I Paint Therefore I Am?
An Exploration of Contemporary Bushman Art in South Africa and Its Development Potential

By

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Declaration

I, Shanade Barnabas, hereby declare that this dissertation is my own original work, and has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university. The sources used have been duly acknowledged. This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfilment of the Master of Arts degree in Culture, Communication and Media Studies in the Faculty of Humanities at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa.

Signature _____   Date: _____

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Philippians 4:13

Dedication

For Flai (1954-2009).

Abstract

In this research the contemporary art of the !Xun community in Platfontein, Kimberley is used as a case study to ascertain whether contemporary Bushman art, contrary to the mid-nineteenth century perception that it was child-like, and the present-day sense that it belongs to the past, is based on recognisable aesthetic principles. A functional-semiotic approach is applied, which takes the signs in painting, separates and categorises them in order to locate a painting's iconic, indexical and symbolic signs. This analysis is done to assess whether or not contemporary Bushman art can be validated as a valuable area of contemporary art and whether creative individuals among the !Xun community may be viewed not as relics of a past people but as legitimate contemporary artists. This argument is revealed through post-structuralist analysis of the individual artworks of two particular !Xun artists.

Interviews with !Xun artists uncovered the ways in which they represent themselves in their art, not only for themselves but for the viewers of that art. The constituents of the power relations between art dealers and the artists are also considered. The problematics of 'authentic Bushman art' is discussed and 'authenticity' in this regard is shown to be a contestable issue. The research then moves to an examination of the impact of modernity on the Bushmen and their art. Mindful of the economic exploitation of these artists in the present day, recommendations are made concerning forms of development which include teaching the artists about art markets, in order to empower them to engage effectively with dealers. Further recommendations are made toward the creation of a code of conduct which would apply to indigenous arts and the relationships between artists, dealers and consumers of the art.

The fieldwork site

Figure 1: Map adapted from (http://www.bdb.co.za/kimberley/climate.htm)

A note on usage and pronunciation

When discussing the !Xun artists I have used their full names in the first instance and their first names thereafter. I have done so out of a sense of warmth and friendship and because they are recognised in their community by their first names. Vernacular names used in this dissertation are: !Xun, Khwe (pronounced as written), ≠Khomani, !Xoo, and N//aoh Djao.

The '!' is a cerebral click.
> "An alveopalatal or palatal stop, produced by pulling the tip of the tongue sharply away from the front hard palate. When made with lips rounded, it sounds rather like a cork popping from a wine bottle".

The '≠' is an alveolar click.
> "An alveolar stop, produced by pulling the blade of the tongue sharply away from the alveolar ridge, immediately behind the teeth".

The '//' is a lateral affricate.
> "Produced by placing the tip of the tongue on the roof of the mouth…and releasing air on one side of the mouth between the side of the tongue and the cheek. More simply, the clicking sound film cowboys use…to make their horses go".

Adapted from *Specimens of Bushman Folklore* (sacred-texts.com) and Barnard (1992:xix).

List of acronyms used

CCMS   –   Culture, Communication and Media Studies

CMC   –   Computer Mediated Communication

CPA   –   Communal Property Association

KTP   –   Kalahari Transfrontier Park

NGO   –   Non-Governmental Organisation

SADF   –   South African Defence Force

SAHRC   –   South African Human Rights Commission

SASI   –   South African San Institute (pronounced SÄ-SĒ)

In-text referencing:

[np] – no page

[nd] – no date

NOTE:

Titles of paintings have been considered complete works and are italicised in this dissertation.

Punctuating the primitive

In *The Death of Authentic Primitive Art and Other Tales of Progress* (1998), Shelly Errington begins with a note on usage that describes her reasons for capitalising certain words and phrases. Errington states that this is meant to alert the reader to the voice (in that instance) which is not her own but that of an organisation or institution in discussion (1998:xxvii). She goes on to qualify her use of quotation marks in the first instance of terms such as 'authentic primitive art', reminding the reader that these categories are constructed, ephemeral and possibly changing (1998:xxvii). I found that I have used punctuation in my own work to make the same point.

Although other writers use 'Bushman' without capitalisation, I have consistently capitalised the term, especially after an interview with a !Xun artist, Freciano Ndala, who emotively declared: "I'm already a Bushman, I will not change … other people thought we were baboons, that's why they called us Bushmen, I'm a real Bushman, I'm not a baboon" (Interview, Platfontein, October, 2008). I am aware, however, that the use of the term 'Bushman', as well as an article before it, is an implication of a communal unity not always present.

Language and usages, it seems, "are but special instances in which self-assertion, imposition, subjugation and other forms of human alienation manifest themselves" (Fabian, 2002:86). These linguistic idiosyncrasies are a constant stumbling block to those striving to voice their subjects in ways that avoid stereotype and myth. Perhaps the best way to engage with this is in open discussion of these struggles in the context of our writings.

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The contemporary Bushman[1] artist has recourse to ancient knowledge and his or her emotive imagery evokes the spirits in memory; he or she is therefore the seer, the visionary, the prophet, the poet and philosopher. The contemporary artist is equipped to become the new shaman. The dominant theory of interpreting early Bushman art assumes that the Bushman artists of old were first and foremost shamans, who saw images while in a state of trance and who, once they came out of the trance, went on to reproduce those images on cave walls (see Lewis-Williams 1981, Lewis-Williams and Dowson 1989, and Lewis-Williams and Pearce 2004). Contemporary Bushman artists may be seen as artists first, who, in evoking the imagery of the past, function as shamans activating their own spiritual potency, perhaps not in trance dancing or hallucinations but in voicing themselves as a people fully present in modern society while remaining connected to their past. Contemporary Bushman art may be used as a platform for this articulation of identity, a possibility which will be discussed at length in this dissertation.

My research highlights the power relations between artists, dealers and NGOs involved with contemporary Bushman art as these power relations affect the construction of the artists' identities. The ensuing exploration has recourse to the artists' own words in identifying whether or not they differentiate between themselves as artists and the rest of their community. Moreover, my research questions whether these artists are embracing aspects of a superimposed culture or whether they are (re)defining[2] their existence via the act of painting. Established ideas about contemporary Bushman art (based on stereotype and myth[3]) are also questioned. My background in art, which involved studies in art history and drawing as an area of practice, has provided a framework within which to begin an analysis of the art.

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[1] I am aware of the naming debate between 'Bushman' and 'San': that each established term carries its own, at times pejorative, meaning. This, as well as my use of the term 'Bushman', will be discussed at length in Chapter Four.
[2] I have used brackets instead of a dash in certain instances to highlight that the action in that instance is not merely one of re-doing but also of newly creating.
[3] When discussing myth in this dissertation I refer to it in the semiotic sense wherein "myth refers to recurring themes, icons and stereotypes which claim common recognition within a cultural group with a shared ideology" (Tomaselli, 1999:66).

In general, contemporary Bushman art is viewed as a tool of development, an income generator related to tourism, as well as to more remote connoisseurs whose interests are served via dealers who interact with the artists. While development is both legitimate and beneficial to indigenous communities, it may also work to lock the art, artist and represented community within the dominant Bushman image, which is often a variant of the 'noble savage'. I believe that viewing the art as 'art', potentially on a par with contemporary art in other idioms, produced in other communities, is a step towards changing perceptions of the art, artist and represented communities. This should begin a conversation which can release the artists and their communities from limiting ideas of what it means to be Bushman. Thereafter we might look at the art (from our changed perspective) in relation to its function as a tool of development and find that it has become that much more beneficial to the community in which it was made.

The extreme case of exploitation of the Platfontein artists (Platfontein being the 'community' of this study) will be highlighted, and recommendations will be made toward rectifying this abuse. The implementation of a code of conduct related to the indigenous arts will be explored as a long-term plan to help protect indigenous artists and craftspeople from exploitation as well as to serve dealers and consumers. A series of workshops will be proposed as an immediate plan to educate the artists concerning the art industry in an effort to curtail exploitation. The impact of the romantic primitivist perspective on development in this community (and others like it) will be examined, along with the failure of the !Xun and Khwe Art Project as well as various other factors affecting development in Platfontein. Basing the discussion on my own experiences as a researcher (and 'outsider') working in this community, I examine the different paradigms at work in Platfontein, highlighting the ways in which this community's worldview sometimes resists development endeavours communicated via initiatives that are specifically western.

Affects of the field

In October 2008, I visited Platfontein, a settlement roughly two kilometres outside of Kimberley. The Bushmen of Platfontein live in small, two-roomed Reconstruction and Development (RDP) houses, with outside drop-toilets and a single tap in the yard. The !Xun[4] are formerly from Angola, the Khwe, from Caprivi and Angola (Robins, [nd]:2). Having served in the South

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[4] This variation of the spelling incorporates an 'n', while the other variation *!Xu* does not. The spelling used in this dissertation is the one preferred by my respondents.

African Defence Force (SADF) in the Namibian War, they were relocated to Schmidtsdrift (approximately 71 kilometres west of Kimberley) in 1990, and established in what became known as "the San 'Tent Dorp'" (Kleinbooi, 2007:3; see also Douglas 1996, Robins [nd], Swart 2004, and White 1995). In 1992, the Batlhaping, the original owners of the land, lodged a land claim. In response to this, the !Xun and Khwe together with the Kleinfonteintjie community (another group occupying the land at the time) lodged a counter-claim. The Batlhaping regarded the Bushmen as "invaders on land they felt rightfully belonged to them"; further tensions erupted when the Bushmen, who were known to operate as hunter-gatherers, were "accused of hunting game belonging to the Batlhaping"; and "stealing their livestock" (Kleinbooi, 2007:8). In a relocation that took roughly six years to finalise, the Bushmen were eventually awarded financial compensation enabling them to acquire alternative land, and in 1999 Platfontein was purchased.

The Platfontein artists make up only a small percentage of the community. Having viewed some of their art early in my research I had formulated what, in retrospect, I recognise as condescending ideas about the art. I had understood it merely as copies of a mythologised past. My professor insisted that my interpretation was too literal; remarking that my previous paper on Bushman identity lacked a sense of immediacy. It was only when I visited the artists that I realised my work had lacked the empirical experience of "being there"[5]. Overlooking the "iconic encounter", I had moved into the "indexical", as Tomaselli (1999) calls it, having written about the Bushmen without an initial encounter. Once I had 'been there', my analysis changed.

I am reminded here of Clifford Geetz's quip that anthropologists convince their readers of the seriousness of their work by persuading them via the 'been there' quality of the research (1988:4-5). Geetz remarks that anthropologists struggle with objectivity even in a single text, vacillating between insensitivity and impressionism, both of which, he suggests, lead to ethnocentrism (1988:10). Romanticisation could be considered the third element of this struggle. Perhaps all three of these struggles do not lead to, but are rather born out of ethnocentric thought. These problematic possibilities must be recognised as the dangers inherent in my own position as researcher, outsider, tourist, and at times (ethnocentric?) philanthropist. Meeting the artists challenged my previous perspective; the change was set in motion when I furtively asked the age

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[5] See Watson (1999) and Tomaselli's (1999) Table of Phaneroscopy for more on "being there".

of one of my respondents. His retort was "*oud genoeg*" (Dikuanga interview, Platfontein, October 2008). Indeed he was 'old enough', and like the rest of the artists I interviewed he spoke of the art being passed down to him by his forefathers; many spoke of their fathers and grandfathers who had taught them how to draw. They remembered life as young boys living 'traditionally' in the country of their birth, seeing their fathers hunt and their mothers gather. These were not the 'counterfeit' Bushmen I had imagined, neither were they sly image creators bent on profiting from imitative images. They were old men, with honest and vivid memories of a past containing characteristic experiences and art forms.

As Tomaselli relates, the immediacy of the interaction, the depth of the intercultural encounters, and the empathy which develops from being touched by the experience, "fundamentally changes not only [the researcher's] perception of who and what was previously the Other, but also of the way that textualism insists on the binary relationship of researcher and researched" (2005:136). I had found myself at a crossroads, either I could continue with a critical analysis of the 'text' (the art produced by the Platfontein artists) despite all that I had learnt in the field or I could write from this new perspective and risk being labelled 'sentimental'. Having sat in the artists' homes and listened to their life stories, I have chosen the latter. I will gladly take the risk, if only for the impact their stories have had on me. It is not my intention, however, to legitimise my fieldwork via emotional reference points – as Johannes Fabian laments (2002:93-4). My zeal for this community emanates from my experience of their current situation; my fieldwork is justified by what I see as the need for the 'entrepreneurs of the art world' to follow ethical practices and maintain economic responsibility in working with such communities.

CHAPTER TWO

Picking at the paint: methods and perspectives

My research approach amalgamates both auto-ethnography and semiotics. Drawing on my background in art theory, as well as Michael O'Toole's (1994) semiotic Table of Functions and Systems in Painting, I offer an analysis of two contemporary Bushman artworks: a painting by Freciano Ndala and a linoleum print[6] by Tuoi Samcuia. In this chapter I will begin a discussion of the structure of the analysis. My fieldwork consists of semi-structured interviews as well as Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC/email correspondence). This qualitative data collection as well as the import of a case study will be described at length in this chapter.

Auto-ethnography, elements of which are present in vignettes throughout this dissertation, requires researchers to "[g]aze, first through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience"; then to look "inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract and resist cultural interpretations" (Ellis and Bochner, 2000:739). In my experience, while attempting to write objectively I found myself stumbling over the 'othering' of my research subjects. When I wrote, remembering my encounters with respondents and my feelings concerning those encounters, my own judgments came under scrutiny – I had began a process of exposing power relations (see Teer-Tomaselli, 2008:39). In recognising my own subjectivity I was able to "reflect on whether it [facilitated] or [impeded] objective comprehension" (Ratner, 2002:np). Ultimately, auto-ethnography helped to reveal my position in the text as well as the framework of my writing.

I chose to interview the curators of different galleries; the KwaZulu-Natal Society of Arts (KZNSA) Gallery and Artisan being two of those galleries that do not deal in contemporary Bushman art, while this is so, the face-to-face interviews allowed for in-depth questioning, and proved fruitful in determining the state of affairs within the South African art industry at the time of writing. Interviews with the artists were held in each of their homes, which helped to ease some of the tension of a researcher/researched interview situation, especially since the interviews

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[6] Linoleum or Lino-printing (as it is known) is a block printing technique that involves a design being carved from a linoleum block. The block is then inked and the print is a mirror image of the carved design. See (www.howtolinoprint.com) and Kafka (1972).

were audio-recorded (see Hillway 1964, and Bickman and Rog 1998). A possible problem with relationally unequal interviews, however, is that informants may feel compelled to describe themselves in 'prescribed' ways. Pieter Jolly discusses a Bushman informant whose statement, "I am not a black man and I am not a white man. I must be a Bushman", reveals a feeling of required placement (1996:207). There are various contexts which cause the informant to say what he may feel is required of him to say, these include:

> the manner in which 'Bushman' has been defined historically; the interview situation, and the perceptions of certain of their interviewers concerning the ethnic identity of the informants and their relations with other groups in the area; remarks made by this informant … [and some others] from the area concerning their Bushman identity; and the increase in the value of 'Bushmanness' in recent years (Jolly, 1996:207).

These conditions are present in interviews with any marginalised group, and are certainly at work in dialogues with Bushmen today. Recognising the sensitivity of identification I avoided directly questioning my respondents' ancestry, asking instead: "*Wat verkies jy, Boesman of San?*" (Which do you prefer, Bushman or San?)[7]. Aside from interviews and email correspondence, mental notes made during conversations and encounters have been transcribed as fieldnotes. This participant observation technique allows for a naturalistic perspective on people's perceptions as certain feelings are better revealed when people enter into casual dialogue with interviewers without the sometimes intimidating presence of the audio recorder and notepad (see Dewalt and Dewalt, 2002).

Regarding email correspondence (CMC) with respondents, there is a higher risk of deception since the researcher is less able to access the non-verbal communication of the interviewee. This text-based research technique also deprives the research of an ethnographic context. On the other hand, the more remote quality of CMC allows researchers to "distance themselves physically from ideological camps, reducing the likelihood of suspicion and innuendo that might alienate some participants" (Mann and Stewart, 2003:84). Ultimately, in the case of participants who are

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[7] My respondents' (sometimes emotive) preference for 'Bushman' interestingly defies the use of the politically correct 'San' often used in academic and government circles (see also Bregin and Kruiper, 2004:52-5).

geographically distant, CMC is a "practical and cost-efficient method of conducting interviews" (2003:86). I found this to be the case with the Cape Town based Art of Africa Gallery.

My translator, a member of the !Xun community, could take me only to the artists from the same community with whom he was acquainted[8]. The !Xun and Khwe, though they live in proximity to each other, are two distinct groups, speak different languages and maintain different cultural practices. These differences may problematise the use of a case study in an exploration of contemporary Bushman art. Indeed, "[c]ritics of the case study method believe that the study of a small number of cases can offer no grounds for establishing reliability or generality of findings" (Soy, 1997:np). Regarding the importance of a case study, however, Hylton White states that the dominant Bushman image "holds a mirror up to its [w]estern disseminators far more than to its referents" (White, 1995:4; see also Gordon 1992b, and Davison 1991). Therefore "an increasingly introspective and reflexive discussion of [w]estern representation is doomed to aridity if it is unable to connect itself back to those very real 'Others' whose lives remain anthropology's single *raison d' etre*" (White, 1995:5). A case study proves important, therefore, in its exploration of representations and identity construction as relevant to the lives and experiences of 'real-life/live' Bushmen.

While some of the data may be specific to the case study, regarding the context of production, Bushmen groups are more alike than they are dissimilar. They are plagued with the same maladies: poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, and alcohol and drug abuse. These problems affect the development potential of the art and when it is shown that they occur to a similar degree in most Bushman communities, it may be claimed that the data, at least when it relates to context, has some general validity. Therefore, the advantages of the case study method are relevant here: "its applicability to real-life, contemporary, human situations and its public accessibility through written reports" (Soy, 1997:np).

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[8] A further shortcoming of this was that I was only able to interview the male artists. The women in Platfontein are "baie skaam" (very shy), as my translator Nicodemus noted (Fieldnotes, October 2008). It was almost impossible to find one who would talk as freely to us as the men did. Hence, all the artists I interviewed were male. In retrospect, their shyness may have been attributed to the fact that on many of my visits I was accompanied by at least two other CCMS students (at least one of them a white male), perhaps they would have been more forthcoming if I was unaccompanied (by the males in our research group) and if I had tried to speak with them together with a female interpreter (unfortunately one was not available at the time).

While there are artistic differences between groups – the art of the ≠Khomani[9], for example, is far removed from that of the !Xun – there are also aspects of resemblance. There is similarity in the representation of figures (both human and animal) as well as in the use of geometric shapes and subject matter. Having said this, I do not wish to claim that contemporary Bushman art produced by different groups is strongly similar, which would be to concede to the myth of unity across all groups. Rather, where there is similarity in representation, the analysis of the artworks will invoke tentative, relatable relationships between different works; where there is similarity in the context of production, the discussion on skills development, its failure and my recommendations will again seek useful connections. To this extent, we may convincingly utilise the art of one group as a case study to generalise on the state of all contemporary Bushman art.

A semiotic method will be used for the analysis of the artworks. This analysis will seek to determine whether or not contemporary Bushman art may be engaged with in an intelligent and contemporary way as well as determining whether these artworks are capable of withstanding criticism. Semiotics, in short, is the study of signs (see Deely 1990, Cobley and Jansz 1999, and Chandler 2002). Using "a systemic-functional semiotics of art" (O'Toole, 1994:176), O'Toole has created a Table of Functions and Systems in Painting, based on representation, modality and composition, in an effort to "discover systematically the particular meanings of a given painting and to show how the options which the artist chooses to construct these meanings are systemic" (1994:176). He has taken the signs used in painting, separated and categorised them so that the table may be used to locate a painting's iconic, indexical and symbolic signs (see page 22 for O'Toole's table). This semiotic approach will be discussed further in Chapter Three.

Urged by Tomaselli to ask what this analysis means for my respondents (Personal communication, August 2009) I thought of Freciano who believes that if his work is not bought it is because it is not good enough. He accepts lower prices in the hope that it will be sold, which impacts negatively on his intrinsic self-worth. Analysis of his art using O'Toole's table could show Freciano that his work is indeed 'good enough', and that he, in turn, is good enough. This

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[9] In August 1995, the Bushmen of the Northern Cape Province lodged a restitution land claim that "brought together about three hundred adults who constituted themselves as a group for the purposes of the claim" (Tomaselli, 2007:viii). This was an ethnically disparate group but for the importance of the land they came together under the collective name '≠Khomani' (2007:viii).

might generate two dissimilar outcomes: either Freciano could feel empowered to enter into dialogue with dealers and resist future exploitative efforts or he could become closed off to everyone, afraid of further exploitation (Tomaselli, personal communication, August 2009). This concern is discussed further in Chapter Nine.

