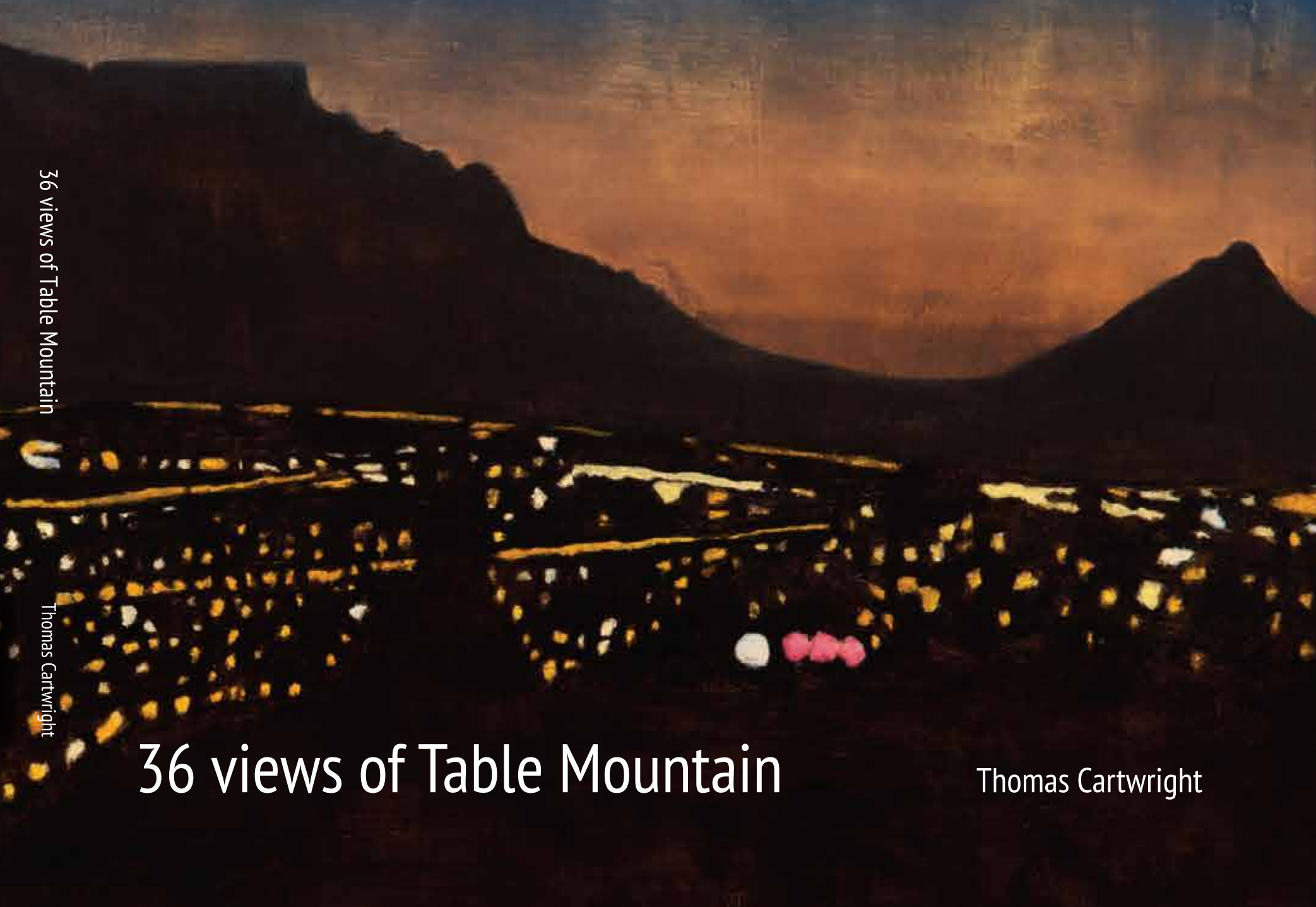

36 views of Table Mountain

Thomas Cartwright

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Thomas Cartwright

Everard Read Gallery, Cape Town 27 November – 11 December 2014

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www.thomascartwright.co.za

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Preface

Pippa Skotnes

When I was a child my parents took me up Table Mountain in the cable car. I remember being very disappointed to discover that the top of the mountain was not flat, as a table should be. Instead it was rocky and uneven. Now that I have lived in the city for almost 40 years the mountain is as familiar to me as my own street, and its tableness is the least of its ever-manifest being.

People who live in a city with a mountain seem to develop a deeply personal relationship with it. When I was in Naples, the locals spoke of Vesuvius as an unpredictable woman, and as a presence to whom morning petitions were regularly muttered. 'What would you do if the mountain started to erupt?' I once asked a taxi driver. 'I would say my farewells,' he said, 'and wait for her to take me.' In the parts of the city nearest Mt Etna, people claim to hear the mountain groaning, creaking, puffing and booming, and they are alert to its moods as if living with a volatile, cantankerous neighbour.

In Cape Town, Table Mountain is, by contrast, less vocal and unpredictable, haunted at its loveliest by the winter mists; resolutely, implacably, radiating heat in the summer, or creating dramatic cloud formations in the windy season. It divides the city into those contained within its embrace and those behind it or distant from it, and there is barely a place where it escapes one's field of vision. The mountain is everywhere a presence.

It is the view from some point in Table Bay that best characterises the public, or national, face of the mountain. This view places the long table-topped edifice of the mountain central, with Devil's Peak and Lion's Head flanking it as two immovable chairs. It is a view that favours a certain kind of symmetry, suggests a distant approach, an arrival, a signal of the port city, a colonial and then a tourist destination. But this is not the mountain of those of us who live within the city. A friend of mind once said he could never live in Cape Town, because the mountain blocks the view, and this, indeed, is true. For Capetonians it is not a distant backdrop to the city, but its most visible, original occupant. It is less an object in the city than the subject with whom we, each of us, have become familiar from our multiple viewpoints.

The degree to which this is true is beautifully realised in Thomas Cartwright's *36 views of Table Mountain*. Inspired by Hokusai's *36* (and also *100*) *views of Mt Fuji*, Thomas's challenge has been less to represent Fuji-as-object – an unchanging background to multiple points of viewing – than to show the shifting mutable shape and scale of the mountain in relationship to different parts of the peninsula. Unlike Fuji, recognisable from any view as a cone-shaped volcanic peak with characteristic crater-summit, Table Mountain's characteristic edifice is almost nowhere to be seen within the city: instead its many sides rise and tumble along tree-lined slopes and craggy gradients that fragment and shift their shapes as the sun and shadows and the viewers' positions re-form its visible identity. In addition, where Fuji is a distant presence for Hokusai, Table Mountain is an active subject in the changing life of Cape Town. In this Thomas offers us juxtapositions that reveal the construction of the city as an act of composition in which the mountain is a constant feature. These juxtapositions are of rock and light,


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mist and shadow, flat rooftop and mountaintop and big sky, the quotidian and the sublime.

