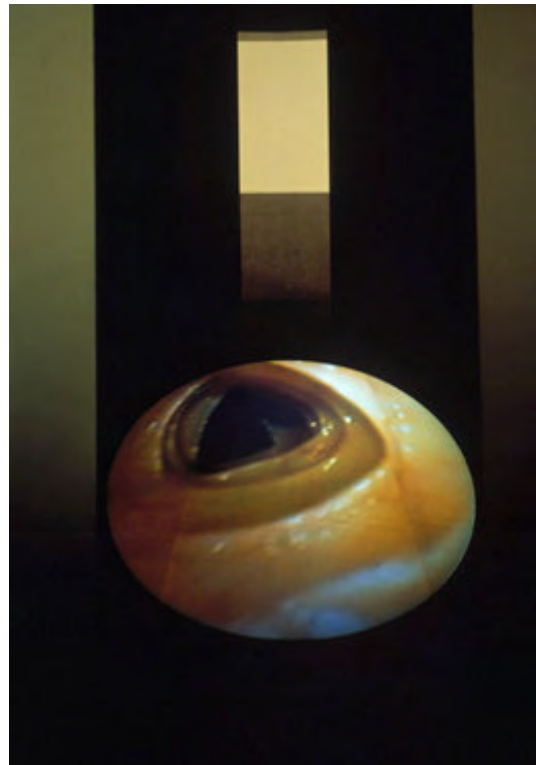
living in exile. It both exposed many to the issues her work explores and inspired others to keep engaging in this discourse, to continue even in the face of anti-terror fear of difference. So as to raise awareness of the contemporary link between religious difference and fear this paper will now consider the installation, *Corpes E'stranger (Foreign Body)* by Mona Hatoum and my own performance and video installation series, *Insecurity I and II*.

To introduce Mona Hatoum, she was born in 1952 in Beirut to stateless Palestinian immigrants forced from their home by the creation of Israel. In 1975 the Beirut airport shut down at the outbreak of civil war while Hatoum was holidaying in London. Consequently, she was cut off from her home and family. From this time on she has lived in exile in London where she has studied art and through her arts practice she explores her own experiences of what she calls "an identity formed from discontinuities". (Hatoum, quoted in Harper, P., in "Visceral Geomerty", *Art in America* Vol. 86, 1998, p. 106). Hatoum describes the experience of cultural displacement: "There's always the feeling of in-betweenness that comes from not being able to identify with my own culture or the one in which I'm living." (ibid)

Hatoum's installation *Corpes E'stranger (Foreign Body)*, 1994, explores the concept of cultural displacement, of living in exile and placing your own identity under scrutiny. Living in between, on the edge of the orifice, the barrier between the inside and the outside. In considering the role of surveillance in terms of national security, this work raises questions such as, what is the affect of these surveillance images? Are they familiar and recognisable? Do they contribute to your understanding of the body or are they confronting and/or horrific or terrifying?

This work illustrates the potentially abject nature of the terror within and creates an immersive environment for viewers to confront this fear and contemplate their own humanity. It is this aim which is clearly linked to my own project and I am especially

interested in the idea of the abject subject, a key theme to which I shall return after briefly describing Mona Hatoum's work.



Corpes E'stranger (Foreign Body) as captured in these four images is a large installation booth you walk into with openings on two opposite sides and a large round projection on the floor in the centre. Viewers can freely navigate the space, viewing the images from both the interior and the exterior. The large ocular projection is made up of a series of microscopic

images of orifices of the body, including images from the eye, ear, naval, nose and genital orifices of the human body. They document the points of in-between, inside and outside the body. This references Hatoum's notion of "inbetweenness", identity between cultures, inside and outside a nationality, culture, language, self-identity.



