Painting Postcolonial Displacement:

Reconceptualising South African Modernism

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Abstract

This research project aims to theorise, critique, and respond through an art practice to a largely unknown but unique aspect of architectural Modernism. Modernism's history may be well understood in the West, but this practice-based PhD finds and details the unusual appropriation and deployment of Modernism in South Africa. My enquiry therefore proposes a critical investigation into politics that both geographically and socially brings to the fore issues of nationhood, origin, and displacement. This project sets out to articulate an historic archive of the development of Modernism that is framed through a colonialist dialectic, visualising a darker side of the modernist project.

My response to the visual manifestations of modernist traditions and legacies in South Africa's architecture is traced through historic race-based urban spatial structures and inbuilt inequalities that are still prevalent today. Contextualised through colonial, postcolonial, and decolonial references, a visual language emerges which is situated within post-conceptual painting and sculptural production methods. My methodologies draw from overlooked historical references and specific architectural archival repositories in South Africa. My process starts with preparatory drawings and collages including architectural model-making focusing on domestic architecture. These models are photographed and subsequently turned into large-scale paintings that due to their hybrid nature appropriate a language of fiction/science fiction. This enables me to open up this particular historical content and allow for ambiguity and multiple interpretations.

What my research found was how architectural Modernism was used by White nationalists during 1950s apartheid South Africa to develop and represent a heroic and modern society that simultaneously was determined to distinguish itself from the legacy of British imperialism. The result was a particularly cruel programme that relied on scientific and technological solutions to segregate the Black and White population spatially and socially. The egalitarian futuristic dreams of the International Style were thus manipulated and mutated into modernist structures that were specifically designed to keep the population segregated from each other. Modernism in South Africa has its roots firmly linked to the International Style or Modern Movement in architecture and planning that shows an inextricable linking of colonialism and Modernism. The visual side of this research project works to draw attention to marginal modernist aesthetics in order to reconceptualise and reinterpret hierarchical colonial frameworks that developed out of the centre of European Modernism.

Keywords: Modernism, appropriation, South Africa, European, apartheid, nationalism, British imperialism, International Style, segregation, nationhood, displacement, race-based, colonial, postcolonial, decolonialise, post-conceptual, painting, sculpture, science fiction.

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A special thank you to my partner Andrea Medjesi who patiently put up with me whilst I was conducting this research, read my drafts, and gave me invaluable feedback and advice.

I dedicate this work to my children: Katharine, Lucas, and Matthew.

iii

List of Figures

List of Figures – Introduction

List of Figures – Chapter One

Figure 50. Ndebele Women and baby, Pretoria, South Africa, Photograph by Constance Stuart Larrabee, ca. 1936-1949, EEPA 1998-060370, Constance Stuart Larrabee Collection Eliot Elisofon Photographic Archives, National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Figure 51. Candice Breitz, *Ghost Series #10*, 1994, Tippex on Tourist Postcard, 10,5 x 14,8cm.

List of Figures – Chapter Two

Figure 52. The old Raadsaal (Council Chambers) in Pretoria designed by Dutch architect Sytze Wierda at the end of the nineteenth century in a Renaissance Rival style. It housed the Volksraad, the parliament of South Africa from 1891 to 1902. Here the Raadsaal forms a background for a crowd of approximately 40,000 gathered in Kerkplein (Church Square) to see C.R. Swart after he became State President of South Africa on 31 May 1961. The Brazilian-inspired modernist Transvaal Provincial Administration Building can be seen newly emerging on the right-hand side of the picture. *South African Panorama*, July 1961.

Figure 53. Duplex house (Weissenhof Museum) and House Citrohan 2016. Architects: Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeannert, Weissenhofsiedlung (Weissenhof Estate), Stuttgart. Constructed in 1927. Source PJT56 / Wikimedia Commons / CC BY-SA 4.0.

Figure 54. House Munro, Pretoria 1932. Architect: W.G. McIntosh.

Figure 55. House Stern, Johannesburg 1934–35. Architects: Martienssen Fassler, Cooke.

Figure 56. Greenside House, Johannesburg 1940. Architect: R Martienssen. © RIBA Collections.

x

Figure 66. Field view, Dutch Reformed Church in Welkom West 1965. Special Collections, Courtesy of University of Cape Town Libraries (unpublished). Roelof Uytenbogaardt Papers, BC1264, J4.2.2. Architect: Roelof Uytenbogaardt.

List of Figures – Chapter Three

Figure 67. Helmut Stauch home and gardens, Pretoria, South Africa, Photograph by Constance Stuart Larrabee, 1960, EEPA 1998-065341, Constance Stuart Larrabee Collection, Eliot Elisofon Photographic Archives, National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Figure 68. Helmut Stauch home and gardens, Pretoria, South Africa, Photograph by Constance Stuart Larrabee, 1960, EEPA 1998-065344, Constance Stuart Larrabee Collection, Eliot Elisofon Photographic Archives, National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Figure 69. House Kellerman, Brooklyn Pretoria 1950 and 1959, Architect Hellmut Stauch. Ground floor and upper floor plan including east elevation plan and section. Courtesy of the Architecture Archives, Pretoria University.

Figure 70. Günther Herbst, model of Helmut Stauch's House Kellerman (1950–1959), titled *Composition with Blue* 2022. Card, wood, styrene, and acrylic paint, 130.18 (h) x 120 (l).

Figure 71. Günther Herbst, Greenside House model 2022, photographic reference 7390. Card, polystyrene, wood, sand, and acrylic paint. Preparatory work for painting.

Figure 72. Günther Herbst, House Kellerman model 2022, photographic reference 7551. Card, wood, styrene, granite ballast and acrylic paint. Preparatory work for painting.

List of Figures – Chapter Four

List of Figures – Appendix

Photographic documentation of Günther Herbst solo exhibition *The Absence of Myth*.

12 January–7 February 2023

Morley Gallery, 61 Westminster Bridge Rd, London SE1 7HT

Photo credit: Jonathan Basset.

Table of Contents

xx

Preface

When I set out to undertake this research project, in the Introduction of my PhD proposal, I referred to Edgar Allen Poe's literary fiction, *The Fall of the House of Usher* as an analogy for the notion of nationhood and origin that could be understood within the parameters of a confined domestic space. This provides a useful favoured site for uncanny disturbances and, like Poe's haunted house, it carries the evidence of crime within in its geography and landscape.[1] Contained within the domestic structure of the space is 'its residue of family history and nostalgia' and its role of shelter and 'private comfort sharpened by contrast the terror of invasion by alien spirits'.[2]

My research stretches back to my childhood in Pretoria where I was born. I grew up during apartheid in the polite conformity of a 'whites only' suburb with immaculate lawns and tidy pitch-roofed houses. An environment I could only describe as uncanny, and something that made the evident familiar seem disturbingly unfamiliar.[3] The effect can only be related as 'a particular intense experience of strangeness'.[4]

I was initially raised in Verwoerdburg, a town approximately 15 km (9 mi.) outside Pretoria in close proximity to Waterkloof Airforce Base during the 1960s until the latter part of the 1970s. Verwoerdburg was formerly known as Lyttelton and renamed in 1967 after the assassination of the then former Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd, who is

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[1] Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (London and Cambridge: The MIT Press 1992) pp. 17–44.
[2] Ibid., p. 17.
[3] Ibid., p. 18.
[4] Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny* (Wiltshire England, Penguin Books, 2003), pp. xlii.

1

mostly remembered as the 'architect of apartheid'. The name was changed again in

September 1995 soon after apartheid had ended to the politically impartial Centurion to

match the already existing Centurion Park (also now known as SuperSport Park) famous

for international cricket.[5]

In 1978, our family moved back closer to the centre of Pretoria, and we lived in

the suburb of Hillcrest situated in and amongst the sprawling modernist multi-campus

of Pretoria University. The campus by then had turned into a laboratory for modern

architectural ideas designed exclusively by Afrikaner architects, who were all in one

way or another concerned with the idea of forging an Afrikaner culture and identity

that soon became synonymous with Pretoria Regionalism. A predominantly racist

environment of White privilege and Black segregation, Pretoria the administrative

capital of the apartheid state, was set against a backdrop of a Brazilian mutation of the

International Style, awkwardly distinguishing itself from imperial and regional

architectural styles. One had an awareness in Pretoria during those years of modernist

state architecture constantly becoming what Hilton Judin describes as… 'the most iconic

public manifestation of an evolving expression of white cultural identity and character

as a new generation of architects in Pretoria took up the challenge of finding form to

their prospects and beliefs'.[6] This is one of the reasons I decided to embark on this

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[5] It is worth reflecting that the name change from Verwoerdburg to Centurion perpetuates a form of Eurocentric mythologising in particular when one considers how 'centurion' is also a part of the Western civilisation Greco-Roman war machine.

[6] Hilton Judin, *Architecture, State Modernism and Cultural Nationalism in the Apartheid Capital* (London and New York, Routledge, 2021), pp. xx.

2

research project. I have always been curious as to why South Africa, and in particular my hometown Pretoria's built environment, was made up of a particular 'modern white building aesthetic'.[7] Growing up during apartheid you simply accepted things the way they were, and no one was particularly interested to critically consider South Africa's deep spatial divisions.

The #Rhodes Must Fall movement in 2015 and T.J. Demos' book *Return to the Postcolony: Specters of Colonialism in Contemporary Art* (2013) finally launched me into this research project. The written component of my research will thus be used to support my position and a model of thinking that is supported by my practice. It is here that I see my contribution to knowledge in both practical and theoretical terms; not mutually exclusive but in relation to one another. The relationship between colonialism and Modernism, which I will show are inextricably linked, is visualised through a painting and sculpture practice in order to reconsider the perceived Western narrative of the development of European Modernism to which we have become accustomed.

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[7] http://www.artefacts.co.za/main/Buildings/bldgframes.php?bldgid=8794.

Introduction

This research project is a response to the unique modernist architecture of South Africa through painting, sculpture, and writing. It will consider the inception of European modernist architectural and planning ideas in South Africa during the 1930s that ultimately provided a rationale for delivering a programme of institutional segregation, resulting in race-based urban spatial structures and inbuilt inequalities during apartheid. Aspects of South Africa's oppressive history is seen through '[the] ambivalent ruins and seemingly innocuous buildings of the forgotten architecture of colonialism and apartheid'[8] (Figs. 1, 2). Modernism in South Africa begins with the South African Modern Movement, an alignment of prominent White architects defined by European modernist aesthetics and techniques. Fundamentally, the architecture of the South African Modern Movement became the means by which Afrikaner nationalist advancement and ideologies, such as nation building and economic empowerment, could make their mark on cities and distinguish themselves from an array of imported European architecture, including British imperial styles such as Georgian and Victorian (Fig.3).[9] These architects had little interest in their positive application to social

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[8] Hilton Judin (ed), *Falling Monuments, Reluctant Ruins, The Persistence of the Past in the Architecture of South Africa* (Wits University Press, Johannesburg, 2021), pp.1.

[9] Noëleen Murray, *Architectural Modernism and Apartheid Modernity in South Africa: A critical inquiry into the work of architect and urban designer Roelf Uytenbogaardt, 1960–2009*', (PhD thesis, University of Cape Town, 2012), p. 63. See Doreen Greig, *A Guide to Architecture in South Africa* (Howard Timmins, Cape Town, 1971). Greig refers to Georgian architecture as South Africa's second vernacular style. See note 175, pp. 138. See also Désirée Picton-Seymour, *Victorian Buildings in South Africa* (A.A. Balkema, Cape Town, 1977). Victorian buildings in South Africa during British imperialism are referred to as interchangeable buildings; for this was the age of mass production and prefabrication, of cast iron and corrugated iron, materials ideally suited to the hotter climates, where weather

problems and that's why Modernism in South Africa can only be understood through colonialism, and that relates directly to the development of Modernism in Europe. My research is intended to give the reader an understanding of how and why that architecture was built and why it affected the political, social, and spatial structures in South Africa. Crucially it considers a re-examining of Modernism's legacy that is predicated on an ideology and a misleading falsified category of homogeneity. Ultimately, it is to show more specifically how the development of European Modernism became appropriated by the South African Modern Movement therefore stretching its sufficient elastic principles of functionalism to fit a racist agenda of segregation.

Appropriately, one must draw distinctions between the term's 'modernisation', 'modernity' and 'Modernism'. Three concepts closely related to each other around which thought about the modern world and culture has tended to revolve, but certainly are not identical to each other. Modernisation, an outcome of the Industrial Revolution, is characterised by a range of technological advances and political developments that include the rise of bureaucracy, democratisation, and increasingly powerful nation states.[10] These economic processes affected a global change in both the social and

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conditions were often violent. Architects working in South Africa exploited the rich variety of prefabricated ironmongery and imported these from Europe to adorn and support houses, churches, schools, and public commercial buildings in both town and countryside. These were often transported overland for hundreds of miles: lamps and lamp fittings; drinking fountains; poles, brackets, spandrils, and railings for verandas; window frames and fanlights; lettering and ornaments; conservatories and bandstands; spiral staircases; and whole shopping arcades.

[10] Hilde Heynen, *Architecture and Modernity: A Critique* (London: MIT Press 1999), c.f. Marijke Andrea Tymbios, *Cementing Belief: Tracing the History of modernist Afrikaans Church Architecture, 1955–1975* (Master's Thesis, Stellenbosch University, 2017).

5

cultural spheres.[11] Modernity is generally used as a broad term and has been described

by Jürgen Habermas as an evolving project 'formulated in the eighteenth century by

philosophers of the Enlightenment… to develop objective science, universal morality

and law, and autonomous art according to their inner logic… for the rational

organization of everyday social life'.[12] In more general terms, Marshall Berman describes

modernity as 'the maelstrom of modern life' which has been brought about by

modernisation, the process of scientific, technological, and societal change.[13] While

achieving agreement on a single definition of the term would be difficult, if not

impossible, there would probably be a general consensus that we can readily identify

certain well-known examples in relation to modernist architecture (Le Corbusier),

design (Bauhaus), painting (Piet Mondrian), music (Arnold Schoenberg), and literature

(Virginia Woolf). Modernism in particular is characterised by what it is not: historicism,

academicism, and that which eschews the new and embraces tradition. In relation to

the visual arts, Modernism has often many different, and at times contradictory,

meanings beyond its early and most basic definition of indicating a new distinctly

modern or contemporary outlook. Modernism within painting was given its recognised

definition by Clement Greenberg who wrote in 1939 of what he called at first, 'avant-

garde art' later described as 'Modernist Painting'. He argued that such painting referred

only to itself and that its concerns were entirely aesthetic: the arrangement and

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[11] Charles Harrison, *Modernism* (Tate Publishing, London, 1997) c.f. Tymbios, 2017, p. 6.

[12] Jürgen Habermas*, 'Modernity versus Postmodernity', New German Critique* Vol. 22 (Winter, 1981); Christopher Wilk (ed), *Modernism: Designing a New World 1914–1939* (V&A Publishing, 2006), pp. 9.

[13] Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air* (Penguin, London, 1988) pp. 15–16.

invention of 'spaces, surfaces, shapes, colours, etc.' to the exclusion of anything outside

itself.[14] Most fundamental to Greenberg's theories was 'the ineluctable flatness of the

surface' in which 'one sees a modernist picture as a picture first, rather than in terms of

any subject matter'.[15] This widely accepted definition with its emphasis on aesthetic

formalism and its rejection of any relationship between art and society, including

popular culture, was subject to challenge by postmodernist critics at the beginning of

the 1960s. However, remarkably, it has survived and remains intact and is still used to

this day with some revisions.[16] At the turn of the twentieth century, the Modern

Movement in architecture originated from this avant-garde spirit shared by Modernist

painting, music, and literature. When compared with their literary and artistic

counterparts, whose counter-modern gestures called the authority of Western

rationality into question, modernist architects were more allied with societal and

industrial modernisation.[17] New forms of building styles aimed to defy the architecture

of the past which concerned itself with detail construction of opulent buildings for the

elite. A new generation of architects condemned and proscribed the triviality of

ostentatiously arbitrary designs with the aim to resolve the socioeconomic divisions

[14] Clement Greenberg, *Avant-Garde and Kitsch, The Collected Essays and Criticism* Vol. 1 (University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 9.

[15] Clement Greenberg, *Modernist Painting, The Collected Essays and Criticism* vol.4 (University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 87.

[16] Christopher Wilk (ed), *Modernism: Designing a New World 1914–1939* (V&A Publishing, 2006), pp. 13. For a revised version of Modernism directly connected to life and practice, see T.J. Clark*, Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History Modernism* (Yale University Press, London, 2001). See also Peter Bürger, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde* (University of Minnesota Press, 1984), for views on the relation of modernist art to popular culture.

[17] Duanfang Lu, *Third World Modernism, Architecture and Identity* (Routledge, 2011) pp. 4.

which architecture had perpetuated up to then, and which in itself had become a

symbol of inequality.[18]

For the purposes of my research project, I will explore architectural Modernism

in South Africa, explicitly considering its role as a colonial substructure. David Joselit

writes that by asserting European modernity as universal, the West was motivated 'to

view all other expressions of modernity as indebted to it, as derivative':

> Such indebtedness not only underwrote the dual modern institutions of imperialism and
>
> slavery by positing subject people as not fully human and consequently in debt to their rulers
>
> or masters for access to modernity but continues to characterise neoliberal (or neo-imperial)
>
> techniques of governance through debt, by loans from international financial agencies such as
>
> the World Bank or International Monetary Fund.[19]

The well-known documented narrative of the geography of classical Modernism

has been primarily determined by metropolitan centres and was translated,

appropriated, and creatively mimicked in colonised and postcolonial countries in Asia,

Africa, and Latin America.[20] Andreas Huyssen states that:

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[18] Robert Hughes, *The Shock of the New* (London, Thames, and Hudson 1991) pp. 176. A key source which informed this attitude was Adolf Loos's seminal text entitled *Ornament and Crime*, first given as a lecture in 1910 and published in 1913. He explored the idea that the progress of culture is associated with the deletion of ornament from everyday objects, and that it was therefore a crime to force craftsmen or builders to waste their time on ornamentation that served to hasten the time when an object would become obsolete. From this Loos developed his radical aesthetic purism of stripped-down buildings which influenced the minimal massing of modern architecture.

