

A photograph of a concrete slab set into a sandy ground. The word "TERRA" is written in large, red, block letters on the slab. Above it, the words "JEANNETTE UNITE" are written in smaller, black, block letters. The slab is bordered by several smooth, light-colored stones. The background is a mix of sand and dark soil.

JEANNETTE UNITE

TERRA

EDITED BY
ANDREW LAMPRECHT & IVOR POWELL



Aerial Photograph: Kimberley Diamond Mines, the Big Hole and De Beers Mine.



DIAMOND GRAVEL FROM THE BIG HOLE KIMBERLEY SOUTH AFRICA

JEANNETTE UNITE

TERRA

EDITED BY
ANDREW LAMPRECHT & IVOR POWELL

SoSo
PRESS

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Metal oxides, site-specific sands, metal grindings, mine dump tailings, pigments mixed into paint and Jeannette Unite's handmade pastels that are used in all the drawings.

TERRA: EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

The book you hold in your hands was born out of two decades of research by Jeannette Unite into the industrial landscape of South Africa – historic, scientific, material and, most importantly, artistic. The art Unite produced from these explorations is inextricable from the impact mining wrought on South African history. We would live in a vastly different country – and indeed a different world – were it not for the epochal discovery of diamonds, gold and other mineral deposits in the second half of the nineteenth century and the concomitant and sometimes tragic effects of these discoveries.

Mining left no part of contemporary South Africa untouched. It led to wars, displacement, the decimation of populations, the calculated and often brutal destruction of socio-political formations and untold environmental damage, as much as it consolidated economic power and promoted industrial development.

Of course, it is not the task of this book to unpack the profound ambivalences of mining in the history of the country. Unite's artistic reflections on these issues do make, we believe, an important contribution to understanding where we stand today. But from here she goes further, turning history, politics and economics into metaphor, into source material for an unflinching freeze frame of constant change.

Reproductions of works from Jeannette Unite's prolific output are accompanied by various essays and reflections that aim to contextualise her art. We are grateful to all the contributors for bringing their knowledge and insights to bear on these sometimes complex issues and the varied art that has sprung from them.

The academic essays in this volume have been through a rigorous peer review process.

Andrew Lamprecht & Ivor Powell
7 February 2012





Earthscars: Rehabilitation

Artist-made pastels with carbons, mine tailings, on cotton rag archival paper
800 x 1200mm 2011 COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST





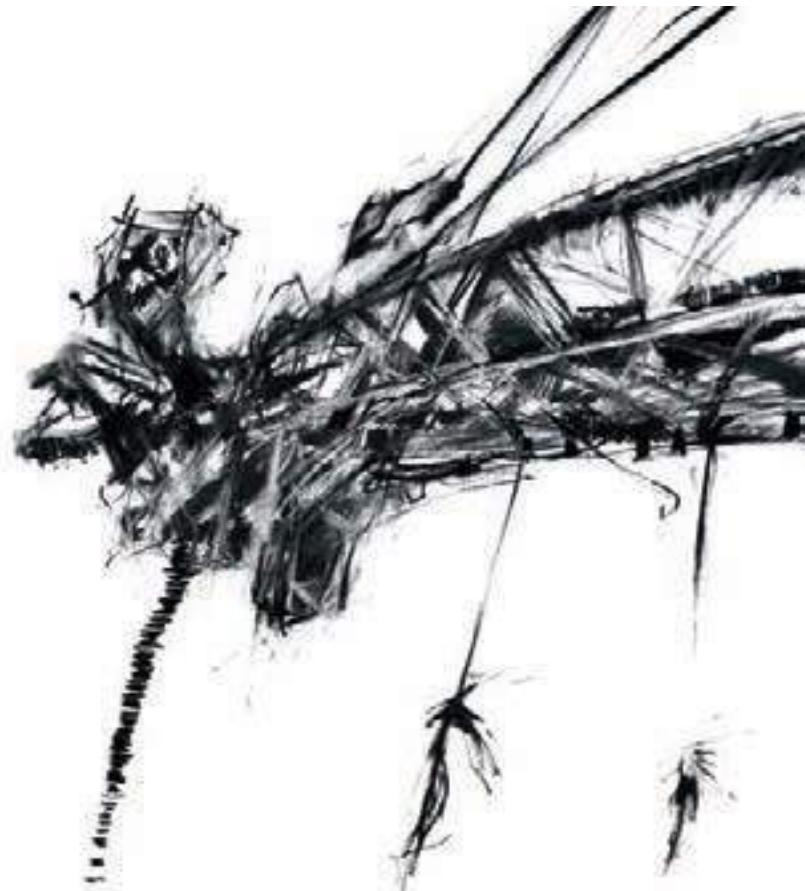
A VISUAL MINING EXPLORATION

South Africa's rich and contentious mining histories provide the point of departure for Jeannette Unite's 'Earthscars' on the level of both the material and metaphor. Closely aligned with environmentally conscious art production, Unite's body of work is site-specific in the sense that she has employed diamondiferous materials, minerals, metal oxides and sands from various significant sites in the production of her work, including making her own pastels with these materials.

Toying with the traditional understanding of 'value', Unite has perpetrated her own brand of alchemy. For a project that began as an identification of wounds that don't heal ('mining' as a reflection of a personal journey, not unlike Freud's parallel between psychoanalysis and archaeology, perhaps), the dense metaphorical possibilities contained in Unite's geological materials have resulted in a slightly different take on the rather hackneyed memory-history-landscape genres of much local contemporary art.

'Art Pick of the Week'
Mail & Guardian
December 2004

Kathryn Smith is an artist, academic, curator and writer.



Overburden Crane Conveyors I, II & III

Artist's handmade pastel containing minerals, metal oxides, calcium and diamond mine tailings on cotton rag paper 800 x 600mm 2006

KUMBA, ANGLO AMERICAN IRON ORE DIVISION

ARTIST STATEMENT: MINING AFRICA'S HERITAGE

The uranium mine near Swakopmund in Namibia was the first mining operation I visited in 1982 - I was struck by the gargantuan ore moving trucks that travelled up the edge of the kilometers wide open pit.

My mining-focused art originated with the exhibition 'Earthscars', a shock response to the 40-year-old diamond prospecting pits on the Palaeolithic African West Coast beach deposits. Mining has defined southern Africa's cultural and socio-political identity, and the impact of colonialism and globalisation affects how we occupy our current landscape.

I progressed from 'Earthscars' to exploring rehabilitation plants and environmental relationships. Conversations around my interpretation of the extractive industry with geologists, engineers, metallurgists, and industrialists expanded my understanding of mining.

Over the past decade my visual explorations include journeys to Namaqualand – Simon van der Stel's copper mine (the first colonial mine from 1685) – through to harbours and construction sites and visits to active gold, coal, salt, manganese, titanium and platinum and obsolete and archaeological mine sites. Photo-documentation from travels and images have been sourced from mining museums and archives, the internet, mining journals and books.

I collected metalliferous mine dump sand, dust, overburden and metal oxides. The artworks incorporate industrial waste that contains enough metals to yield startling colour when molten in kilns under extreme temperatures. This work is informed by physics, chemistry, engineering, geology, technology, geography and conceptual eco-alchemy. The artist as end user of mining re-establishes an art and science link.

The abstract chthonic glass panels are constructed from recycled and sometimes toxic materials like lead, arsenic and cyanide. These artworks about the landscape are made from the landscape in a 'beauty-from-waste' aesthetic.

There is nostalgia for the vanishing and changing industrial landscape. Headgear photographs from archives show influences of German, Welsh and Cornish engineering over the past 150 years. Winding gear designs are for specific mine shafts conditions, some kilometres deep.

Size does count. These massive, monumental drawings mirror the impressive scale, inadvertently celebrating heavy industry. The geometry of blast furnaces, harbour cranes, electric pylons and headgears appeal to my predilection for abstraction. I respond to the engineering's proud, powerful, sculptural qualities and attempt to render drawings as large as construction boards and glass kilns allow.





Residuum: Mines and Machines

Artist-made pastels containing carbon black, iron, metal oxides, charcoal, carbon, calcium and mine dump tailings on cotton rag archival paper 700 x 1100mm 2011 COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

1

VISUAL PROSPECTS





Residuum: Mines and Machines I

Artist-made pastels containing carbon black, iron, metal oxides, charcoal, carbon, calcium and mine dump tailings on cotton rag archival paper 700 x 1100mm 2011 COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

NOTE: THE UNRULY MARK

In many of Jeannette Unite's two-dimensional works there is what one might call a zone of uncertainty. Sometimes it is an all-over effect, but more usually it is one, or more than one, area of the composition where the integrity of visual reference and representation are radically compromised. The artist's mark segues into a different and insistently expressionist register. For the most part following, echoing and creating fugues on the geometric and industrial lines and forms of the machinery associated with mining enterprises, in these passages it more or less dramatically takes on a life of its own.

Sometimes it is the machinery itself that gives in to the exotic energies, charges and rhythms that are carried in Unite's mark-making. The machine as metonym of masculinised force and enterprise now placed in a position of some jeopardy by the tensions Unite brings to bear in the way she sees and renders it: the hard, inflexible and metallic rendered in feathery scratches that cause the shapes of mining to slide in and out of the negative space, asserting identity as form, and then, paradoxically, becoming absences of form by turns.

But more frequently in the bodies of Unite's work, the transformation wrought by the unruly mark comes at the point where, in terms of the work's representational schema, the machine meets the earth. There is, of course, a metaphor here – maybe something more as well – with feeling asserting and imposing its hot and chthonic rule over the cool and the rational, where representation subsists in essentially naturalistic registers of ordered form and tracteries of the retinal.

And earth is a potent metaphor and inexhaustible reservoir of mythic and archetypal tropes. Earth, and what is underground, is, precisely, evocative of the unconscious, that by which we live and by which the world is shaped, but that which we can never know or control.

The point at which the headgear enters the earth – and note the triple sexual innuendo, it is pretty much to the point – becomes, in this way, something like an omphalos. It is the moment of fault in the geology of consciousness, that point from which the lava of memory, trauma and desire erupts against the civil discourses of man's machinations and orderings of the world. Grist. Dragged into, expelled from, a vortex that deconstructs memory and materiality into a play of energies that transcends both time and the co-ordinates of space.

Ivor Powell is an arts writer and investigative journalist.





Residuum: Mines and Machines II

Artist-made pastels containing carbon black, iron, metal oxides, charcoal, carbon, calcium and mine dump tailings on cotton rag archival paper 700 x 1100mm 2011 COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

VISUAL PROSPECTS

Beauty, as an aesthetic concept in fine art, spent most of the twentieth century in hiding, in contrast to the eighteenth century, when the idea of beauty dominated aesthetics. But if visual artists are any social barometer, the concept of beauty is arguably coming back out of the shadows. And the work of South African Jeannette Unite is part of that resurgence. A penchant for dissonance began to shift to beauty from the 1990s onwards, according to philosopher Arthur Danto. He referred not just to an incidental formal beauty but beauty as an integral part of the meaning of an artwork. This is in contrast to beauty's denigration of late, whereby the exclamation 'Beautiful!' became an expression of generalised approbation. Danto writes:

Beyond what was dismissed as its 'emotive meaning', the idea of beauty appeared to be cognitively void

(Danto 2003: 8)

Now, beauty is considered a value, like truth and goodness; he goes even further to call it a human need:

It is not simply among the values we live by but one of the values that defines what a fully human life means

(Danto 2003: 15)

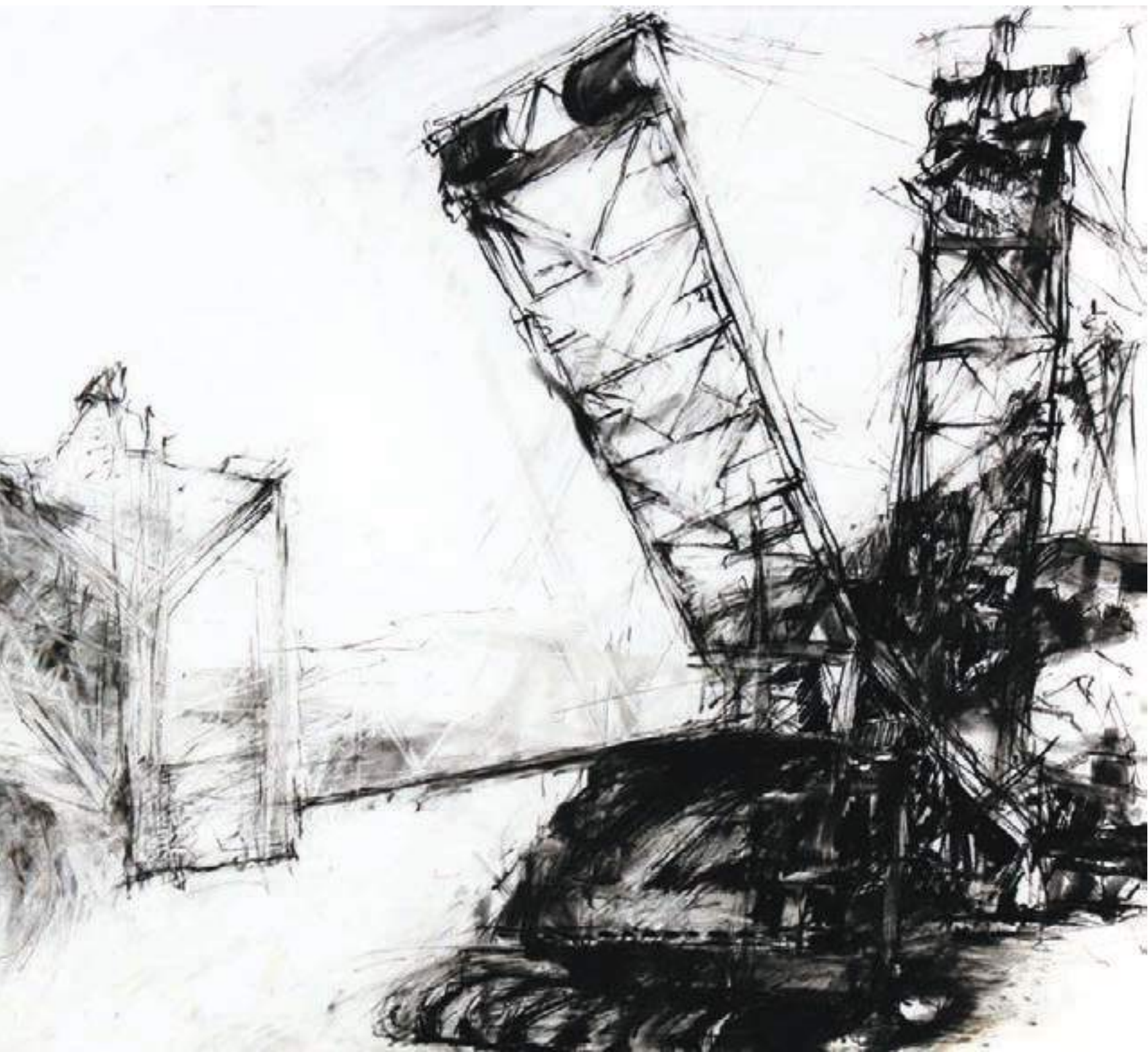
That might seem a sweeping claim for an apparently innocuous aesthetic. But Harvard University professor Elaine Scarry supports Danto's view with a compelling thesis in her book *On Beauty and Being Just*. Scarry expounds on the close connection between beauty and love of truth, which she says are allied. Furthermore, Scarry argues that, far from damaging our capacity to attend to problems of injustice, beauty instead intensifies the pressure we feel to repair existing injuries – in part by demanding constant perceptual acuity (1999: 57). Scarry gives the following instructive example:

How will one even notice, let alone become concerned about, the inclusion in a political assembly of only one economic point of view unless one has also attended with full acuity to a debate that is itself a beautiful object, full of arguments, counter-arguments, wit, spirit, ripostes, ironies, testing, contesting; and how in turn will one hear the nuances of even this debate unless one also makes oneself available to the songs of birds or poets?

(Scarry 1999: 61)

Scarry has her critics, and this essay's selective cull of various notions of beauty only hints at a deep and contested body of philosophy. But why talk of beauty, even in this limited sense, to introduce the art of Jeannette Unite? It might at first seem an unlikely lens, given that the artist often takes as subject matter the physical detritus of a mechanical, industrial world: the mining industry of South Africa. She photographically documents and draws inspiration from the landscape that forms the backdrop to such industry. Sometimes her canvas is glass, at other times wood panels or paper. Her medium ranges from charcoal to pastels, acrylic paint, transmogrified minerals and even film animation. Whichever, her register is usually abstract or leaning towards it, blending otherwise disparate fragments. The artist's sustained focus on the world of mining, however, is more than purely metaphor:





Residuum: Mines and Machines III

Artist-made pastels containing carbon black, iron, metal oxides, charcoal, carbon, calcium and mine dump tailings on cotton rag archival paper 700 x 1100mm 2011 COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

Unite collects leftover minerals, sometimes toxic, that she literally embeds into some of her artwork. To this end, her Cape Town studio has several shelves of neatly stacked large glass jars holding minerals of various colours and characters. The studio is part chemistry lab, part office, part home. At its heart is a beautiful antique wooden table, reminiscent of a Wim Botha installation, bought at auction: ‘I couldn’t stop nodding my head’, Unite concedes, with her ready laugh. The anecdote underscores an apparent gift for re-purposing with new meaning that which has been overlooked or set aside. Alchemists transmute the ordinary (lead-like) level of everyday perception to a subtle (gold-like) level (De Rola 1973: 7). Unite’s oeuvre echoes this kind of transformation, not only in method but also in meaning; she peppers talk of her art with references to personal experiences overcome. As critic Kathryn Smith writes of Unite’s ‘Earthscars’ exhibition (2004):

Toying with the traditional understanding of ‘value’, Unite has perpetrated her own brand of alchemy

(Smith 2004)

This idea of artistic alchemy resonates too in previous works that have drawn upon dreams, myths and legends, in series such as ‘Thresholds’ (1999). The title refers to a desire to transcend and move through a subliminal dark into light, a desire of the artist that followed a traumatic assault a few years prior. This series, hovering between the figurative and abstract, spoke with its animated brushstrokes about personal transformation. This animated quality, which recurs through Unite’s oeuvre, is eloquently described by Anne Emslie:

The pleasure of Jeannette’s painting is that this is done with a delectable, generous, and appetizing mess and smudge and smear and tracery of paint, ink or charcoal ... a felt manoeuvring between spontaneity and control, abandonment and restraint, spillage and the damning of both materials and feelings.

(Emslie 2001)

These characteristics are strongly evident in *Earth’s Crust* (2007), which comprises mining dump waste, metal oxides and foils transformed through heat into 28 glass panels. It is a landscape literally created out of the land itself – a wry twist on a genre that has dominated the work of South African artists, from the apparently ‘unpopulated’ colonial perspectives of J.M. Pierneef to the contemporary charcoal drawings and film animations of William Kentridge. The latter’s work is mentioned by Sarah Nuttall in her book *Beautiful/Ugly*; Nuttall says that beauty, for Kentridge, is a question of form.

Drawing beauty has everything to do with the materiality of his medium, so that for him the call of the Germiston landscape on the South African highveld, with its slime dams, reed beds and bleakness, was specific to paper, charcoal, ruler, eraser: ‘the burnt wood of charcoal itself moved between the object and the drawing’.

(Nuttall 2006: 23)

Unite has a similar preoccupation with form, evident in her intense charcoal works of headgear such as *What is Above is Below* (2007). She says:





Residuum: Mines and Machines IV

Artist-made pastels containing carbon black, iron, metal oxides, charcoal, carbon, calcium and mine dump tailings on cotton rag archival paper 700 x 1100mm 2011 COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

It's about responding to material. A piece of charcoal or compressed carbonaceous iron-rich black is actually the same thing, just in another form. The pointed connection is the thing; it seduces you.

(Gurney & Unite 2008)

In Unite's oeuvre, her proxy is seduction. She has a sculptor's preoccupation for material, a concern traceable to a former tutor who had a profound influence on her work ethic and methodology: Kevin Atkinson, a former lecturer at Michaelis School of Fine Art at the University of Cape Town. But Unite has a painter's preoccupation with seductive surface. She says:

I want people to respond sensually to things because I think that helps them to access any idea. Because the works are quite abstract, the entry point is sensual ... and through that [viewers] can enter.

(Gurney & Unite 2008)

Take her many abstract panels – the 'Overburden' series, for instance (2007). The title refers to the large sand deposits above mineral deposits, sand that has to be moved to tailings. Unite has created elongated, vertical wood panels treated with a variety of sands sourced from specific South African mining sites, as well as mined ash, minerals, metal oxides and powders. Critic Chris Roper called the 'Overburden' works beautiful yet grim:

It's a very modern idea of time that is expressed here – not a sifting through of layers in a chronological order but time as a hodgepodge.

(Roper 2004)

This effect, he says, is heightened by a consideration of materials used, which include Kalahari desert sand, Kimberley yellow ground from near the Big Hole, gold-mine sands containing cyanide and arsenic and metal oxides. This artistic strategy of taking 'left-overs' and presenting them as beautiful might seem counter-intuitive. But as Nuttall has proposed, beauty is to be found at the limits of the ugly and beauty always stands in intimate relation to ugliness (2006: 8). Such transformation can be effected through a simple perceptual shift, presenting differently to the viewer what occurs already in nature – a tension between art of nature and art in nature that philosophers through the centuries have debated. Indeed, German philosopher Hegel might have approved of Unite's work had he lived in this century. Hegel posits that the function of art is

to stir our senses, our feelings, our emotions, with everything which can find a place in the human soul

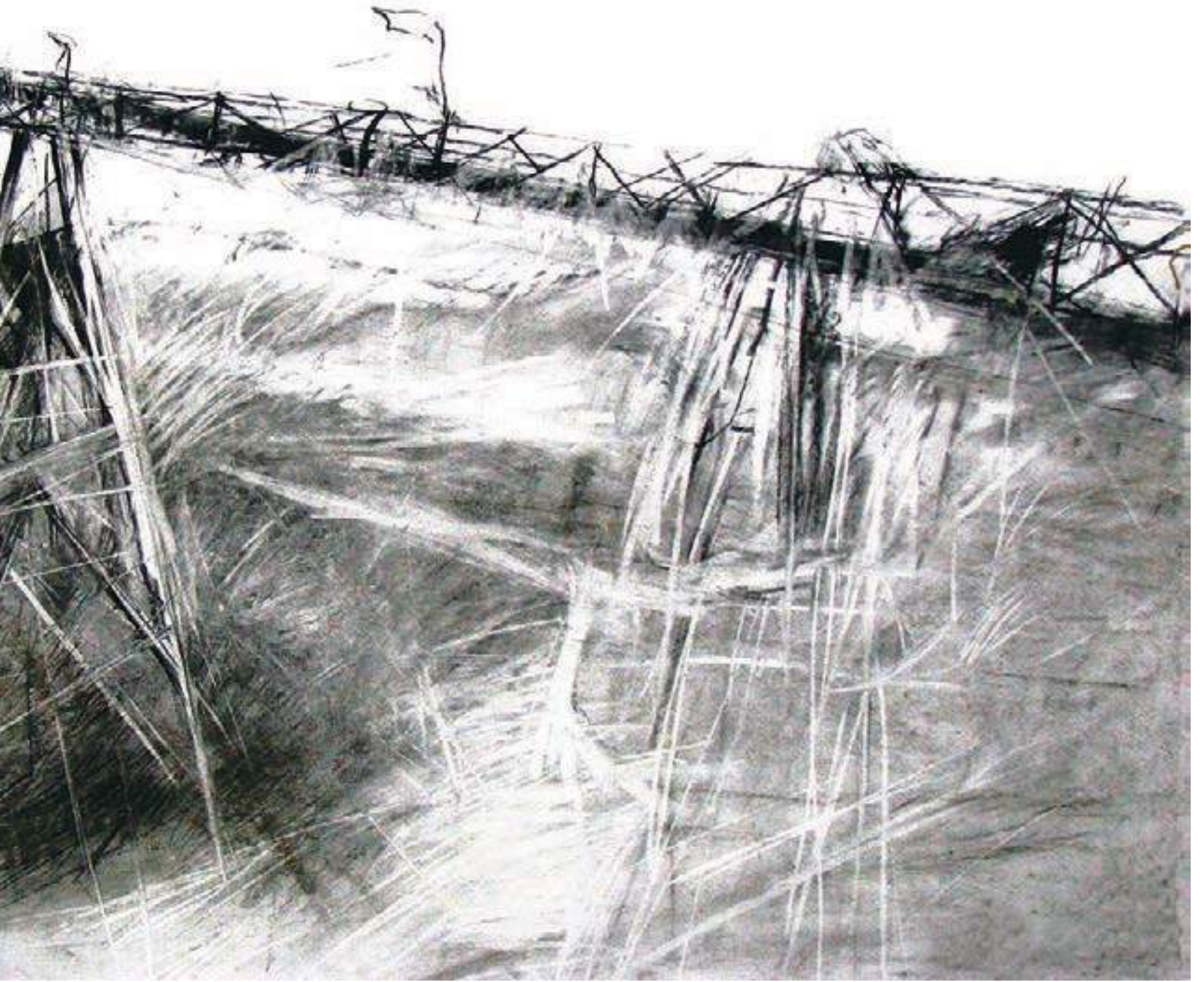
(Hegel, cited in Carritt 1931: 162)

Art critic Melvyn Minnaar put his finger on a similar characteristic of Unite's work when he described 'Overburden' thus:

Abstractions embedded in those antediluvial textures of gritty, earthy dark glimmer offer their own visual dark puzzles: like staring beyond the immediacy of the night sky ... they vibrate with emotion.