It is perhaps no chance that Thomas's beautiful paintings have found their form in the chimeric character of Table Mountain, for Thomas himself is a man of countless parts. Like many artists, his path to full creative productivity has been paved with the labour of a number of other temporary occupations. Born in Toronto, Thomas first moved to Cape Town with his father when he was nine years old, returning frequently until he finally settled here in 1997. For five years he worked in the kitchen at La Colombe (he is now, as I can attest, as accomplished as any grand chef) and before that laboured as a bartender, waiter, carpenter's apprentice, plumber's apprentice, dry-walling apprentice, customer service representative for MNet and, in addition, conducted telephone market research surveys. Finally he found his way to the University of Cape Town and completed his BAFA degree before working with me at the Centre for Curating the Archive for several years on various research and curatorial projects. Few have been so lucky as I to have toiled alongside one so determined to take pleasure in life, so willing to dismiss obstacles, so untiring in refusing the insidious creep of stress and frustration that often accompanies university work. And it is this resolute sense of well-being in the world, this curious attention to the details that will render a new view of things, that is one of the ingredients with which Thomas has created this new body of paintings. This is not to say, however, that each of these represents a joyful view of the peninsula. In some there is a feeling of foreboding, in others a bereft quality of things flung into an almost hostile relief lacking in texture and detail, in others an uncertain quality of dusk as less a time of day than a time of life or state of being. Yet in each there is the challenge and pleasure of rendering something

on a keenly burnished surface into the colours and substance of paint and brushstroke, and calling into being the relationships each of us has with the mountain, from our differing places in the city. This is the materialising work of the painter.

He examines a blade of grass, or Portrait of a city

Natasha Norman

> *The artist is the one who arrests the spectacle in which most men take part without really seeing it and who makes it visible to the most 'human' among them.*[1]

Table Mountain is the defining subject of Cartwright's exhibition. In Cape Town, its status as a spectacle can hardly be forgotten. It continually draws attention to itself as a feature of the urban layout, a moot point on the value of a property in a suburb, a unique definer of weather (which can vary wildly from one side of the relief rain system to the other) and an international icon as a world heritage site – proudly the only terrestrial land mass to have a constellation named after it, by a French astronomer Nicholas de Lacaille, in the 18th century.[2] To every Capetonian it is the unmistakable 'coming home' symbol upon arrival by sea, port, railway or road. It is also a site of division, marking the economic and racial divides legislated by the apartheid government's Group Areas Act when in 1957 the entire mountain range was declared a White Group Area.[3]

While Table Mountain remains the subject of Cartwright's investigation, its historical and cultural significance as an object of social history begins to make visible a unique portrait of the city that surrounds its slopes. Cartwright's chosen views of this mountain reflect his way of challenging a passive contemplation

of its image, particularly in the tourist industry. He draws on the historical precedent of Hokusai's thirty-six views of Mount Fuji as his reference for a personal exploration of both painting and perspective with regard to this great spectacle of his home city.

Hokusai's 36 views

Cartwright's choice of Hokusai's *36 views of Mount Fuji* as the template for his exhibition might at first appear a fairly simplistic formal comparison, but the decision to draw on Hokusai's project is more complex in its subtlety.

Katsushika Hokusai (the more famous of his 30 name changes) was born in 1760 in Edo (present-day Tokyo), then the capital of the Shogun empire that saw a return to traditional Japanese values and a strong censoring of Western influences.[4] Limited trading with Dutch and Chinese merchants from the port of Nagasaki introduced the notion of Western linear perspective in the form of Dutch engravings[5] and the bright blue hue, *Berliner Blau* (better known today as Prussian Blue),[6] both of which had a profound effect on Hokusai's work. The use of linear perspective in Japanese art became increasingly common from the 17th century onwards. In their analysis of *36 views of Mount Fuji,* Kadar and Effken (2008) argue that the artist demonstrates a particularly

unique experimentation with both Chinese and linear perspective in this series.[7] This saw Hokusai develop a style that was such a mixture of Western and Japanese trends that he was considered a non-Japanese artist in Japan, but a Japanese artist according to European sensibilities.[8]

Hokusai used both Chinese and Western linear perspective wihin a single image to generate a tension in the 'natural' depiction of his subject such that the symbolic (attached to a cultural understanding) could be communicated. A Taoist dualism of the earthly and the spiritual is communicated in the compositions throughout the 36 views, where Mount Fuji is usually depicted on a different horizon line to the rest of the activity in the image. The Chinese tradition of multiple horizons is used to effect a separate horizon for Fuji that echoes the Japanese cultural understanding of Fuji as having a unique spiritual reality.[9] Hokusai communicates a subtle complexity in that Fuji's spiritual reality shares the same pictorial space as the more pragmatic linear perspective. The viewer is forced to engage **with** the composition actively (not in a traditional contemplative way) by both entering the scene along the logic of the linear perspective and considering the symbolic implications of the mountain in the composition.

Hokusai's series has been described as having a 'powerful empathy' with nature.[10] His spiritual reverence for the mountain has often been acknowledged and his 36 views further affords a wide range of perspectives that embrace the leisure activities, work and weather endured by Edo people, so that the importance of the natural landscape is continuously juxtaposed with human endeavour.

> *Hokusai creates such inventive views that we perpetually seem to be playing a sort of hide-and-seek with Mt Fuji, often looking with the*

> *people in the picture as they themselves enjoy unexpected vistas. Almost invariably, he will insert an echoing shape into the image – a roof gable where men are retiling, for instance – that serves, by unflattering comparison, to emphasize how perfectly beautiful the mountain always appears, elegantly attenuated with artistic license to improve on its real-life shape.*[11]

Human endeavour is repeatedly contrasted with the harmony and perfection of Fuji, symbolic of the natural landscape.

My impression of Fuji during an artist residency I participated in in Japan was very much in line with Hokusai's insistence on it as a spiritual peak. Mount Fuji was so often shrouded in cloud that my memory is one of the mountain continuously disappearing and emerging. The peak would often hover above a lower bank of cloud or be in a slow dance of reveal-and-conceal as a cloud mass dissolved up its slopes. As such, my observations as a visitor to Japan do much to support Hokusai's Taoist perspectives of Fuji as both a part of the world and spiritually operating on a different horizon. However, this is not my experience of Table Mountain, at the heart of my own City of Cape Town. To look to its clouds is to determine the weather for the next few days, as directional clouds denote an oncoming storm, sunny spell or wind that directly effects my human affairs.

Cartwright's mountain also sits at the centre of a question about perspective, as Table Mountain's presence permeates all the activities and expectations of the city below. The exhibition *Hoerikwaggo: Images of Table Mountain* (2000-1), insightfully curated by Nicolaas Vergunst, was fundamentally an exploration of the mountain's many perspectives in history, culture and politics.