[19] David Joselit, *Heritage and Debt: Art in Globalisation (October Books)* (The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts / London, 2020) pp. xviii.

[20] Andreas Huyssen, 'Geographies of Modernism in a Globalising World' in Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker (eds) *Geographies of Modernism* (Routledge, London, 2005), pp. 6–18.

> In the most interesting ways, Modernism cut across imperial and postimperial, colonial and decolonizing cultures. It was often the encounter of colonial artists and intellectuals with the metropolis's modernist culture that supported the desire for liberation and independence.[21]

Literary critic and essayist George Steiner termed Modernism not only as international and cosmopolitan in its outlook and practice but as 'extra-territorial'.[22] Many of the leading modernist artists and designers moved regularly between European capitals such as New York and Los Angeles. Some were driven by political persecution and others by lack of opportunity often drawn to the magnetism of artistic activity in Berlin or Paris. With the rise of fascism, modernist's spread further afield within the United States while others emigrated to Palestine (under British mandate), South America, and South Africa.[23]

Many White South Africans feel uncomfortable, defensive, awkward, or even worryingly ambivalent about their history. Whereas similarly many in Britain, and in Europe and America, seem to suffer from a selective and collective amnesia about their respective imperial pasts; it's just a question of how much you want to find out and how far back you want to go past the 'official' history. South Africa's legacy, like Israel's, still feels open and raw with comparisons made between these two countries stretching back to the 1970s. However, if we dispense with details for a moment and take in a longer sweep of humanity, could we be drawn to the conclusion that all 'history is genocide'? It is common knowledge how the Nazis 'systematically murdered'

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[21] Ibid.
[22] The following paragraph is rephrased from Wilk, pp. 15.
[23] Ibid.

9

the Jews during the Holocaust, but the atrocities committed by the Belgians on the Congolese, the 'war of annihilation' *(Vernichtungskrieg)* against the Herero and Nama in German South-West Africa, and the British suppression of the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya, are notorious to an extent, but at best ignored.[24] This is of course not necessarily a question of ignorance but rather a question of selective political and social interests shaping specific agendas. Empires rise on the backs of others, just as Amazon and Google, both American multinational technology companies, conquer by squashing all before them. Just two of the Big Five companies whose influence has gone beyond mere information technology and who have now also become powerful political influencers.[25] China and Russia are on the move inexorably in Africa now and have all the hallmarks of colonial bullies; using loans or new infrastructure projects to dominate countries while filling the void vacated by the United States' role as a superpower. Through colonial processes, all human beings thrive by taking things away from others and, as Orwell put it: 'European peoples, especially the British, have long owed their high standard of life to direct or indirect exploitation of the coloured peoples'.[26]

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[24] See Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost, A story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (Pan Books London, 2012); Jürgen Zimmerer and Joachim Zeller (eds), E.J. Neather (translator), *Genocide in German South-West Africa: The Colonial War of 1904–1908 and Its Aftermath* (Merlin Press, London, 2008); Caroline Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning, The Untold Story of Britain's Gulag in Kenya* (Henry Holt and Co. New York, 2005). See also Sathnam Sanghera, *Empireland, How Imperialism Has Shaped Modern Britain* (Penguin Books, Great Britain, 2021).

[25] The Big Five companies in US information technology today are Amazon, Google, Apple, Microsoft, and Facebook.

[26] Orwell, source text cited in Deborah Chasman and Joshua Cohen (eds), *Evil Empire, A Reckoning with Power,* Pankaj Mishra interviewed by Wajahat Ali in 'Empire's Racketeers', (*Boston Review*, Massachusetts, 2018), pp. 77–88.

The trajectory of colonialism inextricably linked to Modernism that this research considers began with the need for Europe to find a seaway to India which was the big prize in the fifteenth century. This is where Europe's influence in Southern Africa begins. When Bartholomew Diaz rounded the southernmost cape of Africa in 1488 with his three caravels, and the King of Portugal Alfonso V, in a clever bit of marketing for those times, changed the name *Cape of Storms (Cabo das Tormentas),* to *Cape of Good Hope (Cabo da Boa Esperança),* the race was on. South Africa was first colonised by the Dutch in 1652 for its strategic location as a halfway house on the spice route to India. It was both invaded by the British in 1795 and subsequently re-colonised in 1806 until the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910.[27] It is crucial to understand, as Edward Said suggests, what explorers and novelists say about 'strange regions' of the world; and how narrative was used in order to assert an identity and hold over a country like South Africa – and in turn how the colonised used the same method to assert their identity.[28] Said notes that:

> [...] the main battle in imperialism is over land, of course; but when it came to who owned the land, who had the right to settle and work on it, who kept it going, who won it back, and who now plans its future – these issues were reflected, contested, and even for a time decided in narrative.[29]

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[27] Similar to Australia and Canada, the Union of South Africa became a self-governing dominion of the British Empire in 1910. Full sovereignty was confirmed with the Balfour Declaration in 1926 and the Statute of Westminster in 1931. It was presided over under a form of constitutional monarchy with the Crown being represented by a governor-general. In 1961 the Union came to an end with the enactment of the constitution whereby South Africa became a republic and left the Commonwealth.

[28] Edward W. Said, *Culture, and Imperialism* (Vintage, London, 1994), pp. xiii.

[29] Ibid.

We are all to some extent guilty of profiting from the misery and exploitation of others. By seeking other people's misfortune, this misfortune ultimately becomes a selfish fortune. My primary aim is to not only face the past of my native South Africa through this project but offer a view of modernity and its belligerent relationship with colonialism which is reframed through a creative dialogue that influences and drives my practice.

My methodologies for architectural references and source material often start with a series of searches on the internet which have led me to more specific sources such as the University of the Witwatersrand's digital repository *WIReDSpace.* This particular site has been an essential source of information providing me with free access to high-quality scans of elevation and floor plans of South African architectural sources. These include, for example, Rex Martienssen's Greenside House and the series of NE51-type township houses initially constructed on a modernist grid (Figs. 4, 5, 6). Other searches have involved contacting the University of Pretoria's Architecture Archives who generously provided me with plans and photographic documentation of Helmut Stauch's domestic modernist architecture (Fig. 7). From these digital and photographic references, I developed architectural models that were initially intended to provide me with graphic source material for paintings only (Fig. 8). However, as this research project developed, my practice evolved into various strands of working methodologies where I realised the architectural models could function as sculptural artworks in their own right. Due to the hybrid nature of the architectural models, I was able to combine a variety of sculptural elements, including found objects in different

12

combinations which I photographed in order to open up the historic content and create a dialogue for multiple interpretations.

By focusing on domestic architecture, which is often overlooked in favour of grand civic architectural statements, I aim to assess a formalist probing that encapsulates hierarchical structures of master and servant relations that I argue mirrors the development of European Modernism. This, I feel, is particularly evident in the exclusive domestic architecture which, through its design and use by wealthy educated Whites, further collectively attributed to the fact that Modernism in a colonial South African context formed an elitist identity that also served a nationalist agenda of oppression and segregation. Thus, the concept of colonial modern seen from a southern African viewpoint has been, and more than likely still is, often overshadowed by European and international modernist narratives. It is here where I aim to contribute to knowledge by drawing attention to a particular form of architectural Modernism appropriated within a colonial context, and to visualise the many different strands and philosophies of Modernism.

Modernist narratives in my practice are referred to by titling my sculptures and paintings with similar titles such as Piet Mondrian's paintings; *Composition No.12; Composition with Blue* 1937–1942 or *Composition with Grid 5 (Lozenge)* (1919) (Figs. 9, 23, 73, 83, 98). The towers reminiscent of Constantin Brancusi and mounted interchangeably onto the roofs of these houses are intended to conjure up a well-known modernist abstract trope with the intention to turn these South African houses into memorials mourning the tragic events of apartheid and its relation to Modernism

13

(Figs. 9, 10). The relation with memorialisation stems from how Edith Balas has compared Brancusi's endless columns to the geometric configurations found throughout his native Oltenia in the form of porch pillars and more specifically death poles of peasant cemeteries.[30] The tower mounted onto the roof of *Composition with Fluorescent Red* (2022) was developed from an image that ethnologist and geologist George Stowe recorded for his book titled the *Native Races of South Africa* (Figs. 9, 11, 12, 13, 14).[31] I subsequently came across the same image in Gary van Wyk's book *African Painted Houses: Basotho Dwellings of Southern Africa.* I refer to van Wyk's understanding of zigzag patterns further on page 121, note 321. These are some of the earliest recordings of Sotho mural art and although these patterns may have had specific names and meanings, such information rarely exists today. I created a three-dimensional structure from the two-dimensional recording as I was interested how the mural design of serration and indentation visually reminded me of some of the bases of Brancusi's early wooden sculptures (Fig. 15).

From these observations I am able to further identify particular forms of colonial Modernism and formalism such as the recurring motif of an 'endless column' and references to abstract Modernist painting. With overlaid imperial references the

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[30] See Edith Balas, *Brancusi and Romanian Folk Traditions* (Columbia University Press, New York, 1987).
[31] I changed the title from *Composition with Red* to *Composition with Fluorescent Red* after deciding to use a fluorescent red colour for a stronger glow emanating from underneath the two smaller central triangles that make up the tower. I felt the fluorescent red's glow would formally/compositionally combine the tower with the fluorescent windows and doors of the house much better. The title changed again for my exhibition *The Absence of Myth*, 12 January–7 February 2023 at the Morley Gallery to *Composition with Fluorescent Red and Blue* when *Composition with Fluorescent Red* was exhibited and is now combined together with *Composition with Blue no.1* which is based on the N51/9 township house with a tower reminiscent of Constantin Brancusi.

paintings *House Windsor* (2020) and *House Kensington* (2019), for example, were

developed through a process of collage and drawing and are based on houses located

south of Durban which forms part of the sprawling township named Chatsworth (Figs.

16, 17, 18). Here, Google Earth was particularly useful for site-specific geographic

references that provided me with a contemporary layout and visual context for the

township (Fig. 19). The township was constructed during the 1960s as one of the

apartheid state's infamous 'race zones' where Indian families were forcefully moved to

as part of the introduction of the Group Areas Act.[32] The images were sourced from

estate agent websites and my interest was drawn to this particular township which,

according to Dianne Scott, specifically demonstrates how south Durban was conceived

of as a modernist industrial landscape as a result of the juxtaposition of the interests of

industry, and the local and national state.[33] The township thus encapsulates the so-

called modernisation of 'private space' that successfully served the interests of

industrialists and the apartheid state at the expense of the inhabitants. The

construction of this modernist industrial landscape had the effect of displacing

[32] The Group Areas Act was the title of three acts implemented by the nationalist apartheid state and was promulgated on 7 July 1950. It was amended and implemented over several years spanning a period up until 1984. The acts segregated all racial groups by assigning different residential and business sections with a particular focus on urban areas in a system of urban apartheid. The intended laws excluded people of colour from living in the most developed areas, which were regulated for Whites only. It was repealed on 30 June 1991 along with many other prejudicial laws through the Abolition of Racially Based Land Measures Act.

[33] See https://www.privateproperty.co.za/for-sale/gauteng/east-rand/boksburg/windmill-park/1919; see also https://www.property24.com/for-sale/shallcross/chatsworth/kwazulu-natal/6220/112343788.

thousands of people who did not fit in with the intentions of the blueprint plan for the zone.[34]

The architectural models and paintings based on actual structures found in South Africa are examples as a way of thinking through the appropriation of Modernism in South Africa that was co-opted by an ideology of cultural nationalism. My practice in relation to the theory of this particular strand of colonial Modernism is thus visualised through an iterative loop that feeds various working methodologies. The methods employed are specific to contextual analysis that are arrived at through a series of visual and theoretical examples as cited above and funnelled into the structure of the PhD thesis. These are visualised through numerous examples of paintings and architectural models. It is worth noting that after all painting is also a method in itself and falls under one strand of this iterative process as a means to propel the more ambiguous narratives as an agent for potential translations of modernist language. It is a space that lends itself to construction of fictive elements that are a substantial part of modernist legacies in South Africa. These languages are marked by specific visual traditions noted throughout the thesis and in connection to formalist and abstract forms of representation. In other words, there is a method within a method that has arisen through the research that is applicable to both visual and theoretical strands of my research and acts as mediator between the two.

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[34] Dianne Scott, 'Creative Destruction: Early Modernist Planning in the South Durban Industrial Zone, South Africa', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (2003), pp. 235–259.

Below are brief outlines of the four chapters for this thesis in which I will

consider how the aesthetic transfer of European Modernism in colonial South Africa is

ultimately worked through and modulated in this research project.

The title for Chapter One is appropriated from the title of the book written by

George Bataille, *'The Absence of Myth'.* For Bataille, 'the absence of myth' had become

the myth of the modern age that he argued has 'lost the secret of its cohesion'.[35] The

book's basic premise of 'absence' is used to an extreme analogical purpose to describe a

Eurocentrist mythologising and entitlement to private space in South Africa coupled

with the severe regulation of public life that restricted the intermingling of all people

and cultures before and during apartheid. Twenty-one years after the end of apartheid

on 9 March 2015, about a dozen protestors gathered in front of a sculpture of mining

magnate and politician Cecil John Rhodes on the campus of the University of Cape

Town and demanded its removal. These events in fact became the trigger for this

research project which provided me with the iconography to grapple with the history

of colonialism and Modernism in a more direct manner. This involved a series of

fictitious 'monument proposals' to replace existing colonial monuments mostly made

from card, paper, and domestic cleaning products influenced by my interest in

makeshift structures (Figs. 20, 21). Bataille' s absence of myth reference is both symbolic

and political and provides me with a framework connecting current debates around

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[35] Georges Bataille, *The Absence of Myth: Writing on Surrealism* (London and New York, Verso, 2006).

17

decolonisation to underpin an assertion of how Modernism is constitutive and not derivative of modernity.

Chapter Two provides the historical context for my research and focuses on the application of Modernism in South Africa, in a profoundly unequal society, by analysing its primary White architects who designed and built predominantly for a White public (Fig. 22). I consider the unique modernist architecture that was closely aligned to the principals of the International Style by exploring an alignment of prominent White architects responsible for the aesthetic transfer of European Modernism during the late 1920s that distinguished itself from British imperial styles that largely dominated the architecture at the time.[36] Attached as it was to Imperial Britain, South Africa appropriated the ideas in architecture rooted in the International Style and developed architectural Modernism under the auspices of Rex Martienssen and his colleagues W. Gordon McIntosh and Norman Hanson at Witwatersrand University.[37] The ideas of the International Style or Modern Movement with its origins in the Netherlands and Germany developed during the first two decades of the twentieth century and spread globally.[38] It emerged in South Africa as an ideology at the margins of the development of European Modernism and became unwittingly interwoven with nationalist

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[36] Melinda Silverman, 'Ons bou vir die Bank: Nationalism, architecture and Volkskas Bank', in H. Judin and I. Vladislavic (eds) Blank: *Architecture, Apartheid and After* (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 1998), pp. 129–143.

[37] Hilton Judin, *Architecture, State Modernism,* 2021, pp. xxvii.

[38] Errol Haarhoff, 'Appropriating Modernism: Apartheid and the South African Township', *A/Z ITU Journal of Architecture* Vol. 8, No. 1 (January 2011), pp. 184–195.

ideologies. This form of state Modernism and cultural nationalism became particularly

evident in Pretoria, the apartheid capital of South Africa.

Chapter Three considers the relation of my practice to a colonial substructure

inherent to architectural Modernism, as laid out in Chapter Two. I have arrived at this

particular point in my practice through questions of origin, displacement, homelessness,

and colonial monuments. In this chapter I select two domestic houses from which I

have constructed models, as well as use as a reference for paintings. These two houses

built in South Africa: one by Rex Martienssen and known as House Greenside or

Martienssen House (1940) and the other by Hellmut Stauch, House Kellerman (1950 and

1959), respectively, are closely aligned to the principles of the International Style or

Modern Movement (Figs. 4, 7). I use the architectural models titled *Composition with

Fluorescent Red* and *Composition with Blue* as structural frameworks to incorporate a

variety of modernist abstract painting and sculptural references to find ways to

articulate the appropriation and mutation of colonial Modernism in South Africa (Figs. 9,

23). The use of architectural models has been particularly useful in 'opening up' this

particular strand of colonial Modernism, whereby 'fiction' and in particular 'science

fiction' is applied to allow for multiple interpretations and make the work accessible to

a wider audience. Science fiction's relation to colonialism, for example, is often

attributed to colonial exploration and journeys into other fantastical worlds with

superior technology. In other words, the dialogue created by these 'fictive worlds'

allows for the interpretation of this particular historical modernist narrative to be

steered down a variety of paths.

Chapter Four develops from Chapter Three, which examines my practice in relation to the modernist agenda of close relations between the South African Modern Movement and its European protagonists. However, here the South African apartheid state instead provided a technical exercise that enabled the social and political contradictions of 'permanence' (in terms of housing) for the urban Black population to be sidestepped. This was facilitated by a particularly cruel and restricted distribution and access to land, including owning property. I will aim to detail how this form of 'low-cost modernism' that originated out of the South African Modern Movement ultimately failed Africans and is a further indictment of the manipulation of Modernism. The 'solution' to local 'problems' even before apartheid became official was the 'need' to design urban spaces for a segregated society, and modern town planning was used in the development, in particular, of new township plans. During apartheid, colour was specifically used to perpetuate a form of racial exclusion based on the colour of people's skin with attention specifically focusing upon the isolation of the White group from the Black group. In *Specific Colour* I examine the political space in which colour has its reality in South Africa (Figs. 24, 25). In a political context colour is loaded with significance and is definitely not neutral.