(Minnaar 2004)





Earthscars: De Beers Hole Earth-Moving Crane
Mixed media on cotton rag archival paper 700 x 1100mm 2004
PRIVATE COLLECTION, KIMBERLEY

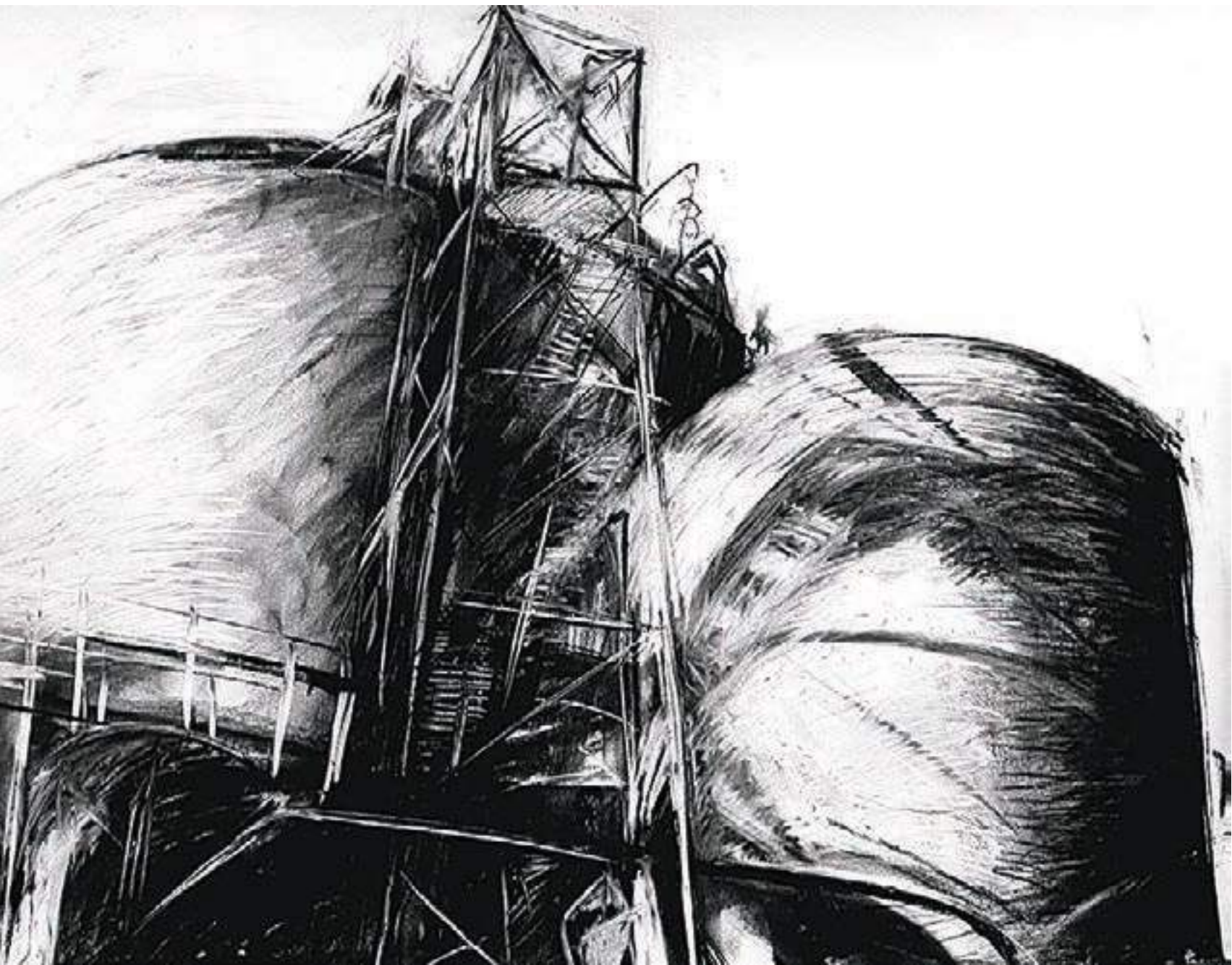
Another commentator referred to these same panels as ‘barcodes with emotion’, says Unite. It’s an apt description: her work speaks both of consumerism concerns and personal affect. The panel format of ‘Overburden’ recurs through Unite’s body of artwork, as does sequencing, gridding and framing works in series. Her ‘Sentences’ exhibition (2001) comprised linked paintings grouped in strips of seven, each series conceived of as a visual sentence with handwriting out of focus. They developed from sequencing collages like an animation strip, linked by theme, colour and gesture. The works create a window of sorts, offering a redemptive vision of the future. Unite suggests the multifarious panels of ‘Sentences’ also references a classification system, an ordering of fragments (Gurney & Unite 2008).

This concern extends to her current work around the archive, an exploration of what information a system of power inscribes. Unite hosted an exhibition, which opened in September 2008, at the National Archives, situated in the old Roeland Street Gaol in Cape Town. It’s a compelling venue that holds maps, documents, photographs and other material dating back to the earliest days of colonial settlement in the Cape. The artist says she is intrigued by the politics of what is and is not stored, the process of retrieving records, and the loaded issue of who gets access. Similar concerns recur in Unite’s mining-related works. Her attraction to the geological metaphor was at first a rather serendipitous one. A personal relationship provided access to mining sites on South Africa’s west coast, first at Alexander Bay on the Orange River estuary and later near Vredendal on the Olifants River. Unite says she was shocked by the polarised landscape: on one side of an electrified fence, an internationally protected reserve full of wildlife; on the other, closely guarded mining operations. She later overheard geologists discussing minerals, trace elements and indicator stones, and a new world opened up. She took photographs and let the ideas percolate. ‘The whole geological language of the landscape just became alive’, she says (Gurney & Unite 2008).

Any viewer of fine art is alert to the associations of subject matter. Mining is a key sector of the South African economy and one of the country’s largest employers, but it has a long and contentious history, in particular around the disruption of family life for many black South Africans who migrated from the rural areas to work in the mines. The land itself was also a brutal tool of the apartheid regime, with successive Land Acts dealing blows of dispossession. There is consequently a heavy socio-political subtext attendant to Unite’s subject matter, willed or not. It is a subtext to which the artist is very alert. But she has become appreciative of the benefits of the mining industry too. ‘It’s actually all part of evolution’, she says, referring to technological strides dependent on commodities.

In a time of increasing environmental anxiety, Unite’s artwork inevitably speaks to broader socio-political issues. These include the current global rush to secure mineral commodities, particularly in Africa, in a fraught time of energy crunches and fuel price hikes. They also reference concerns around land restitution and mineral rights





Paste Plant, Kimberley Rehabilitation
Handmade pastel with metal oxides, charcoal, carbon, calcium and mine dump
tailings on cotton rag paper 700 x 1100mm 2005
PRIVATE COLLECTION, KIMBERLEY

in a country debating the merits of free market growth versus state intervention for more equitable distribution of resources.

Certainly, post-apartheid South Africa has a range of competing priorities, led by the delivery to the previously disenfranchised of a range of basic rights, services and dues that apartheid denied the majority. In this broader context, the arts sector has been challenged to justify its importance and relevance. Unite's work might offer a predominantly aesthetic experience, as critic Paul Edmunds avers in an *ArtThrob* review of 'Sentences' (2001). But who ever said that beauty was frivolous? Through Scarry's lens at least, the arts are a vital part of the imperative towards greater social justice (Scarry 1999).

Kim Gurney is a visual artist and freelance writer.

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Earthscars: Rehabilitation

Artist-made pastels with carbons, mine tailings, aerial maps and photographs of the seven economically operative kimberlite pipes in the Northern Cape on cotton rag archival paper 800 x 1200mm 2005 MTN COLLECTION





2

PARADOX OF PLENTY





Paradox of Plenty Installation
Michaelis Galleries, University of Cape Town 2011

MINING THE LANDSCAPE IN CONTEMPORARY ART

NOTE: This essay seeks to examine a handful of contemporary artists who have focused directly on mining, its visual and physical traces and the legacy that it entails. It is necessarily selective, and in choosing examples to discuss I have drawn on those artists who seem to share (in my opinion) some *simpatico* with Jeannette Unite's concerns or present an interesting comparison to her work. Thus this essay is intended as a companion to *Terra* and is not intended as an exhaustive survey. Unite herself has reflected on contemporary artistic responses in an essay entitled 'Exploring the Visual Residues of Colonial Exploitation' (Unite 2010).

The activity of mining has provided a rich but perhaps not particularly extensive iconography that stretches back at least as far as illustrations made for Agricola's classic study *De Re Metallica* (1556).

The artists discussed below share several concerns amongst them, primarily that of concern with the legacy – social, environmental, economic and political – of mining. Sammy Boloji and David Walker-Brown utilise the archive and oral histories, and the latter incorporates found minerals into his work. The subjective aesthetics of the Bechers and Edward Burtynsky can be seen in Jeannette Unite's own aesthetic paradigm, different though it may be. And the directness of Papa Essel – his anger and his palette of gold, black and red – has a trace in Unite's own preferred colour range and in the marks, now gentle, now hard, that make her work part of a small but significant artistic exploration by contemporary artists who, in their own way, mine the landscape around them.

The actual portrayal of the activity of mining has never really been a popular genre. (However, see Stacey 2010.) As James Ryan has noted in the context of nineteenth-century British art: 'There may be practical reasons for these gaps in Victorian imagery; perhaps painters simply could not get access to factories and mines or perhaps their pictures would not find a buyer.' (2001: 196) He goes on to note that the industrialists who were primary patrons for 'new' art in the nineteenth century may have been reluctant to visually endorse the realities that underpinned their new wealth, and given the enormous role that mining magnates played in art patronage in late nineteenth and early twentieth century in South Africa it is perhaps not surprising to see similar lacunae here. Nevertheless a great many local artists have referenced mining in their work as a result of the ubiquity of mining within the South African social, political and especially economic landscape (to say nothing of the physical marks it has made on the earthly manifestations of that self-same landscape). Examples range from Anton van Wouw and J.H. Pierneef through to William Kentridge, Kevin Atkinson, Kagiso Pat Mautloa, David Goldblatt, Zwelethu Mthethwa, Alan Crump and Sam Nhlengethwa, amongst numerous others. Few if any of these artists have made mining *central* to their work (though Kentridge's first 'Drawings for Projection' can be argued to be distinct corpus, even if mining is somewhat incidental to the narratives, and much the same can be said of Goldblatt's book *On the Mines*).

Photography of mines, and especially the effects of mining upon the landscape, is an important source for Jeannette Unite. In her archival projects, such as 'Paradox of Plenty' (2010, ongoing) and 'Residuum' (2011), she literally 'wallpapers' a space with thousands of such photographs drawn from decades of assiduous trawling in archives, photo libraries and official and unofficial mining documentation. Photography of mining





Paradox of Plenty Installation
Western Cape Archives & Records Service, Cape Town
2012

operations served to document industrial processes and aid engineers, but artistically can be traced to a series made in 1871 by the American Carleton Watkins, who used very large plates to record kilometres of piping used as part of the gold mining complex at North Bloomfield Gravel mines in Nevada (Nickel 1999). As Lori Pauli has noted, these photographs, perhaps unintentionally, show ‘that the installation of the pipe had wreaked havoc on the surrounding land’ (2003: 18). Unlike painting, which in the rare cases when it portrayed mining activity, had a tendency to romanticism, photography usually could not evade the stark realities of the processes and structures it documented.

As the founders of the ‘Düsseldorf School of Photography’, with its detached and subjective approach to its subjects and embracing of a fine art aesthetic within a domain that may be seen to be ‘documentary’, Bernd and Hilla Becher stand as major figures in the history of photography in the latter part of the twentieth century (see Gronert 2009: 17–180). Their seemingly cool, detached large-format photographs of industrial structures, including mining headgears (in their case called ‘winding towers’) deliberately exclude the human subject visibly but thus imply it more directly. Their work, and especially their ‘typologies’, which show a series of seemingly similar but quite distinct related industrial subjects, strongly evokes Jeannette Unite’s archival projects.

Another artist-photographer who has clearly exerted an influence on Unite is the Canadian Edward Burtynsky. His representations of ‘manufactured’ (or ‘residual’) landscapes conceive of landscape as a physical manifestation wrought by human labour (Pauli 2003: 10). Burtynsky has a fascination for the way that industrialised processes impact and transform the environment. His lifelong body of work has explored this photographically in various case studies, including quarries, oil fields and refineries, shipbreaking, recycling, railcutting and, of course, mining. He describes his decision to explore the latter thus:

I had to cross some unknown territory through Pennsylvania, which happened to be one of the largest strip mining areas in the United States. All of a sudden I was in this town called Frackville and I thought ‘Something feels different here.’ I started to drive around the slag heaps and then finally stood in one spot. It was then that I realized that as far as my eye could see everything had been transformed, there was nothing natural left. Slag heaps and incredible aquamarine water. It was like another world. It was surreal. I thought, ‘This is where I want to go. I want to do the mined landscape.’

(Quoted in Pauli 2003: 18)

While Burtynsky, unlike the Bechers, rarely focuses on the industrial machinery of mining (as does Unite), his visceral depiction of the scars upon, and damage done to, the earth that mining produces, demonstrates similar concerns to those underpinning her *Terra* body of work.

Sammy Boloji, born in Lubumbashi in the DRC, uses found archival images sourced from colonial mining archives that show the horrors of colonial mining practices and montages these with contemporary photographs that demonstrate the present devastation left in its wake. Boloji’s juxtaposition of historical and contemporary images forces the viewer to consider what, if any, changes have taken place and situates the blatant abuses of the past in the context of the present injustices that the exploitation of the earth’s resources leaves in its wake. His work echoes Unite’s juxtaposition of archival documents and photographs with her original drawings, showing the devastating impact that mining and colonialism have had on both society and the environment.

Boloji’s primary concern is with the neo-colonialism that precipitates from current





Paradox of Plenty Installation
Western Cape Archives & Records Service, Cape Town
2012

globalised industrial practices, in many ways not dissimilar to the human rights and environmental abuses of the past. His work seems to argue that there is little difference between the racialised slavery of Leopold's Congo and the contemporary economic structures underpinning the resource industry in the third world today.

Papa Essel was born in the gold mining town of Aboso in Ghana. Educated both at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology and at the University of London (the city which is now his home). His paintings, which explore the relationship between word and image, and which draw on the visual language of Akan textiles, carry strong political messages, often related to mining (Magee 2010: 12). Additionally Essel makes use of *adinkra* symbols – a Ghanaian form of communication traditionally, but not exclusively, associated with mourning – in his work at times, almost as a linking mechanism between the English text and the illustrative elements on his canvases.

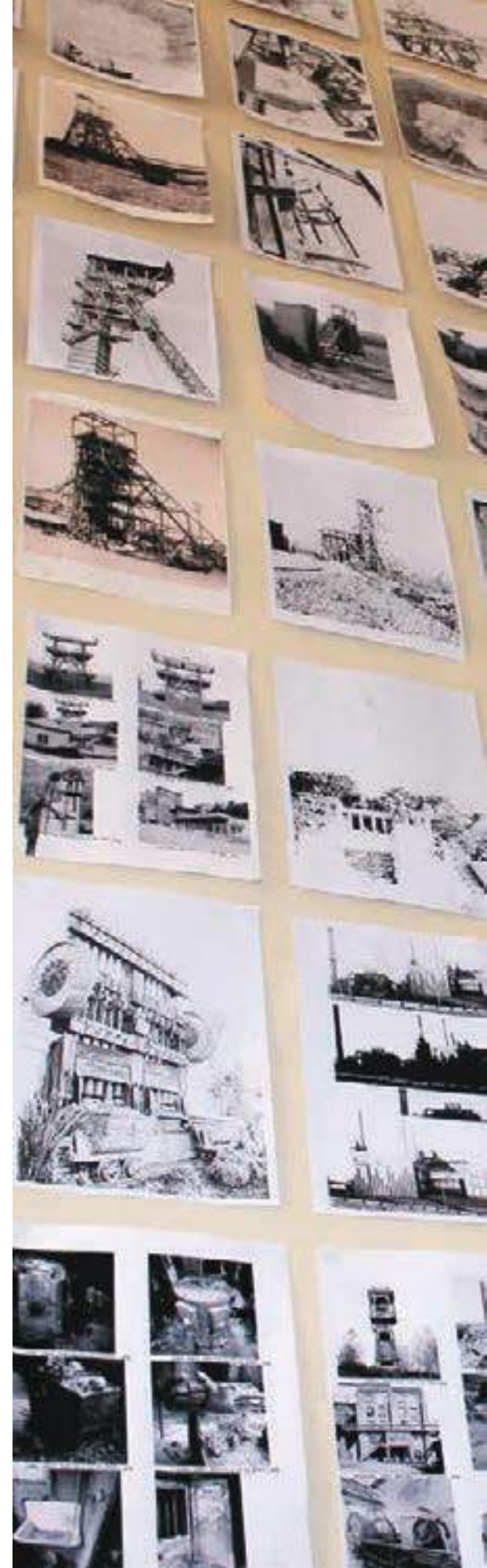
Essel's work utilises not only pictorial symbolism but also that of colour to make his points. In the work *Gold @ All Costs* (2006) the predominant colours are gold and red. The latter is the colour of anger in *kente* cloth, and juxtaposed with lettering and graphic elements (not, in this case, *adinkra* symbols but pictorial images of a headgear and floral motifs) in gold seems to evoke the idea of a field of blood littered with funerary and industrial remains. Text blocks stating 'villages must move for more new gold mines', 'deforestation and forest reserves', 'too poor to mine the gold' and others drive the message home: gold mining causes great damage, both environmental and social.

From the Bowl of the Land (1996) uses horizontal 'strips' or registers in a manner that references the manufacture of Akan textiles but also speaks of the way that different elements in the landscape are 'stitched together' (Magee 2010: 12). Essel's recent work has tended to focus on text to a greater extent, as in *Unfair Exchange* (2007) Here the artist uses quotations about buying gold by western economists in a central panel and, according to Carol Magee, 'comments not only on the unfair conditions of production and compensation that exist within the gold mining industry in Ghana, but in other industries as well' (2010: 14).

Papa Essel's hard-hitting canvases inextricably link greed for gold and the social and environmental devastation that this causes very powerfully. While Jeannette Unite's work does not carry such direct messages (although there are echoes in such works as *Earthscars: Text Response* [2004]) there can be no doubt that their shared concern for the legacy of mining in their respective countries of birth emerge from a shared, if geographically and otherwise distanced, space.

David Walker-Barker is a British academic and artist who works with the way that the landscape intersects with human history in terms of mining, minerals and geology. His research, such as that undertaken in the Northern Pennine ore field – which has a documented history of mining going back to the twelfth century and ceased operations in the late 1990s – has shown a deep sensitivity to the archival and human material culture that intersected with the activity of mining (Walker-Barker 2006).

Walker-Barker notes that the North Pennine mining landscape 'has provided a complexity of geological and human lineages embedded in the fabric of the landscape, in its layers of time; its diversity and details providing a unique coincidence of features and often obscure narratives' (2006: 14). For Walker-Barker the landscape itself is a studio of sorts, analogous to the more traditional artist's working space: 'On entering





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these locations I am seeking ways to articulate the complex combination of physical histories and layers of meaning located there, representations that encapsulate the human resonance with its physical fabric' (2006: 15).

Walker-Barker's research on the Northern Pennine lead and fluorspar mining area (which includes such evocatively named features as the 'West Rigg Open Cut' and 'Slitt Vein') culminated in an exhibition entitled 'In Search of a Hidden Landscape' which took place at Killhope Lead Mining Museum, Weardale, County Durham from May to October 2006. The works drew upon archival images from the area as well as a long and sustained research process of interviewing former miners (many of whom were traumatised by the mine closures and initially reluctant to speak) and utilised minerals and materials collected on site (Annabel Jackson Associates 2007). Iconographically, Walker-Barker also drew from the indigenous miners' craft of making spar boxes that he describes as:

[A]n imagined and alternative space, a world in miniature, a cabinet of curiosities that acted as an analogue to the miners' experience of the hidden landscape in which they spent a major part of their lives. Often beautifully fashioned, they were painstakingly fabricated and represent a unique example of an indigenous form of folk art that flourished in the North Pennines for only a brief period.

(Walker-Barker 2006: 14)

These decorative cases or boxes held mineral specimens that miners found underground and were exhibited competitively. Some of the few remaining original examples (the tradition has recently been revived, especially amongst former miners) are housed in the Killhope Museum, where 'In Search of a Hidden Landscape' took place.

In works such as *A Doorway into Unknown Levels* and *Beyond the Doors are Other Worlds* Walker-Barker evocatively attempted to convey the actual experience of the miners underground, referencing the doors beyond which the mine begins as a subterranean domain in and of itself. The combination of three decades of knowledge of the landscape, his deep research into the history of the area (see Walker Barker 2006) and his interviews with miners combined with his obvious pleasure at the physical beauty of the minerals emanating from the landscape to create an exhibition of works that drew enormous popular response locally. One visitor commented '[t]he art gave a wonderful sense of the place. Using materials from the area, natural pigments, the organic quality to it, the worked in feeling' while another noted that '[t]he pieces are quite magical, alchemical. They take things from the area and give them a different sense.'

(Annabel Jackson Associates 2007: 22)

While many artists have touched upon mining in their practice, very few contemporary artists have made it the centre of their practical research. The handful of artists discussed above, like Jeannette Unite, have chosen this path and in so doing have highlighted the complexities and layers of history that lie beneath the surface of today's mining legacies, just as the strata of the earth contain rare materials that need to be extracted and processed in order to understand their value and significance to humans.

Andrew Lamprecht is an art curator, writer and academic with a focus on contemporary South African art.





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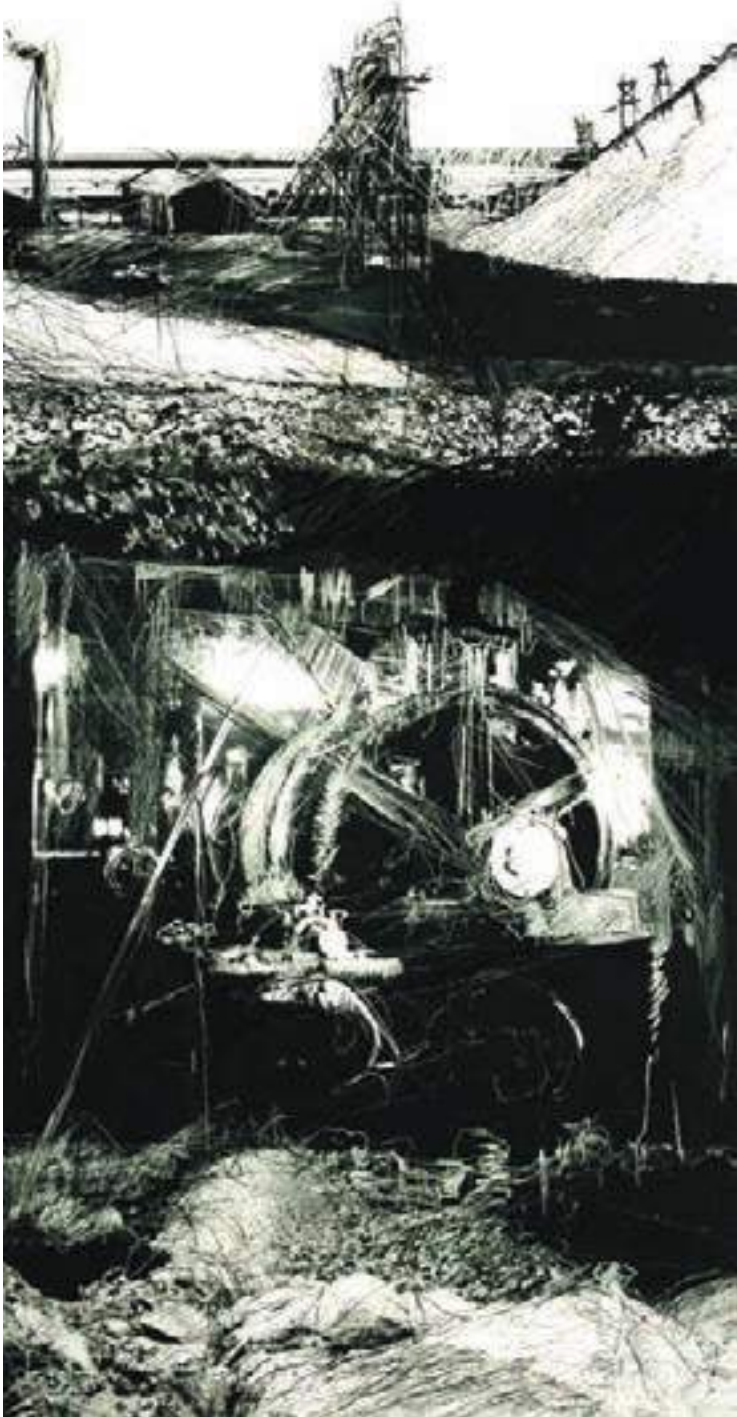
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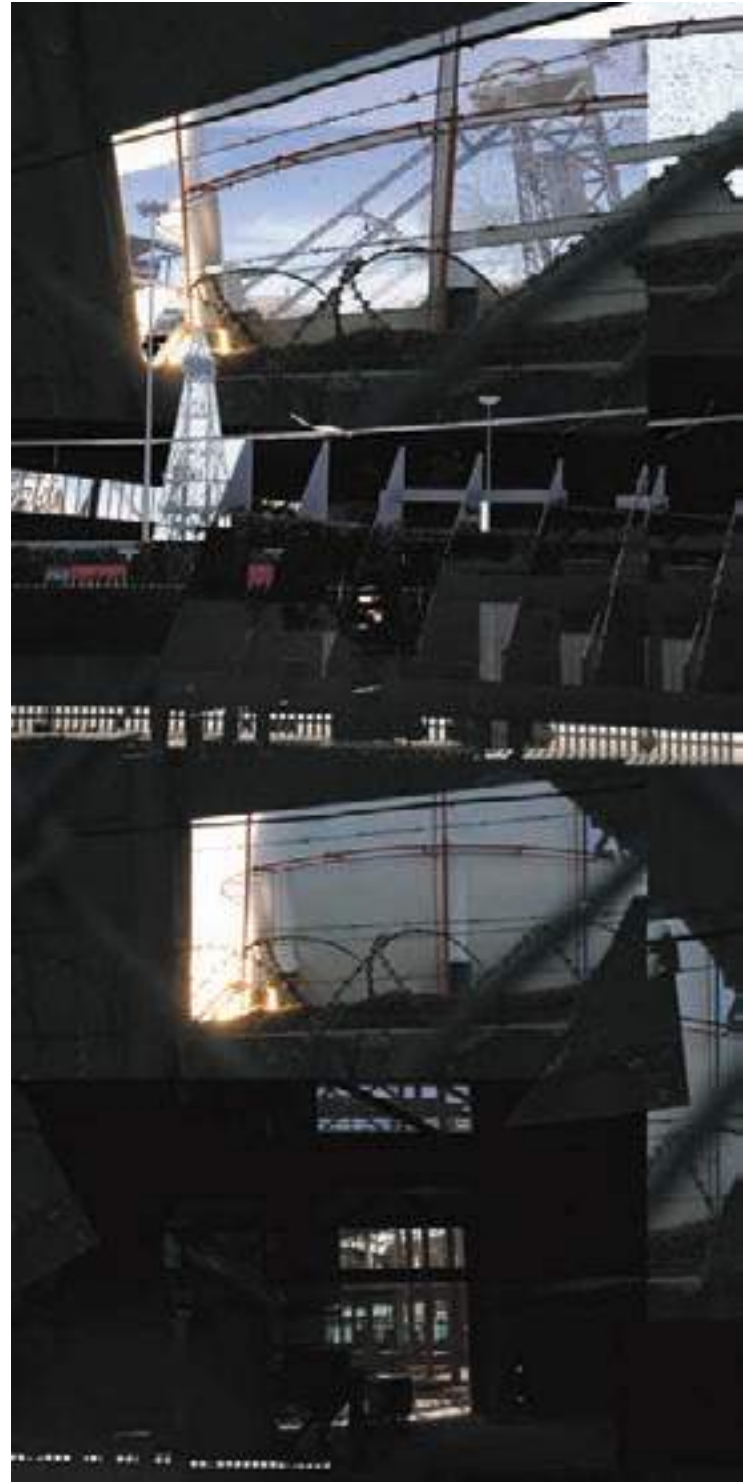
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Above Below I, II, III, IV, V & VI
Drawing on photocollage print on cotton rag archival paper
1000 x 500mm 2012 COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST





Above Below VII, VIII, IX & X
Drawing on photocollage print on cotton rag archival paper
1000 x 500mm 2011 COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

Paradox of Plenty: No-Mans Land

Artist-made pastels with mine dump tailings and metal oxides on cotton rag archival paper 1200 x 600mm 2011 COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST



Paradox of Plenty: Gargoyle

Artist-made pastels with mine dump tailings and metal oxides on cotton rag archival paper 1200 x 600mm 2011 COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST



Paradox of Plenty: Watermark

Artist-made pastels with mine dump tailings and metal oxides on cotton rag archival paper 1200 x 600mm 2011 COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST



Paradox of Plenty: Between Heaven & Earth
Artist-made pastels with mine dump tailings and metal oxides on cotton rag archival paper 1200 x 600mm 2011
COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST



Paradox of Plenty: Construction
Artist-made pastels with mine dump tailings and metal oxides on cotton rag archival paper 1200 x 600mm 2011
COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST



Paradox of Plenty: Rush
Artist-made pastels with mine dump tailings and metal oxides on cotton rag archival paper 1200 x 600mm 2011
PRIVATE COLLECTION, CAPE TOWN



NOTE: PARALLAX

There is a modified photomontage that hangs – along with dozens of other drawings, paintings, glassworks and the like – on a wall in Jeannette Unite’s studio/living room. It got my attention in the course of one of those working brunches that go on until 2 a.m. the next morning. My eye kept returning to it, idly, distractedly, nagging away ...

For a long time I couldn’t understand why – it’s not one of the strongest, most striking, or most compelling works on display in the working clutter of the studio. If anything it looks possibly unfinished, still in need of some elements that will bring it all together.