CHAPTER THREE

Critical contestations: theory and literature

The literature on early Bushman art not only informs the theory but is principally the theory itself; this chapter is therefore an amalgam of theory and literature. David Lewis-Williams's (1982) dominant theory of interpreting early rock art has bearing on the way contemporary Bushman art is viewed, this theory, together with Anne Solomon's (1995) contesting reading, will be discussed here. Since there is no established theory on the basis of which to analyse contemporary Bushman art, I have proposed the use of O'Toole's (1994) Table of Functions and Systems in Painting for analysis, to be further discussed in this chapter. A key question of this study is whether or not contemporary Bushman art consists merely of *simulacra* – copies without a referent other than to original works (or other copies). This discussion must be established within the greater context of postmodernism. With the writings of Baudrillard (1983, 1990), and Jameson and Hardt (2000) as a point of reference, this chapter explores the effect of postmodernism on the Bushmen.

In his research, which is said to have altered perceptions of rock art radically, Lewis-Williams holds that Bushman rock art is a direct reflection of the cosmology of the Bushmen which is in turn a reflection of the material conditions of their lives (see Lewis-Williams, 1982, 1983, Lewis-Williams and Dowson, 1989, and Lewis-Williams and Blundell, 1998). While acknowledging the work of Lewis-Williams in this field, Anne Solomon (1995, 1997, 1999a/b) opposes Lewis-Williams's structuralist-semiotic model, stating that his theoretical premise is flawed as it ranks meanings in order of importance and sets up belief as the "master code" of the art (1999b, 1995).

Similarly, Grant McCall declares that the shamanism model "denies the importance of regional, historical and social contexts in determining symbolic practices" (2007:np). The model is, therefore, restrictive in that it positions rock art "as a simple material correlate of shamanism"; whereas "a more contextual view of shamanistic variability has the potential to provide interesting information" about the circumstances of production (McCall, 2007:np). Sven Ouzman, another propagator of the shamanism model, remarks that despite shamanistic

variability, "there is also a remarkable correspondence in shamanic belief and practice between groups that are spatially and temporally separate" (1998:33). The model, however, risks neglecting archaeological variation in order to "fit patterns of rock art imagery into modern scenarios of meaning based on ethnographic or ethnohistoric data" (McCall, 2007:np).

In affirming belief-context as the *sine qua non* of Bushman ethnologies Lewis-Williams denies all other theoretical premises a place in the field. Yet the shamanism model is one of many interpretations, such as a gendered reading as well as one that focuses on form (Solomon, 1999b:np). These interpretations deserve to be taken equally seriously since Bushman art of the past presumably emanates from original contexts of production which are unknowable to us now (1999b:np). The shamanism model as the master code of the art constrains rock art discourse; the model, for instance, renders aesthetics irrelevant in interpretation (McCall, 2007:np). If, however, it is asserted that Renaissance painters, though they were commissioned to paint representations of Biblical figures and scenes, purposefully imbued their art with elements of aesthetic pleasure which made it the more sublime, why then should early hunter-gatherer artists be denied the use of aesthetics in ways that are meaningful?

Based on an all-encompassing Bushman cosmology, the shamanism model is a homogenous and ahistorical model that ignores all other possible elements (Solomon, 1999b:np). The model is positioned as the essential meaning of all Bushman art, regardless of group differences, "in all times and places" (1999b:np). Contemporary Bushman art therefore risks being subsumed into the shamanistic model, which would position contemporary Bushmen as quintessential noble (and primitive) savages. Belinda Jeursen argues that although there have been conferences, exhibitions and documentaries "contributing to the publicisation of the plight of some remaining groups of Bushmen, not all of these are progressive, with many still subscribing to and propagating a romantic view of the Bushmen" (1995:122). Even with "the work of a limited number of academics now in progress" that is "contributing to changing public attitudes and eliminating prevailing myths" there remains "a long road ahead before nostalgia and misuse of the image of the Bushmen is left behind" (ibid).

On the other hand, Jeursen does acknowledge that the imaging of existing Bushman groups as 'First Peoples', though it "relies on and re-enforces myth-making" (1995:127); is economically beneficial to those communities who "depend on tourism financially" (ibid). Yet, realistically depicted, these groups should not be 'showcased' "wearing skins or hunting animals" (ibid). Jeursen concludes thus:

> The recuperated image of the Bushmen as a link between the past and the future has the potential to act as a positive, unifying factor in South Africa. However, what is really needed is acknowledgement without mystification. It needs to be emphasised that existing communities are culturally distanced from the painters and engravers responsible for the art, both chronologically and spatially. So while the rock art may be viewed as some kind of bridging mechanism, when the image is used in other contexts it speaks of stereotype rather than recuperation (1995:128).

This argument, however, does not show how stereotype can be separated from recuperation. In appropriating past images as recuperated, there is always room for stereotype. Jeursen does not consider the impact that rejection of the romantic Bushman myth will have on those communities reliant on this myth for their livelihood. We should ask what is to become of communities who make their living from cultural tourism endeavours if their myths are removed. While it is important to move away from stereotype, before this is done, it must be ensured that those communities reliant on it are equipped to do without it.

I initially believed that contemporary Bushman art should be understood in terms of the artists' communities and their conceptions of art. I thought this would allow these communities to voice their opinions about their art and would prevent the art from being assimilated into a western perspective. The more I thought about it, however, the more it seemed that this way of looking at the art would only contribute to locking these communities in a state of primitivity. In his thesis on Bushman and Zulu identities, Nhamo Mhiripiri states that "[t]he works of contemporary Bushmen painters have barely received important critical appreciation, and the comprehensive body of literature is largely preoccupied with pre-colonial rock art" (2009:211). To evaluate the art of acclaimed ≠Khomani artist Vetkat Kruiper[10], Mhiripiri uses blended criteria, combining

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[10] Kruiper has had successful exhibitions all across South Africa, mainly thanks to the marketing and networking skills of his business-mined wife, Belinda. See Bregin and Kruiper (2004) and (www.vetkat.co.za) for more.

"art theory with, semiotics, anthropology and Jungian approaches to make meaning out of the pictures" (2009:229). His use of formalism enables a reading of these contemporary Bushman paintings "within world trends" (2009:211). The use of established art theory in an analysis of contemporary Bushman art, therefore, does not location these works within a eurocentric or post-colonial worldview; rather this kind of analysis helps to position the artworks within current trends, validating them as contemporary art.

Using O'Toole's Table (part one)

Function / Unit	Representational	Modal	Compositional
Work	Narrative themes Scenes Portrayals Interplay of episodes	Rhythm　　Modality Gaze Frame Light Perspective	Gestalt:　　Proportion: Framing　　Geometry Horizontals　Line Verticals　　Rhythm Diagonals　　Colour
Episode	Actions, events Agents–patients–goals Focal/side sequence Interplay of actions	Relative Prominence Scale Centrality Interplay of Modalities	Relative position in work Alignment Interplay of forms Coherence
Figure	Character Object Act, Stance/Gesture Clothing Components	Gaze　　Contrast: Scale Stance　　　　　Line Characterisation　　Light 　　　　　　　　Colour	Relative position in episode Parallelism/Opposition Sub-framing
Member	Part of body/object Natural form	Stylization	Cohesion: Reference (Parallel/Contrast/Rhythm)

Figure 2: O'Toole's Table of Functions and Systems in Painting (2004)

Describing the rationale behind the table, O'Toole tells the story of a group of friends in a museum who stand together viewing Botticelli's *Primavera* (1478). One member of the group begins to discuss by whom and for whom this work was painted; another examines the various mythological figures within the painting; and yet another explores the use of colour and composition. Some of these discussions begin outside the painting itself, importing "extra-textual knowledge" (O'Toole, 1994:22). O'Toole points out that while these discussions have bearing on making meaning, they stand alone as monologues. I found this to be the case in my interview with Brenton Maart, the gallery curator of the KZNSA, to whom I offered a selection of !Xun art for analysis[11]. Having viewed the works discussed in Chapter Eight, this is what he had to say:

> My first impressions are that they're very colourful … they're obviously using a symbology and an iconography that exists, that they're drawing on in terms of reference. I think they're pictorial and they're narrative, so they're showing a story, so you'll be able to read things into them which is a formal kind of approach to narrative painting. I think they're definitely based on a very ancient art history but I think they've introduced significant elements of contemporary production in their use of colour and in their compositional decisions (Maart interview, Durban, May 2009).

This was the curator's first encounter with these works and he was not afforded time enough to deliberate over them comprehensively, yet his statements are similar to those of O'Toole's fictitious gallery visitors; they are strings of monologues. To bring such monologues into dialogue, O'Toole suggests the use of a semiotic discourse. There remain, however, "two dangers" in employing this approach (O'Toole, 1994:181). The first is that the spectator could be distracted by the "mass of detail" to which the table might draw attention (ibid). To combat this, a spectator must venture on a provisional interpretation (the individual's initial interpretation) to be tested as more insight is gained (ibid). Furthermore, the table may be used to discuss the work in various degrees of detail as a dialogue between different spectators develops (1994:30).

The second danger occurs when the spectator engages in a detailed analysis of the artwork and then positively evaluates it in order to "justify going to so much trouble over it" (O'Toole,

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[11] Interestingly, at the time of the interview, the gallery had on exhibition the art of Jane Sampson (part of the *Big Night Out* exhibition), who uses what could be called 'Bushman iconography' in her paintings, many of which are mystically titled; *Hunted as animals, they died as heroes* (2009); *Gudu Dance* (2009) and *Paradise lost* (2009). See (www.nsagallery.co.za) for more.

1994:182). The table nevertheless allows for an analysis that separates representation, modality and composition, with the effect that the artwork may be seen to be, for example: strong compositionally, weak representationally and failing modally (ibid). Overall, the table is not as rigid as it might look: the individual may choose where to begin, as well as the level of detail to be delved into. The virtue of the table is that "you can start your exploration or description absolutely anywhere, in any 'box', and move from rank to rank and function to function as particular features strike you" (1994:14), making intuitive links as you go along (1994:176). Because the evidence lies within the work, others can enter the discussion and give their opinions, based on their own usage of the categories (ibid). O'Toole has created a system of analysis which is replicable and functional for all interested in art. The discussion of this table will continue in Chapter Seven. I now want to move to a discussion of the impact of postmodern thought on the Bushmen.

Delineating Postmodernism

The term 'postmodern' began to circulate in the arts in the 1970s (Delanty, 2000:133). Regarding the current society, if anything, we have moved beyond the postmodern into the post-postmodern, reaching backwards for structural certainty. Contemporary Bushman art, however, may still be discussed in terms of the discourse set out by Baudrillard (1983; 1988a/b; 1993) in relation to the simulacrum. Antagonistically, Steven Yates states that postmodernism as an intellectual movement, "looks suspiciously like the product of minds chronically out of focus" (2003:np). Perhaps the most pointed axiom of this 'ism' is "that postmodernism is indefinable is a truism" (Aylesworth, 2005:np). For the most part, the term is employed to delineate a set of key features:

> critical, strategic and rhetorical practices employing concepts such as difference, repetition, the trace, the simulacrum, and hyperreality, to destabilize other concepts such as presence, identity, historical progress, epistemic certainty, and the univocity of meaning (Aylesworth, 2005:np).

Disbelief is the dominant attitude in postmodernism and it is "extended first and foremost to language" (Gregson, 2004:1-3). Postmodern theorists thus take their cue from Ferdinand de Saussure whose "General Principles" (1916) highlights the arbitrary nature of the sign.

Saussure's descriptions of language question the idea of a direct relationship between language and reality in that "the linguistic sign unites, not a thing and a name, but a concept and a sound-image" (Saussure, 1974:66). The sound-image is the signifier, that "psychological imprint of the sound, the impression that it makes on our senses" (ibid). Saussure claims that language is a construct. Nietzsche similarly identifies language, stating that language, so long constructed out of metaphors, is deemed truthful because we have forgotten the metaphoric origin (1873:np)[12]. For Nietzsche there is no truth with a capital 'T', only various 't'ruths. This theory implies a breach between language and the material world and it is "the space into which all postmodern theorizing, and explicitly postmodern literature, enters" (Gregson, 2004:3).

While Saussure provides the linguistic foundation, René Descartes[13], provides the ontological. Descartes's famous "*Cogito ergo sum*" (I think therefore I am), the core of his dualist philosophy, posits that the mind exists separately from the body. This allows him to question the epistemic certainty of an objective reality. He begins his *Meditations* (1641) by attempting to rid himself of all that can be doubted. Via this method of systematic doubt he posits that thought is the only aspect essential to his being and consequently that the mind is essentially distinct from the body. He assumes that his senses cannot be completely trusted because what he senses whilst awake and fully conscious he likewise can sense whilst asleep and dreaming.

This idea, coupled with the assumption that there exists an all-powerful being capable of deceiving man brings him to the conclusion that all he perceives can be doubted. Thinking is therefore the only thing that cannot be removed from him. He is essentially a thing that thinks and the fact that he thinks means that he must exist. The essential self for Descartes, therefore, is the thinking mind. He does, however, believe that the mind and body work in unison, though they are distinct from each other. The problem is that the distinction he argues for undermines the idea of unison. This separation of the mind and body also leads to the separation of private and public space, an issue that will be discussed later.

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[12] Friedrich Nietzsche was yet another important precursor of postmodernism; he makes this particular point in "On Truth and Lies in the Non-Moral Sense" (1873), available at (www.publicappeal.org).
[13] Descartes is known as the father of philosophy, his work is seen as the foundational text for many problems that have arisen with the concept of epistemic uncertainty. Postmodernism is one of the theoretical frameworks that take up the problems highlighted by Descartes. The summary of his work above is based on two translations, that of Cottingham (2005) and Veitch (1901).

The postmodern individual

The postmodern individual, as defined by Baudrillard, is one who experiences the "ecstasy of communication"; in which "[a]ll functions are abolished in a single dimension, that of communication" (1990:131); and in which it is no longer the message that is important but rather the medium "that imposes itself in its pure circulation" (ibid). The individual is thus, "in close proximity to instantaneous images and information, in an overexposed and transparent world" (Kellner, 2002:np). Baudrillard explains that the postmodern being "becomes a pure screen, a pure absorption and re-absorption surface of the influent networks" (1988a:27).

Jameson and Hardt acquiesce in this when they state that the postmodern era is one in which the individual experiences "free-floating and impersonal" intensities (2000:200). The miscellaneous communications thus (re)absorbed from the 'outside world' form the incoherent parts of the fragmented self. The alienation felt in the Modernist period is displaced by an acknowledgement of the fragmentation of the self. This is seen as merely a condition of the era. According to postmodern thought, the centred, unified self is lost, or rather proves to have never existed at all, and the Postmodern man (supposedly) feels none of the anxiety of the Modern.

Baudrillard argues that the technologically advanced society experiences the loss of public and private space; our lives have become transparent and the space in which we live is one "where everything is exposed to the harsh and inexorable light of information and communication" (1990:130). This corresponds with his notion of the hyperreal[14], in which a subject-object distinction "implodes" (Best, 1995:51). Regarding Bushmen groups one might argue that this loss of public and private space occurred as far back as the 18th century, when the Bushmen were enslaved, and even more in the 19th, when they were exhibited, their every privacy measured and logged. Perhaps a certain type of behaviour – that of a grasping for identity (private individual space) – falls short because it gropes for answers within what is now no longer private or public space, but what has become the realm of the 'ecstasy of communication'.

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[14] Baudrillard defines the hyperreal as "a real without origin or reality" (1983:2).

The !Xun and Khwe, for example, claim a heritage from the rock engraving site near Platfontein, yet these groups are emigrants and have no direct claim to this site. It belongs to them primarily because they are Bushmen. It belongs to the people of Kimberley by virtue of their living there. It belongs to us all because the Bushmen were the 'First People'. We are all connected via the "screen and network", the "forced injection of all exteriority" (Baudrillard, 1990:126-32). According to Baudrillard, this state of affairs is nothing less than a "schizophrenia", in which we "can no longer produce the limits of [our] own being"; thus we become "a pure screen, a switching centre for all the networks of influence" (1990:133). This worldview complicates the construction and placement of identity. Chapter Four will explore the problem of identity construction with regards to the Bushmen.

CHAPTER FOUR

A complication of identity

This chapter seeks to explore the notion of a Bushman identity. The relationship between identity, culture and language will be discussed along with spatialisation, the contemporary state of the Bushmen, and how these problematise the concept of identity. I will begin, however, with the contentious naming debate. Where possible I will utilise specific group names but at times there will be need for an all-encompassing term. Since 'Bushman' is my respondents' preferred term, I employ it as a general name for a heterogeneous group where no neutral term exists. Where other writers quoted here have used 'San' believing it to be less pejorative, I have acquiesced to the use of this term. Though I hold that the !Xun and Khwe are dissimilar I also refer to them as *the* Platfontein community. I do this not only because these groups are geographically indistinct but more so because they are brought together by their daily struggles against the same challenges. Francis acquiesces to the use of the term 'aborigine' when discussing national and international groups that face similar challenges and that share common experiences (2007:24; see also Tallbear, 2001 for more on the accessibility of this term), the term 'indigene' has here served the same function.

The term 'Bushman' is considered pejorative by those who feel that it connotes a sense of primitivity, while the other option, 'San,' is believed to be derived from the Khoi *Sonqua* meaning 'forager' (Barnard, 1992:8). Although Robert Gordon argues the case that *Sonqua* also means 'bandit' (1992a:6-7). 'Bushman' is thought to be derived from the Dutch 'Boesjesman' which is said to imply the "deplorable practice of cunningly concealing themselves in the bushes before springing out on the unwary traveller" (Lewis-Williams, 1983:13). Not only is 'Bushman' expressively masculine, it is a single term used to describe a heterogeneous people with different mythologies and cultural practices. Both 'San' and 'Bushman' are externally-ascribed colonial constructs "created to control subjugated peoples in manageable, depoliticised, arbitrarily bounded enclaves of homogeneity" (Wilmsen, 1996:188). Yet there are groups that are currently re-claiming these allotted names "with pride" (Francis, 2007:23; see also Dyll 2004 and McLennan-Dodd 2003b). This is a kind of self-appellation which manifests out of "a new sense of empowerment" (Hitchcock, 1998:303).

Tomaselli (2007b:3) relates an elderly ≠Khomani woman's response to the question of naming. Ouma !Una declared, "I am the earth. This earth is the San/d. Now we are the San/d Bushmen. ≠Khomani, ≠Khomani. From the Sand". Interestingly, when asked if she must be called San, !Una spoke of *sand*, inferring a oneness with the earth (see also Francis, 2007). Another ≠Khomani member, Pertrus Vaalbooi, said "the Bushman is the same as the land. The land, the earth. The Bushman, it's almost as if he lives with the earth" (cited in Tomaselli, 2007b:4). While the sentiment is the same, the preferred name is different.

Discussing the complications of identification for the Bushmen, Michael Francis remarks that, "today these disparate people argue amongst themselves that they are the 'Bushmen' or they are the 'San'" (2007:22). Almost wearily he declares, "I know of no other 'group' of people with so many names and so little consensus" (ibid). It is indeed a wonder that so heterogeneous a group has found its way into society's consciousness with so narrow an image, even though "[i]ntermarriage between 'Bushmen' and black farmers has occurred from at least the early sixteenth century" (Jolly, 1996:20; see also Elphick and Malherbe, 1989:4-5).

A Bushman identity is not easily derived from names or appearances and the essentialised notion of *Bushmanness* is now being challenged by the Duma[15] and others like them who bear little resemblance to the 'traditional' Bushman image, yet claim Bushman ancestry. Such difficulties pose constructive challenges to the stereotypical image, which is leaning dangerously toward "absolutist indigenism"; since a searching for indigenous authenticity "imagines relocation and ethnic cleansing on an unimaginable scale" (Clifford, 2001:482). The Bushman history is already one of genocide; it would be doubly tragic if Bushmen in the contemporary world were to be destroyed by the use of an iconography which demands uniformity of appearance.

For the Bushmen, identification has always been of serious consequence. In colonial South Africa they were considered a plague, and with the majority exterminated long before the apartheid government came into power, the remainder were classified as "coloured" and left to

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[15] The Duma are Zulu-speaking Bushman descendants living in the Kamberg area of KwaZulu-Natal. See Francis (2007) for more. The CCMS research partners, the !Xoo of Botswana are another group who, while they do not resemble the iconic noble savage image, claim Bushman ancestry.

live in poverty stricken conditions (Tomaselli, 2007a: viii). Stephen Watson (1991) relates their history in sharp clarity:

> Dispossessed of the land over which they had moved as hunters and gatherers for centuries, hunted down by the white colonialists as if they were wild animals, regarded as little more than vermin by surrounding black tribes, they were virtually extinct, victims of genocide, by the end of the nineteenth century (1991:10).