This modernist PhD research project is thus the expression of a particular ideological moment in history with the intention to show how these multiple matters; history, apartheid, architecture, monuments, painting, sculpture, and colour are entangled, and how art and ideology coincide. Louis Althusser's formulation in 'A Letter on Art...' in the collected essays, *Lenin and Philosophy* states:

20

What art makes us see, and therefore gives to us in the form of 'seeing', 'perceiving' and

'feeling' (which is not the form of knowing), is the ideology from which it is born, in which it

bathes, from which it detaches itself as art and which it alludes.[39]

In many respects it could be argued that apartheid was, in effect, a theoretical

and practical manifestation of Modernism. When one considers the understanding of

Modernism as a:

[...] neutral, spatial, and linear grid upon which reality can be mapped, a being can be

experienced as a 'standing reserve' (or as an always available resource) to be controlled and

used at will by the modern subject.[40]

This project borne from the ideology of apartheid and its relationship with the

development of Modernism in Europe is examined through painting and sculpture, to

comment on and participate in current decolonial debates. It recognises the general

amnesia that is so often associated when it comes to contemporary postcolonial

awareness in the West by recontextualising the apartheid past in order to understand

the present. Walter D Mignolo and Rolando Vazquez in *Decolonial AestheSis* ask why

Western aesthetic categories like 'beauty' or 'representation' have come to dominate all

discussion of art and its value, and how those categories organise the way we think of

ourselves and others: as White or Black, high or low, strong or weak, good or evil:

[...] decolonial art (or literature, architecture, and so on) enacts these critiques, using

techniques like juxtaposition, parody, or simple disobedience to the rules of art and polite

society, to expose the contradictions of coloniality. Its goal, then, is not to produce feelings of

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[39] Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (Monthly Review Press, New York, 2001), pp. 152.
[40] Danie Goosen, 'Tradition, Modernism, and Apartheid', *Acta Theologica* Vol.37, No. 25 (University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, 2017), http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1015-87582017000200005

beauty or sublimity, but ones of sadness, indignation, repentance, hope, and determination to

change things in the future.[41]

The focus of my research is first and foremost a reflection of the production of my studio practice in relation to the written text based on existing research. My practice is an attempt to find ways of spatially and structurally thinking through the cultural failures of apartheid, including post-apartheid South Africa. Ultimately, my practice is intended to recontextualise South Africa's unique modernist architecture, with its origins in colonialism and European Modernism in relation to a nefarious development that created the conditions for an architectural project of racial segregation and social inequality that persists to this day.

[41] Walter Mignolo and Rolando Vazquez et al., 2013,
https://socialtextjournal.org/periscope_topic/decolonial_aesthesis/

Chapter One

The Absence of Myth

'Night is also a sun', and the absence of myth is also a myth: the coldest, the purest, the only

true myth.[42]

The title *The Absence of Myth* adopted for the opening passage of this chapter

comes from a book by one of the more radical philosophers and writers of our time,

Georges Bataille, whose thinking and writing on notions of body, culture, society, and

community never fell short of controversy.[43] In June 2015 I had my second solo

exhibition with Gallery AOP in Johannesburg with the same title. Andrea Medjesi who

wrote the essay for my exhibition catalogue suggested what resonates at a point of

urgency are clearly 'misplaced' signs whose functions are disguised through visual

diagrams of floating rafts (Fig. 26). Fragments of Kazimer Malevich, Barnett Newman or

Frank Stella's paintings are chameleon-like 'reassembled' into rafts, developing the

adaptability that floats through the murky waters of Modernism, 'changing colours and

flags in order to secure its future and meaning thus critically assigning "otherness" to

the instructiveness of signs'.[44]

One of the finest myths Modernism still imposes on us, Medjesi argues, is the

dominance of knowledge of experience and sensations, so constructed as to doubt

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[42] Georges Bataille, *The Absence of Myth,* (2006), pp. 48.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Andrea Medjesi*, The Absence of Myth,* Günther Herbst solo exhibition catalogue, Gallery AOP (T&R – Hirt & Carter, Johannesburg, 2015).

23

everything that is not empirically sound or proven. If, as Bataille suggests, the idea of

non-knowledge equals horror, the human experience is well adjusted to deal with such,

as our history and presence testifies. To assume the privilege of omnipresent control,

the idea of knowledge is misrepresented in order to oblige our desire for perpetual

innovation and progress. Thus, is the pact with horror then the only real solution we are

presented with?[45] Is technology the horror we have to live with for the sake of

progress? One can picture Walter Benjamin's angel of history here as a metaphor for the

price of progress:

> My wing is ready for flight, I would like to turn back. If I stayed timeless time,
> I would have little luck.[46]

> His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single
> catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The
> angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a
> storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel
> can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is
> turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call
> progress.[47]

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[45] Ibid.
[46] Gerhard (Gershom) Scholem, *Greetings from Angelus: Poems,* translated by Richard Sieburth (First Archipelago Books edition, Brooklyn New York, 2017).
[47] Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations, Essays and Reflections*, translated by Harry Zohn. Edited and with Introduction by Hannah Arendt. Preface by Leon Wieseltier (Schocken Books, New York, 2007), pp. 257–258.

The raft paintings in the exhibition Medjesi felt, reminded her that our aspirations are fragile constructs that float the waters of our desires but need to be accounted for and safeguarded through both ecstasy and horror.[48]

The intention of this chapter is to describe my historic painting practice and how this shaped my current research. I am interested in how Afrikaner nationalist politics became an architectural substructure of colonial Modernism. The modernist project had devastating consequences for South Africa's indigenous population, who were conquered and terrorised by European powers that also suppressed their spiritual belief systems and origin. In contrast the Voortrekker pioneers were held up to be mythological figures who paid a 'cruel price in blood and tears to own their right to the land'. This Afrikaner identity, David Goldblatt wrote, was rooted as much in myth as it was in any observable or historical reality, driven by the political aspirations and political power of the National Party. At its heart lay a discourse that inscribed itself into history through the making literal of founding myths. Notable amongst these is the Great Trek, reinterpreted by proto-nationalist ideologues as a heroic exodus by the Voortrekkers from British imperialism.[49]

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[48] Medjesi, (2015) pp. 7.

[49] David Goldblatt, *Some Afrikaners Photographed*, (Sandhurst: M. Crawford, 1975), pp. 23–24. Goldblatt writes that The Great Trek in reality was nothing more than an unstructured migration of the malcontent and marginalised from the former Cape Colony under British rule. The exodus narrative was made a chronicle, overlaid with religious, quasi-religious, and crypto-biblical echoes replete with archetype in covenants and miracles, totems, and taboos. What it all added up to was a divinely ordained destiny, based on a covenant contracted between the proto-people and their God before the battle of Blood River on the bank of the Ncome River on 16 December 1838 in what is today KwaZulu-Natal. The Afrikaans name Bloed Rivier (translated into English as Blood River), is the name given to one of the many battles fought between the Voortrekkers and Zulus, exploding into the founding myth that formed the

Bataille's 'absence of myth' can be applied as an extreme analogy to describe a more generalised lack of unity between the different race groups in South Africa. The legacy of colonialism past and present continues to this day. Apartheid was built upon 300 years of segregation orders and legislation which accelerated with the industrialisation of South Africa following the discovery of diamonds and gold towards the latter part of the nineteenth century. Today we observe in its neglected infrastructure a lingering presence of subjugation and a powerful reminder of the everyday bureaucracy of colonialism and apartheid.[50]

Michael Richardson, who wrote the introduction to Bataille's English translation of *The Absence of Myth*, relates that one of his apparent projects was to perform an actual human sacrifice in an attempt to understand the intense motivation behind such an idea and the only way to understand it was to participate in such an act. He soon enough realised the meaninglessness an act like this would prove to be, however, it did seem to have a profound impact on his thinking. This appears to have propelled him during the 1940s to ponder what myth could mean in a society.[51] Bataille recognised that although contemporary society was not entirely without myth, its denial of ancient myth had itself become the myth of the modern age having 'lost the secret of its

basis of Afrikaner identity, crammed into school history books, eulogised in the pulpits of the Dutch Reformed Church, in political rhetoric, and all the other dubious means at the disposal of the ruling elite.
[50] Hilton Judin (ed), *Falling Monuments*, 2021, pp. 1.
[51] Bataille is not the first writer to focus on the absence of humanity's relationship with nature. Strictly speaking, this has a long tradition with writers such as William Wordsmith, John Ruskin, William Morris, T.S. Elliot, and Aldous Huxley, among others. They all abhorred the rationalism, standardisation and regimentation of capital that would, according to them, ultimately lead to the demise of our individual freedoms, creativity, and traditions.

cohesion'. Written in the wake of World War Two he saw Surrealism as both a symptom

and the beginning of an attempt to address this loss. Modern society, Bataille suggests,

believed that it no longer had a need for myth because it had evolved beyond

dependence upon a ritual to establish a mediation between mankind and the rest of

creation, since society now had dominion over nature. In other words, society had

deluded itself into believing it was without myth by making a myth of its very denial.[52]

For Bataille this absence of myth was merely one aspect of a more generalised

'absence'. It also in a more direct way meant to him the absence of communication

which he defined as 'sacred'. By extension, its loss means the failure of communication

which touches all levels of society. A society that ceases or is unable to genuinely

communicate ceases to be a society and becomes an 'absence of society' or more

specifically an 'absence of community'.[53]

Bataille's rethinking of myth is useful when applied to South Africa and apartheid

because much of his thought transposes well and enlightens the segregation and

fragmentation of its society based on forceful race and class relations. In contemporary

[52] See also Jean Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community* (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1991), pp. 52. Jean Luc Nancy calls Bataille's 'absence of myth' an 'interruption of myth' instead. He states that we do not know very much about what mythic truth was or is for men living in the midst of what we call 'myths': 'But we know that we / our community, if it is one, our modern and postmodern humanity – have no relation to the myth of which we are speaking, even as we fulfil it or try to fulfil it. In a sense, for us all that remains of myth is its fulfilment or its will. We no longer live in mythic life, nor in a time of mythic invention or speech. When we speak of 'myth' or of 'mythology' we mean the negation of something at least as much as the affirmation of something. This is why our scene of myth, our discourse of myth, and all our mythological thinking make up a myth: to speak of myth has only ever been to speak of its absence. And the word 'myth' itself designates the absence of what it names.'
[53] Rephrased from Michael Richardson (ed) in the 'Introduction' to George Bataille's, *The Absence of Myth*, 2006, pp. 1–27.

27

South Africa the past continues to persist in the present, just as the Deep South in the USA bears the raw hallmarks of its own racist history. South Africa's apartheid past remains a haunting presence as the absence of an intimate and rather unconventional heritage has become increasingly clear.[54] In other words, the present is hardly able to address all the horrors of the past. Today's urban built environment scattered with vacant buildings and ruins stand as testament to South Africa's oppressive history of colonialism. Rather than longing for an idealistic rural idyll, architects during apartheid adopted a form of Modernism inspired by cultural nationalism driven by the economic and social advancement of Afrikaners.[55] My hometown Pretoria, for example, during the 1950s and 60s 'saw the influence of a white consciousness reach its peak culturally'.[56] Architect and academic Hilton Judin writes that this was a form of nationalism embraced by a new generation of Afrikaners in the former Transvaal province, moving from the countryside to the capital. Here they found for the first time a secure place they could call their 'own' whilst finding many opportunities to acquire higher education and jobs. Modern state architecture became the most iconic public manifestation of an evolving expression of White cultural identity and character as a new generation of White architects took up the challenge in finding form to their prospects and beliefs (Fig. 27). Judin calls this an opportunistic faith in the Afrikaner nation who felt a need to entrench their vulnerable and contested position on the

[54] Hilton Judin (ed), 2021, pp. xx.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid.

African continent. Architects grappled with a modernity and vernacular at the same time as the urban industrialised and agricultural rural landscape was transforming. Economically, South Africa was growing despite the fact that the country had become increasingly isolated and was seen as an international pariah over its statutory apartheid policies. Judin further reminds us how between the State of Emergency on 30 March 1960, following the massacre by police of a large number of protestors at Sharpeville and the 'White only' referendum on becoming a Republic on 5 October 1960, few Afrikaans-or English-speaking voters voiced their opinion against nationalist Hendrik Verwoerd and his segregationist policies.[57] It wasn't long before these voters got caught up in a tide of White unity generated by support for the Republic under the campaign slogan *To Unite and Keep South Africa White*.[58] Recent studies show that while the underlying historical context and circumstances of the rise of Afrikaner nationalism belongs to a different era of international politics, it is, however, rooted in the experience of a people who were denied social and economic power and whose cultural agency was marginalised by an imperialist agenda.[59] Academic commentators in South Africa now argue that in hindsight both the imperialist establishment and

[57] During 1960 the African National Congress and the Pan Africanist Congress organised demonstrations in connection with a variety of grievances in particular, the pass laws. The Pass Law was a form of internal passport which all Africans over the age of 16 were required to carry with them at all times. On 21 March 1960 at a Pan Africanist Congress pass law demonstration at Sharpeville in the southern Transvaal, 69 Black people were killed and a 180 wounded when police opened fire on a large group of demonstrators.

[58] Hilton Judin, *Architecture, State Modernism,* 2021, pp. xx.

[59] Federico Freschi, 'From Volksargitektuur to Boere Brazil: Afrikaner Nationalism and the Architectural Imaginary of Modernity, 1936–1966', in Freschi, F., Schmahmann, B., Van Robbroeck, L. (eds.), *Troubling Images: Visual Culture and the Politics of Afrikaner Nationalism*, (Wits University Press, Johannesburg, 2020), pp. 1–22.

international community were slow to realise the depth of Afrikaner humiliation after the South African War formerly known as the Anglo-Boer War.[60] The ultimate pursuit of Afrikaner nationalism became a unified White national identity that was ideologically driven and highly organised. In view of the legacy of brutality, enforced racism, and economic inequality that ultimately characterised the Afrikaner national apartheid state, it seems relevant and urgent to reassess the mechanism through which the current resurgence of nationalist sentiment across the world has re-established itself.[61]

Methods and Theories Part 1 – Relationship to Practice

I will refer to themes that I have grappled with in the past in order to make sense of how my practice has been influenced and developed whilst conducting this PhD research project. My current practice has developed out of the specific events of the #Rhodes Must Fall campaign, which initiated a series of fictional *Monument Proposal* sculptures. What has, however, become clearer to me is that my practice is a continuous critique of Modernism that considers a visual language that deals with politics both geographically and socially, and which brings issues to the fore of

[60] Ibid., See also Nosipho Nkuna, 'Black Involvement in the Anglo-Boer War 1899–1902', *Military History Journal* Vol. 11, Nos. 3/4 (October 1999), http://samilitaryhistory.org/vol113nn.html The war was renamed to acknowledge and include the Black southern African participants who were either forced or joined voluntarily. The 'participants' referred to the war as the 'White Man's War'. The Anglo-Boer War or Second Boer War, and also known as the Boer War (11 October 1899–31 May 1902) was a conflict fought between the British Empire and the two Boer Republics (South African Republic and Orange Free State) that stimulated an Afrikaner cultural and political awakening in direct opposition to the influence of the Empire in Southern Africa. The war was triggered by conflicting political ideologies of imperialism and republicanism and the discovery of diamond and gold deposits in the two Boer Republics.
[61] Freschi, Schmahmann and van Robbroeck (eds.), 2021, pp. 2.

nationhood, origin, and displacement. I will refer to my practice throughout this thesis as an aesthetic response to these facts.

The origin of my research comes from the extrapolations of my long-term preoccupation with photographing and painting impoverished shelters of London's homeless population from 1998 to 2015 (Figs. 28, 29). The materials and fibres that made up these shelters, and the way they were at odds with the surrounding architecture or immediate environment was the starting point for a series of paintings combining a variety of painting genres. These ranged from Photorealism to Geometric Abstraction and mark-making emphasising the materiality of paint, thus converging a number of different types of painting styles into a single painting. By appropriating a language of modernist abstract painting practices in the making of these paintings, the poignancy of homelessness as subject matter may have been somewhat perversely decreased some might argue, however, it enabled a critical distancing from the original in order to deliver an 'indictment of modernism through the medium of painting'.[62] This criticality of Modernism is extended into my current practice and is the overarching element that binds all this research together. In my exhibition *The Man Who Wasn't There* at Gallery AOP Johannesburg in 2012, art critic Michael Graham Smith wrote that the hard-edged 'modernist language' or shapes are used intentionally because they operate at different speed to the illusionistic areas and some echo areas within the painting in an attempt

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[62] Michael Graham Smith, 'Review' of *The Man Who Wasn't There*, Günther Herbst at Gallery AOP 2012. http://artthrob.co.za/Reviews/Michael_Smith_reviews_The_Man_Who_Wasnt_There_by_Gunther_Herbst_at_Gallery_AOP.aspx

to conflate Modernism's über-idealism with the harsh make-do ethos of surviving on the streets (Fig. 30). He further equated these paintings' topicality as a reminder of how South Africa is hurtling at breakneck speed towards a massively urbanised homeless population.[63] When I moved to the UK, and to some extent because of South Africa's history, I became focused on London's homeless. In some ways I feel I was probably rethinking tensions and political injustices that I'd grown up with.