The piece is made up basically of two separate images, vertically stacked one above the other and printed on a large sheet of photographic paper. On this surface Unite has worked with painterly markings of an expressionist order in swirling whites and greys. One of the juxtaposed images is of a mining headgear of Victorian vintage set in what has the look of an industrial yard. It may be of the Big Hole Museum in Kimberley – it certainly has that colonial-era, corrugated-iron look.

The other component image – that in the lower half of the sheet – is a photograph taken inside a mine shaft, looking into depth underground. It is of a tunnel, framed and supported by heavy ironwood spars that also serve to lead the eye in classic perspectival usage towards a vanishing point, that never arrives, being swallowed up as the underground murk melts to impenetrable black.

The above and the below. Crassly put, the image is interesting – or at least capable of interest – in the way it contrasts or juxtaposes the public face of what you see above ground with the underground reality of extracting minerals from the reluctant and resistant earth, and at formal level in the interplay between the triumphal lines and geometries of industry and the lumpy organic insistence of earth.

But where the piece achieves something visually remarkable is in the area of transition between the two stacked images, and the way Unite’s marks serve to define the surface.

Before specifying what exactly this is, two observations in parenthesis. While we are sitting around a table in the artist’s studio, while my gaze restlessly returns to the work described here, while we (the artist, co-editor Andrew Lamprecht and I) talk about this and that in relation to this project, Jeannette has a large sheet of artist’s paper in front of her, and all the while she is working on a new drawing of a gigantic attenuated piece of industrial machinery that stretches horizontally across the landscape-format of the paper from edge to edge and engages in several dynamic explosions of formal energy in between. She is half-listening, half-engaging with the conversation, but all the while, as though there are two centres of consciousness at play here, two separate agents sharing a headquarters, she is scratching and rubbing away. Half an ear one way, one





Above Below XI, XII, XIII & XIV

Drawing and ink on photocollage print on cotton rag archival paper using artist-made pastels containing carbon black, iron oxide, charcoal, metal oxides, titanium, ink, pigment with carbon, calcium and mine dump tailings 1000 x 500mm 2011 COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

eye turned to another, it is as though the drawing is doing itself in between sips of wine. It is not exactly the same thing, but the method I am observing is also not very far away from the practice of automatic drawing that engaged and fascinated the Surrealists. It is one in which, because conscious attention is wandering elsewhere, the usually repressed contents of the unconscious are given freer rein, coaxed as it were into free play and assuming an agency rather than their characteristic role of subterranean *mise en scène*. The Surrealists cherished automatism as a state of grace in which the ego and rational process receded, and it is not hard to take their point: the indefinable power of art lies precisely in its preconscious communications, and – at least in the expressionist register – the closer one comes to operating from the unconscious, the more immediate will be the communication.

The other observation I want to make here is that when – like Archimedes leaping out of the bath – I shared with her the perception I'd been trying for half the day to crystallise, Jeannette was at best mildly interested. She could see what I was getting at, but it was not something she had noticed before in relation to the work. Neither was achieving that particular effect in any way part of her intention in working into the montage. Her response can best be described as indulgent: this is the kind of thing that critics say, not the kind of thing that artists do.

Okay, with all this said, what is the point? Simply this: if you block off the bottom half of the image, the zone of indeterminacy worked with Unite's expressionistic marks belongs to the upper image of the mining headgear. You read the surface as a free rendering of the ground in which the industrial apparatus is set. If on the other hand, you block off the top half, the area in between the two reproduced images reads as the ceiling of the mine tunnel, defining texture as the space moves into depth.

In short, she has generated a profound ambiguity, a zone where what is represented is neither one thing nor the other, but also both things at the same time. It is more than merely *trompe l'oeil*. What it effects is a kind of dialogue between representation and expressionism, an intensification of the preconscious communications of the mark in relation to what is recognisably depicted. The artist has created a zone of dynamic uncertainty, in which, the mark – the ultimate currency of abstract expression – is in a state of flux, of ambiguity and constant becoming.

It is mark-making on steroids, or maybe in a state of grace. At its best – and this particular work is not its best, just conveniently illustrative of the effect – the interplay that Unite creates between the shapes of industrial development and the pure visual energy that erupts out of the earth and in the spaces in between is both charged with high drama and shot through with poignant ambivalence.

Paradox of Plenty: Harvest

Artist-made pastels with mine dump tailings and metal oxides on cotton rag archival paper 1200 x 600mm 2011
COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST



Paradox of Plenty: Conquest

Artist-made pastels with mine dump tailings and metal oxides on cotton rag archival paper 1200 x 600mm 2011
COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST



Paradox of Plenty: Collision/Collusion

Artist-made pastels with mine dump tailings and metal oxides on cotton rag archival paper 1200 x 600mm 2011
COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST



Paradox of Plenty: Trade Ex-Change

Artist-made pastels with mine dump tailings and metal oxides on cotton rag archival paper 1200 x 600mm 2011
COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST



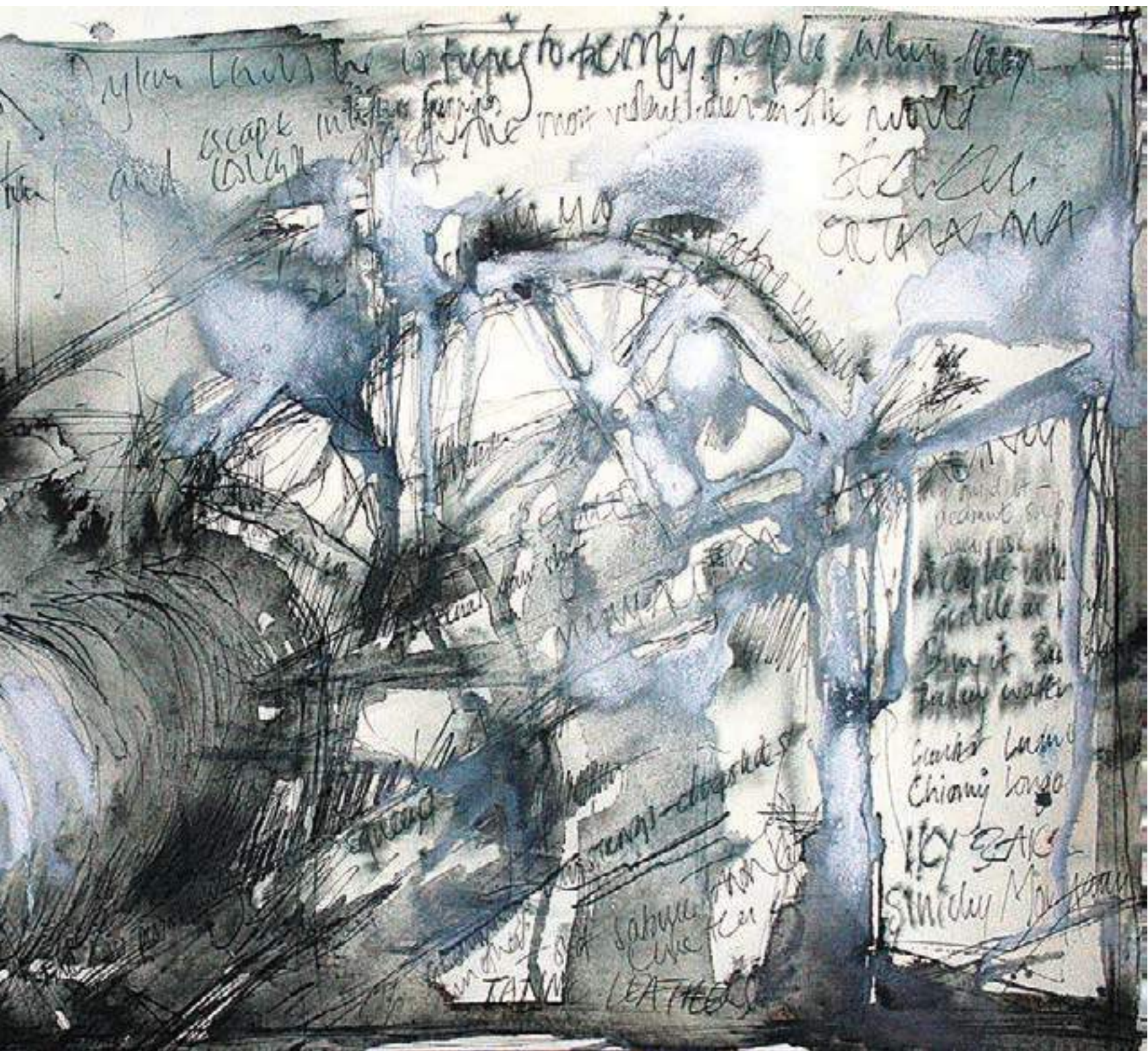
Paradox of Plenty: Studies

Drawing with artist-made pastels and inks with mine dump tailings and metal oxides, including iron oxide, titanium, zinc, manganese, calcium and pigments, on cotton rag archival paper. Variable sizes approx 300 x 400mm each 2011 COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

Paradox of Plenty: Studies

Drawing with artist-made pastels and inks with mine dump tailings and metal oxides, including iron oxide, titanium, zinc, manganese, calcium and pigments, on cotton rag archival paper. Variable sizes approx 300 x 400mm each 2011 PRIVATE COLLECTION GERMANY

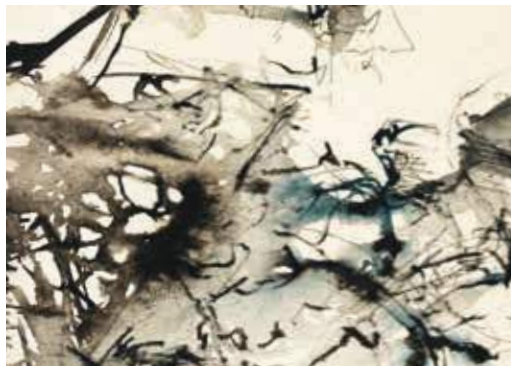




Paradox of Plenty: Studies

Drawing with artist-made pastels and inks with mine dump tailings and metal oxides, including iron, titanium, zinc, manganese, calcium and pigments, on cotton rag archival paper variable sizes approx 300 x 400mm each 2011 COLLECTION MELANIE CHAIT





Paradox of Plenty: Studies

Drawing with artist-made pastels and inks with mine dump tailings and metal oxides, including iron, titanium, zinc, manganese, calcium and pigments, on cotton rag archival paper variable sizes approx 300 x 400mm each 2011 COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

NOTE: PLENTY

The way it plays in Claude Monet's *Haystacks*, or his views of Rouen Cathedral, is Art History 101: the same thing seen in different lights, at different times of day, with varying degrees of atmospheric interference, does not look the same. Its identity shifts, and the way the viewer, too, perceives the image – its affective charge – is likewise fluid and elusive.

In Impressionism the paradox unpacks in a particular and metaphysically subversive way, as generations of artists grappled with, interrogated and developed a zeitgeist problematically inscribed or encountered in the Impressionist moment.

At the heart of the matter is this: at the end of the day, after all the versions are done, Monet does not leave us with a haystack at all.

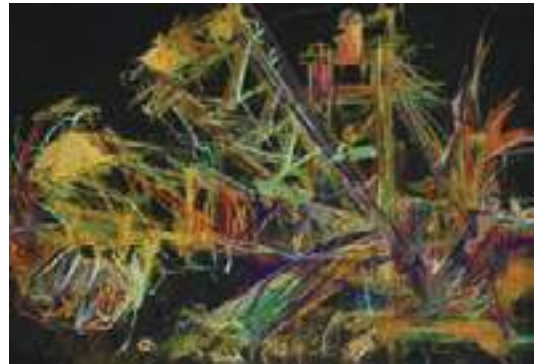
He gives us only views or versions, loci for the play of light that is no respecter of form. This play of light – light that exists in perception only in relation to form – is the real and perpetually elusive subject of Monet's retinal interrogations. The 'thing' is undercut, subverted and denied in the versions of the thing – at the same time and in the same series of gestures that it is enriched and elaborated.

The collector's paradox, the perplexity of the multiple perspective.

Jeannette plunders the sites that provide her subject for material and for memory. She makes relics out of found detritus; she all but inveterately assembles photographic images and versions she makes of her subject sites across time and through geological depredation.

Her subject becomes a palimpsest of itself, a multiple of clues in a metaphysical mystery, a whodunnit even, that never, by definition, arrives at a solution or a finality. And it leaves her work restlessly unfolding, ultimately and inalienably anxious, caught in the paradox of the plenty.

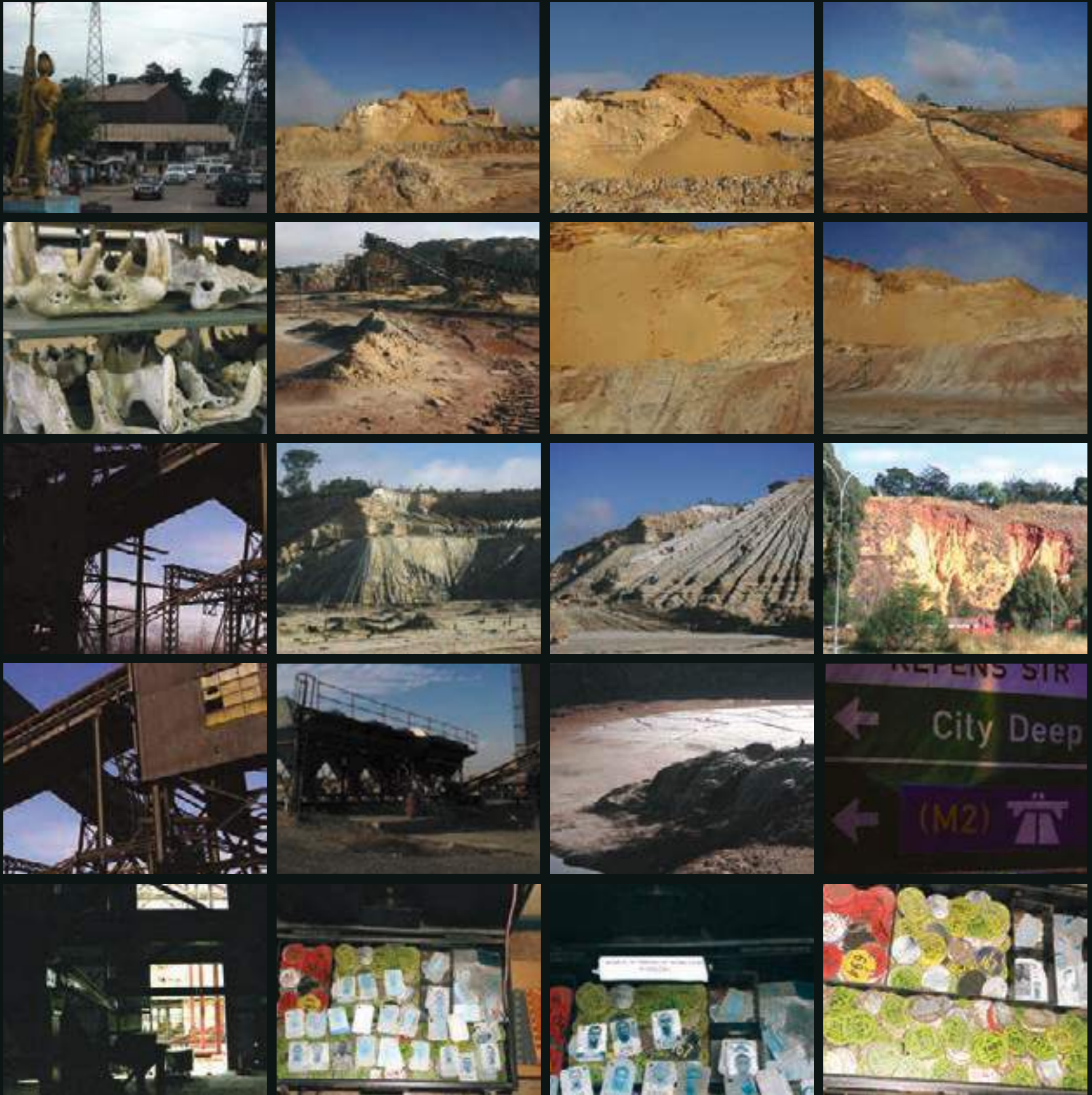




Paradox of Plenty: Paper Studies

Artist-made pastels containing carbon black, iron, metal oxides, charcoal, carbon, calcium and mine dump tailings on cotton rag archival paper approx 300 x 400mm 2011 COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST





Photographs of gold mines in Welkom, Free State, Johannesburg, South Africa, Ibusi, Ashanti Kingdom, Ghana & Arusha, Tanzania taken by the artist between 2005 & 2011

3



HEADGEAR



Headgear: The Four Rushes. Copper, Diamond, Gold & Platinum
Mixed media on archival cotton rag paper 690 x 1100mm 2007
COLLECTION SMUTS STUDIO ARCHITECTS

HEADGEAR: MINING ENGINEERING DRAWINGS

Just then they came in sight of thirty or forty windmills that rise from that plain. And no sooner did Don Quixote see them that he said to his squire, 'Fortune is guiding our affairs better than we ourselves could have wished. Do you see over yonder, friend Sancho, thirty or forty hulking giants? I intend to do battle with them and slay them. With their spoils we shall begin to be rich for this is a righteous war and the removal of so foul a brood from off the face of the earth ...'

—Don Quixote (Cervantes 1605)

Mine headgear constructions support wheel mechanisms for suspending winding cables that transport workers and ore up and down deep-level shafts. These strange anthropomorphic structures have become the iconic symbol for mining. I am compelled to document and draw multiple representations of these icons as a memorial to South Africa's changing landscape. The abstract engineering of the headgears provide a visual construct that codifies the mining industry's social and geopolitical history.

Headgears and the pale ochre gold mine ore dumps are a vanishing aspect of Johannesburg's landscape and heritage. The remaining few structures are monuments to the elemental drama of Johannesburg's gold rush. Decades of mining have left a legacy of deep tunnels, and in the contemporary era, gold mining residues are reprocessed and funnelled back into these underground tunnels. Above ground, evidence of Johannesburg's mining history is being dismantled, and the disappearing headgears erase memories of the high social and political cost of mining.

Shaftheads, sandwiched between highways and bland post-modernist corporate headquarters, hint at the tremendous industry below ground that energises and defines 'Jozi', as the city is fondly referred to. Johannesburg's prime monuments are underground, submerged and invisible, yet tangible like an underground Eiffel Tower – an inverted emblem that conjures up the esoteric domain of the Axis Mundi. The centre points of this scarred earth are vertical edifices that link the grounds above and below, and earth and sky. Count among these various pillars and columns, trees, towers, staircases and ladders that create access points for transferring resources from the mines, and from Jungian realms of the threshold of consciousness.²

The ore and waste products that rise from the mine are imbued with material and metaphysical properties coded in subterranean information and data. The significant properties of materials and metals fascinate physicists and alchemists, but the world of mining is a Dante-esque inferno balanced between the earth's crust and its fiery core of magma, within its brooding caverns where the heat and the resistant rock face consumes the lives of miners who brave these depths to extract these resources. The metaphysical properties of minerals harvested are transformed and transmuted in the artist's process.

The composite images of mine headgears in my drawings refer to the enterprise of mining and impact of discovery and rush to exploit mineral resources in South Africa: the discovery of the Namaqualand copper deposits, followed by the discovery of the diamond fields of Kimberley, the Johannesburg gold rush and finally the scramble for the platinum mines. It is Africa's tragic history that the scramble for mineral resources

Headgear: 6 Kilometres

Drawing on archival cotton rag paper with handmade pastels including carbon, charcoal, iron oxide, titanium, yellow ochre & mixed media
1500 x 830mm 2009 PRIVATE COLLECTION JOHANNESBURG





Headgear: 6 Metres Under

Mixed media drawing on archival cotton rag paper with handmade pastels, including carbon, charcoal, iron oxide, titanium and yellow ochre 2450 x 830mm 2008

COLLECTION CARLTON HOOD

everywhere on the continent yields mainly an impoverished inheritance for most Africans. It is generally true in Africa that wherever there is extreme wealth beneath the surface there is extreme poverty above the ground. The global corporations have named this the ‘the resource curse’. Cyril Obi claims that this construct ameliorates the mining houses’ complicity in the maintaining of a status quo that exploits the poor in the extraction of African resources (Obi 2008). As Duncan Miller has pointed out, the discovery of Namaqualand’s copper electrified the Western world and yet there is no tertiary institution in Namaqualand and unemployment there is amongst the highest rates anywhere in South Africa (Miller 2006).

‘Oom Fanie’, a Namaqualand crystal hunter guided me to the Simon van der Stel mine site in 2006. What remains of the Simon van der Stel prospect near Concordia is a caged orifice in a mountain tinged verdigris from oxidised copper in the rock. Initiated in 1686, this was the first colonial mining prospect in South Africa, but the ore could only leave Namaqualand via Port Nolloth after industrial technology facilitated the construction of a railway specifically designed to ship out the extracted copper.

The first headgear I photographed was in Namaqualand at the Nababeep copper mine. Initially, security wouldn’t permit access to the mine, but fortuitously I met the owner on that same day at the residence of a local journalist and received his permission to photograph. The mine owner had purchased all the copper mine dumps for the same value as he now receives for one truckload sent to Gauteng to be reprocessed. At the mine site, there were two large craters in the earth, each a slightly different shade of mineral-impregnated green. The viridian hues come from copper, zinc and lead, which are found together in nature. These metals have similar properties and are near each other on the periodic table. The site was scattered with large boulders streaked through with cyanide deposits. The red soil near the quarry was tinged green from the oxidising copper content. Beyond the scarred earth of the mine, the orange Namaqualand daisies were in bloom.

An isolated image of a winding gear doesn’t reveal the variations in their design and engineering or how varied and inventive each headgear was. Their variety may be a response to new materials and methods of binding the metals, such as pop rivets, and may also reflect the particular skills of the individual engineers who built these structures. Perhaps unique design configurations are a form of expression for industry players in a competitive environment in which most structures dwarf human proportion. The earliest structures for shallow depth shafts were wooden. In the evolution of the technological innovations of exploitation in Africa, construction shifted from pop rivets to welding, and the most recent structures are concrete.

My focus on headgear and mining engineering started with a 2007 visit to the Western Cape Archives in the Old Gaol in Cape Town to carry out research on mining. At the archive, I was confronted by posters everywhere prohibiting the use of cameras. I negotiated an exhibition of the archive’s content in exchange for capturing their data with my camera. In the reading room, I met a journalist for *Mining Weekly*, who linked me to people in the mining industry. Various journeys followed, to Kimberley, the Kalahari, Namaqualand, Johannesburg, Newcastle, Namibia and Dundee, resulting in access to manganese, uranium, coal, diamond, gold, platinum and titanium mines. I have subsequently read mining journals and books, including one written by the first general manager for the De Beers diamond cartel (Williams 1905). In 2008 I found the majority of historical photographs of headgears in folders in MuseumAfrica in Newtown. The folders were labelled ‘Headgear: Gold’, but there were no references to which mines the individual structures served. I have had conversations with mining industry leaders and interviews with mining personnel who worked for these mines. These conversations and interviews reveal a lot about the mining industry in South Africa.

Headgear: Winding Gear Shaft

Drawing on archival cotton rag paper with artist-made pastels that include carbon, charcoal, iron oxide, titanium, yellow ochre & mixed media 1500 x 830mm 2009

COLLECTION IONA CELLARS, GRABOUW





Headgear: Deep Blue Shaft

Drawing on archival cotton rag paper with artist-made pastels that include carbon, charcoal, iron oxide, titanium, yellow ochre, cobalt & mixed media 1500 x 830mm 2010

COLLECTION JADE DAVENPORT

The resource industry is still a largely male-dominated world that thrives on brute force and harsh physical labour. The harvesting of these materials for our constructed environment is dangerous, dirty and devastating on the environment. The feminine disappears off the landscape like Persephone into the underworld leaving a barren, cold and flowerless world. There is little sentimentality in this world of industry. The human and technological input merely serves the ultimate goal of extracting as much resource from the earth as possible in the most profitable manner. Headgears are central to this endeavour and encode a memory of each mine's history of profit. These edifices of industry do not remain long after they become obsolete. It is our responsibility to document this continuously changing landscape so that the history of the headgears does not vanish with their demise.

The history of mining in South Africa is intertwined with issues relating to migrant labour, geological, geographical, ecological and economic impact of mining on the environment, and the persistence of corporate giants that exploit the labour of masses of workers to bring these resources to the surface. I set out to capture some of these issues in my series of etchings and large-scale drawings of headgears. The materials and colours I use in my drawings are derived from the landscape and reflect the elements extracted from the earth in the process of mining. My handmade pastels come from mine dump tailings and my colours from metal oxides sourced from actual manganese, copper, gold, titanium and platinum prospects. I have chosen to etch and draw on a scale limited only by the physical constraints of industrial construction board and the size of glass and rolls of cotton rag paper available to me. The grounds for these works are so large that I have to rig up platforms and ladders to access the upper reaches of the paper. The intended results are drawings that dwarf human scale to reflect the gargantuan size of the ore- and earth-moving machinery involved in the mining processes.

These drawings of headgears are a lyrical interpretation of structures that 'dance' and stagger across our post-industrial, postcolonial, mineral-laden earth. They speak to the pride and arrogance of our industrial-scale exploitation of the earth and allude to the rape, plunder and greed that drives humanity's compulsive metal harvesting, necessary to sustain our resource-dependent existence.