By presenting these images in succession, the work plays a surveillance slideshow. The viewer is the voyeur, surveying, identifying, ordering and considering the surveillance. Rather than entering a space and looking upwards for inspiring images, this installation keeps your gaze firmly on the ground. Rather than looking to the heavens for answers or inspiration we are channeled back down to consider the humanity in this space of "inbetweenness". These images are confronting, somewhat foreign and otherworldly, however, what they do is remind us of the fear we have for the terror within. Their strangeness is only possible because we do not recognize them as parts of ourselves. When confronted with the humanity of the space between our bodies and the outside, we find comfort in locating reference points of either difference or sameness. We can identify with or reject any semblance of a corporeal

self in these images, however, Hatoum's work locates us at the edge of the orifice, in the space between, allowing us to experience the loss of fixed identity and confront the fear of an abject body, neither inside, nor outside, but fully immersed and embodied. Her work allows others to experience the feeling of living in exile, being displaced from your culture, becoming foreign to yourself and fearing the terror within.

This work was exhibited at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney in 2005 during the "War on Terror" and at a time the nation was being urged to "Be Alert but not Alarmed" to Terror/ism. It expresses feelings of cultural displacement and exile experienced by those most likely placed under greater surveillance. The exhibition allowed the Australian public the opportunity to experience works directly expressing feelings of cultural displacement and exile. Further, this work invites viewers to scrutinise confronting surveillance images. As part of the exhibition program, several public forums were presented and a range of on-line discussion forums popped up, demonstrating the positive and engaging role of art in critical public discourse in the contemporary context.

The concept of "inbetweenness" in Hatoum's work is explored through the use of abject images in *Corpes E'stranger (Foreign Body)*. This equation of the abject with identity is the basis of my current research into 'abject subjectivity'. Simply put, the concept of the 'abject'

refers to simultaneous eroticism and horror at a lack of integrity between the inside and the outside of the body as outlined by Julia Kristeva in *The Powers of Horror*. Hatoum's work exactly induces this sense of erotic attraction and horrific repulsion in images of bodies leaking inside out.

In my own work I extend this awareness to consider the very acute ways in which 'abject subjectivity' occurs within cross-cultural homosexual relationships. 'Abject subjectivity' occurs within cross-cultural homosexual relationships when what is the most erotic is simultaneously the most horrifying threat to cultural identity. What makes the erotic, horrific within cross-cultural homosexual relationships is the intersection of racism and homophobia. In many cultures and religions homosexuality is not embraced as 'normal' and within accepted social relationships. For individuals within cross-cultural homosexual relationships, both partners undergo a degree of cultural displacement in order to establish and maintain relationships with in-laws and communities. This cultural displacement is a direct consequence of homophobia within many cultural groups and a lack of formal roles for homosexual couples within the culture such as husband or wife. The potential impact of increased scrutiny within communities as a result of the 'War on Terror' on cross-cultural homosexual relationships is of creating an abject subjectivity, where what is erotic within an individual's identity is also a terrifying threat to cultural identity. This leaves identity in a place of 'in-betweenness', as outlined by Mona Hatoum.

Thus as a way of exploring 'abject subjectivity' and prising apart the recognition of difference and the feeling of fear, in my work, I engage in a process of 'tongue writing', using blue liquid in my mouth to write with my tongue onto glass, Perspex and flesh. In

presenting my current research, I will include the artist statements followed by some description of the installations, *Insecurity I and II*.

Insecurity I

Live art and video installation

At this time of being 'Alert' to terror, our communities and selves have come under surveillance. We fear the terror within. I question whether this surveillance makes us secure and belies our fears or does it serve to confirm our worst nightmares and instill terror? Do we feel more open to otherness and difference or more terrified of it once under surveillance? In this performance I use the techniques of surveillance itself to enhance the viewers awareness of confusion. This brings in to question the assumed link between



surveillance and security. Increased surveillance of a tongue written text cannot increase

understanding; it remains indecipherable.

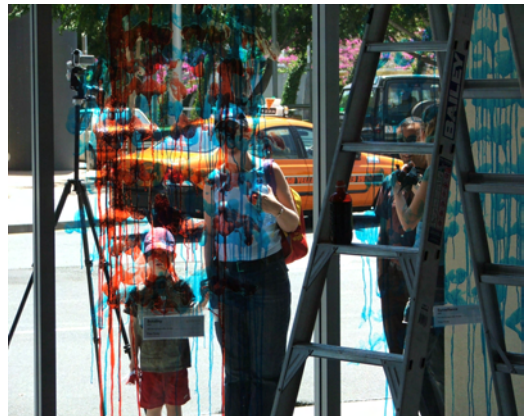
Insecurity I begins as a performance. A two-hour stream of consciousness performance of tongue writing on seven themes: surveillance, scrutiny, complicity, voyeurism, subjectivity, terrorism and fear. Viewers are invited to participate by performing the act of viewing, being the voyeurs putting the performative text under scrutiny. The performance and scrutiny are filmed on multiple cameras, effectively placing the text under surveillance.



