

**UNDERSTANDING WHITENESS IN SOUTH AFRICA  
WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO THE ART OF BRETT  
MURRAY**

ROSS P. PASSMOOR

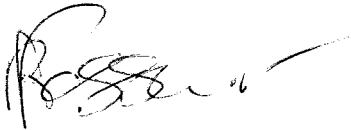
MAFA DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Art in Fine Arts, in the faculty of Humanities, Development  
and Social Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg.

December 2009

## Declaration

Except where acknowledged to the contrary, this dissertation is the original work of the candidate. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Art in Fine Art, University of KwaZulu-Natal, and has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ross Passmoor', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ross Passmoor

December 2009

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Juliette Leeb-du Toit', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Juliette Leeb-du Toit

December 2009

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Juliette Leeb-du Toit, for her unending patience and her insightful supervision.

The National Research Foundation for their much appreciated funding for the duration of my research, without this my paper would never have even started and to Professor Juliet Armstrong for her help in arranging my funding.

Brett Murray for allowing me to interview him and for his warm and hospitable nature.

Marilyn Fowles for her untiring support over the years. Vulindlela Nyoni, his guidance as an intellectual and a friend is greatly appreciated. My partner, Sarah, whose emotional support is beyond comparison. My parents, Pam and Alan, whose patience and confidence have allowed me to realise my potential.

## Abstract

The white male artist whose self-interrogation attaches to his whiteness, difference and former centrality, inevitably exposes himself to the critical scrutiny of current discourse on race and whiteness studies.

In this dissertation I examine the concept and emergence of whiteness as a dominant construct in select socio-historical contexts, more particularly in the colonial sphere. While colonial whiteness has often failed to acknowledge or foreground the faceted nature of its composition, this became particularly marked in a South African context with polarisation in the political, cultural and linguistic spheres. However in encounters with the colonised, unifying pretensions of whiteness prevailed, reinforcing difference along racial lines.

I examine the work of white South African male artist Brett Murray, in which the interrogation of whiteness and associated marginalization and invisibility is again foregrounded, but predominantly in a postcolonial context. As Murray cautiously navigates his satirical gaze at the culturally and conceptually flawed hybridity of South African (male) whiteness, he inadvertently exposes a nostalgic gaze at erstwhile racial centrality. I further consider whether as a postcolonial other Murray has in fact been able to transcend racially based self-interrogation by addressing more polemic issues associated with power, corruption and inhumanity that transcend race.

## Contents

<b><u>Acknowledgements</u></b>	page	1
<b><u>Abstract</u></b>	page	2
<b><u>Introduction</u></b>	page	4
<b><u>Chapter 1: A theoretical and historical introduction to Whiteness</u></b>	page	6
i) Race, Ethnicity and Identity Politics		6
ii) The Historical Context of Whiteness		11
iii) Post-Colonial Whiteness		14
<b><u>Chapter 2: Aspects of Whiteness in the South African Context</u></b>	page	20
i) Some South African Particularities		20
ii) Post-Apartheid Euphoria		24
iii) Afrikaner and English Whitenesses		25
iv) Diaspora		29
v) Whiteness and Africanicity		44
<b><u>Chapter 3: An overview of Murray's body of work in relation to Whiteness</u></b>	page	49
i) Formative Years		49
ii) Post-Liberation Introspective Satire		57
iii) New Beginnings		73
<b><u>Conclusion</u></b>	page	84
<b><u>Bibliography</u></b>	page	86
<b><u>Appendix: Murray Interview (September 2009)</u></b>	page	96

## Introduction

I seek to expand upon the existing discourse of whiteness studies in order to shed light on the perceived existential crisis of white South Africans. In outlining contemporary theories of identity construction, I discuss the historical development of race and thus whiteness and review contemporary literature surrounding the study of whiteness in order to gain a better understanding of the concept of whiteness. This knowledge is then applied to the South African context and in particular to the art of Brett Murray situated within this context.

In highlighting the notion of whiteness an inevitable racialization process takes place, and in this dissertation Murray is racialized as a white. The question remains then, is it worth revisiting race in a country where the topic is sensitive, contentious and a social reality. Ratele suggests that an investigation of whiteness is an endeavour that will inadvertently revert to the propagation of racist thought and recentre white ideology (Ratele, 2007: 431-436) Ratele further suggests,

“Making whiteness unconscious is a better way through which fundamentally different friendships, loves, education, thoughts, and other facets of a beautiful, psychoculturally healthy life of the indigenous person can be carved out, less pained by the trauma of the long and brutal history of white and colonial regimes” (Ratele, 2007: 436).

Ratele’s view is in opposition to what this dissertation and whiteness studies in general are aiming to achieve. Although Ratele’s concerns about a re-centring of whiteness are valid, the reality is that by rendering whiteness unconscious, whiteness as a tacit norm is inadvertently recentered (Steyn 2001, Lopez 2005). Whiteness achieves its power as ideologically centred by remaining unconscious, without scrutiny and invisible to white people. Any attempt to investigate, scrutinize and critique whiteness must inevitably critically conserve the category of whiteness and utilize ‘race thinking’ (Taylor, 2004). That is the acknowledgement that race effects and shapes peoples existence and therefore critique and scrutiny should be directed at all the facets of the concept of race. Sullivan suggests that to rehabilitate whiteness is more a fruitful endeavour than to deny race completely (Sullivan, 2008: 249).

Furthermore she asserts that white guilt produces a “self-focused, emotional wallowing that distracts white people from political struggle while making it seem as if they are doing something to counter racism” (Sullivan, 2008: 252). In essence Sullivan contends that whiteness should not be abandoned because of its violent history, instead she suggests a reinvention of the concept, so as to retain a movement towards anti-racism. This dissertation then aims to make whiteness visible in the critique of Brett Murray’s work in order to engage in a discourse that is cognisant of Murray’s race and the complexities that lie therein.

I have chosen Brett Murray as the artist of enquiry for two main reasons. Firstly he openly acknowledges his whiteness and explores the concept in his work. This is important because his work and the aims of this dissertation attempt to undo racist thought by explicitly acknowledging and critiquing whiteness. Secondly he is an ethnic amalgam, both Afrikaans and English speaking, allowing for an intriguing reading of his work as the work of a hybrid whiteness.

However this dissertation is limited by the fact that Brett Murray is only one person, one point of reference against which the perceptions of whiteness will be compared and contrasted. This is not an attempt to make broad generalizations about whiteness in South Africa. Instead it is a work of interpretative research that takes as its starting point the broad generalizations of whiteness studies and applies this to Murray’s work, thus enabling a possible, if only small, expansion of the subject. By situating Murray’s work within the discourse of whiteness studies, this dissertation regards whiteness as complex and heterogeneous, making the study of an individual’s work relevant in relation to a perceived group.

## **Chapter 1**

### **A theoretical and historical introduction to Whiteness**

#### **i) Race, Ethnicity and Identity politics**

#### **ii) The Historical Context of Whiteness**

#### **iii) Post-Colonial Whiteness**

#### **i) Race Ethnicity and Identity Politics**

Race and ethnicity are terms that have become diffuse and problematic through overuse and misapplication (Lopez, 2005). The constructed nature of these interrelated terms will be integral to an understanding of issues to be addressed in this dissertation. In this chapter I will discuss race and ethnicity and the slippages between them, the development of the modern racial order and the contemporary location of whiteness in particular in a South African context. In keeping with Epstein (1998), I will use the term 'ethnicity' to describe "communities which see themselves as different by virtue of history, religion and/or language but which, in South African terms, might be described as being of the same race" (Epstein, 1998: 51).

I further concur with Samson's assumption that, "People make race. Differences in skin colour and other physical attributes exist, but on a spectrum rather than in neatly apportioned categories" (Samson 2005: 3). The idea that people make race is a core assumption in the critical study of race as a sociological phenomenon. However in order to understand this fully, a discussion of race and what is involved in its making will be addressed. Ratcliffe maintains that much of the world's population regards race as an empirical truth. However, "To some, it may be little more than a convenient set of descriptors; to others it represents something considerably more sinister. It is a



way of ordering groups hierarchically and deterministically, that is the inferiorization of certain groups is deemed to apply in all places and for all time” (Ratcliffe 2004: 27).

The term race is essentially a generalization, referring to a phenotypically distinct group of people regarded as similar. As a term it is used by theorists and racists alike, the only difference being that modern theorists generalize in order to shed light on the effects of a racialized social order, while racists perpetuate racial hierarchies in order to secure positions of power. Debra Nails maintains that although individuals can be conscious of their racialized existence, “a race (like a state) can be severally conscious of the existence of the whole but has no distinct consciousness of its own” (Nails in Valls 2005: 64). For the purposes of this dissertation, race will not refer to the genetically based reality of phenotypical differences, but instead to the symbolic meanings attached to those bodily differences (Brunsmas & Rockquemore, 2002. p340). Thus, “the fact that a person is born with "white" skin does not necessarily mean that s/he will think, act, and write in the "white" ways I've described. Nor does the fact that a person has "brown" or "black" skin automatically guarantee that s/he will not think, act, and write in "white" ways” (Keating, 1995: 907).

Ethnicity is a term often used interchangeably with race, due to the fact that the two terms co-construct each other historically. Racial categories often refer to large groups of people with no historical bond or ethnic connection; hence the concept of race has brought many groups together by virtue of their racialization. MacDonald claims that, “ethnic groups are defined by perceptions of common descent” (MacDonald 2006: 17). In this sense race and ethnicity are synonymous. He notes further that, “communities are ethnic because their members believe they are associated by common ancestry” (MacDonald 2006: 17). Racial categories have generated a perceived common ancestry, thus ethnicity and race are inextricably entangled. As racial hierarchies have permeated the identity construction of individuals and groups, an historical racial identity relates in a reciprocal manner to ethnic identification.

Avtar Brah argues that ethnicity is used to refer to “a set of processes through which relational differences between groups are constructed and held in place” (Epstein, 1998: 49-59). While Brah acknowledges the constructed and changing nature of ethnicity, other ethno-theorists such as Ratcliffe feel that a more fluid model, based on

specific socio-cultural situations, is required in order to understand the shifting nature of ethnicity. Ratcliffe says of his situational approach to ethnicity, that there, “exist highly complex and multi-dimensional ethno-cultural identities. Essentially different aspects of our identity (not necessarily rooted in heritage) emerge in different social contexts” (Ratcliffe, 2004: 28). Ratcliffe further suggests that a post-modern sense of ethno-cultural identification, one that is useful when acknowledging a racial basis for interpretation, regards “ethnicity as constantly changing, not permanently anchored in history, either ‘real’ or imagined. As with the situational variant, it arises from social interactions of various kinds, and draws inspiration from global, national and local contexts” (Ratcliffe, 2004: 29). Ratcliffe maintains that this perception of ethnicity is a key to understanding cultural hybridity and diaspora, two key aspects of post-colonial social theory (Ratcliffe, 2004). This perspective of a fluid, hybrid and plural ethnic identity that is under construction is reified by post-colonial discourse.

Race and ethnicity, therefore, cannot be conceptualized as an essentialized, unified system of meanings (James, 2003: 28). Instead they should be discussed and analyzed as heterogeneous, plural and replete with contending discourses. Power relations are key to understanding this multi-faceted view of cultural development and dynamics. Just as culture is subject to the centres of cultural production and reception, so too is an individual’s ethnic identity. This is not to say that ethnic identities are pre-determined by the power centres, or located in an individual’s access to power. Rather authority lies in individual ability to exercise agency and determine the extent to which ethnicity holds sway as a conscious or unconscious influence on identity construction.

In discussing the work of an individual, as this paper does, identity construction becomes integral to an understanding of the reciprocal relationship between the artist and the social structures within which he works. This is illustrated by Brewer who accepts that the notion of a social identity has been invoked throughout the human sciences when the need for a conceptual bridge between individual and group analysis is required (2001: 115). Brewer maintains that social identity provides a link between individual psychology and the structure and process of social groups within which the individual is located (2001: 115).

If one defines social identity as an aspect of the self, the management of multiple identities is like an internal juggling act (Brewer, 2001: 121). Brewer further suggests that this management of identities occurs at both a conscious and subconscious level, and that the individual may be aware that differing identities may have conflicting implications for their behaviour. Thus while the individual's enactment of identity is bound to a certain extent by their social context, the process remains one of accessing performances from an internal canon of identities or self-representations (Brewer, 2001: 121).

Acknowledging that the self draws on multiple identities in varying social contexts, Deaux (1996) provides some insight into the uses of social identity theories in the human sciences. He considers group identities as identities that are utilized when referring to a social identity located within the individual self-concept, in which identities are regarded as aspects of the self that have been influenced by membership of a social group on the other hand relational social identities are role identities, in the sense that they are identifications of the self as a certain kind of person. They differ from individual based social identities, because they define the self in relation to others (Stryker, 1980). Whereas these forms of social identification privilege the importance of the influence of the group on the identity construction of the self, group-based social identities refer to the perception of self as an integral or interchangeable facet of the larger social unit. Brewer maintains that group social identity influences the self-concept in two ways; the first is when the construal of the self transcends the individual to involve a more inclusive social unit. In this instance the boundaries between the self and other group members is overshadowed by the more important boundaries between ingroup and outgroups. In the second instance, the attributes and behaviours of the individual self are merged with the representation of the group as a whole, highlighting the features that make the group distinctive from others and simultaneously enhancing uniformity and cohesion within the group (Turner et al in Brewer, 2001: 119). In a work such as *Bubblehead Underpants* (2002) Murray highlights some of the features of whiteness, such as its seemingly blank façade, bear in mind that the Afrikaans term for white people (blanke) has an etymological connection to blankness or transparency.



Bubble Head: Underpants  
2002  
340 x 190 x190 mm  
Painted bronze Ed:1/8

Not dissimilar to group based identities, collective social identification involves a shared conception and representation of the group based on perceived common interests and history. However the impetus of a collective social identity is an active effort to forge the group collectively, to change what the group stands for and how others will view it. Therefore collective social identity represents goals achieved collectively, above and beyond what individuals initially had in common. The concept of collective identity therefore provides a critical link between social identity (at both individual and group levels) and collective action (Gamson in Brewer, 2001: 119).

Social identities are not only diverse within the sphere of social discourse, but are also built of many facets of a group or individual's identity construct. Race is an important facet in this construction, because groups are not only ethnicized by their cultural practices, but are also racialized. The constructed nature of race has influenced, and been influenced by the not so distant past. Still race persists beyond the colonial era as a testament to the collective memory of the groups affected by its enactment. Phenotypical differences have existed as long as people have lived in varying environments and have identified observed differences. These physical differences have been useful to groups that seek to differentiate themselves from the 'other', for what are usually power-related reasons. When these physical differences are not present, they can be constructed. For example the wearing of the Magen David (Star/Shield of David) in Nazi-controlled Germany, was enforced to visually differentiate Jews from their Christian German counterparts. Since the beginnings of modern human exploration, groups of differing phenotypical traits have come into contact with each other. The modern order of racial hierarchies however, soon began to foreground and racially align it's perceived others.

## **ii)The Historical Context of Whiteness**

As noted above, ethnic and racial identities are aspects of social identification that are in process and contingent on a collective history. In order to understand whiteness as a racial identity and metanarrative of self identification, an understanding of it's historical development is necessary. According to Samson (2005) by the Middle Ages Europe had already moved away from the relatively tolerant polytheisms of the

ancient Mediterranean. Muslims (the 'Moors' as they would be known) from North Africa invaded Spain in 711. The Moors were later overthrown in the eleventh century by Christian leaders from the northern parts of Spain. However Moorish power remained in some coastal areas. While religious difference had occurred in the past, religious rifts now began to assume a racial aspect as well. After the reconquest of Spain, "royal and aristocratic families became increasingly concerned with 'purity of blood', praising whiter complexions as evidence that particular families had not intermarried with Moors or Jews" (Samson, 2005: 12). Although difference between groups was still essentially located in religion, physical attributes were now a signifier of that difference, and in the Iberian Peninsula the notion of whiteness was further attached to superiority. Samson suggests that this was the beginnings of the modern racial order and in particular the beginnings of the concept of whiteness (Samson, 2005: 12). However Stevens suggests that in most colonial contexts the initial constructions of whiteness were in a defence of a "normativity that was perceived to be under threat from the 'heathen', the 'barbarian', the 'Saracen', the 'primitive native', and so forth" (Stevens, 2007: 427). Thus whiteness was positioned at the apex of the hierarchical structures and connotations of physical difference, a concept that would much later come to be known as race.

In 1492 Columbus's inadvertent discovery of the Americas led to a new and unexpected phase in the understanding of human difference. The goals of Spanish and Portuguese colonisation in the Americas were, economic exploitation and religious conversion (Samson, 2005: 14). Initially debates about issues of equality and indigenous rights ensued. Unable to decide on a verdict the eventual outcome was arrived at due to fear that the Spanish colonists would rebel against Spain if their freedom to abuse the indigenous people of the Americas was curtailed (Samson, 2005: 15).

Subsequent development of a hegemonic racial hierarchy was reflected in the implementation of slavery in newly discovered regions of the world. Slavery is a human phenomenon that existed long before Europeans endeavoured to explore the world and in particular continental Africa. Although the European slave trade would, "vastly exceed earlier precedents in both scope and brutality" (Samson, 2005: 19). Samson suggests that the act of slavery compounded already existing European

prejudices (Samson, 2005: 19). By enslaving others, a sense of European superiority existed, enslavement serving to further perpetuate and aggravate the multitude of perceived and real inequalities.

This was to gain momentum with a shift in European power in the seventeenth century, when the English defeated the Dutch in numerous naval battles and began a slave trade of their own, soon becoming the dominant European slave traders and later imperial political power. Due to a unique style of colonial management, new forms of self-identification started to emerge in the English colonies, “From initially the most common term *Christian*, at mid-century there was a shift towards the terms *English* and *free*. After about 1680, taking the colonies as a whole, a new term of self-identification appeared – *white*” (Jordan, 1974:52 in Samson, 2005: 22).

The English had developed an enmity towards many other nations since the crusades, however at the time of colonial advancement the Irish were their closest foes. The Irish were perceived as primitive and savage by the English, these views were to be institutionalised and would form part of the public’s understanding of the other. The hatred of the Irish was a form of extreme ethnocentrism, that reached its peak in the sixteenth century, the same era in which the English were settling Northern America (Allen 1994; Canny 1973; Liggio 1976 in Smedley 1998: 694). The hallmarks of English racial oppression were by now obvious and constituted “The assault upon the tribal affinities, customs, laws and institutions of the Africans, American Indians and the Irish by English/British and Anglo-American colonialism [and] reduced all members of the oppressed to one undifferentiated social status, a status beneath that of any member of any social class within the colonising population” (Allen 1994: 32).

By the time Britain envisaged greater expansion into South Africa, America was already in the process of claiming its independence from Britain. The British were entering into an industrial age and its colonial ambitions were largely determined by new capitalist markets and strategic positions in case of war (Samson, 2005). The nineteenth century challenged traditional ideas about imperialism, new ideas of the imperial mission assumed a slightly more evangelical and humanitarian edge. Henceforth a new strategy of civilizing the uncivilized and converting the heathen developed in order to maintain and expand a territorial empire (Samson, 2005).

Coinciding with the British colonial endeavour, academic concerns with race and human difference in the form of the emerging discipline of anthropology arose. Due to the colonial attitudes at the time this science was tainted by the aims of colonialism and ended up serving colonial interests, rather than academic pursuit. Ratcliffe highlights the value of the discipline of anthropology to the colonists, “The key was that it was possible for scientists to describe, categorize and then formally classify the world’s human population” (Ratcliffe, 2004: 17). This categorization was then ordered hierarchically, based on the hegemonic norms that had been in development since the middle ages. However there was resistance to a scientific racial order, such as Blumenbach’s view that distinct ‘races’ was a purely hypothetical position (Ratcliffe, 2004: 17). However Blumenbach’s perspective was short-lived, as notions of a racial strata served the goals of colonialism better. Positivists like Cuvier suggested in 1805 that humanity comprised of three races; ‘white’, ‘yellow’ and ‘black’, with ‘white’ at the apex and ‘black’ in the “lowest position” (Ratcliffe, 2004: 17).