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Headgear: Conveyor

Drawing on archival cotton rag paper with artist-made pastels that include carbon, charcoal, iron oxide, titanium, yellow ochre & mixed media 2450 x 1250mm 2008
PRIVATE COLLECTION, CAPE TOWN





Headgear: Gold Shaft

Drawing on archival cotton rag paper with artist-made pastels that include carbon, charcoal, iron oxide, titanium, yellow ochre & mixed media 2450 x 1250mm 2008

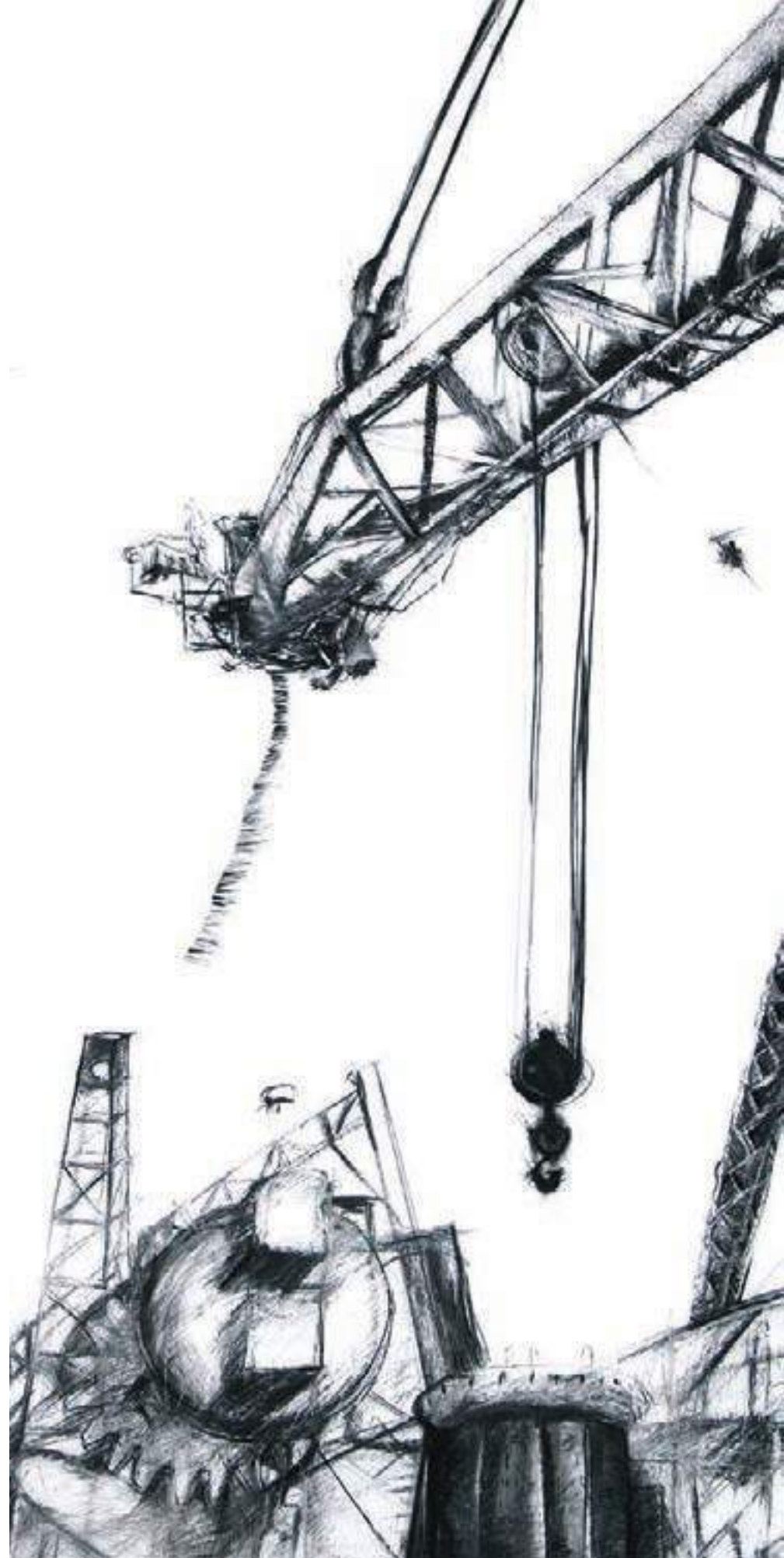
COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST



Headgear: Namaqualand Copper

Drawing on archival cotton rag paper with artist-made pastels that include carbon, charcoal, iron oxide, titanium, yellow ochre & mixed media 2450 x 1250mm 2008

COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST



Headgear: Sending The Steel

Drawing on archival cotton rag paper with artist-made pastels that include carbon, charcoal, iron oxide, titanium, yellow ochre & mixed media 2450 x 1250mm 2008

COLLECTION DEREK & MARINE WILLIAMS

Headgear: Gold Deep

Drawing on archival cotton rag paper with artist-made pastels, including carbon, charcoal, iron oxide, titanium, yellow ochre & mixed media 2450 x 1250mm 2008
COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST



Headgear: Winding Gear Mechanism

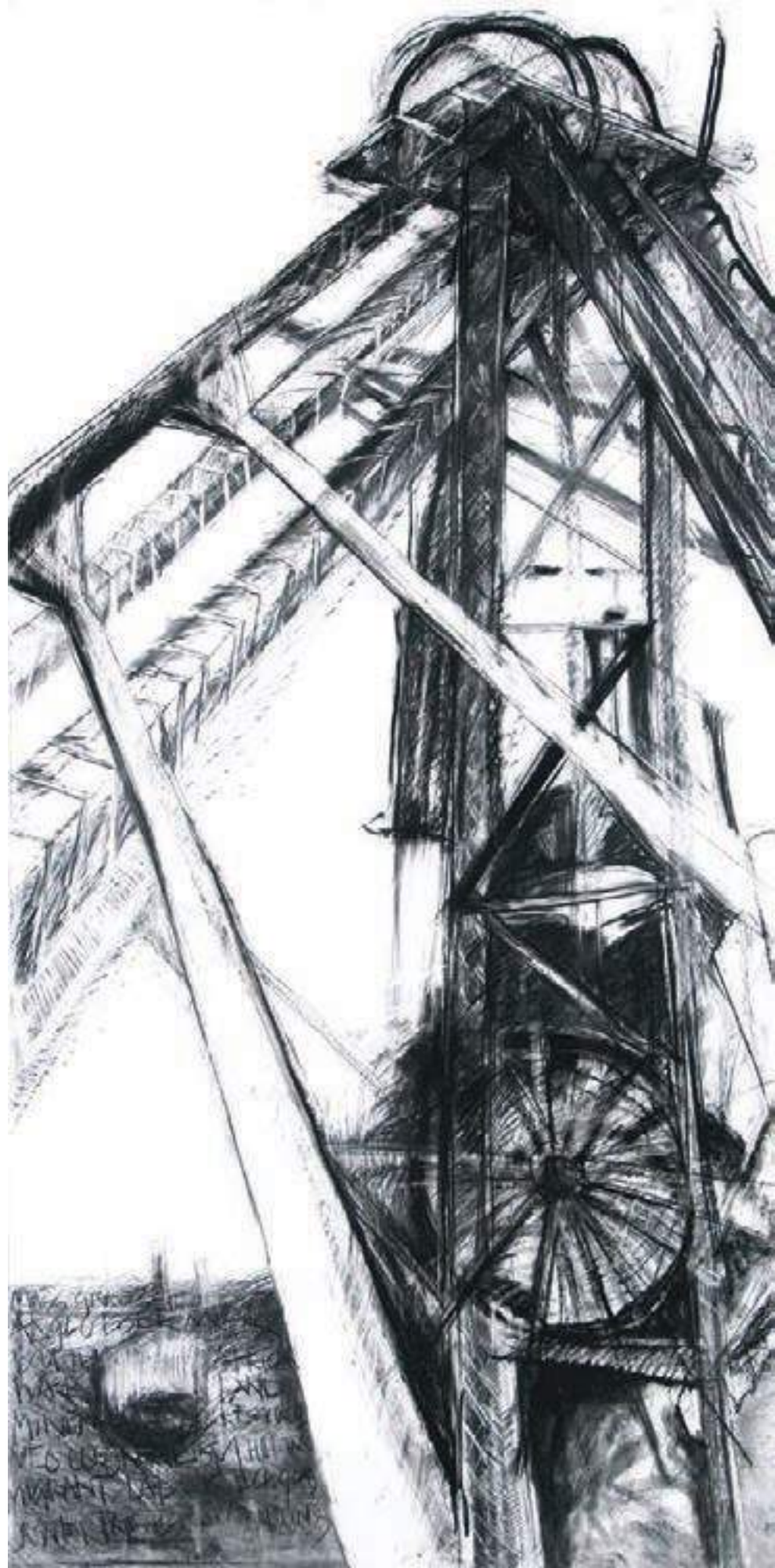
Drawing on archival cotton rag paper with artist-made pastels, including carbon, charcoal, iron oxide, titanium, yellow ochre & mixed media 1500 x 830mm 2008
COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST



Headgear: Shaft Head Apparatus

Drawing on archival cotton rag paper with artist-made pastels, including carbon, charcoal, iron oxide, titanium, yellow ochre & mixed media 1500 x 830mm 2009
COLLECTION IONA CELLAR, GRABOUW, CAPE





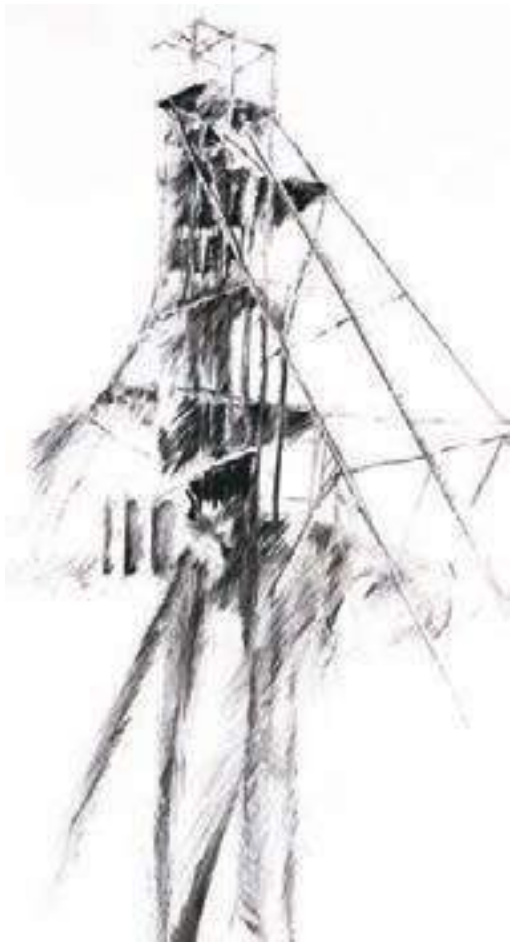
Headgear: Kimberley - A Different Angle

Drawing on archival cotton rag paper with artist-made pastels that include carbon, charcoal, iron oxide, titanium, yellow ochre & mixed media
2450 x 1250mm 2008

PRIVATE COLLECTION, CAPE TOWN

Headgear: West Shaft

Drawing on archival cotton rag paper with artist-made pastels that include carbon, charcoal, iron oxide, titanium, yellow ochre & mixed media 1500 x 830mm 2008
PRIVATE COLLECTION, CAPE TOWN



Headgear: East Shaft

Drawing on archival cotton rag paper with artist-made pastels that include carbon, charcoal, iron oxide, titanium, yellow ochre & mixed media 1500 x 830mm 2008
PRIVATE COLLECTION, CAPE TOWN



Headgear: Gold Seam

Drawing on archival cotton rag paper with artist-made pastels that include carbon, charcoal, iron oxide, titanium, yellow ochre & mixed media 1500 x 830mm 2008
COLLECTION ROBERT GRACE, CAPE TOWN



Headgear: Gold Deep

Drawing on archival cotton rag paper with artist-made pastels that include carbon, charcoal, iron oxide, titanium, yellow ochre & mixed media 1500 x 830mm 2008
COLLECTION MARIANNE CASE



Headgear: 6 Down Gold

Drawing on archival cotton rag paper with artist-made pastels that include carbon, charcoal, iron oxide, titanium, yellow ochre & mixed media 1500 x 830mm 2008
COLLECTION LOMBAARD, JOHANNESBURG



Headgear: Shafted Gold

Drawing on archival cotton rag paper with artist-made pastels that include carbon, charcoal, iron oxide, titanium, yellow ochre & mixed media 1500 x 830mm 2008
PRIVATE COLLECTION, JOHANNESBURG







Headgear images courtesy Western Cape Archives and Records Service, Cape Town, MuseumAfrica, Johannesburg and from the artist's journeys to the Kalahari, Namaqualand and Johannesburg, 2006 - 2011



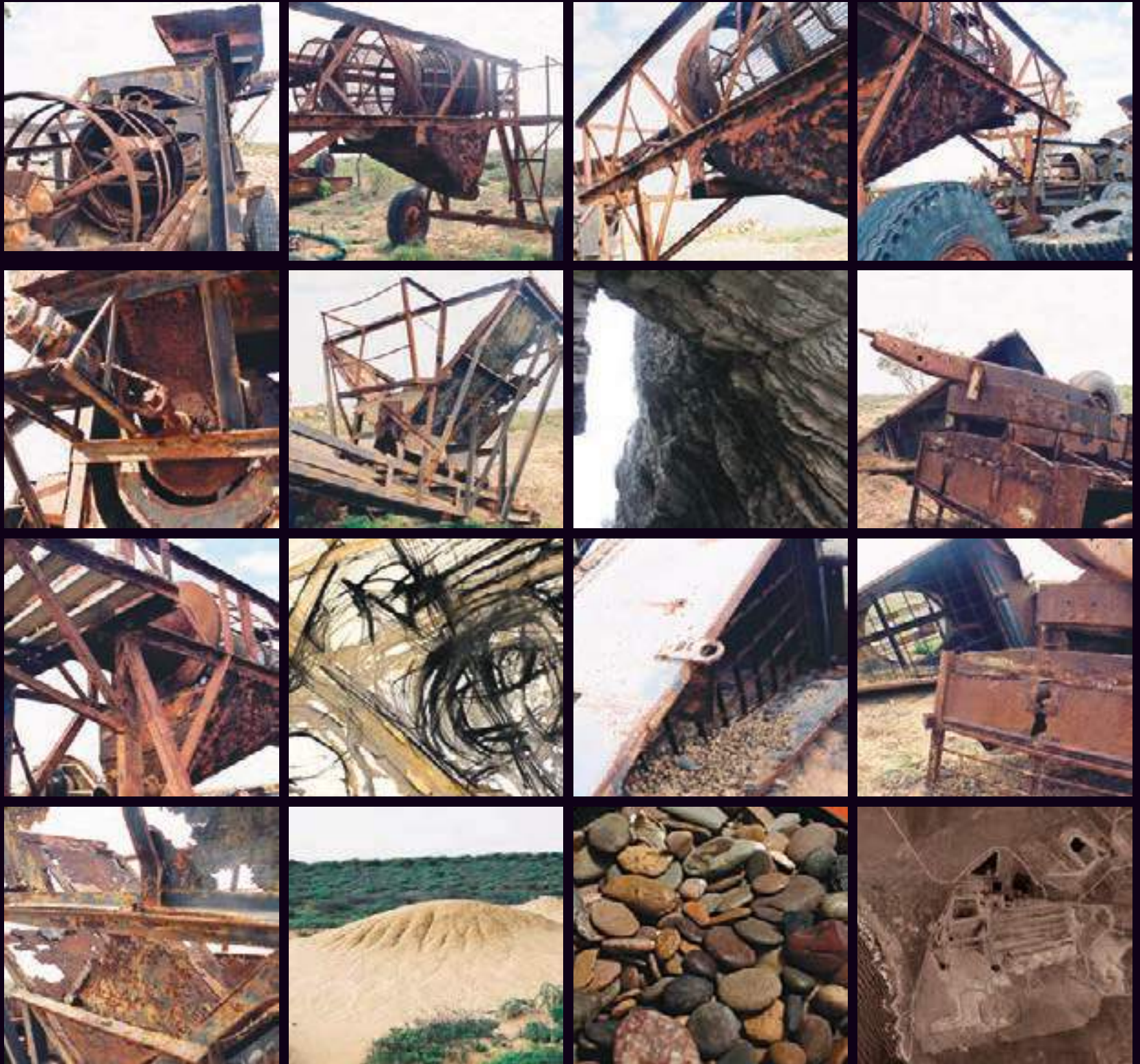


Headgear images courtesy Western Cape Archives and Records Service, Cape Town, MuseumAfrica, Johannesburg and from the artist's journeys to the Kalahari, Namaqualand and Johannesburg, 2006 - 2011

4



EARTHSCARS



West Coast diamond mines on alluvial Palaeolithic beach deposits that have diamondiferous gravels, tailings and rusting 'trommels' that were used for separating the diamonds from the eroded pebbles washed down by the Orange and Olifant Rivers. The diamonds are originally from the Kimberley area, due east, moved down by the glacial and fluvial action. It is even speculated that diamonds in South America could be from Kimberley because the continents drifted apart from the once-homogeneous continental mass of Gondwanaland. Photographed from 1998 onwards.

... RUBBLE OF THE AEONS, NOT LAST NIGHT'S TAKEAWAY ...

At a colloquium on colour hosted by Rhodes University's Fine Art Department in March 2010 Jeannette Unite chose to speak on her own art practice, with specific reference to an age-old preoccupation with mixing colour and drawing on the unearthed remains from South Africa's mines. Principally a slide show and an anecdotal account, I became increasingly aware that Unite's focus was not only aesthetic and alchemical but also informed by South Africa's mining history. That Kumba, a division of Anglo American, amongst other multinationals based in South Africa, has deemed it fit to grace their walls with Unite's art is therefore fitting. That the work is, yet is not, merely decorative reaffirms a point made by Australian cultural analyst, Stephen Muecke, about the representation of his native landscape:

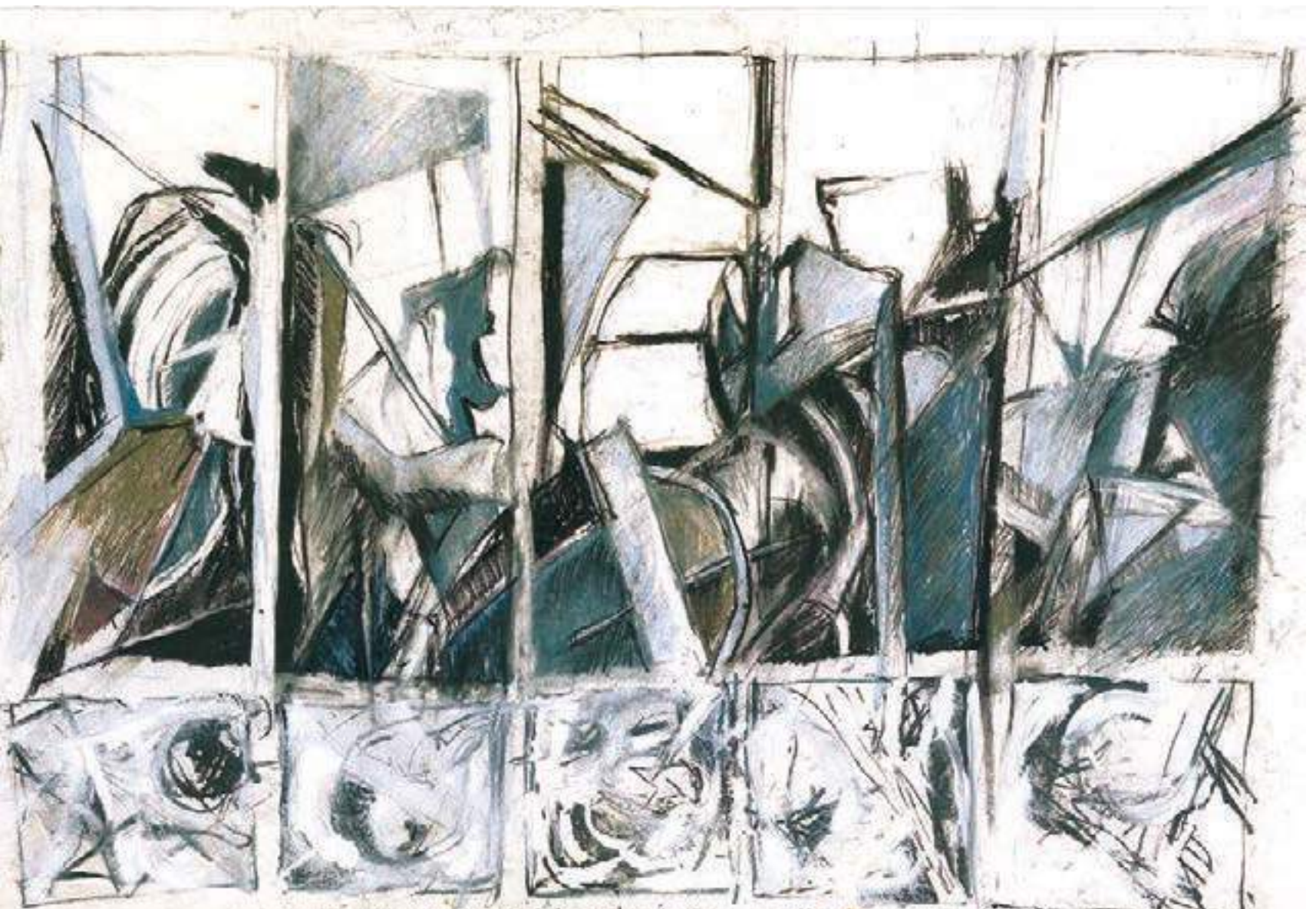
Aesthetics can be politics carried out by other means, for what one learns to value in landscape, indeed, what is included in the frame, enables the promotion of what is considered valuable and worthy as an object of aspiration.

(Muecke 2004: 71)

Land in South Africa and in Australia has from the beginnings of colonialism and at the inception of nationhood always been contested. In her presentation for the colloquium on colour Maureen de Jager forcefully conveyed the devastating impact that the unequal distribution of land continues to generate to this day. Politics and aesthetics, therefore, inevitably produce a collusive and unsettling bond, one which Unite has focused on without making the content of her works overtly polemical. Rather, after Simon Schama's interpretation of the earth art of Andy Goldsworthy, Unite can be read as 'a dramaturge of nature's temper, often fickle, often foul' (Schama 2005: 267). Schama's reading further hones that by Muecke, for land as concept and as grit is not automatically something deemed valuable or worthy, land is also something treacherous, 'often fickle, often foul'.

It is not surprising, therefore, that South African and Australian novelists have often dramatised the psychically damaging nature of nature's distemper. One need only recall the plight of the central protagonist in Patrick White's novel *Voss*, or that of the protagonist in J.M. Coetzee's novella *Dusklands*, who by sheer dint of will seeks to transform wilderness to number. It is this desire to control and order the land, or rather the wilderness, which Unite implicitly critiques. Unlike Coetzee's protagonist, however, Unite as dramaturge stages another moment in the history of South Africa's landscape: that point when earth becomes commodity; that point when the commodity is exhausted; that point when the gaping maw of mined earth, like a victim of a rape, lies sullied, disregarded, left wasted, finally deemed nothing. It is at that point, then, that Unite revisits the ghostly remains of an excavation to gather up the traces, sometimes benign earth samples, sometimes foul, yet always beautiful. For Unite the land, therefore, is never barren, bleached, abstracted or worthless – a prevailing perception harking back to John Barrow's journeys into the Cape hinterland (1806). That Unite literally transfers the subtle tinctures of earth to her surfaces speaks reams about the intimate links she draws between drawing, painting, and earth or land art. As the American cultural analyst





is prospected a 40km stretch of coastal land on the west coast just north of Koeke.
vel deposits lie 40 meters below the surface. The landscape is semi-arid and the plant
minster vel. Low rainfall means that there is no topsoil - I was born in 1964 in the
01 - these earth "scars" wounds have still not healed because there was no environ-
was profoundly shocked by the size of the bare patches that are as old as I am
that don't heal. Scars for time, earth echoes scar tissue inflicted that
in hands and wounds - it does not recover without assistance or care and love

Earthscars: Text Response
Mixed media on archival cotton rag paper 690 x 1100mm 2003
PRIVATE COLLECTION CAPE TOWN

W.J.T. Mitchell observes:

Landscape is a medium of exchange between the human and the natural, the self and the Other. As such, it is like money: 'good for nothing in itself, but expressive of a limitless reserve of value'

(Mitchell, cited in Muecke 2004: 71)

In speaking of land, therefore, one necessarily speaks of human intervention. That land, exhausted, still holds a reserve of value, whether as idea or substance, returns us to the process of commodification which is also intrinsic to the process of art making. It is here that one better understands Muecke's reading of representation in art as an object of aspiration. The preoccupation with land is of course a prevailing trope in all national cultures; moreover, it is a preoccupation which indissolubly connects aesthetics, politics and economics. One need only think of the English pastoral literature and painting tradition, or of colonial constructions of identity in Canadian and Australian literature and art. Or, in the case of South Africa, of relatively recent interrogations of mine dumps in the work of Clive van den Berg, the animated films of William Kentridge, the Hopperesque landscapes of Walter Meyer, or the gritty yet conceptual reflections of Willem Boshoff. In an excerpt in the *Mail & Guardian*, from a lecture delivered by Willem Boshoff at the Johannesburg Art Fair, we encounter a moving reflection on humankind's relation to land:

The Karoo is, of course incredibly rich in fossils and I find fossils irresistible. I recently had the good fortune to live on the world heritage site, the Cradle of Humankind, at Kromdraai near Krugersdorp. There hominid fossils of our distant forebears were found throughout the 20th century. I saw for myself the caves in which our distant relatives lived and I felt a sense of self-discovery. The oldest hominid footprints on record are on the west coast near the town of Langebaan. These footprints are attributed to an individual named Eve and date back 120 000 years.

(Boshoff 2010)

What Boshoff reveals to us is just how intimately the human and the natural, self and Other, are connected. For millennia a place of human habitation – a Cradle of Humankind – it becomes all the more preposterous, therefore, to perceive the South African landscape as the legitimate subject of colonial domination and extortion. While Unite may not be as focused on the fossilised trace of ancient human habitation, she nevertheless recognises the ongoing inextricability of land as petrification, as the reliquary of fossil remains, as earth gouged, hacked, expropriated, squandered. Boshoff moves on to discuss his particular aesthetic relation to the properties of earth:

Granite, an igneous stone, was once a liquid that came up from deep inside the Earth by volcanic action. The past few years I often worked with texts that are written in sand and granite stones. My writings in sand are usually swept away at the end of exhibitions, while those in stone are permanent ... Granite lies underground, dormant in hills and ridges, and it takes a supreme effort of blasting and drilling to dislodge workable blocks. I prefer to work with already existing blocks from old, worked-out mines and I try to rehabilitate those mines as much as to make sculpture.

(*Mail & Guardian* 26–31 March 2010)





Earthscars: West Coast Machines
Mixed media on archival cotton rag paper 690 x 1100mm 2003
MTN COLLECTION

While Boshoff and Unite's processes of making art are markedly different, what joins them is precisely the need to revivify a worked-out mine. If Boshoff works with bold physical mass, producing on their obsessively reworked surfaces a language that is pictographic and conceptual, Unite elects to scavenge the trace elements, shards, flecks, of an earth that has virtually been rendered fractal by the violent actions of blasting and drilling. It is a powder she seeks, a powder which she returns to its originary liquid state, then transfers to the surfaces of her artworks. If Boshoff subjects the surfaces of his granite blocks 'to months and months of merciless grinds and polishing until they glimmer like the liquid they once were', then Unite, through quite another painterly and alchemical process, similarly seeks to restore that glimmer and sheen to her works.

When listening to Unite speak about her untiring obsession with visiting and scavenging mines for the fodder for her work – earth after all is also a kind of food – I became increasingly entranced by the delicacy of her process, her relish for the glamorous matter or substances she'd dredged and painstakingly reworked into the medium of paint. Moreover, it was the iridescence of the soil substances she presented before us, substances which were not falsely boosted by artificial lighting but substances which harboured their own peculiar light. Here, furthermore, I was once again reminded of Schama's elegiac description of Andy Goldsworthy's art process. Countering the glib accusation of a British critic that Goldsworthy merely 'fiddl[ed]' around with nature, Schama argues that Goldsworthy's art is in fact densely and poetically emblematic, returning insistently to the themes of vitality and mortality' (Schama 2005: 269). Schama goes on to speak of:

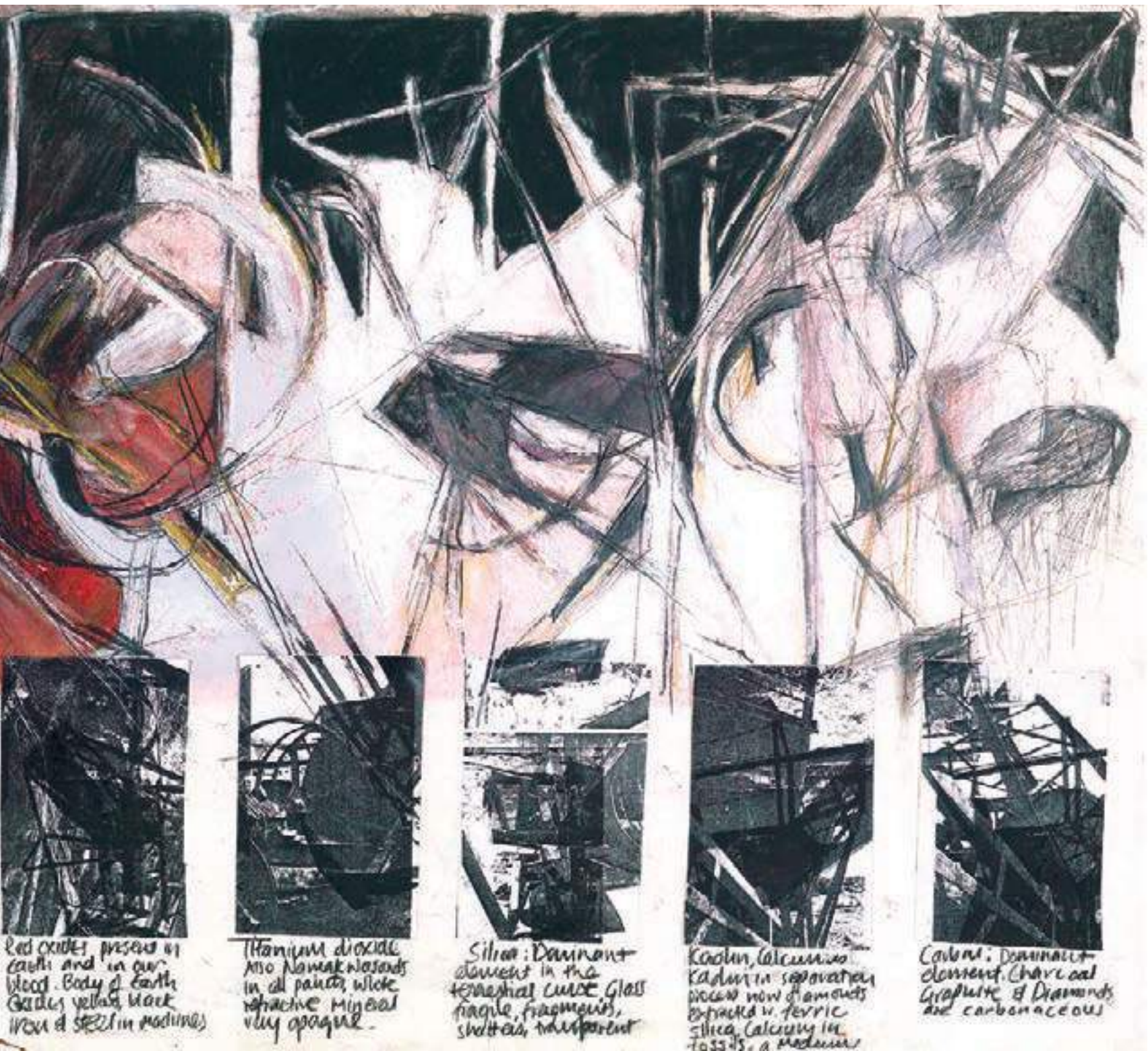
the peculiar virtues of Goldsworthy's work – its moral intensity; its Ruskinian devotion to work and craft; its scientific curiosity; its intelligent engagement with the long history of land use; its marvellous instinct for the baroque hyperbole of the natural world – all those mottlings and juttings and peelings and stainings ...