Whether viewed from behind or in front, from near or afar, the mountain's symbolic value is influenced by where we live in relation to it. Yet its symbolism is both transient and relative. Though it be a common symbol, Table Mountain has no collective or singular meaning among Capetonians.[12]

Simply put, the daily activities and individuals' social and cultural histories determine the nature of each unique interaction with Table Mountain. Vergunst notes that the Table Bay view of the mountain has become symbolic of colonial arrival and occupation.[13] At the same time, the view of the mountain from Robben Island (also in Table Bay) has recently been reviewed as a framing that represents democratic freedom.

... Mandela recalled how, during his many years of incarceration on Robben Island, he and his fellow inmates looked longingly across Table Bay at the magnificent silhouette of Table Mountain. In their eyes, Table Mountain was a symbol of the land to which they hoped one day to return. He explained how, over the centuries, the mountain had stood as a symbol of hope and freedom for Khoisan bands fighting colonial domination, for Indonesian slaves wishing to bury their leaders on its slopes, and for twentieth-century political prisoners serving life sentences on the island.[14]

As such, Table Mountain is more a site of projection, a cultural, social and political landmark[15] that becomes a portrait of the person looking, rather than a universal objective, symbolic 'truth.'

Cézanne and Mont Saint-Victoire

Hokusai may have provided the formal inspiration for Cartwright's project, but I can't help thinking that

Cartwright's relationship to Table Mountain is perhaps more like that of Paul Cézanne's interest in Mont Sainte-Victoire. This is not to say that Cartwright is exclusively pursuing a project of naïve painting, but rather that, like Cézanne, he has turned to a particular landmark of his landscape in order to interrogate the practice of painting itself.[16]

Like Cézanne, Cartwright has tackled a quintessential landmark of his home region. Sainte-Victoire remains a symbol of Provence in Cézanne's paintings. The challenge he engaged with in painting the mountain was one that tackled both its formal and symbolic qualities[17] as the artist attempted to see the mountain anew, beyond the painting conventions of his time. As a result, he tirelessly painted it *en plein air* and shifted his perspectives, using flatter facets of colour to try and grasp at the immediacy of his looking and attain a 'real' or 'authentic' experience. Despite the project being driven by his desire to

realise sensation, it remained a 'slow and consciously cerebral act'.[18]

These sentiments are echoed in Cartwright's process. Despite presenting an often obscure or fleeting view of the mountain, Cartwright's process is incredibly methodical. A sourced image is carefully catalogued, mapped and translated onto a mounted board that has been primed with seven layers of finely sanded home-made gesso. The chosen palette is mixed for hours before painting starts. Undercolours dry and thin layers of paint slowly build up on the surface.

Cartwright, like Cézanne, has chosen a mountain heavily symbolic of a hybrid cultural history. Table Mountain was first named 'Hoerikwaggo' (mountain of the sea) by the native men and women who lived along its slopes.[19] Later colonial arrivals by sea afforded a different view of the mountain as they journeyed from Europe seeking a trade route to the east. The mountain's symbolism has subsequently been translated into a form of contemporary consumption, driven to a large extent by the gaze of the tourist. The tourist gaze is arguably a form of commodified culture, where the symbolic, historical and cultural becomes recoded for consumption in an economy of travelling.[20]

The Capetonian mountain

Table Mountain rises from the sea, a startling height at the tip of the continent. It has been heralded as Africa's gatekeeper in various versions of the amalgamated folklore born of the traders, seamen and nomadic herdsmen who lived here. The reality of its narrow peninsula means that Table Mountain maintains an ultimately intimate and fundamentally defining presence in the city's geography, both in terms of the urban infrastructure, architectural layout and weather patterns. The mountain defines a peninsula with parts cast in shadow and an ocean 'all

around'. Moving along and around its base (as most roads do) affords an ever-changing view from the Table Bay 'table top' image to the False Bay back view or Hout Bay cliffs.

As a Capetonian, I can attest to Table Mountain's more embedded links to the reality of life's experiences in the city. Roads navigate around it (with highway off-ramps occurring confusingly on the right-hand side instead of the left-hand side in some places). Suburbs are sheltered by its buttresses or mercilessly assaulted by wind, rain and sun. This is not to say that the mountain lacks any spiritual significance, but that such significance lies in a less remote understanding of the spiritual.

Africa is anchored
at its tip by a peg
beaten flat –
it stops the continent
drifting …
What I saw
Was God's Anvil –[21]

Cartwright's mountain is not a spiritual mountain in the sense that Hokusai's mountain is spiritual. Cartwright dispels the mountain's commercial symbolism by gazing at its seeming 'incidentalness' to a portrait of the city, and it is this very 'incidentalness', its quotidian referencing of one's location anywhere on the peninsula, that becomes a defining part of his series.

In his paintings, Cartwright makes clear reference to how Hokusai's mountain peeps into the *Ukiyo-e* views of domestic life: the way Hokusai seemed 'to be playing a sort of hide-and-seek with Mt Fuji'. Fuji is not always the largest, dominating feature of Hokusai's compositions, but it is always somehow at the core of his depictions: a fundamental part of his investigations between linear and Chinese perspective.

Similarly, in Cartwright's images Table Mountain is always the defining horizon of his compositions but the mountain's formal appearance seems almost incidental in many of the images. In some cases the view is from a unique distance, framed by an outlying farmer's fields, 1950s-seeming highways or a bend in the coastal road. The visual game for a local is one of recognition: a game of view-finding and placement. In other images, the mountain is too close and its rocky crags seem to envelop the viewer, the sky cropped by architectural lintel or cableway machinery. In both types of image the mountain remains ungraspable: too close to see its form or too far away for us to see its detail or natural context. It is perhaps this ungraspable theme in the works that leads me to discuss the mountain as 'incidental' in the images. This is indeed a Capetonian artist's 36 views of Table Mountain, but it is also a portrait of the city that lines its slopes.

Translating the photograph into paint

Cartwright's views are also a subtle comment on the landscape-painting tradition in South Africa. Critic and writer John Coetzee termed the landscape tradition a 'literature of failure' in that it has historically failed to image a populated landscape.[22] Cartwright is eminently aware of his landscape's people and the complexity of that history, but he looks at it through a contemporary gaze.