As the physical anthropologists devised more sophisticated ways of positioning the world’s peoples, few ever questioned the underlying logic, even when the data they collected failed to confirm their theories. In the process, race effectively became a world-view; an incontestable ‘fact’ about the way the world was ordered (Ratcliffe 2004: 17). As Ratcliffe suggests, through history and eventually through science a worldview of racial hierarchies was established that would permeate the lives of all who experienced different races, whether conscious or unconscious of its influence.

### **iii) Post-Colonial Whiteness**

In the contemporary post-colonial era, whiteness has loosened its grasp on the physical spaces it had conquered and dominated through colonization. Lopez suggests that, postcolonialism represents “a critique of the West’s historical domination of its others, the corresponding assumption of its cultural superiority over those others and especially the discourses that enable both” (2005: 7). Correspondingly Frankenberg regards whiteness as the “production and reproduction of dominance rather than

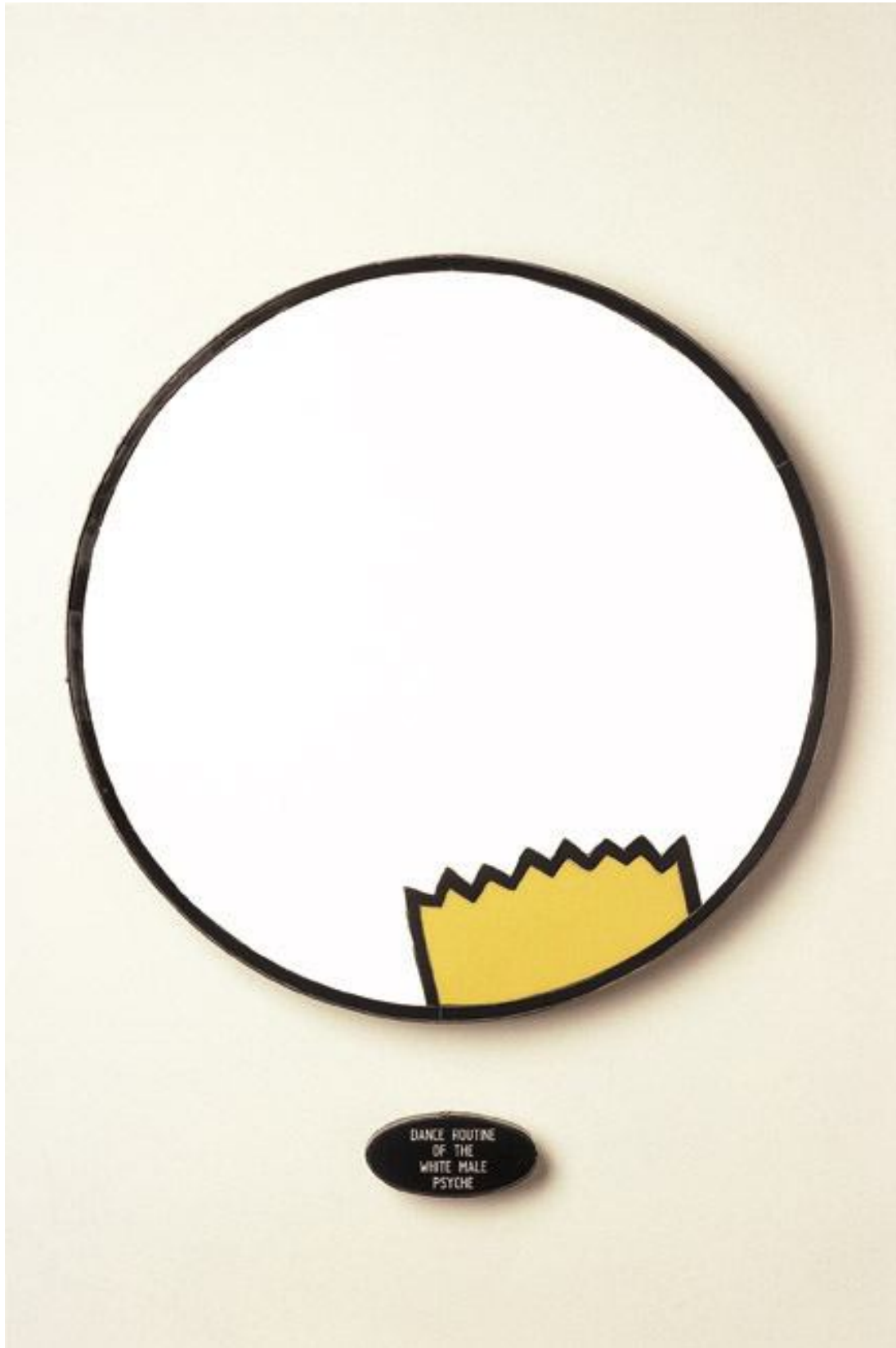


subordination, normativity rather than marginality, and privilege rather than disadvantage” (Frankenberg, 1993: 236). Thus in history and the contemporary moment, whiteness and colonialism are inextricably linked.

While Lopez contends that the end of colonialism should have brought about the end of the dominance of whiteness, whiteness persists as a latent ideal (2005: 1). Theorists such as Henry Louis Gates (1986) and Kwame Appiah (1992) regard race as a malignant fiction, whilst others such as Richard Dyer (1997) and Ross Chambers (1997) argue for more scrutiny directed at whiteness as a tacit norm (Lopez, 2005: 2). Whilst these two views approach race from different perspectives, their ultimate goal is the same. The first group aims to do away with the fiction of race entirely, whilst the other wants to place whiteness as a racial category - one amongst many others. Although seemingly incompatible both groups share in common a scrutiny of the power structures that hold racial hierarchies in place; and this in the end is the ultimate goal of critical race theory (Lopez, 2005: 2). Whiteness studies is a recent, post 90’s development in the critique of race. Its purpose has been to foreground and scrutinise the concept of whiteness. Through illuminating the concept, the field of whiteness studies then aims to deconstruct the power centres of white supremacy. This would entail critiques of cultural, political, economic and all other knowledge based institutions. Whiteness studies are divided by what Sullivan refers to as “eliminativists” and “critical conservationists” (Sullivan, 2005: 237). The eliminativists, such as Gates and Appiah, aim to dismantle and undermine the concept of whiteness in order to negate potential for abuses of power. Eliminativist theory is based on the notion that as long as whiteness exists, so does racial oppression. Beyond this, eliminativists aim to undo the fiction of race entirely. Critical conservationism on the other hand, in the case of Dyer and Chambers, wishes to reinvent whiteness as an anti-racist category. As oxymoronic as whiteness and anti-racism seem, critical conservationists posit that whiteness could become more than just the oppressive racist force it has been forged from. Furthermore, Sullivan suggests that, “since lived existential categories like whiteness cannot be merely or quickly eliminated, white people should work to transform whiteness into an anti-racist category” (Sullivan, 2005: 237). Although these views seem to be ostensibly paradoxical, their core beliefs are essentially the same, that is to focus on whiteness as a racial construct and therefore enable critique of the concept to challenge the hegemony of whiteness.

As discussed earlier, in the history of imperialism and colonial expansion race has been utilized as a justification for the domination and oppression of others. This domination came in multiple forms, located in perceived superiority ranging from the technological to the religious. Through dominating other groups, and by utilizing race as a means to legitimate domination, whiteness became ideologically centred. By controlling several pedagogical, ontological and epistemological structures, whiteness was able to control most systems of knowledge. Through this control of knowledge, whiteness was able to define and change its others to suite the model of humanity which was regarded as the norm by European and white standards. Because all structures of knowledge production and critique were controlled by white power structures, whiteness itself became incapable of being scrutinized as an active force in the development of cultural norms and identities. Instead, through the long processes of control and domination by whites, whiteness itself has become somewhat of a tacit norm, a hegemony that until recently has been beyond criticism, and will remain beyond mainstream criticism until the white centres relinquish their power to new centres of ideological discourse.

To contextualise the application of a theorized post-colonial whiteness I refer to one of Brett Murray's artworks. Murray's work, *Dance Routine of the White Male Psyche* (2000), shows the subaltern icon of white masculinity, Bart Simpson, avoiding his own gaze in a mirror. Whilst there are multiple readings of this work, it can be subject to a range of interpretations allied to post-colonial literature theorizing whiteness and the Euro/American west. Race theorist Henry Giroux has suggested that whiteness, invisibility and domination are closely related (Giroux, 1992 in Keating, 1995: 905). The so called invisibility of whiteness is revealed in Murray's work, *Dance Routine of the White Male Psyche* (2000). In a post-colonial reading of this work, an understanding of dominant hegemonic whiteness is discernible. The major themes of dominant hegemonic whiteness are; its invisibility and by virtue of this, it's inability to recognise itself. However as is suggested by Murray's work, hegemonic whiteness is complicit in avoiding its own gaze, suggesting it is not so much an invisible



Dance Routine of The White Male Psyche  
2000  
Diameter: 790 mm  
Wood and plastic

whiteness, but a whiteness that is unwilling to acknowledge itself. This is further reified by the notion that whiteness is in fact visible to those who are not white and have had to struggle against its dominance. Keating, in keeping with Giroux, suggests that the power whiteness gains from its invisibility lies in its ability to make the other visible, “whiteness operates as the unacknowledged standard or norm against which all so-called ‘minorities’ are measured” (Keating, 1995 :905). In relation to the work, Morrison highlights the isolationist stance of hegemonic whiteness, possibly shown in the rigid borders of the mirror at which Bart gazes. Morrison associates whiteness with an insistence on purity, self-containment, and impenetrable borders (Morrison, 1992 in Keating, 1995: 907).

Ironically relatively few theorists of colonialism and post-colonialism have focused on whiteness. Lopez maintains this is because of the post-structuralist sensibilities of much post-colonial writing that avoids critiques of the sociological and focuses on the literary or linguistic. Lopez maintains that because colonialism and whiteness both signified the same thing, hegemonic power and imperialism of body, mind, culture, land and so forth, that the discussion of whiteness was left out because of its similarity to the discussion of colonialism (Lopez 2005). Not only this, but as Dyer contends,

“For most of the time white people speak about nothing but white people, it's just that we couch it in terms of 'people' in general. Research . . . shows that in Western representation whites are overwhelmingly and disproportionately predominant, have the central and elaborated roles, and above all are placed as the norm, the ordinary, the standard” (Dyer, 1997 :3).

Psychoanalysis is a useful device in the understanding and deconstruction of the location of postcolonial whiteness, particularly Lacanian psychoanalysis. However it is far from a perfect mode of interpretation. Derrida takes psychoanalysis to task for its aspiration to a universal narrative and implies a latent colonial impulse in this desire. (Derrida, 1998: 66-67) However to Lopez the benefit of psychoanalysis is that the praxis of psychology is to serve its object, meaning that the method is always self-reflexively informed by the subconscious (Lopez, 2005 :155). In this psychoanalysis is perfect in the analysis of trauma, colonial and post-colonial trauma in particular,

due to its acknowledgement of the fluidity of the object and recognition of the vast differences and heterogeneous nature of society and its individuals (Lopez 2005 :156). The assumption that art is a symptom of the society in which it is produced, results in the politicizing of the psychoanalytic process which is useful when attempting to understand the work of art as a symptom of race amongst other influences.

Most studies on whiteness in the post-colonial context and associated critique are located within Euro-American post-colonial discourse and leave little room for subaltern, plural or hybrid whitenesses that exist in many post-colonial regions. Failing to acknowledge the multiple sites of whiteness has narrowed the field to a critique of dominant hegemonic whiteness and to a discussion of how to undermine its power structures. However whiteness comes in multiple forms and not all of these are invisible or omnipotent. Erickson asserts that there is no problem with acknowledging the dominance of the American situation and “allowing for multiple ‘inventions’ of whiteness in different times and places” (Erickson 1995 :175). I will take account of the dominant hegemony of whiteness, whilst bearing in mind that whiteness is not a homogenous or nebulous entity. Instead it is fractured and multiple. For the purposes of this paper, the dominant whiteness of the Euro-American West will serve as the background to the fractured and in process whitenesses of the South African context.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Aspects of Whiteness in the South African Context**

#### **i) Some South African Particularities**

#### **ii) Post-Apartheid Euphoria**

#### **iii) Afrikaner and English Whitenesses**

#### **iv) Diaspora**

#### **v) Whiteness and Africanness**

#### **i) Some South African particularities**

Given that whiteness is not a homogenous concept, and that its driving force was located in colonialism, each subsequent colony has its own plural interpretations of what whiteness is, or was. In the context of South Africa, this concept is based in the tradition of prevailing colonial hierarchies, but was further reified by the apartheid system. This re-inscription of race has had consequences that have caused a divergence in the globally theorized whiteness of Europe and America, from that of South African whiteness. Apart from apartheid's re-inscription of race formally, the fact that no other country in the post-colonial era has had a numerical minority dominate for such a lengthy time has inevitably affected race relations (Schutte, 1995: 3). However the racial stratification in South Africa is infamous because of the apartheid system that had been implemented (MacDonald, 2006: 7). Originally in the white centres of Europe and America, the notion of whiteness as superior had become entrenched as a tacit and hegemonic norm, invisible to critique and scrutiny. However in South Africa apartheid formalized what in the West was a hegemonic norm. Thus identity was far more consciously arranged around conceptions of race because as Epstein states, "In the South African context, it is obvious that the state, historically,

has had differential impacts on people's lives depending on their social, racial and class position (and remembering that these are irretrievably interlinked)” (Epstein, 1998: 49)

McDonald underlines the contemporary nature of apartheid in relation to the development of white supremacy, “Apartheid, by contrast, was not instituted until the second half of the twentieth century, which is why apartheid is not reducible to simple white supremacy. Apartheid was a version of white supremacy, one among several competitors, and what distinguished apartheid from its rivals was not racism, which was common to all of them” (MacDonald, 2006: 7). The defining nature of apartheid that MacDonald is alluding to is its legal structure. As Schutte writes, “One of the most striking features of white-dominated South African society until the last decade of the twentieth century was its structuration by legal means” (Schutte, 1995: 68). This legal structuration of race caused perceptions of race to be foregrounded, a break with the way in which white supremacy had previously been constructed. This legal structuration meant that whiteness was no longer an invisible norm, but a highly visible and legitimized race group. The visibility of whiteness is something that in South Africa is experienced by all races, not just whites, as Matsebula et. al. suggest, “whiteness has not been invisible to black and indigenous peoples and that it has been part of the long history of resistance by black people in South Africa” (Matsebula, Sonn & Green 2007: 437).

The visibility of race and more specifically, whiteness, is addressed in an alternate reading of Murray’s work *Dance routine of the White Male psyche* (2000, refer to page 17). When analyzed with reference to theorized hegemonic post-colonial whiteness, the work highlights the invisibility of the tacit norm of whiteness. However when re-read in the South African context, it conveys a different meaning altogether. The meaning is shifted towards one of shame, loss, insecurity and a shift from the ideological centre to the periphery of political power. Bart signifies the white male’s yearning for icons that can guide his now defunct cultural influences. However never quite being able to fully see the image of Bart, the white male dances, seeing only a fragment of an elusive white icon. The white male tries to identify with a foreign whiteness, a whiteness perceived to have more legitimacy than his own. The

whiteness represented by Bart is however a resistant, rebellious and anarchic whiteness. Bart represents an aspect of whiteness that is flawed, marginalized and anti-social. The work tries to deconstruct the idea that whites, reinforced by the latent power structure located in masculinity, are now in a process of re-identification, having lost aspects of what was once certain and an ideologically centred ethnic and racial identity.

Whiteness in the era of apartheid and particularly in the last decade of apartheid was most obviously ideologically centred, and unlike conceptions of whiteness's in the rest of the world, it was visible (Steyn, 2005). The historical construction of apartheid was full of contradictions, uncertainties and lapses in control; however the system prevailed for more than forty years, reflecting the powerful and intimidating nature of the apartheid state. Thus, force was not the only tool at the disposal of the apartheid state, as Posel suggests, "it also had a lot to do with the systematic bureaucratization and normalization of race. With the advent of apartheid (which built on white supremacist foundations laid decades earlier), South Africa became one of the most thoroughly racialized social orders in the world" (Posel, 2001: 88).

The use of bureaucratic systems to normalize conceptions of 'race' and thus generate or further reinforce the existing racial hierarchy was an important aspect of the apartheid system. Whereas white supremacy in previous eras, such as the colonial, relied primarily on force and intimidation, the apartheid state built on the existing western racial norms, utilizing bureaucracy to ingrain the apartheid racial order in the minds of all who were subject to it. This shows, according to Posel, that apartheid's social engineers drew deliberately on a conception of 'race' as a socio-legal construct instead of a scientifically measurable essence (Posel, 2001: 88). Murray reflects upon this with *Bureaucrat* (1985) and satirizes the notion that bureaucracy was one of the major instruments of the apartheid regime. Murray's satirical art at this time was politically engaged in that it lampooned all facets of the apartheid state. This rampant satirical attack, on the ideological centre at the time, shows surety in his choice of target. Murray acknowledges that the targets at the time were obvious (Murray, 2009). However this is not to say that the apartheid systematization of race was sufficient to generate a racial hierarchy on its own. Instead the apartheid system built on the myths of white supremacy that had been in development since pre-colonial times. In





Bureaucrat  
1985/9  
190 x 280 x 240 mm  
Ciment fondu, cast iron and paint

the experience of most white South Africans, race was socially constructed in ways that drew heavily on the myths of racial science. These myths added to the notion that 'race' was a tacit norm, a notion that permeated South Africa throughout apartheid. (Posel, 2001: 88)

## **ii) Post-apartheid Euphoria**

In the post-apartheid era political power is in the hands of the African National Congress, a previously banned political party whose members are predominantly black. The state now uses a constitution heralded as one of the most liberal in the world. However as Epstein asserts, social inequality persists in the 'new' South Africa, the poor are still poor, while the rich retain their wealth. Furthermore, the poor are still mainly black and the rich are predominantly white, making it impossible to disentangle race and class (Epstein, 1998 :49). Although Epstein's statement is demographically accurate, the classes of South Africa are heterogeneous and an emerging black middle class is beginning to complicate what were clear race/class boundaries.

Although political power has changed, undoing forty years of legal racial stratification and centuries of subversive white supremacy is a task that generations to come will have to grapple with. As in the recent past, not only were white identities normalized as superior of its others (as in the rest of the Western world), but in apartheid era South Africa, the superiority of whiteness was legally enforced. Steyn maintains that in the present South African situation, "whites have lost political power. They largely maintain economic power, and because Western cultures are held in esteem as the believed key to internationalism, they still hold cultural power" (Steyn in Lopez 2005: 122). This cultural hierarchy can be seen and reinterpreted in the artworks to be discussed later, as South African cultural institutions privilege Western or white cultural practices and in turn the entire cultural praxis. The cultural goal of achieving whiteness is thus normalized and made invisible as whites and Western culture maintain the age-old hegemony of white supremacy. However, as suggested earlier, Steyn maintains that, "Even before April 1994, white South Africans were acutely aware of their whiteness - that it was a position of privilege, the absolutely defining factor in their life chances" (2001: 163).