(Schama 2005: 269)

Then, in a strikingly inspired turn, Schama goes on to counter Goldsworthy's work to the contemporary 'connoisseurs of decomposition [who are so] overwhelmingly urban' and whose fascination is restricted to walls 'amusingly inscribed with palimpsests of graffiti'. And here follows Schama's vital qualification that while 'Goldsworthy, too, plays in the junkyards of the world, [his works] are strewn with the rubble of the aeons, not last night's Chinese takeaway' (Schama 2005: 270).

By examining Schama's words closely, with an ear to understanding Jeannette Unite's art, one finds a resonant vocabulary – a tool-box of words – which aptly describes what Unite is up to, for she too inhabits 'the junkyards of the world'; she too is a 'connoisseur of decomposition'; she too captures a poetics that is densely emblematic, vital, mortal. Like Boshoff, like Goldsworthy, Unite draws upon the liquefaction and stain of the earth. In a contemporary world culture that is fascinated by art that is mirthless, profane, disposable, Unite returns us to the vitality of art as sacrament. That said, Unite is by no means an artist who romantically aligns herself with a gone world; she is no mere idealist. For her, the earth as object of contemplation and source for art making is not only beneficent or regenerative; rather, it also accounts for a deep sense of disconnection which many South Africans have experienced in relation to place and geography. In sum, Unite's





Red oxides present in
earth and in our
blood. Body of earth
Goes yellow, black
Iron & steel in machines

Titanium dioxide
Also known as
in all paints, white
refractive mineral
very opaque.

Silica: Dominant
element in the
terrestrial crust. Glass
fragile, fragments,
shatters, transparent

Kaolin, Calcium
Kadon in separation
process now diamonds
extracted w. ferric
silica. Calcium in
fossils, a medium

Carbon: Dominant
element. Charcoal
Graphite & Diamonds
and carbonaceous

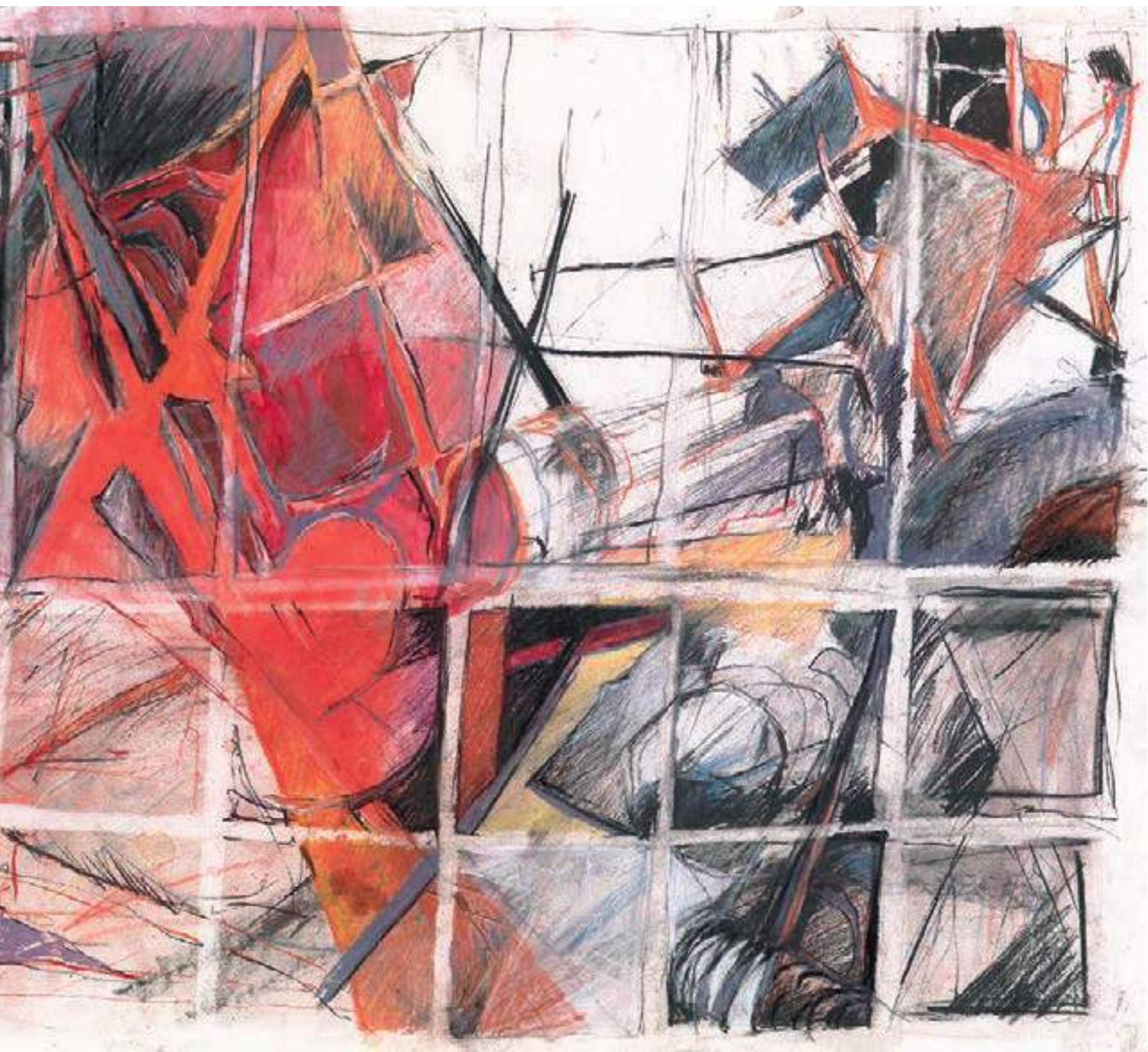
focus is not therefore intrinsically existential, for while she is well aware of the iniquities associated with mining as a colonial and multinational enterprise Unite's captivating interest has proved to be the earth in all its multifaceted, beautiful and/or toxic dimensions, as a source for explorations in works which function as both colour fields and as scarred and scarified representations of figure and structure.

Dr Ashraf Jamal is an author, critic, and philosopher.

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Earthscars: Red West Coast Machines
Mixed media on archival cotton rag paper 690 x 1100mm 2004
COLLECTION RIZA MOOSA

Diamond Mining Machines
Mixed-media canvas 250 x 250mm each 2007
COLLECTION KUMBA, ANGLO AMERICAN IRON ORE DIVISION



Earthscars: Red West Coast Trommels

Mixed media on archival cotton rag paper with rubbing printed off
a sangoma bracelet 690 x 1100mm 2004

COLLECTION VENMYN RAND



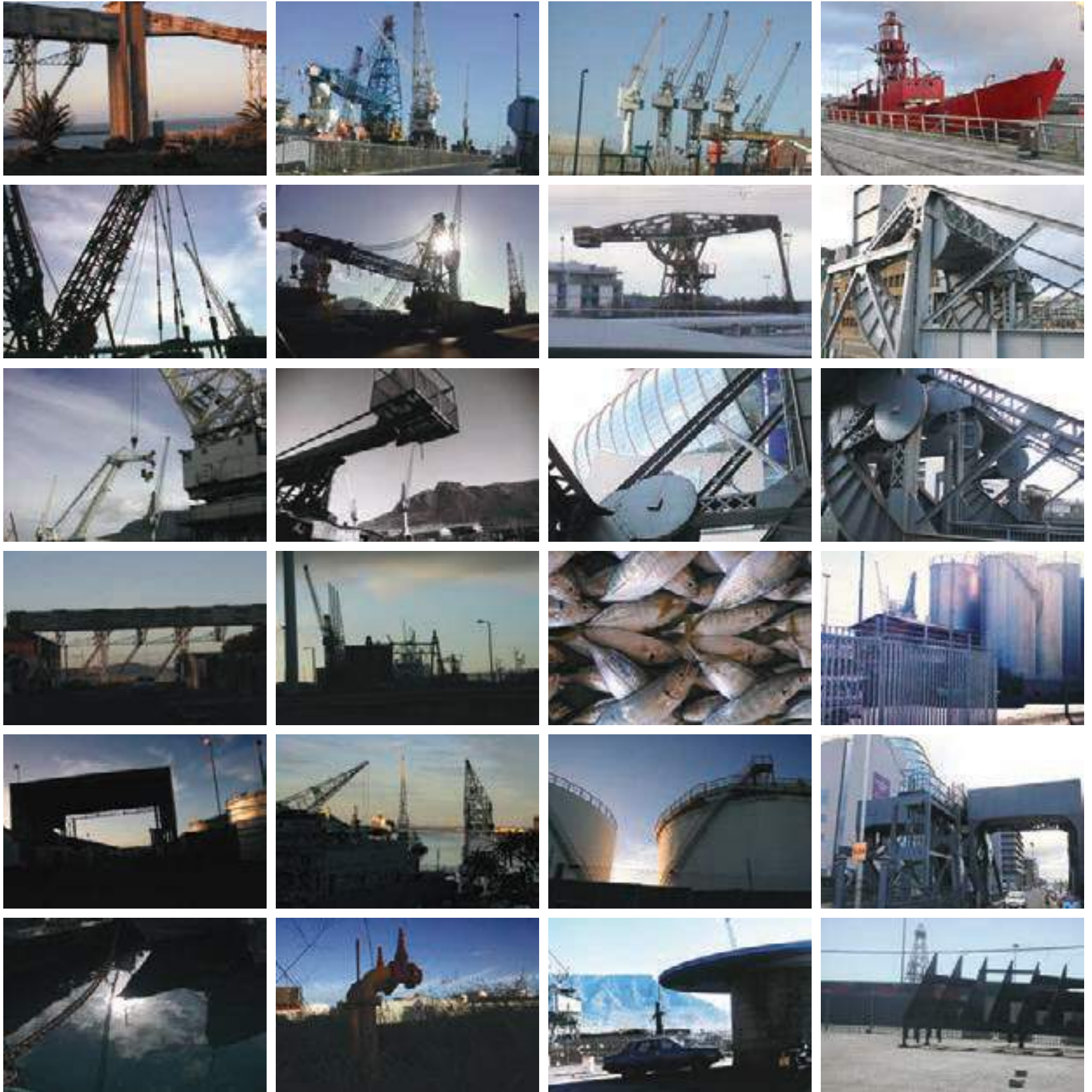
5

INDUSTRIAL LANDSCAPES



Cape Town Harbour
Drawing on archival cotton rag paper diptych. Each 1100 x 800mm 2006
COLLECTION FAIRBRIDGES





Harbours: Cape Town, East London, Lagos, Dar es Salaam, Zanzibar & Dublin
Photographed by the artist between 1989 & 2011

Cape Town Industrial Landscape
Mixed media on archival cotton rag paper
Triptych 1500 x 2620mm 2009
COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST





6



EXTRACT



Saldanha Iron Ore Terminal, 800km by rail from the Sishen iron ore deposits in the Kalahari Desert, transported in the longest train in the world
Photographed during journeys between 2007 and 2010

THE MIXED BLESSING OF LARGE MINERAL RESOURCES

NOTE: This short discussion describes the use and abuse of natural resources by humankind, with reference to some South African examples. It also considers the global situation with regard to the availability and application of geological raw material, and comes to the conclusion that human society is in a minerals-supported ‘technospasm’ from which it cannot recover. The future of humans (in the guise of ‘Homo sapiens’) on this planet is likely to be limited.

It is frequently to South Africa that one must turn in order to find the biggest and oldest (often both) examples of a specific type of geology. For instance, the Barberton mountainland is one of the oldest areas of continental material, the Bushveld complex is the largest known igneous complex, and the Vredefort structure is the largest and oldest preserved meteorite impact crater.^{1,2}

When it comes to ore resources, the situation is no different. The Bushveld complex supplies around 80% of the world’s platinum, but that is by no means the end of the story. South African ore deposits also are major sources of at least ten other commodities.^{2,3} The mining and export of these ores have been the mainstay of the South African economy for over a century. Nevertheless, this geological bonanza is not an undiluted Good Thing. There are serious social and environmental problems associated with large-scale mining. To illustrate some of these problems, this article focuses on copper, but a similar set of arguments can be put forward for any type of ore, anywhere in the world.

The first mining operations along modern lines in South Africa were for copper in Namaqualand at the Blue Mine⁴ (near modern-day Springbok) in the 1850s, several decades before the discovery of gold ores and diamonds to the east and north of the copper district. The copper deposits themselves were known to the indigenous Nama people, who probably worked the so-called native copper (meaning that it occurs in metallic form near the surface). Further east, other copper deposits, and iron, gold and tin sources, were mined by various groups of black African farmers, long before the first European colonists arrived in South Africa.⁵ In 1685, Simon van der Stel, the Dutch governor of the Cape Colony, led a famous exploration trip to Namaqualand, and small-scale ore extraction occurred over the next century and a half. But the difficulties of transporting ore to a distant harbour inhibited growth of the mines. In 1848 a railway line was built to Port Nolloth on the Namaqualand coast, 90 kilometres west of the copper mines, and operations at the O’okiep mine took off with a vengeance in 1856, followed by mines at Nababeep, Carolusberg and several other locations. The Namaqualand district remained the leading South African copper producer until the discovery of the huge Phalaborwa copper-zinc-phosphate ore body in what is now the Limpopo province about a century later: mining started there in the mid-1960s and it became one of the largest copper producers in the world.

Why are these apparently beneficial economic developments problematic? In the long term, mining ‘brings destruction as well as wealth’, which affects primarily those living nearby.⁶ One of the long-term problems is that the formation of ore bodies – in other words, the enrichment of normally rare elements into zones that



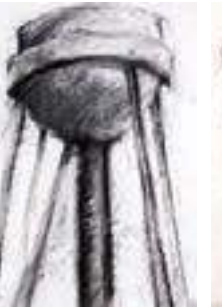


are economically viable – requires energy. This is because ore formation goes against the Second Law of Thermodynamics (the natural tendency to increasing disorder). When ore is mined, the formation process effectively is reversed, and the entropy is restored. But the amount of ‘counter’-energy spent in this process (which must be at least equal to the amount used to form the ore in the first place) is not always obvious. Leading geoscientist Maarten de Wit calculated the amount of energy that was ‘spent’ by nature to form a 4-million-tonne copper deposit, and converted that energy to cash via the price of coal. He came to the conclusion that copper worldwide is sold at a mere 0,1% (a thousandth) of the actual cost involved in the creation of the ore by nature, and mining and processing it by humans.⁷ Seeing as the price at which a commodity is traded currently is influenced only by what users are prepared to pay for it, coupled with the fact that most buyers are (a) probably entirely ignorant of the points raised above, and (b) mainly driven by economics and self-interest and therefore would resist paying the hidden costs, the missing 99.9% of the reversed energy is effectively dumped into the environment.

If the raw materials are worked into the final products locally, then some of the missing costs can be recovered. Unfortunately this did not happen in South Africa’s case because it, like the whole of Africa, was seen by the colonial ‘masters’ merely as suppliers of the wherewithal from which all kinds of products were produced ‘back home’. Most of the copper extracted from the Namaqualand mines was exported to Britain, and undoubtedly formed part of the copper used to electrify Victorian London in the 1880s – the actual cables being produced in British factories, of course – thus bringing great prosperity to England.⁸ The mess and misery stayed behind in South Africa. One might argue that the colonial situation is now over, and that the modern tendency is for most of manufacturing to be done in the source countries (for example, Australia), but for South Africa this is still very far from being the case: less than 10% of the commodities mined in this country are worked up into the final products locally.⁹

The effects of the deficit between the going prices of commodities on the world markets, and the ‘natural’ costs are clear to see in terms of social suffering in communities where mine closures have resulted in mass retrenchment, and physical problems such as mining-induced diseases like silicosis, waste dumps and slimes dams oozing pollution and ground instability.^{9, 10} Since the closure of most of the copper-mining activities in Namaqualand, communities like Nababeep have become ghost towns, with in excess of 75% unemployment. Infrastructure like schools and hospital services are shrinking, and problems such as alcoholism are rife.¹¹ Some communities will be able to reinvent themselves, but others not, and for some even a new period of prosperity may come too late. This tragic downside of the lop-sided exploitation of mineral riches has been referred to as the ‘resource curse’ by Jeannette Unite¹² and others.

The very existence of a downside of course implies an upside, and it is true that South Africa would have remained a pastoral economy if its rocks did not contain one of the richest sets of commodities in the world. We all like the trappings of the industrialised first-world lifestyle, from relatively low-tech features like hot water on tap in our homes to the internet, and many would say that our mineral wealth is more of a blessing than a curse because it allowed us (or some of us, anyway) to adopt it. This attitude completely misses the core issue: by being a major producer of ore, but a minor manufacturer of goods, we have been lumbered with the largest slice of that missing 99.9% of the money. Until the users become willing to pay the full ‘natural’



price for an ore (which probably is never), or all the final manufacturing is done here, the consequences will worsen. My colleagues with strong connections to the mining industry sometimes ask me (a bit belligerently) if I am implying that it would have been better if mining was never allowed, but such philosophical musings are beyond my ability. Our history is a once-off experiment and I lack sufficient information (and/or imagination) to model what would have happened if things were done in a drastically different way. If you ask an Amish person, (s)he would undoubtedly say it would have been much better, but I have noticed that very few outsiders are willing to adopt the rigours of the Amish lifestyle.

The pace at which mineral resources are mined means that none are renewable. The copper deposit Maarten de Wit considered⁷ took a hundred thousand years to form, but it could be removed in less than fifty years. Greed and shortsightedness prevent sensible, sustainable practices, and the increasing world population with its escalating lifestyle expectations exacerbates the negative situation exponentially. Sophisticated materials are required for our hi-tech, information-driven society, and when the ore sources that supply the raw material run out, the first-world lifestyle, to which most people aspire, will become increasingly less attainable.

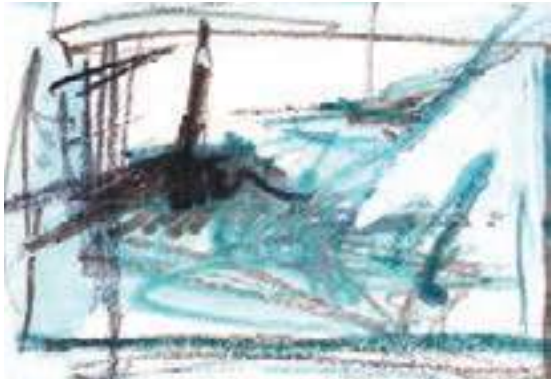
In 2007, archaeometallurgist Duncan Miller coined the evocative term ‘technospasm’ to describe our unsustainable acceleration of consumption of non-renewable mineral resources.¹³ Leakey and Lewin,¹⁴ and many others, have pointed out our negative impact on the biosphere, but the notion of the ‘technospasm’ goes much further and widens the sphere of our destructive activities to include the inorganic, geological realm as well. Mining provides the basic requirements of every gadget today’s consumers hold so dear – motor cars, laptops, cellphones, iPods, GPS systems, you name it. When the resources run out, there will be no more television, no more internet, no more Google Earth, no more Facebook, no more ... – the list is extremely long. Furthermore, eventually there will be no more electricity, because the chemicals needed to make boilers, nuclear cores, wind turbines and solar cells will be dispersed on scrap heaps. We are not exempt from the Second Law of Thermodynamics so, even with the most careful recycling, eventually the minerals we mine from concentrated ore sources will be dispersed irrecoverably on the surface of the globe.

Similar views were expressed by the philosopher John Gray, who sounded a clarion call of warning.^{15, 16} He unflinchingly identified dangerous ideologies (either woolly-minded or cynically political), smugness of the rich, ignorance of the poor and, above all, overpopulation as the main drivers of a deadly trend. He referred to humankind as ‘Homo rapiens’, essentially a pestilential and fatal infestation of our planet. He summarised the possible outcomes of this disease, which he called *primatemaia* (‘a plague of people’), as follows:

1. the extinction of ‘H. rapiens’,
2. a ‘chronic, long-term infection’,
3. death of the host organism (i.e. destruction of planet Earth), or
4. symbiosis.

Gray believes that the fourth, and most benign, option unfortunately is beyond the collective nature of H. rapiens. He further pointed out that the second option is unsustainable. The third option is impossible, despite the assertion in popular parlance that humans will ‘kill the Earth’. In the words of palaeontologist Jurie van





Namaqualand diamond mine, Alexcor's man-made mountain adjacent to a Ramsa water heritage site. A titanium-heavy mineral sand project O'okiep and the Nababeep copper mine dumps showing shaft holes filled with mineral-leached chemicals. 'Oom Fanie' at Simon van Der Stel's 17th-century prospect near Carolusburg, Northern Cape
Photographed on numerous journeys between 1996 & 2007

der Heever, 'there is nothing wrong with the Earth that the extinction of the human race would not set right in a few hundred thousand years'.¹⁷ This leaves the first option – that humankind will wipe out itself, and many other species along with it.

Duncan Miller offers a slightly more hopeful end-scenario, which would mean the continuation of some fraction of our species. In the waning throes of the technospasm, as crucial resources are depleted to extinction, the human population will dwindle to under a billion and revert to a Stone Age-type existence. This condition will be permanent, as the raw materials to restore the current status quo will take tens of millions of years to build up again. Perhaps then, in our humbled state, at last we may become worthy custodians of the wonderful planet on which we evolved.

Some more hopeful individuals have expressed the opinion to me that those people I quote in this article (and I too) are being unnecessarily pessimistic. They point to our remarkable resourcefulness in finding alternatives, which may drive us to develop new technologies as the current set of commodities become first too expensive and then unavailable. While accepting that a number of humans will probably decrease by several orders of magnitude, they argue energetically against the collapse of civilisation predicted by Gray, Miller and others. In other words, they foresee a scenario which would be the equivalent of Gray's option: a sustainable exploitation of the planet and the indefinite continuance of *H. sapiens* with a highly technological and comfortable lifestyle.

My lack of ability for backward thinking is matched by an inability to predict the future, so I will be wishy-washy and refrain from expressing a strong preference for either model. However, unfortunately I think that Gray has a better understanding of the human psyche than my starry-eyed acquaintances.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people have influenced my thinking about the matters that I discuss in the paper, and some of them are mentioned, with thanks, in the list of sources below. This gratitude encompasses all of you who have been generous with your ideas, and you know who you are, even if I do not thank each of you by name. To DEM a special word of thanks for a thorough proofreading, which immeasurably improved the manuscript. My thanks go also to the two anonymous reviewers who pointed out several places where the writing was not sufficiently clear to make my point. Any remaining mistakes are to my address. This is an AEON publication, number 103.

Professor Marian Tredoux lectures in geochemistry at the University of the Free State. She has a particular interest in the platinum-group elements, meteorites, the Vredefort impact structure and the causes of the extinction of the dinosaurs.



NOTES:

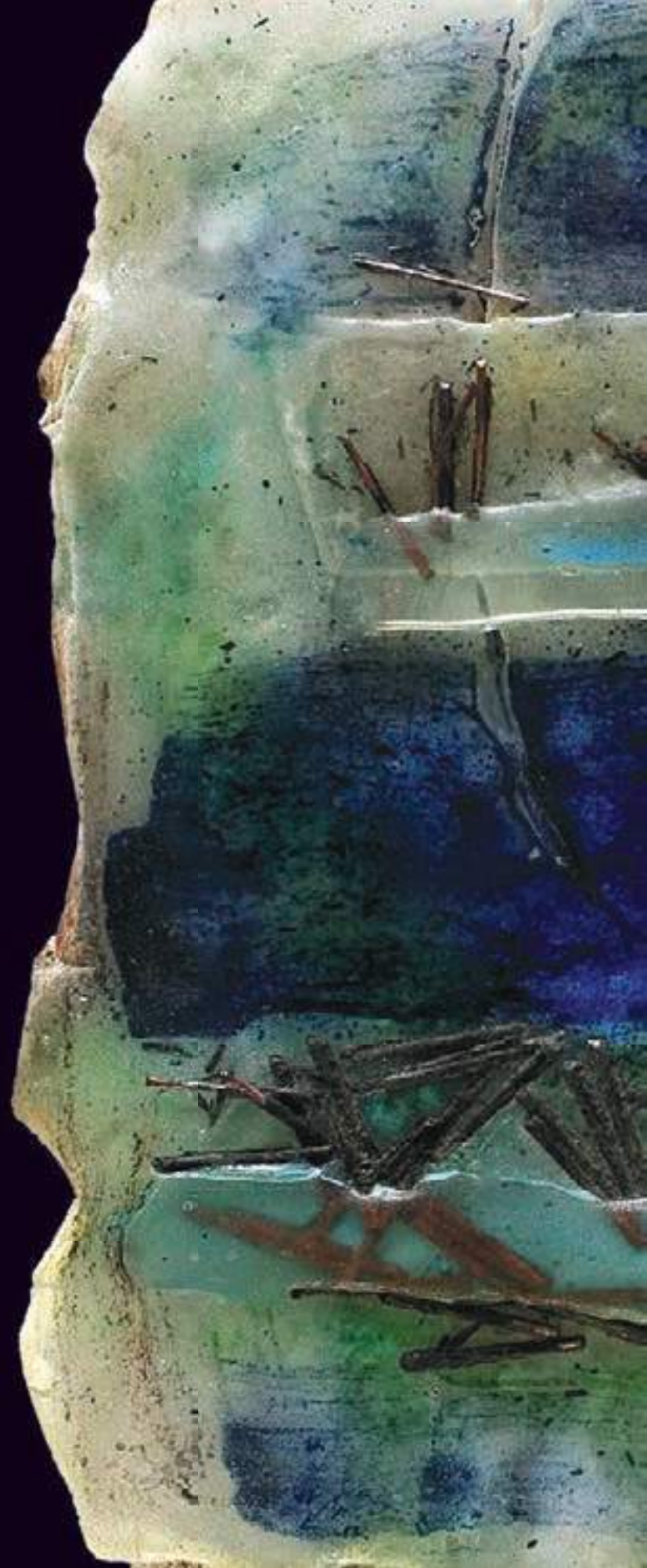
- 1 **McCarthy T. & Rubidge B.**, (2005) *The story of Earth and life*. Cape Town: Struik Publishers. One of the most thoughtful books about the interlinked histories of the organic and inorganic components of our planet that is available.
- 2 **Norman N. & Whitfield G.**, (2006) *Geological journeys*. Cape Town: Struik Publishers.
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- 5 **Miller D.**, (2009) A brief history of indigenous metallurgy in southern Africa. *The Digging Stick* 26(3): 1–4.
- 6 **Naturegeoscience** 2011. *Beyond mining*. Editorial. *naturegeoscience* 4, 653.
- 7 **De Wit M.J.**, (2005) *Valuing copper mined from ore deposits*. *Ecol. Economics* 55(3), 437–443.
- 8 **Lambert T.**, (2011) *A brief history of London*. Accessed on 4 November 2011 at <http://localhistories.org/london.html>.
- 9 This is according to my colleague Dr Johann Claassen, a widely-read metallurgist, who spent many years in various mineral industries and is very well informed about the so-called value chains of each. (A value chain follows a commodity from the mining stage to the production of the final products which will be sold.)
- 10 **Morton M.C.**, (2010) ‘TB epidemic linked to African mining’. *EARTH*, monthly magazine of the American Geological Institute, Denver, U.S.A.. Also available at www.earthmagazine.org.
- 11 **Saint Y.**, (2005) Mid-term evaluation, Namakwa District Municipality. Learning to learn for democracy project, Institute for Democracy in Africa (IDASA), South Africa; also obtainable from www.namakwa-dm.gov.za, 14 pp.
- 12 In 2010 I met artist Jeannette Unite at the opening of her art exhibition at the Oliewenhuis in Bloemfontein. I was impressed by two things: that she uses natural materials and pigments in her work and that her art speaks directly to the problems of the resource curse. In discussion she is very knowledgeable about the scientific issues involved.
- 13 **Miller D.**, (2007) ‘The abyss of time: a geological take on “sustainable development”’. *Mind Shift* 05: 19–21.
- 14 **Leakey R. & Lewin R.**, (1995) *The sixth extinction: Patterns of life and the future of humankind*. New York: Anchor Books.
- 15 **Gray J.**, (2002) *Straw dogs*. London: Granta Books.
- 16 **Gray J.**, (2004) *Heresies*. London: Granta Books.
- 17 This comment was made by Jurie during a recording of the weekly radio programme ‘Hoe verklaar jy dit’ on Radio Sonder Grense (RSG). I was one of the panel members on that occasion and am sure that I quote it virtually verbatim. Jurie is a consistently energetic critic of the excesses of the first-world lifestyle.