Tongue writing is an abject process through which I am exploring my subjectivity, a gestural diary of impermanent indecipherable traces. By wearing a disposable hooded coverall as a costume, I am presenting my own form as a blank canvas that records the stain and trace of the performance.

Insecurity I continues as a video installation. After the performance the trace remains, as glistening marks on the gallery windows and as discarded coveralls that inhabit the gallery walls like ghosts

reminding us of time that has passed. The recoding of the performance becomes a multi-screen video booth in which you can view ten screens presenting the two hours of the performance back to back simultaneously. As you stand in the gallery either looking in or looking out you are presented with performance surveillance from this same viewpoint. This aims to make conscious the act of looking. By presenting the footage as a multi-screen booth I am referencing the style of a security booth and placing the viewer in the position of security.



Through *Insecurity I*, I am beginning an experiment in questioning how viewing relates to understanding, decipherability and knowledge. I am interested in how Australians experience the world through the mediation of the screen and the text. I am questioning the affect of placing the viewer in the position of security and simultaneously the affect of placing the text under surveillance.

Description: I began writing in blue liquid as a reference to the blue biro, an authentic, primary pen reinterpreted. As I wrote across the façade of the gallery, people immediately stopped to watch, an audience gathered, some taking photos, and quite literally placed me under surveillance. Over the course of the performance, around 30 people voyeuristically scrutinized my performance of the text. Along with this one to one scrutiny, there was a level of surveillance where at all times five cameras were recording every moment of the text being written. As I wrote each panel of text, I then changed the coverall I was wearing. I



hung them ceremonially on the walls of the gallery leaving the trace of that text on the coverall to mark the time and space, and to bear witness to that text. Throughout the performance, the gallery filled up with these coveralls, these remnants of the texts under surveillance.

The second phase of the text involved writing with red liquid, reminiscent of an amendment, addition or a correction. However, this text stood back to back with the blue mirroring rather than adding to it. In the aftermath of the performance, the text remained on the walls, the

coveralls filled the gallery walls and people passed by watching. The gallery location was important as a site busy with foot traffic, close to Brisbane tourist locations.

During the course of the performance and installation what I became most interested in through this research was whether this public performance which leaves the trace recording each act visibly, the surveillance feed covering every moment of the performative text from multiple angles, the costumes stained in the trace of the text, whether this overwhelming amount of information and surveillance actually enables any understanding. Or does presenting this overwhelming amount of textual evidence simply distance a viewer from any appreciation or understanding of otherness and difference? Surveillance does not automatically breed understanding, nor does it equate to security. In fact, in terms of the current trend in national security to refer to the 'terror within', surveillance and scrutiny can result in insecurity.



Thus in this work, *Insecurity I* and the next, *Insecurity II*, *tongue writing* is an abject process – writing onto flesh is intimate and yet the idea of liquid coming out of the mouth onto a

body is revolting, simultaneously intimate and horrific. Within cross-cultural relationships each partner undergoes cultural displacement in order to share their lives, their cultural identity is displaced by their relationship. Current surveillance of anything 'other' as a result of the 'war on terror' responds to and reproduces the fear of the terror within and encourages us to scrutinise others and ourselves. *Insecurity II* sharpens the focus to consider the shock of my own experiences that, for an individual within a cross-cultural relationship, what is the most intimate can, under scrutiny, become the most horrifying threat to cultural identity within both cultures.