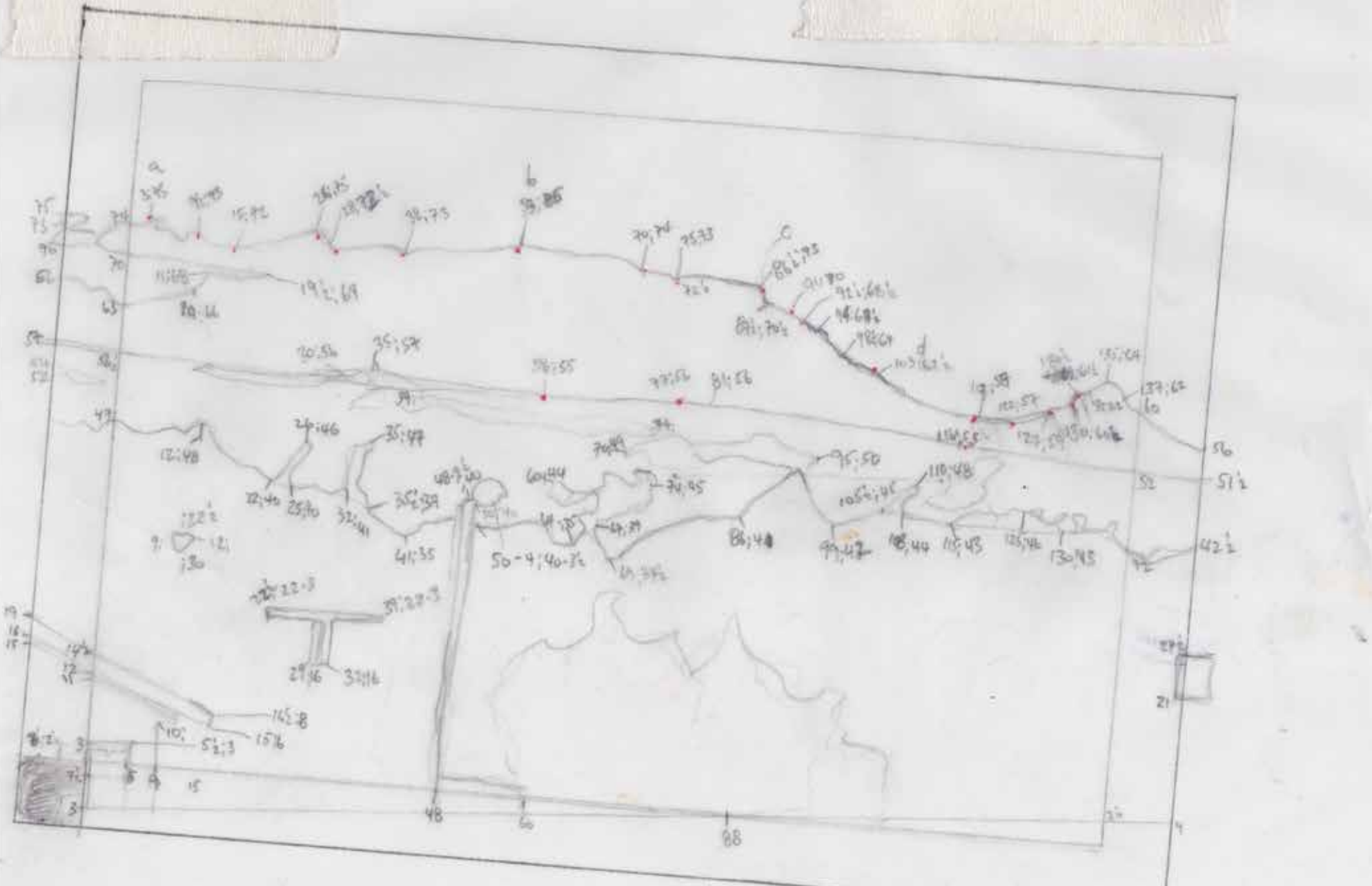
Cartwright's paintings derive from photographs taken by himself and his family, friends and acquaintances, to source a snapshot view of the mountain. The term 'snapshot' is used here as the source images are not always carefully composed. Despite comprising a startling collection of photographs, the photographs maintain a snapshot aesthetic in that they are blurred in places (by movement or imprecise focus), strangely cropped and always from a handheld perspective. Cartwright further crops these found

views, directing a more specific investigation of the aspect of the mountain that he wishes to interrogate through paint.

The photographs remain a source, a particular relic of vision that Cartwright transmutes into a painted image through thin layers of oil paint on board. The edges of his forms retain their photographic crispness but the colour, atmosphere and composition become fractured in his play of scumbling, dry-brush, flat colour planes and thin- or thicker-layered surfaces.

Towards the middle of the series, Cartwright began limiting his primary hues to three per image in order to exploit the versatility of painting. His earlier works in the series are characterised by a loyal and crisp painted field, which slowly evolves into a faceting of chiaroscuro in the later works. Perhaps, like Hokusai, the tensions in Cartwright's 'natural' depiction of the mountain expose a symbolic notion about it, a conscious interrogation of the means by which his mountain is perceived. He may not employ the same forms of active perception as Hokusai or Cézanne, but his methodical choices, editing and sourcing reflect his own unique and active engagement with Table Mountain. He, like Cézanne and Hokusai before him, challenges the passive spectacle of his milieu.

In the late 1800s Van Gogh wrote passionately to his brother Theo about his impressions of Japanese art. His enthusiastic reception of *moku hanga* (Japanese woodblock printing) echoed the 19th century sentiment that led to the term *Japonisme* being coined, which referred to a specific style in French and English decorative arts inspired by the Japanese *Ukiyo-e* print. Van Gogh wrote that 'If you study Japanese art, then you discover a man who is without doubt wise, philosophical and intelligent' – a person who spends their time studying a blade of grass in order to better understand the plant, then the seasons, then the landscape, then the animals, then the human figure.[23]



Cartwright recognises that every depiction of a landscape is a subjective act without objective truth.[24] His 36 views reflect a particular seeing of Table Mountain that is much more than simply a world heritage site, the face of tourism or a municipal logo. Cartwright's mountain is remarkable, shifting, elegant, architectural, grand and intimate. It is, also, just another depiction of how this artist sees the world.

Endnotes:

1. Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1964 [1948]. 'Cézanne's doubt'. In Hubert L. Dreyfus and Patricia Allen Dreyfus (trans. Maurice Merleau-Ponty). *Sense and non-sense*, 3rd ed. Paris: The Northwestern University Press. p18.

2. The constellation Mensa, meaning 'table,' can be sighted around midnight in mid-July in the southern hemisphere, below the better-known Orion constellation.

3. Vergunst, Nicolaas. 2001. *Hoerikwaggo: Images of Table Mountain*. Cape Town: South African National Gallery. p28.

4. Asian Art Museum. 2010. *Hokusai and Hiroshige* [podcast]. Texts derived from the Hokusai and Hiroshige exhibition catalogue by Yoko Woodson and Yokohama Prints teacher workshop by Molly Schardt. Chong-Moon Lee Center for Asian Art and Culture. Available online: https://itunes.apple.com/us/itunes-u/hokusai-hiroshige/id381382725?mt=10

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Publishing. pp234-69.

7. Kadar, Endre and Effken, Judith. Ibid: p311.

8. Ibid: p310.

9. Ibid: p314.

10. Calza, Gian Carlo. 2003. *Hokusai*. London and New York: Phaidon. p230.

11. Clark, T. *Hokusai's great wave*. 2011. London: British Museum Press. p17.

12. Vergunst, Nicolaas. Ibid: p22.

13. Ibid: p20.

14. Fuller (1999: 140) in Vergunst, Nicolaas. Ibid: p33.

15. Fuller (1999: 26) in Vergunst, Nicolaas. Ibid: p20.

16. Winchell, Kaleigh 2009. 'Cezanne and the practice of painting'. Honours Thesis, University of Michigan: p36. Available online: http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/63946/winchell_kaleigh_2009.pdf?sequence=1. Accessed 19 November 2014.