Kenya's Rift Valley: Kariandusi archaeological site. Diatomite mine and processing plant. Single-cell diatoms left a deposit of chalky light material that is ideal for filtering beer. Lake Naivasha irrigation project affects the water table severely but provides flowers and asparagus for international markets

7



ECO-ALCHEMY





Residual Geology I & II

Hot fused and molten glass panels with gold mine dust and silver, platinum and copper metal foils, lustrous and diamond gravel ore particles 350 x 350mm 2006 COLLECTION PEZULA, KNYSNA



Detailed segments from glass artworks

HOT EARTH CRUST: MOLTEN GLASS ARTWORKS

[True alchemy] employs nature's agents and imitates her operations. [False alchemy] works on erroneous principles and employs the tyrant and destroyer of Nature as her agent. The first, from a small quantity of a vile matter, fashions a most precious thing. The second, from the most precious matter, from gold itself, fashions a matter most vile, smoke and ashes.

Dom Antoine Joseph Pernety, *Dictionnaire Mytho-Hermétique*, 1787
(Quoted in De Rola 1973: 13)

Jeannette Unite began experimenting with glassmaking in 1999 at the suggestion of onetime collaborator Joe Faragher. Since then her works in glass have become an important adjunct to her deep and penetrating exploration of the legacy of industrial, and especially mining, activities on the South African landscape. Glass, with its simultaneous fragility and strength, its ability to reflect and refract colour in exquisite and unique ways and in order to work with it, and the demand for a profound technical and physico-chemical knowledge to use it clearly makes for a fascinating medium for Unite. All her work articulates the convoluted and frequently obscured interconnectedness of power and fragility, of legacy and what is seen as expedient and temporary, of that which is transparent and that which is occluded. These seeming contradictory stances are all interrogated and made glaringly present in her glass works.

Approximately 90% of the glass industrially manufactured today is soda-lime glass. Like almost all glass (and most glass manufactured in the past) its core component is silica (derived from sand) with the addition of sodium carbonate (soda) to lower its melting point and calcium oxide (lime) for durability. The resultant product comprises approximately 70–74% silica in its make-up. This is the glass one typically encounters in everyday life, in windows, bottles and other practical applications, and this is the glass that Jeannette Unite uses as the basis for her works.

While naturally occurring glass, such as obsidian, has been known and worked since prehistoric times, the oldest known glass products produced by human agency are believed to be mid-third millennium BC glass beads from Mesopotamia and Egypt, possibly created as a by-product of ancient metalworking. In the context of Unite's fascination with mining, this is a very suggestive theory to consider. The origins of glass may well be tied to the accidents of ancient mining processes.

From this time, glass manufacture developed rapidly in the cultures of the eastern Mediterranean world, although it remained a luxury material until early modern times. Many different techniques and types of glass manufacture were discovered including the production of transparent glass and 'stained' glass (i.e. glass to which metallic or other impurities were deliberately added in order to change its colour).

In the most simple terms Jeannette Unite's glass works are typically produced by using a sheet of plate glass as a base and then arranging shards of discarded glass, metal fragments and mineral dust, diamondiferous sands and the other detritus from industrial mining processes and composing an image, upon which a top layer of plate glass is then placed. This 'sandwich' is then heated in a kiln at high temperatures





Mine Shaft Surface to Deposit I, II & III

Hot fused and molten glass panels with gold mine dust and silver, platinum and copper metal foils, lustres and diamond gravel ore particles. Variable size each approx 250 x 650mm 2010 COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

where the layers fuse and colour and material changes take place in the minerals, producing (after lengthy cooling and annealing) a glass panel (Unite 2010). In actual fact the process is far more complex than this, utilising carefully controlled changes in temperature of the kiln, and the addition of different materials at various stages of the process in order to achieve the exact colours or characteristics that the artist desires. Several ‘firings’ over a number of days may be required to achieve the particular effects sought. The finished works have a visual language that echoes Unite’s paintings and drawings, but with a tactile quality and three-dimensionality all of their own, with their crusty surfaces variations in transparency and evidence of bubbles of molten material having burst.

Discovering this process did not come overnight and involved years of experimentation and research. In addition, the decision to work in glass and as part of her mining project came about from strands of knowledge that were at first unrelated. In an unpublished paper, here quoted at length, Unite reflects on this:

I met Joe Faragher in group therapy months after I had been assaulted in 1992. Joe died in 2009 but he shared his love and knowledge of materials and glazes and metal colour. He understood the distribution of geological ‘organs’ – the gold face – how geology was distributed deep in the earth from the perspective of both the underground mining engineer beneath the surface and as an alchemist ceramist. He understood the geological offerings and the magic they could yield. He knew and understood temperature phases, the chemical combinations required to make glass, as well as having done numerous workshops in the East and the Netherlands and visiting hot shops around the world while researching about the possibility of making ceramic decals. Joe’s insistence on my learning glass processes in 1999 resulted in us doing a series of glass artworks. A year or so later I was engaged to a geologist on the diamond mines and I started drawing connections from conversations the geologists were having about diamond tracer materials with what Joe had said. These diamondiferous and metalliferous materials are the same mentioned on artists’ paint tubes and all this combined with knowledge from my professor and mentor – the artist Kevin Atkinson, who shared his system of making our own paint from pigments and aggregates like marble dust – brought me to the point where I began to work with raw material from the earth in order to describe the earth. The glass perfectly synthesised my desire to create ‘abstract’ images with conceptual content from this specific material content! Pieces of discarded copper cable articulate between ‘frozen’ bits of molten glass piercing the air and grazing your finger in a way that is not traditional for this art form.

I think I started working with glass at a time that I was emotionally and psychically fractured – so the glass also symbolised my own internal need to congeal and anneal and heal – and once whole the innate risk of the material and ever-present danger inherent in the materiality of it disintegrating from thermal or mechanical shock. I like my pieces to be crusty and opaque and rough, and sometimes sharp and uncomfortable, although technically perfect, to suggest danger.

My glass processes mimic geological processes and layering to create the crusty, opaque vitrified land/forms which also mimic the geological formation of the earth using the same materials and minerals. This is a deliberate imitation of the geological processes of the earth’s formation, where glass is kiln-formed at similarly high temperatures with similar materials. Chance elements are





Vertical Core I, II & III

Cobalt, copper, diamondiferous and metalliferous material hot fused into molten glass 650 x 350mm 2007

PRIVATE COLLECTION, LONDON

controlled by quantities, heat and duration of ‘soaking’ and the use of alkaline additives as well as the viscous toxic elements that transform metal into brilliant colour.

When I started the glass, my lack of education in physics let to my bedtime reading of the periodic table of elements and restless fantasising about the chemical reactions and colour combinations and visual possibilities that would result from reactions of combinations of lithium/arsenic/cyanide if added to titanium dioxide and lead bisilicate.

This restless, probing and explorative experimentation and research echoes the process by which alchemists went through in order to learn their skills, and alchemy is something that seems to sit comfortably in describing Jeannette Unite’s working methods.

In 2004 Kathryn Smith wrote ‘toying with the traditional understanding of “value”, Unite has perpetrated her own brand of alchemy’ (Smith 2004). Indeed ‘alchemy’ is a term that Unite herself has applied to what she does on several occasions. As early as 2001, in relation to ‘Sentences’, a series of polyptych paintings and a video, she noted

Fire is profound. It transforms materials. It consumes the old and something new is born – clay is mud and becomes stone. Alchemy on the ethereal level is about altering perception and consciousness from lead-like to gold-like. It’s not about understanding. It is about ‘innerstanding’. I see the process of art making as alchemical, about personal transformation. It’s about becoming other.

(Quoted in Emslie 2001: 13)

Clearly, long before she embarked on the glass works discussed in this essay she was aware of a metaphorical link between her work and that of the alchemists of old. Today alchemy is frequently characterised as a misguided and foolish endeavour to try and turn lead into gold in the days before modern science and chemistry set matters straight. However this 3000-year-old tradition – mystical and obfuscatory though it may sometimes have been – represents a system of experimentation, discovery and research that many believe underpins several aspects of modern science and chemistry, especially its practical aspects, including ore testing and refining.

Indeed the relationship between alchemy and glassmaking is itself one that, until recently, has been little understood. In a 2008 exhibition *Glass of the Alchemists: Lead Crystal-Gold Ruby, 1650-1750*, held at the Corning Museum of Glass, this connection was explored (Mystery of Alchemy [online]). Many of the innovations in glassmaking during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries can be ascribed to the experiments of alchemists in the field of material science.

For centuries, writers on alchemy stated that the goal of turning lead or some other base material into gold was only symbolic of some much higher goal, and recent academic research has amplified this view. (See, for example, the work of Stanislas Klossowski de Rola in this regard.) As Pierre-Jean Fabre observed in 1636: ‘Alchemy is not merely an art or science to teach metallic transmutation, so much as a true and solid science that teaches how to know the centre of all things, which in the divine language is called the Spirit of Life’ (*Les Secrets chimiques*, quoted in De Rola 1973: 8). Alchemy was a system that sought to take that which is base and imperfect and transmute it into that which is perfect. This process could involve a number of steps, much as the creation of Unite’s



Geological Deposit

Antimony, pewter, titanium, cobalt and industrial elements in hot molten glass 550 x 150mm 2005
COLLECTION BLITZ, LONDON



Ore Deposit

Antimony, pewter, titanium, cobalt and industrial elements in hot molten glass 550 x 150mm 2004
COLLECTION PLITT, JOHANNESBURG



Glacial

Molten glass with copper and cobalt multi-fired 500 x 200mm 2010
COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

glass pieces do. These stages were linked to colour changes, echoing the transformation of minerals of one drab colour into spectacular and varied hues in Unite's process of combining materials, heating at high temperatures and cooling them between sheets of glass. This is not the only similarity: just as she acquires the materials she uses from mines herself, so too those who engaged upon the 'Great Work' of alchemy were taught that 'it is essential to journey to the mine, and take possession of the raw subject' (De Rola 1973: 10).

There can be no doubt that the discourse of alchemy was frequently shrouded, and even obscured, with much mystical or pseudo-mystical mumbo jumbo and a seeming obsession on the part of many of its followers to make valuable gold out of something of much less financial worth. However, there can also be very little argument with the thesis that for many of its practitioners this was merely a physical manifestation (even a ruse) for the pursuit of something quite different, namely the spiritual perfection of the self and the transformation of material that is worthless, fractured and unresolved into substance of permanence, beauty and true value.

While it is suggestive that other writers, and Unite herself, have drawn analogies between her artistic methodology and that of the alchemists, it should be noted that she is no New Age neo-hippie on some quest for mystical secret knowledge. Her practice is firmly rooted in scientific research, and she has no illusions as to the hazards of working with what she describes as 'all the dangerous things' that she utilises to make her glass art – unlike the alchemists of old, who not infrequently died from exposure to hazardous substances used in their experiments. The late Professor Kevin Atkinson's teaching influenced Unite's practice in both the manufacturing of her own materials and the idea that artistic transformation is about the coagulation of concept into matter.

An alchemical or mystical description of glass production is not so far-fetched; of course the characteristics of glass can be explicated scientifically, but there is a 'magic' to glass, as any child knows: its fragility and simultaneous strength; its properties of transparency; the myths that have grown up around it such as it being 'a very slow-running liquid' rather than the solid it so obviously is. Similarly the alchemical philosophy of turning the human body (lead) into the eternal (gold) reflected in 'transmutation' of sand into glass. The fact that ancient glass is still with us demonstrates that despite its susceptibility to breakage it nevertheless endures if cared for. This can be applied more generally to art making. As Unite argues, 'this is central to artistic transformation: What artists are doing is transcending/transmuting /transporting material from one state to another' (Unite 2010).

Jeannette Unite's work for the last decade has uncompromisingly interrogated 'the geographical and geological history of Africa's industrial and mining sites and how the impact of colonialism and globalisation affects how we occupy our current landscape' (Lamprecht 'Artbio', [online]). This combined with her description of herself as a 'physicalist viscerally connected to material and its alchemical and aesthetic possibilities' (Lamprecht 'Artbio', [online]), has led to a body of work that intrinsically draws upon the physical remnants (e.g. industrial waste material, mine dust and discarded manufactured goods such as glass) of the processes she uses as subject matter (mining, industrialisation and the exploitation of natural resources). In itself this is a powerful artistic statement, but when one considers the manner in which she takes that which industry discards as useless by-products and transmutes



Copper Trace I

Cobalt, copper, diamondiferous and metalliferous material
hot fused into molten glass 300 x 250mm 2004
COLLECTION TURNER, COPENHAGEN



Copper Trace II

Cobalt, copper, diamondiferous and metalliferous material
hot fused into molten glass 300 x 250mm 2004
COLLECTION TURNER, COPENHAGEN



Industrial Ladders

Diamond gravel and copper foil hot fused molten glass
500 x 150mm 2005
COLLECTION HEWGILL, UK

them into that which has real aesthetic value one sees that she is doing far more than drawing attention to an ecological and resource-based problem. She is indicating its solution. In her glass works she is at pains to only use 'waste' material, be it broken window panes or dust leached of its gold content, and then transform them into something else, showing us what potential treasures have been missed in that callous act of 'throwing away'. In this light, it seems to be no coincidence that one of her chosen materials is glass. Glass is one of the most eminently recyclable materials around, yet in South Africa more than two thirds of that disposed of (600 000 tonnes in 2007 alone) ends up in waste dumps (*SA Engineering News* 13 July 2007). Clearly she is not just concerned with physical matter alone but that it also *matters* as to what we do with it.

Though her glass art is 'abstract' in artistic terms, there can be no doubt that it draws upon the landscape (that overriding theme in so much of her work) for inspiration. Visually there are echoes of the land to be seen, and that which lies beneath it and has been harnessed for our needs is reflected in its materiality. But there are other hints too: of a landscape transcended and healed; of dreams, ambitions and flights of imagination that would make the ancient alchemists proud.

In his influential book *What Painting Is*, James Elkins uses the language and theories of alchemy to convey to the reader what 'actually happens' when an artist paints in oils. The magic of the transmutative act of taking minerals and transforming them into a picture is wonderfully elucidated in his text, which he concludes thus:

Above all, alchemy is the record of serious, sustained attempts to understand what substances are and how they carry meaning. And for that reason it is the best voice for artists who wrestle every day with materials they do not comprehend and methods they can never entirely master. Science has closed almost every unsystematic encounter with the world. Alchemy and painting are two of the last remaining paths into the beautiful world of unnamed substances.

(Elkins 1999: 199)

In her attempt to take these paths Jeannette Unite enters into the realm, unexpectedly perhaps, of landscape. Her landscapes may be drawn from the materials of this earth but in some ways speak also of other worlds. A young girl who visited her studio noted that *Earth Crust* (2007) 'looks like the surface of the moon', and maybe in this hit upon something: that work comprises 28 panels, the same number of days in the lunar month. For alchemists, the moon represented the female force of purification, essential in the transmutation of base matter into gold, essential in restoring balance to that which is unbalanced, healing and making whole that which is shattered and torn asunder. Jeannette Unite's glass art too seems to be engaged in this Great Work.

Andrew Lamprecht teaches Discourse of Art at the Michaelis School of Fine Art, UCT. He is active as a writer, critic and curator with a particular interest in contemporary South African art.





Glacial Reposition; Ore Reposition & Sedimentary
Reposition

Molten glass with copper and cobalt multi-fired 500 x 200mm 2010
COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST



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Magmatic Core I, II & III

Cobalt, copper, diamondiferous and metalliferous material
hot fused into molten glass 500 x 150mm 2008
PRIVATE COLLECTION, LONDON



Deposit Cobalt I

Cobalt, copper, diamondiferous and metalliferous material
hot fused into molten glass 500 x 150mm 2009
COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST



Deposit Cobalt II

Cobalt, copper, diamondiferous and metalliferous material
hot fused into molten glass 500 x 150mm 2010
COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST



Deposit Cobalt III

Cobalt and chrome and copper hot fused into molten
kiln-formed glass 500 x 150mm 2006
PRIVATE COLLECTION, TOKYO



Deposit Cobalt IV

Cobalt, copper, diamondiferous and metalliferous material
hot fused into molten glass 500 x 150mm 2010
COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST



Residue Copper Cobalt I

Cobalt, copper, diamondiferous and metalliferous material
hot fused into molten glass 500 x 150mm 2008
PRIVATE COLLECTION, FRANCE



Residue Copper Cobalt II

Cobalt and chrome and copper hot fused into molten
kiln-formed glass 500 x 150mm 2010
COLLECTION JOHNSON, CAPE TOWN



Residue Copper Cobalt III

Cobalt, copper, diamondiferous and metalliferous material
hot fused into molten glass 500 x 150mm 2008
PRIVATE COLLECTION, TOKYO



Industrial Earth Moving Crane I, II & III

Triptych of hot fused molten glass panels with gold mine dust and silver, platinum and copper metal foils, lustres, titanium and diamond gravel ore particles 650 x 310mm COLLECTION LUSTY & WILLIAMS, LONDON





Earth Crust Glass Wall Installed for Public Art Commission Awarded
Polyptych panels of glass molten with iron, titanium, goldmine dust, platinum lustre, silver, platinum and copper
foils, titanium and diamond gravel ore particles 500 x 500mm each total wall installation 1500 x 3000mm 2006
COLLECTION DEPARTMENT SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, CSIR BUILDINGS, PRETORIA





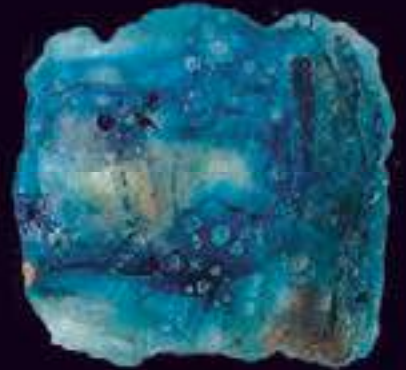
From Whence It Comes

Transmogrified glass, molten at temperatures of the volcanic magma earth layer at which geological igneous structures are created in nature. Materials that react include copper, cobalt, mine dump waste, industrial waste and site-specific sands and soils, titanium, platinum, silver, gold foils and lustres in recycled float glass.

A predominance of copper industrial waste and mine dump samples from the oldest colonial mine in South Africa, the Simon van der Stel mine in Namaqualand, is present in this work.

These glass panels have undergone multiple firings through a furnace resulting in crystalline glacial-like fluxing of the metalliferous and diamondiferous materials and minerals. 350 x 350mm each
Total installation 1700 x 2800mm
2006-2010

COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

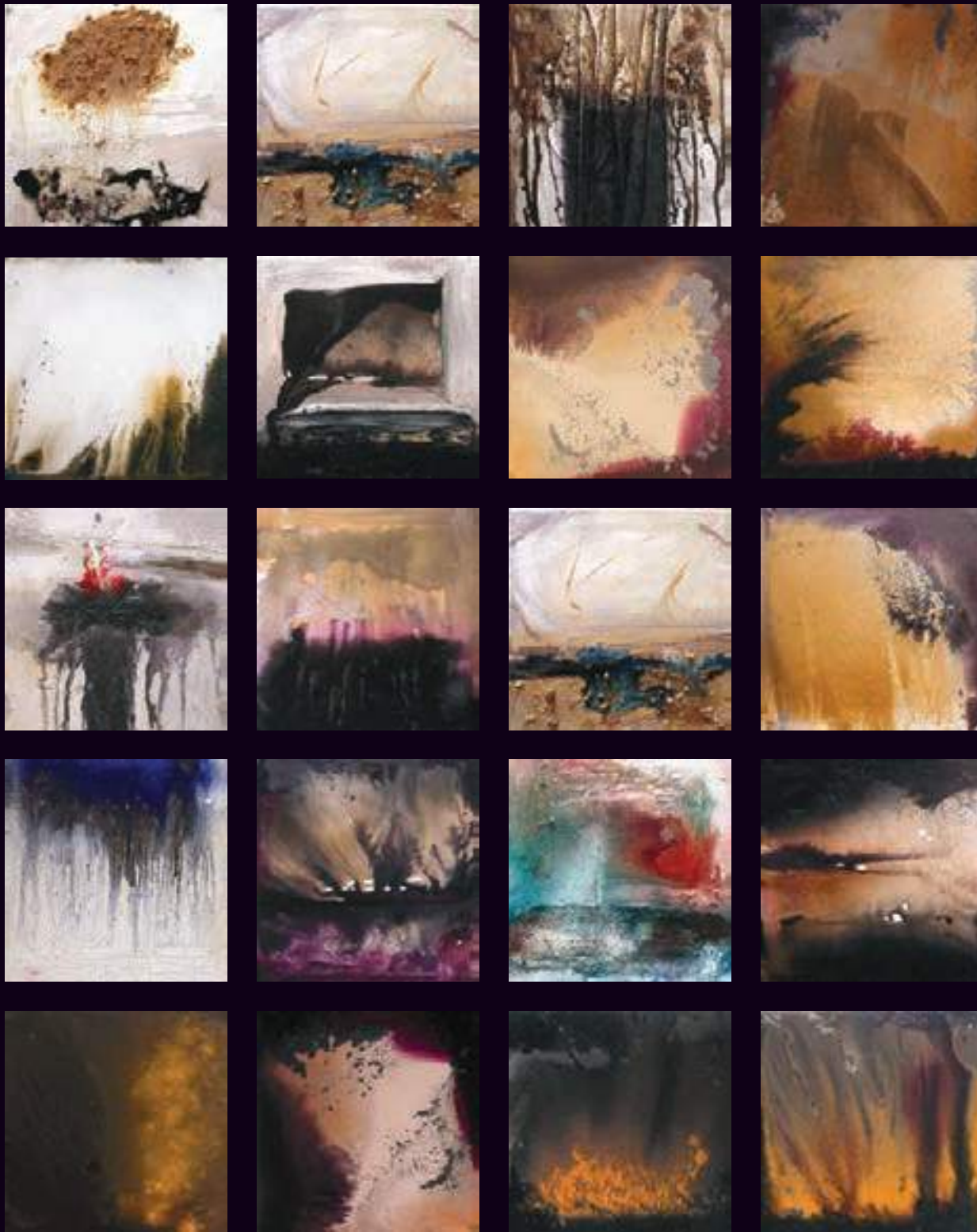


8

OVERBURDEN







Carbon Imprints

Graphite, carborundum, iron, titanium, gold mine dust in acrylic medium
300 x 300mm 2010 COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST & VARIOUS COLLECTIONS



Overburden: Cape Sands II

Tritych with kaolin, titanium, iron ore, ochre in acrylic medium
1200 x 1000mm 2006 PRIVATE COLLECTION, CAPE TOWN

ENERGY, EMOTION AND ECO-MORALITY

The 'Overburden' series refers to massive sand deposits above diamond gravel deposits that are moved during mining activities. Unite uses site-specific sand and embeds it onto wooden panels in artist's emulsion.

The 'Overburden' series comprises minimalist-precise, elongated, vertical wood panels treated with a variety of sands sourced from specific mining sites – and mined ash, minerals, metal oxides and powders and the like to offer highly tactile surfaces that glow beyond their immediate flat space. The pieces are elegant and boldly sculptural in their attraction. Abstractions embedded in those antediluvial textures of gritty, earthy dark glimmer offer their own visual dark puzzles: like staring beyond the immediacy of the night sky ... They vibrate with emotion.

Cape Times
25 February 2004



Overburden: Kalahari Landscape I & II
Diptychs with titanium, iron ore, ochre, manganese in
acrylic medium 800 x 1900mm 2008
PRIVATE COLLECTION, NETHERLANDS

Overburden: Cape Sands II
Mixed media polyptych wood panels with
kaolin, titanium dioxide, diamondiferous
minerals and sands in acrylic emulsion
1900 x 1800mm 2007
PRIVATE COLLECTION, CAPE TOWN





GEOLOGICAL TIME



The large 2m-high works in 'Overburden' are very beautiful, but also very grim in the way they express layers of geological time. It's a very modern idea of time that is expressed here – not a sifting through of layers in a chronological order, but time as a hodgepodge. This effect is heightened by considerations of the materials used. For example, on the 2,2m-high wood panels of **Overburden I: Soiled** Unite has used, *inter alia*, Kalahari desert sand, Kimberley yellow ground from near the Big Hole, red sand from Johannesburg and Kimberley, gold mine sands that contain cyanide and arsenic, minerals metal oxides and powders, and so on ... the personal as making sense of the overpowering impact of the geological sweep of the works. When you visit the show, give yourself time to sit in front of the works – you'll feel a strange sensation as you become dizzyingly drawn into the layers of minerals and dirt.