Insecurity II

Multimedia installation

Within *Insecurity II* I am exploring the notion of *abject subjectivity*, the affect of cultural displacement within homosexual cross-cultural relationships where what is most erotic is also most horrifying as a threat to cultural identity. This work presents both the performance of tongue writing on the body under surveillance and the corporeal canvases recording the trace

of the performance as a series of intimate moments and embraces. Filming the performance as surveillance distances the intimacy of the process of writing the female through tongue on flesh. The narration of the performance by security guards listening to John Laws implies dichotomies of male/female and heterosexual/homosexual. The photographs and images within the gallery re-engage the intimacy of the performance but set it up as the habitat of the voyeur, disturbing the relationship between surveillance and security.

Description: The recording of the performance of 'tongue writing' the female body took place inside an active security booth. I set up my camera recording their 16-frame security screen during a normal workday. The performance traversed all 16 locations, inside and outside offices, mechanical workshops, studios and public courtyards. After a chapter of text was written onto the body, we stripped, leaving the trace of the text on coveralls in each location. Over the course of one hour, all 16 frames become filled with the trace of the text.



The security guards on duty in the booth naturally began discussing what they were watching, our performance, and describing what they thought was happening and how they felt about it. The following is a brief transcript of their commentary.

Security guard 1: "I don't even understand what it's all about to be honest."
Security guard 2: "Struth"
Security guard 1: "It's something to do with security, Insecurity it's called."
Security guard 2: "When did you ever think about it? Like trying to understand what they fucking get up to here."
Security guard 1: "Here they go."
- Pause -
Security guard 1: "I don't understand it. I don't understand what it's all about."
Security guard 2: "What are they doing now?"
Security guard 1: "I dunno, I didn't watch what she did last time."



After the performance, I stuffed the coveralls stained in the trace of the text, so they became corporeal in form, referencing the body. They then lined up in the gallery to bear witness to the performance, and as a reference for the body in the text. They represent the 'foreign' language of 'tongue writing' and the intimacy of the act of writing with the tongue onto flesh. Their positioning up against one another and in embraces attempts to reinsert intimacy back into the surveillance of the text. Each corporeal coverall is all stitched up, silenced,

stained and lined up. They line the wall like a silenced army watching the surveillance of the performance they bear witness to.

Through this work I am also considering the particular significance of complicity within witnessing an act and remaining silent. A choice mediated by surveillance, allowing the misunderstanding of silence as security. Additionally, allowing the misinterpretation and misunderstanding of security to silence. The relationship this work makes with the concept of insecurity is that complicity breeds insecurity.

In conclusion, this paper considers the artwork of Mona Hatoum and Freya Pinney to explore and outline preliminary research into the notion of 'abject subjectivity', cultural displacement resulting from simultaneous eroticism and horror within cross-cultural homosexual relationships. Presenting installation artworks as texts under surveillance introduces the mechanisms of national security into the realm of the viewer, overtly placing notions of surveillance and scrutiny into public discourse and challenging constantly enforced fear of difference, the affect of this process. It is important to acknowledge that this research is in its early stages but is timely within a climate of security legislation. This work aims to clearly demonstrate that surveillance is not the same as security and does not guarantee increased safety or understanding. Instead without awareness of its limitations surveillance actively produces its opposites, fear and misunderstanding.

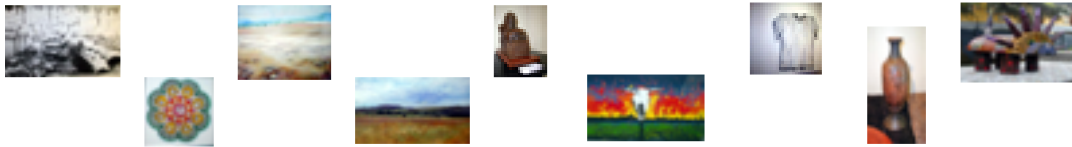
Racism in the new world order is underpinned by fear of difference, perpetuated and nauseated through national security campaigns. As a result of fear of terror/ism, increased levels of surveillance and scrutiny within and by communities' impacts on relationships between people, particularly within cross-cultural relationships. Homosexual cross-cultural relationships displace the cultural identity of both partners and when coupled with racism in the new world order can lead to a state of abject subjectivity, a point of simultaneous eroticism and horror centred around the intersection of cultural and sexual identity.