South African whiteness and its shifting racial order is therefore comparable to that of Western white supremacy and the overarching narratives of whiteness. However the racial dynamics here are fundamentally different from those in America or Europe, because whiteness has been visible and upheld in South Africa for more than half a century. The awareness of white South Africans of their own whiteness is what distinguishes them from a homogenous, globally theorized whiteness. Although whiteness and white supremacy has built upon centuries of subversive racial stratification, the South African white recognises their own whiteness, initially by being legally centred through apartheid and more recently by being democratically decentred. Epstein expands on this point by suggesting that, “where it used to be the common sense of white South Africans that they were superior to their fellow countrymen and women, this feeling is now not acceptable, even though it may persist in some (maybe many) cases” (Epstein, 1998: 50).

### **iii) ‘Afrikaner’ and ‘English’ Whitenesses**

Whiteness in South Africa is also different to a mythologized global whiteness, because of the perception of a massive disjuncture that lies within the narrative of South African whiteness. Whiteness in the South African context is comprised of two major cultural groups which are delineated by language. Steyn (2004: 143-169) asserts that in the South African context whiteness has been defined in terms of the struggle between English and Afrikaans subjectivities. The perceived and socially constructed rift between Afrikaners and white English Speaking South Africans has been constructed out of an historic rivalry and battle for control over the country. The distinction between the two is vital to understanding the constructedness of whiteness in the South African context. Furthering Steyns distinction of a dichotomous whiteness, Foster and Salusbury similarly define contemporary South African whiteness as two distinct, though inextricably entangled, groups. The English speaking white is of concern for Foster and Salusbury and they refer to these whites as ‘White English Speaking South Africans’, or WESSA’s (Salusbury & Foster in Distiller & Steyn, 2004: 93). While they may share many common traits and assumptions of privilege; “there are also significant differences in how their whiteness is being reframed in post-apartheid South Africa” (Steyn, 2004: 144).

When looking at the discourses within South African whiteness from an historical perspective, Gabriel (1998) feels that Afrikaner whiteness could be regarded as a subaltern form of whiteness. It is a whiteness that has “shifted over time”, but has generally “remained prey” to the more dominant discourse of specifically British whiteness (Gabriel, 1998: 184). As a result of the subaltern nature of Afrikaner whiteness, the whiteness of the Afrikaner has been heavily tied to ethnic and nationalistic discourse (Steyn, 2005: 143). It is widely regarded that the rise of extreme Afrikaner nationalism in the early twentieth century is a reaction to the defeat of the Boer at the hands of the British in the South African War of 1899-1902 (Dubow, 1992; Fredrickson, 1981; Porter, 2000; Vail, 1989). As a result the divide between the Afrikaner and English ethnic groups has been perceived to be deep enough to be untranslatable (Steyn, 2005: 147).

In comparison to their Afrikaner counterparts, far less literature is to be found on WESSA's. Foster and Salusbury attribute this to the fact that WESSA's are comprised of such a vast range of ethnicities that many theorists would argue that the group is too diffuse for study (Salusbury & Foster in Distiller & Steyn, 2004. p 93). They comprise of a multitude of ethnic histories, including Portuguese, Irish, British, Dutch, Greek, Jewish and even Afrikaner ancestries. However it is not only the diffuse nature of the groups that has made them difficult to study, but also the fact that,

“The use of English as the main official language of academia, business, and politics further strengthens the reproduction of whiteness in post-apartheid South Africa. It offers unfair privileges to mostly white people who have access to this language to monopolise the production of ideas about society” (Green, Sonn & Matsebula, 2007: 401).

Salusbury and Foster suggest that the only reason the group is considered as distinct by theorists, is that it has been borne out of a resistance to other more clearly defined social groups, in particular a more clearly defined whiteness in the Afrikaner (Salusbury & Foster in Distiller & Steyn, 2004: 93). Furthermore, they suggest that WESSA identity is diffuse and unarticulated because of this resistance to other groups. WESSA's define themselves not by who they are, but in resistance to who they are not, which as the White and English in the name implies; they see themselves as not

Black and not Afrikaans. Foster and Salisbury's categories are integral to an understanding of whiteness, however the term Afrikaner is too broad to be fully discussed in this paper. Afrikaner as an ethnic group may have been founded on language and 'race', however in the present the perceived racial exclusivity of the Afrikaner is being dismantled.

The relationship between the white English and white Afrikaner are of importance to a discussion of whiteness in the South African context, and of importance to a discussion of Murray's work. If one is to locate Brett Murray within an ethnic group, his would be a hybrid of both English and Afrikaner ethnicities. In South Africa multiple ethnicities exist alongside each other and assimilation and hybridization are inevitable, which is true for groups that identify themselves as both along ethno-cultural and racial lines. Afrikaners and WESSAs are theorized as distinct, however the boundaries between the two have been blurred through interaction and racial polarization. The fact that whiteness is a core attribute for both groups has brought them together and any perceived rift is bridged by racial commonality. Steyn does acknowledge this commonality between the groups, however she points out a key difference in how whiteness has been utilized by each group. Steyn maintains that English-speaking whites are reliant on a whiteness that is dominant and international; the post-colonial whiteness referred to in chapter 1. However she feels that white Afrikaner are unlike white English South Africans, whose whiteness has an international ideological centre that gives their identity a stable continuity (Steyn, 2004. p153). Thus the post-apartheid White Afrikaner is contending with a profound existential crisis (De Klerk, 2000; De Lange, 2001; Louw, 2001; Slabbert, 1999).

Steyn's 2001 publication, *Whiteness just isn't what it used to be*, identifies 'white talk' as a characteristic of South African whiteness. 'White talk' is a heterogeneous discourse that in its multiple guises serves to legitimate and reinforce various aspects of white supremacy and ideology. Steyn suggests that white English South Africans utilize 'white talk' in ways that serve a maintenance function. Afrikaans 'white talk', on the other hand, performs a much more active constitutive role rehabilitating and reinventing a space for itself in the new society (Steyn, 2004: 162). The position of the Afrikaner according to Steyn is experienced as weak in relation to both the African other who possesses demographic power and their English white counterparts,

who's whiteness associates itself with the dominant Western brand of whiteness (Steyn, 2004. p162).

In the post-apartheid context of South Africa white Afrikaners have had to attempt to relocate their identity. This is in part due to the idea that their identity was so vehemently structured around notions of Calvinism, patriarchy and of course whiteness. To continue with white supremacist attitudes in a society ruled by a black majority and a liberal constitution, would mean isolation and the group would be rejected and regarded as counter-revolutionary and racist. That said, one must acknowledge that English ethnic identification is also in a process of change, maintaining their whiteness through international, Eurocentric allegiances is no longer an acceptable form of ethnic identification. How these two ethnic strains of whiteness are morphing and adapting to a 'new' South Africa, where their legitimacy has been undermined, is of primary concern to this paper.

The type of whiteness shown by WESSAs, is referred to by Steyn (2001 & 2005) as diasporic, while Paton reinforces their cultural and linguistic association to Europe (Paton, 1981 in Distiller & Steyn, 2004: 94). In contrast to Afrikaners, whose language is of Africa, the WESSAs cling to the British dialect, upholding its correct use. All this suggests that whilst the Afrikaner is regarded as experiencing an existential crisis in the post-apartheid context of South Africa (De Klerk, 2000; De Lange, 2001; Louw, 2001; Slabbert, 1999; Steyn 2004), then WESSAs are experiencing a post-colonial crisis of identity. As Butler suggested in the mid seventies, "they feel a lack of purpose, of direction; they want to feel they belong; and they are afraid of belonging: they don't know what to belong to" (Butler, 1976: 11).

In the following section I will discuss a major trait of South African whiteness, namely diaspora. This is usually used in reference to English whiteness, however as Green et al. suggest "while the white population in South Africa is by no means homogeneous, whiteness is an overarching identity" (Green, Sonn & Matsebula, 2007: 404). In contemporary South Africa English and Afrikaner whiteness are becoming more and more inextricably entangled, as Murray himself evidences.

#### **iv) Diaspora**

When referring to South Africa in the post-colonial paradigm, diaspora is a concept that cannot be ignored. Colonization and subsequent de-colonization of spaces resulted in the fracturing and spread of many groups across the former British empire. Admittedly colonization is not the only reason for there being diasporic populations around the world. Diasporas borne out of labour, culture and victimization are some types of diaspora presented by Cohen in his five part typology of diaspora (Kenny, 2003 :42). The fourth and fifth parts of his typology are known as ‘trade’ and ‘imperial’ diasporas, which are types of diaspora that will be of importance throughout this dissertation. An imperial diaspora is a diaspora borne out of the conquest of land or imperial expansion. In the South African post-colonial context these types of diaspora would be associated with the British empire. The diasporic subject according to Kenny, seeks to transcend the boundaries of the nation state within which they exist, they search for reciprocal sensibilities found in globally scattered communities (Kenny, 2003: 135). Whilst the term diaspora has traditionally been utilized in describing groups that have experienced a dispersal from a homeland for multiple reasons, both voluntary and involuntary, diaspora has referred to groups that also manifest a collective myth about their previous homeland and who show a commitment to its maintenance and desire to return home (Kenny, 2003 :142). Kenny also asserts that diasporic communities experience alienation and isolation in their new homelands. However the term diaspora is now widely used in reference to migrants, expatriates, expellees, political refugees, alien residents, and ethnic and racial minorities, along with a wide range of processes connected with decolonization, transnationalism, and globalization (Anthias, Safran, and Clifford in Kenny, 2003 :142). Dayal refers to the negotiation of dual homelands experienced by diasporic groups as double consciousness (Dayal, 1996: 47). He regards double consciousness as a state of mind that is to be striven for by a diasporic population. Double consciousness gives the diasporic individual an interstitial perspective on what it means to be South African, which allows for multiple interpretations of the concept of ‘belonging’ (Dayal, 1996: 47). Thus for the purposes of this dissertation I will assume Clifford’s stance as evidenced in Kenny, “rather than constructing typologies that run the risk of being arbitrary or exclusive, avowedly ‘postmodern’

approaches such as Clifford's are concerned with how 'hybrid' forms of identity and consciousness are constituted and represented and how a new 'diasporic space' that transcends the nations of origin and settlement is created" (Kenny, 2003: 142).

The concept of diaspora is one that is rarely applied to groups of people that are deemed white. However as evidenced earlier, South African whiteness and in particular English speaking South African whiteness is diasporic in nature. Martin suggests that most white South Africans would reject the notion that they form part of a diasporic population or community (Martin, 1996:14). This is as a result of nationalist propaganda and the ambition of many white South Africans to 'belong' in South Africa, most people regard diaspora and belonging as mutually exclusive concepts. Under apartheid identity was fixed, now South Africans can access multiple identities (Martin, 1996: 14). It is this ability to access multiple identities that reinforces the notion of whiteness in the contemporary moment as being diasporic in nature. Samir Dayal refers to the ability of choosing multiple identities as double consciousness ( Dayal, 1996). The white diaspora of South Africa will be discussed not in terms of a geographically specific 'Mother Land', as the cultural influence of Britain and Europe in the modern globalized world is too diffuse and entangled with other cultural sources of media to be referenced or 'chosen' as Martin puts it. Instead the diasporic referent in the case of white South Africans is a reference to dominant, hegemonic whiteness, which I will refer to as Euro-American whiteness in order to provide a space to legitimize the theoretical diaspora. In interrogating South African whiteness by locating much of it's cultural reference as being outside of itself and in particular from a theorized Euro-American centre, and I will show this as a trait of whiteness in the work of Brett Murray.

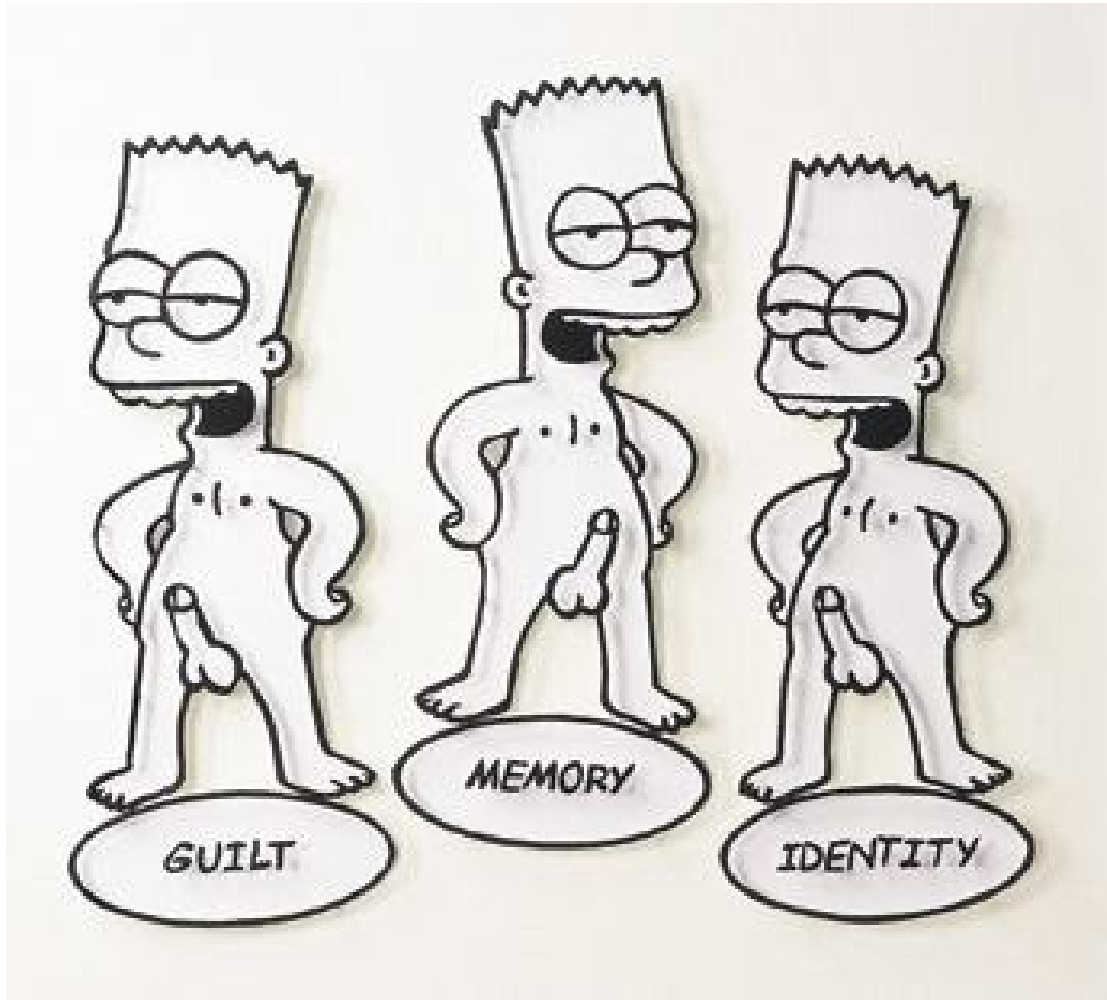
Murray's work has often assumed the vernacular form of the 'popular', re-appropriating 'popular' icons to be used for his own iconoclastic visions. The term 'popular' however is not without it's complexities and is by no means a universal term. Instead Murray's use of the 'popular' is an example of the diasporic tendencies discussed above. Murray reaches out to and deploys the popular signage of a Euro-American whiteness located in the popular media in order to foreground and reflect upon the position of whiteness in South Africa. An example of this would be his frequent use of Bart Simpson as a motif within his work, as a metaphor of a rebellious



and subaltern whiteness, a viewpoint that is not dissimilar to his own. The use of Bart Simpson has been discussed with reference to the work, *Dance Routine of the White Male Psyche* (2000, refer to page 17), however the use of this American Icon of childish and anarchic rebellion within the setting of white suburbia is a recurring element of Murray's attempt to both represent himself and whiteness through the strategic employment of a subaltern resistant white icon.

The work *Guilt, Memory and Identity* (2000), from the *I Love Africa* (2000) exhibition, is one example of Murray's use of Bart as both a metaphor of himself and of whiteness, both local and Euro-American. The image shows three images of Bart with erections, standing over emblems that hold within them the text; guilt, memory and identity, as in the title of the work. The general interpretation is that Bart is aroused by notions of guilt, memory and identity. However, when conflated with the idea that Murray is utilizing Bart as a metaphor of the self and of the various manifestations of whiteness, multiple readings emerge. Murray, as in a number of other works; *Artist: Self Portrait* (1985), *New Beginnings: the Artist* (2006) and *Renaissance Man Tending His Land* (2008), has tempered the didactic nature of his satirical attack by placing himself within the artwork. *Dance Routine of the White Male Psyche* (2000, refer to page 17), situated within the same body of work, acknowledges Murray's referral to whiteness when utilizing Bart as a signifier, where Bart is also a reference to himself. Murray suggests that mainstream Euro-American whiteness is aroused by its own guilt, memory and identity that is built out of oppression and subjugation of Africa. However as I have suggested, Murray is not only focusing his gaze at Euro-American whiteness as his target, but is simultaneously referring to his own identity and the collective identity of South African whites. This dual reference is an example of what Dayal has termed diasporic double-consciousness of a diaspora (Dayal, 1996). Murray has accessed the canon of Euro-American whiteness in order to articulate his own position on the subject.

Murray utilizes the strategy of engaging a state of double-consciousness in numerous works, referencing simultaneously himself, his perceived group collective (see Brewer, 2001), and a foreign imagined Euro-American whiteness. *Renaissance Man Tending His Land* (2008) is perhaps a more literal example of his inclusion of himself as the object of satire. Again, as in *Guilt, Memory and Identity* (2000), Murray layers



Guilt, Memory and Identity  
2000  
Each 1200 x 430 x 80 mm  
Metal and paint



Artist: Self-Portrait  
1985/9  
640 x 340 x 320 mm  
Cast resin, bronze and paint



New Beginnings: The Artist  
2006  
Pigment inks on cotton rag paper  
37 x 37cm



The Renaissance Man Tending his Land  
2008

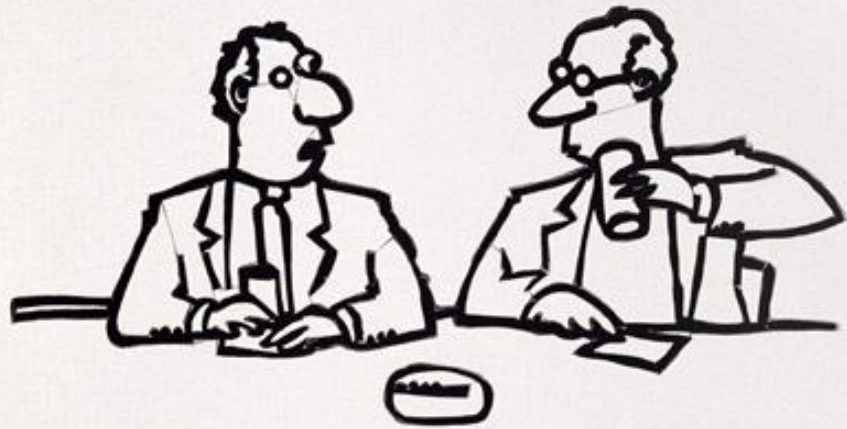
Photograph  
76.5 x 61cm  
Edition of 3

his conception of whiteness. He situates himself within the construct of the imagined colonial subject, yet the overall effect is one of an incongruous amalgam of cultures, a reflection on what Murray regards as an absurd diaspora. Whilst situating himself within the context of a globally theorised historically specific whiteness, he also references the contemporary moment, by incorporating the ‘weed-eater’ as the tool with which he tends his ‘land’. The land to which he tends is in fact his own garden, further problematising the notion of a diaspora and the individualistic priorities of many white South Africans, suggesting that his garden is a piece of renaissance Europe here in South Africa. He further confounds the issue of ‘race’ by having himself, from the neck up, painted black. The reasoning for this will be discussed with greater depth in a later section. The blackness of his face contrasts both literally and figuratively with his whiteness, highlighting the complexities of the diasporic condition of whiteness. Constantly in a state of ambivalence, between a performance of blackness and whiteness. As Dayal suggests, “diasporics may position themselves as resisting assimilation, liminally situated on the borders or fault lines, alive to the play of contradiction and to the unregulated possibilities of such a positioning” (Dayal, 1996: 52).