'Art Pick of the Week'
Mail & Guardian
26 February 2004




Mining Machines on Overburden

Graphite, carborundum, iron, titanium,
gold mine dust in acrylic medium
300 x 300mm 2010
CHEMICAL ENGINEERING BUILDING, UNIVERSITY OF
CAPE TOWN

Overburden: Soiled

Mixed media polyptych wood panels with
diamondiferous minerals and sands in
acrylic emulsion
1900 x 1800mm 2007
COLLECTION ZUEGAL, GERMANY





**Overburden: Hot Earth
Chromate, Copper Iron**

Pure copper grindings, sulphur blue, graphite,
titanium dioxide, iron oxide, manganese and
carbon in acrylic medium polyptych marine
plywood panels 1900 x 1400mm 2007
COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

Overburden: Copper Iron

Pure copper grindings, sulphur blue, graphite,
titanium dioxide, iron oxide, manganese and
carbon in acrylic medium polyptych marine
plywood panels 1900 x 1400mm 2007
COLLECTION MOEREN, GERMANY





Earthscars: Kimberlite Pipe
Polyptych painted panels on marine plywood
2000 x 1000mm 2004
PRIVATE COLLECTION, JOHANNESBURG

Earthscars: 6 Feet Under
Polyptych painted panels triptych
2400 x 1000mm 2004
COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

9



SENTENCES & THRESHOLDS

Martina in Flight: Venice Italy 1999 Flight



Sentences: Venice Remembered
Mixed media on archival cotton rag paper
800 x 1200mm 2001 COLLECTION ADVOCATE DU TOIT



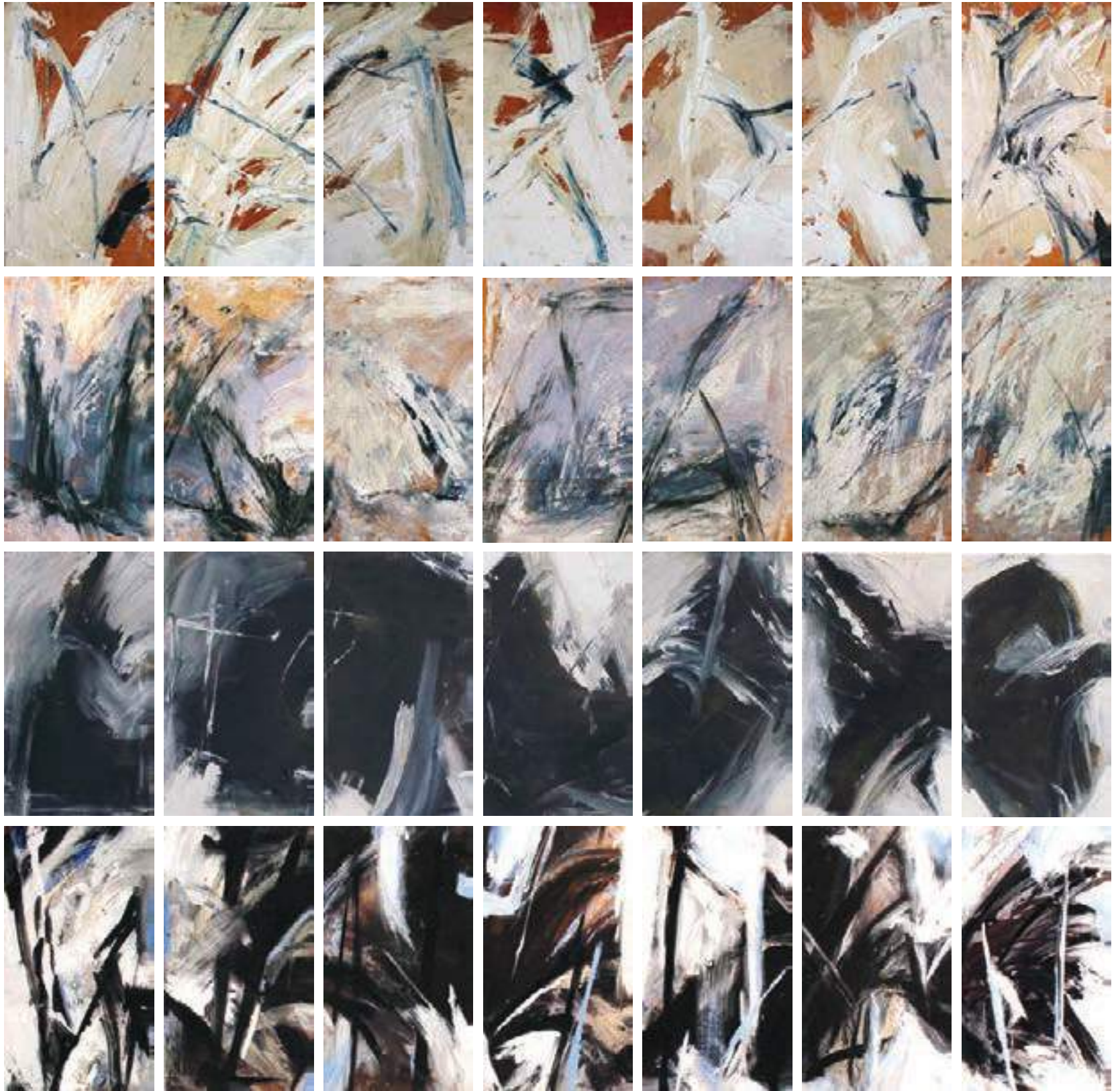
Sentences: Trajectory I
Mixed media collage overlays
800 x 1200mm 1999
PRIVATE COLLECTION, CAPE TOWN



Sentences: Strelitzia
Mixed media collage overlays
800 x 1200mm 1999
PRIVATE COLLECTION, CAPE TOWN



Sentences: Trajectory Flight Remembered
Mixed media collage overlays
800 x 1200mm 1999
PRIVATE COLLECTION, CAPE TOWN



Sentences: Paragraph
28 mixed-media painted marine plywood panels 1999
2610 x 2600 mm
COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST



Sentences: Firedancer
Seven-panelled mixed media painting 650 x 2600mm 2001
PRIVATE COLLECTION, LONDON





Sentences: Internal Visceral Reality I
Mixed media polyptych on marine plywood panels 2002
PRIVATE COLLECTION, PLETTENBERG BAY



Sentences: Internal Visceral Reality II
Mixed media polyptych on marine plywood panels 2002
VODACOM COLLECTION



NOTE: JAGGED SHARDS OF MEMORY

One of the earliest of Jeannette Unite's works recorded here is a performance piece called *Post-Traumatic Mask*. I was not there and I do not know much about the piece. I do know, though, that in one way or another the piece – and particularly the way the figure is costumed and masked – reflected the artist's response to a series of highly traumatic events that occurred in her life around the time it was made.

What those events were is not particularly relevant here. What is relevant is the way the artist has engaged with her subject matter and materials in responding to them. Rather than dealing with events, she has swallowed the trauma whole, and in a tellingly solipsistic process, cycled it back in jagged dangerous shards of costume that, both literally and metaphorically, agitate and undermine the integrity of the self that is given in the form of the nude dancer protagonist.

In this, Unite creates a dialogue of reference, echo and form giving on to an almost visceral sense of peril and violence that is explored and developed in a series of paintings related to the performance piece.

It is, I think, more than just anecdotally interesting that the same shapes and rhythms of trauma and violence insistently recur, leitmotifs, in Unite's much later mining and industrial landscapes. Sometimes they are inscribed in the ground of earth, sometimes they take over the forms of industry and machine. All, as it passes through the mediumistic consciousness of the artist, is wracked with peril.





Thresholds: Post-Traumatic Mask I, II & III
Mixed media on canvas 950 x 650mm 1996
COLLECTION LAMBERTH, CAPE TOWN

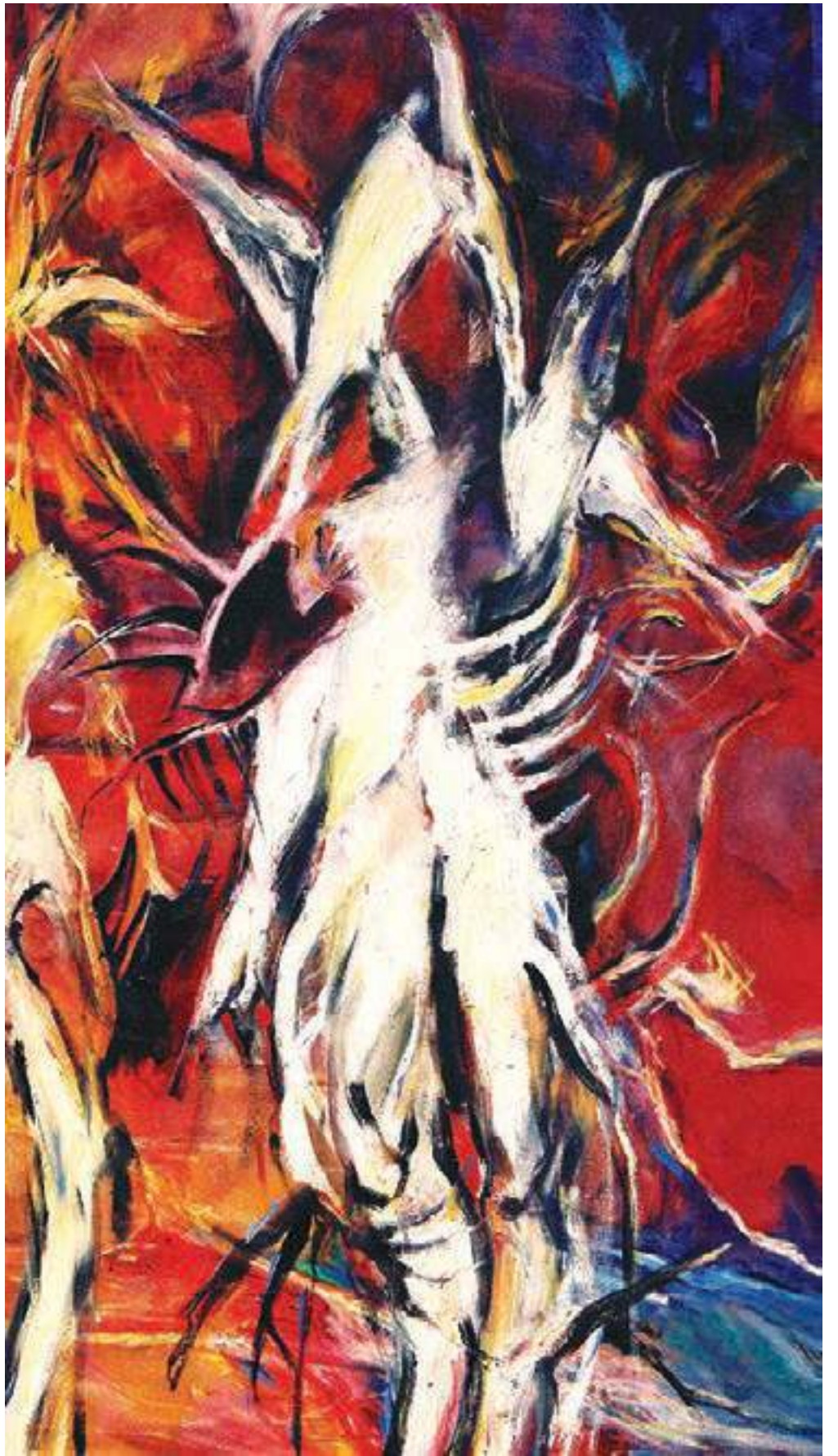


Post-Traumatic Mask (Performance)

Documentary photographs 1993
COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

Thresholds: Post-Traumatic Mask

Oil on canvas 1500 x 800mm 1994 COLLECTION SAGER



Dearest Dearest Kevin
You have had an immeasurable impact
on my world and you still do every
single day. But also took stock of
your immortality and the legacy you
have left, in myself and others who have
committed their lives to art and
creativity as a consequence of your impact.

I am so grateful I encountered you at
Midraab. It changed my life. You
gave teaching workshops on my
career, as an artist, and the
teaching experience but the overall
effect was that you imparted
confidence that the love of a
dedicated teacher gave us. You
primarily taught by example.
As an artist you would produce a
body of work in an intense
shorted time-frame - enormous
extensive energy output. Impossible
to imagine possible. Your work
was that larger than life integrity
and intensity, commitment, and
passion that embodes you as
well as the refined sensibility and
sophisticated intellect.

A practical impact of your teaching
is that I still use your paint
method of mixing pigments into pure
acrylic emulsions with fillers to get
an archival quality paint that was
affordable enough to use liberally and
in abundance. In the middle of 82
year I was so stuck financially so
barely proceed academically, you
sent a group of us to the Anubis shop
to get materials and supplied us with
a full range of pigments and acrylic
emulsions and public dust and canvas.
We knitted together a decent number.

Excursus: Kevin Atkinson 1939-2007

Jeannette Unite was deeply influenced by the artist and Michaelis School of Fine Art teacher, Kevin Atkinson. A prominent metaphysical post-painterly abstractionist who worked in the geographic and cultural isolation that South Africa experienced in the 1960s, Atkinson studied printmaking in Stanley Hayter's studio in Paris, where he had 'discussions with Marcel Duchamp'. In the 70's he met Joseph Beuys in Edinburgh and later in Dusseldorf, he was influenced by the writings and communications of arts theorist, American Jack Burnham.

Both as a teacher and active member of the arts community, Kevin influenced generations of artists.

This letter was written to Professor Emeritus Kevin Atkinson by Jeannette days before he died.

A large format canvas supports so that we could really get down to the work. You set us up so we were submerged in paint and enabled!
Thank You! Thank You! Thank You!

This particular method led me to sourcing the pigments and minerals and metal oxide powders and sands from specific mining sites so that the materials became the subject as well. This was also a consequence of your input when I was making the break from teaching to full time art practice.

You spoke of artists and artists' instinct and intuition, of altering states by taking the sum total of materials, sites, experience, the incidental exposure and any input that had informed a current position. That the alchemical transformation artists make in their work to access something substantial with integrity and relevance and an X factor.

Kevin, in the 1970's you said "I am a Verb." In this century you have become a legend. Thanks so much Teacher, Paradox, Mentor, Friend Human and Artist - you are with me daily in the art making process.

With so much love and gratitude and thoughts for you and Lea at this time

Jeannette Unite



Kevin Atkinson and Jeannette Unite in her studio.
In 1999 at the Irma Stern Art Museum, University of Cape Town with Director, Christopher Peter and Lady Lea Leigh at the 'Thresholds' exhibition opening, at which Kevin presented the opening address.

Thresholds: Liminal
Mixed media on canvas 1000 x 1400mm 1997
COLLECTION CAVIN & LUCY CHIAT, MELBOURNE







Thresholds: From the Edge
Mixed media on canvas 1000 x 1400mm 1998
PRIVATE COLLECTION LEOPARDS CREEK, LIMPOPO PROVINCE



Post Attack
Six mixed media drawings on paper
Each 485 x 345mm
1992
COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST







Thresholds: Separation
Mixed media on canvas 485 x 345mm 1994
COLLECTION CLIFFORD CHANCE



Thresholds: Icarus
Mixed media on canvas 485 x 345mm 1990
COLLECTION FEHRSON BRUMAGE, CAPE TOWN



Table Mountain Quarry Wrapped
(Collaborative performance)
Documentary photographs 1993

Thresholds: Through the Tunnel
Mixed media on canvas 2250 x 2500mm 1998
PRIVATE COLLECTION, CAPE TOWN



END NOTE

It starts as a simple binary: above ... and below; what is seen in the usual course of events and what is not seen. Then it gets complicated. And it gets complicated in the hubristic, paradoxical and scrambled reality that humans have created not least because what is above, in a very real sense, was once below. Nearly all of it, in one way or another. The tree that cooked the sap that became, through human, chemical and mechanical agency, the rubber that was fashioned into the tyre that cushioned the wheel that carried the machine ... was once a seed incubating silently underground.

The steel that that was heated and beaten and hammered and riveted and bolted to make the monster machinery was once the iron ore that that same mechanical unit now wrenches and smashes and scoops from the bowels of the earth to mix with other minerals and chemicals (similarly produced) and expose to extremities of stress and temperature (achieved by combusting what has been taken out of the earth) to make more machines. And so on. And so on.

It's the house that Jack built on a cosmic scale and on a perpetual loop – or maybe an infinite regression, I'm not sure which, or if there is really a difference in the first place in a curved universe. It is also a perpetual alchemy, where alchemy is the second cousin of science – a different way of looking at the same transformations of matter. Where science tends to constitute matter as material to be controlled and worked into different forms by additions of energy and the manipulation of chemical reaction, alchemical thinking comes from the inside, and wants to focus on the transformation itself, the metamorphosis, as it were, of the 'essence' of the material.

I'm not getting mystical here. Considered historically as practice, alchemy was an abject failure. Nobody, I think we can confidently say, ever turned base matter into gold (base matter, incidentally, being understood by many alchemists to be shit – imagine puzzling over that one!) It is almost exactly at the point that empiricists started to think in terms of material rather than essence that they started to get it right in terms of controlling and ruling the given world of experience. Even so, there are deeper contents embedded in the alchemical universe, and while not particularly significant (except as mistakes) to science, these are not without significance in the non-instrumentalist context of art.

What alchemy reflects is the strangeness, the mystery, at the heart of existence. It is about things in themselves rather than things as we use them, and in this way is more rooted in metaphysics than it is in engineering. And in this way the identities it generates encapsulate





Threshold: Acute Post Reflex
Six mixed media drawings on paper
Each 485 x 345mm 1985
COLLECTION CALABRESE, CAPE TOWN

what we – as consciousness – inscribe into them. In one way it talks about us and the world in ways that only really became accessible to scientific thinking – in the doctrine of relativism – when Einstein bent all knowledge and the parameters of time out of shape with three simple terms in a single equation. These are not things I understand much about. But I do understand that different perspectives yield different answers and access different zones of intelligence. To go back to the simple binary laid out at the start of this note: the above and the below are profoundly paradoxical in Jeannette Unite's practice as an artist.

The above – which can profitably here be thought of as material civilisation – is, looked at in one way, pretty much a selective construct of the below. What is below is the reservoir from which the stuff is drawn for what is made above. And, in ways that science cannot and would not want to, the artist is in a position to explore and to give concrete expression to the ambiguous relationships between, and the elusive interconnectedness of, the two. In this process a discourse, because the perspectives of art are irreducibly solipsistic, is initiated around the values of the civilisation.

It is far from accidental in this context that a guiding metaphor engaged in the dichotomy between the above and the below is that between the conscious and the unconscious in the human heart. What is above is what we know or we think we know. What is below is what exists, what drives us, what shapes our world beyond our understanding or our control. By inserting her practice in the space between the two, Unite constitutes her materials and her working surfaces as sites where such ambiguities and transitions are negotiated, where time and history and agency, and both individual and collective unconscious are all thrown together into a creative and mediumistic flux.

Crucially, a debate is entered, an engagement developed with experience and, by the same token, with ourselves, as we systematically turn the world (and in the process, because what is above is also below) inside out. As Marian Tredoux has pointed out, until it all runs out and the dynamic is fatally compromised, the earth emptied out of all its materials, poised to fall in on itself, its deep structures to implode, as apocalyptically conjured by the scientist, the above – which can profitably here be thought of as material civilisation – is, looked at in one way, pretty much a selective construct of the below. What is below is the reservoir from which the stuff is drawn for what is made above. And, in ways that science cannot and would not want to, the artist is in a position to explore and to give concrete expression to the ambiguous relationships between, and the elusive interconnectedness of, the two. In this process a discourse, because the perspectives of art are irreducibly solipsistic, is initiated around the values of the civilisation.





Threshold: Post Past
Six mixed media drawings on paper
Each 485 x 345mm 1985
COLLECTION CALABRESE, CAPE TOWN

10

RESOURCES





renchi 76

Pétrole

Label on a blue bottle, partially obscured.

Label on a green bottle, partially obscured.

Label on a green bottle, partially obscured.

White ceramic bowl containing dark granular material.

White ceramic bowl containing dark granular material.

AFRICA'S DIRTY SECRET

Africa's dirty little secret is cheap labour. None of Jeannette Unite's work of the last decade would have been possible if it wasn't for the industrial transformation of Africa through cheap labour. A slavery system. In 200 years' time this work will be acknowledged for leading the visual examining of this requiem to labour.

The artistic creature that is Jeannette Unite is to me a dazzle of striated colours unleashed on canvas, a vivid energy poured out through charcoal on paper. The language of bodily movement, even the soulless dance of industrial machines, is given fresh meaning. There is an imagination here that is moored not in the self-indulgent but anchored in confident ideas. It takes a great deal of courage to coax grace and beauty out of a crane, seduction from a disused winding tower or even to find perfect harmonious tones in the harsh alchemy of mining chemicals. As a composer, there are aspects of her industrial landscapes that remind me of Arthur Honegger and his famous orchestral tone poem *Pacific 231*, depicting a steam locomotive.

Bongani Ndodana-Breen is a composer and producer.





Slave sites: Bagamoyo, Tanzania & Zanzibar, 2009
Slave forts: Cape Coast & Elmina Fort, Ghana, 2010

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Jeannette Unite is a visual artist who is immersed in the materiality of the art making process whether it is using her own large hand-made chalk-based pastels with mineral oxides or using similar metal oxides in glass artworks, paintings or prints. She uses images, information and metaphors from mining as a point of departure for her reflections on her own personal journeys. She travels to mining and industrial sites for samples, to research and photographically record evidence of the residual remains of power, industrialisation and neo-colonialism on the African landscape. She studied towards a BA Fine Art at the Michaelis School of Art, University of Cape Town from 1981 until 1986, and studied further at UNISA while teaching at Frank Joubert Art Centre until demand for her artwork propelled her into full time art practice in 1997. She continues to live and work in, and travel from her studio in Cape Town.

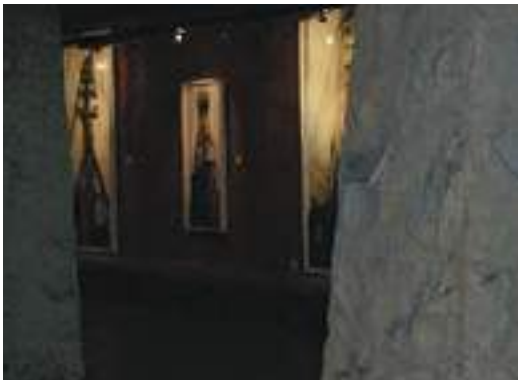
CHRONOLOGY

- 2012 **Residuum: Mines & Machines**, Installation at the Western Cape Archives & Records Service, Old Gaol, Roeland Street, Cape Town
Exhibition & Presentation: *9th IMHC International Mining History Conference*, Johannesburg
HAWK Group Art Intervention, (curated by Lien Botha) Overberg, Western Cape (project printed map)
Return to the Archive, Museum Africa, Johannesburg
- 2011 **Paradox of Plenty**, Michaelis Galleries, University of Cape Town
Installation of mining archive & artist-in-residency
Mining the African Industrial Landscape: Presentation; *Conflicts & Natural Resources: African Studies Conference*, AEGIS, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Spain
Artists Visual Response to the Industrial Landscape: Presentation *On the Surface: The Heritage of Mines and Mining*, conference University Innsbruck, Austria
Izikhwepha Zhetu / Shaping our Minds, (curated by Phumzile Dlamini) Durban Art Gallery (catalogue)
3 Parts: More Harmony, South African, United Arab Emirates & Mozambique artists (curated by Phumzile Dlamini), Durban Art Gallery (catalogue)
Alumni Exhibition & Auction, Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town (catalogue)
- 2010 **6 Meters Under**, 4th Beijing International Art Biennale, China
The Lie of the Land: Representations of the South African Landscape, (curated by Michael Godby), Iziko Michaelis Collection, Old Town House Museum (catalogue)
Fragile Earth Glass, Project Room, Grande Provence Gallery, Franschoek
TERRA: Above Below, Oliewenhuis Museum, Bloemfontein (Catalogue)
Salon de Confuses, (curated by Andrew Lamprecht) Rose Korber Art Salon
Mining the Artists Palette in the African Industrial Landscape: Presentation at the *Colour Colloquium*, Rhodes University, Grahamstown
Mineral Resources and Residues of Power in the African Industrial Landscape, Presentation at ICACD (3rd International Conference on African Cultural Development) *Cultural Imperatives for Development: 50 Years Post Independent Africa*, Kumasi, Ghana
- 2009 **Headgears**, 9th Tashkent Biennale, Central Asia, Uzbekistan
Presentation 'The Colonial Gaze' Scientific conference, *Urban Philosophy: Anthropological Landscape*, Tashkent, Uzbekistan
Earthscars: Mining the African Landscape: Presentation AngloGold Ashanti, Turbine Hall, Johannesburg



Scarborough Beach 1995. Gold Mines, Welkom 2010
Collecting Anglo-Boer War concentration camp remnants with Women's War Memorial Museum staff 2010
Installation at Frank Joubert Art Centre 1996
With stallion sculpture in Ireland 2009. The artist in her Cape Town studio 2008

- Headgear**, Inaugural solo exhibition, AngloGold HQ, Turbine Hall, JHB
- Earthscars: Mining African Landscape**, XLIIIrd AICA (International Association of Art Critics) Congress, *The Relations Between Art and Science: Complicity, Criticality, Knowledge*, Dublin Castle, Ireland
- On Top of the World**, (curated by Andre Vorster) (catalogue)
- Earthscars**, 20:20 Presentation at VANSAs, Spin Street, Cape Town
- 2008 **Remembering the Future**, Western Cape Archives and Records Service, Old Gaol, Roeland Street, Cape Town
- Re-structuring the Colonial**, Group Exhibition, Thompson Gallery, Johannesburg
- Natural Form**, Group Exhibition Artists Working in Glass, The Edge Glass Gallery, Cape Town
- 2007 **Hot Earth**, Artworks in response to travels to copper mines of Namaqualand. Thompson Gallery, Johannesburg
- Visions of Africa**, (curated by Dirk Oegema) Pretoria Art Museum
- Earthscars**, Anne Bryant Art Museum, East London
- 2006 **HERM: Boundaries Between the Wild and Cultivated**, collaboration Cumbria Institute of Arts, Ann Bryant Art Museum, East London
- 2005 **Gunfree South Africa**, Constitution Hill Auction, Johannesburg
- 2004 **Earthscars: A Visual Mining Exploration**, William Humphreys Art Museum, Kimberley
- Earthscars: A Visual Mining Exploration**, Mozambique National Gallery, Maputo, Mozambique
- Earthscars: A Visual Mining Exploration**, Irma Stern Museum Gallery, University of Cape Town
- Surfacing**, with Lynne Lomofsky, Unite Studio, Cape Town
- 2003 **S.U.M.**, Bag Factory Residency Exhibition, Fordsburg Art Studios, Johannesburg (catalogue)
- Sentences & Gestures**, Zebra II, Hampstead, London
- 2002 **South African Artists**, Old Mutual Place, London
- 2001 **Sentences**, Bell-Roberts Contemporary Gallery, Cape Town (catalogue)
- Heart For Art**, Red Cross Fundraiser, The Foundry, Cape Town
- SA Today**, Signature Artist, (curator Patrick Lagus), Fair Centre, Helsinki
- Blue Danube**, animated projection, edited by Koeka Stander, concert with Sibelius Orchestra, Helsinki, Finland
- 2000 **Sentences**, art animation film, 8 minutes, edited by Koeka Stander
- Artichoke**, Multimedia event, Sandton Civic Centre, Johannesburg
- 1999 **Thresholds**, Irma Stern Museum Gallery, University of Cape Town
- Paper Prayers**, Hardground Printmakers, National Travelling Show
- Group Exhibition**, National Library of South Africa, Cape Town
- Softserve**, Public Eye Event, IZIKO South African National Gallery, Cape Town
- Thupela Workshop**, IZIKO South African National Gallery, Cape Town
- 1995 **Recent Works**, Chelsea Gallery, Cape Town
- Abstracts**, AVA Association for Visual Arts, Cape Town
- 1994 **Print Triennial**, Muse d'Art Contemporain Internationale, Lyon, France
- 1993 **South Africa in Black and White**, Print exhibition (curated by Ray Maylen), South African National Gallery, Cape Town
- Aids Awareness**, AVA Association for Visual Arts, Cape Town
- Brides**, (curated by Christopher Peter), Irma Stern Museum Gallery, University of Cape Town
- Recent Works**, AVA Association for Visual Arts, Cape Town
- 1992 **Art Now**, AVA Association for Visual Arts, Cape Town
- 1990 **Critics' Choice**, AVA Association for Visual Arts, Cape Town
- Sensuous Images**, Wandel Street Gallery, Cape Town
- 1981 **Young Artists' Exhibition**, 1st Prize, Kellogg's Foundation (catalogue)