17. Matsumoto, Kaoru 1993. 'Cezanne and Hokusai: The image of the mountain'. Thesis for Masters in Art at McGill University, Quebec, Canada: p55. Available online: http://www.worldcat.org/title/cezanne-and-hokusai-the-image-of-the-mountain/oclc/427981982. Accessed 14 August 2014.

18. Winchell, Kaleigh. Ibid: p16.

19. Vergunst, Nicolaas. Ibid: p16.

20. Interestingly, Hokusai was also capitalising on the culture of travel that emerged during the Edo period. His thirty-six views of Mount Fuji is arguably a part of the Meisho-e 'pictures of famous places' tradition where prints of landscapes were purchased as souvenirs or to satisfy the curiosity of places not yet seen by the buyer.

21. Extract from Bernard Levinson's 'I See You', in Vergunst, Nicolaas. Ibid: p51.

22. Coetzee (1995: 5) in Vergunst, Nicolaas. Ibid: p43.

23. Calza, Gian Carlo. 2003. *Hokusai*. London and New York: Phaidon. p402.

24. Fuller (1999: 26) in Vergunst, Nicolaas. Ibid: p20.

Table Mountain: a close-up view

John Cartwright

A mountain in a city. A layered sea-bed uplifted by intercontinental mashups. Rock-climbers' heaven. A death-trap for the casual or disrespectful. A smorgasbord of weathers and micro-ecologies. A mythic sentinel at the tip of Africa. The docile subject of a thousand postcards. Where a sign says 'This is not an easy way down'. The remnant stub of a huger decayed mountain. Occasionally an island, as the climate changes. A place to find yourself. A place to get lost in.

As we tackle the north-facing slopes and cliffs, the city hums and bleeps below, unaware of our surveying eyes. We climb, traversing millions of years in minutes: slithery decaying granite, sharp-edged broken shale, dark mudstone, grey sandstone blotched with lichen. On top, we are in a kingdom of rock and air. As a sudden cloud surrounds us, we find that we are in the wild.

Back in the city, we smell buchu on our hands.

We have squeezed the leopards and the baboons off the mountain and – for the time being? – there are no dassies, but there is again a pair of klipspringers, bounding with their tiny precise hooves from ledge to ledge. We still have company, despite our immature ignorance of the world whose air we breathe together. Boubou shrikes call and respond in the shade of the kloofs, swifts wheel whistling across the cliffs; yellow-

woods crouch in the cracks, disas blaze, black ground-beetles scurry across white-sand footpaths, and agama lizards slip into crevices.

We look at the mountain from many places and at many times and distances, seeing it and not seeing it. To paint is to look, and to cause others to look. What do we see?

Rock

The oldest – and lowest lying – rock layers are of shale, deposited as muddy sediment under water some 550 million years ago – the upper boundary of this layer cuts across Signal Hill and above most of the 'city bowl', along the lower slopes of Devil's Peak and continues (buried under sand) across the western edge of the Cape Flats to False Bay.

Then hot magma rose up, intruding into the shale and in places overlaying it. A period of massive intercontinental collision uplifted the shale and granite (whose rounded grey shapes, embedded with crystals, may be seen on the Atlantic slopes of Lion's Head). And then, 'on top of this eroded, flat surface … that cuts across Malmesbury shale and granite bedrock rests an enormous pile of sand. Over 7 km thick, this pile of sand (which also includes intervals of mud) was deposited between 510 and 340 million years ago. It is the lowermost portion of this pile of sand that is exposed in the 600m high sandstone cliffs of Table Mountain.'[1]

So what we see today is the lowest, eroded and weathered remnant of a mountain massif that was once about seven times as high and stretched across the present Cape Flats and continued in the 'Cape Fold Belt Mountains' from Stellenbosch onward.

In the course of the last few million years since that last major upheaval, the underlying structure has changed little, but the climate has swung back and forth – at times, Table Mountain has been an island

30 kilometres from the mainland; at others, one could have walked dry-shod across False Bay from Fish Hoek to Rooi Els.

Water

Where there is a mountain standing in the way of moisture-laden off-sea winds, there is likely to be rainfall, and where there is rainfall there will be freshwater streams, and so it is here. However, as the soil on the upper slopes, ledges and tops of Table Mountain and the Cape Peninsula mountain chain is thin and sandy, with relatively little in the way of deep humus-rich soils or retentive bogs and sponges, much of the rainwater passes quickly through and away to the sea, with only the strongest streams continuing to run throughout the dry and windy summers.

Among the strongest perennial streams flowing off Table Mountain, and certainly the most easily accessible, is the one running from Platteklip Gorge, the great crack in the northern cliff-face (conventionally regarded as the 'front') of the mountain, and on down into what we now know as Table Bay.

Without that stream, and therefore without Table Mountain, Cape Town in its present form would not exist.

Early European sailors, on the way south and around the Cape in the direction of the fabled East, soon noted that Saldanha – up the west coast from Cape Town – provided a much better and safer harbour than Table Bay, but had no reliable source of fresh water, which was their chiefest need on the long voyage.

This perennial stream, and the seasonal pasturage on the gentle slopes around its lower reaches, had been known to the local people for unnumbered generations. To them this was Camissa, the place of sweet waters. These pastoralist Khoi groups, primarily the Gorachoqua and the Goringhaiqua, needed reliable

pasture for their sheep and goats and, as the local vegetation provided little sustenance for their flocks, were obliged to engage in 'transhumance': moving in a regular cycle from one grazing area to another as the seasons changed.

To European sailors, Table Mountain was therefore not only a striking visual beacon, but a signal of the reliable presence of fresh water, and several Portuguese, English and Dutch ships dropped anchor in Table Bay for rest and refreshment before Jan van Riebeeck arrived in 1652 with instructions from the Dutch East India Company 'to found a fort and garden there'.

Today our water comes pumped through huge pipes from other mountains on the far side of the Cape Flats, but on the western slopes of Table Mountain are still the decaying but impressive remnants of an engineering scheme initiated in the 1880s, when the growth of Cape Town and the consequent dire shortage of water forced the city authorities to stop tinkering with small local reservoirs and make serious plans.

Five stone-built dams were constructed on the 'Back Table', with materials and supplies being hauled up by a pulley system from the slopes above Camps Bay and then transported to the sites on a specially laid rail-track. Down below, the Pipe Track still runs along the slopes from Kloof Nek to Slangolie Ravine, where the pipes dive into the buttress.

Even this grand investment of planning and effort could not keep up with the growth of the city, and the massive black iron pipe-line – at times barely buried under the path, at others crossing small ravines on stone pillars – is now a curiosity. The sober brick building of the Kloof Nek water treatment plant, however, with its gleaming and whooshing interior, continues to demonstrate (at least for now) the simple virtues of 20th-century municipal engineering.