African tribes considered them lazy, because they kept no livestock and did not cultivate, and European colonists hunted them believing that they were hierarchically lower than human beings, remarking "their speech, it seemed to us inarticulate noise, rather than language, like the clucking of hens, or gabbling of turkeys"; and on another occasion that Bushmen language "is rather apish than articulately sounded" (cited in Chidester, 1996:24). By the 1850s the Bushmen "were no longer able to be the wholly stone age people their ancestors had been" (Watson, 1991:9). Many had already been employed as servants and labourers on white-owned farms. Modernity had afforded a change and culture had to keep up or be left behind. The hunter-gatherer lifestyle that seems the epitome of 'Bushmanness' was largely left behind for the agricultural ways of their employers. Likewise, their egalitarian social order was at odds with the hierarchical order of the Afrikaners and the English. As many writers have commented, for the Bushmen of this time it was either a case of assimilation or annihilation.

On language and land

Some years after the death of Wilhelm Bleek, famous for transcribing Bushman poems and stories, together with his sister-in-law Lucy Lloyd,[16] his daughter, Dorothea, was hard pressed to find Bushmen who remembered their stories (Bleek, 1929:311-12). Speaking of the families of her father and aunt's former informants, Bleek remarks that she found the folklore was "dead, killed by a life of service among strangers and the breaking up of families" (1929:312). It is true that language "is a tool by which we are 'made' and creatively 'make' ourselves" (Barker, 1999:31). Moreover, "[l]anguage recognition and cultural recognition … are important parts of

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[16] In 1870 the library curator, Wilhelm Bleek, persuaded the new governor of the Cape, Philip Wodehouse, to allow him to take a few Bushman prisoners to his home to work as servants. Bleek and Lloyd went on to spend the next few years "recording thousands of pages of folklore, mythology, and other texts from a succession of /Xam informants" (Barnard, 1992:79).

political empowerment for indigenous peoples" (Katz *et al*, 1997:186). It could therefore be argued that in oral cultures, the death of folklore signals the death of culture which in turn may signal the loss of a structured group identity.

It was not only Bushman folklore that was in the process of being forgotten but also the original languages in which those stories were told. Perceiving this, a few ≠Khomani elders have become actively involved in the nursery school in their community, teaching the children time-honoured skills and crafts and telling them stories in their original language in an attempt to foster a 'traditional' identity in the younger generation (Simões, 2007:87)[17]. As the children grow and move to government schools, however, that identity may soon be tempered by the modern (ibid). The Afrikaans language has indeed ushered the Bushmen into a literary culture at odds with their previously oral mode and as Chapman reminds us, "even our records of Bushman oral expression come to us in severely mediated form, having been recollected by respondents in colonial times and recorded by Victorian linguists and missionaries" (1997:20).

Regarding the problematics of land, while the ≠Khomani were awarded land in 1999, several years on "the land claim had not resulted in much substantial change with regard to the standard of living among those who wanted to retain their 'traditional ways'" (Tomaselli, 2007a:viii). A lack of resources, skills, motivation, education and the mismanagement of allocated funds have together resulted in a community in which alcohol, drug abuse, and violence are rife (ibid). Today, there are Bushmen communities living in a fixed space, much of which is due to successful land claims, which has addressed "the need for security and the need to make an economic claim, to gain rights of ownership" (Simões, 2001:96; see also Marshall and Ritchie, 2002) and which has also afforded the state a means to place these communities under bureaucratic control (Simões, 2001:9; see also Hitchcock and Holm, 1993). This produces its own difficulties; hunting, for example, is not feasible in certain areas, and some allocated areas have little or no game; in others the game belongs to the national parks. When significant traditions become impossible to continue, this in turn affects the construction of group identities.

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[17] There are two Early Childhood Development (ECD) sites in Platfontein, these are crèches run by SASI. While the lesson plans are written in Afrikaans, the languages of instruction remain !Xun and Khwe (Pamo, CMC, October 2009).

From a Marxist perspective[18] it may be argued that there can now be no Bushman identity, since the Bushmen are alienated from their land, their labour and the fruits of that labour. Benedicte Ingstad and Per Fugelli observe that "there seems to be one huge loss in the health account of modernisation [of the Bushmen]: the loss of land" (2006:67). For a people whose every ritual is closely linked to their relationship with the land such a loss means they suffer a great deal as the fundamental component of their way of life is removed from them. Thus, how can they 'be' Bushman if all that constitutes 'Bushmanness' is tied to the land?

On personal identity

The cultural theorist, Stuart Hall, argues that "[u]nless we are going to identify ourselves as nothing but members of the human race, every other identification leaves something out"; more specifically, "[t]o leave something out is an act of … symbolic power, which is to say: *I am what I am because I'm not the other*" (1997:14). Fabian likewise argues that "our ways of making the Other are ways of making ourselves" (1990:756). Thus it may be said that Africans call themselves 'black' only because they have encountered the 'white' and vice versa. Identification "has much to do with what is in your imagination" (Hall, 1997:13). The idea of a self-image is, therefore, an image in one's mind that develops from encounters with others (ibid).

Discussing Walter Ong's (1990) conception of the sense of self of people in oral cultures Margaret Daymond states that "experience is so firmly rooted in the particular and the communal that abstractions such as 'self' are almost impossible" (1987:15). A notion of the personal self can thus be said to have little function in a communitarian system and would consequently remain undeveloped. Therefore, while Bushman stories may be told as a personal account, there remains a lack of detached self-examination. It may be said, however, that their past suffering[19], missionary experiences and the assimilation of western culture have contributed to the

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[18] For Marx, man is a creative "species being", who labours beyond his immediate needs, this separates man from animals, and it suggests that whereas animals labour purely driven by the need to survive, man uses his labour beyond the need for survival (Marx, 1972:58). This labour and its product constitute an extension of man himself. It is through the process of labouring and manipulating nature that man creates for himself a sense of identity. See Marx (1972) for more.

[17] Daymond argues that suffering is "a necessary source of autobiography" (1987:15), which is an interesting and rather controversial idea considering the genocide of the Bushmen groups in the 1800s.

development of the contemporary Bushman's individual self. This implies that contemporary Bushman identity necessarily differs from that of the past, which was strongly established in community rather than in individuals.

The noble savage

Yet another image that has complicated identification for the Bushmen is that of the 'noble savage'. The French traveller and painter, François Le Vaillant was one of the first to portray the romantic image of the Bushmen (Barnard, 2007:17). His watercolours presented "an idyllic image of the Bushman life" and portrayed "attractive faces, with intelligent and reflective expressions" (ibid). His subjects were adorned with "beautiful metal necklaces, earrings and hair ornaments" (ibid). His paintings of their weaponry were idealised representations of "bows, arrows and quivers ... perfectly proportioned and without flaw" (2007:17-8).

The image of the noble savage has been reiterated by anthropologists as well as non-anthropologists such as poets and fiction writers (Guenther, 1980:123). Mathias Guenther highlights the themes of the noble savage motif; "the ecological sensitivity and responsibility, the innocence, the beauty, the humanness and the harmony of these people who, in their dealings with settler groups over the past centuries, have been 'more sinned against than sinning'" (ibid). The painting below by Samuel Daniell (1810) seems to have been produced under the influence of such ideas. Daniell was an English painter and engraver who travelled to the Cape and into the interior of Africa, and whose repertoire includes numerous studies of "Bushmen Hottentots" (encyclopedia.jrank.org).
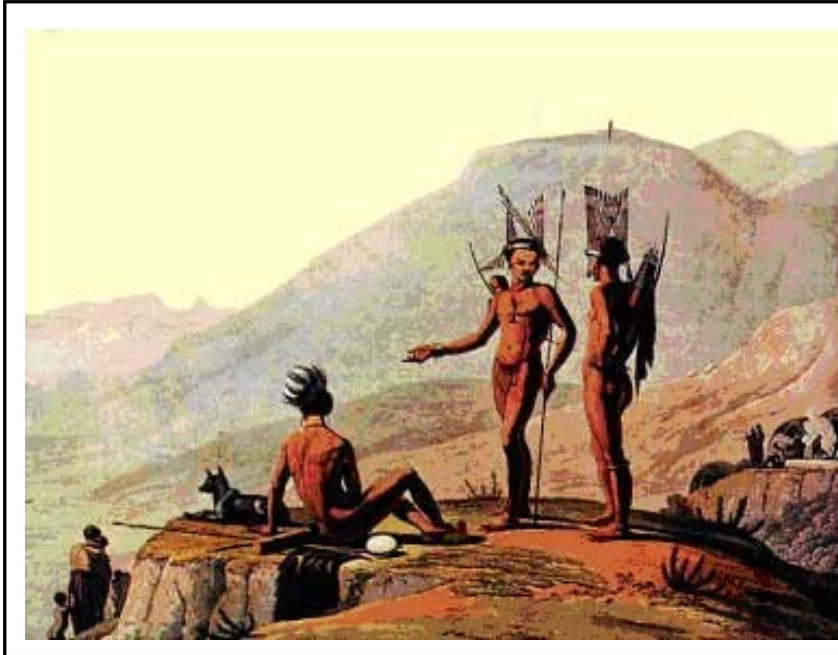
Figure 3
Samuel Daniell
Bushmen Hottentots armed for an expedition
Aquatint. Dimensions unavailable

The figures are depicted as relaxed; the standing figures are causal yet regal, while the sitting figure reclines with the firm muscles of his back in a delicate curve. Even their dog sits regally and astutely with ears cocked. All three figures are atop a hill; from this vantage point they seem to be discussing the land below, this we note by the hand gesture of the middle figure. The three are painted in shades similar to the surrounding ground; representing, perhaps, their closeness with nature. Their physical appearance, weaponry and clothing, define them as 'Bushmen', yet they are defined "as much by what the artist [has left] out of the picture as by what he [has included]" (Jolly, 1996:199). Absent from the picture are "accumulated possessions associated with more hierarchically organized and settled groups" (ibid). Interestingly, the mat huts in the background suggest "some affinity with Khoi pastoralists" (ibid).

Others have argued that Daniell's subjects were indeed Khoi pastoralists and not Bushmen. This may have been so; but as Alan Barnard reminds us of the inhabitants of the west coast of South Africa, "[i]n this area, the distinction between Khoekhoe and San was historically not as significant as one might imagine" (2007:11). Moreover, "[i]t is well established, especially in the Western Cape, that herders who lost their livestock easily reverted to a hunter-gatherer existence" (2007:12). The figures in Daniell's painting are "depicted in a stylized, classical pose high above the surrounding countryside – primitive but proud lords surveying a wild dominion"

(Jolly, 1996:199). From the above it is evident that art, together with literature, did well to drive the image of the noble savage. This image, still prevalent today, is driven by the media.

Even in its heyday, the noble savage image was not applied to all Bushman groups. Le Vaillant, for example, distinguished between two kinds of hunter-gatherers "first those who comprised the marauding bands of runaway slaves, escaped criminals (often of mixed ancestry) and other malefactors; and, secondly, the 'true Bushmen', whom he called, after a Khoekhoe name for them *Housouanas*" (Barnard, 2007:17). The romantic image was further challenged in the 19th century with the onset of Social Darwinism through which "Europeans came to see themselves as [biologically] superior to all other peoples" (2007:18). Distinct physical attributes of peoples such as the Bushmen were classified as primitive "characteristics of 'inferior' branches of the human race" (ibid). The image of the noble savage gave way to that of the 'primitive savage'. This latter image exists even today: the notion of undeveloped, pygmy-like people, speaking in clicks, dressed in skins, hunting with bow and arrow and dancing around a campfire constitutes many people's ideas of what it means to be Bushman.

While the primitive and noble savage are two dissimilar images they continue to exist as juxtaposed ideas in our communal consciousness. This is further entrenched by new publications on Bushman folklore (further mediated since the writers commonly create revisions of the Bleek and Lloyd collection) and when filmmakers and anthropologists perpetuate myths. For example, thirty-eight years after the making of his documentary, *The Hunters* (1958), John Marshall admitted to "setting up scenes, especially the 'kills'" (Tomaselli, 2003a:210). Gordon explains this as a means to perpetuate "the myth of 'wild Bushmen'" (ibid), yet by the 1950s Bushmen living as hunter-gatherers had entered the realm of myth. Marshall had thus made the decision to (re)create an essentialised idea of 'Bushmanness'.

Bushman identity in the art world: The Art of Africa and the proliferation of myth
Contemporary Bushman artists have entered the art world as primitive as well as noble savages. The artwork of the Platfontein artists is marketed through the South African San Institute[20]

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[20] SASI is an independent NGO that works to mobalise "resources for the benefit of the San peoples of Southern Africa" (www.sasi.org).

(SASI) programme N//aoh Djao San Art & Craft at the Wildebeest Kuil Rock Art Centre[21]. The art is also privately bought by dealers from the Art of Africa Gallery and sold online. This is the largest online gallery of Bushman art in the world and exhibits the works of a number of Bushman artists from all over southern Africa (www.theartofafrica.co.za). The Art of Africa website has this to say about the investment potential of Bushman art:

> Bushmen art is a visual diary portraying the lives of the few remaining Bushmen. Their traditions and culture are beginning to fade in the fast-encroaching westernized world. Art has become a means to preserve their heritage and culture in this difficult, changing time (www.theartofafrica.co.za).

The art is thus marketed as the last of its kind and the artists are portrayed as mystical dreamers. On the website each artist is afforded his or her own webpage containing various works on sale. Each webpage has a short biography interspersed with romanticised quotations, some of which are the artist's own. Of Freciano, for example, they write:

> For Freciano his art is his life: 'While I'm alive, my work is my life. My work starts from dreams. When I draw and paint I lie down at night to dream about the image. In the morning I get up and draw the image in the sand, to see if it is what I saw in my dreams' (www.theartofafrica.co.za).

This romanticising of the art re-establishes the stereotypical image of the noble savage in the mind of the consumer. To say that the art comes from dreams is to evoke images of Bushmen shamans painting images on cave walls remembered from their trance states, implicitly connecting the contemporary artist to the Bushman artists of old. Yet "[t]he public cannot be blamed for lack of enlightenment ... when they are exposed to outdated museum displays, and films and advertisements which merely play upon stereotypes to sell themselves" (Jeursen, 1995:125). Even so, while the passage above offers a romanticised image of the artist that posits his identity as almost otherworldly, we cannot deny that these are Freciano's words. In my own

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[21] The Wildebeest Kuil Rock Art Centre is "a community-based public rock art project" situated on the outskirts of Kimberley (www.wildebeestkuil.itgo.com/). There are more than 400 rock engravings on this site. Visitors are taken to the engravings on guided tours. The centre itself includes a display room of pictures and artefacts; a small auditorium where visitors are encouraged to watch an introductory film on the history of the site; and the N//aoh Djao shop where !Xun and Khwe art and craft is sold. See (www.wildebeestkuil.itgo.com/) for more.

interview with this artist he did recall the past as the focus of his art. When asked why he paints, his answer was that he learnt from his forefathers and now he earns an income from it; it was his grandparents who advised him to learn how to paint in order to generate an income (Interview, Platfontein, October 2008). Yet this was not a man trying to 'cash in' on the Bushman image; on the contrary, I perceived that through his art, Freciano is attempting to assert his identity not as a mythical figure but a 'real' Bushman.

Returning to the concept of spatialisation, it can be said that the expression of identity is often centred on location and this is perhaps, "especially true for indigenous peoples for whom a connection with 'their' land is vital" (Simões, 2001:95). The irony is that it is these people "who have historically struggled for land rights more than other cultural groups" (ibid). If identity is centred on location, perhaps we should ask where these artists *locate* their work. For the most part, the subject matter is reminiscent of an 'ancient' way of life, evoking imagery of the pristine hunter-gatherer. In other words, the work is located in the past. Does this then mean that their identity is located – or at least rooted – in the past? This is partly true (but it is also true for many other groups of peoples); all the artists I spoke to made reference to their forefathers and in doing so they each attempted to validate themselves as Bushman individuals as well as Bushman artists.

Chapter summary

This chapter has endeavoured to examine certain key issues which work to complicate Bushman identity. There are many texts that continue to struggle with this question, lamenting that the Bushmen are continually miscast, "out of time, out of politics and out of history" (Skotnes, 1996:17). Yet on the question of how they *should* be cast there seems to be a silence. What is sure is that there is no pure, unblemished 'wild Bushman' identity. Moreover, there are no workable criteria for measuring 'Bushmanness'; the abovementioned concerns work only to problematise the issue of identity. If any modern Bushman identity is to evolve, it must be done with all the above in mind. Increasingly, it is the responsibility of anthropologists to tread lightly, distinguish sharply and record in truth.

PART TWO

CHAPTER FIVE

What is art?

In classical antiquity, 'art' (from the Greek '*tekhnē*') "was the name given to any activity governed by rules; art was that which could be taught, and as such did not include activities governed by instinct or intuition" (Burgin, 1986:143). Innate talent, now considered a precursor to good art, was not an initial consideration. According to E. J. Brandi "art is a specifically human activity and to ask, what is art? ... cannot be entirely separated from questions such as what is man?" (1977:240). Similarly, Alfred Gell suggests that "artworks are manifestations of 'culture' as a collective phenomenon; they are, like people, enculturated beings" (1998:153). The concept 'work of art' "has been in constant change over the last two thousand years … ranging from craft to original idea, 'traditional' to creative, utilitarian to non-utilitarian" (Blocker, 1994:138). Art is now post-historic; "anything and everything is admissible in the context of artistic theory and intention"; since "it is only the atmosphere of theory which differentiates artworks from other things" (Crowther, 1993:181-82). From this we see why, in the modern world, a toilet cistern signed 'R. Mutt' by Marcel Duchamp can be placed in an art gallery. It is apparent, from the above, that 'art' can mean different things to different people, though this does not preclude certain universal defining factors. Below are a few essential aspects (in no particular order) that work towards delineating a 'work of art' (Blocker, 1994:147):

The object:

1. must be appreciated aesthetically.
2. must be something that cannot be made by just anyone[22].
3. must be judged, ranked, and prized by indigenous critical and aesthetic criteria.
4. must not be entirely utilitarian and mundane[23].
5. should portray, express, represent imaginary people, historical happenings, and so on – should be an object that refers to other objects.

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[22] Even Duchamp's *Fountain* (1917) was different because it was his eccentricity and cheeky social commentary imbued in the piece that made it worthy of exhibition.

[23] If the work is either of these – utilitarian or mundane – in being set apart from its original purpose it is imbued with artistic purpose.

6. must be made with the intention of creating a symbolic representation of life which is set apart from the rest of life and which is meant to be enjoyed and judged aesthetically.

7. must be conceived within a tradition, yet also breaking away from that tradition in aesthetically relevant ways.

Is indigenous art really art?

From the above it follows that an artist is a skilled professional or semi-professional, recognised as such by consumers of the art[24] (Blocker, 1994:148). The artist is a creative innovator who can just as easily follow long-established convention. In a cross-cultural analysis, if an object corresponds with the viewer's understanding of art, the viewer may call it art. If the same object is not considered 'art' by its creator and the community to which the object belongs, that is not to say that it cannot be considered art by those outside of that culture. However, those who consider the intention of the creator the principal defining force of art will deny the object a status as art object (1994:125-26). Others may deem this object un-artistic or less artistic because of the 'traditional' subject matter and stylised representations. It is erroneous, however, to suppose that tradition implies uniformity and creativity implies radical novelty (1994:157).

This reiterates T. S. Eliot's (1972) argument that tradition, because of its historic sense,[25] is alive and changeable. Artistic tradition is therefore "not opposed to but necessary for artistic creativity" (Blocker, 1994:156). In other words, without the initial presence of the box it is impossible to think 'outside the box'. Artistic innovation, then, "is a complex relation between art and its past" (Crowther, 1993:192). As a matter of interest, the notion of tradition discredits the idea of indigenous art as primitive, since 'primitive' presupposes a lack of cultural complexity, while "any community which possesses a tradition of artistic expression has more than a little sophistication in its culture" (Layton, 1991:3).

Interestingly, concepts such as 'artist' and 'artwork' may be viewed as labels employed by those outside a culture who wish to understand the makers and the objects within that culture by using a framework to which they are accustomed. Raymond Firth notes that "the concept of art as such

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[24] For the purposes of this study the term 'professional' could mean one that is taught informally as well as formally.
[25] Eliot describes the historic sense as a perception "not only of the pastness of the past but of its presence"; it is a sense of the timeless and the temporal together (1972:14).

is alien to the practice and presumably the thought of many of the peoples studied by anthropologists" (1992:26). Indigenous items have, through a cross-cultural diffusion of objects, attained status as art objects; if their makers were unaware of this in the past they are certainly aware of it now. This notwithstanding, the notion that the object produced by an indigenous craftsperson/artist qualifies as an art object only because of the perceptions of "the aesthetic audience and consumer" (Blocker, 1994:142) may become incongruous. In many contemporary indigenous communities, artists are fully aware of their work as art objects and of themselves as artists. When I first met my translator, Nicodemus, and asked if he could take me to the artists in the community, he took me only to a select few, making the distinction not only between the artists and the rest of the community but also between the artists and the craftspeople. Later on I learnt that there are different words in !Xunthali (the language of the !Xun) for 'artist' and 'craftsperson'. Unfortunately, while he knew the words, Nicodemus was unable to write in his mother tongue and could therefore only articulate and not inscribe these words.