List of images:

1. *Untitled self portrait (wearing latex tongue writing hijab)*, Freya Pinney 2005
2. *Untitled self portrait (Silenced by surveillance)*, Freya Pinney 2005
3. *Corpes Estranger (Foreign Body)*, Mona Hatoum 1994. Installation view.
4. *Corpes Estranger (Foreign Body)*, Mona Hatoum 1994. Detail.
5. *Corpes Estranger (Foreign Body)*, Mona Hatoum 1994. Details.
6. *Corpes Estranger (Foreign Body)*, Mona Hatoum 1994. Details.
7. *Insecurity I*, Freya Pinney 2005. Live Art photograph by Simone Eisler.
8. *Insecurity I*, Freya Pinney 2005. Live Art photograph by Simone Eisler.
9. - 13. *Insecurity I*, Freya Pinney 2005. Live Art photograph by Terry Pinney.
14. *Insecurity I*, Freya Pinney 2005. Installation view photograph by Freya Pinney.
15. & 16. *Insecurity II*, Freya Pinney 2005. DVD stills.
17. *Insecurity II*, Freya Pinney 2005. Installation view photograph by Freya Pinney.

A Visual Representation of Time, Space and Identity Ten Years After Democracy

Judy Ramgolam



Ten years into the new democracy in South Africa, and artworks still reflect decades of an aberrant society – a society still on the brink of emancipation and, furthermore, a society grappling with the aftermath of place and displacement. What better place to deal with these inherent contestations of identity, place and displacement than the Vaal Triangle, a place epitomizing the ideological divide of Afrikaner nationalism and neo-liberal democracy. It is a place contrived to address the socio-economic imperatives of the previous dispensation, and historically remembered for the Sharpeville massacre. Once more, it is characterized by the oscillation between the ideological perspectives of Vanderbijlpark.

A recent exhibition of visual representations showcased artwork by the staff from Vaal University of Technology. Many of the artists interviewed for this article acknowledged that the negotiated transfer of power was not embraced in the Vaal Triangle. At official functions, Vanderbijlpark refused to hoist the new South African flag and, conversely, the constitution for the new democracy was signed at Vereeniging. Using political reading as a framework for analysis that involves a discussion of race, gender and class discourses, I will discuss the artwork exhibited on the 19th of March 2004 by the Fine Arts staff of Vaal University of Technology at Gallery 88 in Sasolberg. Of particular interest is the diverse and multicultural staff complement that includes, alphabetically, Rodney Hopley, Reshma Maharajh, Mashoale Makwela, Ben Nsusha, Annette Schultz, Avitha Sooful, Rita Tasker, Kiren Thathiah, Maggie van Schalkwyk, and Vanessa van Wyk.



Sentinels Collage



Sydney

The diverse approaches of the artists expose commonalities in their discourse with issues of identity, place and displacement. For a few of the artists who participated in the exhibition, dialogues with their Afrikaner identity in a post-*apartheid* South Africa were fraught with insecurities and fears. Maggie van Schalkwyk's inspiration was drawn from family photographs and mass media images. Van Schalkwyk appropriates photocopied images in her collages, reiterating the erratic nature of the status of art. She is of the view that collage

is an almost immediate art form and a dynamic medium. It was not her intention to outrage her viewers but to depict her visual interpretation of the world.



From left to right

Maggie van Schalkwyk

Sentinel, 2004
Collage

Precipitate, 2004
Collage

Ik leef en gij zult leven, 2004
Collage

The over-saturation of mass media and visual imagery in society forms part of the artist's search for meaning. Van Schalkwyk explains that any comment on society transpires on a subliminal level and she explores her positioning in a post-*apartheid* nation while still coming to grips with her political history. On a moral and ethical level, Van Schalkwyk still struggles with her identity as a member of the settler colonial minority group of South Africa. Part of her dilemma would stem from the notion of *false consciousness* that was imposed by the ideology of *apartheid*. The artist grapples with her hybrid identity as a Zimbabwean Afrikaner, before dealing with her identity as a member of the settler colonial group. Even though the political history of both countries is similar, the experiences have been unique. Van Schalkwyk holds that the display of anger and hatred is more prevalent in South Africa than in Zimbabwe. But the swing of the pendulum from historical images to current visual images allows the concepts of time and narrative to be manipulated to simulate new timelines.