Embedded with the familiar history of European and American Modernism, since 2006 my practice has become an engagement with aspects of 'architectural modernism' and 'geometric abstraction' in relation to a form of landscape tradition. The homeless or shelter paintings as suggested earlier are the origins for my research that employ references from Bauhaus to De Stijl in the form of familiar grid-like patterns, such as a Piet Mondrian *Compositions* transported throughout a series of five paintings titled *High Holborn* from numbers 0–5 (Fig. 29). Juan Bolivar wrote that these 'emblems are the footprints of modern man' that are encoded into my practice as schematic signifiers acting like barcodes that can be scanned.[64]

> Placed within urban settings, they are unequivocally titled to reflect the synergy between these image's indexicality and the settings they inhabit – Tottenham Court Rd. 3/Black Blue Red, 2009, New Oxford Street 2007 and Waterloo Rd. 3/Red White Blue, 2009/12, to name a few of the titles.[65]

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[63] Ibid.

[64] Juan Bolivar, 'The Man Who Wasn't There', Günther Herbst at Gallery AOP, Johannesburg, Exhibition brochure (printed by Ultra Litho, Johannesburg, August 2012).

[65] Ibid.

Crucially these paintings are also about a recognition of vulnerability married to a necessary sense of shelter as a basic human need for survival. The paintings are on a humane level also as a response to a natural threat of being exposed to the natural environment or severe weather conditions, and how essential it is to have a functional roof over one's head. I aimed to use the formal language of abstraction, coupled with some of those anxieties and vulnerabilities to construct paintings that not only referenced homelessness but were a reference to so many other factors that could create the conditions for losing one's home, such as relationship breakdowns, fires, wars, lost jobs, and debt, amongst many others. Within these works I recognised a relationship to a strong visual identity with some of the precarious architecture of South Africa.

In 2012 I encountered a book titled *The Fatal Impact: The Invasion of the South Pacific 1767–1840* by Alan Moorehead that subsequently changed the focus of my practice. The book chronicles the voyages of Captain James Cook of the Pacific Ocean islands and Australia and in particular chronicles the fateful moment when the Tahitian and Aborigine's 'social capsule was broken open' and were confronted for the first time by Europeans.[66] Although I don't agree with some of the views and language used in the book, the title and its content nevertheless carry the weight of fragility and vulnerability experienced by the inhabitants of the Pacific. The book is illustrated by many of the paintings and drawings by William Hodges RA (Royal Academy) who was

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[66] Alan Moorehead, *The Fatal Impact, The Invasion of the South Pacific 1767–1840*, originally published in 1966, London (this edition Mead & Becket Publishing, Sydney, 1987), pp. 8.

33

the official artist on Cook's second voyage (1772–75) (Fig. 31). These paintings are on one

level a romantic view of colonialism but also on another level, some of the first

examples of a move towards Western globalisation and the site for future

regenerations. The startling thing about Hodges's eighteenth-century British painting,

writes Jonathan Jones, is that:

> [...] its central elements – naked beauty, bathing, woods, Polynesian artefacts – are all
> ichnographically identical to the themes of the paintings, drawings, writings, and carvings
> made on Tahiti more than a century later by Paul Gauguin.[67]

Gauguin was essentially both the inheritor and mourner of an idyll fully formed

before the French Revolution (Fig. 32). Inherently Jones argues nothing had changed in

the European fantasy of Tahiti when Gauguin sailed there in 1891.[68] I took the landscape

format informed by Hodges's history paintings and prints to apply similar formal

considerations that I used in the homeless paintings to search for ways of bringing a

visual language to 'post-colonialist subject matter'. In a series of landscapes or

geological tableaux, the process begins with an image of an iceberg or mountain that

functions as a 'stage' around which to formally construct a composition (Fig. 33). The

paintings titled *Ice Islands 2* or *Invader #1*, for example, employ coloured geometric

'collages' of which the borrowings are often indirect, such as De Stijl, Minimalism or

Colour Field Painting (Figs. 34, 35, 36). These abstract modernist references are used to

'invade' the landscapes, which in themselves are 'assembled' together with various

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[67] Jonathan Jones, 'Fantasy Island', *The Guardian*, Saturday 3 July 2004
https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2004/jul/03/art
[68] Ibid.

styles of mark-making in the final rendering process from collage or photograph into paint.

> Where once we were inclined to consider Stella's object paintings on a level of painterly critique enforced by Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried, we are now free to rummage through painterly histories, seeking an unrestrained access to the categories given to painting.[69]

In other words, the identity of these paintings is conceived through a variety of sources where symbols and meaning become multiples referring to political and historical events that are researched through the development of colonialism and Modernism. 'This also stands in for a broad comment on social dislocation via the imperialist pretensions of western art and by extension the politics behind it. Abstractions in the world, aesthetically and sociologically.'[70]

My painting *Who is Afraid of Lygia Pape* (Fig. 37) refers to that all too often perverse process of unequal exchange which involves the exclusion from art history and constantly unfavourable judgement of artists who are deemed to originate from the international periphery.[71] I used part of a Frank Stella painting, *The Marriage of Reason and Squalor II* (1959) and collaged it together to form a 'raft' with part of Barnett Newman's *Vir Heroicus Sublimis* (1950-51). Other parts of fragmented Stella paintings float along past an anonymous snow-capped mountain. The title Who is afraid of ... is also a reference to a series of Newman paintings titled *Who is Afraid of Red, Yellow and*

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[69] Andrea Medjesi, 2015, pp. 5.
[70] Paul Carey-Kent, *Into and out of Abstraction*, Exhibition catalogue, Lubomirov-Easton, 26 April–21 June 2014.
[71] Paulo Herkenhoff, Lygia Pape: 'The Art of Passage' in Lygia Pape, *Magnetized Space* (Exhibition catalogue organised and produced by the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia 2011).

Blue I-IV. Pape's woodcut *Tecelar* (1957) bears a striking resemblance to Stella's *Marriage of Reason and Squalor.* Whereas Stella has long been part of the so-called contemporary Western canon, Pape more or less until fairly recently, has been excluded. Pape emerged during the 1950s in a context of what was then described as the 'Third World' which was seen as territory beyond the market or, as Paulo Herkenhoff describes, outside of history, like Hegel's jungle.[72]

The world occupied by my paintings within paintings employ facets of familiar modernist symbols as the signifiers for our historic and current times.[73] Landscape as a theme is also crucial as a trigger in our relationship not only with the natural but also, importantly, how this often aligns with the cultural and the political. This is where Bataille's notion of myth becomes relevant, drawing on a relationship that has severed the ties between the natural and the spiritual in favour of a measurable, quantifiable means of existence that is aligned with the progressive technocratic policies of survival, that not only tolerate but help create cardboard, homeless structures and add to the romanticised view of the colonial and imperial territories summoned in the 'shelter' and 'raft' paintings. *'The Absence of Myth'* is a reference that is taken both symbolically and politically, tying into the contemporary issues and debates surrounding decolonisation

[72] Ibid.
G.W.F. Hegel's *Philosophy of History* (first published in 1837) glorifies Ancient Greece and denigrates Africans whom he sees as children in the jungle, unaffected by the movement of history. Many African scholars reject his thesis on Africa arguing that his pronouncements on Africa have contributed to the stereotypical image of Black people.
[73] Juan Bolivar, August 2012.

36

and supporting my argument on the entanglement between Modernism and colonialism more explicitly.

The connection with the natural and the spiritual is further considered in relationship to functionality as an expression of life and can be further situated in the context of human labour, a position Jacques Rancière develops in the essay, 'Decorative Art: Temple, House, Factory'. Rancière equates the perfection of geometry with the rigour of the division of labour and distinguishes between the builder's hand and the architect's thought as a blueprint for the conceptualised, idealised form of expression that is no longer executed by hand. And when it is executed by a hand, the builder's hand becomes a form of servile labour that '[neither] adds to nor subtracts anything from the master's drawing'.[74] Instead:

> [...] it signals that the work comes from the thought of a man that has nothing more to express
> through the activity of his hands and is executed by the men who do not have the right to put
> any of their own thought or their lives into their work.[75]

Put in the context of the 'shelter' and the 'raft' paintings, the idea of a hand, a resourceful hand without a thought, helps us situate the socioeconomical gravity of the homeless shelters not only as structures but as a form of resistance to the divisions and the precarity of labour imposed by industrial and post-industrial strategies of Modernism. In this sense, the argument made by Bataille indicates a change of

[74] Jacques Rancière, Aisthesis, *Scenes from the Aesthetic Regime of Art* (Verso London, New York, 2019), pp. 138.
[75] Ibid.

37

paradigm, and a shift between the functional, essential means of production to the prefabricated blueprints for the future made by the hands of an architect.

Frank Stella's paintings are the best examples in support of this statement, and the reason they are appropriated into my own painting methods. The functionality of his stripe paintings, as Carl Andre comments, are 'the paths of brush on canvas':[76]

'Frank Stella is not interested in expression or sensitivity. He is interested in the necessities of painting.'[77]

Rancière makes further observations, and draws a connection between John Ruskin's attitude and a philosophy towards production:

> To shelter and express: the conjunction of these two functions is essential because it allows one to reject the simplistic opposition between the useful object and the object of disinterested contemplation…. For Ruskin there is basically only one art: architecture, which builds housing for men, people, and gods.[78]

Rancière continues the argument:

> Man needs the place where he lives after the workday to offer him not only shelter but also the feeling of life in action, joyous in itself.[79]

In the 'shelter' and 'raft' paintings the materiality of paint that is poured, dragged, and smeared recalls the notion of 'life in action' that is executed by hand, intentionally so, to underline and further de-stabilise the argument between structural

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[76] Carl Andre quoted by Thierry de Duve in 'Chapter Four, The Monochrome, and the blank Canvas', *Kant After Duchamp, An October Book,* (The MIT Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, London England, 1996), pp. 199–279.
[77] Ibid., pp. 200–201.
[78] Jacques Rancière, 2019, pp. 139.
[79] Ibid.

38

and functional means of labour. On another level, the paint effects refer to the natural environment or dramatic weather conditions intended to set the general mood of the work. When combined with the rendered/ 'collaged' elements the intention is to form an ambiguous space with tilting perspectives which are neither inside nor outside.[80] Landscape also functions as a formal tool, defined by the tradition of the figure–ground relationship, and a source of reference in the form of these 'collages' to structure a narrative around them. In other words, abstraction set against a landscape 'backdrop' that appears in the form of recognisable grids, colour schemes, and chequered boards; fragmented and reassembled into unmanned rafts, boats, or monuments as if left by Modernism's drifting legacy.[81] Here, the figure–ground relation is further used in a context of traditional landscape painting; a form of ideological supremacy and a colonial dominance that is associated with colonial conquering and reconfirmation of the 'mythical status' and the fantasies that come hand in hand with nationalism. The apartheid nationalism myth of South Africa is not lost here. And this is what flags do – stamp artificial, abstract statements on their backdrop, be it in the form of writing, letterheads, or buildings, or even on the actual land itself – heralding ownership.

[80] Rachel Withers, 'Günther Herbst, One in the Other', *Artforum* Vol. XLVIII, No. 2 (October 2009), pp. 250–251.
[81] Ibid.

Methods and Theories Part 2 – Historical Overview

The monument must become the revolution and the revolution again become a monument.[82]

In May 2015 debates around decolonisation came to worldwide attention with a series of protests that erupted in Cape Town that started with demands for the removal of a statue that commemorated the achievements of Cecil John Rhodes, a former Cape Colony prime minister. This event gave birth to the #Rhodes Must Fall campaign, with its consequences felt mostly in the UK and USA. However, #Rhodes Must Fall was not the first such act in the recent history of South Africa. In 1994, the statue of Hendrik Verwoerd, the so-called 'architect of apartheid', was removed from parliament. In post-apartheid South Africa, a notable strategy of interventionist projects precedes Rhodes's removal, initiating a series of temporary adjustments to public monuments.[83]

On 24 September 1999, for example, the government changed Shaka Day, a day normally observed by IsiZulu people, to Heritage Day to serve as a forum for multiple cultural manifestations. One such contribution among others was by Beezy Bailey who, outside the Houses of Parliament in Cape Town, transformed the figure of the first prime minister of South Africa and Boer War hero Louis Botha into a Xhosa initiate. His face is painted White and the figure on horseback was adorned with a hat and blanket.

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[82] Jacques Rancière, 2019, pp. 180.

[83] Kim Miller and Brenda Schmahmann (eds.), *Public Art in South Africa: Bronze Warriors and Plastic Presidents* (Indiana University Press, Indiana, USA, 2017). Another intervention piece was John Nankin's 1999 *Mister Rhodes*, an adaptation of Henry Pegram's Cecil John Rhodes statue in Company Gardens, Cape Town. The figure represented points north to allude to the subject's initial ambition to build a railway from Cape Town to Cairo. Nankin suspended brick-weighted ropes from his arms and shoulders that alluded to riggings in mining whilst simultaneously suggesting gold bars which implied 'a burden or retribution' thus 'inverting the idea of accumulation'.

The title *Abakwetha* meaning, 'They name you', was added temporarily to cover the name of Botha inscribed on the plinth and to read with the remaining text, 'Farmer, Warrior, Statesman'. For Heritage Day in 2014 Sethembile Msezane, for example, created a character based on her Zulu traditions and posed silently in front of the same Louis Botha statue as Bailey's initiate. The performance created a powerful visual dialogue between South Africa's colonial apartheid-era history and her own. Zayd Minty discusses these projects in a context of considering public art as a potential form of 'symbolic reparations'.[84] In other words, in a historical context of displacement and exclusion, these projects are intended to foster a sense that public spaces belong to all residents, in particular to include those who have been excluded, thus transforming, and developing the post-apartheid city.[85]

In David Bunn's essay 'Whited sepulchres: On the Reluctance of Monuments'*,* he writes that in Africa or any other colonial context, monumental architecture bears the burden of racially specific contradictions and instead is inhabited with a reluctance to imagine the idea of citizenship outside the divisions of race.[86] Presumed as a White tradition, Bunn states that monuments during apartheid South Africa also surpassed the ethical understanding of native communities, for which it was an obscure promise of future independence. At the same time, 'white monuments run the risk of becoming invisible or being neglected, because they rely on repeated memorial practices of an

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[84] Ibid., pp. 106.
[85] Ibid.
[86] David Bunn, 'Whited sepulchres: On the Reluctance of Monuments', in Vladislavic and Judin (eds) (1998), pp. 93–117.

embattled minority group of settlers and children'.[87] This paradox, Bunn suggests, has general implications for the symbolic functioning of all monuments. Bluntly put, in South Africa 'monuments find it impossible to be bearers of collective meaning and instead are inhabited by contradiction, because of their reluctance to imagine the idea of citizenship outside the boundaries of race'.[88]

In 2014, Cigdem Aydemir, an Australian artist, did what would have been unthinkable during the apartheid years by shrink-wrapping in plastic, two statues of notable Afrikaner leaders namely, Marthinus Theunis Steyn and C.R. Swart.[89] Situated on the campus of the University of the Free State, she then subsequently sprayed them bright fluorescent pink, thereby provocatively questioning the nature and meaning of nationalist statues on the campus and others in the city of Bloemfontein (Fig. 38). The idea of repurposing these existing statues, writes Jonathan D Jansen, was intended to create discord in the Afrikaner nationalist narrative of powerful symbols. This provided multiple narratives on these images and was strongly motivated by what the institutional leadership of the University of the Free State (UFS) regarded as the ideal of the public university. After all Jansen reminds us; universities are 'places where the

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[87] Ibid., pp. 93.
[88] Ibid., pp. 94.
[89] Marthinus Theunis Steyn (b.1857 and sculpted by Anton van Wouw in 1929) was a pre-apartheid figure best known for his anti-colonial stance against the British and the establishment of educational institutions. He was also the sixth and last president of the independent republic of the Orange Free State from 1896 to 1902.
Charles Robberts Swart (b. 1894 and sculpted by Johann Moolman in 1991) nicknamed 'Blackie' was the first apartheid State President of the Republic of South Africa from 1961 to 1967. Amongst his notorious achievements was his role in passing and overseeing the implementation of the Immorality Act (1927) which prohibited intimate relations between Black and White people. He was also responsible for banning the Communist Party of South Africa as well as certain members from the African National Congress.

commonplace is questioned, but also spaces where learning informs activism, beyond merely removing, replacing, or relocating what we do not like'.[90]

On 9 April 2015, when the Rhodes monument at UCT was removed, Msezane performed another one-woman piece titled *The People's Art Chapungu – The Day Rhodes Fell*. In Shona belief the Chapungu bird is thought to be a good omen that brings good fortune to a community.[91] Msezane embodied the spirit of the bird and stood on a plinth behind the statue of Rhodes raising and lowering her 'wings' as the statue was taken down from its original position overlooking Cape Town. The performance 'became a way of evoking the symbolism of Great Zimbabwe, thereby animating the counter narratives against colonial rule'.[92] Msezane thus located her body, '… – as a black female – within a public memorialised space and operated as a mechanism of reclaiming and re-remembering the narratives of black woman in South Africa and African histories'.[93]

#Rhodes Must Fall was connected as it was to a wider campaign to 'decolonise the university' and to interrogate the continued racial, social, and economic inequality in South Africa. Attacks on other statues of great dead White men had far more local

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[90] Jonathan D Jansen, 'It's Not Even Past: Dealing with Monuments and Memorials on Divided Campuses' in Freschi, Schmahmann, and van Robbroeck (eds.) (2020), pp. 119–139.

[91] The Shona people are an ethnic group native to Southern Africa and are primarily from Zimbabwe where they form the majority of the population. They consist of five clans namely: Karenga or Southern Shona (about 8.5 million people), Zezuru or Central Shona (5.2 million people), Korekore or Northern Shona (1.7 million people), Manyika tribe or Eastern Shona (1.2 million) in Zimbabwe (861,000) and Mozambique (173,000) and Ndau in Mozambique (1,580,000) and Zimbabwe (800,000).