Are all Bushman artists dead?

While reading *Art in Outline: An Introduction to South African Art* (1993), I stumbled upon an implicit historicising of the indigene that read: the indigenous art of southern African "was bound up with the way society functioned"; furthermore, this art "had a specific and structured role in society" (Huntley, 1993:41). I was struck by the use of the past tense. By constantly being portrayed as a past people, the Bushmen are being relegated to the periphery of society – or worse, they are relegated to museums and record books. As Tomaselli notes, "The San are assumed by media and many tourists … to be a pre-modern people living in the 'past'. Looking at 'them', it is assumed, is 'us' engaging with the 'ancestors' of 'our' [w]estern civilization" (2003b:64). It may be that contemporary artists need to revolutionise their art, as the 'ancient' imagery in their art asserts that this is a people who belong to the past. Conversely, it may be argued that such images anchor these communities in a heritage without which they might disappear altogether in the eyes and mind of the rest of the world.

Tourism has "had a significant impact in resuscitating San art": instead of immovable pictures on cave walls, contemporary Bushman artists "now use small shale fragments, paper, material and ostrich eggs, amongst other surfaces" (Tomaselli, 2003b:61). These works can then be "easily

packed away by tourists in their suitcases and taken home for display" (2003b:61). This is a manifestation of 'cultural negotiation', a process in which "indigenous practices and knowledge are packaged, re-presented, and interpreted in ways which make sense to visitors, but which also influence performers'[26] own identities" (2003b:64). One of the struggles of contemporary Bushman artists is thus to "recover agency, to popularize San heritage, and to challenge prevailing myths" (2003b:62).

A further difficulty for these artists lies in the continued contention of whether or not the art is 'authentically Bushman'. Errington writes that "the late twentieth century marked the end of the golden era of authentic primitive art"; however, "[i]deas about authenticity, about primitivism, and about art are very much alive ... in the mass market if not among cultural critics" (1998:7). Discussing Laurens van der Post's assertion that his grandfather had killed the very last Bushman rock artist, Tomaselli states that, contrary to this account, Bushman artists are very much alive (2003b:61). He adds that Bushman art has been reinvented by a new generation of artists who work from popular memory, incorporating new influences and developing new and different surfaces (ibid). I myself, in July of 2008, purchased a 'rock painting' from a ≠Khomani tracker who paints in his spare time (the painting was done on a shale fragment).

On authenticity

In his discussion of an Aboriginal artist's designs re-worked by an Australian design firm, Andrew Lam-Po-Tang (2003) poses several difficult questions concerning the constituents of an authentic indigenous artwork. The firm's brief was to commission genuine Aboriginal art and the artist in question was an Australian Aboriginal. The problem arose when the final work failed to correspond with the popular perception of Aboriginal art; with the artist's consent the art was modified by the firm to resemble popular perception. Lam-Po-Tang, therefore, questions the constituents of 'genuine Aboriginal art':

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[26] Tomaselli uses the term "performers" in discussing those groups that 'act out' when engaging with tourists. The ≠Khomani crafters in the Northern Cape, for example, build small grass stalls along the roadside and sit at the fire dressed in their skins and adorned with jewellery similar to that on sale to tourists. After 'work', before heading off home, they put on their conventional garb, which includes jackets, shirts and pants (Fieldnotes, July 2009).

Does this description only apply to artwork that is rendered by an Aboriginal person? And if so, what if that artist paints something other than the traditional style? What if the artist paints an Impressionist, Abstract, Surrealist or Realistic work? What if it's a cartoon? Or does the description apply to a particular style? If so, does that mean that someone other than an Aboriginal artist could produce a 'genuine' piece? (archive.agda.com).

These questions could easily be asked of Bushman art and the issue is further complicated with the addition of disputes over gender. On a field trip to the Kalahari in July 2008, I met a ≠Khomani craftsperson selling his wares at the side of the road. He told me that only the men paint, while the women do beadwork. I asked: "Why only the men?" He replied that this came from their forefathers. He went on to describe the hunter-gatherer dynamic, saying that men and women have certain tasks between them. This was apparently enough to explain why only the men paint. When I spoke to the artists at Platfontein they said that both men and women paint. Which of these statements is authentic? Would a rock painting from a Bush*wo*man be seen as inauthentic? Perhaps we ask the question of authenticity because of other commercially made Bushman-like paraphernalia. Walter Benjamin evokes this idea when he states that it is mass reproduction which propagates the authenticity of the work of art, since before it is reproduced the work's authenticity remains unquestioned (1979:223).

Of further interest is that the heritage site near Platfontein does not 'belong' to the !Xun and Khwe since they are not the direct descendants of the group/s that had produced the rock engravings. Is their claim to this site inauthentic? Writing on the debate of authorship of many thousands of rock paintings found throughout southern Africa, William van Rijssen argues that previous research has proved incorrect in naming the groups responsible for the various paintings (1994:174). The question of authorship is a contested issue for archaeologists and anthropologists alike; it is all the more difficult for present-day Bushmen trying to navigate this terrain. If historical records are blurred and the generational dissemination of custom, tradition and lifestyle has been disrupted, then where is identity and artistic tradition rooted? With these questions in mind, the notion of authenticity seems a futile grasping for answers.

This issue is further complicated by artists who have appropriated Bushman imagery in their artworks. Upon visiting the Artisan Gallery I viewed the work of MaryAnn Orr, a South African

artist who incorporates Bushman imagery and fragments of Bushman folklore into what she calls "sewing machine paintings" (Greenberg interview, Durban, May 2009). I recognised some of the fragments from the stories collected in the Bleek and Lloyd collection. I was told by the curator that one of Orr's works of a similar nature had been sold at Bonhams[27] in London for seven and a half thousand pounds (£7500) (Greenberg interview, May 2009). Is this artist to be expected to concede royalties to the Bushmen, and to which Bushman group? Or, as Jeursen notes (1995:127), is rock art "a recurrent symbol" and "a motif inherited by all South Africans"? In situations like these it becomes clear that arguments about authenticity and intellectual property become less viable when one steps out of the theory and into the field.

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[27] Founded in 1793, Bonhams is the "world's oldest and largest auctioneer of fine art and antiques still in British ownership" (www.bonhams.com).

CHAPTER SIX

Mirror mirror on the wall: contemporary Bushman art as simulacra?

Countless media products have contributed to the dominant picture of the pristine hunter-gatherer. This image is ceaselessly re-established in the mind of the viewer. The Bushmen are well aware of this representation and groups such as the ≠Khomani craftspeople understand what tourists want and diligently proffer this. It may be argued that they are as much a part of the selling of this image as are the media. Baudrillard declares that we have come to a kind of "pornography" of information and communication, in that images and knowledge are widely available, readable, fluid and performative; he calls this "the obscenity of the visible, of the all-too-visible" (1990:131). Arguing for the successive phases of an image, Baudrillard states that the image (1988b:np):

    1. is the reflection of a basic reality.

    2. masks and perverts a basic reality.

    3. masks the absence of a basic reality.

    4. bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum.

The fourth and final point is of significance to this discussion. According to Baudrillard, in the "age of simulation" the real event is overthrown by the representation; the age of simulation therefore "begins with the artificial resurrection of referentials in sign systems" (Baudrillard, 1983:4). This goes beyond imitation, reduplication and parody; it is a substitution of "signs of the real for the real itself" (ibid), to the extent that the "real is no longer real" (Baudrillard, 1988b:np). And when the real is no longer what it once was "nostalgia assumes its full meaning" (ibid). The nostalgia present in many contemporary Bushman art pieces could thus be attested to the liquidation and artificial resurrection of referentials in a hyper-reality; in that art becomes mere pastiche of past images[28].

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[28] See Jameson's "Postmodern and Consumer Society" [1982] for more on pastiche in the postmodern sense, available at (http://evans-experientialism.freewebspace.com/jameson_postmodernism_consumer.htm).

Baudrillard states that "art has been dissolved within a general aesthetization of everyday life, giving way to a pure circulation of images, a transaesthetics of banality" (1993:11). He declares that "art is gone … there are no fundamental rules, no more criteria of judgment or of pleasure … there is no gold standard of aesthetic judgment or pleasure" (1993:41)[29]. There are those, however, who disagree with Baudrillard. Sara Schoonmaker remarks that "[b]y discussing the nature of reality, Baudrillard assumes that he can know what that reality is, and that he can describe it to others" (1995:185). She calls this an assumption which "contradicts the substance of his argument that it has become impossible to distinguish between reality and its representation" (ibid). Schoonmaker argues that Baudrillard's epistemology "thus conflicts directly with the content of his position" (ibid). This is much like the postmodernists' self-refuting declaration that there are no absolutes. What then can we take from Baudrillard's arguments of contemporary art of the early 20th century? What does it mean for a discussion of Bushman art today? An answer may be found in the sense of loss delineated in his writings and the repercussions of this loss in relation to multiple reproductions of an artwork.

In *The End of Art* Donald Kuspit (2004) reiterates the point that the art world has lost something, asserting that "[i]n postmodernity we no longer see the painting, only the reproduction, or, at best, the painting through the reproduction, so that painting and reproduction become identified and seem virtually the same to the popular(izing) eye" (2004:9). The reproduction thus becomes more real; it is better understood, far more familiar and consequently becomes more acceptable than the original (2004:9). Kuspit declares that the reproduced Cezanne "is reassuring and appealing because it seems everyday – confirms that everyday consciousness is the only legitimate consciousness – whereas the real Cezanne is intimidating and discomforting because it disrupts everyday consciousness" (2004:9). The reproduction is thus tamed and "castrates" both "the work of art and consciousness of it – consciousness in general" (2004:9). It does indeed seem to be a state of castrated consciousness when tourists, who have travelled to 'see the

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[29] If we cannot delineate the boundaries of art then anything may be permissible and art simultaneously becomes everything and nothing. This is not merely a dialogical tangle, as Tomaselli *et al.* note, "the mess of everyday life" and the contradictions thereof tend to "befuddle the theory" (2008:349). Thus while postmodern theory affirms that we cannot classify nor can we judge art, taxonomy and aesthetics remain and art critics, historians and curators have not lost their professions.

Bushmen', grumble over the sight of 'modern' Bushmen living unlike those viewed in the *Gods Must be Crazy* (1980, 1989, 1991, 1993, 1996) films.

There are others, however, who believe that postmodernity liberates instead of castrates. Douglas Crimp asserts that "[t]hrough reproductive technology postmodernist art dispenses with the aura"; therefore, "[t]he fiction of the creating subject gives way to the frank confiscation, quotation, excerptation, accumulation and repetition of already existing images" (1990:53). Thus ideas of "originality, authenticity and presence, essential to the ordered discourse of the museum, are undermined" (1990:53). Similarly, Craig Owens writes that postmodernism is meant to critique representation because postmodernists "expose the tyranny of the signifier" (1990:59).

Contemporary artists, nonetheless, "are able at best to *simulate* mastery, to manipulate its signs ... [s]uch simulacra of mastery testify, however, only to its loss" (Owens, 1990:67). It could therefore be suggested that a present-day Bushman identity based on countless representations of the 'wild Bushman' is no true identity at all. Similarly their contemporary art may be seen as versions of, or variations on other paintings, from a time gone by. Though Baudrillard would have us believe that this is true of everything in the present-day society, I cannot conclude that this is the case with contemporary !Xun art. These artists have not entered into a state of pure simulacra (simulating what they once were, in a rootless continuum); instead, their art proves fruitful as a platform for cultural, social and individual re-articulation[30].

This point may be expressed via the contention between high art and low art. Benjamin argues that the aura of the work "withers in the age of mechanical reproduction" (1979:223). The Frankfurt scholars Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer (1979) agree that the artwork's aura is indeed lost via the invading and subverting of high art; they believe this deprives the work of its separateness upon which they see its social and critical function to depend. Adorno argues that bourgeois art maintained a subversive nature which was ultimately lost in its assimilation into

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[30] Indigenous art entering a state of pure simulacra has much to do with the commodification of indigenous communities' knowledge and culture. When culture and communal knowledge becomes commodified these turn into vacuous copies of information. I believe that there is hope yet for contemporary !Xun art as this community does not bargain a price for their knowledge. The artists I interviewed were welcoming and asked for nothing in return. Only one artist, at the end of an interview, told us that he was hungry.

everyday life (he does not, however, idealise this high art but rather accepts that it too has its faults and sees that it has been tamed and made part of the established order).

Conversely, Benjamin (1979, 1999) argues that because art has left the realm of the *beautiful semblance*, the distance between art and man has been nullified and it is now able to be used for political ends. I believe that the distinction between high art and low art remains contentious in Bushman art today, only it is formulated differently. Art dealers and consumers may value the art as ritualistic, invoking the predominant image of the 'wild Bushman'. Yet if the art frees itself from the preconceptions of consumers, it may function as a platform for artists to re-articulate themselves for themselves, their communities and the consumers of their art. This process is already underway, as is evident in the work of the !Xun artist, Flai Shipipa (see **Figure 4**). Not only is the medium contemporary but the content depicts newfound religious beliefs intermingling with older mythologies[31].

Figure 4
Flai Shipipa
Limbuamba and Crosses
Acrylic on canvas
90 x 100 cm
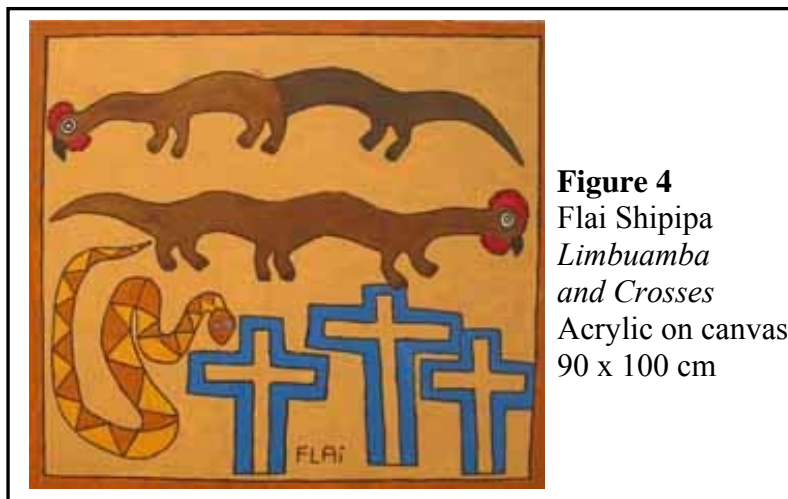
Change and continuity in art

It may be argued that Bushman art has lacked change and continuity through the ages as there has been no substantial innovations of form, perspective, space and rhythm. Perhaps this was the

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[31] The 'Limbuamba' is believed to be a deadly creature that lives in the wild in Angola. This predatory animal is said to be able to hunt and kill even humans. The !Xun word for this animal is "*Khise ganana*", the version 'Limbuamba' is "*swart taal van Angola*" (black language from Angola) (Pamo CMC, November 2009). My respondent had received this information from the older !Xun community members, who did not know any Afrikaans translation of the animal's name.

case in the past because of the nature of religious beliefs in the communities; tradition is likely to have played a vital role in the construction of the art. This way of looking at the art, however, tacitly accepts the dominant shamanistic theory. Yet shamanism cannot and does not provide explanations for all Bushman art sites across time and place (see Solomon 1995, 1997, 1999a/b).

Later Stone Age rock art may have served as a system of communication not unlike writing; the stylised images could have functioned in a way analogous to a system of writing. The allusions of communication systems cannot be boundless: "to communicate, they must be limited in both the variety and range of variation in the forms they employ and in the meanings [attached] to them" (Forge, 1977:31). Such systems "use ambiguity, especially of their core symbols … to communicate key associations and relationships that are essential to ritual and cognitive systems" (1977:31). This degree of abstraction is evident in the symbols of early Bushman art.

Anthony Forge explains that visual symbols play a key role "in the transmission of culture … from generation to generation" (1977:31). It may be the case that Bushman art did not develop similarly to western art because it was primarily a sign system, and such a system would need to be preserved while being entrusted to future generations. On the other hand, the same kind of communication system could also be attributed to early European art, a fact which did not hinder change and continuity in that art. The oral cultures of those regions, however, gave way to literary cultures and in this one might find reason for the change and continuity that took place.

Interestingly, Brandi notes that there are artistic parallels between the rock art of Australia, Africa, eastern Spain and other countries (1977:221). Of the Mimi[32] figures he writes that they "convey the impression of intentional unity, as if this form of representing the human figure was chosen by the artists for a specific purpose or reason" (1977:237). The same can be said of the recurrent elongated human figures in the rock art of early hunter-gatherers. Brandi describes these types of stick figures as "schematic" in that they are "representations of human figures that are regarded as being closer to the 'geometric' or 'symbolic' end of the continuum than to the 'naturalistic'" (1977:227). It may be argued that rock artists of old used the stick figure as a

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[32] The Mimi art style is an Australian Aboriginal art style that "comprises small red naturalistic figures, in which movement is skillfully portrayed" (Morwood, 2002:50).

symbol of group unity in order to bolster their communitarian group system. The use of similar figures in the contemporary art can perhaps be seen as symbolic of a past social unity, or at least an aspiration to such a unity and perhaps, at times, a yearning for that unity.

It should be remembered that change and continuity was cut off from the Bushmen by those who persecuted them to the extent that these groups have long been forced to hide their culture and allow themselves to be assimilated into that of another, more 'civilised' people. It is only recently in history that they have been afforded a chance to articulate themselves without fear of harm. Yet the !Xun and Khwe continue to live in a state of crisis. Approximately 80% of those living in Platfontein are unemployed and the school is finding it difficult to motivate the students to attend regularly (Sabao, personal communication, October 2008). Perhaps in invoking the images of old, the artists are trying to root themselves in a heritage, as "[s]ocieties undergoing stress and change make recourse to ritual more often than during stable times" (Tomaselli, 1999:82).

The politics of indigeneity

For the most part, contemporary Bushman art consists of two-dimensional, stylised drawings of figures that look similar to the rock drawings of old[33]. The depthlessness and stylised images tend to echo those of early rock art. As they began to encounter Europeans and Afrikaners, the Bushman artists of old would draw men on horseback and carriages. Bushman art today, however, has little if any contemporary imagery. Perhaps the reason for this is that international buyers would think it less authentically Bushman if the artwork contained anything more than the idyllic African landscape. Freciano did say that he would like to incorporate modern images in his art but he cannot because "the people will not buy it" (Interview, Platfontein, October 2008). He is thus compelled to paint in a way that is reminiscent of 'ancient' rock art or else he will not earn an income. Of further interest is that the art is marketed as 'Bushman art', the artist is thus Bushman first and artist second.

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[33] Extensive pictures of contemporary Bushman artwork currently on sale can be viewed at the Art of Africa Gallery on their website (www.theartofafrica.co.za).

Indigenous art, it seems, is constrained by the politics of indigeneity. Writing about the African art market Christopher Steiner states that "these images are constrained by the buyer's *a priori* assumptions about what is being bought – that is, the images are constructed to *satisfy* demand rather than to *create* demand" (1995:164). The art dealer is the mid-point between artists and consumers, though at times this mid-point is made to seem far greater than it is. Dealers sometimes move "objects and artefacts across institutional obstacles which often they themselves have constructed in order to restrict direct contact or trade" (1995:151). Some of these dealers bring pressure on the artists to produce what they can market; even the titles which they impose on the paintings represent the imposition of meaning on them to meet the perceived demand of western buyers (to be discussed further in Chapter Seven); the artwork and its discovery are thus made to confirm the good taste of the buyer (1995:152). This means that the art is made to work for buyers, corresponding with their notion of authentically African art. This reaffirms what Steiner later describes as "the tourist's sense of technical and cultural superiority" (1995:159).

Freciano told me of his dealings with a buyer who often tells him to draw animals (Interview, Platfontein, October 2008). These paintings sell well, therefore it seems sensible (on the part of the artist) to create such art objects according to popular taste. The romantic European image of the starving artist is starkly ironic in an African context where you need not be an artist to starve. Thus, in a state of poverty and lack of development, why should artists not paint what they know the consumer will buy? This is Tomaselli's "tourist-speak" in action; the case of indigenes performing certain behaviours for the "tourist gaze"[34]; that stems from assimilated and prescribed images of what tourists think indigenes should be (1999:102). Elsewhere Tomaselli discusses certain ≠Khomani groups that "have re-constituted themselves in terms of stereotypical cinema/tourist/coffee-table book images of pre-modern 'Bushmen'" (2003b:64).