Exhibitions: 'Headgear', inaugural exhibition at AngloGold Ashanti Headquarters, Turbine Hall, Johannesburg 2009
'Above Below', exhibited in the underground reservoir space, Oliewenhuis Art Museum, Bloemfontein. 2010
'Overburdens', exhibited during a Bag Factory Studio residency, Johannesburg. 2003

EDUCATION

- 1987-1997 Frank Joubert Art Centre, taught printmaking and general art.
 Taught adult education drawing classes: *If You Can See You Can Draw*
 Taught Painting classes: *Feel the Fear and Do it Anyway*
- 1992-1996 BA (FA), UNISA, University of South Africa
- 1987 Facilitated workshops; Gallery 709; Adderley Str & Franschoek
- 1982-1986 Dip.F.A., Michaelis School of Fine Art, University Cape Town
- 1981 Matriculated Rustenburg Girls High, Cape Town

SELECTED ART COLLECTIONS

- Anglo American HQ Kumba, Johannesburg
- Bell Dewars Incorporated
- Clifford Chance, Brussels, Belgium
- Department of Science and Technology, CSIR Building, Pretoria
- Development Bank of South Africa, Johannesburg
- DEVS, Cape Town
- Fairbridges, Cape Town
- Goldstone Resources, Cape Town
- Iso-leisure, Johannesburg
- Isqithi HQ, Johannesburg
- Liberty Holdings, Cape Town & Umhlanga, Kwazulu
- Louis Karol Architects, Johannesburg
- MTN, Johannesburg
- Old Mutual Place, London
- Pezula, Knysna
- Swiss:Re, Johannesburg
- Chemical Engineering Building, University of Cape Town
- Vodacom, Cape Town
- William Humphreys Art Museum, Kimberley

AWARDS, GRANTS & RESIDENCIES

- 2011 Artist-in-Residency, Michaelis Galleries, University of Cape Town
- AEGIS Travel Grant to University Autonoma, Madrid Spain
- 2009 Artist-in-Residency, RaMoma Art Museum, Nairobi, Kenya
- 2009 Art Moves Africa (AMA) Research Grant for Travel in Africa
- Tashkent Biennale merit award for original use of natural materials.
- 2006 Awarded Glass Wall Installation/Public Art Competition, CSIR
- Department Science and Technology, Pretoria
- 2003 Bag Factory, Fordsburg Artists' Studios (Triangle Network) Johannesburg
- Constitution Hill (Glass & Steel Water History Sculpture) Finalist
- 2000 Thupela Workshop, IZIKO South African National Gallery, Annex
- 1999 Thupela Workshop, IZIKO South African National Gallery, Annex
- 1981 Kellogg's Young Artists' Award First Prize, National Art Competition.
- Prize: 4 Year all-inclusive international art scholarship

PUBLICATIONS

- 2010 'Headgear: Mining Engineering Drawings', *Critical Interventions*, 6: 91-101, Spring 2010.
- 2010 'TERRA: Sands and Detritus Soiled with History', *Art South Africa*, 9(1): 98-9, Spring 2010.
- 2010 'Exploring the Visual Residues of Colonial Exploitation', *Nukta Art: Contemporary Art Magazine of Pakistan*. 5 (1): 80-85.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 2011 **Bell, S.** 'Resourceful Artist Digs Deep', *Cape Times*, March
- 2011 **Van Bosch, C.** 'Vlook Myne' *Die Burger*. March
- 2010 **Thurman, C.** 'Mines, Headgear & the Mind'. 18 February
- 2010 Earthscars catalogue, 'Above Below', Oliewenhuis Art Museum, Bloemfontein.
- 2010 **Godby, M.** *The Lie of the Land* (catalogue) Michaelis Collection, Iziko Museum
- 2010 Beijing Biennale (catalogue), Chinese Artists' Association.
- 2009 **Lange, J.** 'Mined over Matter'. *Design Magazine Creative Economy*
- 2009 **Lambrecht, B.** 'Man and his Environment'. *De Kat*. Sept.
- 2009 **Bosman, N.** 'All Mine'. *The Citizen*. October
- 2009 **Knox, B.** 'Headgear: an Exhibition by Jeannette Unite', *Look Away*, Johannesburg. Issue 13 Quarter 4: 24
- 2009 **Prinsloo, L.** 'Gold-Mining Major Hosts Mining-Themed Exhibition', *Engineering News Magazine*. 10 July
- 2009 **Lamprecht, A.** Artist Bio *Artthrob* (Online) <http://www.artthrob.co.za/Arthbio/Jeanette-Unite-by-Andrew-Lamprecht.aspx>
- 2008 **Davenport, J.** 'One-person Cape Town Exhibition Explores Aesthetic Appeal of Mining'. *Mining Weekly* Oct.
- 2008 **Keylock, M.** 'Mining the Past', *Mail & Guardian*. Sept.
- 2008 **Bryant, J.** 'Archive Exhibit', *Design Ways Magazine*. 2 Sept.
- 2008 **Wilkinson, V.** 'Africa's Heritage True Grit', *Weekend Argus* September 21
- 2007 **Lambrecht, B.** 'Hot Earth', *Die Beeld*. October.
- 2005 **Smith, K.** 'Art of 2 Cities' *Art News*. London, 2nd quarter
- 2004 **Minnaar, M.** 'Energy, Emotion and Eco-Morality', *Cape Times: Independent Newspapers* 25 February.
- 2004 **Roper, C.** 'Art Pick of the Week' in *Mail & Guardian*. 20-26 February.
- 2004 **Smith, K.** 'Art Pick of the Week', *Mail & Guardian*. 10-16 Dec.
- 2003 S.U.M residency exhibition (catalogue), Bag Factory, Studios
- 2002 **Riitta-Eiilisa, L.** 'Straussin musiikki juhlisti uuden vuodenpaivaa Helsingissa Finland' *Helsingin Sanomat*. Jan.
- 2001 **Jolly, L.** 'Music bring paintings to life', *Cape Argus*. 17 April
- 2001 **Meylan, R.** 'SA Art in Finland' *Weekend Argus*. 15 Dec.
- 2001 **Verkkola, T.** 'Kaukainen Etela-Afrikka onkin hyvin laheinen' *Helsingin Sanomat*, Helsinki. Dec.
- 2001 **Goniwe, T.** 'Fragile Firedancer Flower.' *Design Indaba Magazine*, December
- 2001 **Edmunds, P.** 'Jeannette Unite at Bell-Roberts Contemporary'. (Online) www.artthrob.co.za/01apr/reviews.html (Accessed: 6 May, 2008)
- 2001 **Emslie, A.** *Jeannette Unite: Sentences*. (catalogue) Cape Town: Bell-Roberts Contemporary
- 1994 **Vosloo, E.** 'Jeannette Unites Vibrant Energy with her Artwork', *Sunday Times*, 22 May.
- 1992 **Munitz, B.** 'Bushmen Art', *Cape Times*, October.
- 1990 **Emslie, A.** 'Angry Artist puts Violence on Walls' *Cape Times*, 9 April
- 1990 **Benita, M.** 'Female nudes lost in paint', *The Argus*, 2 May.
- 1990 **Kramer, N.** 'Artist work strong, thick & gestural', *The Argus*. 23 March.
- 1981 **Barnes, M.** 'Kellogg's Young Artist Award' *Sunday Times*, 18 October

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ARTWORKS

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- 2 **Johannesburg gold mine dust**
4 **Photo spread: Artists materials**

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Earthscars: Rehabilitation I 2011

Drawing 800 x 1200mm COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

DRAWINGS: All drawings incorporate Jeannette Unite's hand-made pastels that contain mine dump tailings, industrial detritus, carbon black, iron ore, titanium dioxide, zinc, manganese, charcoal, metal oxides, site-specific-sands and ink and pigment in a calcium carbonate base, rendered on archival paper.

8 **Overburden Crane Conveyors I, II & III** 2006

Drawing 800 x 600mm COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

10 **Paradox Of Plenty: Crane** 2011

Drawing approx 300 x 400mm COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

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Drawing 700 x 1100mm COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

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Drawing 700 x 1100mm COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

16 **Paradox: Residuuum: Mines & Machines III** 2011

Drawing 700 x 1100mm COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

18 **Paradox: Residuuum: Mines & Machines IV** 2011

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20 **Earthscars: De Beers Earth Moving Crane** 2004

Mixed media on cotton rag archival paper. 700 x 1100mm.
PRIVATE COLLECTION KIMBERLEY

22 **Paste Plant, Kimberley Rehabilitation** 2005

Drawing 700 x 1100mm
PRIVATE COLLECTION KIMBERLEY

24 **Earthscars: Rehabilitation II** 2005

Drawing and photographs of seven economically active kimberlite pipes in the Northern Cape on cotton rag archival paper. 800 x 1200mm COURTESY MTN COLLECTION JHB

26 **Photo spread: Kimberley diamond mines**

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34 **Photo of Archive Installation, Old Gaol**

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38 **Photo of Archive Installation, Old Gaol**

40 **Above Below I, II, III, IV, V & VI** 2011

Drawing on photocollage. 1000 x 500mm
COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

42 **Above Below VII, VIII, IX & X** 2011

Drawing on photocollage. 1000 x 500mm
COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

44 **Paradox of Plenty: No-Man's Land** 2011

Drawing 1200 x 600mm COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

44 **Paradox of Plenty: Gargoyle** 2011

Drawing 1200 x 600mm COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

44 **Paradox of Plenty: Watermark** 2011

Drawing 1200 x 600mm COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

44 **Paradox of Plenty: Rush** 2011

Drawing 1200 x 600mm COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

44 **Paradox of Plenty: Construction** 2011.

Drawing 1200 x 600mm COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

44 **Paradox of Plenty: Between Heaven & Earth** 2011

Drawing 1200 x 600mm PRIVATE COLLECTION CAPE

46 **Above Below XI, XII & XIII** 2011

Drawing on photocollage 1000 x 500mm
COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

48 **Paradox of Plenty: Harvest** 2011

Drawing 1200 x 600mm COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

48 **Paradox of Plenty: Trade Ex-Change** 2011

Drawing. 1200 x 600mm COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

48 **Paradox of Plenty: Collision /Collusion** 2011

Drawing 1200 x 600mm COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

48 **Paradox of Plenty: Conquest** 2011

Drawing 1200 x 600mm. COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

50 **Paradox of Plenty: Studies** 2011

Drawings. Variable sizes, approx. 300 x 400mm each
COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

52 **Paradox of Plenty: Studies** 2011

Drawings. Variable sizes, approx. 300 x 400mm each
COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

54 **Paradox of Plenty: Studies** 2011

Drawings. Variable sizes, approx. 300 x 400mm each
COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

56 **Photo spread: Gold Mines: Johannesburg & Ghana**

3 HEADGEAR

Mixed media on archival cotton rag paper with the artist's handmade pastels that contain carbon, charcoal, iron oxide, titanium and yellow ochre with gold mine dust from Johannesburg, diamond mine tailings and fine ground material from heavy mineral mines. Most of the series was originally shown at the Western Cape Archives and Records Services in 2008 and then formed the inaugural exhibition at AngloGold Ashanti Headquarters in Johannesburg at the Gold of Africa Museum Gallery in Turbine Hall.

58 **The Four Rushes: Copper, Diamond, Gold, Platinum** 2007

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60 **Headgear: 6 Kilometres** 2009

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61 **Headgear: 6 Meters Under** 2008

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63 **Headgear: Deep Blue Shaft** 2010

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64 **Headgear: Conveyor** 2008

Drawing 2450 x 1250mm PRIVATE COLLECTION CAPE TOWN

65 **Headgear: Gold Shaft** 2008

Drawing 2450 x 1250mm COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

66 **Headgear: Namaqualand Copper** 2008

Drawing 2450 x 1250mm COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

67 **Headgear: Sending The Steel** 2008

Drawing 2450 x 1250mm COLLECTION WILLIAMS

68 **Headgear: Gold Deep** 2008

Drawing 2.5 x 1.25mm PRIVATE COLLECTION JOBURG

68 **Headgear: Winding Gear Mechanism** 2008

1500 x 830mm COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

68 **Headgear: Shaft Head Apparatus** 2009

500 x 830mm COLLECTION IONA CELLARS, GRABOUW

69 **Headgear: Kimberley A Different Angle** 2008

2450 x 1250mm PRIVATE COLLECTION, CAPE TOWN

70 **Headgear: West Shaft** 2008

500 x 830mm PRIVATE COLLECTION, CAPE TOWN

70 **Headgear: East Shaft** 2008

500 x 830mm PRIVATE COLLECTION, CAPE TOWN

70 **Headgear: Gold Seam** 2008

500 x 830mm COLLECTION ROBERT GRACE

71 **Headgear: Gold Deep** 2008

Drawing 1500 x 830mm. COLLECTION MARIANNE CASE

71 **Headgear: 6 Down Gold** 2008

Drawing 1500 x 830mm. COLLECTION LOMBAARD

71 **Headgear: Shafted Gold** 2008

Drawing 500 x 830mm PRIVATE COLLECTION JOBURG

72 **Photo spread: Headgears from Archives**

74 **Photo spread: Headgears from Archives**

4 EARTHSCARS

76 **Photo spread: West Coast Alluvial Diamond Mine**

78 **Earthscars: Text Response** 2003

Drawing 690 x 1100mm PRIVATE COLLECTION

80 **Earthscars: West Coast Machines** 2003

Drawing 690 x 1100mm MTN COLLECTION

82 **Earthscars: Mineral & Material** 2003

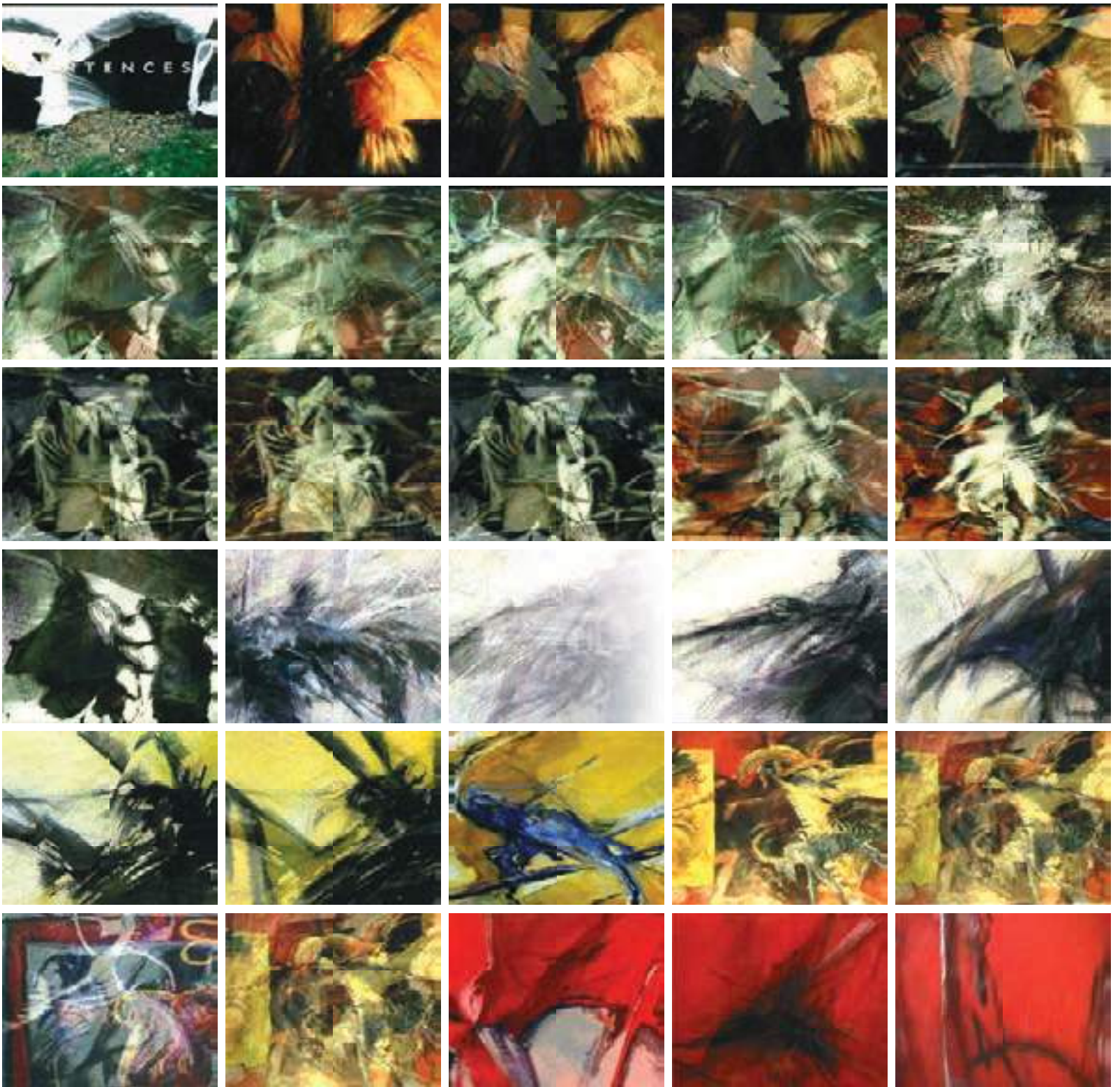
Drawing 690 x 1100mm WILLIAM HUMPHREY, ART MUSEUM

84 **Earthscars: Red West Coast Machines** 2004

Drawing 690 x 1100mm COLLECTION RIZA MOOSA

86 **Earthscars: Red West Coast Trommels** 2004

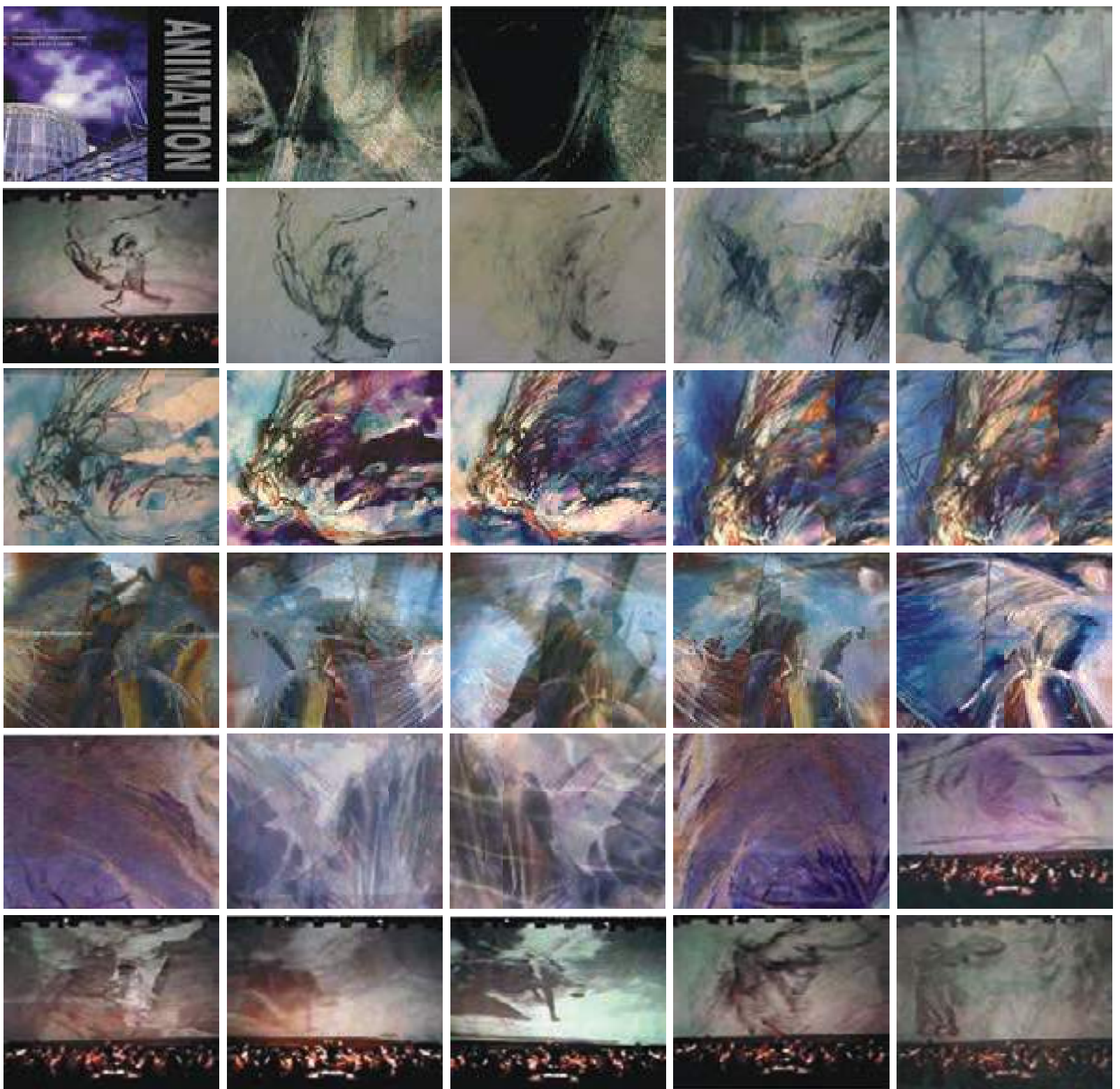
Mixed media on archival cotton rag paper with rubbing printed off a sangoma bracelet 690 x 1100mm
COLLECTION VENMYN RAND JOHANNESBURG



Animation for 'Sentences' video shown at Bell-Roberts Contemporary 2001
'Softserve', IZIKO, South African National Gallery 2000

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- 88 **Diamond Mining Machines** 2007
6 x Mixed media canvas 250 x 250mm each
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- 5 INDUSTRIAL LANDSCAPES
- 88 **Cape Town Harbour** 2004
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COLLECTION FAIRBRIDGES
- 90 **Photo spread: Harbours**
- 92 **Cape Town Industrial Landscape** 2009
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- 6 EXTRACT
- 94 **Photo spread: Iron ore mine. Saldanha terminal**
96 **Photo spread: Salt mine & processing plant**
98 **Photo spread: Water towers. Turbine Hall Joburg**
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102 **Photo spread: Underground**
104 **Photo spread: Diatomite mine, Rift Valley, Kenya**
- 7 ECO-ALCHEMY GLASS:
Transmogrified glass artworks all constructed from industrial waste and sands from significant sites, mine dumps throughout Africa and historical locations including Anglo Boer War concentration camp sites. The metal oxides are used for their colour are: platinum lustres, silver, platinum & copper foils, chromes, titanium, iron ore, ochre, manganese titanium and cobalt, diamondiferous and metalliferous material and diamond gravel ore particles hot fused to create reactions in the heat.
- 108 **Residual Geology I & II** 2006
Glass 350 x 350mm
COLLECTION PEZULA, KNYSNA
- 109 **Detailed segments from glass artworks.**
- 110 **Mine Shaft Surface to Deposit I, II & III** 2010
Glass Variable 650 x 250mm
COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST
- 112 **Vertical Core I, II & III** 2007
Glass 650 x 350mm
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- 114 **Geological; Ore & Glacial Deposit** 2010
Glass 500 x 200mm
COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST
- 116 **Copper Trace I & II** 2004
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COLLECTION TURNER COPENHAGEN
- 117 **Industrial ladders** 2009
Glass 500 x 150mm
COLLECTION HEWGILL UK
- 118 **Glacial, Ore & Sedimentary Reposition** 2010
Glass 500 x 200mm
COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST
- 120 **Magmatic Core I, II & III** 2008
Glass 500 x 150mm
PRIVATE COLLECTION LONDON
- 122 **Deposit Cobalt I, II, III & IV** 2006
Glass 500 x 150mm
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- 124 **Residue Copper Cobalt I, II & III** 2008
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- 126 **Industrial Earth Moving Crane I, II & III** 2008
Glass 650 X 310mm
COLLECTION LUSTY & WILLIAMS UK
- 128 **Earth Crust Glass Wall Installed for Commission Public Art Award** 2006
18 glass panels 500 x 500mm each. 1500 x 3000mm
COLLECTION DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, CSIR, PRETORIA
- 130 **From Whence It Comes** 2006 - 2010
28 glass panels. 350 x 350mm each, total installation 1700 x 2800mm
COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST
- 7 OVERBURDEN
Mineral Paintings on polyptych panels with material from the landscape, diamondiferous minerals, sands, metal oxides, pigments in emulsion with ashes from love letters, graphite, carborundum, iron, titanium, kaolin, gold mine dust, copper grindings, sulphur blue, titanium dioxide, iron oxide, manganese and zinc in a polymer acrylic medium
- 134 **Carbon Imprints** 2010
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- 136 **Overburden: Kalahari Landscape I & II** 2008
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- 138 **Overburden Cape Sands II** 2010
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- 140 **Overburden: Mining Machines** 2007
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PRIVATE COLLECTION, GERMANY
- 140 **Overburden: Soiled** 2007
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PRIVATE COLLECTION, GERMANY
- 142 **Overburden: Hot Earth** 2007
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COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST
- 142 **Overburden: Copper Iron** 2007
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- 144 **Earthscars: Kimberlite Pipe** 2004
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- 144 **Earthscars: 6 Feet Under** 2004
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146 **Sentences: Venice Remembered** 1999
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- 148 **Sentences: Strelitzia** 1999
Mixed media collage overlays paper studies. 800 x 1200mm
PRIVATE COLLECTION, CAPE TOWN
- 148 **Sentences: Trajectory I & II** 1999
Mixed media collage paper work 800 x 1200mm
PRIVATE COLLECTION, CAPE TOWN
- 148 **Sentences: Trajectory** 1999
Mixed media collage paper studies 800 x 1200mm
- PRIVATE COLLECTION, CAPE TOWN
- 149 **Sentences: Paragraph** 1999
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- 150 **Sentences: Internal Visceral Reality I** 1999
Mixed media polyptych panels
PRIVATE COLLECTION
- 150 **Sentences: Internal Visceral Reality II** 1999
Mixed media polyptych marine plywood panels
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- 152 **Sentences: Firedancer** 1999
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- 154 **Thresholds: Post-Trauma Mask I, II & III** 1996
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- 156 **Post-Traumatic Mask Performance** 1992
Photographs
- 156 **Thresholds: Post-Traumatic Mask** 1994
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- 158 **Photographs with Kevin Atkinson** c. 1997
- 160 **Thresholds: Liminal** 1990
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- 162 **Thresholds: From the Edge** 1996
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- 164 **Post Attack** 1992
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- 166 **Thresholds: Separation** 1993
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CLIFFORD CHANCE, BELGIUM
- 167 **Thresholds: Icarus** 1992
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COLLECTION FEHRSON BRUMAGE
- 168 **Thresholds: Collaborative Performance** 1993
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- 169 **Thresholds: Through the Tunnel** 1994
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- 170 **Threshold: Acute Post Reflex** 1985
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- 172 **Threshold: Acute Post Reflex** 1985
3 of series of 6 drawings Each 485 x 345mm
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- 174 **Photo spread: Artist's Apothecary**
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179 **Photo spread: Art & life**
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183 **Photo spread: Exhibitions**
185 **Photo spread: Sentences animation stills**
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Animation of artworks for the 11 meter high video projection for Strauss concert with the live Sibelius Orchestra, Helsinki, Finland 2001/2002

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Hot Earth Crust: Molten Glass Artworks	Andrew Lamprecht

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'Sentences: Paragraph' & animation at 'Softserve' multi-media exhibition event in the South African National Gallery 2000
Installing 'Sentences': Paragraph at the South African National Gallery Annex after a Thupela workshop 1999
'Sentences' in Cape Town studio 2000. South Africa Today signature artist in Helsinki, Finland 2001





Aerial photograph: Diamond mines, Kimberley



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