[92] Iziko Museums, 2019, https://www.iziko.org.za/news/peoples-art-chapungu-day-rhodes-fell

[93] Ibid.

and international prominence. The *Daily Telegraph* in April 2015 described the attacks on these statues as vandalism, however, twelve years earlier in April 2003 it reported the pulling down of Sadam Hussein's statue in Baghdad as a symbol of liberation and the overthrow of despotism.[94] Jansen writes, 'what the physical removal of the very objects that might constitute the content of a progressive curriculum creates an empty void as far as intellectual engagement is concerned'.[95] A myriad of questions remain about what to do with defaced or removed monuments. Tsione Wolde-Michael writes that intact monuments may defy interpretability in museums and defaced monuments provide a visible record of how people have 'responded to and interacted with' racist historical narratives in public spaces.[96] We should consider following Wolde-Michael's thought on how 'monuments defaced through protest can be displayed to contextualise the damage as part of a broader history of resistance to white supremacy'.[97] Another strategy has been to create some form of a dialogue by building new monuments and objects that served a decisive and deliberate counterpart to older ones. These sometimes involve posthumous reconciliations between enemies and even have in some instances included those who have enjoyed good relations in the past. One such juxtaposition of monuments can be found in Durban where an existent statue of Louis

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[94] Richard Drayton, 'Rhodes Must Not Fall? Statues, Postcolonial "Heritage and Temporality"', *Third Text* Vol. 33, Nos. 4–5 (Routledge, 2019), pp. 651–666.
[95] Jansen, 2020, pp. 137.
[96] Tsione Wolde-Michael, 'We Should Think Differently About the Preservation of Racist Monuments', https://hyperallergic.com/author/tsione-wolde-michael/ (5 May 2021).
[97] Ibid.

Botha is paired with a new statue of Dinizulu ka Cetshwayo.[98] Near Dundee in KwaZulu-Natal, the so-called site of the Battle of Blood River *(Bloed Rivier)*, is commemorated with a monument of 64 bronze cast-iron wagons arranged in a laager (the D-shaped battle formation adopted by the Voortrekkers) and is provided with a post-apartheid Wall of Remembrance invoking a hornlike battle formation used by Dingane's Zulu warriors.[99] On 17 April 2015, the South African Minister for Arts and Culture, Nathi Mthethwa convened a discussion of transformation and heritage in Pretoria with a variety of proposals made during the course of a day-long meeting.[100] It was decided that dumping these unwanted objects in museums is clearly impractical and only raises further difficult questions about what to do with them. Instead, it was debated to establish historical 'theme parks' at national, provincial, and local levels. However, these ideas are hardly new. Several South African cities had from time to time mooted for 'the establishment of designated commemorative spaces where relocated monuments of the past would be joined by new monuments dedicated to the heroes of the present order'.[101] However, the reason these initiatives have not been implemented to date

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[98] In 1884 Louis Botha assisted Dinizulu to become paramount chief of the AmaZulu. In 1910 following his appointment as prime minister he again assisted Dinizulu by releasing him from prison where he started a four-year term for his alleged role as an instigator of the Bhambatha Rebellion against British rule and taxation.
[99] The Battle of Blood River was fought on 16 December 1838 on the bank of the Ncome River in what is today KwaZulu-Natal, between the Voortrekkers, and Zulus. Blood River or translated into Afrikaans Bloed Rivier is one of the founding myths that formed the basis of Afrikaner identity. The colour of the river turned red with the blood of the advancing Zulu warriors who had to cross the river to attack the Boers who were strategically positioned in a D-shape laager formation on the opposite side of the Ncome River. The Zulus were apparently compromised with a change of tactics that replaced some of their long throwing spears with shorter stabbing spears, that ensued in them being mown down with the power of the Boers firearms.
[100] Kim Miller and Brenda Schmahmann, 2017 (eds.), pp. xii.
[101] Ibid.

45

according to Kim Miller and Brenda Schmahmann is because they are essentially

unworkable on an ideological level:

> In the 2015 discussion, as in past endeavours to implement such 'theme parks,' it was unclear
>
> how an agenda to achieve inclusive histories might be reconciled with pressure to remove
>
> objects from the public domain that some consider offensive.[102]

> And as Sabine Marschall has observed:

> Resistance towards a designated, shared place of honour for old and new heroes prevails not
>
> only on the part of people who identify with the 'old guard' but also on the part of those who
>
> identify with the new order, because the commemoration of their leaders is perceived to be
>
> neutralised, rendered ambiguous or even 'contaminated' through the presence of 'enemy'
>
> heroes.[103]

Recent decolonial debates in relation to the context of South Africa's colonial

monuments have certainly helped propel and popularise a postcolonial redress since

#Rhodes Must Fall in 2015. In fact, it has become so popular in the last six years that it

has reached 'a point of saturation as a one-size-fits-all radicalising prefix'.[104] The

problem, Morgan Quaintance states, is semantic, which has caused the term to become

diluted and lose an essential critical rigour:

> In the West, and in particular the artworld, 'decolonisation' is largely understood and
>
> propagated as a symbolic and metaphorical process that has, for the most part targeted
>
> objects, ideas, and sociocultural behaviours. In parts of the majority of the world (that is to say,
>
> Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, South America and so on) where the effects of colonial and neo-

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[102] Ibid., pp. xii.

[103] Sabine Marschall, 'Landscape of Memory: Commemorative Monuments, Memorials and Public Statuary in Post-Apartheid South Africa', (Leiden, The Netherlands, Brill, 2010) pp.156, quoted by Miller and Schmahmann (eds), 2017, pp. xii.

[104] Morgan Quaintance 'Decolonising Decolonialism' *Art Monthly* No. 435 (April 2020), pp. 6–11.

colonial rule are concrete, enduring, and operate at state level, the process of decolonisation is

literal, economic, and actual.[105]

Quaintance further states that the problem clearly is that in the West the

symbolic and metaphorical dialogue has dominated the discourse and allowed the

actual effects of colonialism elsewhere to hardly feature and remain unchecked. This is

what he calls 'parochial activism', which is first and foremost the privilege to operate in

an environment free of censorship or political violence, and very seldom if ever is

attention drawn by these activists to conditions in the rest of the world where these

liberties of free speech don't exist. Second, Western organisations who benefit from

state-level colonial structures operate with impunity within a Euro-American symbolic

enclave. The point Quaintance makes is that symbolic decolonisation might be an

important front from which to challenge prejudicial attributes of Western sociocultural

economic and political hegemony. However, he argues, to do so without paying

attention to colonial processes elsewhere undermines the project and ultimately

excuses, redoubles, and recentres the same dominant and one-sided Western system

that the 'revolutionaries' are trying to dismantle.[106]

The origin of the term decolonisation is worth recounting here. The term

emerged in Latin America as a school of thought that focuses on untangling the

production of knowledge from what it perceives to be primally European episteme.

Introduced by Aníbal Quijano in the 1990s, his concept of the 'coloniality of power'

[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid.

47

identifies and describes the living legacy of colonialism in contemporary societies in the form of social discrimination; outlived formal colonialism which became integrated in succeeding social orders.[107] Catherine E. Walsh and Walter Mignolo in their co-authored book *On Decoloniality* develop Quijano's concepts referred to as, 'the modernity/(de)coloniality shared project', further. Their interests and concerns are the habits that modernity/coloniality implanted in us all and how modernity/coloniality has worked and continues to work to negate, disavow, distort, and deny knowledge, subjectivities, world senses, and life visions. Decolonialism, according to Mignolo, seeks to dismantle colonialist frameworks of thinking and sensing in order to dismantle and delink from colonialism's habits, forms of life, and subjectivities:[108]

> It opens up coexisting temporalities kept hostage by a Western idea of time and the belief that there is only one single Western-imagined fictional temporality: Western-imagined fictional temporality.[109]

> Modernity/coloniality means, in the sphere of knowledge, that Western institutions and philosophy encroached consistently over the wide and non-Western cultures and civilizations since 1500 whose praxis of living, knowing, and doing were mostly unrelated to Western civilization. And when they were—like Islam—Latin and Christian theology managed through time to impose their disavowal over Arab and Persian Islamic theology.[110]

[107] Aníbal Quijano, 'Coloniality of Power and Eurocentrism in Latin America', *International Sociology* Vol. 15, No. 2 SAGE, 2000), pp. 215–232.
[108] Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine Walsh, *On Decoloniality, Concepts Analytics Praxis* (Duke University Press, Durham and London 2018), pp. 1–12.
[109] Ibid., pp. 3.
[110] Ibid., pp. 138.

48

In other words, it critiques what we know and experience as the perceived Western universality of knowledge and superiority of Western culture. This has been and still conflicts with decolonial debates that also 'see this hegemony as the basis for Western Imperialism'.[111] My particular interest develops from Aníbal Quijano's concept of coloniality and the transformation that it produced to the idea of modernity. Coloniality is thus the darker side of Western modernity. However, modernity is not a decolonial concept, but coloniality is. Coloniality is thus constitutive, not derivative, of modernity.[112] Mignolo suggests we need to delink from modernity because modernity is fatally linked to coloniality. David Joselit, in his book *Heritage and Debt*, takes this issue a step further by offering art as one primary locus of a cultural recalibration. He argues that art's globalisation has the potential to redress Western Modernism's cultural dispossession of the global South. Both imperialism and slavery, the two primary means of capital accumulation in the nineteenth century, claimed the inferiority of non-Western cultures as justification for appropriating their land and personal freedom. Whilst European Modernism claimed to free itself from the ballast of tradition it dismissed non-Western art to a form of cultural heritage that lacked any contemporary relevance, except when appropriated for proprietary innovations. Joselit proposes that this recalibration is fundamental to globalisation:

[111] Aníbal Quijano, 'Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality', *Cultural Studies* Vol. 21, Nos. 2–3 (2007), pp. 168–178, quoted by Mignolo, pp. 106.
[112] Ibid., pp. 106–107, 111.

> The West 'regains' its heritage as a particular rather than a universal set of traditions, while the global South reasserts its dynamic traditions as contemporary.[113]

Global contemporary art is thus an arena in which 'cognitive justice' is understood as engagement with and respect for myriad ways of knowing and experiencing the world.[114]

Monument Proposals

Five years after #Rhodes Must Fall, on 7 June 2020, the toppling of Edward Colston's statue in Bristol Harbour in the UK became caught up with a global *Black Lives Matter* protest, sparked by the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis USA. David Olusoga points out the problem with these kinds of events and warns that those who believe that the fallen statue of Colston could bring real social change face a difficult question. He asks, if forced to choose between a national debate on racism or statue wars which is it to be? Of course, there should be no binary choice here, however, he fears the statue war will be prioritised over the latter. By allowing the statue debate to get in the way of the anti-racism debate would be a mistake, 'and would empower objects that we mostly ignore'.[115] However, the legacy of colonialism breathes happily today in the form of tax havens coupled with the rise of resurgent nationalisms declaring themselves stridently in exclusionary ethnic, cultural, or religious terms.

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[113] David Joselit, *Heritage and Debt: Art in Globalisation (October Books)*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London England, 2020) pp. xvii–xviii.
[114] Ibid.
[115] David Olusuga, 14 June 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/global/2020/jun/14/statue-wars-must-not-distract-reckoning-with-racism-david-olusoga.

Obvious examples are the legacy left by Donald Trump's isolationist and protectionist presidency in the United States. One cannot ignore the patriotic posturing and diplomatic dithering that characterised the United Kingdom's Brexit negotiations with the European Union. We are witness to a constant upsurge of right-wing politics coupled with xenophobia, Islamophobia, varying echoes of anti-Semitism – in East-Central Europe, including the so-called 'special operations' of Russia's President Vladimir Putin in the Ukraine; Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Hindu-first' rewriting of a nationalist history in India at the expense of multiculturalism; the segregationist 'apartheid' policies by the Knesset such as the Jewish nation-state law that declares only Jews have the right of self-determination relegating all Arabs to second-class citizens in Israel:[116]

> There is no necessity for decoloniality without modernity/coloniality. Modernity/coloniality engendered decoloniality. As far as the promises of modernity legitimize coloniality, that is, oppression, exploitation, and dispossession, decoloniality is the response of and from people who do not want to be oppressed, exploited, and dispossessed. Decoloniality emerges out of the need to delink from the narratives and promises of modernity—not to resist, but to re-exist…

> If the rhetoric of modernity (domination) legitimizes coloniality (exploitation), the latter engenders conflict, and conflict generates responses. De-westernization and decoloniality are two types of responses whose enactment and contours are shaped by local histories. Re-existing means using the imaginary of modernity rather than being used by it.[117]

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[116] Adapted from Freschi, Schmahmann and van Robbroeck, L. (eds.) (2020), pp. 1–22.
[117] Walter D. Mignolo, 2018, pp. 145–146.

51

In an era of decolonisation and post-apartheid, South Africa struggles to come to grips with its past in order to shape its future:[118]

> This ongoing and prevailing manifestation of coloniality is an affirmation of deep-rooted and ongoing racism and is coherent with what Mbembe signals as continuously new configurations of racism that are emerging worldwide.[119]

Suketu Mehta notes that … 'colonialism isn't over, it just got replaced by an incredibly inequitable system of world trade and in particular tax havens'.[120] Refining a point that Metha makes, Quaintance states that hypocrisy, virtue signalling, and fundamental undermining of the current decolonial project appears to have also co-opted a purely symbolic approach. This, he states, reached the height of absurdity with *Frieze* magazine's so-called 'decolonial' issue 199, November–December 2018 (Fig. 39). On its front cover in bold type, it stated, *DECOLONIZING CULTURE: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?* In its opening statement it claims to be 'examining the relationship between culture and colonialism and explores the ways in which historic forms of domination have given rise to others…' What Quaintance incisively points out is the fact that none of the contributors in this issue, amongst the ads for blue chip art galleries and Saint Laurent and Gucci fashion advertisements, mention the elephant in the room;

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[118] Hilton, 2021 (eds.), fourth cover.

[119] Christoffel H. Thesnaar, 'Decolonisation and Renewed Racism: A Challenge and Opportunity for Reconciliation?' *Theological Studies* Vol. 73, No. 3, a3838 (https://doi.org/ 10.4102/hts. v73i3.3838, 2017). See also Achille Mbembe, *Decolonisation and Renewed Racism: A Challenge and Opportunity for Reconciliation*, 2015, pp. 28.

[120] Suketu Mehta, *This Land is our Land, An Immigrants Manifesto* (Macmillan, USA, 2019) quoted by Morgan Quaintance, April 2020, pp. 6–11. Two examples of neocolonialism today that Morgan Quaintance references among others are the current Chinese incursions into African countries extracting natural resources and securing profitable new markets for its businessmen and entrepreneurs; and the colonisation of West Papua by Indonesia that since the 1960s has had to endure relentless killings and imprisonment of its citizens at the hands of the Indonesian military.

that the main economic extractor of capital and facilitator of illicit financial flows from former colonies is the very real structure of tax havens; a largely offshore system designed to receive illicit financial flows and corrupt capital under the bureaucratic veil of plausible legal deniability.[121]

In the wake of the campaign to remove colonial statues I felt a need to respond to historical narrative with which I felt very familiar. The *Monument Proposal* models/sculptures were initially only intended to provide relief and structural content to inform my paintings, however, I feel they can now also be read on their own terms, informed by their making (Figs. 40, 41, 42, 43). Framed in a fictitious context, the sculptures allow for an intensification of play with symbols, signs, references, and styles as a way to address issues around temporality in oscillation, hovering between commemoration and possibility, historic events, and possible refolding of our present with other narratives. In view of my working methodologies, I rely on 'collage' as a method of making, which relies on the superimposing of visual and material references. The collaging method is considered as a temporal fragmented response to the theories of Modernism and implies thinking through the notions of memory and identity. Coloured geometric 'collages' borrowed from the modernist handbook are combined with paper, card, and a variety of domestic cleaning products and other ready-made objects. Domestic cleaning products such as sponge cloth, sponge foam, and all-purpose cloths are intended as an analogy for cultural cleansing or the selective

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[121] Rephrased from Morgan Quaintance, April 2020, pp. 6–9.

rewriting, editing, or whitewashing of colonial histories. The use of monuments as

sculptural proposal devices and the idea of 'cultural collaging' as a way of addressing

the past, memory, and the gaps therein, enabled me to pursue this research in relation

to a postcolonial narrative in dialogue with the notions of modernist abstraction and

formalism. These proposals are also developed into larger scale works where the

references in relation to European and American Modernism, signs, and motifs unique

to South Africa, such as textile and wall decoration patterns, are used around Modernist

painting abstraction references (Figs. 44, 45, 46).[122] I refer to indigenous sources,

alongside modernist abstraction references in an attempt to implicate Modernism from

the centre with colonial histories and traditions at the so-called margins of the

modernist debate. The overall intention of this body of work is to articulate and find a

visual language that condemns the development of South African Modernism which

became an exclusive, essentialist aesthetic of racial segregation.

Thus far I have aimed to establish the context for this project and sketch out

some of the current political influences that are inevitably intermingled with the

primary focus, that is, to show how Modernism was appropriated in South Africa and

became inseparable from European colonialism. This takes in racism, neocolonialism,

postcolonialism, decolonising and the effects of colonial histories that are still with us

today, including inequality, poverty, exploitation, hardship, corruption, illegal flows of

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[122] Paulus Gerdes, *Woman, Art, and Geometry in Southern Africa* (Africa World Press, Trenton, Eritrea,1998).
Gerdes states that symmetry is central to the geometry of female artists and artisans of Southern Africa.

African funds and tax havens – all of these would not be so entrenched without the habits and history of colonialism.