The artist, more so than the community, has the opportunity to engage with the 'outside world' in a way that is intimate and powerful. Considering that approximately 85% of The Art of Africa's clientele are foreigners (Robison interviewed by Van de Weg, November 2007) it would not be an exaggeration to say that the art is able to speak to the world. Evoking Walter Benjamin's "The

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[34] John Urry coined the term "tourist gaze" to connote a gaze that is "constructed through difference" (2002:1). It is a gaze shaped by many factors and constructed via one's relationship with the 'other'; it is an 'othering' and pleasuring gaze which positions the other as exotic and different.

Author as Producer" (1934), Hal Foster (1995) proposes a new dispensation for the artist, that of 'the artist as ethnographer', wherein artists work as producers of texts (or other artefacts), of re-articulations of themselves, their communities and their culture. Foster argues that in this position artworks can recover long suppressed histories (1995:306). The income provided by the art may also assist artists to "secure a degree of independence from state aid and the limited opportunities for employment offered by the dominant society" (Layton, 1992:138; see also Williams, 1976:271-72). These factors of development will be discussed at length in Chapter Nine. I want to now move to a discussion of the art itself.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Looking at the art – old and new

The following is a discussion of the similarities between early rock art and contemporary Bushman art via a study of a painting by Flai Shipipa. The painting's (part mystical, part emotive) relation to the rock art of old is explained in the ensuing discussion.
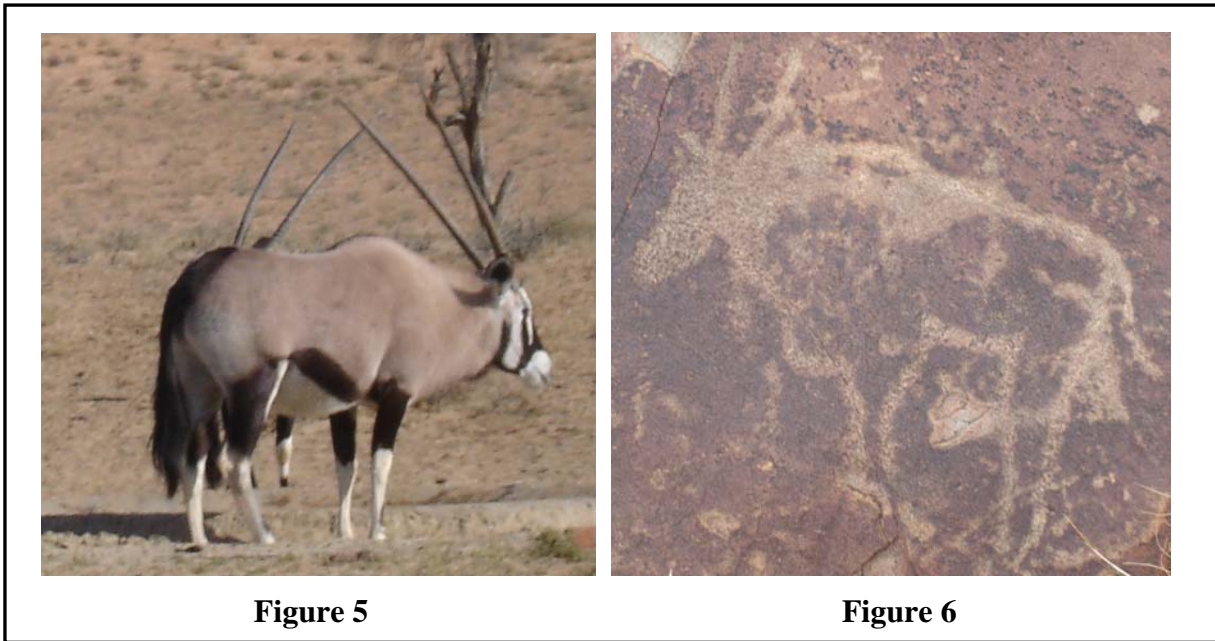
| Figure 5 | Figure 6 |

Figure 5 is a photograph taken on a game drive in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. When reviewing my pictures I noticed that most of the animals were in profile. This is probably the perspective that most of the 'ancient' Bushmen had as well. These animals would most likely have been viewed from the side and from behind, because a frontal approach would frighten the animals away. In addition, while watching *The Art of God* (2008), I noticed the only time the hunters had a close view of the animal was when it was lying exhausted and flat on the ground. This view of the animal in profile may be one of the elements contributing to the two-dimensional quality of the early rock art. **Figure 6** is a rock engraving from the Wildebeest Kuil rock art site (the engraving is about the size of a man's hand). As was the case with early rock art, there is a lack of detail and depth, and the animal is portrayed in profile.

The dominant shamanistic theory of rock art purports that depictions of animals are viewed as icons associated with human activity and never as pictures in and of themselves (Lewis-Williams, 1981:10). Depictions of animals such as the eland are seen to have been employed by shamans to activate spiritual potency in order to enter the spirit realm (Lewis-Williams and Pearce, 2004:100). Though this may be true for the rock art of old (the site at Wildebeest Kuil may have been used for ritualistic purposes), the same cannot be said for contemporary works, at least not that of the !Xun.

Figure 7	Figure 8
Untitled	*Untitled*
Unknown	Acrylic on canvas
Dimensions unavailable	Dimensions unavailable
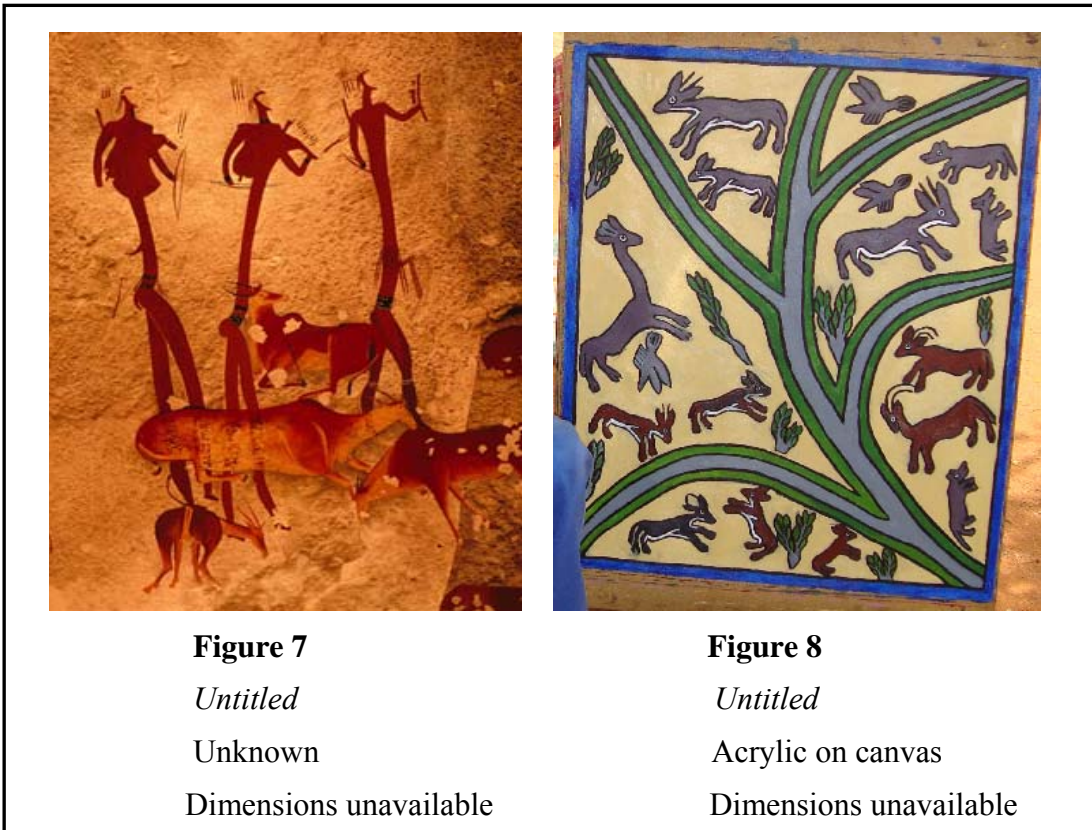
Figure 7 is a rock painting from Giant's Castle in the Drakensberg Mountains. With its ochre palette, two-dimensionality and elongated human figures it is representative of most of the Bushman rock art in southern Africa. According to Lewis-Williams, the juxtaposition of animals and human figures is symbolic rather than representational of situations observable in nature (1981:10). Perhaps the same could be said of **Figure 8** (at least of the way in which the animals are positioned). Another painting by Flai, this contemporary piece has similar characteristics not only to **Figure 7** (the rock painting) but also to **Figure 6** (the rock engraving). Flai's work is a

two-dimensional, depthless painting with limited detail. The animals are depicted in profile with few distinguishing features, reminiscent of early rock art. While there is a similarity of motifs between this contemporary painting and those of the Stone Age hunter-gatherers, there is a distinctly different feeling in Flai's artwork. There are a few 'earth' colours in this painting; Flai has incorporated blues and greens as well. These hues are not, however, the handmade, 'of the earth' pigments used by the old rock artists; they are store-bought acrylics. I am of the opinion that this does not lessen the value of the work but highlights a way in which these contemporary artists are engaging with the contemporary world. The larger range of colour and the clear elements of design enhance and set Flai's work apart as contemporary art.

Of the artists I interviewed, Flai was the only one who intended that there be a story behind his artworks. When asked if he would relate the story behind this particular painting (**Figure 8**), he answered: "The green and blue, that's the water, the river, and those are the river's veins. Each place is different. For example [he points], this one is South Africa, Namibia, Angola, Zimbabwe and England" (Interview, Platfontein, October 2008). I asked "Why England, with all the African countries?" He replied, "Those places that God shaped, the Bushmen were the first people that knew those places" (Interview, October 2008). Flai went on to relate that when the buyers came they also recorded the stories behind each of the paintings. He believed that the stories followed the paintings and that those who had access to the paintings would also have access to the stories.

Having seen Flai's work in three different exhibitions, I noticed that each artwork was emotively named, although Flai himself does not name his artworks. I gathered that the buyers create names for each work from the stories that Flai recounts, while the stories themselves do not accompany the works. This is apparently not uncommon in the indigenous art market; what is more the titles of paintings are changed at times to fit the current trends of the art world, an act which conditions what the viewer sees in the work (Steiner, 1995:156). The titles of Flai's works are often mystical in nature, alluding to long-held romantic myths of the Bushmen. Yet we cannot deny that Flai has a part in this as the titles are extracted from the stories he recounts.

The shamanistic model maintains that for the Bushmen there is no divide between religion and aesthetics (see Lewis-Williams 1981, Lewis-Williams and Dowson 1989, and Lewis-Williams

and Pearce 2004). Certain theorists believe that the divide between art and religion occurs only in western culture since "the religious crisis of the Enlightenment" (Gell, 1998:97). The dominant interpretation of rock art would agree. Yet even if the shamanistic model proves valid for an explanation of the function of the 'ancient' rock art, the same cannot be said of contemporary Bushman art. If, however, the rock art of old was central to the telling of stories, then it may be said that this function has carried over into the contemporary art. It remains, however, a telling of stories of the past. Yet contemporary Bushman art can be so much more: it could act as a platform to aid these artists in changing the romanticised view of them held by many.

These artists are clearly trying to earn a living; as Tomaselli notes, primitivity is now a "cultural commodity sold to earn an income" (2003b:64). The concern is when the art becomes merely an imitation of meaningful cultural objects of the past. Unlike Pop Art, the vacant quality of which had a socio-political message, vacuous indigenous art is an art that loses quality and aesthetic value; it is art that has the power to harm the indigenous art industry as a whole. In "Hotel Kalahari" McLennan-Dodd (2003a) tells of her encounter with Silikat van Wyk, a ≠Khomani Bushman. She writes, "[h]e tells me he had a dream about me and the seven stars, and my Bushman name is 'Morning Star' and look, here is a necklace with stars on it for only R20" (2003a:463). The necklace is suddenly imbued with Bushman symbolism and mysticism which makes it all the more valuable. This is certainly innovative and we cannot deny Silikat's entrepreneurial flair. A concern, however, is that these artists and craftspeople create what they believe the customer wants, that is, what they believe the customer thinks is authentically Bushman. The artwork then becomes functional only as a commercial product.

The Platfontein artists describe their art in terms of their folklore. Even when this was not entirely the case, my respondents affirmed that when they painted they thought of their past, their *groot ouers* (grandparents/forefathers), and the life they led as young boys in the country of their birth. Even these memories come back to the artists as stories of the past. When asked if they thought to paint scenes from modern-day life, the general reply was that they painted that which they were taught and nothing further. This was perplexing since I always thought of an artist as an innovative creator who looks forward and onward to new and exciting things, yet these artists were only looking backward. However, one particular artist's response made me understand this,

"We must draw old things, from our forefathers … we must not do modern work, we must do work of the old days so that we can prove that we are still people from the old days" (Carimbwe interview, Platfontein, October 2008).

It may be argued that these contemporary Bushman artists are untrained and thus unable to create 'good art'. On the other hand, as many have noted before, art does not exist within a vacuum, and because of this we must understand that these artists are creating art in conjunction with the acquisition of knowledge pertaining to such concepts as the tourist gaze, the politics of primitivity, and the politics of identity. Their drawing in a so-called 'child-like' manner may be seen as more than merely drawing without training, or drawing without talent. It is drawing with the understanding that primitivity sells (see Tomaselli, 2003a:64), and is also perhaps linked to their drawing with nostalgia; a nostalgia that liberates them from the demeaning present day.

Using O'Toole's Table (part two)

The following begins a study of two individual works, which, as mentioned earlier, will be analysed using O'Toole's Table of Functions and Systems in Painting (1994), available on page 22. Finding no kind words for art historians, O'Toole laments that they have "created the cult of the artist as an individual partly because this suited the ideology of the bourgeois public they served and partly because biographical detail is the easiest kind of factual evidence to accumulate" (1994:176-77). The authority of art historians, according to O'Toole, is "achieved mainly through modality" in that "it is not what you say that counts, but the way that you say it" (1994:176). He states that "[h]ard evidence, which the reader might compare with his own observations, is lacking, and impressionistic assertions and unsubstantiable comparisons are framed in a discourse of traditional authority" (ibid).

Two central theories underlie art history; the first is that "the study of art must be factual" and the second is that it must be chronological (O'Toole, 1994:178). O'Toole states that the theory of chronology is "about certain patterns of cause and effect and influence" in that "certain social, political and biographical events 'cause' certain pictorial themes and styles" and "certain artists, or whole schools or centuries of artists 'influence' their successors" (1994:179). Cumulatively, this becomes a 'Great Tradition' which marginalises women, "the non-European, the ethnic and

the primitive" (1994:180), and "whose ineluctable chronology is inscribed in every textbook, teaching practice and gallery layout in the [w]estern world" (1994:179). There is thus no room left for alternative reading of artworks.

Interestingly, this Great Tradition has proven central to art criticism and the exorbitant amounts paid for certain paintings (O'Toole, 1994:179). This is because artistic value is an abstract term in which value "is not present in the cultural object itself" but is rather accredited, depending on the context of the cultural product in question (Lewis, 1990:7). This echoes my previous comment that the contemporary art of the !Xun is made valuable because it is *Bushman*. Describing the discourse of art history as one that is certain of itself, O'Toole holds that it is a discourse that demands an all-encompassing knowledge of 'The History of Art' in order for any kind of meaningful observation to be made (1994:182). This discourse has become so entrenched that non-experts have come to rely on art historians to pronounce on the meaning of artworks (ibid). The aim of O'Toole's semiotics, on the other hand, is to provide "a new vocabulary which anyone can learn to use and which will empower us to express our insights about a work and compare them confidently and courteously with others" (ibid).

The use of semiotics may bring us to alternative readings of art, which do not fit within the scope of the Great Tradition, thus proving that the discourse of art history "is a cultural practice which is politically and economically determined" (O'Toole, 1994:182). The priority of semiotics is "the study of the features of the text itself" (1994:181). It examines what is represented; the modal strategies used to engage the viewer and colour our perception; its compositional arrangement; and the interactions between these three functions – representation, modality and composition (ibid). Extra-textual facts about artists, their milieu, and the broader socio-political and economic structure of their epoch are left for "later consideration when their relevance has been proved by aspects of the text itself" (ibid).

The three functions (representation, modality and composition) work together and "are inseparable, and we only separate them in our description as a convenient way of focusing on the particular systems which operate for each function one at a time" (O'Toole, 1994:22-3). While there may be many paintings where not all the systems will be relevant, "there are a great many

paintings where it does help to distinguish between the various ranks of unit" (1994:12). This is because "our eyes tend to scan the surface of the canvas and 'home in' on configurations that we recognise"; thus "a kind of 'shuttling' process begins to take place between our images of each unit and of the picture as a whole" (ibid). As O'Toole notes, the table allows for one to move between the boxes as well as between the three main functions. This is not only possible, but probably inevitable: evidence of this is found in the following analysis of *Animals Going to the Water* (undated).

Figure 12
Freciano Ndala
Animals Going to the Water (Self-titled)
Acrylic on canvas
100 x 90 cm

With its representation of different types of buck the work may be described as a rural scene (figure/work/representational function)[35] and while there seems to be no action – the straight-legged stance of the animals conveys a sense of stillness – the title evokes a sense of motion. The

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[35] The information in parenthesis is helpful in delineating which 'box' in O'Toole's table is being discussed at specific times (though it must be remembered that the discussion will move between boxes making intuitive links): '(figure/representational function)' for example shows that in identifying the specific *figures* in the *work* the *representational function* can be worked out: a rural scene is portrayed.

geometric shapes, however, create a kind of kaleidoscopic movement between the animals (work/modal function), thus saving the painting from being entirely static. The composition is such that there is no recognisable foreground, middle-ground and background (work/compositional function). The geometric shapes also work to blur any lines that the viewer's eye might draw to construct their own foreground, middle-ground and background. The animals, while standing still, seem to not stand on anything at all; in truth they seem to be floating (figure/representational/modal function). All these work together to create a sense of weightlessness in the painting. This weightlessness, however, does not create imbalance in the work. This is due to the strong horizontals and verticals in the frame.

Figure 13
Animals Going to the Water (with guidelines)
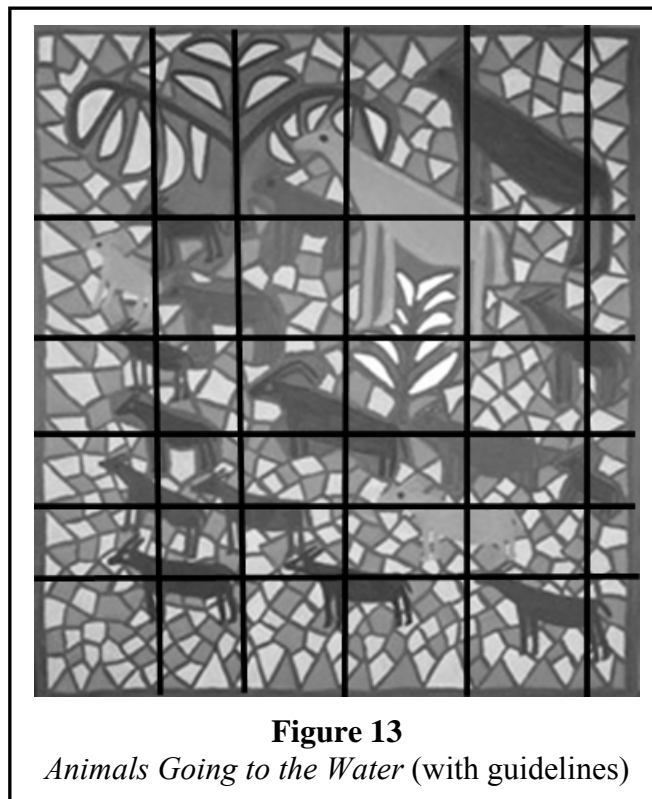
The animals stand almost in rows, creating horizontal and vertical lines that run both across and from top to bottom (figure/modal function). Had these strong lines not been incorporated in the work the weightlessness would have overwhelmed the painting; thus these horizontal and vertical axes work within the frame to "contribute to harmony and stability" (O'Toole, 1994:23).

Another aspect that offsets the feeling of weightlessness in the painting is that of the rigid, static stance of the animals which grants them a sense of solidity (figure/representational/modal function). Harmony is further created via the use of contrasting colours, also known as complementary colours (work/compositional function).

The contrasting colours used in this painting are red and green. Contrasting colours are those opposite each other on the colour wheel. When placed next to each other on the canvas they fight for dominance and make each other appear brighter (www.alifetimeofcolor.com). They also create a sense of motion, as together they seem to vibrate. Red and green are warm colours and when set together they appear larger and fill the space (ibid), imparting a sense of urgency which further emphasises the motion communicated. The brown undertones bring out the *earthiness* in the red and green; these earth colours thus complement and correspond to the representation of a rural scene. Overall, it is clear that what initially appeared to be a simple work has proved to be one that is not only aesthetically pleasing, but having been imbued with recognisable aesthetic principles; it is also a manifestation of the aesthetic awareness of the artist.