*****

Table Mountain is made of rock and carved by water and air. Add fire (from time to time) and you get microbes and bacteria, plants, insects, birds, animals and us, a constantly changing *mix masala* of consciousnesses and cultures, with all the regular pains and joys of such creatures, and a few local variations.

The mountain also changes in its own time, grain by rolling grain and rock by falling rock.

In the mean time, see the big sky, drink the water, feel the wind, smell the fynbos, hear the sunbirds and the ravens and the many distant sounds of a city going about its business. You are here.

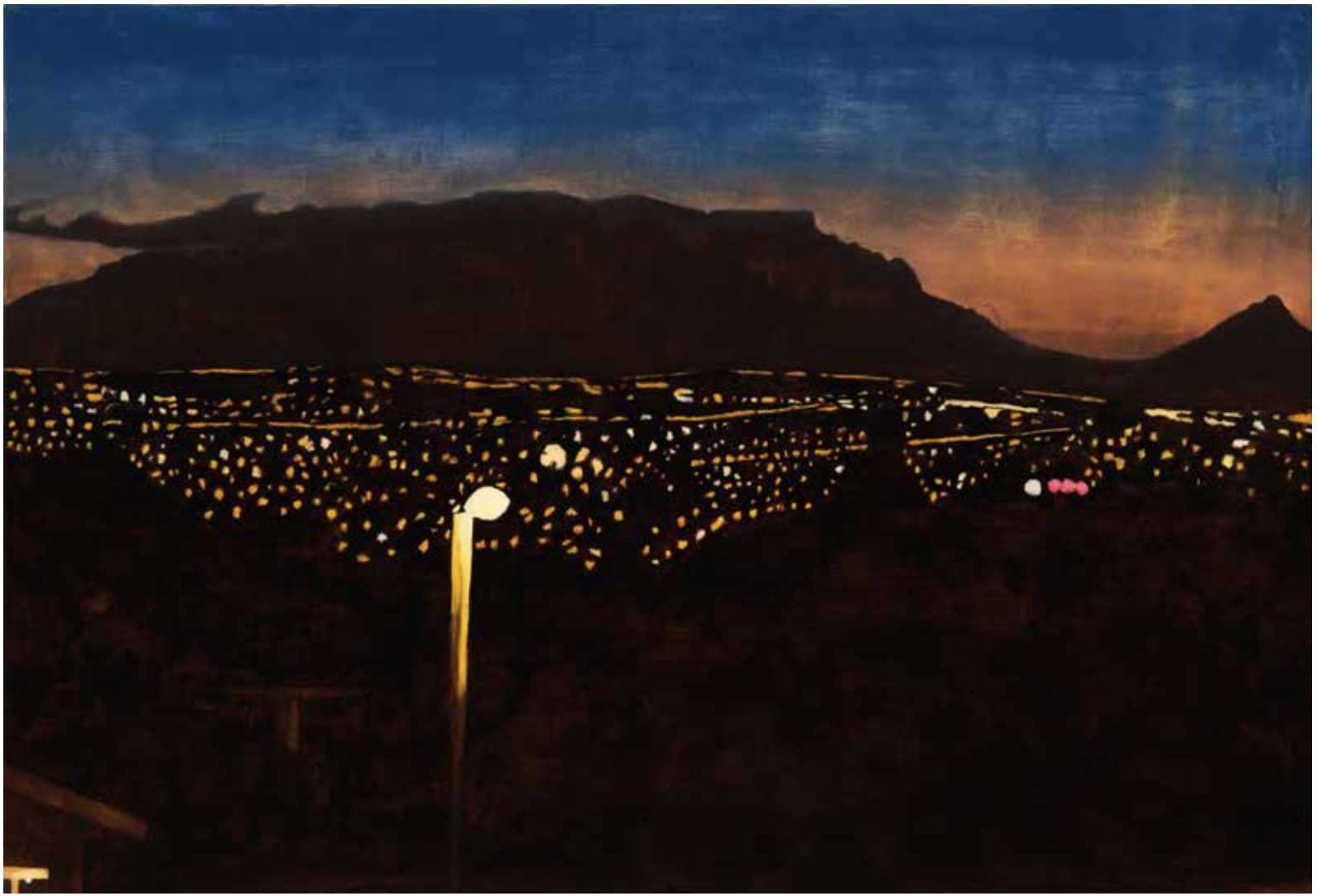
Endnotes

1. Compton, John S. 2004. *The rocks and mountains of Cape Town.* Cape Town: Juta and co. p57.

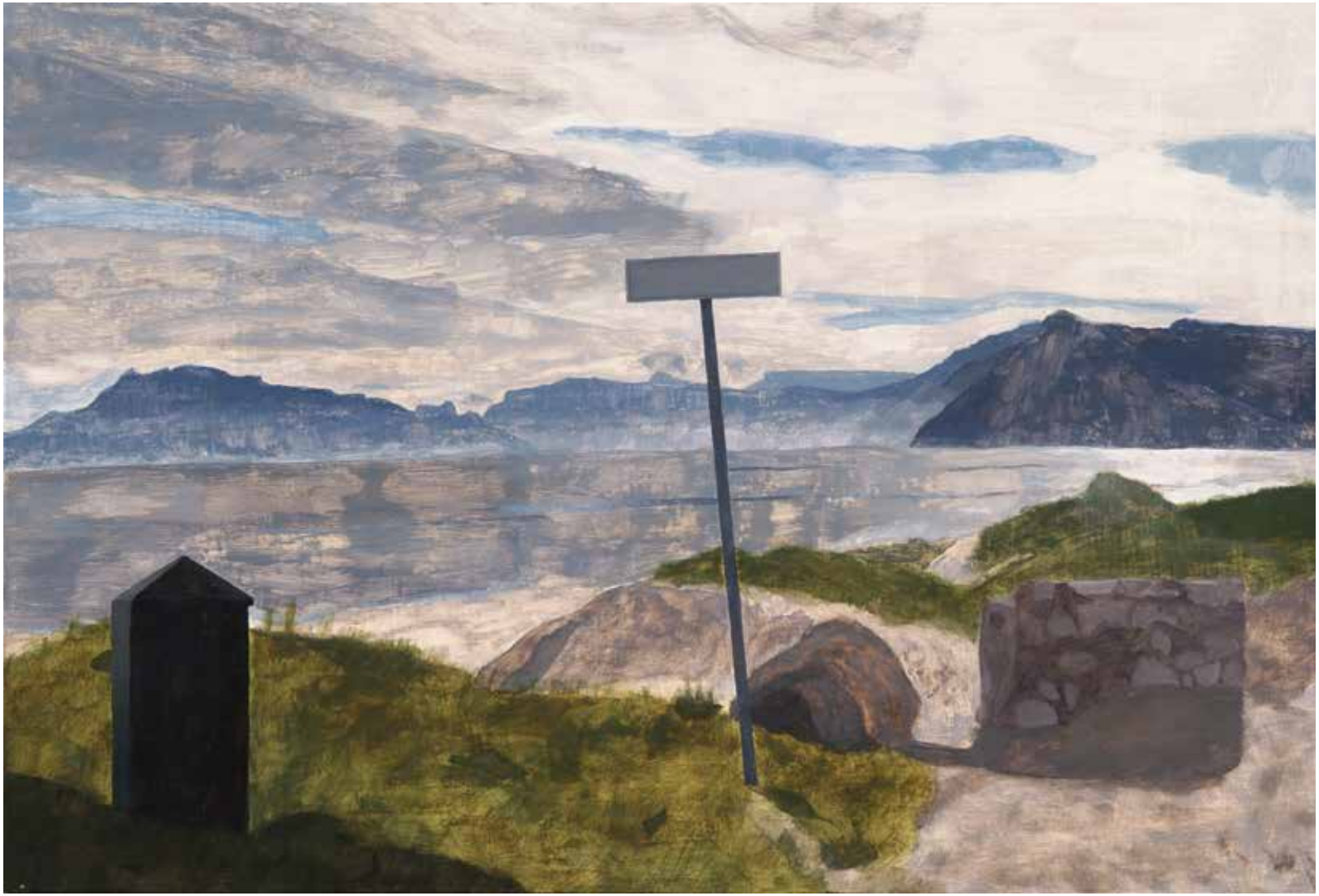
The Good Hope Centre, foreshore

Cape Town train station

Footpath ‘To Trek’ off Kloofnek Road, Tamboerskloof



From the top of the N1 near Welgemoed



Benning Drive, Kommetjie

From the V&A Waterfront by the old grain silos

The upper cable car station with Robben Island in the distance

From the coastal road near Llandudno

On the N7 near Philadelphia

Bottom cable car station, Table Mountain Road