Van Schalkwyk's images are sometimes worked into with pencil and charcoal. However, Van Schalkwyk relies more on the manipulation of the photocopied images. The exclusion of the female presence was again unconscious but, in retrospect, she holds that in her experiences in a patriarchal society, women were portrayed as observers and men were the decision makers. In *Sentinels*, her composition displays an overt male dominance except for the matriarchal figures. Viewer responses to *Sentinels* highlighted universal qualities that spoke of an era that prompted the narrative to be externally positioned.

In spite of being a member of a large family Van Schalkwyk displays a phobia of mass demonstrations and of large crowds as evident in her compact and crowded compositions. She also concedes that her crowded compositions reflect the phenomenal availability of visual images and her inability to selective. Ultimately, the artist prefers that her work should '*speak for itself although [her] collages are concerned with making social comment*'.



Annette Schultz
Sydney, 2004



Annette Schultz
B2472, 2004

Annette Schultz uses the Duchampian ready made in all her assemblages. [1] The artist does not use conventional sculptural techniques or mediums, and finds mixed media more of a challenge. She challenges the universal values of originality and ownership as obvious in Sydney, Venus de Brillo and B 2472. In addition, Schultz's use of manufactured commercial objects from everyday life opens a dialogue regarding the hegemonic status of sculpture and its mediums. In Venus de Brillo she uses Brillo sunbeam polish, a figure resembling Venus, and Mister Min cleaning detergent. The arbitrary relationship between Schultz's assemblages and the signified meaning is deliberate. Schultz prefers to allow the viewer to make the political associations, further decentring the autonomy of the artist. However, she concedes that she challenges the role of the male superhero even in household cleaning agents.

Video art has been dislocated from the periphery to dominate the art scene and yet for some historians, the digital era already marks the end of video art. American critic Rosalind Krauss points out that we live in a time where artists are concerned with ideas and discourses. Video art is combined, as in the case of Mashoale Makwela, with digital images, graphic animation and virtual reality. Makwela, like Van Schalkwyk, is concerned with the manipulation of time and the distorting of time barriers between the past, present and future. Makwela uses satire to make political commentary when addressing the theme *Ten Years of Democracy to Ten Years of Handicap*. The artist questions who benefited from the ten years of democracy. This debate-specific approach has appropriated the posters from the 2004 elections and Makwela uses text that is loaded with metaphors.

Reshma Maharajh challenges the role of Indian women artists in a post-apartheid context. This is evident in her bright compositions of Indian iconography. Maharajh uses mixed media, collage and etching. Iconographically, the role of women has been challenged regarding their representation in contemporary Indian society. In *Fire Vessel* the artist deals with the socially constructed roles of women. Women are seen as energy centres in a wheel that is always moving, always in union with something, which makes her role significant, but for whom, what and when? These socially constructed roles are also explored on a mythical level. Indian religion gives women a different status that has been decentred in a patriarchal society. Hierarchically, the devolving levels of importance are from the mother (*mata*), father (*pitha*), teacher (*guru*) and then God (*deva*). The artist furthermore questions the role of Indian women in a rainbow nation and the hybridization of Indian culture.



From left to right

Reshma Maharajh

Embrace, 2004
Mixed media,
collage and etching

Fire whispers, 2004
Mixed media,
collage and etching

Fire vessel, 2004
Mixed media,
collage and etching

Adornment – Sringara, 2004
Mixed media
collage and etching

Inclination, 2004
Mixed media
collage and etching

Kiren Thathiah expresses difficulty discussing [my] personal works because of the complexity of thought processes involved in producing the works. The process of creating work is part of the work itself, and that process involves major mental adjustments' (Thathiah, 2004). The series of five paintings is not only about place and attempting to establish the location of the artist but also about the human being and his/her situation in society. The scale of the works and the manner in which they are arranged presents a panoramic view. The artist holds that a sense of place is not African but that of the Afrikaner/settler, reminiscent of African painters. That highlights contestations between occidental and oriental approaches to landscape painting and questions the authenticity of Indian, African and European landscape. Further, the conflict of the lack of ego emerges in the absence of the human element that correlates with the lack of ownership. The artist is of the opinion that one cannot look at landscape as being owned by certain cultures, gender or race therefore the landscape is devoid of any human element. Landscapes on their own are fraught with issues, the ownership of land, difficult cultures ... and yet the land is still owned by the settler minority.