Returning to the notion that Bushman art, including the art of contemporary Bushman artists, is child-like, it seems ironic that in their efforts to repudiate the art traditions of their time, Pablo Picasso and his Modernist contemporaries looked to the objects of African culture that had been taken to Europe by anthropologists and collectors (Blocker, 1994:280). The Modernists lauded these objects for what they believed was a kind of freedom from the formal techniques of their day for which they themselves had searched (1994:281). They began to adopt such freedoms in their own work. Blocker notes that these European artists, having been guided by "the Romantic assumptions of their own generation", in turn "misread primitive art as individualistic bravado, [and] spontaneous outpouring of savage emotion, seriously overlooking aspects of skill, technique, and indigenous artistic conventions" (ibid).

Assisted by anthropologists, western artists did eventually come to see what they had overlooked in African art. This new-found knowledge, however, sparked another set of ideas: African artists were suddenly denied creativity or inventiveness; they were seen rather to be stifled by staying within "prescribed ancient formulae" (Blocker, 1994:283). African art thus went from inspiring

European artists to being criticised for the selfsame 'freedoms' it was supposed to have held. The most common criticism is that the art is child-like, yet the naive figures in the work of European artists such as Henri Matisse are rarely criticised as such. When these works are placed side by side – such as Matisse's *The Fall of Icarus* (1943) and the Platfontein artist, Tuoi Samcuia's *Rooibok* (undated) – the argument of child-like art is shown to be inconsistent[36].
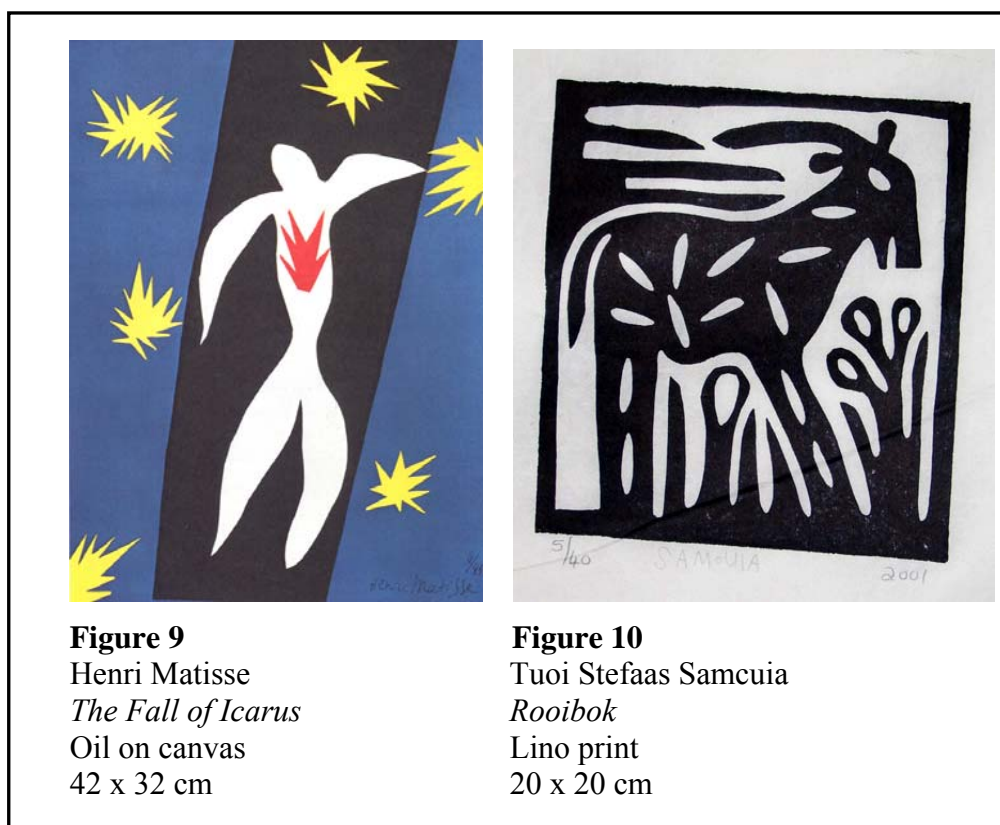
Figure 9
Henri Matisse
The Fall of Icarus
Oil on canvas
42 x 32 cm

Figure 10
Tuoi Stefaas Samcuia
Rooibok
Lino print
20 x 20 cm

Samcuia's linoprint is based almost solely on the use of line in composition (work/compositional function). The starkness of the black on white is punctuated by strong verticals and horizontals. The verticals are present in the thick lines of the buck's leg and the growth of the vegetation; the horizontals are present in the lines emerging from the frame at the top left and continue into the

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[36] Matisse was noted "for his creative flouting of the conventional rules of drawing and perspective, as well as his fluid and innovative draughtsmanship" (www.visual–arts–cork.com). He broke the rules of composition and in breaking them, he re-applied them. This comparison between Matisse and Samcuia is not intended to show that Matisse is less of an artist (only the ignorant would propose this) but rather that the dismissal of contemporary Bushman art on the grounds of it being so-called 'child-like' is an ignorant disregard of the strengths of the work.

horn of the buck. The strength of these straight lines tends to lend a hardness to the piece, yet neither of these – verticals or horizontals – overwhelms the piece; rather they are brought together in a harmonious balance by the curve of the buck's back and tail (member/modal function). This curve leads up from the vertical lines and flows into the horizontal.

A second curve is created in the line of the horn and the face; this also works to harmonise and balance out the linear shapes. In offsetting the straight lines the curves add a gentleness to the piece, which may be attributed to the nature of the buck itself, but there is also strength conveyed via the strong trunk-like legs (member/modal function). The horizontals work to guide the eye across the top of the print, also lending weight to the top section. From here the eye moves to the curve – from horn to tail – and then downwards to the buck's firmly planted feet and the surrounding vegetation (episode/modal/compositional function). This movement also works from the bottom of the print going upwards.

Figure 11
Rooibok (with guidelines)
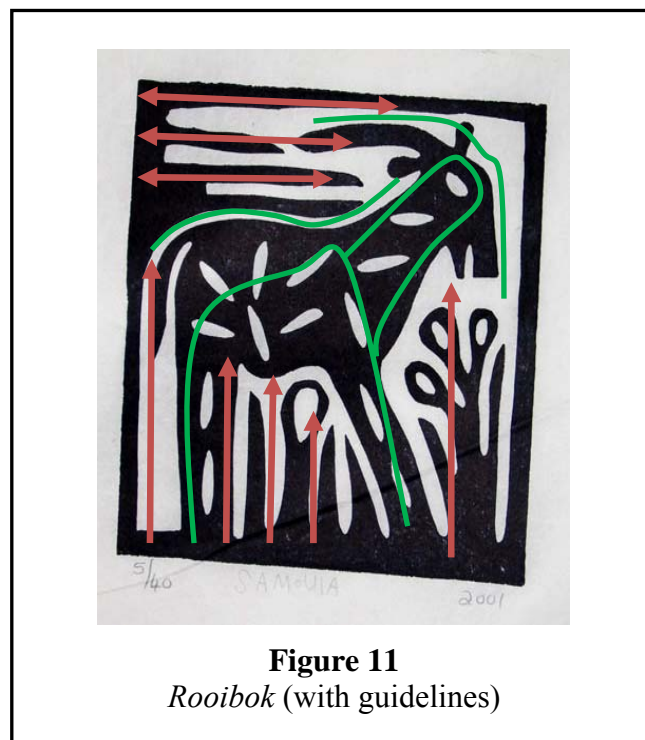
The elongated shapes inside the buck also create and facilitate movement upwards, downwards and from side to side. The smooth, unbroken lines create a fusion between buck and vegetation:

fauna and flora are one. Here line is used to express transparency, this technique[37] was used by the "Paleolithic painters in caves, where one animal merges into and overlaps another and sometimes pregnant animals are shown with young inside them"; this transparency "implies interpenetration", where one form penetrates another and both are "seen simultaneously" (Malins, 1980:36). In *Rooibok* this maybe be seen as symbolic of the Bushmen's notion of the connection between man, animal and earth (see also Mhiripiri 2009 for a discussion of this fusion of man, animal and nature in the art of the renowned ≠Khomani artist Vetkat Kruiper). *Rooibok* is a print that uses recognisable aesthetic conventions; the end result is that of artistic elements working together to create a harmonious equilibrium.

Chapter summary
The above have been randomly selected !Xun artworks used for analysis. It has been shown, from the above analysis, that artworks by contemporary Bushman artists are able to be critically analysed using a replicable semiotic method. In analysing the art using O'Toole's table, a chart built on western conceptions of art, I found that contemporary Bushman art can be discussed in an intelligent and critical manner without having to regress into romantic primitivism. It is important that we view this art not as work that is soon to be extinct, or work to be dismissed as child-like, but rather as art that engages with the present and that will change and progress along with the people who make it.

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[37] Interestingly, this linear transparency was developed by the Cubists into their trademark 'simultaneous view' (see Malins, 1980:36).

CHAPTER EIGHT

Return to Platfontein: pillaging for truth

On a return trip to Platfontein in February 2009, I visited the artists I had initially interviewed and showed them each a copy of two of their paintings[38]. None of the artists asked for compensation for their time, but I did want to express my appreciation in some way. Instead of commodifying their knowledge by offering them money, I presented each of them with a box of oil pastels. From my previous interviews I gathered that art supplies were a component of the power the buyers held over the artists (Fieldnotes, October 2008), the details of which will be discussed further on. Initially apprehensive about taking the artists copies of their work, I was afraid they would be distressed by what they might see as a copy that could be sold. Providence lent a hand; my copies were lost in transit and I had to utilise the printer at an internet café in Kimberley. The prints from the antediluvian machine were inadequately copied – inadequate for any sale. The artists seemed unperturbed; yet eager to quell any imaginings of exploitation, I offered to leave them with their respective prints at the end of each interview.

I asked the artists whether they recognised the paintings and with each of them having answered in the affirmative I enquired about when the works were painted, to whom they had been sold and for how much. I did not inform the artists about the gallery's selling price as I felt that without being equipped with a broader knowledge of the industry this information would serve only to disturb them. Freciano said that he knew the man who bought his work sold it to others at a higher price: he said that he would "buy it for [R]500 but maybe sell it for [R]1000" (Interview, Platfontein, February 2009). This estimation was far from accurate; the paintings in question were selling for sums in excess of R10 000. The selling prices of the works shown here are those of the Art of Africa at the time of writing.

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[38] Of the four main artists I had interviewed, Flai was the only one I could not speak with on this return visit as he had just been discharged from hospital and was too sick to be interviewed. Regarding the paintings, I had found these images on the Art of Africa website (see www.theartofafrica.co.za).

Joao Dikunga

Figure 14
The Hunter's Wife
Selling price: R29 000
Acrylic on canvas
90 x 100 cm

Figure 15
Hunter Waiting
Selling price: R9800
Acrylic on canvas
80 x 60 cm

Each artist had painted these works years ago. Joao Dikunga maintained that he had painted both *The Hunter's Wife* and *Hunter Waiting* in 1990. Freciano's works, painted in early 2008, were the most recent. Katunga Carimbwe, however, said that he had completed the works while still at Schmidtsdrift, and while he could not think of the date, my translator noted that the community had been in Schmidtsdrift not less than sixteen years ago. Regarding the payment received for the works, Joao had received no money, whereas Katunga had initially received R50 for each painting. Katunga had taken part in an art workshop held at Schmidtsdrift in which the artists were supplied materials and asked to complete one work per week. At the end of that week they were paid R50. After the workshop the artists complained about the "*min geld*" (little money) they had received. When they directed their complaints to those heading up the workshop, they were each awarded an additional R5000. Katunga's paintings, *Rock Art* and *Baobab Tree*, are currently on sale at the Art of Africa Gallery for R16 000 and R18 000 respectively.

Katunga Carimbwe

Figure 16
Rock art
Selling price: R16 000
Acrylic on canvas
80 x 80 cm

Figure 17
Baobab tree
Selling price: R18 000
Acrylic on canvas
90 x 100 cm

While Freciano was promised R300 for each painting, he received no money. When asked why he parted with his paintings without being paid, he simply responded that he had trusted the buyer. Interestingly, the payment policy of The Art of Africa maintains that artworks are only delivered in seven to fourteen days from confirmation of payment (www.artofafrica.co.za). Evidently, they do not trust their customers as much as they expect the artists to trust their dealers. Because the supplies belong to the dealer, a tacit rule is that the work cannot be sold to anyone other than the dealer lest the artist is made liable for the cost of the materials.

Because the materials belong to the dealer, the artwork is already regarded as his property. This is perhaps another reason for not withholding paintings before payment. What worsens this already relationally unequal situation is that, for the most part, the artists have little idea who these buyers are or for whom they work. They say "Keila[39] bought it" or "Zierkie bought it", but they do not know from where these people come. These dealers are from different galleries and

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[39] This name repeatedly used by the artists is not the same Keila Mierke of SASI who currently works with the artists.

are not obliged to work through SASI. Furthermore, there is currently no regulation set in place to stipulate how dealers are to conduct transactions with the artists.

SASI is presently attempting to prevent a certain buyer, whom the artists know only as 'Zierkie', from continuing to purchase their art. The artists have complained of non-payment for works sold to this man. SASI has sent lawyer's letters and has tried to contact him, but unsuccessfully thus far. The artists seem to be too trusting of buyers who promise payment once the work is sold; unfortunately little can be done for them once these buyers leave with the paintings. It is, however, common practice in the art world for dealers to take work on consignment. Nevertheless, the !Xun artists are left waiting for payment in some instances for a period of years. The alternative, however, can be similarly unjust. Dealers who buy the work immediately tend to bargain for a low price – around R300, with R500 as the maximum payout – and while this seems a fair price for a single work, the exorbitant resale value makes their haggling over the initial price all the more discreditable.

This is not merely an argument over money. When asked if she bargains with her artists and craftspeople, Sue Greenberg, the curator and owner of the Artisan Gallery in Durban, had this to say: "If somebody has put hours and hours of work into something and decides that it's worth R300 I would not belittle them by saying 'hmm, I'll only give you R200 for that'" (Interview, Durban, May 2009). This is at the heart of the problem: to haggle over the price is inadvertently to question the worth of not only the artwork but the artist. Therefore, it is not merely an act of exploitation; it is a dehumanising act that is magnified in respect to marginalised communities with a history of being subjugated.

Freciano Ndala

Figure 18
Animals going to the water
Selling price: R28 500
Acrylic on canvas
100 x 90 cm

Figure 19
Waterhole
Selling price: R21 500
Acrylic on canvas
100 x 90 cm

I was told that Gezz Robison of The Art of Africa has assured SASI that he pays the artists R2500 per painting (Mierke interview, Kimberley, May 2009). When I remarked that The Art of Africa told me that the artists get paid 60% of the profits of the sale, Keila Mierke, the Craft Facilitator at SASI, said, "Well, I can't say anything about that because it's not worked through SASI. So I don't have a big knowledge of that" (Interview, Kimberley, May 2009). When asked why The Art of Africa is still allowed to buy directly from the artists, Mierke said:

> SASI is in the process of negotiating basic memorandums of understanding [MOU] with the artists, but they have a free choice as to through whom they want to market their work. If they agree to the MOU then we can assist them with these matters – as they have been exploited in the past" (CMC, April, 2009).

When it comes down to survival, however, as Meryl-Joy Schippers, the Director of SASI noted, "if an artist can sell a work even for a small amount of money, at least they would have made some money out of it" (Interview, Kimberley, May 2009).

Costs of the trade

We cannot merely criticise The Art of Africa without considering the costs of business. Believing this, I hoped that the gallery would be forthright in discussing monetary issues. I had appealed several times for an estimate of the costs incurred by the gallery when purchasing and selling a work from the Platfontein artists. I realised that before the work was bought there was the transport fee to consider (the buyer had to fly back and forth from Cape Town) and the fee for a translator. Furthermore, as I was reminded by Schippers, there is little movement of the paintings on the website. Katunga's *Rock Art* and *Baobab Tree* are extreme examples of this (having been painted not less than sixteen years ago).

Receiving no response from The Art of Africa, I speculated over the cost of holding these paintings and other sundry costs that would justify the mark-up. These costs are many: insurance, framing, holding, advertising and marketing, maintaining the website, and liaisons with customers. There are also the costs of general upkeep of the gallery to consider: rent/bonds, taxes, electricity, water, refuse disposal, internet and telecommunications, employees' salaries and wages. These costs can easily increase almost overnight, as illustrated in the example given by Greenberg (Artisan's curator and owner):

> I just had a jewellery ("Just rings") exhibition where R200 000 worth of stock came in and I had to get extra insurance (just for my peace of mind, so I could sleep at night!) and the cost was R3500 for the month. So there are costs which artists do not take into account, but any reputable gallery should make sure their stock is well taken care of, especially if it is on consignment (CMC, August 2009).

Greenberg went on to say that "[t]he fact that so many galleries have been forced to close down in the past months with a turn in the economy surely tells us that we are skating on thin ice and are not making the killing as some artist believe" (CMC, August 2009). She did mention, however, "[t]hat is not to say that some galleries have acted unprofessionally from time to time. I

am sure they have, but most are doing the best they can for the artists, under quite trying circumstances" (CMC, August 2009). Greenberg spoke openly about her business transactions with artists and craftspeople. When I told her of the difficulties I was having with The Art of Africa she said, "[c]an't think why the gallery concerned can't help. Some won't I know, maybe they have something to hide!" (CMC, August 2009). Tomaselli offered another response; saying that businesses sometimes refrain from answering questions not because they have anything to hide but rather due to apprehension over revealing trade secrets (Personal communication, May 2009). This is perhaps true in some cases, though with all I have learnt about the discrepancies of business between the gallery and the Platfontein artists, and with their silence after my numerous emails, I am unable to vindicate The Art of Africa with such a response.

Towards a Code of Conduct

Australia's National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA) has compiled a code of conduct regarding the exhibition, sale and marketing of indigenous art (Van de Weg, 2007:38). This code is intended as a guide for the indigenous art industry "covering industry issues relating to the production and sale of indigenous artwork and intellectual property uses" (NAVA, 2007:1). Wendy van de Weg suggests the compilation of a similar document for Bushman art. She maintains that such a document would "protect artists, dealers, and [NGOs] alike" (2007:39); providing "a neutral, measurable and national set of standards" (NAVA, 2007:1). Even though "[t]here can surely be no simple comparison with the Australian scenario" (Solomon, CMC, August 2009), a code with similar standards would help to curb the exploitation of these artists and craftspeople on a national scale. Such a document would also help to quell contentions between organisations.

A code of conduct would ensure that online galleries represent the Bushmen in a way that is agreed upon by the communities (Van de Weg, 2007:40). Nevertheless, such representation is hardly their own – they should be mobilised to participate in the production and presentation of their own media products. While endeavours such as Hella Rabbethge-Schiller's exhibition and eponymous book, *Memory and Magic* (2006), assist in putting these communities and their art on the proverbial map, it is still not their own representation of themselves and their art. The South American Kayapo Indians are an example of an indigenous community that has learnt how to use

the media as a platform to voice themselves; their participatory video productions are aimed at voicing their opinions on a global platform (see *The Kayapo: Out of the Forest*, 1989). Granted, it will take a long time before Bushmen communities are able to produce and market their own media products, yet this remains an ultimate aim.

When asked for her thoughts on the artists' complaint about insufficient payments, Mierke felt that at times the artists believe they are being exploited because they "lack knowledge of the art world, and art systems", thus their perception is that:

> ...people buy their work and sell for huge prices, which in cases might be true. But then these galleries, agents carry/hang a work for months, even a year or two before it sells – and then the artists have no notion of rental fees, framing, overheads, liaisoning [sic] with prospective buyers, organising exhibitions, marketing … various costs involved – they only see selling price and think they are being done in. (Mierke CMC, October 2008)

Therefore, together with the formation of policies concerning the relations between artists and dealers and the marketing of paintings, it is necessary to educate the artists about the workings of the industry, equipping them to ascertain whether or not they are obtaining a fair deal. This would empower the artists and ultimately mean less policing for the national organisation that would need to be created in order to enforce the code. It is not only the artists who need protecting. There are dealers (few and far between though they may be) who are genuinely concerned with the development of their artists. Greenberg told me of instances in which a buyer would find an artwork in her gallery and then contact the craftsperson and conduct a private sale (Interview, Durban, May 2009). While she had marketed, advertised and housed the work she had been wronged by both the craftsperson and the buyer in that she was not awarded compensation for her time, money and business know-how that had contributed to the sale of the work. Stipulations in the code, referring to the conduct of artists towards dealers, and perhaps to the conduct of consumers towards dealers and artists, would assist in reforming practice.