Upper cable car station

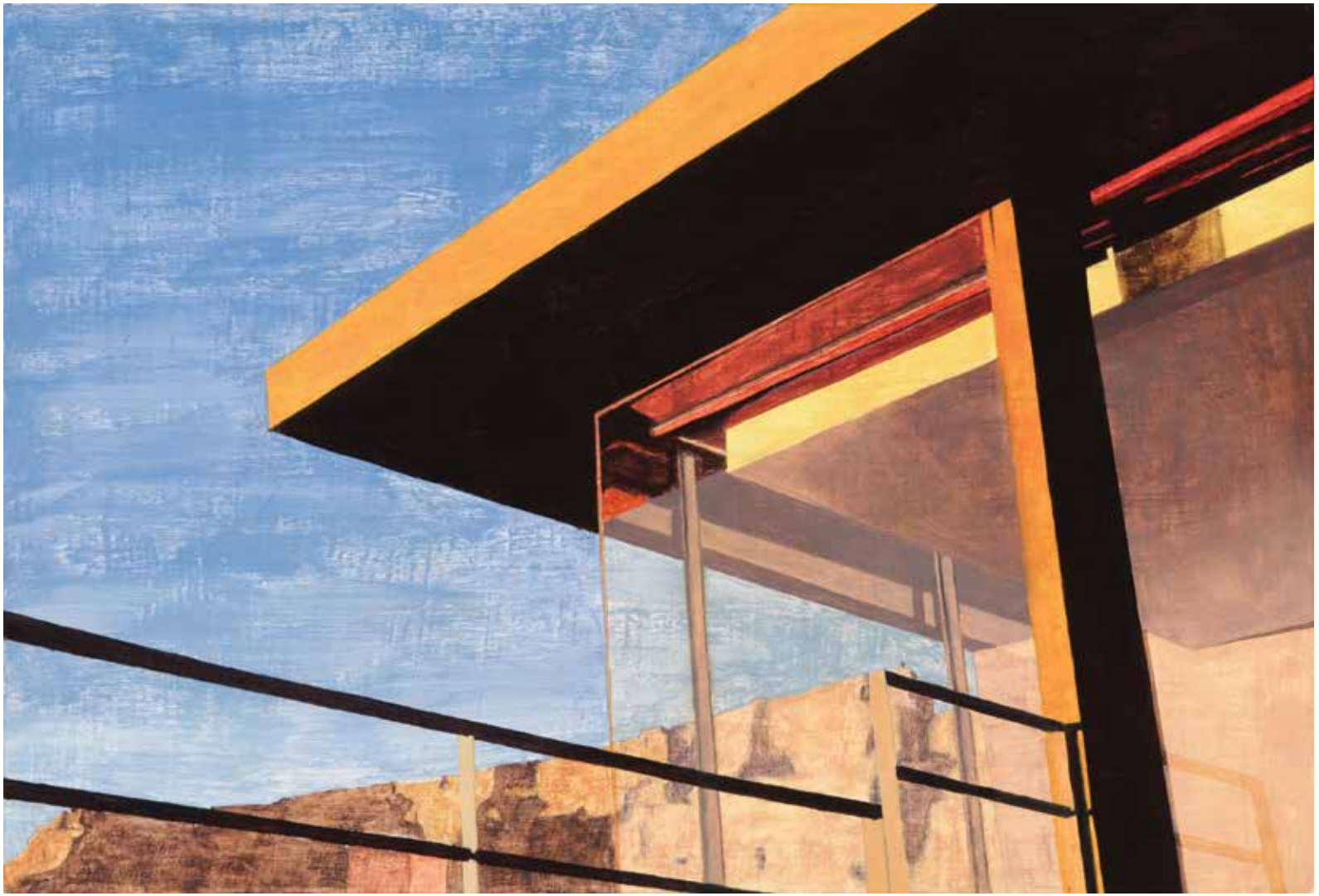
Off the False Bay coast

Wreck of the Seli 1, Bloubergstrand

View from the Spur, Big Bay, Bloubergstrand

From the bottom cable car station

Beach Road, Camp's Bay



Hilldene Road, Tamboerskloof

Thelema Mountain Vineyards, Helshoogte

Disembarking at Cape Town International Airport

Upper contour path between Platteklip Gorge and Kloof Corner

From Lion's Head

V&A Waterfront with Christmas tree

Outside The Assembly, Harrington Street

From the top of Kloofnek Drive

From a pedestrian bridge at the V&A Waterfront

Baden Powell Drive near the N2, Khayelitsha

From Tygerberg with signal cannon and cell phone tower

From the water off Clifton

Fairview farm, Suid-agter Paarl Pad

On the M3 flyover near Ndabeni

From Kasteelspoort, by the Old Cable Car Station

A great wave off Kommetjie

The limestone quarry on Robben Island

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my wife, Julz, for her support over the course of this project; also my daughter, Maya, for her patience and forbearance and getting-on-with-things while I cloistered myself in the studio; and to my stepson, Jarid, for the same.