The 2002 exhibition *White Like Me*, reveals much insight into the notion of a white diaspora. The work, *African Parts* (2002), shows two white men at a bar and the one asks, “What parts of you are from Africa?” Firstly, as is common in Murray’s work, the visual style is one of Euro-American origins. This use of the ‘New-Yorker’ cartoonist handelsman (Murray interview, 2009: 19:45) style comic functions as a way of generating nostalgia for a whiteness lost and is an acknowledgement of a whiteness that is diasporic in its cultural references. The text in the work further reifies this concept, as the one white man regards the other as fractured, possibly having some parts from Africa and some from the same place that generated the visual style of the piece, namely Euro-America. The work also generates a fear of a fraudulent whiteness, suggesting that none of the parts of whiteness are from Africa.

Continuing in the same vein (and from the same exhibition) the work *White Africans* (2002) shows St Peter at the gates of heaven calling for whites who think they are African to stand to one side. This work covers many of the points raised in *African Parts* (2002), but utilizes another of whiteness’s multiple guises, that of Christianity.





*" What parts of you are from Africa? "*

African Parts  
2002  
1100 x 1100 x 140mm  
Plastic and wood



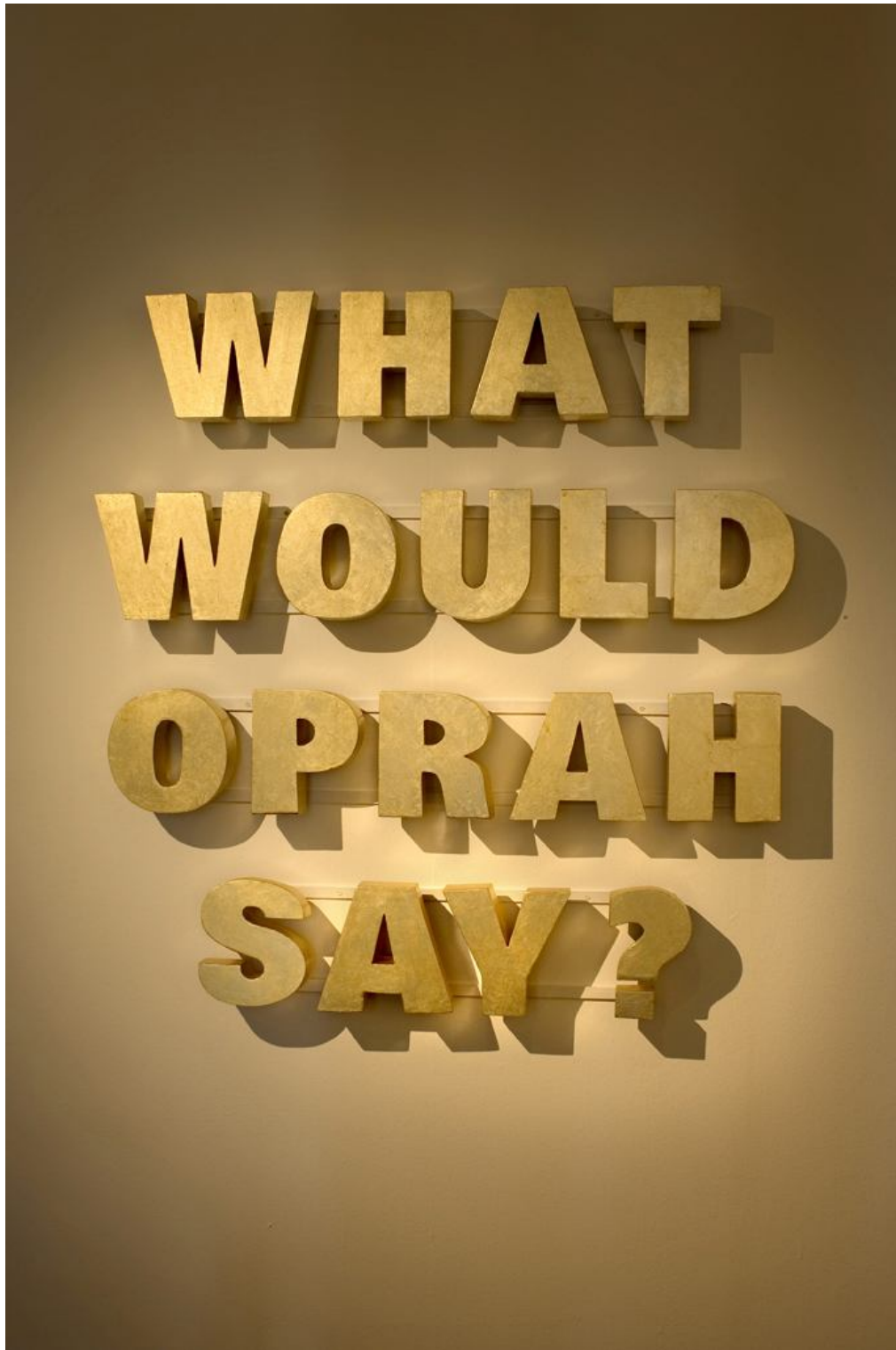
White Africans  
2002  
1900 x 1150 x 115 mm  
Painted metal



By utilizing Christianity and the notion of a judgement by God to highlight the insecurities of white South Africans, Murray is moving beyond nationalism in the debate surrounding whiteness and Africanicity. According to Kenny this is a diasporic approach to the subject that seeks, “to transcend the nation-state as the primary unit of historical analysis, searching for reciprocal interactions and the sensibilities they nurture among globally scattered communities” (Kenny, 2003: 135). By referring to a global entity such as Christianity, and whiteness, Murray highlights another aspect of diaspora, the sense of accountability. In this sense Murray is suggesting a fear within white South Africans that they might be judged by Euro-American whiteness and be found to be frauds or race traitors by claiming to be both African and white simultaneously.

Another example of this fear or acknowledgement of Euro-American judgement, is the work *Mediated Morality* (2006), from the ongoing series *Golden Truths*. The work is a wall mounted golden text piece that reads, “What would Oprah say?” The irony in terms of this dissertation, is that according to physical anthropology Oprah is not white. However, as this paper has discussed, whiteness is not merely a physical attribute, but a site of privilege, power, and ideological centeredness and one need not necessarily have white skin in order to be white (Keating, 1995: 907). *Mediated Morality* (2006) highlights the strange diasporic nature of whiteness, acknowledging that the cultural sources are propagated by the media producers of the world. Thus what has been regarded as cultural imperialism when referring to the traditional colonial ‘other’, is regarded as diaspora when referring to white South Africans.

The motif of a cowboy is utilized by Murray in his 2001 exhibition *Hero*. In the context of a white diaspora, the imagery of the cowboy refers to multiple sites of cultural production. The cowboy hero has been sanctioned as an archetypal protagonist of the history of America (Gray Sweeney, 1992: 67), somewhat of a mythic persona in an historical vision of Americas pioneer past. Murray plays on notions of cultural commodification, acknowledging in works such as *God* (2001) the reverence that South Africans and in particular South African whites have for the myth of the white ‘western’ hero. The play on the word western is no coincidence, as Murray highlights not only a fascination with the traditional western film genre, but



Mediated Morality  
2006  
Metal and gold leaf  
120 x 110 x 20 cm  
Edition of 3



God  
2001  
1990 x 560 x 80 mm  
Metal and Plastic

acknowledges the upholding of the west, in this case a specifically American west, by white South Africans.

One of Murray's most literal references to a white diaspora is the work *W.A.S.P Cry for a place in the sun* (2008). The work is the words 'I Ham An African' made out of a mild steel armature and coated in "fools gold". The W.A.S.P in the title refers to white Anglo-Saxon Protestants, a racial and ethnic group that comprises of most English speaking whites in the United States of America. The title suggests that this is a cry for help, a call from white Anglo-Saxon protestants for a place in Africa. Again the notion of a white diaspora that claims it's identity not necessarily from European heritage, but from whiteness as a whole, is complicated. In this work Murray highlights the idea that many white South Africans claim much of their identity from WASP culture. Thus Murray is alluding to the idea that white South Africans claim more of their culture from America and therefore becoming African is problematic. Murray undermines this call for a place in Africa, by using the text 'I Ham An African', a reference to Thabo Mbeki's 'I am an African' speech of the 8<sup>th</sup> of May 1996. Murray is suggesting with this work the fears of many white South Africans, by using the word 'ham' instead of 'am', Murray highlights further the idea that white South Africans (English speakers in particular) are making a mess of their attempts to become African. This is primarily because they keep their diasporic bond open to Europe and America and (unlike common perceptions of their Afrikaans counterparts) they have yet to reject Europe and become African. This is further amplified by Murray's use of fools gold to coat the text, implying a further falsity in the W.A.S.P's claim for Africanness. Alluding to the notion that English speaking whites built their power through gold and now in the present, they can only masquerade as valuable to Africa. This work relates closely to my final section on Murray's most dominant theme, whiteness in Africa and attempts to attain indigeneity.



W.A.S.P Cry for a Place in the Sun  
2008  
Mild steel and fools gold  
12.5 x 168 cm

## **v) Whiteness and Africanicity**

“Migration and dispersal have always been a part of human history, exploration, trade and a growing population have lead to a globally interconnected world. The expansion of empires has been a recurrent theme throughout history, from the Romans, through to more recent times with the advent of European and more specifically the British colonial project. These migrations have brought about an enmeshment of both the colonizer and colonized” (Steyn in Lopez 2005: 123).

Despite this enmeshment, South Africa in recent history, through Apartheid, sought to keep colonizer and colonized apart. “The transition to democracy disentangled citizenship from race, opening citizenship to all South Africans irrespective of race, but it did not disentangle class from race” (MacDonald 2006 :126). Mbembe regards the postcolonial situation as embedded within two primary concepts, ‘Displacement’ and ‘Entanglement’. Displacement refers to the postcolony’s impermanent status, suggesting its temporality and an interlocking of its pasts, presents and futures (Mbembe in Terretta, 2002 :161).

A major theme in Murray’s work is the notion of being a white in an African context. Similar to the notion of a white diaspora, however the concept of being white and African entails a process of becoming. This is not the maintenance of whiteness through a diasporic link, instead this is an attempt at whites to become African, through a number of means. The decentring of whiteness in South Africa, although not absolute, can lead to many possible versions of whiteness (Dolby, 2001: 14). As has been illustrated, whiteness can reinvent or rehabilitate itself by referring to an imagined local heritage, or retain its diasporic links to the centres of Europe and America. However these are but broad examples of the possible paths of a future whiteness. Another path which is inextricably linked to the former is the quest for white inclusion, to become indigenous and thus, African. Mbembe suggests that for whites in a country with a majority that is black, ‘becoming African’ is a conscious act on the part of whites (Mbembe, 2001: 10). Through the historical narratives generated out of colonialism, ‘race’ and territory have become conflated, the ‘dark’ continent (Africa) is the land of black people. Thus anything that is not black is

automatically out of place and cannot call for any kind of Africanicity (Mbembe, 2002. p256). This notion of whites being out of place is exemplified in *Renaissance Man Tending His Land* (2008, refer to page 35), where Murray shows himself to be feigning Africanicity. However the work highlights the incongruous nature of whiteness and Africanness, suggesting that any attempt to be African will be problematic. The notion that previously oppressed postcolonial groups should reinstate an identity denied by colonization is regarded as a political necessity in the postcolony. (During, 1987: 29) However as shown by Murray in (amongst other works) *Renaissance Man Tending His Land* (2008, refer to page 35), the former settler has no previous identity to return to in the post-colonial context, and is thus caught between multiple identities that are incongruent (During, 1987: 29).

According to Mbembe, to attain Africanicity as a white, one must engage in an identity performance that undermines the norms through which race has been materialized (Mbembe, 2001: 10). However Steyn counters this by suggesting that it is not an undermining of race that is required, instead it is a commitment to place that will secure a stable African identity for whites (Steyn, 2001: 147). This is exemplified by the white Afrikaners rehabilitation of their ethnicity and 'race', and reinforced in part by Jacob Zuma in his pre-election campaign, suggesting that Afrikaners are the only white Africans.

Murray grapples with these notions in multiple ways. *African Parts* (2002, refer to page 37) from his 2002 *White Like Me* exhibition, suggests a cynicism towards the concept of indigeneity. Murray again utilizes the visual vernacular of the 'New-Yorker' type comic, in order to present his visual one liner. The use of a traditionally Western style of presentation is the antithesis of the hybrid white African identity that Steyn is calling for. However the use of this visual style highlights Murray's point, that there is nothing African about this artwork, or the two white men depicted in it. In the same exhibition Murray complicates the issue of white Africanicity, by proposing a means of achieving it in the work, *Tribal Elders* (2002). In this work, the visual style lies still in the diasporic, however he shows a satirical alternative the Eurocentric whiteness that Steyn and Mbembe strive to move away from. By utilizing terms like 'tribal' and 'elder', Murray highlights the problematic position of the former settler.



*" Send my regards to your tribal elders."*

Tribal Elders

2002

1100 x 1100 x 140mm

Plastic and wood



As earlier suggested by During (1987), the former settler has no legitimate pre-colonial identity to return to, thus Murray satirizes the possibility of claiming a pre-colonial African identity for whites. Murray highlights this conundrum, by suggesting that whites take on the pre-colonial identity of blacks in order to legitimize their place in Africa. Whilst these works are humorous by virtue of the incongruity of the image associated with the text, it is this very juxtaposition that Murray feels is representative of whiteness placed in Africa. (Murray 2009)

Earlier examples of this in Murray's work include *Identity* (1995), a work that superimposes a 'smiley' face onto the body of a Zulu warrior. The smiley face was and still is an icon of Western popular culture and a symbol of a generic western identity. Murray could not have known the implications of the smiley face for the future, as it is now an active part of shorthand SMS language that symbolizes various moods to the recipient. The smiley face represents happiness, the work is a play on the notion of the happy native, a patronizing Western view of tradition not dissimilar to the colonial notion of the noble savage. Whilst referring to the other of whiteness, the work refers to whiteness in South Africa as an emblem of the West placed over a stereotypical African identity.



Identity  
1995  
1800 x 1200 x 150 mm  
Metal and plastic

## Chapter 3

### An overview of Murray's Body of Work in Relation to Whiteness

#### **i) Formative years**

#### **ii) Post-Liberation Introspective Satire**

#### **iii) New Beginnings**

#### **Formative years**

Brett Murray is an artist currently working in Cape Town, his works are predominantly sculptural, however painting and drawing are forms that he utilizes in his sculpture and on their own. Brett Murray's earliest works engage primarily with the political climate of South Africa in the mid to late nineteen eighties. The targets of his satire at the time were obvious, namely the apartheid government with the various associated government institutions and social acceptances of hegemonic power structures at the time. In his Masters exhibition he satirizes the structures of the then apartheid government, through the use of fibreglass and resin sculptures that lampoon situational and ideological institutions and structures. This collection of rotund sculptures is both humorous and solemn, an ambivalence that is reflected in much of Murray's work. The exhibition comprised of a number of painted fibreglass and resin sculptures which "announced Murray's engaged, agitprop style, this during an extended state of emergency, apartheid's demise imminent but, then, still unthinkable" (O'Toole, 2005: 1). As O'Toole reiterates, Murray's works at the time were both politically aware and satirical. At the time many other white South African artists were engaged in the use of satire to debunk and transgress the boundaries instituted by the apartheid government. Works such as *Bureaucrat* (1989, refer to page 23), highlights the ineffectual nature and helplessness of bureaucratic systems in place at the time. These early works of Murray's don't actively engage with his own ethnicity or consciously acknowledge his own whiteness, instead they highlight traits of whiteness that are synonymous with maintaining privilege and hegemony. His

work at the time was a rejection of the apartheid system without the overt acknowledgement of cultural identity, instead a focus on the ills of the apartheid system and in this avoiding a critique of the self. This lack of ethnic interrogation at the time, has resulted from the notion that apartheid was built upon presumed ethnic and racial solidarity, manifest most prominently in aspects of Afrikaner nationalism. At a time when a struggle for democratic principles and independence dominated, investigating an understanding of the self and notions of identity would have been regarded as self-absorbed and bourgeois (Murray, 2009). Murray chose to be a part of a resistant response to apartheid domination and as a result his earliest work does not satirise his own constructed identity, but the farcical nature of structures associated with apartheid. According to Barnett, examples of this expectation can be found in white novels of the time,

“They are positioned on the margins of Western literary canons as representatives who can speak of and against a racist system, in the name of universal values of justice and equality. They are asked to represent life under apartheid, and present a principled resistance or refusal to it”  
(Barnett, 1999:94)

*Policeman* (1989) again reflects upon the ineffectual and hopeless situation whilst simultaneously challenging the dominant apartheid structures of the time. The work regards the institutional structures of government in the late eighties, showing a policeman whose boots are literally too big for him. This could also allude to the idea that the task at hand for the police and structures of oppression was too great. The use of caricature was employed not to identify incongruity within white identity, but to highlight the farcical nature of the values upheld by the apartheid state. Pissarra suggests that, “Murray ‘universalised’ his subjects, while retaining enough specificity to mock Apartheid and its icons” (Pissarra, no date: 1). The ‘universalised’ subject Pissarra refers to exemplifies the white artist of the late apartheid era, intent on avoiding engaging the self as subject whilst attempting to be both critical of the local whilst appealing to the ‘universal’ values referred to by Barnett, above. Ironically it is this claim to universalism that is an aspect of whiteness reflected in Murray’s work at this time. The universalized subject to which Pissarra refers is inevitably a white European or American subject.



Policeman  
1985/9  
610 x 300 x 390 mm  
Cast resin and paint

This said, Murray was not, at the time, naive enough to completely neglect self critical engagement. The work, *Artist: Self Portrait* (1989, refer to page 33) which shows the artist as an infant holding a paint palette and an enema, in this a self critical gaze alludes to the artist as being just as ignorant and talentless as the icons he satirizes. His use of self-satire here is not a reflection on his identity, but a mode of satire that softens its didactic nature. Through satirizing himself in *Artist: Self Portrait* (1989), he undermines his position and counters the morally dichotomous nature of the body of work. This notion of the satirized and caricatured self is suggested by Ivor Powell to be a kind of leitmotif throughout his career (Powell, 2002: 3). Although throughout his career the use of self satire changes, at this point it is used as an academic counter balance to the overt attack on the multiple facets of the apartheid system in place at the time. The self portrait of the artist enables Murray's work to be both an assault on apartheid, whilst simultaneously situating the artist within the very system he criticizes. Powell reiterates this notion in the catalogue essay for the exhibition, suggesting that the series rests on "psychotic exaggeration, but at the same time, Murray has emblematically taken the subject matter and the socio-historical critique within his own consciousness. And he has done this by locating his figuration against a source caricature – that of the artist himself." (Powell, 2002: 4)

Murray exhibited again in 1992, his exhibition ironically entitled *Heritage*. The exhibition used popular wildlife as containers for African curios and cultural objects. With the end of the apartheid regime imminent, Murray sought to deconstruct the legacy that apartheid would leave on South Africa. Murray engages with Eurocentric perceptions of Africa, and the notion that in a globalized world, the culture industries are dominated by an overarching containment by and subscription to the Western centres expectations of marginal groups, as suggested above this includes white South Africans. This move away from the attack on bad governance, as seen in his Master's exhibition, is the beginnings of a search for new satirical targets. The departure from the art of his Masters show, that was resistant to apartheid oppression, was brought about because by this time the apartheid government was preparing to relinquish control of the country to the ANC. Instead Murray chose to reflect on possible futures that might emerge.