Kiren Thathiah *Landscape series*, 2004
Acrylic on board

Ben Nsusha's artworks are based on the erratic nature of the life cycle of society. *Blessed is the Hand that Gives* reveals the double standards of beggars. As an artist, Nsusha documents what is transpiring in society. He views the traditional healer as a servant of society. He is, moreover, fascinated with the controversy of the hairstyle of the *Sangoma*. [2]The Eurocentric method of clipping a traditional hairstyle highlights elements of multiculturalism and hybridity. This kind of controversy creates a dialogue between the artwork and the viewer. The artist believes that he can create the dialogue, but he cannot impose meaning on his work. The viewer's response can assist the artist in gaining deeper insight into his work.



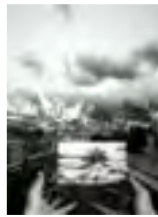
From left to right
Ben Nsusha
Traditional Healer, 2004
Bronze

'Blessed is the Hand that Gives', 2004

Dominic Thorburn, in an article entitled 'Sobriety and Sunshine', emphasizes the significant role of print-making in the history of the struggle in South Africa. [3] Rodney Hopley works with digital imagery in conjunction with the traditional printing techniques. He has been exploring new approaches and uses a combination of traditional printing methods with digital imaging. In '*Among these dark satanic mills*', a title taken from William Blake's poem, Hopley portrays a silk-screened image of industrial landscapes that the artist encounters daily.



From left to right



Untitled, 2004 Digital image



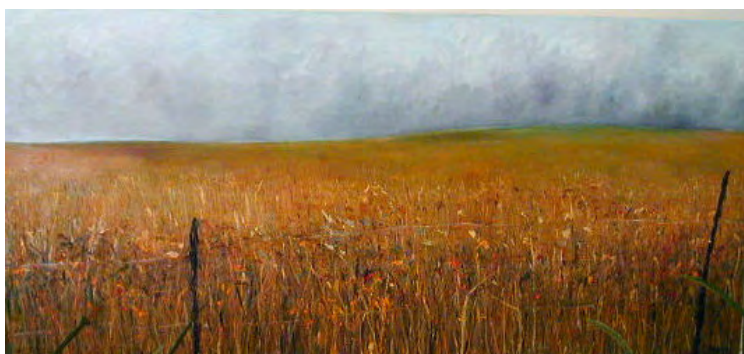
Untitled, 2004 Digital image

Rodney Hopley

'Among these dark satanic mills', 2004 Silkscreen

The visual images used in his prints moreover reflect the role of Iscor in the previous political dispensation. It was viewed as a symbol of oppression typifying one of the cornerstones of *apartheid*, that is, the job reservation act. The black-and-white digital prints allude to the inherent power struggle of the *apartheid* era. Hopley indicates that in the previous dispensation he would have been arrested for photographing Iscor in the light of ANC bombings as a symbol of *apartheid*. Furthermore, the artist's inclusion of his hands signifies his personal presence, a physical human presence in the environment, and the role of the superstructure in the process of industrialization and commodification.