Jeremy de Tolly is my looongest standing friend and has talked me through many of the demons that accompany any self-initiated creative project; we are lucky to be walking side-by-side on our respective journies. Similarly, Niek de Greef gave me good technical advice throughout the project and helped me push my practice to more challenging, less safe ways of thinking and making. Natasha Norman also provided sensitive critiques of works as they were in progress, and 'got' the whole project so completely that I felt compelled to ask her to write an essay about it.

Pippa Skotnes has provided sound advice, generosity with her time and resources and generally been a brick over the last ten years. Thanks, doll.

My father has supported all the life choices I've made that I can remember, no matter how hare-brained; he has also, of course, operated a 24 hour banking service throughout my life. I hope to start paying some of that back soon. My mother once advised me that the greatest waste is to have a talent and not to use it, so I've had that in my head for about twenty years, wondering what my talent is. I hope that I've found it.

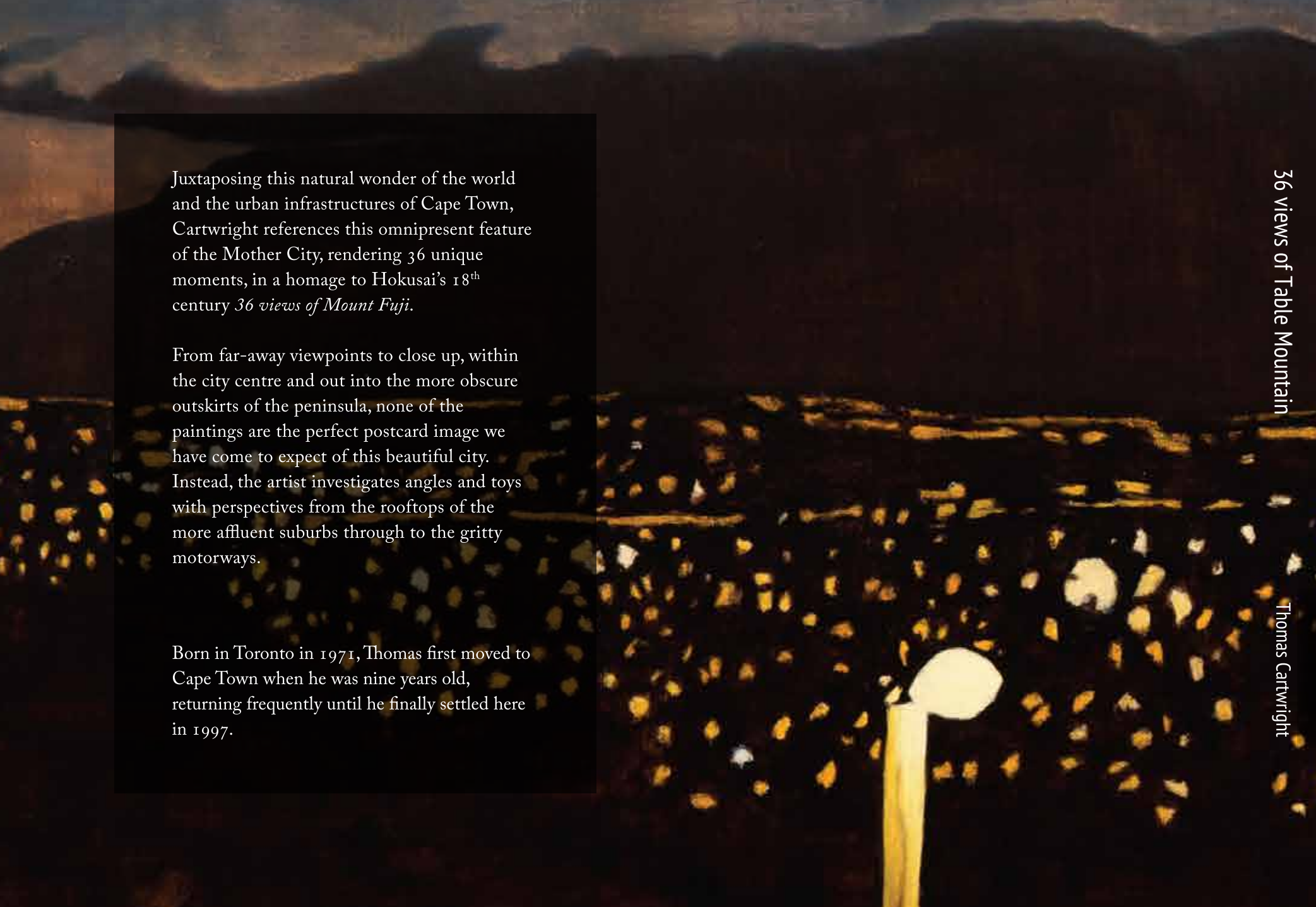
Thanks to the Paint in Progress group for their comradely support, advice and criticism – Katherine Bull, Virginia MacKenny, Lauren Palte, Zara-Moon Arthur, Katherine Spindler and Nina Liebenberg. Thanks also to the friends and family who provided me with images and/or accompanied me on drives and mountain walks in search of unusual perspectives of Table Mountain: Pa, Julz, kr!5, Niek, Jarid, Maya, Jeremy, Rob Keith, Delene van Dyk, Mark Antonello, George Joubert, Simon Wall, Ant Fox, Barry Donnelly, André Rademeyer and Thelema Mountain Vineyards.

Final thanks to Charles Shields and David Tripp of the Everard Read Gallery for their interest in the project, and to the very capable support staff at the gallery: Emma, Mikaela, Justine, Cheryl and the installation team.

Heartfelt thanks to Niek de Greef for his work on the layout of this catalogue. And for beer and coffee over the course of the year.

Images

All works photographed by, or licensed to, the artist unless otherwise specified.
The paintings were photographed by Michael Hall.
p7. Hokusai, K. c. 1830-4. 'Fuji seen through the Mannen bridge at Fukagawa, Edo'. Colour woodblock print. 38.5 x 26.2 cm.
p9. Mount Fuji photographed by Natasha Norman.
p13. Cézanne, P. c. 1905. 'Montagne Sainte-Victoire and the Black Chateau' (detail). Oil on canvas. 65.6 x 81cm. Bridgestone Museum of Art, Tokyo, Japan.



Juxtaposing this natural wonder of the world and the urban infrastructures of Cape Town, Cartwright references this omnipresent feature of the Mother City, rendering 36 unique moments, in a homage to Hokusai's 18th century *36 views of Mount Fuji*.

From far-away viewpoints to close up, within the city centre and out into the more obscure outskirts of the peninsula, none of the paintings are the perfect postcard image we have come to expect of this beautiful city. Instead, the artist investigates angles and toys with perspectives from the rooftops of the more affluent suburbs through to the gritty motorways.

Born in Toronto in 1971, Thomas first moved to Cape Town when he was nine years old, returning frequently until he finally settled here in 1997.

36 views of Table Mountain

Thomas Cartwright