Appropriating Myths

The development of modernist art of the twentieth century originates directly from the consequences of European colonialism, and appropriation formed an integral part of that. The story of how European artists such as Picasso, Matisse, Ernst, Pechstein, Nolde, Kirchner, and Brancusi, among others, responded to masks, sculpture, and a variety of other genres of tribal African, Oceanic, and American origin is well known and even to a point excessively documented. From these so-called 'discoveries' of indigenous forms, modernist artists very early on acknowledged the richness and complexity of non-European culture and recognised the possibilities for a radical shift. Fraught with contradictions, these artists' interests have long been celebrated as a 'cross-cultural discovery' and it was only after the Second World War that Western cultural dominance, as well as the political and economic hegemony, started to be challenged, initiating the post-war epoch of decolonisation.[123] Thomas McEvilley explained the historic modernist model as nothing but 'a single line moving forward across the page of time, with the vast ahistorical blank spaces of nature and the undeveloped world around it'.[124] This indifference is summed up by Patricia Leighten

[123] Nicholas Thomas, *Possessions, Indigenous Art / Colonial Art / Decolonization* (Thames and Hudson, London 1999), pp. 7.

[124] Thomas McEvilley, *Art & Otherness, Crisis in Cultural Identity* (Kingston NY: Document / Mcpherson, 1992, pp. 135), quoted by Nicolas Bourriaud in *The Radicant* (Lukas and Sternberg, New York, 2009) pp. 14.

who suggests that 'the modernists did not extend this social criticism to a radical critique of the reductive view of Africans that was promoted for colonial justification'.[125] Instead, she argues, they embraced a deeply romanticised view of Africa, for example, preferring to mystify rather than examine presumed idol worship and violent rituals. This in turn also recognises how these artists misunderstood African art and how utterly ignorant were the terms of their admiration.[126] What is generally well understood today is how, in the visual arts, the approbation and appropriation of African ways of seeing would become pivotal in a manner unprecedented in the history of European aesthetics. Despite that, what is often less well understood are the responses to modernity and Modernism that were made where European colonialism impressed its mark. A much-needed corrective to a Eurocentric historiography of Modernism that is redefining it as global rather than a purely Western phenomenon is what this research builds on and aims to contribute to.[127] From a global perspective of Modernism, what emerges as the unifying strategy behind its creation everywhere is the transformative act of appropriation, writes Elaine O'Brien. This is understood here to subsume all cross-cultural artistic exchange, both non-Western and Western (i.e., Primitivist, Orientalist, and Occidentalist). Appropriation, she states, was not invented by the modernists but was instead a result of nineteenth- and twentieth-century conditions of mass

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[125] Patricia Leighten, 'The White Peril and L'Art nègre: Picasso, Primitivism, and Anticolonialism' *Art Bulletin* Vol. 72, 1990, pp. 609–630.

[126] Ibid.

[127] Elaine O'Brien, *Modern Art in Africa, Asia, and Latin America: An Introduction to Global Modernism* (Wiley-Blackwell Chichester, West Sussex, 2013), pp. 1–13.

urbanisation and modernisation of travel and communication. Distances shrank and cross-culture encounters with foreign artists and objects of art increased 'to become everyday matters in contact zones'.[128]

> On all sides, artist-agents of Modernism stole for their own art the power they saw in alien traditions, vastly expanding the concept, vocabulary, and expressive potential of art. Strong misreading's were the normal, necessary lubricants of modern art making, and conservative art forms from one culture functioned in quite radical ways in transferred cultures.[129]

During the first decade of the twentieth century, for example, when Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) a Spaniard in Paris was appropriating a formal language of African traditional sculpture, Aina Onabolu (1882–1963) was appropriating the mimetic illusionism of academic European traditions from textbooks, foreign newspapers, and magazines (Fig. 47). There is no record that suggests they ever met; however, they were both equally and simultaneously vehicles of African-European cross-fertilisation. In an African context, Onabolu's appropriation was a revolution: 'modern' in that it was a clear break with the past, writes Everlyn Nicodemus. His choice of easel painting and academic realism was also deeply political and an act of defiance against the bigotry that oppressed all Africans.[130] Most of us know the story of the other side of the cultural exchange; how Picasso in Paris in 1907 encountered in the Musée d'Ethnographie du

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[128] Ibid., pp. 10.

[129] Ibid.

[130] Everlyn Nicodemus, 'Introduction, African Modern Art: An Ongoing Project', in Elaine O'Brien (eds.), *Modern Art in Africa, Asia, and Latin America: An Introduction to Global Modernism* (Wiley-Blackwell, Chichester, West Sussex, 2013), pp. 18–25. See also Laurence Madeline and Marilyn Martin (eds.) in 'Picasso and Africa exhibition catalogue' (Bell Roberts Publishing, Cape Town 2006), pp. 151–165.

Trocadéro expropriated African and Oceanic sculptures from France's colonies. Picasso scholar Patricia Leighten concludes that:

> [...] at the very least we can say that Picasso's interest in African art lay as much in what he imagined to be their function as ritual objects as in their forms, whose very abstraction encoded the mystical power he wanted to appropriate.[131]

In a colonial outpost such as South Africa, the terms defining the general character of Modernism were approximately the same as those in Europe, writes John Peffer. However, the propensity for South African artists:

> [...] was to respond to modernist principles by means of local historical conditions as opposed to the presumption of universal relevance assumed by European artists.[132]

In other words, painting, sculpture, and photography created by White settlers and their descendants often gestured towards indigenous and traditional African models. This is what Nicholas Thomas has identified as a similar trend amongst mid-century White artists in Australia and New Zealand and calls 'settler primitivism'. He suggests that the term evokes an artist's bipolar embrace of both empathy and romanticism. Thomas distinguishes between metropolitan primitivists like Picasso who made eclectic use of African sculpture without any regard for the context of the original and settler primitivists who, in former colonial societies, made specific reference to particular and well-known indigenous traditions in their work. For settler

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[131] Patricia Leighten, 1990, pp. 609–630.

[132] John Peffer, *Art and the End of Apartheid* (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2009), pp. 14–22.

primitivists the exotic other was also local, and their art was intended to call attention

to and 'affirm a local relationship';[133] Thomas further notes that:

> [...] the deep association between indigenous people and the land provided strong and
> condensed reference points for a colonial culture that sought to define itself as native and to
> create national emblems.[134]

Whereas Picasso and his metropolitan clique had appropriated art from other

cultures without much regard for contextual relationships, settler artists were often

involved in a two-sided appropriation of European modernist techniques and

indigenous aesthetic forms.[135] Thus, between the birth of the Afrikaner nationalist state

in 1948 and the political watershed of 1976 (i.e. the Soweto uprisings that would

ultimately destabilise the Afrikaner nationalists' hold over the country) a significant shift

occurred in the canon of 'high art' in South Africa.[136] From the backward-looking, blood-

and-soil myth-making imagery, a sophisticated rhetoric of abstract figuration

developed that was more in tune with the aspirations of a 'modern nation state' (Figs.

48, 49).[137] Despite its 'African' references, Pretoria-based painter Alexis Preller's work, for

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[133] Ibid.

[134] Thomas, 1999, quoted by Peffer, 2009, pp. 21.

[135] Peffer, 2009, pp. 21.

[136] Referred to as the Soweto Riots or Soweto Uprising, June 16, 1976, became a particular poignant day in the history of black empowerment in South Africa. The conflict leading to riots arose over the imposition of new regulations to the Bantu Education programme that set out to introduce the compulsory use of Afrikaans as instruction for mathematics, social studies, history, and geography.

[137] Federico Freschi, *Afrikaner Nationalism, Modernity, and the Changing Canon of 'High Art' in Visual Century*, Volume 2, Lize van Robbroeck (ed) (Wits University Press, Johannesburg 2011), pp. 9–25. Freschi writes that artist such as Jacob Hendrik Pierneef and Willem Hermanus Coetzer, among others, depicted the majestic beauty of the virgin landscape or promised land paid for by the blood and sweat, by the righteousness and heroism of the early pioneers the Voortrekkers. Pierneef painted 'empty' and ordered landscapes redolent of a controlling nationalist gaze, whilst

example, seemed to satisfy conventional standards of officially sanctioned taste. No

longer shackled to the blood-and-soil imagery of the Voortrekkers and the Great Trek:

> [...] it nonetheless represents the triumph of white civilisation for the newly established
>
> Republic in a style that was 'modern' and forward-looking while still figurative and accessible.[138]

In 1938, a loose collective of South African artists formed the New Group with

the aim to promote current forms of 'modernist art' and 'kick against the junk' of the

more reactionary and conservative attitudes that were prevalent at the time.[139]

> The need to find local referents for a 'homegrown' Modernism may have increased the desire
>
> among these progressive artist[s] – who were also politically liberals – to look to African
>
> traditions as a source of inspiration with a uniquely local character.[140]

Preller, a member of the group, was perhaps one of the first painters to

appropriate the 'striking look' of the Ndebele people in his work.[141] His painting titled

Grand Mapogga 1 of 1951 is based on a photograph taken by Constance Stuart Larrabee

that was published in *Natural History* magazine in 1949 (Figs. 49, 50). In the painting a

woman sits statuesquely dressed in a cape and wrapped in a blanket, her form

morphing suggestively into a 'maize cob' with its leaves peeled back. Her individuating

facial features have been reduced and erased into an anonymous oval as she sits

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Coetzer painted reconstructions of Voortrekker life unambiguous in constructing a heroic Afrikaner history. Both can be seen to reinforce a powerful Afrikaner identification with the land and an absolute right to its ownership.
[138] Federico Frecschi, 2011, pp. 17.
[139] John Peffer, 2009, pp. 16–17. The New Group was a collective of young artists, most of whom had studied in Europe and who, on their return, started to question and oppose the conservative values promoted by the South African Society of Artists. Among its members were Lippy Lipshitz, Frieda Lock, Cecil Higgs, Terence McCaw, Walter Battiss, and Alexis Preller.
[140] Ibid., pp. 17
[141] Ibid.

isolated with a number of beaded rings on her neck, arms, and legs whilst her cape is

drawn down to reveal two high set breasts.[142] All these elements, Peffer suggests,

ultimately constitute no deep concern with Ndebele culture but rather has more to do

with the artist's own personal mythology. During the 1930s, Larrabee had already begun

to include Ndebele woman in her photographic work. A close colleague of Preller's, she

ran a portrait studio in Pretoria and is today known for her 'tribal studies' of black South

Africans. Judging from Larrabee's evidence of the images themselves one can only

deduce that she treated her African subjects as picturesque material for her modernist

formal compositions. Brenda Danilowitz argues that these painted African bodies and

designs of the Ndebele were effectively treated as found objects of a romantic pastoral

'vanishing tribal culture' in Africa that ultimately enabled fulfilling a White settler

fantasy that imagined itself as culturally and technologically distinctive and superior.[143]

Peffer suggests that political artists such as Larrabee and Preller's views would have

been fairly liberal and generally critical of the National Party's policies, however, when it

came to more fully shared forms of cultural integration, they were only willing to meet

the 'natives' halfway.[144] In other words, whilst indigenous people's claim to land are

being denied or forgotten, elements of their culture are prominently displayed and

[142] Ibid., pp. 18.
[143] Ibid., pp. 16.
[144] Ibid., pp. 21.

affirmed.[145] 'The "native" status of the new settler nation is proclaimed in a fashion that perforce draws attention to real natives that are excluded.'[146]

Accordingly, it is also crucial to point out the fundamental differences between appropriation art from the 1980s and post-appropriation art today that revolves around history itself, writes Jan Verwoert. A recurring theme in 1980s' postmodernist debates was the supposed death of any historical meaning. In other words, the death of Modernism, and the momentary suspension of historical continuity. The collapse of the Soviet Union which brought about the end of the Cold War resulted in the 're-emergence of a multiplicity of histories in the 1990s'. The challenge, Verwoert suggests, for appropriationist artists today is to discover new ways of dealing with these 'unresolved histories'.[147] Historical time has once again become crucial. However, this historical time does not follow a 'linear and unified timeline of steady progress imagined by modernity. Rather it is produced by a multitude of competing and overlapping temporalities that are born from local conflicts and unresolved predicaments of modern regimes of power.[148] An example is Candice Breitz's appropriated South African ethnographic tourist postcards which have been altered with *Tipp-Ex* correction fluid, depicting bare-breasted native women posing in outdoors

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[145] Ibid.

[146] Thomas, 1999, pp. 12.

[147] David Evans in *Appropriation, Documents of Contemporary Art* (Whitechapel Gallery, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2009), pp. 22, quoting Jan Verwoert, 'Apropos Appropriation: Why Stealing Images Today Feels Different' (http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v1n2/verwoert.html, 2007).

[148] Jan Verwoert, 'Apropos Appropriation: Why Stealing Images Today Feels Different' (http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v1n2/verwoert.html, 2007).

settings (Fig. 51).[149] The reference Breitz alludes to here are that these 'ghosts' can be further interpreted as the spectre of White racial superiority which circumscribes indigenous cultures. After receiving a hostile reception with the work being interpreted as the spectre of White racial superiority which circumscribes indigenous cultures in general, and women in particular, the work has since been reassessed and is understood as being important for its engagement with the often-assumed invisibility – and hence predominance – of whiteness.[150] Okwui Enwezor has written that:

> [...] the artist's intervention into the postcards engineers its own obliteration of recognition, whereby recognisability, a key feature of portraiture, remains manifest only in the emptiness and blank appearance of whiteness.[151]

The task is, as Jacques Derrida states, to 'learn to live with ghosts' and this also means to learn 'how to let them speak or how to give them back speech'.[152]

Through a series of examples that veer from historical to painterly references in relation to my own practice, this chapter contextualises the complexity of debate that starts with the entanglement and strong link between Modernism and colonialism, bringing the debate into the light of contemporary activism and responsibilities as Verwoert proposes. This forms my own response to decolonisation seen from a South

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[149] https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/breitz-ghost-series-10-t15153
[150] Ibid.
[151] Ibid., see also Yilmaz Dziewior and Kunsthaus Bregenz (eds)., Candice Breitz, *The Scripted Life*; Essays by Beatrice von Bismarck, Okwui Enwezor, Colin Richards, and Edgar Schmitz (Kunsthaus Bregenz, Austria, 2010).
[152] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, The Work of Mourning, & the New International*, translated by Peggy Kamuf (New York and London, Routledge, 1994), pp. 132.

African position and perspective. History forms a large part of the argument, as an indictment of Modernism and a legacy that is woven between different references and events – from the romanticised view of land and nature to the more pressing issues surrounding the role of monuments and the response to the enculturated strategies of appropriation. George Bataille's notion of myth described in his book *The Absence of Myth,* has been useful to re-describe my shelter and raft paintings as modernist blueprints for the future and how that can be further applied to South Africa's fragmented and traumatised society. Here, history is seen as a working document and a form of temporality that can help us situate future strategies in addressing Western ideological and cultural dominances. I look to my own practice as a means of activating these complex issues, and with the use of visual languages of painting and sculpture I am articulating a question whose answer is not straight forward, but a multifaceted response that is of global proportion. The main significance here is the inclusion of the other, in this case the history and the legacy of South Africa's colonial past that is being transformed and is recalibrating its influence and identity in view of the global economical and geopolitical changes. These are not aligned with a singular, dominant view but a network of local influences and legacies that are formative of its cultural origins and habits.

Chapter Two

South African Modernism

This chapter focuses on examples of the unique modernist architecture of South Africa that was closely aligned to the principles of the European modernist Movement or International Style.[153] The intention of this chapter is to provide a historical context of a colonial substructure that developed out of European Modernism from which I extract data to inform my practice. My research aims to visualise this less well-known colonial history of Modernism that transformed the egalitarian futuristic ideas of the International Style that mutated into a nefarious development under nationalism. I feel this articulation is important in order to rethink how we understand the until now intertwined 'linear, Eurocentric and nationalist narrations of modernism'.[154] My research aims to show how colonialism and Modernism are inextricably linked, thereby acknowledging the project of 'modernity as a truly world-historical event'.[155] In South Africa Modernism manifested itself spatially into conditions of segregation and oppression with some of these constructions still visible today, haunting the contemporary landscape. I begin the historic trajectory in this chapter with domestic architecture, as these were some of the earliest forms of modernist constructions appropriated in Pretoria during the 1930s. I am particularly interested in domestic

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[153] The term 'The Modern Movement' is often used interchangeably with the term 'The International Style'.
[154] Kojo Abudu, Interview: 'Artist Ângela Ferreira Examines Modern Architecture and Colonialism', 2021. https://archive.pinupmagazine.org/articles/interview-angela-ferreira-modern-architecture-colonialism
[155] Ibid.

65

modernist architecture because these are sites that encapsulate the complex relations of master and servant in South Africa. I view this relation as an embodiment of the development of European Modernism which I apply in my research to reinterpret hierarchical colonial frameworks that emerged from the margins of the modernist debate.