The work *Heritage: Artefacts* (1992) exemplifies this, showing an antelope made of a metal cut-out containing a Tanzanian curio and a plastic *Oros Man* juice bottle, it cynically investigates notions of cultural heritage and the constructed nature of these heritages. In the centre of the antelope together with other ‘artefacts’ is an exclamation mark, read as a critique of Western perceptions of Africa, one might see this work as illustrating how an amalgam of commodities presented to the foreigner under the guise of African authenticity is legitimized through subscribing to the colonial desire of an exotic and wild Africa. There are elements of Murray’s acknowledgement of his own Westernness or whiteness, understood in terms of the glissement between critique of the foreign gaze and becoming the foreigner, as Chapman indicates, “Under apartheid whites were given a political-racial identity which (coterminous with superiority) utilized to its advantage either its Western European inheritance or its long African rootedness” (Chapman, 1998: 89).

In *Heritage: Corruption* (1992) a metal hyena surrounded by coins containing a butchers knife, alludes to the notion that as a collective, South Africa will inherit the heritage of apartheid corruption. The exhibition engages with the possibilities of an imagined post-liberation future and the bitter legacy that apartheid would leave, in 1992 the end of the era was in sight and Murray was on hand to provide insights into the possible after effects of the change in dispensation. In *Heritage: Memory and Tears* (1992) an elephant, mythically renowned for a long memory, contains ‘tears’ made of bank notes and a blank container in it’s midst, alludes to the pain of the past and the possible forgetfulness of the future. The irony is not wasted on an audience either local or foreign; the myth of the legendary memory of the elephant provides insight into the metaphoric nature of this work. The symbolism of the ‘tears of money’ suggest a commodification of memory, the idea that money can be thrown at the problem and that memories of the past can be erased through the financial trials and tribulations of the future. All the works on the Heritage exhibition use the same stylistic presentation of the animal containing objects, allowing for multiple open ended readings of each, however the overall theme would be one of pre conceived perceptions of Africa and how South Africa might influence these misconceptions.



1992

Heritage: Artifacts

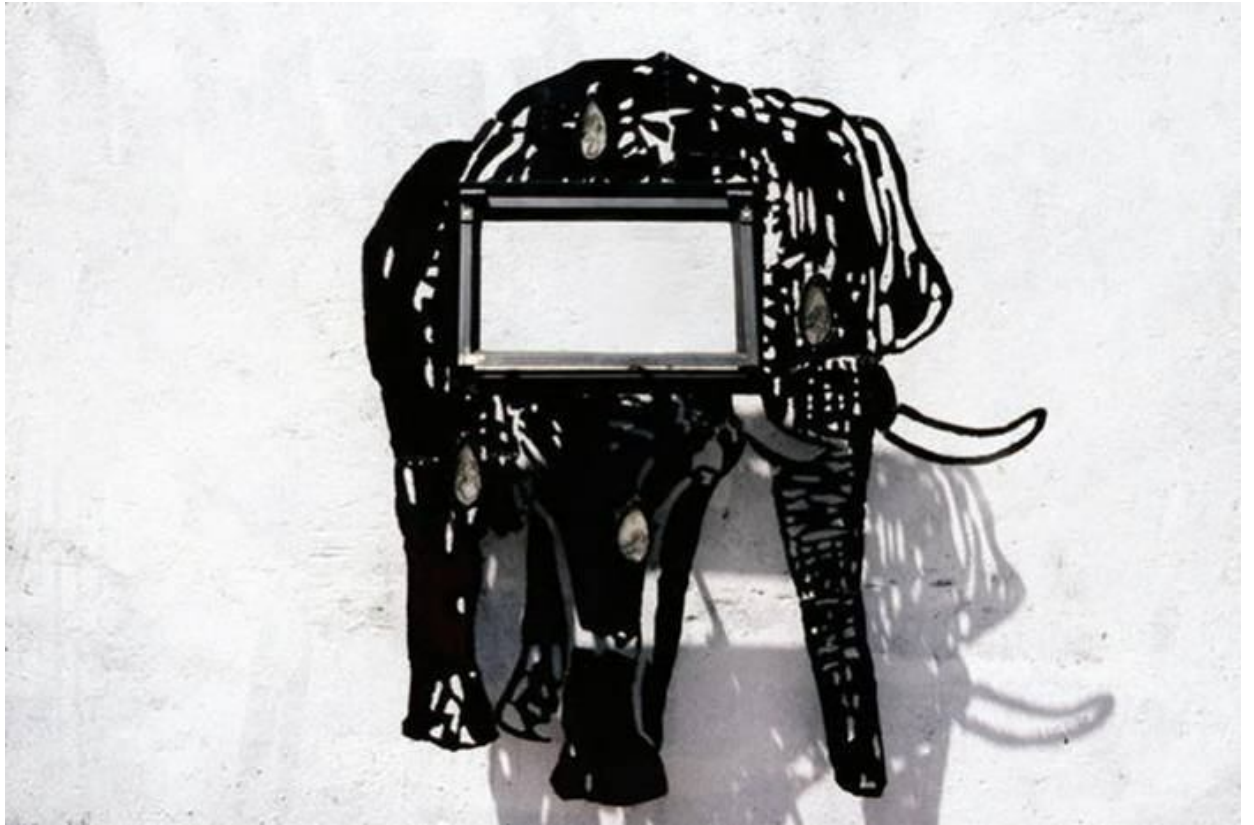
Metal, Tanzanian curio and plastic object

170 x 130 x 14 cm





1992  
Heritage: Corruption  
Metal, knife and coins  
90 x 90 x 10 cm



1992

Heritage: Memory and Tears

Metal, banknotes and glass

175 x 140 x 15 cm

## **Post-Liberation Introspective Satire**

The exhibition *Scurvy* opened on 16 June 1995, now officially Youth Day. The significance of this day is to honour of the children of Soweto who rose against their apartheid oppressors and died in 1976. The exhibition was co-curated by Murray with Kevin Brand and seven artists took part in the exhibition, Wayne Barker, Lisa Brice, Kevin Brand, Barend de Wet, Kate Gottgens, Brett Murray and Andrew Putter. These artists occupied *The Castle* (of Good Hope, in Cape Town) and created site-specific works in which they questioned, lampooned and flagellated the past, (Martin, 1996: 13) in a satirical take on recent and former sites of power. Not unlike the satire deployed to debunk the myths of the apartheid system in Murray's *Master's* exhibition, Murray's work showed a shift away from the political satire of the late eighties and showed a move towards questions of heritage, memory, commodification and personal and collective identity, themes that had been touched upon in *Heritage* (1992).

In the work *Sell* (1995) the artist has employed a similar visual style to that used in *Heritage*, showing a group of traditionally clad African men with the Shell petroleum logo embedded in their torsoes. This work engages with the commodification of labour, resources, culture and cultural hybridity. Oil off the coast of Nigeria and Shell and other petroleum conglomerates' investment there is highlighted in this work by Murray, this association with other African groups (such as Nigeria) suggest that Murray is speaking for others, a trait heavily associated with whiteness.

Murray's work focuses on identity construction in his perceived others, the highly culturally imperialistic nature of the globalized world, acknowledging South Africa's re-entry into world culture and the effects of this on the identities of African peoples. *Identity* (1995, refer to page 48) similarly deals with cultural commodification, the work shows a Zulu Warrior constructed out of metal, with a large emblematic 'smiley face' in place of his head. The work critiques the ascribed nature of culture, the notion that happiness will be attained through acknowledging ones roots or culture, whilst also criticizing the colonial assumption that the 'natives' are happiest when left to their own traditions which in many cases are a form of income, in the tourist industry for example. Notions of ascribed and inherited identities are critiqued in *Scurvy* as an unhealthy mode of identification. Murray's concerns with globalization are primarily



Sell  
1995  
1100 x 1000 x 150 mm  
Metal and plastic

negative, a resistance to dominance and hegemony that is persistent throughout his career.

Popular iconography is used for the first time extensively in *Scurvy*. *Warrior* (1995) shows the *Pink Panther* holding a traditional Zulu shield; again the work criticizes cultural commodification, whilst acknowledging global cultural hybridization. In his catalogue essay, Pissara suggests that the work “pokes fun at those who wear their Africanness as an accessory. However in the South African context it can also be seen as sharply political, as the Zulu shield is a (tourist) icon representing (pre-colonial) Zulu military might” (Pissara, no date: 2). It may also be the beginnings of Murray’s own investigation of white ethnicity, the struggle between Africa and the white centres of cultural production. This work shows again Murray’s use of self-satire, if one reads his use of western cultural iconography as a self-critical appraisal of himself situated within the black body and African culture. We see an ambivalence in his work that suggests he is doubly conscious of the effect of the Western centres on the traditions of Africa, but he situates himself as both African and Western. However the exhibition was not without its critics and pitfalls, as Martin suggests,

“There was one serious shortcoming – that the occupation of The Castle (of good hope in Cape Town) was executed by five white men and two white women. The spectre of internal neo-colonialist practices loomed in the mysterious spaces and narrow stairways. Nelson Mandela's image was ubiquitous, but black artists were left on the other side of the moat” (Martin, 1996: 13).

This lack of inclusion of the other as a participant is an aspect of this exhibition that cannot be overlooked, as it undermines much of the impetus of the works on display and the flagellation of the past is reread as possibly an unreflexive self flagellation. Especially in Murray’s work which at this stage utilized the image of the black ‘other’ to illustrate conceptions of ascribed Western identity onto that of the African subject. In this regard Murray is the benevolent voice of whiteness that speaks for and claims to protect its less fortunate others. If read as neo-colonial and un-reflexive, as Martin (1996) has suggested, Murray’s work appears to subscribe to the very culturally imperialistic notions he critiques. However if read as a conscious choice to display



Warrior  
1995  
1700 x 800 x 1500 mm  
Wood and plastic

only the works of white artists, Murray's work can be seen as both a critique of commodified identities and a reflection upon his own Africanness a hybrid of Western thought and symbolism, merged with Western preconceptions of the African subject. Martin further acknowledges this possibility by suggesting that, "The recognition of our Africanness and our hybridity, will enable South Africans to face history and to take responsibility for that history, to relate and to fuse the selves and the others in us" (Martin, 1996: 15).

In 1996 Murray had an exhibition entitled *White Boy Sings the Blues*, the title itself summarizes much of what the exhibition dealt with. Murray's own race and the conundrum facing white artists in South Africa, 'singing the blues' is a multi-layered concept in the case of this exhibition, acknowledging cultural imperialism and racial stereotypes, whilst at a base level commenting on the perceived crestfallen feelings (although satirically addressed) of whites regarding the state of post 1994 South Africa. The exhibition was Murray's first foray into the highly charged realm of racial identification and the exhibition deals with both racial hybridity and resistance to it. Geers notes that Murray's racially charged exhibition engages the concept that "Young white artists are the most disenfranchised, caught as they are, between producing objects that continue to subscribe to Eurocentric prejudices, while living in a country that is becoming increasingly prejudiced against anything foreign, and in particular against anything European" (Geers, 1996: 1). The image used on the invitation is a picture from a family album which shows the artist aged six at the time covered from head to toe in brown body paint and dressed as a Zulu warrior, probably in preparation for a party or even a dress up day at school. Geers notes that, "The playful naivety that the image was originally constructed with is now eclipsed by the political climate of post-apartheid society" (Geers, 1996: 1). The image is a condensation of what the exhibition tries to achieve, a sense of the artist trying to recompose his identity to that of an African, however this sense of identity searching and reformulating is created with humour and a touch of Murray's self critical cynicism.

Works in the exhibition expand upon themes of racial identification through juxtaposition, building upon the aesthetic utilized in *Scurvy* (1992), *Black Like Me: Colonel Saunders* (1996) is an example of Murray's humorous take on the cultural hybridization taking place in South Africa, by placing an 'afro' on Colonel Saunders,





The Artist as a Zulu, aged 6  
Postcard invitation for White Boy Sings The Blues  
1996





Black Like Me: Colonel Sanders  
1996  
Wood, plastic and coins  
105 x 63 x 10 cm  
Edition of 4

he references the notion that for many white South African artists the status of a morally questionable heritage is answered by projecting “an idea of the world through the eyes of black African subjects. This is in part a cathartic legitimization of the artist’s existence in Africa where the indigenous subject becomes the object of the artist’s fantasy” (Geers, 1996: 1). The irony in Murray’s work is that he uses foreign signifiers to denote both blackness conveyed through the ‘afro’, a signifier of African American identity and whiteness, colonel Saunders of K.F.C. Although primarily utilizing humour to lessen the emotional burden of racial acknowledgement in his viewer, in works such as *Land* (1996) there is a far more earnest attempt at revealing the hierarchical and complicated relationships between blacks, whites and the land. Using the motif of two heads, one ‘white’ and one ‘black’, arranged in a hierarchical way, the work shows the dominance of the ‘white’ head over that of the ‘black’, both in a struggle for land, which is shown as soil in a jar.

In 1997 *30 Minutes*, a group exhibition held in the Robben Island prison, Murray’s piece *Guilt and Innocence* comprised of 200 family photographs that coincided with the period of time that Nelson Mandela was in prison. The exhibition dealt with the notion of separateness based on race. Murray’s work acknowledges the naiveté of his privileged white upbringing in comparison to the existence to that of Nelson Mandela. The protected seemingly utopian lifestyle that was Murray’s experience is shown in juxtaposition to that of the stark prison that housed Mandela for so many years. The title of the exhibition highlights notions of accountability and raises the question of who was or wasn’t innocent or guilty. Murray’s catalogue entry was this,

“I was born in December 1961, a few months before the Rivonia trialists (Nelson Mandela and his compatriots) were imprisoned. Being born in Pretoria, into a half-Afrikaans, half-English family, where my father’s heritage extended back to include both Paul Kruger and Louis Botha (Boer presidents), disguised by my grandmother re-marrying a Scottish Murray and my mother’s history reaching back to the French Huguenots, I am a white, middle-class cultural hybrid. This was and is my comfortable and uncomfortable inheritance. The political and social forces beyond the confines of my family formed a system which protected and infringed on me, empowered and disempowered me, promoted and denied me. When I



Land  
1996

Wood, plastic, jar and earth  
90 x 80 x 150 cm



1997  
Guilt and Innocence  
Site: Robben Island Prison Visitors Block  
Framed photographs

looked beyond my private experiences of loves and relationships, family and friends and of boy becoming man, the contradictions in this system, which divided my life from others, resulted in a cross-questioning of responsibility and complicity. This uncertainty challenged the understanding of what became ambiguous life experiences. The photographs document moments of my life within this context, and date from 1962 to 1990, when most of the political prisoners were released from Robben Island.” (Murray, 1997: 1)

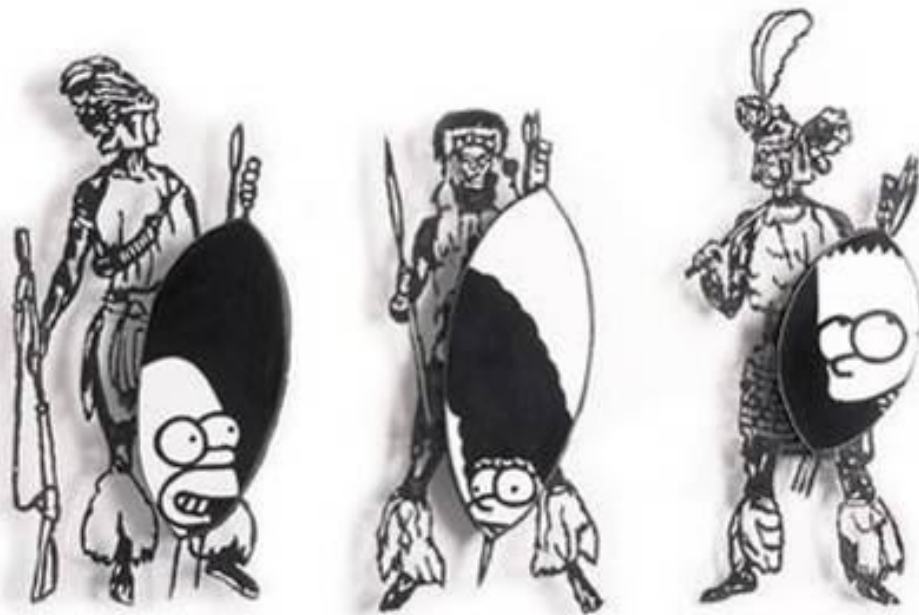
The questioning of his own inheritance as a white person was becoming an integral aspect of Murray’s work by this time. In *Guilt and Innocence*, Murray’s focus moves away from cultural hybridity to a reflection on his own history, through artifacts, in this case family photographs. The work sheds light on the plurality of existence throughout Mandela’s imprisonment, critiquing apartheid notions of separate but equal development, white privilege and the racial hierarchy of the day.

An example of Murray’s merging of the populist and conceptual in one piece is *The Dance Routine of the White Male Psyche* (2000, see page 17). As discussed earlier, the piece shows a subaltern white male icon, Bart Simpson avoiding his own gaze in the mirror. This is symptomatic of much colonial and post-colonial ethnic investigation, the inability of the centre to identify and engage fully in understanding itself, instead it is only able to identify itself through creating ‘others’. This inability for whites to reflect and criticise themselves is a facet of whiteness usually associated with the Western centres, and not entirely accurate in the South African context, as it has been suggested by Steyn (2005) that in South Africa whiteness has always been an integral part of her identity, highly visible and a conscious site of power. In the context of Brett Murray’s development as an artist, this work can be regarded as the beginnings of a conscious and open white self-reflexivity. Whilst other exhibitions, like *White Boy Sings the Blues* (1996), acknowledge whiteness in a way that is not necessarily conscious of the location of whiteness, instead treating the concept of whiteness with a sense of guilt and shame through merely attempting to undermine it through juxtaposition. However in this work Murray uses the imagery of Bart Simpson to allude to both the white centres inability to be self-reflexive as well as the pervasive nature of the centers conceptions of whiteness to permeate our own

conceptions here, in a hegemonic manner. Keating suggests that, this invisible omnipresence gives whiteness a rarely acknowledged position of dominance and power. Suggesting that whiteness, domination, and invisibility are intimately related and the dominant culture's inability or reluctance to see it as such is the source of its hidden authority (Keating, 1995). “Whiteness is an unrecognized and unacknowledged racial category that secures its power by refusing to identify itself” (Keating, 1995: 905). Murray at this point of his career was beginning to investigate the state of being of whites, and the complexities within that, that are not reducible to privilege, power and racism.

The work *Protect and Serve* (2000) shows a group of Zulu warriors with the Simpson family covering their shields, investigating as in earlier exhibitions a sense of cultural hybridity, whilst at the same time using the Simpsons as a metaphorical icon of whiteness. Here whites are attempting to attach and disguise themselves as a parasite on traditional cultures. The effect is not unsimilar to works such as *Identity* (1995, see page 48) in which Brett Murray’s whiteness becomes somewhat of a surrogate voice, a voice to the supposedly voiceless other (Nuttall, 2001: 133). This superimposition of popular Western iconography onto the African other complicates notions of contemporary whiteness, whereas in the apartheid era, whites were writing to the European centre as a surrogate voice to the other, in the post-apartheid context the voiceless have regained a position from which to represent themselves. In this situation “what, then, is left to the white voice in this new context? Perhaps what is left is the capacity or the responsibility to write within and not beyond whiteness” (Nuttall, 2001: 133).

On the same exhibition, but displayed four years later, *The Shack as Metaphor* (2004) utilizes a simplistic ‘New Yorker’ or ‘punch magazine’ style (a stylistic feature incorporated from 2002 onwards) single frame cartoon to criticise the art industry, highlighting ideas of Africa as a creation of eurocentric fantasies. Appearing as part of the *I love Africa* exhibition, but four years later, there is a shift from Murray’s integration of western power and hegemony through popular culture, to the hybrid amalgam of popular culture and fine art institutional discourse. This is a trait that would become more prevalent in years to come.