A code of conduct would also be useful in quality control. There are many disputable works that are both bought and sold on the sole merit of the artist's Bushman ancestry and the difference between genuinely original work and examples of "airport art" which at best have only economic

importance is one which must not be obscured. This might not be purely imitative art – as discussed in Chapter Seven – yet it certainly tends to lower the quality of the entire body of indigenous art. Perhaps, within the code of conduct, the creation of certain stipulations could allow for quality control – much like what Gantsi Craft[40] has done with the crafts of Botswana's !Xoo. Tomaselli tells of his yearly visits to this community, beginning in 1994 (Personal communication, June 2009). The crafts were of different qualities and haphazardly priced. A year later the quality had improved and a standard pricing system had been introduced. When asked about this, the community told Tomaselli about their partnership with Gantsi Craft. This organisation supplies materials (and at times sells these materials) to the craftspeople who then sell the end product back to Gantsi Craft. For most of the women of the village there is little other work, Gantsi provides work and enables them to earn an income. This partnership has led to a considerable improvement in the quality and availability of crafts. Such an improvement is a direct reflection of skills development.

In his discussion of the arts in Britain, Justin Lewis (1990) makes a few suggestions that are practicable in regards to contemporary Bushman art. He discusses using the arts in an economic strategy that creates an image for the tourist, creates pride for the local community and promotes investment by local and international businesses (1990:131). There is, however, a flaw in local promotion, where communities compete with each other for business. The success of one of these community projects may mean the failure of another. Lewis proffers a national central plan as a solution. In a South African context this could be in the form of a nation-wide NGO that caters for all indigenous communities with projects that complement each other, so when tourists visit one place they are informed of another that offers a different experience, another *un*missable community to visit. Regarding the state of affairs of the Platfontein artists, short of a nation-wide NGO, a code of conduct could be implemented in order to support the artists, dealers and consumers and help to curb the proliferation of exploitation of the artists.

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[40] See (www.kuru.co.bw/gantsicraft.org) for more information on Gantsi Craft.

For the love of the game: Soccer World Cup tourism and its effects on indigenous art

The forthcoming Soccer World Cup is an example of an event that promises international revenue. Tourists will no doubt wish to return home with their share of African paraphernalia, and in some cases these will include art objects. The consulting firm, Grant Thornton, has estimated that the 2010 Fifa World Cup will contribute at least R51.1 billion to South Africa's gross domestic product (www.southafrica.info). This is R29.8 billion higher than their original estimate in 2004. It is estimated that the games will be attended by 289 000 overseas visitors, 48 000 African visitors and around 115 000 domestic tourists (ibid). Around 25 000 overseas and 100 000 African non-ticket-holding tourists are expected to visit South Africa during the World Cup (ibid).

These visitors will want to experience South African culture and will surely return home with an array of holiday bric-a-brac. As much as their purchasing will boost the South African economy these consumers could do much harm to the sale of indigenous art. Business-minded artists and craftspeople could easily sell their wares and make a handsome profit, but the rest may well be exploited to a higher degree than they are currently. Since the demand for indigenous art will increase exponentially during this period, certain gatekeepers – art dealers and curio-shop owners – will benefit greatly, but may leave the artists without the benefit of higher wages.

Certain curio-shop owners already exploit the lack of business know-how amongst their suppliers. In speaking to an employee of a curio-shop in Durban's Victoria Street Market, I was told of instances in which an artist will arrive with a suitcase full of prints (Anon, personal communication, July 2009). He is informed that he is to come at the end of the week for payment, the suitcase is handed over to the shop, the employees are told to take out a handful of prints, which will be sold exclusively for the shop; the artist gets no commission from these pilfered prints. The shop buys the rest of the prints from the artist for around R8 each.

The Victoria Street Market is always bustling with foreign tourists, and the prints are sold to these tourists for various prices – whatever the salespeople can obtain, depending on the naivety of the tourist – but the average price for a single print is around R100. While interviewing a curio-shop owner I witnessed a sale made with a foreign customer. The item concerned was an

African mask, sold for over R200. I later found out it had cost the shop owner a mere R50. Because of what, I believe, will be the multiplication of such scenarios, I see the creation of a code of conduct as an immediate requisite. Such a code is necessary not only for Bushman art but all indigenous art in South Africa[41]. It is not my intention, however, to assume "that all indigenous peoples are manipulated" for this is to "fall into the trap of universal notions of oppression"; and often such a view "gravely [underestimates] those it purports to protect" (Pack, 2001:158). By ensuring economic responsibility and ethical business practices, a code of conduct would benefit not only the artists but also dealers and consumers of the art.

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[41] There are many illegal immigrant artists and craftspeople who ply their wares to curio-shop owners in the Victoria Street Market. These people, at least, are trying to earn a decent living. The creation of a code of conduct regarding indigenous arts, however, might work to undermine their business and lead them to counterproductive means of income. These and other concerns need to be taken into consideration in the writing up of such a code.

CHAPTER NINE

Overview

Beginning with the effect of romantic primitivism on development, this chapter aims to explore the factors affecting development in Platfontein; these are conditions that have worked toward the failure of many different development ventures in this community, in particular, the !Xun and Khwe Art Project. The use of art workshops as centres of social healing, artistic networking, skills development and project continuation will be discussed. Recommendations are made toward possible strategies for future skills development amongst the Platfontein artists.

Lines drawn in the sand: romantic primitivism and its effect on development

Development potential has always been marred by a romantic primitivist perspective. As described by Roger Sandall (2001), romantic primitivism involves the inclination of governments towards preservation of past practices instead of development, which may afford indigenous communities a significant degree of self-government. Sandall argues that the idea of preservation and the independence afforded these communities have made them victims of anti-assimilationist policies which are "embraced and promoted by idealistic middle-class whites" (2001:14). The choice to live a 'traditional' lifestyle therefore seems to be no choice at all. Furthermore, a traditionalist livelihood positions these communities in a living diorama, in which they become representations of a generalised past. This is an extension of the noble savage image which implicitly suggests that western modes of life defile 'Bushman culture'. This perspective is singularly tolerant of an art that portrays a suspended culture, undefiled by the west (though ironically, contemporary Bushmen artists use materials that are specifically modern: acrylic/oil paints, canvases and linoleum for example). Paradoxically, this seems not to deter western buyers; providing the image is that of an idyllic hunter-gatherer culture suspended in time, they seem content to purchase the work.

These artists "are not only accepted *even though* but perhaps precisely *because* they are not using [w]estern academic techniques … [thus] [t]heir 'primitive' style becomes a mark of authenticity and visual expression unspoilt by [w]estern academicism" (Marshall, 2000:102). Yet in the face of this stereotype, contemporary Bushmen artists could work to defy and "subvert the authority

of the [w]estern dominated academy and its forms and expectations" (Marshall, 2000:103). Dissidents may argue that these artists have not had the training and have not mastered long-standing artistic conventions to the extent of being able to defy them. Yet their informal training, the knowledge obtained over the years from visiting their collective exhibitions[42], as well as their access to each other's work and to the work of other artists from outside their community has certainly contributed to a kind of artistic education.

We cannot deny that "San languages, cultures and identities, like all other societies, exhibit social practices that adapt, change and develop continuously *through time*, space and place" (Tomaselli, 2001:3). Therefore, to compel culture to remain a certain way is to inhibit development and growth. Yet it may be said that the Bushmen themselves are part of the problem of romantic primitivism; artists paint idyllic pastoral scenes and other community members work as trackers and guides[43] – their job descriptions, it seems, have not changed since the 18th century. It could be argued, however, that the Bushmen engage with romantic primitivism because we have displaced their "pre-colonial images of their forefathers and themselves" and have imposed on them our image of what they should be (Tomaselli, 2001:3; see also Kulick and Willson 1992, and Lewis-Williams and Pearce 2004). This Sandall decries as "[w]estern sentimentalism fashionable among spoiled, white, discontent urbanites"; the indigene is then "caught up in the fantasizing of their media admirers and academic friends" (2001:x). In an interview with two SASI employees at the time, Tomaselli relates his encounter with Gao, the lead actor in the *Gods Must be Crazy* films:

> …he [Gao] told us how particularly German tourists spend days driving out there, and some kind of guide will say, "There's Gao! There's Gao sitting in his overalls outside his four-bedroom house with a tin roof". The tourists get very angry because they've spent all this time and money getting there and this guy doesn't even exist like he does in the film (Interview, July 2001).

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[42] The art of the !Xun and Khwe have been exhibited on numerous occasions at the William Humphreys Gallery and at Wildebeest Kuil for example. The organisers usually transport the artists to the opening night of the exhibition (Fieldnotes, February 2009).

[43] See Dyll (forthcoming) and Finlay (2009) for more on !Xaus Lodge where a cultural village has been set up in which tourists can engage with the Bushmen who are asked to relocate to this area for a time.

The paradigm of romantic primitivism allows for little progress. It is a paradigm that imposes a kind of glass ceiling on those communities concerned, placing the indigene in a singular and sentimentalised role. There are few alternatives available however. Yet to leave these struggling communities to their own governance seems a decision both socially and morally incomprehensible when one considers the high infant mortality rate, the children dying of curable diseases, the rampant abuse of drugs and alcohol, and now, the onset of HIV/AIDS[44]. If governments are to practise 'partial governing' that is, the granting of degrees of autonomy to particular communities, where will the line be drawn? Ultimately it seems a line drawn in the sand. Modernisation, on the other hand, has its pitfalls; this cannot be denied, but to ignore its benefits, to look only to the past, is to lock the indigene into nostalgic futility.

Factors affecting development

After a long day's work in the field, I sat discussing the exploitation of the Platfontein artists with a fellow CCMS researcher, Thomas Hart, who said simply that what these artists need is "a kind person" (Personal communication, February, 2009). It was so simple a comment yet I realised that it was a large part of the solution to the current problem of exploitation. This community of artists does need someone whose interest lies with the artists, who wants them to prosper and does not ask, "What can I get out of it?" Juliet Armstrong is one such example. A renowned South African artist, Armstrong takes progressive and informally trained South African artists under her wing and helps develop their careers. She assists these artists in marketing themselves and improving their art. She has been working with Zulu ceramics for a number of years and has sent potters to Korea and New Orleans "for workshops and to sell their work" with plans for similar initiatives in the future (julietarmstrong.co.za). Perhaps SASI could consider forming relationships with established South African artists who are willing to share their knowledge and expertise with the Platfontein artists and who will introduce them to and facilitate communication with key players in the art world.

While there have been many productive projects undertaken by SASI and other organisations with the Platfontein community, a number of those projects have had little or no effect

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[44] See the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) (2004) report for details on the plight of these communities, available at (www.sahrc.org.za).

(Fieldnotes, July 2008). It seems that organisers enter the community with a zeal for development that is met with indifference, and at times disdain from a community that has witnessed the failure of similar projects. Eventually co-ordinators become despondent and the project fails. At times, organisations, "especially if state directed, tend to use development projects to secure political goals, often at the expense of the supposed beneficiaries" (Dyll, 2004:8). Government and other organisations may attempt to "secure successful development *at*, and not *with*, local communities" [emphasis my own] (2004:8). Competition and strife between the organisations involved may further complicate issues, as Richard Robison of The Art of Africa relates:

> As Art of Africa is a company that needs to make a profit to stay in business, SASI thinks that our participation in anything to do with the Bushmen can only be a bad thing. There's been instances where we arrange a workshop with the artists and the only thing SASI has on their minds is what can they get out of it by doing nothing rather than wanting to work together. They seem to be more interested in petty politics (CMC, October, 2008).

SASI, on the other hand, has complained that though The Art of Africa informs them of intended workshops, this is not received in writing and such workshops are seldom conducted as joint ventures. Concerning a workshop held in December of 2008, SASI complained that it was informed of the intended workshop by Art of Africa's Gezz Robison via telephone (Mierke, CMC, April 2009). The workshop was undertaken at the same time as one conducted by SASI. The artists thus participated in SASI's workshop "for a day or two and then participated in The Art of Africa [workshop]" (Mierke, CMC, April 2009). Because the artists were paid stipends for participating in the workshop held by The Art of Africa, the result was a lack of participation in SASI's workshop. Lack of communication and joint participation had led to a waste of SASI's much-needed resources.

SASI does not have the funds to pay artists for their participation. Payment for artworks created in such workshops comes only when a work is sold. Some artists then refuse to participate in SASI's workshops, but this refusal adversely affects their own powers of income-generation in the long term, as well as endangering the projects which, because of the small number of participants, may have to close (Mierke, CMC, April 2009). Immediate payment bolsters a

culture of immediate gratification. When they become accustomed to this kind of transaction, artists are less likely to participate in long-term projects from which they do not directly and immediately profit. On the other hand, to be able to wait for payment is, at times, a luxury these artists do not have.

Not only is there a problem of contestation between organisations, there is also a problem of disharmony between the organisations and the community itself. Currently, many community members in Platfontein are disillusioned with SASI and some refuse to work with them in implementing community projects (Fieldnotes, February 2009). This is due to a multiplicity of reasons, one of which is an alleged lack of communication. Some in the community believe that SASI has little knowledge of the goings-on in Platfontein. More disconcertingly, the community members who work in the SASI office in Platfontein are distrusted and thought to be only interested in safeguarding their own interests, other community members believe that SASI does not have the community's best interests in mind, but seeks to generate wealth and reputation for itself (Fieldnotes, February 2009). There is an immediate need for SASI to re-establish the Platfontein community's faith in this NGO that is meant to assist and support them.

Failure of The !Xun and Khwe Art Project

Established in 1993 in Kimberley (Stephenson, 2006:17), The !Xun and Khwe Art Project consisted of a group of artists who were supported by the !Xun & Khwe Trust until 1997, and later by the !Xun & Khwe Communal Property Association (CPA); "then for two years without formal support, nothing much happened" (Mierke interview, Kimberley, February 2009). The lack of funding seems to be the fundamental reason for project failure, though the apathy of the community is also to blame. Between November 2007 and February 2008, the !Xun and Khwe Art Project was "abandoned" (Mierke interview, February 2009). The CPA could not afford to keep it running and Mierke, the then director, resigned. Thereafter, there was a sudden halt in progress, other facilitators left the programme and without any administration the artists merely waited for something to happen. Mierke pointed out that these artists could not be suddenly expected to become their own administrators. Drawing attention to the Kuru[45] art and crafts

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[45] See (www.kuru.co.bw/art.html) for more on the Kuru Family of Organisations.

projects, she noted that even after fifteen years of training the Kuru artists still needed funding and still worked under the administration of Kuru (Mierke, interview, February 2009). "Development takes time", she said, "I think people are over idealistic about these things" (Interview, February 2009).

Mierke went on to relate an experience in which the department of Social Development provided funding for a certain project. It was expected that the project would become self-sufficient within two years. This did not occur and the funds were soon exhausted. One of the difficulties is that the artists are all of the older generation; their entrenched world views as well as the language barrier make for difficulties in communicating development strategies. Mierke suggested that "maybe if younger people get involved, they can start taking over with the administration and marketing … eventually they might be able to, I believe, do it themselves" (Interview, Kimberley, May 2009). The concern is that the younger generation in Platfontein seem uninterested in art. Mierke mentioned this as one of the challenges experienced by SASI over the years. Young people had been involved in the projects but "the challenge is always funding, they quickly find another job that pays more and always leave, and also if you don't have some kind of interest in art and craft yourself then you don't find it very interesting" (Mierke, interview, May 2009). There is thus a need for young people who will demonstrate an interest in art and equip themselves with the skills required for the continuation of projects and for these projects to become not only self-sufficient but generators of future projects.

Considering that most young people seem uninterested in art, one might legitimately question whether skills development in the area of art would be worthwhile for this community as a whole. I believe so; it is surely not exceptional that the talent for art may be found only in a few young people – what talent there is could be fostered via the continuation of art projects and workshops. Other young people might find an interest in the business side of the industry, which could also be fostered via such projects. The older artists should not be forgotten: a fraternity of artists in this community could create a space in which to assist each other, teaching and learning from one another, improving the present work and growing new talent. Facilitators could be called in to assist with art classes – although this should be at the will of the artists themselves. I find it reasonable that should they wish, they could be tutored to improve their artistic skills.

Again, this would be unproblematic only if the image of the noble savage were relinquished along with all other romantic notions of how and for whom the Bushmen should create their art.

Teaching the artists about the industry

Remarking that the artists are "not business people, they're not administrators, they're not really interested in those things", Mierke went on to say that "few artists are able to make their art and market it, deal with agents, [and] deal with galleries" (Interview, Kimberley, May 2009). In interviews with the artists, however, I found that they were interested in learning about the industry. Discussing the failure of development strategies in which large sums of money are allocated to communities, Tomaselli *et al.* note that primary strategies are required, to produce skills involving book-keeping, banking, savings, investments, planning and management (2008:362-63). Essentially these communities need to learn how to cope with modernity (ibid). This is why I believe the primary strategy to help these artists cope with the indigenous art market is to teach them how to operate and manoeuvre within it.

When asked if they would be interested in learning more about the art industry and how to engage with a buyer as well as market their own art, each artist answered in the affirmative. I offered them the idea of an informal workshop in which they would be taught by a facilitator (in their own language) about the business of art. Such a workshop would run over a series of days. The artists would be free to discuss various issues with the help of the facilitator. They would be encouraged to offer each other a support system for the future. And with the aid of skits and song they would be encouraged to incorporate these lessons into their negotiations with dealers. It is my hope to continue to research the viability of such a workshop, as well as to implement and record its outcomes.

Yet offering these artists information about the industry may not necessarily lead to a desirable end. Mierke told me of a photographer sent by the municipality who was to take photographs of the Platfontein community and work together with some of the artists towards a tourism enterprise (Interview, Kimberley, May 2009). One of the artists, however, refused to work with the photographer without being given R1000. because they could not pay the artists the project was halted and eventually cancelled. It is thus apparent that merely to hand out information is not

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sufficient; an entire educational process needs to take place. The community needs to learn the difference between those who wish to exploit them and those who want to help them. The necessary skills of analysis and decision-making must be learnt by the community in order for them to be empowered. Tomaselli alerted me to the need for consumer education; the tourists, he said, should be educated about the communities they visit and the arts and crafts they purchase (Personal communication, July 2009). Broadening the understanding of tourists would help to combat the pressure these communities face to conform to a certain image. Nevertheless, we need to be careful of what we teach and to what ends, as there is always the danger of miscommunication, a theme to be discussed further on.

Art for social healing

Workshops could be set up to not only help the artists combat the exploitation they suffer but also to assist the community to express their emotions concerning their past suffering and their present state. These art workshops could be used as a form of therapy, art therapy[46] being a legitimate psychotherapeutic technique. As the International Art Therapy Organisation states:

> Art has the potential to change lives, and often in profound ways. When words are not enough, we turn to images and symbols to tell our stories. And in telling our stories through art, we can find a path to health and wellness, emotional reparation, recovery, and ultimately, transformation (www.internationalarttherapy.org).

Art created and exhibited in its community has the potential to offer community members a sense of purpose and direction while assisting their participation in productive instead of "counterproductive activities" (Anon, 1997:78). The need is perhaps not for an outreach programme but for an *in*reach project that provides a space in which the artists of the community can convene and help the younger generation cope with straddling the past and present. The Platfontein community's current state of social, economic and developmental disrepair has much to do with the load of history its members carry. The creative processes involved in community

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[46] Art therapy is "an established mental health profession" that integrates "the fields of human development, visual arts, and the creative process with models of counseling and psychotherapy" (www.explorehealthcareers.org). Art therapy is based on the belief that "the creative process involved in artistic self-expression" helps with conflict resolution, the development of interpersonal skills, stress reduction, and the increase of self-esteem and self-awareness (explorehealthcareers.org).

art projects may serve "as a vehicle to allow people to move from present circumstances to future possibilities" (Marshall, 2000:105). The visual image can "become a stimulant that triggers memories; it can serve as a catalyst for recalling stories and values, relating them to the young and to others, thus preserving this important aspect of cultural identity" (2000:111). These images are able to complement "the oral tradition, thus strengthening it, as well as perhaps creatively transforming it" (ibid).

To canonise or to control?

Theoretically, South African art has followed the international example of "blurring the boundaries" between restrictive categories in art, such as high and low art, and fine art and craft (Marshall, 2000:98). More pertinent, because of its segregationist past, the arts in South Africa needed to be reviewed and re-assessed:

> In an effort to establish a 'new South African art', many works by self-taught black artists, formerly denigrated as craft and excluded from the canon, were now included into a new, more inclusive and representative canon and exhibited in art galleries and art museums alongside the work of established academically trained (and still mostly white) artists (Marshall, 2000:98).