During the 1950s/60s, a building boom of state-sponsored Modernism facilitated more and more large-scale buildings of concrete, steel, aluminium, and glass towers to be constructed, rapidly changing the urban skylines of South Africa. Hilton Judin writes that cultural possession within Afrikaner nationalism gave way to the official embrace of state Modernism and technological progress being displayed, and this was evident in particular, in the state capital Pretoria. During apartheid the role played by provincial and cultural institutions in White economic development was becoming more apparent in planning, education, and the economy during the 1960s. The architecture that followed was understood as being more than symbolic value representing vast ambitions and organisational acumen of the apartheid state. It was in terms of what Homi Bhabha has called 'narcissism of self-generation'.[156] Ultimately, it served to obscure manifestations of how the White environment was being constructed, while any shared national narrative or space (landscape) was denied and slowly buried, in particular the apartheid capital (Fig. 52).[157] However, many of the failures of modernisation and

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[156] See *Introduction: Narrating the Nation* in Homi K. Bhabha (ed)*, Nation and Narration* (Routledge, London, 1990), pp. 1. Source text, cited in Judin, 2021, pp. 22.
[157] Hilton Judin, 2021, pp. 22.

nationalism were exemplified by the apartheid regime's inability to manage urban and labour contradictions of capitalist development and subdue Black resistance. Within a relatively short time, the myth of progress and self-sufficiency on which Afrikanerdom depended became insecure and confused as the country started to unravel politically.[158]

Architectural Modernism in South Africa, in particular the International Style, became well established in the Transvaal province as far back as the 1930s and produced a group a group of architects who were also teaching students in both Johannesburg and Pretoria. However, the effects of this form of orthodox Modernism were short-lived and during the 1940s it was replaced with an internationalist form of regional Modernism that considered issues more related to the climate and local materials. There was amongst these early practitioners a readiness to embrace the modern, even though ironically Afrikaner society in general was traditionally religious and conservative. In South Africa the path for Afrikaner nationalism in architecture was through a blunt reconstructed Modernism rather than an obvious return to classicism or strict regionalism.[159]

Architectural ideology, in its sense of visionary speculation, has been a particular hallmark of architects and the history of modern architecture during the 1920s and 30s. Architects of the Modern Movement or International Style are often described as a coven of architects in central Europe who presumed to create a utopian world in which elite and proletariat alike would inhabit a world of white flat-roofed buildings in

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[158] Paragraph rephrased from Judin 2021, pp. xxxiv.
[159] Judin, 2021, pp. xviii–xxxiv.

verdant cities.[160] What is often less well understood is how this new architecture,

particularly in a colonial context, had a negligible influence outside its clique of fanatics.

Seen in context of the time during the 1930s: South Africa, a self-governing dominion of

the British Empire since 1910 which lasted for approximately 50 years, had the ideas of

the International Style which originated in the Netherlands and Germany during the

first and second decades of the twentieth century, appear much earlier when compared

to Britain or British Empire dominions such as Australia and New Zealand.[161] The

relevance here is that for the South African Modern Movement in Architecture and

Planning it became the means by which Afrikaner nationalist advancement and

ideologies such as nation building and economic empowerment could make their mark

on cities and also distinguish itself in particular from British imperial styles.[162] After

Afrikaner urbanisation many regarded the city of Pretoria, for example, too Anglicised in

its architecture.[163] Afrikaner nationalism had its roots in centuries-old anti-colonial

struggles seen as a constant striving for independence and self-determination, and

[160] Gus Gerneke, 'From Brazil to Pretoria, The Second Wave of the Modern Movement', in Roger Fisher, Schalk le Roux, and Estelle Maré (eds), *Architecture of the Transvaal* (University of Pretoria, National Book Printers, Cape Town, 1998), pp. 197.

[161] Errol Haarhoff, 'Appropriating Modernism', 2011, pp. 184–195.

[162] Judin, 2021, pp. 4. Judin writes that British colonial imperialism, for example, weighed heavily on the city of Pretoria. Herbert Baker's public buildings and churches were spread across Pretoria, such as the Cathedral of St. Alban (1905), Pretoria station (1908), and most evidently the Union Buildings (1910–1912) on Meintjieskop. The Union Buildings, the official seat of the South African government had the British Empire symbolically preserved in all its glory through Baker's eclectic mixing of the Arts and Crafts movement, Cape Dutch colonial style, and local sandstone, including granite from the surrounding hills. See also Melinda Silverman, 'Ons bou vir die Bank: Nationalism, Architecture and Volkskas Bank', in H. Judin and I. Vladislavic (eds), *Blank: Architecture, Apartheid and After* (Rotterdam, NAi Publishers, 1998), pp. 129–143.

[163] Judin, 2021, pp. 5.

responsive to its singular identity.[164] A constant dread of social mingling and the break from rural life contained barely concealed fears of urban miscegenation, writes Judin. The fear of racism and anti-urbanism influenced considerations in architecture such as limiting open public spaces at the expense of clearly defined squares or fortified buildings.[165] A modernist architectural language informed South Africa's new constructions of the rising Afrikaner social elite. Huge cultural complexes of opera houses, state theatres, hospitals, and universities were built to secure and celebrate their rise to ascendancy and control. These public buildings were explicitly and by law for Whites only; they were intended to represent the triumph of 'the European' in Africa.[166]

It is worth considering the term nationalism here first before I continue with how an aesthetic transfer of European Modernism in the form of the International Style became a form of cultural segregation. Ernst Gellner sees nationalism as socially determined, stating that nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness but rather an invention of nations where they have not existed before. Gellner casts this inventing of nationhood in a negative light, effectively equating it with 'fabrication' and 'falsity' implying the existence of de facto communities that can be favourably contrasted to nations. Federico Freschi claims that most of the writing on nationalism from the 1980s onwards has proceeded from a point of critical engagement

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[164] Ibid.
[165] Ibid.
[166] Tony Morphet, 'The work of Eaton and Biermann in Durban', in Judin and Vladislavic, pdf, 1998, pp. 148 -162

69

with the notion of the nation being invented and historically constructed rather than being an immutable 'natural' entity, and this is precisely the opposite of what nationalist ideologues want one to believe.[167] Freschi references Anthony D. Smith who suggests in his book *National Identity* that nationalism, although primarily a political force, is inseparable from culture:

> More than a style and doctrine of politics, nationalism is a form of culture –
> an ideology, a language, mythology, symbolism, and consciousness – that
> has achieved global resonance, and the nation is a type of identity whose
> meaning and priority is presupposed by this form of culture.[168]

Benedict Anderson, on the other hand, proposes that the concept of the 'nation' must be understood as highly subjective cultural representation through which people come to 'imagine' a shared experience of identification with a culturally defined community such as the Afrikaners. In this context, the term 'imagined' is not used in Gellner's sense of a falsely fabricated body, but rather to express a link between individuals who are unknown to each other but have come to create a belief in a collective identity through a shared sense of history culture and kinship.[169]

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[167] Ernst Gelner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1983). Originally sourced in Federico Freschi's, *The Politics of Ornament: Modernity, Identity, and Nationalism in the Decorative Programmes of Selected South African Public and Commercial Buildings 1930–1940* (PhD thesis, University of Johannesburg, 2007), pp. 17–19.

[168] Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (Middlesex, Penguin, 1991), pp. 91–92.

[169] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (Verso, London) 1991. Original sources, see Freschi, 2007, pp. 18–19. See also Hermann Giliomee, *The Afrikaners; Biography of a People* (Tafelberg, Cape Town, 2003); David Goldblatt, 1998, *South Africa: The Structure of Things Then* (Oxford University Press, 1998); Federico Freschi, Brenda Schmahmann, Lize Van Robbroeck, L. (eds.), *Troubling Images; Visual Culture and the Politics of Afrikaner Nationalism* (Wits University Press, Johannesburg, 2020).

An Aesthetic Transfer – 1920s–1930s

During the mid-1920s a small group of students from Witwatersrand University in Johannesburg became self-appointed spokesmen of the new 'avant-garde' architecture and fought running battles with academics and other members of the profession who were not supportive of the Modern Movement.[170] The School of Architecture at the University of Witwatersrand became the seedbed for the modernist movement in South Africa and its principal channel, *The South African Architectural Record.* The main agents involved in the aesthetic transfer of architectural Modernism into South Africa during the early 1930s were architect students Rex Martienssen, Norman Hanson, and W. Gordon McIntosh who initiated a series of European study tours between the late 1920s and 1930s. Referred to as the *Zero Hour Group*, they constituted to create a living architecture in South Africa and 'become a universal guarantee of quality and perfection of design and service'.[171] During a 1930 tour to Europe, Martienssen and Hanson visited, among others, the newly completed Weissenhofsiedlung in Stuttgart (Fig. 53).[172] The immediate modernist impact on Martienssen was apparently lukewarm;

[170] Gus Gerneke, 'From Brazil to Pretoria, The Second Wave of the Modern Movement', in Fisher, le Roux and Maré (eds.) (1998), p. 208. For a detailed history, see Gilbert Herbert, (1975),*Martienssen and the International Style, The modern movement in South African architecture,* (A.A. Balkema, Cape Town and Rotterdam), pp. 29–32.
[171] Gilbert Herbert, 1975, pp. 95–98.
[172] Here Mies van der Rohe was responsible for the site layout, intended to showcase a demonstration of the Modern Movement's planning and architecture. Also represented in the model development were buildings designed by Le Corbusier and Walter Gropius amongst other emerging protagonists of the Modern Movement. See also Marion von Osten, 'The Arab Village of Stuttgart', *Bauhaus Tropics,* Vol. 5 (June 1913), pp. 62–65. With its architectural manifestation of cosmopolitanism, the Wiessenhof Estate became the target of a smear campaign by the National Socialists. These lines of argument consequently served as a style template for the Nazi propaganda campaign against 'Cultural Bolshevism' and the 'degenerate' modern arts'.

he simply did not like the work of Gropius at first and Le Corbusier apparently made little impression on him. However, despite the initial coolness to Gropius, after a period of reflection Martienssen wrote that the influence of men like Gropius must be good, because his work has its basis in a rational approach to the 'problem'. As for Le Corbusier, whilst he did not impress Martienssen at first, he did eventually 'speak' to him through the printed page. Some suggest that this may even have been the most important event of this tour to Europe, that is, not a building seen but a book bought; *Le Corbusier's Collected Works 1910–1929*.[173] As editor, writer, teacher, and architect, Martienssen became the centre of modernist dissemination in South Africa and then spent a significant time studying Le Corbusier and other European modernists, in particular, the German expressionist Erich Mendelsohn.[174] Martienssen returned to Europe in 1933 and this time met Le Corbusier in his Paris office. Le Corbusier was clearly impressed with Martienssen and must have felt that the Transvaal was clearly at the cutting edge of the Modern Movement. This culminated in Le Corbusier referring to Martienssen and his associates as *Le Groupe Transvaal*, a term that has stuck.[175] Fully internationalised, these architects perceived themselves as part of a worldwide

[173] Rephrased from Herbert, 1975, pp. 95–98.

[174] Daniel Herwitz, 'Modernism at the Margins', in Judin and Vladislavic, 1998, pp. 413.

[175] The European study tours and the impact of Le Corbusier cannot be underestimated. Martiennsen was without doubt becoming the Modern Movement's strongest protagonist in Southern Africa culminating in a publication called *Zerohour* showcasing the new architectural work from Europe. Meant as a manifesto and journal series only one print issue was ever printed. Le Corbusier received an issue and he responded with an approving letter that was published in the South African *Architectural Record* (1936, Vol. 20, No. 11, pp. 381–383) in which he coined the term *Le Groupe Transvaal*. The letter was also used to preface: *Le Corbusier et Pierre Jeanneret – Oeuvre Complete de 1924–1934*, 1st ed. (Zurich, H. Girsberger, 1935), pp. 5–6.

aesthetic and cultural revolution, of which Johannesburg was simply a local 'city-site'.[176]

Similarly, to Brazilian modernists such as Niemeyer and Costa, questions of locality were

simply misplaced. 'There are no problems of form, only problems of building,' Mies van

der Rohe had famously observed, suggesting that context posed no questions for the

general theory of architectural form for these modernists, apart from its application in a

particular place.[177]

The first locally executed building in the International Style was a domestic

house in Pretoria referred to as House Munro designed by W. Gordon McIntosh and

built early in 1932 (Fig. 54). The house, a two-storey solution, was a relatively simple

statement of rational design. Within the envelope of a compact cubic form, broken by

the projection of a kitchen to the southwest, a terrace to the northeast and a great

projecting round-ended staircase tower to the south flanking the entrance, the overall

composition of mass and interplay of forms are suggestive of De Stijl architecture.[178] The

influence of Le Corbusier can be seen in House Stern of 1934 by the Martienssen,

Fassler, and Cooke partnership which was effectively an association of members and

former students of the Department of Architecture at the University of the

Witwatersrand (Fig. 55). The house was clearly modelled on Le Corbusier's famous Villa

Stein at Garches in France. Clive Chipkin, in his book *Johannesburg Style*, unequivocally

states that 'Le Corbusier is everywhere' and attributes features such as the external

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[176] See Herwitz, 1998, pp. 413
[177] Ibid., pp. 413–414.
[178] Herbert, 1975, pp. 95–98.

staircase with its powerful diagonal, the paved first-floor terrace 'floating as an idea', and the curved walls, among other elements to the great master.[179]

In the design for Martienssen's own house in the Johannesburg suburb of Greenside his absorption of various influences culminating in that of Le Corbusier is evident (Fig. 56). It reveals his personal love of the Italian Renaissance – in particular through a subtle way of configuring abstract forms in glass and brick with small Renaissance – Mannerist windows asymmetrically placed that punctuate the façade-like front that could be conceived as low-relief sculpture. The emphasis of the house is its framed façade, an historical continuity that is present in the frontality of old Cape Dutch houses, a Renaissance palazzo, and of course a villa in the Corbusier style. The use of face brick on the façade of the house was noted as a broadening and maturing of the Modern Movement, a departure from the rather self-conscious puritanism of the earlier stages.[180]

In a colonial context, the appropriation of these architectural ideas reveals an elitist White South Africa's interdependence on a European identity. In his essay 'Modernism at the Margins' Daniel Herwitz writes about beginning at the centre in order to understand the periphery and states that if the cultures of Modernism are to be divided into margin and centre it is because modern art and modern architecture arose in the cosmopolitan centres of Europe and America out of robust art worlds, and

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[179] Clive Chipkin, *Johannesburg Style: Architecture and Society 1880's–1960's* (David Phillips Publishers, Cape Town, 1993).
[180] Herbert, 1975, pp. 136–154.

74

the art and architecture at the margins did not. This, Herwitz states, leads to lives being lived in the colonies in a perpetual state of imitating the centre, further complicated by a lack of inferiority. He further suggests that this state of dependency on Europe (commonly referred to as Eurocentrism), however, is more often desired to assure one's identity by sustaining oneself as an appendage of European culture. South Africans conceive this not as dependency but as a badge of identity, in other words valorising European identity over the 'native' or indigenous. One can then rightly argue that Eurocentrism in South Africa expresses the settlers' desire to claim cultural difference from the native and authority over him. Herwitz goes on to make the point that it is the refusal on the project of remaking one's culture in a way that reflects essentially new conditions of existence which are neither European nor 'native' but something as yet to be defined. In these circumstances Europe becomes a tribe; that is, the colonial is the European become tribal. That is how the modernist architecture of South Africa fiercely attached itself to European models and refused to assimilate with the locality.[181]

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[181] Paragraph rephrased from Daniel Herwitz, 1998, pp. 408. Herwitz writes; 'colonial subjects throughout the world find themselves divided in various ways between attachment to their localities and to the colonial centres, which rule them or where they originate. It is from these states of uncertainty of ambivalence of fragmentation in identity of life between poles of attachment to Europe and submission to 'creolization' that modern architecture; art, novels and poems tend to arise [,] Herwitz argues. Such art hovers between imitation of the given and assertion of difference as it attempts to remake these models in the name of another identity. In other words when the colony is ready to strike out in the adventure of Modernism, their desire is often to find ways of recovering an expression of their difference by recovering a past. The recovery of this past however goes beyond the rhetoric of difference because it is a way for a dispossessed colonial self to regain an identity, a set of traditions, which the colonizer's hand has crushed. Resurrecting the past and the image of the self-invested in its recovery is no easy task as the colonial artist or architect may end up fetishizing this past or "museumizing" it in works which "copy" from historical sites and vitrines. Inventing new forms of representation, which means that becoming oneself and producing Modernism at the margins are finally two sides of the same historical adventure. By reanimating the past and to bring aspects of the self that are buried under the weight of splitting, repression, and displacement everything must be remade. Thus,

From the middle of the 1930s, however, a growing movement away from the International Style in South Africa became more evident amongst a small fraternity of Modern Movement architects.[182] Gus Gerneke writes that this was more than likely influenced by pragmatic reasons that took weather conditions into account. The reason being it is difficult to insulate and waterproof flat roofs because they leak in heavy thunderstorms (Fig. 57). Big windows in exclusively modernist designed houses were also inappropriate without overhangs to temper the Highveld sun. Most telling was the fact that the austerity of early modern designs was not necessarily always appreciated by mostly conservative prospective clients.[183] Derek Japha suggests that the rejection of Corbusian planning, however, left a void for the development of a new formal paradigm. The exhibition *Rebuilding South Africa* in 1943 eventually aimed to offer a new set of planning ideas more in tune with the concept of a realist engagement with South African environmental problems, including the housing crisis affecting the Black population. Influences and ideas ranged from diverse sources, such as Soviet planning, American New Towns policy, German Rationalism of the 1920s and, in particular, the writings of Lewis Mumford and the post-war work of Walter Gropius.[184] Mumford,

the West provides the materials through which colonial artists and architects can revisit their own past, just as the art of West Africa provided a stimulant for Picasso and the early modernists in Europe' (pp. 407–408).

[182] Gerneke, 1998, pp. 196–227.

[183] Ibid.

[184] Derek Japha, 'The Social Programme of the South African Modern Movement', in Judin and Vladislavic (1998), pp. 423–437. According to Japha, Gropius's significance for South African modernists who had lost their taste for Le Corbusier's focus on machine beauty was that he was widely regarded as particularly responsive to social issues, published important papers on housing, and consistently argued against architecture that was based on mere stylistic preconceptions. Japha further states that Gropius was appealing because his work was considered as a practical demonstration of 'objective scientific method' and the fact that he himself after leaving Germany for

noted in particular for his writing on urban architecture, became an unavoidable source for South African architects discontented with Le Corbusier. His 1938 book *The Culture of Cities* was at variance with Corbusier's idea of urbanism, provoking a monumental response by his ardent followers in South Africa. It is, however, important to note that Mumford was not an anti-modernist, but instead argued for the continuation of certain aspects of modernist practices and offered the possibility of continuity and regeneration in what he referred to as 'authentic modernism' as opposed to its complete loss.[185] Lewis Mumford's influential critique of architectural Modernism became ambivalent and ambiguous in a South African context. However, his idea of the local and organically conceived 'region', conceptualised as a whole, and kept separate from the city, was reinterpreted by White nationalists to mean the legally defined, closed, uniform, and racialised world of the township for the Black population.