Protect and Serve  
2000  
1200 x 2000 x 10 mm  
Metal and plastic





***"If your work romanticises poverty or uses  
the shack as metaphor... you'll be on my  
next show in London!"***

The Shack as Metaphor  
2004  
4200 x 2500 mm  
Paint



The exhibition *Hero* (2001) investigates archetypal heroes, a move away from the specificity of local cultural hybrids and into the realm of universal humanism. The work, *Us and them* (2001), is both a comment on the subjectivity of othering and a note on where his cultural cues for the othering process emerge from. The visual pun is all too apparent, using two sets of identical cowboys to illustrate the non-difference between 'us' and 'them'. The fact the cowboys are iconic of the western film genre is a further visual pun that alludes to the hegemony of the west in influencing our conceptions of us and them.

The exhibition *White Like Me* (2002) is a show that actively engages with Murray's own white identity, whilst acknowledging and challenging governmental and economic institutions, as Murray has noted, 'White Like Me' merges the thematic concerns pursued in two of my past shows - satirical attacks on bad government (pre-1994) and attempts to define an often discombobulated sense of identity" (Murray, 2002: 1).

Using 'New Yorker' style comics as a visual aid, the work *White Africans* (2002, refer to page 38) uses St Peter as the ultimate judge in deciding the fate of whites who think they are African. In utilizing St Peter, Murray locates and situates whites as being judged by the locus of their religio-cultural belief system, namely Christianity revealed in St Peter the mythical first pope of the Catholic church. This ambivalence shows the hybrid nature of the South African condition, by alluding to the notion that Africa has been hybridized to such an extent that its cosmology has morphed into one of Western design. Not only this, but the work reflects on the diasporic nature of 'white' South Africans, commenting on the notion that whites are eventually judged and choose to be judged by Western ideals and standards. Murray's work utilizes humour to engage with contemporary issues surrounding debates about the authenticity of white ethnicities. The Work *African Parts* (2002 refer to page, 37) shows two white business men, one asks the other, 'so which parts of you are from Africa?'. Funny, but also multi-layered, requiring the white viewer to rethink the written pun and bland visuality of the piece and question the authenticity of their Africanness.



Us and Them  
2001  
2400 x 680 x 60 mm  
Wood and Plastic

## New Beginnings

Murray's 2002 exhibitions *New Beginnings* is a collection of photographs showing the artist dressed as an infant. Standing on what appears to be a stage with a small chalk board in each photograph labelling who the artist is in that moment. Titles ranging from *the Artist* (2002, refer to page 34) to *the President* (2002) suggest a broad and sweeping interpretation of all aspects of life as a performance. This performative process is enacted by the artist who satirizes himself and the institutions he performs by depicting himself in infantile attire. This collection of work can be read as a personal rebirth for Murray as he investigates the various positions that he has criticised through new and apparently innocent eyes. He gains a satirical ambivalence by placing himself as the target of his own satire.

Moving away from his earlier critiques of self in terms of his ascribed white identity, Murray's show *Sleep Sleep* engages with the discourses of power in a global context, utilizing the imagery of primarily Western descent. This exhibition could be read as an aspect of whiteness, as it draws on the popular cultural imaginary of the white centres of America and Europe. This can be seen in works such as *Religious Narcissism* (2006), which show the cartoon icon of Casper the friendly ghost, being crucified and looking down at a dark reflection of himself. Although a work like this does not overtly acknowledge whiteness, it acknowledges and scrutinizes an aspect of hegemonic whiteness, located in Christianity.

The exhibition also has a three dimensional (as opposed to wall mounted) sculptural content, engaging in what seems to be a comical minimalism, almost Brancusian. The sculptural pieces include a *Gorilla* (2006) and a *Little Pig* (2006), both are shown as smooth, sleek, comical and depraved simultaneously, as Smith notes, "These bulbous, patinated black bronzes are hybrid figures, somewhere between human and animal, and are at once comic and threatening, like edgy castoffs from a Pixar storyboard" (Smith, 2006: 1). His visual vernacular is set in the western tradition, something that has always been apparent in his work; however the shift lies in his subject matter and his primary focus of inquiry. Earlier exhibitions ( *White boy sings the blues* 1996, *White like me* 2002, *Guilt and innocence* 1997, *Heritage* 1992) focused on the hybridized and commodified nature of his own race/ethnicity and others. Recent



New Beginnings: The President

2006

Pigment inks on cotton rag paper

37 x 37cm



Religious Narcissism  
2006  
Acrylic on canvas  
117 x 400 cm



Gorilla  
2005/06  
Bronze  
Height: 61cm  
Ed. of 5 + 1AP



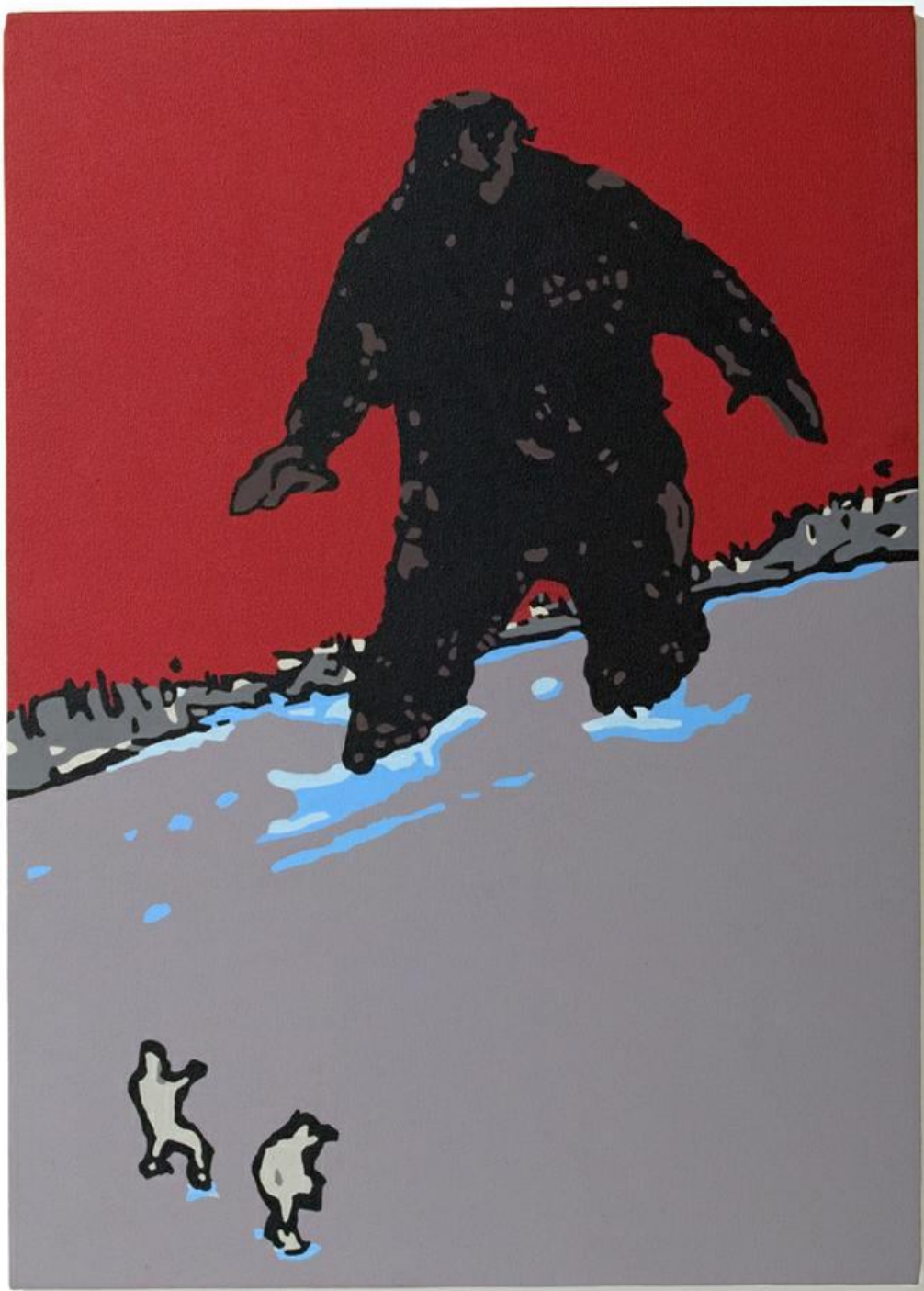
Little Pig  
2005/06  
Bronze  
Height: 66cm  
Ed. of 5 + 1AP

exhibitions like this one and *Hero*, show a shift from the particular; to attempts to define and scrutinize the hegemony of the global centres of whiteness and power. The work *They're here* (2006) is an attempt by Murray to universalize difference, this is not a culturally or racially specific work. Instead he is attempting to point out a humanist trait of 'othering' and differentiating oneself from another, usually out of fear. Clarke suggests that the racial or ethnic other is built out of fear of difference, arguing that "what appears repellently alien is the manifestation, a reflection, of fantasy in some other. In this way, that which is familiar turns to frightening and produces feelings of hate" (Clarke in Sullivan, 2005: 140). However in the South African context this work cannot help but be read as a comment on the fears of white South Africans of the 'swart gevaar' (black danger) that was a theme all too prevalent before the 1994 elections. Smith observes that Murray's show challenges the viewer not only because it makes one question when or if to laugh at the sad state of global and local politics, but that the "entry point to subversion often lies in pointing out the ridiculous deeply embedded in the rhetoric of power" (Smith, 2006: 1).

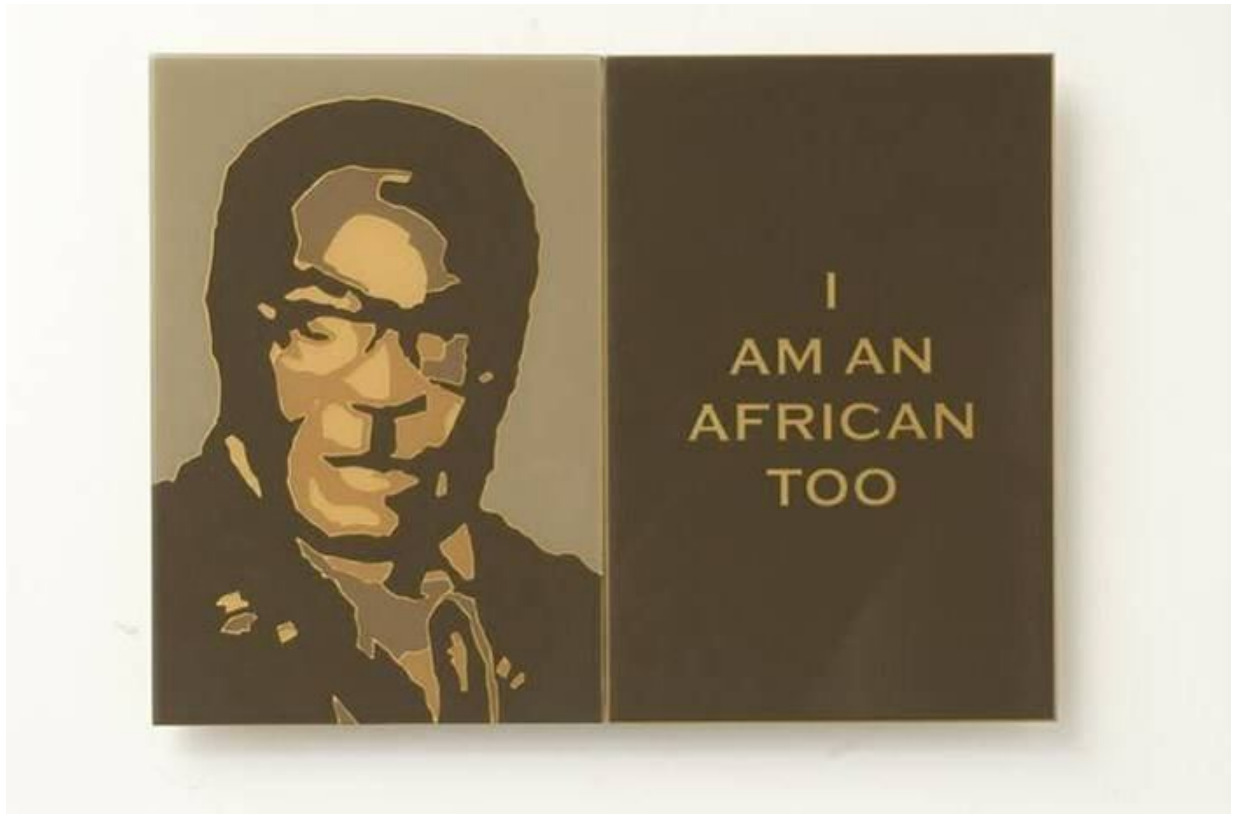
Thurman suggests that Murray's most recent exhibition is a move back toward the more overtly political, something he had not engaged with since the transition to a democratic country in 1994. "Between then and now an autocritique of his own identity and 'whiteness' had ensued. The change back to the critique of the political economy of the new South Africa has its roots in Polokwane 2007, and the recent politically charged elections" (Thurman, 2009: 1). Although as Thurman suggests, Murray has moved more overtly into the political sphere with his exhibition *Crocodile Tears*, he has engaged in political discourse actively as a 'white', acknowledging his own race and ethnicity whilst criticising himself and the political powers he pokes fun at.

Politically overt works such as *I am an African too* (2007) uses an image of Robert Mugabe to undermine Thabo Mbeki's 'I am an African' speech by highlighting his political silence on the topic of Zimbabwe's many social and economic failures, are countered by works that satirize his own whiteness and henceforth his position of privilege and ambivalence in the situation. Works such as *W.A.S.P Cry for a Place in the Sun* (2008, refer to page 43),





They're here!  
2005/6  
Acrylic on canvas  
70 x 65cm



I Am An African Too  
2008  
Alluminium and paint, diptych

42 x 570 x 4cm  
Edition of 5

which through the use of text, autocritiques Murray as a white Anglo Saxon Protestant, and suggests he 'hams' being African, in other words does it badly. Works such as this again soften the didactic nature of his satire, by placing himself within the target area of his satire.

Countless comparisons are drawn between the political climate of contemporary South Africa and that of pre-revolution France, the most blunt of these is the work *Let Them Eat Pap* (2008), which satirizes the rich, powerful and still predominantly white of South Africa and compares them to the gentry of pre-revolution France. Here he suggests that like Marie Antoinette, the wealthy and powerful are out of touch with the harsh realities faced by the majority in South Africa. This point is reified by Corrigan who suggests that Murray's focus is not the misuse of power as has been popular in post-apartheid art, but his focus is the heinous misuse of influence. "This is personified by his references to Marie Antoinette and Louis XIV, the French royals who lived a life of excess while nonchalantly neglecting their impoverished subjects. *Let Them Eat Pap* (2008) cements this analogy between the French aristocracy and the ruling party" (Corrigan, no date: 2).

There is a sense of duality in the intended targets of his satire in this exhibition. Murray's work both criticises those who have political power and those who have financial power and privilege, Corrigan goes on to acknowledge this duality, "He presents a sort of hyper-reality in which the moral character of the ruling party (or the whites who remain powerful) are presented in a concentrated form – Murray doesn't rely on hyperbole. Some of his work probably appears offensive, but the humour he employs destabilises the sincerity of his accusations" (Corrigan, no date: 1).

For some time Murray has retooled the icons of popular global capitalist culture, attaching to them a distinct visual and satirical vernacular. Murray now moves away from the popular capitalist and engages with popular art icons and the colonial connotations inherent in them. In post-apartheid South Africa Green et al, suggest that an attempt to unify different groups has been attempted through the sharing of national symbols; however whites resist these symbols as they regard the symbols as reflective of the black majority (Green, Sonn & Matsebula, 2007: 402). Murray's insistence throughout his career of utilizing foreign, western symbols and visual styles as a vehicle to portray his message is reflective of his own whiteness,



Let Them Eat Pap!

2008

Metal, paint, silverleaf and fools gold

118 x 83 x 12 cm

suggesting an aversion to the local and an acknowledgement of his lack of African authenticity. Shaman suggests that the exhibition is, built around one of the most charged symbols of Euro-centricity, namely the colonial. Murray's works appropriate Dutch and Austrian seventeenth century imagery, Murray introduces "crocodile tears" as an iconographical element designed as a satiric reference to the false guilt of the whites and wealthy blacks and the false tears wept for those "who are less fortunate" (Shaman, no date: 1).

Murray's use of himself as the source caricature is again utilized in *The Renaissance man tending his land* (2008, see page 35) a work that literally situates Murray within the target area of his own satire. He references his own ambiguous stance and the lunacy of the position he is taking; that of criticising whiteness and wealth whilst he is both. The photograph is strikingly similar to that of himself as a Zulu warrior (page 62), seen on the cover of *White Boy Sings the Blues* and in his *Guilt and Innocence* exhibition. Shaman notes that, although this is several decades later, Murray is once again situating himself within the black body. These images according to Shaman suggest that Murray's work is grounded in "the struggle of the South African white to discover or create an African identity, some kind of inner reconciliation with Africanness" (Shaman, no date: 2).

## Conclusion

This dissertation has investigated the concept of whiteness through research into the historical development of the concept, contemporary research on the topic and through the application of this literature to the work of Brett Murray. In utilizing Murray's work to examine aspects of whiteness in South Africa, this dissertation has shed light on the perceived dilemma facing whiteness in this country and expanded on a discourse that enables an understanding of postcolonial and post-apartheid whiteness in South Africa.

The research has shown that Murray contends with a double consciousness (Dayal, 1996) that renders him diasporic. It is the perceived dichotomy between diaspora and Africanicity that often results in a defensiveness among some white South Africans. To be perceived as other for many contemporary white South Africans is a sobering reality. In the context of whiteness studies the perceived need to construct oneself as African is deconstructed and criticised by Murray through his use of satire and seemingly incongruent signifiers of culture. Murray's use of globalised icons to foreground his ideas is evidence of his cultural fluidity, his hybrid status and his double consciousness in that he criticises and deconstructs the perceptions of where his own cultural iconography is located. Ranging from the 'smiley' face superimposed on the other in *Identity* (1995, on page 48) representing the reciprocal nature of mainstream whiteness and its others in co-constructing each others identities, to the use of cowboys as a means to reflect upon perceived differences between groups in the *Hero* (2001) exhibition, Murray uses specific popular forms that enable him to reflect upon the local through engaging in a globalised and dominant Western visuality.

Through discussing not only Murray's diasporic nature, but also his historical development, this dissertation has shown how Murray constantly reflects on the changes that the country is experiencing. His work addresses the vicissitudes of an evolving democracy in South Africa, satirical targets changing as the political and cultural environment does. Murray's work has shifted from his earliest critiques of the apartheid regime as the most obvious target, moving into the post-apartheid context with criticisms of culture, ascribed identities and heritage. Beyond this early and

apparent shift in subject matter, Murray's work further acknowledges his own whiteness from the mid to late nineties, satirizing whites as hedonistic (*White Boy Sings the Blues* 1996) and acknowledging his own position of privilege (*Guilt and Innocence* 1997). Later appraisals of whiteness in *White Like Me* (2002), although satirical, suggest a more frank investigation into the complexities of his own existence as a white. In much of Murray's work he attempts to erode conformity to oppressive systems, whether it be apartheid, nationalistic or global identity constructions or class struggles. His work reflects his own hybrid ethnicity entangled with a subscribed racial identity symptomatic of his own diasporic location.