Many outreach programmes were established between galleries, museums and previously disadvantaged communities. While this reflects an attempt at equality, it may also be seen as tokenism or as Rasheed Araeen points out "ongoing paternalism" (1994:4). Sabine Marshall acknowledges this, stating that "[b]y establishing community art centres and outreach programmes, community art[47] is institutionalised, conveniently labelled and controllable, thus enabling 'serious' artists to continue practising fine art" (2000:99). The same can be said even of well-meaning outreach projects concerned with contemporary Bushman art. Interestingly, Marshall shows that the art gallery or museum can "function as a locus of display on the one hand, but simultaneously a place of containment and control" (2000:106).

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[47] Community art is simply art made by, in and for a certain community. It is usually art with a purpose related to community development.

Calling them "slick, lifeless venues", Dunja Kersak (2009) laments the exhibition of art in "privately owned spaces where only a small portion of the elite [come] to admire whatever [is] the flavor of the moment, as well as themselves" (2009:1). On the assimilation and newfangled fame of an Angolan artist, Paulo Kapela, he writes:

> The Kapela I knew, or Maître Kapela, as we called him, lived in the dungeons of UNAP (National Union of (Plastic) Visual Artists), with cracking floorboards and walls, mildew, and the total absence of modern facilities. His quarters were accessed via a side door leading into a small courtyard full of debris and the stench of urine. From there, a wide staircase led through a series of vast spaces in an advanced state of decay and full of all manner of accumulation. Among this assortment were Kapela's installations, and in the smaller area, walled off with cardboard, cloth, corrugated iron, and other salvage materials, his mattress (2009:1).

Although this is an extreme example, it is a lament concerning the real spaces in which art is created, as the newly labelled 'fine art' is taken out of the real circumstances in which it is made and placed in sterile environments that, as far as Kersak is concerned, impede dialogue about the content and context of the work. I think here of the many exhibitions of the Platfontein artists that reach only a few in the art world and no one in the community. Perhaps if the exhibitions were held at the church (a large hall situated centrally in Platfontein) the art could be shown in its own environment and the community would have access to the exhibitions. Though if this were to happen, I wonder how many of those who would visit Kimberley's William Humphreys Art Gallery to view this art would actually make the trip into Platfontein to do the same. Yet perhaps (with just the right amount of zeal, marketing and co-operation) co-ordinators of such an event could succeed in introducing consumers of the art to the artwork's con*text* as well as con*tent*. Platfontein is only about two kilometres away from Kimberley. The great distance between Platfontein and Kimberley seems to be, after all, a distance of the mind.

Different paradigms concerning time and space (and everything in-between)

There are four main development communication paradigms: *dependency/dissociation, modernisation, development support* and *another development* (see Melkote and Steeves 2001, Servaes 1995, and Tomaselli and Shepperson 2003). These paradigms "advocate specific principles and strategies in achieving their development agendas" (Dyll, 2004:28).

However, the empirical muddle that is found within the communities targeted for development often refutes the applicability of the theories propounded by the contributors of development paradigms and defies simplistic explanations. Being sensitive to the 'messiness' of development in practice is important in discussing practical applications of development paradigms in various communities (Dyll, 2004:28).

Development strategies fail partly because of failures in the communication process. The communicators and communicatees are positioned within different paradigms; if the message does not move well enough between these paradigms, it will be distorted. This frequently occurs since the western Cartesian logic of the communicators is "often subverted by indigenous forms of reasoning, which operate on circular and nonlinear patterns" (Tomaselli, 2001:286). Although organisations may have the best intentions, many development programmes fail in the field because the organisations have neglected to consider cultural sensitivities and two-way communication (Dyll, 2004:8). Projects fail not because the subject communities lack intelligence; it is more a problem of different and often opposing paradigms.

I found this difference of paradigms in my own interactions with the Platfontein community. When conducting interviews, together with my translator, I walked to the home of each artist. After walking for what felt like hours in the dry and scorching midday sun, I would ask Nicodemus if the house was close by, to which he would reply, "*Ja, dis net daar*" (Yes, it's just there). Without the demarcation of roads or avenues we walked across sandy trails, between houses, and through equally sandy yards, and after repeating this conversation a few times I began to realise that "just there" did not mean the same to me as it did to Nicodemus. In simply walking through the settlement we were each measuring the space differently.

Time also seems differently measured in Platfontein. There were many occasions in which my colleagues and I would schedule a meeting with someone and upon our arrival at the designated meeting spot, the person in question would be absent. After waiting for some time we would begin our search, driving around the settlement following lead after lead until we found our unapologetic host sitting, beer in hand, in the home of a friend. Other times we would be told how busy they were and how tomorrow would suit them better. Confounded and disappointed,

we would discuss the 'busy schedule' of an unemployed man who was not out searching for a job. We considered these as methods of tactical avoidance, yet the same kind of behaviour is to be found within the entire community. Offices are sometimes closed for lunch with no set time of re-opening; meetings are held with only an approximate time set for the beginning of the gathering and no time set for the end[48]. These are manifestations of the way time is configured in Platfontein; it is a strange and ethereal melding of elements, both fluid and stagnant.

Money is also treated differently in Platfontein. Many community members maintain a kind of 'live-for-the-day' attitude. It may be argued that poor communities are compelled by their poverty to engage with money in this way. Yet this kind of behaviour ironically propels poverty. Schippers related a story about Samcuia, who was given a large sum of money for one of his works. Samcuia decided to spend the money on a car, which after a bout of reckless driving, was beyond repair within a few months of its purchase (Schippers interview, Kimberley, May 2009).

Another story she related was that of certain craftspeople in Botswana who were introduced to a community banking system. An elderly lady went to the bank for the first time and asked for the twenty pula (P20) she had put in formerly. She was given P20 but she refused to take the single pink note as it was not the P20 she had put in. She went on to describe the money that she had put into the account; she told the clerk that there were two notes, both green in colour. Not recognising that what she had put in was two P10 notes and what she was given was a single P20 note, she felt cheated by the clerk. A further challenge became clear when the community complained about their bank charges; they could not understand that this was a part of the legitimate workings of a bank (a system that exploits us all).

While at !Xaus Lodge our host told us of his troubles with a Bushman staff member who once he had been paid, would go out and spend his entire pay check, without a thought for the month ahead, let alone his future. This behaviour is evidently common amongst the Bushmen groups I have encountered. In the past this live-for-the-day ideology was adopted by the Bushmen partly

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[48]It may be argued that what is lacking in the offices and projects in Platfontein is a strong work ethic. Mierke related that when she worked at the art project there was a problem with getting the artists to work to a deadline. To foster a sense of professionalism would help the existing offices and future projects to run smoother. On the other hand, perhaps in certain cases, as with the artists, industry needs to bend to their sense of time and not the other way around.

by force of circumstance: they had no means of storing meat and preserving certain foods. This outlook, though it served them well in the hunter-gatherer days, has proved detrimental upon their entry into the cash economy, and as Tomaselli reminds us, the non-European world is one "where even the remotest of communities are affected by a rampant post-cold war capitalism" (2001:294), which legitimises their exploitation.

A thorny issue concerning different paradigms can be found in the way contemporary Bushmen engage with their land and their feelings towards financial aid. When the ≠Khomani were granted the farm Witdraai, following the 1999 land claims, the government did little to equip them with skills to help them to best utilise the land (see Simões 2001, Dyll 2004, and Finlay 2009)[49]. The game on the farm was ceaselessly hunted and soon everything was gone. When the community asked the government for more game their request was refused (Fieldnotes, July 2008). Their eliminating the game on the farm seems to be in striking contradiction to the myth of the noble savage living in harmony with nature[50].

The government was wrong to neglect the implication of a programme towards sustainable living practices. Yet, instead of adapting and engaging differently with the land, the ≠Khomani blamed the government for their position. They also expected to be given more game as if it were owed to them. This seems to be a feeling of entitlement and a sense that others are to blame for their current plight. These are real concerns in communities with similar past experiences; moreover, this attitude generally works antagonistically to development initiatives based on community involvement and individual hard work. On a more positive note, however, when we revisited Witdraai the following year, though we found no sign of game, in discussion with a young ≠Khomani man involved with community development it became clear that the community is beginning to learn more about conservation[51].

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[49] There were also problems with corruption within the CPA which saw money being mismanaged. See Grossman and Holden (2002a), (2002b) and Dyll (2004) for more.

[50] Even the early Bushmen did not adhere to this myth. The hunter-gatherer lifestyle included roaming the land, consuming the natural resources in one area and then moving on to the next, allowing each area a chance to recover before their return. It was only because their numbers were not as great as the Kalahari itself that this way of life proved viable. Some of these Bushmen joined European hunters on their hunting parties, contributing "substantially to the depletion of game, especially elephant" in what was then known as South West Africa (Gordon and Douglas, 2002:49).

[51] I was told of the young men's involvement with the Wilderness Leadership School, an initiative that is preparing them as trackers on guided tours (Fieldnotes, July 2009). See (www.wildernesstrails.org.za) for more.

The final difference in paradigms to be discussed here is the contention between preservation and re-articulation of Bushman cultural sites. Francis notes that "some traditional healers scrape paintings off of the rock faces to collect the paint for healing, general luck and rainmaking and lightning prevention medicines" (2007:129; see also Staehelin and Wicksteed 1997). This represents a different way of seeing the rock paintings; in this paradigm these paintings are very much alive in the cultural practices of the day. Those who may wish to preserve these paintings as emblems of a bygone culture would maintain that actions such as these deface and ultimately remove rock art, so that future generations will have to look to documented records to experience this art. The Abatwa have restricted access to the rock art in the Drakensberg Mountains. Francis tells of a struggle they had with Amafa[52] to perform their Eland Ceremony[53] (see Francis 2007 for details of this ceremony). The Duma, though they are traditional healers, do not scrape off the paints as other traditional healers have done. Richard Duma had this to say:

> I am very disappointed because as we planned this ritual we needed to be alone at the cave to do whatever we want to do. But yesterday they say that they want to see if we are going to touch the paintings or want to put the blood on the painting. I say no, we know how to handle these paintings (cited in Francis, 2007:129).

Later Francis mentioned that the Abatwa wished to be able to use certain rock art sites for the continuation of their rituals, hoping to be allowed to paint on the rock face (Personal communication, May 2009). This again shows a difference of opinion concerning the rock art. It displays a different paradigm that favours continuation and re-articulation of cultural objects over preservation of those objects. In the case of the Abatwa, however, this is not plainly so; while they do propose preservation they believe that it does not obviate the use of the site. It would be interesting to consider the impact on tourists had they to witness the remains of fresh eland meat, blood, traditional beer and money at these rock art sites. Does this kind of thing

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[52] Amafa, which means 'heritage' in isiZulu, is the KwaZulu-Natal Heritage Organisation (Francis CMC, August 2009).

[53] Francis problematises the position of the Dumas and their newly created Eland Ceremony, calling it a combination of "an imagined past with an idealised image of themselves as they seek their position in the new South Africa" (2007:132). This ceremony is a "synthesis of past and present and the same time it is neither" (ibid). Francis calls it "an act of defiance" that "states that the Abatwa are still here despite the violence, the dispossession, language loss, and genocide" (2007:133).

desecrate the site or does it display a continuation of culture and a renewal of the significance of the site? The answer to such questions depends, again, on the paradigm from which one responds. Thus, before organisations work on elaborate development strategies, the different paradigm of the community in question needs to be taken into consideration and understood; only then can the communication be positioned accordingly.

An amalgam of past and present

The crucial point is that "indigenous cultures are simultaneously 'traditional' and 'contemporary': 'traditional' in the sense that distinctive views of the world remain alive, [and] 'contemporary' in the sense that they belong in the present" (Thomas, 1987:17). They could be called an amalgam of past and present as they have been "neither fully absorbed by, nor excluded from, modernity" (ibid). They are thus "both 'First Peoples' and modern citizens-in-the-making" (Robins, 2001:833). They remain in a kind of limbo between the present and the past, and because they are not conversant with the terms and conditions of the present, they look to the past as a kind of salvation. Perhaps this is at the root of the fragmentation these communities feel. Moreover, the past can never be brought back and living with nostalgia does nothing to better their present condition. This is just the thing that feeds romantic primitivism, and as Sandall scathingly remarks, what is created out of this is a tragic people who are "[i]lliterate, vocationally disabled, [and] unpresentable outside the ethnographic zoos they live in" (2001:17). Preservation, it seems, comes at a price.

The irony of the romantic primitivist perspective is that while anthropologists may advocate the seclusion and frozen-in-time*ness* of their subjects, they themselves taint these communities by their very presence. Modernity is thus evident "in the presence in the field (but absent from the film) of the observing and recording electronic image" (Tomaselli, 2001:5). Guilt-ridden over this contradiction, Lorna Marshall, of the famous Marshall family who traversed the Kalahari in search of secluded Bushman groups, wrote in her diary:

> What have we done in making a track into this country? If we could go back three years and choose again in the light of what we know now, I would not come here and would hope that many

more years would pass before anyone came in and that the Bushmen might have their life here unmolested that much longer (cited in Gonzalez, 1993:191).

She wrote this after the South African government and others had followed the Marshalls' convoy tracks deep into the Kalahari[54]. The presence of these 'outsiders' effectively led to the disintegration of Bushman family life (see Marshall and Ritchie, 2002). Yet the Marshalls' tracks were not the first and certainly not the last to enter this land and 'corrupt' its people.

The corruption of modernisation and the final word on development

Discussing what he calls an "evolutionist understanding" that posits First Peoples as an endangered species, Tomaselli argues against the notion that "like riverine rabbits and spotted owls, First Peoples have to be placed into a special environment, because if they do not live in such designated spaces their 'extinction' is certain" (2002:213-14). Such exploits have resulted in, what are today, a marginalised, exploited, economically barren people. If the present generation hopes to leave a legacy beyond that of semi-literacy and alcoholism, there needs to be a movement towards furthering sustainable development. Positive endeavours towards meaningful change must come from the Bushmen communities themselves, from government, from the organisations involved and from the rest of us who so rigorously categorise them.

Bregin and Kruiper write that in order to heal themselves the Bushmen need to move forward, they need to forget the pain of the past, but they remain "a symbol, an exhibit, a display item on somebody else's agenda" trapped, "between the truth and the lie, the myth and the reality" (2004:53). Importantly, if they are excluded from the global discussion and debate surrounding their own people, the Bushmen are silenced, and are thus expressed, interpreted and narrated by others. Unable to contribute and voice their opinions and interpretations of images of themselves, they are disempowered (Tomaselli, 2002:215); development is effectively inhibited.

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[54] The Marshall's began their 'trek' into the Kalahari in the 1950s; their tracks were followed later by "farmers looking for farm workers. It also heralded the start of intensive research involvement by North American and, later, other researchers, of the Ju/'hoan language, culture, religion, and life style" (van Vuuren, 2008: [np]).

Driving through the settlement, I perceived that this was an impoverished community. Yet only when I walked along the dirt roads and entered the tiny homes did I see just how little these people possessed. There were times I was given the only chair to sit on, while my respondents found overturned buckets and broken stools on which to perch. There are simple yet vital things missing in Platfontein; a taxi service, for instance, would greatly improve the connection between Platfontein and Kimberley (Hart, personal communication, February 2009). As it stands, the artists are bound to their settlement; a taxi service would enable them to travel to the town to sell their art. Such a service would open up comparable economic opportunities for other members of the community. This and other innovations could prove beneficial for future research into the difficulties of development in this community.

CHAPTER TEN

Reaching our conclusions

The road ahead in the development of contemporary Bushman art will no doubt continue to be a straddling of two worlds. Art that is excessively 'traditional' and over-stylised may work to relegate its people to a mythologised past, yet this kind of art could conversely validate itself and its community in the present by connecting them to a legitimate past. Indigenes must navigate between (re)articulating their identity and (re)affirming their connection with an 'ancient' identity. The arguments set out in this dissertation have highlighted the problematics of the term 'authentic Bushman art'. I have shown that the discourse of contemporary Bushman art, therefore, needs to move beyond exclusionary and superfluous ideas of authenticity.

Nevertheless considerations of authenticity cannot be altogether removed; indeed if we are to see the contemporary art prosper, authenticity must be a criteria for judgment. However, the danger of the current discourse of art evaluation based almost solely on authenticity – defined as a relationship to past art – is that artists produce work that resembles what they believe the consumer regards as 'authentically Bushman'. As has been shown, some artists feel constrained by this. Thus, if the focus turns from authenticity to a broader appreciation of the art, it will allow these artists to express themselves in ways that *they* deem fit.

In addition, a code of conduct would certainly enhance the workings of the market for indigenous art in South Africa. It would help to curtail the continued exploitation of these artists, protecting not only the artists and dealers, but helping to maintain a standard for the highest quality of artworks. Yet it remains my belief that to educate these artists about the industry would be the most immediate way to empower them. This could be as simple as gathering them together in groups for a series of talks about the workings of the art industry and the ways in which they could protect themselves from exploitation.

The future of development for these communities rests on the answers to some difficult questions. As I have already mentioned, the continued marketing of the art as possibly the last of its kind aids in locking the Bushmen in a state of perpetual *pastness*. Romantic primitivism has

proven detrimental in leading communities to appropriate preconceived notions of 'Bushmanness', binding contemporary Bushmen to the pages of Bleek and Lloyd. Marshall Sahlins writes that reports on the death of indigenous cultures "have been exaggerated" (1999:i). While acknowledging the part played by the west in the suppression of these cultures he also notes that they have resisted change in many ways and at the same time, in some cases have utilised modern technologies to their advantage. Sahlins sees these indigenous cultures as able to disappear and reappear "in ways we had never imagined" (1999:xxi). Yet for the most part, anthropologists and marketers alike refuse to deny the image of the indigene's dying culture.

Ideally, the artists should not need to rely on stereotypes to sell their work or assert their identities. Before the public domain is rid of such stereotypes, however, it must be ensured that these communities are able to function without them. They must be given room to voice their own identities. If the west stops exerting pressure on contemporary Bushman groups to (re)enact, (re)produce and (re)turn to the past, then they could begin to create a space for themselves in the current society that does not rely on myth. And if they choose to continue turning to myth, it will at least be their free choice and not the persistent decision of others.

The post-structuralist analysis of contemporary Bushman art in this dissertation has shown that if the art is set up against artistic criteria of judgement, it can be discussed alongside works of other contemporary artists and the artists can be elevated to the level of contemporary artists instead of being marketed as Bushman survivals. This already solves part of the problem – when the art is considered to be a part of the contemporary art scene, fit to be critiqued as all other contemporary work is critiqued, then the artists and their art cannot be relegated to museums and coffee-table books depicting the 'almost extinct Bushmen,' together with their 'almost extinct art'. To have the work raised to the level of other contemporary work means that the artists are also raised in their capacity as artists: they would be primarily artists, as opposed to their current designation as Bushmen first and artists second. Moreover, when the art is seen as contemporary it elevates not only the artist but their represented communities to the contemporary. Along with a code of conduct, this way of looking at the art would help to curtail the preponderance of 'bad' Bushman art, the vacuous nature of which taints the art in general with the stigma of simulacra.

Contemporary Bushman art can be used by the artists as a platform for social transformation and cultural continuity. To bind the art to preservation is to bind its people to a past that cannot be reclaimed or relived. Yet the selling of their art and crafts alone cannot save the Platfontein community and similar communities from the cycle of poverty, unemployment and apathy, along with the plague of alcoholism and domestic abuse. For meaningful development, governments and organisations need to look beyond the use of these communities as marionettes in the theatre of culture. Arts and crafts can certainly form an integral part of the solution, but that solution must be bigger than cultural tourism endeavours. In part, this is why development must not lose focus of the real challenge: that of shifting and often opposing paradigms.

In order to realise their potential and to mobilise themselves, these communities need to interact and become fully engaged with the present. I remember my first visit to Ngwatle, a rural settlement in Botswana, home to the !Xoo Bushmen. Our research team was confronted with a desolate stretch of land. There was no electricity, no running water, and no sign of city life, yet there, in the hustle of the craftspeople plying their wares, I caught sight of a beaded necklace with a goat-bone pendent, and, burned at its centre, the iconic Nike tick. This was proof that the Bushmen are indeed receptive to influences from outside; it is only others who want them to remain pristine hunter-gatherers of the 21st century. In order for contemporary Bushman artists to be *artists*, they and their art cannot be locked in a simulacrum of the past. Continuity and change must be allowed to occur, at the same time it must not be forced on them. They must be free to find it at their own pace.

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Illustrations:

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Figure 2 – Michael O'Toole's Table of Functions and Systems in Painting (2004:24).

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Figure 5 – Photograph taken on a game drive in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. July 2008.

Figure 6 – Photograph of a rock engraving from the Wildebeest Kuil rock art site. Picture taken during the July 2008 CCMS field trip, Wildebeest Kuil Rock Art Centre, Kimberley.

Figure 7 – Rock painting from Giant's Castle in the Drakensberg Mountains.

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Figure 19 – Freciano Ndala. *Waterhole*. Acrylic on canvas.

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