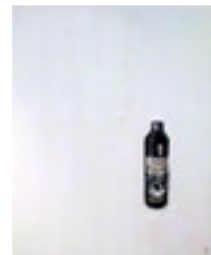
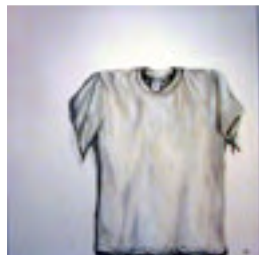
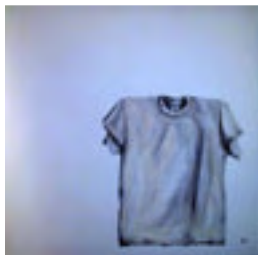
Avitha Sooful's paintings work on two metaphoric levels, firstly landscape as a metaphor for life, and secondly, landscape dealing with her social and political context and her ambivalent attitude to democracy. Her oil paintings on canvas are composed in her studio but they are based on her experiences as she drives through the landscape. The landscape represents how we see life in abundance and within boundaries that are literal and self-imposed. The sky represents emotions, time and place. On a socio-political level, *Deur die Vrystaat* is a play on the title that is reflective of the past. In the previous dispensation people of colour could not drive through the Free State, and now we have reaped the benefits of the new democracy, freedom of movement, and yet we wait for the delivery of promises' (Sooful, 2004).



Avitha Sooful

Deur die Vrystaat, 2004, Oil on canvas

Vanessa van Wyk's work forms part of a series entitled 'Strip Medium'. The artist uses an existential approach in her artworks. She takes cognisance of other contributing factors like the fears 'of the new unknown change'. The artist's preoccupation with semantics and semiotics is visible in the play on words in her titles. The relationship between the signifiers is optimized in her inclusion of the text to allow for viewer interpretation. The artist has painted three different-sized T-shirts, small, medium and large, and a bottle of paint stripper. These are part of a series of paintings dealing with the concepts of medium, stripping and word play. The artist questions the choice of medium and the appropriateness of mediums, when in fact artists themselves are mediums as apparent in video art and in the body art of Yves Klein and Steven Cohen. The production process is a conscious effort whereby the artist starts with the conceptualization of a title that is not fixed. Van Wyk then uses the devices of defamiliarization to draw attention to her work. She also draws attention to the form, and the form in turn becomes part of the content and allows for communication and interaction.



From left to right

Vanessa van Wyk

'Small', 2004

Acrylic on canvas

'Medium'

Acrylic on canvas

'Large'

Acrylic on canvas

'Stripper'

Acrylic on canvas

Rita Tasker comes from a tradition of ceramics, and is more comfortable with three-dimensional art forms. Her style has evolved from an ornamental and conceptual approach to a more project-design approach. She is presently exploring the designing of flower-specific vases. Her vases make ecological statements, for example, *Beware the Predator* hints at other types of human predators. *Echo gecko* is concerned with the creation of rhythmic patterns. In addition, roses are also used as a source of inspiration in the art form by the same title. *Giraffe conference* aims to locate humankind's place in the ecology as merely observers and the advancement of man and communication.



From left to right

Rita Tasler

Beware the predator, 2004
Earthenware

Echo gecko 2004
Earthenware

Giraffe conference 2004
Earthenware

Roses, 2004
Earthenware

Flower specific vase 2004
Earthenware



Ave
Oil on canvas



Acrylic on board

Lacan argues that the construction of our identity is a subjective process and is a result of our interaction with others that resemble and do not resemble us. [3] We find meaning through the gaze of others and by external factors, and therefore identity is never stable and this process will never lead to completion.

Many of the artists already discussed, if not all, have in various works explored notions of identity within the context of time and displacement. An example would be the commonality present in the above two paintings by Sooful and Thathiah.

Each of the artists engages with the act of disseminating information about themselves before engaging with external relationships. Sooful perceives the landscape as a mechanism through which she firstly explores the human element of emotion and secondly the landscape epitomizes the political climate in an apartheid and post apartheid South Africa. For Thathiah, once more the landscape serves as a means for personal discovery and thereafter he attempts to position himself in a national and international visual cultural context.

End Notes

1. Ready-mades, refers to a term that Marcel Duchamp applied to mass produced objects. Duchamp accorded the status of art to these found objects. (Hopkins, 2000:27)
2. Sangoma, is used to describe a holy man or woman, a skilled divine and healer within the tradition of the Zulu and Ndebele native people. Sangomas have always been a crucial part of tribal life and customs and many of their traditions have been recorded throughout history.
www.africanenza.com/sangoma
3. See, Hans Betems, *Literary theory: The basics*. 2001. London: Routledge

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