Beyond this, his work develops an open-ended critique of the politics of class and identity. *Crocodile Tears* (2007) is an amalgam of Murray's concerns about white identity as diasporic, combined with a return to the criticism of political ineptitude and economic inequality that marked earlier works such as *Policeman* (1989, on page 51). By situating his work in relation to class issues and political agenda, Murray further complicates notions of whiteness and diaspora. Suggesting that his whiteness should not prevent him from scrutinizing any powerful institution or personage in the post-apartheid context, Murray upholds a liberated whiteness that is specifically located in Africa. Thus in *Crocodile Tears* (2007) a confident Murray, who regards himself as an African and feels he can criticize anyone, regardless of race, confronts state ineptitude, personal greed and highlights the complexities within conceptions of Africanity. In this there is a return to the goals of Murray's early career, that is to undermine structures of oppression, while acknowledging his unique and complex position of being a white African.

## Bibliography

### Books and Journals

- Adam, H and Moodley, K. (1986) *South Africa without Apartheid*. Berkley University of California Press.
- Alcoff, L. M. (1998) What Should White People Do?. *Hypatia*, 13, (3) pp. 6-26.
- Allen, Theodore W. (1994) *The Invention of the White Race, vols. 1*. London: Verso.
- Anthias, F. (1992) *Ethnicity, Class, Gender and migration*. England: Avebury.
- Appiah, K, A. (1992) *In my father's house: Africa in the philosophy of culture*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Attwell, D. (2000) *Modern Fiction Studies*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Barnard, R and Farred, G. (2004) *After the Thrill is Gone*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Barnett, C. (1999) Constructions of Apartheid in the International Reception of the Novels of J. M. Coetzee. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 25, (2) pp. 287-301.
- Baudrillard, J. (1997) *Art and Artifact*. London: Sage Publications.
- Bernstein, A and Cock, J. (2002) *Melting Pots & Rainbow Nations*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Brown, D. (2006) *To Speak of this Land*. Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.
- Bryant, C et. al. (2001) *The Contemporary Giddens*. New York: Palgrave.
- Butler, F, G. (1976) The Nature and purpose of the Conference. In Andre Devilliers(Ed.); *English-speaking South Africa today: proceedings of the National Conference, July 1974*. pp. 7- 16. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
- Canny, Nicholas P. (1973) The Ideology of English Colonialization: From Ireland to America. *William and Mary Quarterly*, 30, (3) pp. 575-598.
- Chambers, R. (1997) *The unexamined*. In Whiteness a critical reader, ed. Hill, M, 187-203. New York, New York University Press.
- Chapman, M. (2006) *Art Talk, Politics Talk*. Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu Natal Press.
- Cashmore, E, E. (1984) *Dictionary of Race and Ethnic Relations*. London: Routledge.



- Chipkin, I. (2007) *Do South Africans Exist?*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.
- Coombes, A. E. and Siopis, P. (1997) Gender, 'Race', Ethnicity in Art Practice in Post-Apartheid South Africa: Annie E. Coombes and Penny Siopis in Conversation. *Feminist Review*, spring 1997, (55) pp. 110-129.
- Davis, J. E. (2000) *Identity and Social Change*. London: Transaction Press.
- Dean, T. (2002). Art as Symptom: Žižek and the Ethics of Psychoanalytic Criticism. *Diacritics*, 32, (2) pp. 21-41.
- De Klerk, W. (2000) *Afrikaners: Kroes, kras, kordaat*. Cape Town: Human and Rousseau.
- De Lange, G. (2001). *Boetman in 'n briefir konteks*. In C. Louw (Ed.), *Boetman en die swanesang van die verligtes*. pp. 320-351. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau.
- Derrida, J. (1998). *Resistances of Psychoanalysis*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Deaux, K. (1996). *Social identification*. In E. T. Higgins & A. Kruglanski (Eds.), *Social psychology: Handbook of basic principles*. pp. 777-798. New York: Guilford.
- Distiller, N and Steyn, M. (2004) *Under Construction*. Pietermaritzburg: Interpak Books.
- Dolby, N. (2001) White Fright: the politics of white youth identity in South Africa. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 22, (1) pp. 5-15.
- Dubow, S. (1992). Afrikaner Nationalism, apartheid, and the conceptualisation of "race". *Journal of African History*, 33, (2) pp.209-238.
- During, S. (1987). Postmodernism; or Post-Colonialism Today. *Textual Practice* 1, (1) pp. 32-47.
- Dyer, R. (1997) *White*. London: Routledge.
- Engels, D and Marks, S. (1994) *Contesting Colonial Hegemony*. London: British Academy Press.
- Eriksen, T. H. (1991) Ethnicity versus Nationalism. *Journal of Peace Research*, 28, (3) pp. 263-278.
- Frankenberg, R. (1993) *White women, race matters: The social construction of whiteness*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Fredrickson, G. M. (1981) *White Supremacy: A comparative study in American and South African history*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gabriel, J. (1998) *Whitewash: Racialized politics and the media*. London: Routledge.

- Gates Jr, H, L, ed. (1986) *'Race', writing , and difference*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Geers, K. (1997) *Contemporary South African Art*. Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers.
- Giddens, A. (1991) *Modernity and Self-Identity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Giroux, H. (1992) Post-Colonial Ruptures and Democratic Possibilities: Multiculturalism as Anti-Racist Pedagogy. *Cultural Critique*, (21) pp. 5-39.
- Graham, G. (2005) *Philosophy of the Arts*. London: Routledge.
- Green, M, J, Sonn, C, C & Matsebula, J. (2007) Reviewing whiteness: Theory, research, and possibilities. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 37, (3) pp. 389–419.
- Gunaratnam, Y. (2003) *Researching 'Race' and Ethnicity*. London: Sage Publications.
- Hall, R. E. (2004). Entitlement Disorder: The Colonial Traditions of Power as White Male Resistance to Affirmative. *Journal of Black Studies*, 34, (4) pp. 562-579.
- Hutcheon, L. Bhabha, H. K. Boyarin, D. Gözl, S. I. (1998). Four Views on Ethnicity. *PMLA*, 113, (1) pp. 28-51.
- Jamal, A and Williamson, S. (1996) *Art in South Africa*. Cape Town: David Philip.
- Krige, R and Zegeye, A. (2001) *Culture in the New South Africa*. Cape Town: Kwela Books.
- Leland, D. (1989) Lacanian Psychoanalysis and French Feminism: Toward an Adequate Political Psychology. *Hypatia*, 3, (3) pp. 81-103.
- Liggio, L, P. (1976) English Origins of Early American Racism. *Radical History Review*, 3, (1) pp. 1-26.
- Lopez, A, J. 2005. *Postcolonial whiteness : a critical reader on race and empire*. New York: New York University Press
- Loury, G, C. (2002) *The Anatomy of Racial inequality*. England: Harvard University Press.
- Louw, C. (2001) *Boetman en die swanesang van die verligtes*. Cape Town: Humem & Rousseau.
- MacDonald, M. (2006) *Why 'race' Matters in South Africa?*. U.S.A: Harvard University Press.
- Martin, M. (1996) The Rainbow Nation: Identity and Transformation. *Oxford Art Journal*, 19, (1) pp. 3-15.
- Matsebula, J, Sonn, C,C, & Green, M, J. (2007) Refining the review of whiteness:

- A reply to Ratele, Stevens, and Steyn. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 37, (3) pp. 437–442.
- Mbembe, A. (2002) African modes of self-writing. *Public Culture*, 14, (1) pp. 239–73.
- Morrel, R. (2001) *Changing Men in Southern Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: University Of KwaZulu-Natal Press.
- Morrel, R. (2001) *From Boys to Gentlemen, Settler Masculinity in Natal 1880-1920*. Pretoria: University of South Africa.
- Morrison, T. (1992) *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Omi, M and Winant, H. (1994) *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*. New York: Routledge.
- Porter, A. (2000) The South African war and the historians. *African Affairs*, 99, (397) pp. 633-649.
- Powell, I. (2002) *Exploding heads, Brett Murray and the Aesthetics of Whiteness*. Capetown: Bell Roberts.
- Pryke, M et. al. (2003) *Using Social Theory*. London: Sage Publications.
- Ratcliffe, P. (2004) *'Race', Ethnicity and Difference*. Open University Press: New York.
- Ratele, K. (2007) Make indigenes unconscious of whiteness: A response to Green, Sonn, and Matsebula. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 37, (3) pp. 431–436.
- Reisigl, M., & Wodak, R. (2001) *Discourse and discrimination: Rhetorics of racism and antisemitism*. London: Routledge.
- Robinson, S. (2000) *Marked men, White Masculinity in Crisis*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Royce, N. (2000) *Deconstruction*. New York: Palgrave.
- Samson, J. (2005) *Race and Empire*. Malaysia: Pearson Longman.
- Sarich, V and Miele, F. (2004) *Race, the reality of human differences*. U.S.A: Westview Press.
- Sarup, M. (1989) *Post-Structuralism & Post-Modernism*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.
- Savile, A. (1992) *Psychoanalysis, Mind and Art*. Oxford: Blackwell Press.
- Schutte, G. (1995) *What Racists Believe*. U.S.A: Sage Publications.

- Slabbert, V. Z. (1999) *Tough Choices: Reflections of an Afrikaner African*. Cape Town: Tafelberg.
- Slater, D. (2004) *Geopolitics and the Post-Colonial*. Oxford: Blackwell publishing
- Stevens, G. (2007) Tactical reversal or re-centring whiteness? A response to Green, Sonn, and Matsebula. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 37, (3) pp. 425–430.
- Stewart, C. (2007) *Creolization*. U.S.A: Left Coast Press.
- Steyn, M. (1999) *White Identity in Context: A Personal Narrative*. In Thomas K. Nakayama and Judith N. Martin, (eds.), *Whiteness: The Communication of a Social Identity*. (p. 265). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Steyn, M. (2001) *Whiteness Just Isn't What It Used To Be*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Steyn, M. (2004) Rehabilitating a Whiteness Disgraced: Afrikaner White Talk in Post-Apartheid South Africa. *Communication Quarterly*, 52, (2) pp. 143-169.
- Steyn, M. (2005) White talk: White South Africans and the management of diasporic whiteness. In A. J. Lopez (Ed.), *Postcolonial whiteness: A critical reader on race and empire* (pp. 119–136). Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Steyn, M. (2007) As the postcolonial moment deepens: A response to Green, Sonn, and Matsebula. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 37,(3) pp. 420-424.
- Stryker, S. (1980) Political Protest Orientations Among Black and White Adults. *American Sociological Review*, 45, (2) pp. 191-213
- Sullivan, S. (2008) Royce and the Rehabilitation of a Racial Category. *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 44, (2) pp. 236-262.
- Tarrant, S. (2008) *Men Speak Out*. New York: Routledge.
- Taylor, G. (2005) *Buying Whiteness*. U.S.A: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Taylor, P, C. (2004) *Race, a philosophical introduction*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Vail, L. (Ed.). (1989) *The Creation of tribalism in Southern Africa*. London: James Currey.
- Valls, A. (2005) *Race and racism in modern philosophy*. Ithica: Cornell University.
- Vora, A. & Vora, E. (2004) The Effectiveness of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Perceptions of Xhosa, Afrikaner, and English South Africans. *Journal of Black Studies*, 34, (3) pp. 301-322.
- Werbner, P & Modood, T. (1997) *Debating Cultural Hybridity*. London: Zed Books.

Wicomb, Z. (2001). Five Afrikaner texts and the rehabilitation of whiteness. In R. E. Kriger (Ed.), *Culture in the New South Africa. After apartheid* (pp. 159-182). Cape Town: Kwela Books.

Williams, P & Chrisman, L. (1994) *Colonial Discourse & Post-Colonial Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Yancy, G. (2004) *What White looks like*. New York: Routledge.

Zegeye, A. (2001) *Social Identities in the New South Africa*. Cape Town: Kwela Books.

### **Online Resources**

Brewer, B, M. (2001) The Many Faces of Social Identity: Implications for Political Psychology. *Political Psychology*, 22, (1) pp. 115-125. [Online] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3791908> [19/08/2009 10:28]

Brunsma, D, L, and Rockquemore, K, A. (2002) Socially Embedded Identities: Theories, Typologies, and Processes of Racial Identity among Black/White Biracials. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 43, (3) pp. 335-356. [Online] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4121531> [19/08/2009 10:34]

Chapman, M. (1998) The Problem of Identity: South Africa, Storytelling, and Literary History. *New Literary History*, 29, (1) pp. 85-99. [Online] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20057469> [23/08/2009 10:08]

Corrigall, M. (no date). Crocodile Tears review. *Brett Murray* [Online] <http://www.brettmurray.co.za/essays-and-texts/mary-corrigalls-crocodile-tears-review/> [June 2009]

Dayal, S. (1996) Diaspora and Double Consciousness. *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association*, 29, (1) pp. 46-62. [Online] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1315257> [08/06/2008 07:45]

Epstein, D. (1998) Marked Men: Whiteness and Masculinity. *The New Man?*, (37) pp. 49-59. [Online] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4066174> [19/08/2009 10:34]

Erickson, P. (1995) Review: Seeing White. *Transition*, (67) pp. 166-185 Published [Online] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2935265> [24/09/2009 08:18]

Geers, K. (1996). White Boy Sings the Blues review. *Brett Murray* [Online] <http://www.brettmurray.co.za/essays-and-texts/kendell-geers-white-boy-sings-the-blues-review/> [June 2009]

Gilly, M, C, and Jensen Schau, H. (2003) We Are What We Post? Self-Presentation in Personal Web Space. *The Journal of Consumer Research*, 30, (3) pp. 385-404. [Online] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3132017> [06/11/2009 02:52]

Gray Sweeney, J. (1992) Racism, Nationalism, and Nostalgia in Cowboy Art. *Oxford Art Journal*, 15 (1) pp. 67-80. [Online] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1360489> [06/11/2009 03:03]

Keating, A. L. (1995) Interrogating "Whiteness," (De)Constructing "Race". *College English*, 57, (8) pp. 901-918. [Online] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/378620> [19/08/2009 10:35]

Kenny, K. (2003) Diaspora and Comparison: The Global Irish as a Case Study. *The Journal of American History*, 90, (1) pp. 134-162. [Online] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3659794> [22/09/2009 16:04]

Mbembe, A. (2001) Ways of Seeing: Beyond the New Nativism. *African Studies Review*, 44, (2) pp. 1-14. [Online] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/525572> [29/10/2009 15:27]

Meskell, L. (2005) Recognition, Restitution and the Potentials of Postcolonial Liberalism for South African Heritage. *The South African Archaeological Bulletin*, 60, (182) pp. 72-78. [Online] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3889120> [29/10/2009 15:08]

Murray, B. (1997). Guilt and Innocence catalogue text. *Brett Murray* [Online] <http://www.brettmurray.co.za/essays-and-texts/brett-murrays-guilt-and-innocence-catalogue-text/> [June 2009]

Murray, B. (2002). Notes from the White Like Me catalogue text. *Brett Murray* [Online] <http://www.brettmurray.co.za/essays-and-texts/brett-murrays-notes-from-the-white-like-me-catalogue/> [June 2009]

Nuttall, S. (2001) Subjectivities of Whiteness. *African Studies Review*, 22, (2) pp. 115-140. [Online] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/525577> [19/08/2009 10:31]

O'Toole, S. (2005). Brett Murray's Dark Comedy. *Brett Murray* [Online] <http://www.brettmurray.co.za/essays-and-texts/brett-murrays-dark-comedy-sean-o-tooles-essay/> [June 2009]

Pissarra, M. (no date). Mario Pissarra essay. *Brett Murray* [Online] <http://www.brettmurray.co.za/essays-and-texts/mario-pissaras-essay/> [June 2009]

Posel, D. (2001) Race as Common Sense: Racial Classification in Twentieth-Century South Africa. *African Studies Review*, 44, (2) pp. 87-113. [Online] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/525576> [19/08/2009 10:42]

Seidman, G. (1999) Is South Africa Different? Sociological Comparisons and Theoretical Contributions from the Land of Apartheid. *Annual Review of Sociology*, (25) pp. 419-440. [Online] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/223511> [06/06/2008 10:24]

Shaman, S, S. (no date). Crocodile Tears review. *Brett Murray* [Online] <http://www.brettmurray.co.za/essays-and-texts/sanford-s-shamans-crocodile-tears-review/> [June 2009]

- Smedley, A. (1998) "Race" and the Construction of Human Identity. *American Anthropologist*, New Series, 100, (3) pp. 690-702. [Online]  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/682047> [06/11/2009 12:33]
- Smith, M. (2006). Sleep Sleep Review. *Brett Murray* [Online] Available:  
<http://www.brettmurray.co.za/essays-and-texts/michael-smiths-sleep-sleep-review/>  
 [June 2009]
- Sullivan, R, E. (2005) Review: Social Theory, Psychoanalysis, and Racism by Simon Clarke. *Contemporary Sociology*, 34, (2) pp. 139-140. [Online]  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4147175> [07/11/2009 07:54]
- Terretta, M. (2002) Reviewed work(s): On the Postcolony by Achille Mbembe. *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 36, (1) pp. 161-163 [Online]  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4107414> [15/10/2009 09:20]
- Thurman, C. (2009). Crocodile Tears review. *Brett Murray* [Online]  
<http://www.brettmurray.co.za/essays-and-texts/chris-thurmans-crocodile-tears-review/>  
 [June 2009]
- Vestergaard, M. (2001) Who's Got the Map? The Negotiation of Afrikaner Identities in Post-Apartheid South Africa. *Daedalus*, 130, (1) pp. 19-44. [Online]  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20027678> [23/08/2009 09:51]

**List of works by Brett Murray** (in the order they appear in the text)

- Bubble Head: Underpants.*** (2002) page 10. [online]  
<http://www.brettmurray.co.za/work/white-like-me/> [June 2009]
- Dance Routine of The White Male Psyche.*** (2000) page 17. [Online]  
<http://www.brettmurray.co.za/work/i-love-africa/> [June 2009]
- Bureaucrat.*** (1985/9) page 23. [Online]  
<http://www.brettmurray.co.za/work/masters-work/> [June 2009]
- Guilt, Memory and Identity.*** (2000) page 32. [Online]  
<http://www.brettmurray.co.za/work/i-love-africa/> [June 2009]
- Artist: Self-Portrait.*** (1985/9) page 33. [Online]  
<http://www.brettmurray.co.za/work/i-love-africa/> [June 2009]
- New Beginnings: The Artist.*** (2006) page 34. [Online]  
<http://www.brettmurray.co.za/work/new-beginnings/> [June 2009]
- The Renaissance Man Tending his Land.*** (2008) page 35. [Online]  
<http://www.brettmurray.co.za/work/crocodile-tears/> [June 2009]

*African Parts*. (2002) page 37. [Online] <http://www.brettmurray.co.za/work/white-like-me/> [June 2009]

*White Africans*. (2002) page 38. [Online] <http://www.brettmurray.co.za/work/white-like-me/> [June 2009]

*Mediated Morality*. (2006) page 40. [Online] <http://www.brettmurray.co.za/work/golden-truths/> [June 2009]

*God*. (2001) page 41. [Online] <http://www.brettmurray.co.za/work/hero/> [June 2009]

*W.A.S.P Cry for a Place in the Sun*. (2008) page 43. [Online] <http://www.brettmurray.co.za/work/crocodile-tears/> [June 2009]

*Tribal Elders*. (2002) page 46. [Online] <http://www.brettmurray.co.za/work/white-like-me/> [June 2009]

*Identity*. (1995) page 48. [Online] <http://www.brettmurray.co.za/work/scurvy/> [June 2009]

*Policeman*. (1985/9) page 51. [Online] <http://www.brettmurray.co.za/work/masters-work/> [June 2009]

*Heritage: Artifacts*. (1992) page 54. [Online] <http://www.brettmurray.co.za/work/heritage/> [June 2009]

*Heritage: Corruption*. (1992) page 55. [Online] <http://www.brettmurray.co.za/work/heritage/> [June 2009]

*Heritage: Memory and Tears*. (1992) page 56. [Online] <http://www.brettmurray.co.za/work/heritage/> [June 2009]

*Sell*. (1995) page 58. [Online] <http://www.brettmurray.co.za/work/scurvy/> [June 2009]

*Warrior*. (1995) page 60. [Online] <http://www.brettmurray.co.za/work/scurvy/> [June 2009]

*The Artist as a Zulu, aged 6*. (1996) page 62. [Online] <http://www.brettmurray.co.za/work/white-boy-sings-the-blues/> [June 2009]

*Black Like Me: Colonel Sanders*. (1996) page 63. [Online] <http://www.brettmurray.co.za/work/white-boy-sings-the-blues/> [June 2009]

*Land*. (1996) page 65. [Online] <http://www.brettmurray.co.za/work/white-boy-sings-the-blues/> [June 2009]

*Guilt and Innocence*. (1997) page 66. [Online] <http://www.brettmurray.co.za/work/guilt-and-innocence/> [June 2009]



***Protect and Serve.*** (2000) page 69. [Online] <http://www.brettmurray.co.za/work/i-love-africa/> [June 2009]

***The Shack as Metaphor.*** (2004) page 70. [Online] <http://www.brettmurray.co.za/work/i-love-africa/> [June 2009]

***Us and Them.*** (2001) page 72. [Online] <http://www.brettmurray.co.za/work/hero/> [June 2009]

***New Beginnings: The President.*** (2006) page 74. [Online] <http://www.brettmurray.co.za/work/new-beginnings/> [June 2009]

***Religious Narcissism.*** (2006) page 75. [Online] <http://www.brettmurray.co.za/work/sleep-sleep/> [June 2009]

***Gorilla.*** (2005/06) page 76. [Online] <http://www.brettmurray.co.za/work/sleep-sleep/> [June 2009]

***Little Pig.*** (2005/06) page 77. [Online] <http://www.brettmurray.co.za/work/sleep-sleep/> [June 2009]

***They're here!.*** (2005/6) page 79. [Online] <http://www.brettmurray.co.za/work/sleep-sleep/> [June 2009]

***I Am An African Too.*** (2008) page 80. [Online] <http://www.brettmurray.co.za/work/crocodile-tears/> [June 2009]

***Let Them Eat Pap!.*** (2008) page 82. [Online] <http://www.brettmurray.co.za/work/crocodile-tears/> [June 2009]

## Appendix: Brett Murray September 2009 interview transcription

Ross Passmoor: How would you describe your own ethnicity, if at all?

Brett Murray: Ja, if at all? If I'd want to? I don't know, I think, I think, I'm a human being first and then I'm male and then I'm in South Africa and then I'm white. So it's very difficult, I mean I think in the context if someone tells me in South Africa or anywhere, if someone demands of me that I am an African, I'll sort of kick and scream and say I'm not, and if someone tells me you are an African, I'll kick and scream and say I'm not, or whatever, I'll take the apposing view. You know if someone demands of me to be something, or your identity is your whiteness, I'll say no it's not and if they demand of me that my identity isn't my whiteness, I'll take the contrary position. I think that ambivalence about my ethnicity is sort of constant. Although I mean pragmatically I'm a white South African with sort of heritage that's half Afrikaans, half English, but now that you can kind of do DNA swabbing, we've found that you know we're all from the same stock, so we are all African, across the world.

Time elapsed - 03:24

I find it quite difficult to pigeon hole. And also I suppose it's coming out of the eighties and coming out of the whole Verwoerdian, you know, own affairs, everything is compartmentalized according to race. My default setting is to steer clear of those kind of rigid definitions. So it's not a question I'd like to answer, but I know from the outside I am a white South African, speaks English although my father was Afrikaans, you know, face value. But within that kind of ethnic divide, the nationalism that comes with those kinds of ethnic groupings and divides, that's why wars have been perpetuated and fought across the centuries. So it's kind of (groan) on the one hand yes, that's what I look like, but on the other hand I'm, you know. And also in my own work I don't want to pretend to be a spokes person for any ethnicity, because I am one person who has had my own experiences and my work is going to reflect that. And hopefully people from across the board in terms of ethnic groupings, if you want to sort of go with that, will be able to follow and understand and get an understanding of

what I am within those dialogues and not necessarily make a judgement call that I am that because I am white, or that's my voice because of such and such. So it's a tricky area that you are in and also as South Africans. It's tricky on the one hand, but that is our ethnicity, that kind of weird fucked-upness. We are all a bit of everything. There are eleven languages. You have parallel experiences that touch each other, from a rural person in the eastern cape to a person in the city, living in the same country, but completely different contexts, but in South Africa. We are both South African, that person and myself, sitting here, but that's what makes up the dynamic of who we are. That there are all these kinds of contradictions, and that's what makes it interesting being a South African, for me.

6:24

RP: You have spoken about ethnic ambivalence and not wanting to be placed in a box, but often in your work, as seen in exhibition titles like 'White boy Sings the blues' and 'White like Me' and much of your iconography uses the discourse of 'race', how do you negotiate this without compartmentalizing different groups and essentialising 'race'?

BM: I think the audience needs to negotiate that. I mean obviously I think about it, I'm conscious of it, but the reason that I make things is because I can't really articulate what those positions are intellectually necessarily, verbally. So I might in retrospect be able to kind of see oh that's maybe why I was making that, but when you are in the process of doing it, it's quite an organic process, you are shifting around images and Ideas, going down dead ends, then you see something on T.V., so you go down that route. So it's quite organic, it's not a conscious negotiation through the kind of mine fields of ideologies. It's more tentative, a little bit more probing with obviously a broader consciousness of the context that you are dealing with South Africa and you are dealing with those kinds of things. And say for the thing 'white boy sings the blues' that title came from, because I was quite active in the eighties, sort of printing posters and doing things. Sort of doing poster designs and logo design and sting up t-shirt printing place that printed shirts for the UDF and unions, that was sort of my day job. But also being a white south African, and the class of whites was obviously quite privileged, within the context of pre-94. I was involved in all these

processes, apart from doing my own work, I was involved in all these kinds of processes but it always felt like it was from a position of luxury, that I could engage in these processes, so it was quite self critical. Hence the title 'white boy sings the blues', who am I to sing the blues, what is my voice within this? So in that way, with the title of that bunch of sculptures, I wanted to identify that contradiction within the work that I was doing and within myself. Obviously consciousness of what's happening around you and wanting to discuss it and relate to it and talk about it and make stuff about it, but also in the broader context identify that it comes from a position of privilege. I suppose a lot of my stuff, or often the stuff that I do, the satirical stuff, often for me is more interesting, because satire, there's always a target of satire. You kind of throw stones and you want to get like minded people around you and identify a target and ridicule that target, whether softly or hard, or whether it's through parody, or whether it's through a one liner, which just cuts them down, or slapstick. There are various levels of satire, and through using all of them you can identify a target out there. What I try and do, or what I have realized, it's not a conscious thing over the last while. What I have realized what I do is to kind of soften the didactic nature of satire, where you kind of have the moral high ground and you are pointing fingers at the targets out there, but I actually am both the person who satirizes and who is being satirized. So I place myself firmly within the context of that which is being satirized. Again there is that kind of ambivalence of author and target. It's not necessarily judgemental, or it could be, but I'm looking at myself.

12:00

So Like an exhibition like 'white like me', when I did that, that I suppose came from, it was a moment in time, can't say when it was, like 2000. But pre-94, with the stuff that I was doing, while I was doing my masters. That stuff was obviously, the targets that were out there were quite obvious, it was the white regime, it was patriarchy, the army, religion, police and the violence of the system. So there was a position of goodness and badness, I identified myself with this has got to shift and change and those were the targets out there. So the satire was quite focused and in a sense quite obvious.

13:00

Post-94, then there was a kind of blurring of boundaries and it gave a lot of artists and poets and writers and authors across the colour spectrum, but sort of white south Africans as well an opportunity to internalize, so that the landscape that you were looking isn't out there actually. You are looking at your own identity, memory, histories and notions of self and who you are, within this kind of interesting and fucked up context. There was a lot of internalizing of those kinds of debates. Some work I did relate to those kinds of processes, that's why in white boy sings the blues, that kind of head, I just used the motif of the head. Whether it was looking at the TRC process which was happening at the time, or whether it was looking at comic vengeance or sort of that thing. Colonel Saunders, where you have disjunctures, cultural disjunctures being sort of welded together with hopefully amusing effect, but quite critically as well. Then the other more formal images, of the profiles of the heads, with fans and hidden stories and books. So that's why I used the kind of head, as a kind of an internalizing, what I spoke about before, where the external became the internal.

14:52

But then with 'white like me', what kick started that, I suppose around the time, before hand I had made a work, that work actually (Dance routine of the White Male psyche), for another group of things around that Bart sculpture (Africa) that I did. I can't remember what it said, dance routine of the white male psyche, where the head is slightly. So the focus had shifted, eventually, the focus is not the white male patriarch.

But for the White like me show, that was a kind of a work that sort made me start thinking about taking the piss out of white identity. And then also within that, there was another work related. And so I started of, and I also saw a huge west African guy with a t-shirt 'black like me' which is the hair gel product, and those works (colonel Saunders etc..) were called black like me. So I thought why not use the premise of a show called 'white like me' and see the kind of ambivalence of the proudness of the identity of being white similar, compared to the proudness of an identity of being black, you know 'black like me'. And I sort of made a t-shirt actually, but it (the logo)

was tiny and said 'white like me', it was that sort of, it was exactly (white like me cover design) but much smaller. I was prepared to do the show called 'white like me', but the t-shirt was tiny and kind of apologetic, kind of proud, but not. And then most of those works were gonna be, I was gonna use a lot of comics, from New-Yorker magazines. It was gonna be two guys at a bar, which is like a standard one liner motif, of two white guys at a bar, just talking about the weirdness of this country, and beginning to deconstruct notions of identity, notions of psychological sense of place, notions of otherness, notions of lack of ethnicity, or a kind of a tribal identity, in a country where it is kind of forced on you to have those kinds of identity.

18:55

Where as someone like Zuma could say that only Afrikaners are Africans, because of that kind of identity and those kinds of racist notions as well. It was just going to be two guys, articulated differently, but then I made two of the white guys at a bar then I started making other things. Using the comic as a one liner comic as the unifying motif.

RP: Are there any specific reasons for your choice of the 'New-Yorker' Style comic?

19:45

BM: That, I mean, I quite like the, I've been a fan of Handelsman and there's a whole lot of guys, mostly men. I just like the kind of 60's nostalgia. That's a guy called Saxon, who originally drew that one (Man Praying). There was a competition, even in the New-Yorker there was a competition. The new Yorker mag, in Pretoria and in the cape times, there was a competition where they would provide you with an image and the reader would comment, to see who could get the funniest comment. So I was using that as a starting point. I didn't want to, I like the New-Yorker, I like the style of that. There's a kind of anonymity and a kind of weirdness, a sentimentality and nostalgia, in the way they draw things and it did seem to reflect a kind of white experience, even in this context. It wasn't conscious though, I wasn't talking about American culture, it was just useful icons that I could steal.

21:06

RP: With of your steel cut out works, you also make prints of them.

BM: Sometimes, Ja

RP: Now, why not just make prints, or do you have an attachment to your medium?

BM: Ja, I think it is that, I mean I enjoy doing the metal stuff, I enjoy the physicality of that. In the context of these works, I quite enjoyed the, coz these are normally throw away one liners in a magazine, and I quite liked the contradiction of having these monumentalized, these Ideas that are sort of thrown away. Hopefully because of the text in them they become a bit more redolent and resonant of something a little bit richer and stronger than a kind of throw away idea. To have as these kind of heavy, because most of these metal ones are quite bulky, awkward, heavy, sort of grandiose articulations. Almost like huge tombstones of an idea.

22:16

I often grapple with that, because I think the nature of a satirist and the kinds of area that I'm dealing with. Is that I'm wanting to kind of reach as large an audience as possible. Some like Zapiro, who's a friend of mine, he's got such a huge audience. Sometimes I wish that my processes involved being on the streets and more within the popular culture realm. The fine arts realm is quite rarefied and the audience is growing, but it's quite small. It's just how I've landed up articulating my ideas and enjoying the materials and process, because it's also about the therapy of thinking about things and making it and doing it and carving it, there's kind of a therapeutic process in that. Sometimes I wish that, all of those I could make posters of and prints of and just put them out in the streets, make huge prints of them, like banksy I suppose.

23:33

You know and do that, and that is a kind of a contradiction that I know within my work, because you reach a larger audience. Often my ideas are kind of current, so they

may not necessarily stand up to the ravages of time, in terms of how they resonate down the line, the less effective ones, hopefully the more effective ones will have a kind of longevity. But ja, I mean I, I would feel far more comfortable with a massive audience, to reach a massive audience.

RP: So do you have ambitions to change this?

BM: Not really, I mean I'll see what happens. At the end of every exhibition, I often think, well now I'm going to do those street posters. In the eighties we did, well there are a couple of things, but we did with in reaction to, sort of, like that was something that we worked on ( 6 panel, screen-print, of Thabo Mbeki), so we did like a, one, two, three, six piece, like three colour print. So we just went out and bunged them up and I liked that immediateness of doing stuff, but now I want to do it with my ideas. You know we did a lot of them, instant posters, responding to what was happening, and you reach a huge audience and it's quite anarchic. Which is what I kind of enjoy. So I do battle with that, and every now and again I think fuck I should just start making silk screens, big silk screens, then I sort of get round to, no, I'm gonna make a sculpture, the I sort of. I work in a language that I'm familiar with.

25:46

RP: In the late eighties, your work dealt with what you have called the obvious targets. From there you seemed to move into questions of identity, the self and other. What happens now?

BM: Well now it's fun again. Now the playing fields are supposedly level, but they're still not, obviously. The mistakes of the past are being repeated by the new elite. There is absolutely no difference between the two elites, absolutely none. The colour of the skin and for me that is not a difference, that's a class issue. Now the new elite are just as corrupt as the past. As someone who is politically conscious, having been brought up in the eighties, that's my default position, to take the piss out of what I see to be wrong. I just, I don't like someone, my language is the visual language and I'll make a go of it. The Targets, they just present themselves. You just watch the 7 o'clock news and the targets just. Being a satirist in this country is actually quite an



easy job, it's like shooting fish in a barrel, it's easy, you'll get someone, you'll get something. There was a moment sort of post ninety four, the kind of euphoria of the Madiba years and all that, but that's long ago. So I mean my default position is to throw stones, like a klip gooier. Sometimes I wish. Do I wish? No I don't, I mean I think I wish I drew landscapes, drawn some flowers or something not obscure, but something that's not sort of socially driven or socially conscious, but that's who I am so I've given up that fight.

28:10

So post-94, kind of a satirist, if that's how I want to describe myself. It's free game, the targets are out there, so it's not going to shift. Interestingly enough those volumetric sculptures (sleep sleep) those kind of works are stuff that I was doing in the eighties. My masters stuff, those kind of volumetric things about power and the abuses of power. Similarly the stuff I'm doing now, now it's in bronze, then it was in resin, are about the same kinds of things. The next bunch of stuff I'm actually taking images from the eighties and posters that I worked on and kind of facilitated, in the struggle and I'm just inverting it, because the ideals that we were hoping for then, have been absolutely unrealized. So I'm using the icons from those times and I'm going to turn them into images like for example (gets print showing workers with text : tell my people that I love them and that they must continue the struggle for Mercedes, Jack Daniels etc...), the original was up to there "tell my people that I love them and that they must continue the struggle. So it's fair game. It's relooking at those kinds of icons, that's just what I feel like doing at the moment. It's also a kind of therapeutic process for me, coz I kind of sit and boil watching the TV and it needs an outlet, so that's the outlet. Maybe its got to do with, I had a kind of obnoxious father, you know, there's a kind of father figure that I disliked, so maybe that's why I don't like figures of authority. I don't know, but that's who I am, it needs a kind of release.

30:50

RP: 'Race' as a topic in your work must be a difficult concept to portray without coming across as a racist.

BM: No it's difficult, I mean, I think having travelled a little bit, and notions of race and racial identity in South Africa. South Africans are quite unashamedly upfront about being able to articulate, even sort of pre-94 issues of race. It was the struggle, that's sort of what it was about, although it was actually about class, but its ostensibly about race. So we talk about it and we are open about it and we shout about it, whether it's from a sort of hardcore fascist right wing point of view or from a liberal point of view or a Marxist point of view or whatever. It's stuff that gets chatted about, we openly discuss these things. If you go to America and if you go anywhere else, race, people pussy foot around it, they are very cautious around issues of being kind of politically correct when talking about race. That's why a lot of south African stand up comics at the moment, those issues are just, everyone deals with it, it's out there.

RP: Do you think there is a connection between the apartheid system of hierarchically structured race groups and the present?

BM: I'm not sure, I think it's another subject that's fair game, talking about race. Trying to define who you are in the broader context, if you filter it down to it's essence it might be about colour, or notions of identity, or fighting notions of identity about colour. I wouldn't necessarily say that my stuff is, I'm fighting against it. So I'm dealing with it, but I'm also fighting against it, so there's a kind of a contradiction, a kind of ambivalence. You kind of touch on it as you go along, but it's not the all encompassing driving force of what I do. It was a moment in time in where I did those kinds of things, which I certainly wouldn't do now. Then it was because there was a sense of post-94, white artists, now I'm generalizing hopelessly, but bear with me. There was a sense that you had to step off the podium, to hear other voices. Which was essential, on the one hand, for those shifts to take place, But those days are over. Those shifts have taken place, I'll fight for any platform I have to have my voice heard and I'm not embarrassed about it. If someone wants to say, 'you got your platform because your white', whatever. I'm going to do what I do as best as I can, I'm going to articulate the weirdness of this place from my perspective. If someone wants to define that as being a white perspective, then they are totally lost. My view is not your view, it certainly wasn't my fathers view or the guy down the roads. It's not a white view, it's my view. What's interesting now is that before hand there was often a racial divide between those views, now there isn't.

38:00

I'm reading a great book by Mbeki's brother, called 'the architects of poverty, and he is scathing about this new bunch. He's basically saying they are colonialist, the new elite are absolutely, they have perpetuated everything, they are absolute colonialists and that's not a white voice. Beforehand you could get away with calling that a white liberal voice, it aint. So those kinds of divisions are being totally blurred. You can get a fascist white guy, you can get a fascist black guy, you can get a liberal white and a liberal. So those definitions are beginning to hold less and less water, in terms of defining who you are, and also as an individual. I don't speak on behalf of anybody, if I choose to reference my cultural ethnicity or whiteness in works here and there, well that's an aspect of what I do and that's because I want to do it and I'll do it. If someone says that's who you are because you are white, I'll fight it kicking and screaming, but if somebody says the opposite I'll also fight that kicking and screaming, because that's my ambivalence to it all.

RP: Although you don't want to be placed in a box, the interpretations of your audience may do that, do you feel any pressure of expectations, or do you make your work solely for yourself?

BM: I don't think so, no, I don't think so. There are a lot of white artists who aren't dealing with what I'm dealing with. There are a lot of black artists who are and a lot of black artists who aren't. It's a free for all. The interesting thing about post-94, because I was lecturing over that period, is that the younger artists now, there is a freedom. Before hand there wasn't, your work was either socially engaged or you were a sell-out. If you did landscape painting or modernist architecture or if you did that, it was like, are you fucking out of your mind, that's so indulgent, so bourgeois, it was a wank basically. That was the hardcore position, because there was a war going out there, there were battles to be fought, although it was an incorrect thing and an incorrect assumption at the time, that's what was going on. There wasn't a freedom, although there were pockets of people who were just you know, fuck it we're just going to do it. It was a political decision that you made not to make political work, you had to fight up against something. Now post-94 the younger batch of artists, there

is a freedom, you can or you can't, you want to or you don't want to. You've got to celebrate that, and that's great. I mean what the fuck, apartheid, it was so long ago, you've got kids that have gone through school entirely in a liberated context, on paper a liberated context and that's great.

42:00