> On the drawing board the township was made to look like the 'garden city' designs of Europe, but in the minds of the labour bureaucrats it was understood as the labour dormitory of the temporary working class, an ambiguity that was easily sustained in the social planning vocabulary of the National Party government.[186]

America shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War, had tried to come to terms with Mumford's ideas and theories.

[185] Herwitz writes that Mumford directed attention to certain formal models for his 'organic' approach by relating concepts of regionalism to the Garden City, for example, as defined by Ebenezer Howard, the founder of the Garden City Movement, in which self-contained urban communities are surrounded by greenbelts dividing areas proportionately into residences, industry, and agriculture. Another formal model was the concept of the neighbourhood unit as defined by Clarence Perry in the early 1900s that provided urban planners a framework to build functional and self-contained desirable neighbourhoods.

[186] Morphet, 1998, pp. 148 -162.

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The urban housing crisis became particularly acute during the 1930s due to the continued industrialisation that was triggered by the discovery of gold in 1884 and the Great Depression during the 1930s. This caused a massive influx of Whites from rural areas, coupled with a series of new land laws which displaced Blacks even further, with the biggest impact felt in Johannesburg and its surrounding areas. Tony Morphet writes that the international modernist movement had its own form of commitment to social planning.

> In Le Corbusier's formulations it was the application of scientific principles of planning and design that would provide the basis of freedom for the working masses of the great European cities, and it was the responsibility of the architectural profession to pursue its purpose regardless of the political authority under which it was to operate. There is evidence enough to show that Modernism was prepared to make its peace with regimes of either left or right in order to gain sufficient support and resources to carry out its designs.[187]

During the late 1930s and early 1940s there were intense debates within the South African Modern Movement on whether architecture alone was sufficient to bring about a revolution in consciousness or whether architecture should subordinate its interest to a wider, more embracing political vision of the role of the working class in transforming the social basis of production.[188] These debates were never adequately resolved because by the end of the 1940s architectural Modernism had lost its capacity to inspire passionate support and unconditional commitment. Despite this, Modernism in South Africa was to continue its ambivalent connection co-opted by the powers of

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[187] Ibid.
[188] Ibid.

78

the apartheid state.[189] The decisive break from the International Style was a dramatic moment in the country's architectural history arising ironically not from its opponents but instead from its most outspoken defenders. It was the revolutionaries who revised the rules, writes Julian Cooke in his essay 'Revisions of the Modern', including architects such as Norman Hanson, W. Gordon McIntosh and John Fassler, who were all members at the core of Transvaal Modernism. It would appear the new rules did not have the same hegemonic power of the pre-war period however, there seems to have been sufficient common ground to define them as a group. Their shared beliefs were underpinned by several parts; a social programme (which I will discuss in Chapter Four) and an urban programme that included civic design, an approach to technology, and a method for organising formal and spatial relationships.[190]

Post-War Modernism

Hilton Judin in *Architecture, State Modernism, and Cultural Nationalism in the Apartheid Capital* writes that the consensus in architecture in post-war South Africa regarding a uniformity of style that was international partially gave way globally to a recognition of national cultural and regional distinctions.[191] Drawing their inspiration from a variety of international sources, local architects saw their designs as distinctive

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[189] Ibid.

[190] Julian Cooke, 'Revisions of the Modern, The End of the International Style in the Transvaal' in Fisher, le Roux, and Maré (eds) (1998), pp. 231–251.
See also Daniel Herwitz, 1998, pp. 413–414.

[191] Following text is rephrased from Hilton Judin, 2021, pp. xxiii–xxxvii.

and in a limited sense their 'own' architectural solutions and never part of the African

continent's culture. Perhaps these buildings could be best understood as responses to

the cultural and political anxieties at the time. South African architects were

constrained by a cultural understanding in which they rejected indigenous architecture

and felt insecure about their heritage. Modernist models were imported to develop and

represent the heroic direction that White nationalists envisaged of their future.

Architects questioned the basic tenets of the Modern Movement in relation to regional

differences, particularly in the wake of the dominance of the International Style. Much

of the architecture of Pretoria during the 1960s was still rooted in British colonial rule

and Afrikaners could never identify with such a heritage. Rather than resorting to

buildings reminiscent of an earlier era, architects looked to the United States and

Europe for inspiration, as well as non-Western architecture from Brazil or Japan in this

period. South Africa was among nations such as the United States and Brazil who were

least affected by the war in terms of rebuilding destroyed cities. A post-war generation

of architects dissatisfied with the International Style's blunt abstract and uniform guise,

revised Modernism and preferred to engage with building techniques and local

materials of their immediate circumstances. The ruling National Party controlled the

built environment by dispersing state-sanctioned opportunities and supported a certain

expression of Afrikaner culture as an evolving symbolic construct itself, as the White

nation required continuous endorsement and affirmation.[192] In 1942, two events

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[192] Ibid. Regionalism emerged in an international post-war context in the work of Kenzo Tange in Japan with his 'Tradition of the New', Alvar Aalto in Finland, Eero Saarinen in the United States, and Oscar Niemeyer in Brazil.

occurred that moved Pretoria from a marginal position to a more central position architecturally. First, the untimely and early death of Rex Martienssen robbed the profession of its main modernist proponent and second, the establishment of an independent Department of Architecture at the University of Pretoria in 1943.

Regional architecture is mostly generated by designers responding directly to aspects in a place-specific way that considers climate, materials, site, defence, economics, and religion. To this list one can add the particular expression of the community.[193] This was of course precisely what the nature of the indigenous population's architecture depended on before colonisation/industrialisation; a point I will return to in Chapter Four. In terms of a colonial context there are, according to architectural historian Doreen Greig, three endemic styles referred to as vernacular architecture in South Africa. For the purposes of this chapter, I will focus on the Third Vernacular referred to as Pretoria Regionalism that reflected a particular response to nature and landscape through economical use of naturally available and industrially produced materials with an experiential response to climate, all of which modified the emergent principals of the modern.[194] Thus, all the components for an emergent regional style specifically to Pretoria were readily at hand. These consisted of funds for

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[193] Amos Rapoport, *House, Form and Culture* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1969).
[194] Doreen Greig, *A Guide to Architecture in South Africa* (Howard Timmins, Cape Town, 1971). The First Vernacular is Cape Dutch, a colonial invention with its roots in medieval Dutch, German, French, and Indonesian styles, which was prominent in the early seventeenth century in the Cape Colony and, as the name suggests, derived from the initial settlers of the Cape that were Dutch. The Second Vernacular according to Greig began in the early nineteenth century with Georgian architecture brought to the Eastern Cape from England which was a simple late eighteenth-century domestic style with classical ornamentation adapted by builders from standard pattern books accommodating itself to local variations of materials.

state commissions for public buildings and exclusive private domestic architecture that used locally manufactured materials. This was coupled with a vast array of indigenous building material and crucially a particular willingness to achieve a distinct cultural identity. Thus, the theories of the Modern Movement were to influence the architecture that was built in Pretoria during the 1930s and 40s, albeit tempered by local circumstances. W. Gordon McIntosh's own home built in 1938 in Brooklyn Pretoria, for example, was already applying a more rustic interpretation of the 'White Houses' of the *Le Groupe Transvaal* when he made an unplanned on-site decision to leave the brickwork unrendered (Fig. 58). This marks a pivotal moment as a move away from the limitations of reinterpreting the Modern Movement's aesthetics and closer to a more regional solution.[195]

The architect that probably best exemplifies regional architecture in South Africa and who was also associated with the Pretoria University's Department of Architecture

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[195] For further detailed analysis of W.G. McIntosh's House in Brooklyn Pretoria refer to, Gilbert Herbert 1975, pp. 148–149. Gordon McIntosh, according to some observers, did not deliberately set out to create a point of departure from the International Style and articulated the duality of Pretoria architects grappling, '…firstly with the local problem and its solution, and secondly with the broader issue of modern architectural development and international implications' writes Herbert. However, the house still relates the compact planning of the 'Gropius' houses to a theory of vertical separation. Built within the confines of an irregular rectangle the articulation of the ground and first floors is accomplished through a central spine on the axis of a staircase and to the east a bedroom constructed above an open gallery below. To the west (in reverse to the east) the open roof terrace is situated above a living room. According to Gilbert Herbert, the internal planning is handled with great precision and clarity allowing an interlocking of spaces such as the stair hall and living area that suggests a third space for dining and the change of ceiling level and transition from solid wall to glass plane further emphasises an expression of space. For the purposes of this thesis the crucial point, however, is a break from the International Style by one of its most vociferous proponents as opposed to any 'outsiders' forcing the issue. Thus, McIntosh's house in terms of the International Style is not typical but an important mutation and this is evident with none other than the 'hood' over the living room window as protection from the intense Pretoria sun. See also Fisher, le Roux, and Maré (eds), *Architecture of the Transvaal* (1998) and Clive Chipkin, (1993).

was arts and craft inspired Norman Eaton who rejected the universality of the International Style. With strong Afrikaner ties he remains one of the most significant representatives of the Pretoria Regionalists.[196] Elisa Dainese writes that he was a remote figure too eccentric to be part of the inner circle of Le Corbusier's *Le Groupe Transvaal.* He nonetheless was a regular contributor to the *South African Architectural Record* and designed and built celebrated brick houses in the Pretoria countryside and renowned bank buildings with African detail in the city centre.[197] He was also particularly outspoken about gridiron township development in South Africa which he felt was destroying indigenous architectural traditions which created complicated and chaotic towns lacking any form of harmony. South African architects, he felt, had lost sight of any traditional forms of African architecture and the lessons it could teach them. By examining various different interpretations of vernacular and indigenous architecture and drawing on specific local traditions, he extended his study beyond perceived architectural movements and styles and worked on ways to solve the 'coexistence' between Western and native traditions. Eaton also developed the concept of the tribal

[196] Beginning in the 1930s, Eaton visited the indigenous Ndeble and Pedi villages outside Pretoria accompanied by renowned architect friends such as Adriaan Louw, Meiring, and Barrie Biermann, and artists Walter Battiss and Alexis Preller. These excursions to the villages by White intellectuals appear to have been at a time that John Peffer and Elisa Dainese have called a 'search for an authentic "other" and a lament for the Ndebeles' encounter with modernity which led putatively to the contamination and gradual disappearance of local cultures'. See Ayla Levin, 'Basic Design, and the Semiotics of Citizenship: Julian Beinart's 'Educational Experiments and Research on Wall Decoration in Early 1960's Nigeria and South Africa', *ABE Journal – Architecture Beyond Europe* (2016), pp. 12; John Peffer, *Art and the End of Apartheid* (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis and London, 2009).
[197] Elisa Dainese, 'Histories of Exchange, Indigenous South Africa in the South African Architectural Record, and the Architectural Review', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* Vol. 74, No. 4, (December 2015), pp. 454.

village as a perfect model and romanticised this idea of 'the African quality'.[198] His style, for want of a better word, according to Clive Chipkin reached professional maturity in his post-war houses and in particular Greenwood House in the Willows of Pretoria displays his understanding of this so-called 'African quality' (Figs. 59, 60).[199] According to David Bunn, Greenwood House is a paradoxical response to similar problems faced by South Africa's monumental tradition which excluded the indigenous population.

> The solution it proposes is a sort of therapeutic monumentalizing, in which exploitative labour relations are concealed by an architectural fantasy about vanishing tribal identity and the past. The unequal exchanges between the master's house and the servant's 'village' are theatricalised as a relationship between modernity and African tradition. Servants are like defenceless villagers huddled up against [the] protective enclosure of a benevolent chiefly power.[200]

Bunn's description of Greenwood House as monumental referencing to village life and lost civilisations reaches a bizarre conclusion here. If the 'building' is an analogy of an archaeological revelation of so-called past cultures, he states that he would place it in the realm of ruin aesthetics. Bunn further maintains that it is something between

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[198] Ibid.

[199] David Bunn, 'Whited Sepulchres: On the Reluctance of Monuments' in Ivan Vladislavic and Judin Hilton (eds), *Blank: Architecture,* 1998, pp. 93–117. This exclusive and generous four-bedroomed house with a flat low roof and cool white interior living spaces is constructed out of local wood and stone that acknowledges the characteristics of the hilly landscape of the Willows. It certainly ticks all the boxes of regional architecture with the main house's rectilinear modernist forms at the centre falling away into the roundness of '… outdoor recreational areas shaped like 'kraals, (enclosures for livestock within a South African village settlement) swimming pools that look like gourds and the whole surrounded by stone quarried on site'. The client specifically also wanted a separate 'village' quarter for the domestic servants. These were shaped as indigenous round huts (rondavels) with thatched roofs and structured around a tree like a 'kraal'. 'Conical stone towers, like Iron Age grain silos, conceal water cylinders, and these, together with the round huts and a ceremonial stone gateway, give the impression of a miniature Great Zimbabwe'.

[200] Ibid., pp. 115.

nature and cultures with its round huts and ceremonial gateway giving the impression of a miniature Great Zimbabwe that could be seen in a context of ethnographic theatre and looks like it emerged from a distant past with a hint of tourist interest in souvenir architecture.[201]

Pretoria's Brazilian Style Modernist Civic Buildings

During the post-World War Two period, the South African economy grew exponentially with an average growth of 4% between 1945 and 1960 that increased to 7% between 1960 and 1970.[202] In spite of a decline in gold mining and agriculture, the main components of the economy before World War Two, GDP (gross domestic product) more than doubled in one decade on the strength of capital-intensive industrial production. The apartheid regime by 1966 was approaching the zenith of its power, having suppressed organised Black resistance coupled with unprecedented electoral support across the White population at large.[203] Considering the rapid growth of the economy and the expansion of the state's bureaucratic apparatus; it is perhaps not surprising that state-sponsored public buildings during the 1950s and 60s escalated.[204] One particular aspect of historical relevance was the establishment of a School of Architecture at the University of Pretoria in 1943. A group of young

[201] Ibid.

[202] Federico Freschi, 'From Volksargitektuur to Boere Brazil: Afrikaner Nationalism and the Architectural Imaginary of Modernity, 1936–1966' in Freschi, Schmahmann, and van Robbroeck (eds.) (2020), pp. 66–91.

[203] Federico Freschi, 2020, pp. 73, Original source Deborah Posel, 'The Assassination of Hendrik Verwoerd: The Spectre of Apartheid's Corpse', African Studies Vol. 68, No. 3 (2009), pp. 331–350.

[204] Freschi, 2020, pp. 73–74.

enthusiastic graduates met these challenges and through the requirements of the

church and state helped forge a nationalist Afrikaner identity. Another pertinent aspect

was with the staging of the *Brazil Builds* exhibition in 1943 at the Museum of Modern

Art New York. The accompanying catalogue states in its opening statement that the

motives for staging the exhibition in New York was for Americans to get to know Brazil

as a future ally that included a keen desire to know more about their solutions for the

problems of controlling heat and light on large exterior glass surfaces.[205] It was thus in

the early 1940s when the International Style was grafted onto the extravagant

indigenous architecture of Brazil that the stage was set for its second wave. Due to the

acceptance of modern architecture worldwide the Brazilian mutation soon also ignited

a spirited following in South Africa, and in particular the Transvaal. This Brazilian-

inspired regionalism inadvertently became a crucial contribution to South Africa's

cultural patrimony and *Brazil Builds* provided a persuasive reference point for the

emerging generation of Afrikaner architects, especially those from the Pretoria School

of Architecture calling for 'an expression of newly independent statehood'.[206] Seen in a

similar context as Brasília and Chandigarh, the intriguing imagery of the *Brazil Builds*

exhibition signalled great excitement amongst architects and students who had access

to architectural publications from abroad.[207] The interest ultimately created professional

[205] Ibid., original source https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/2304
[206] Roger Fisher, 'The Native Heart: The Architecture of the University of Pretoria Campus', in H. Judin and I. Vladislavic (eds), *Blank: Architecture,* 1998, pp. 222–235 originally sourced in Freschi, pp. 73.
[207] Both Brasília and Chandigarh were state-sponsored enterprises designed to show its inhabitants their own futures. Built along the doctrines set out by CIAM and Le Corbusier, these cities created uninviting sculptural masses

contact between Brazilian and South African architects including a bilateral link between their institute and the South African Institute of Architects and it didn't take long for the transatlantic architecture to become visible in Pretoria and eventually also in Johannesburg.[208] It's worth noting that it was the young Pretoria architects particularly who were able to bridge the disparity between the austere International Style of the orthodox moderns and the Brazilian Second Wave, thereby forging an acceptance of modern architecture by public and patrons alike.[209]

The first Brazilian-inspired building to be commissioned by the state was built in 1950; the Meat Board building in Pretoria designed by the German-born architect Hellmut Stauch (Fig. 61).[210] Although on a diminished scale, the building is a faithful interpretation of Lúcio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer's Ministry of Education and Health Building in Rio de Janeiro which was originally completed in 1943. Clearly influenced by the Brazilian modernist's regionalist interpretation of Le Corbusier's theories of the 1920s and 30s, he applied these to the Meat Board building, raising a rectangular box on *pilotis*, providing open spaces to allow for flexible interior partitioning and covering the windows with adjustable *brise-soleils*. It was praised by the editorial team of the *South*

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separated by large voids. See James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State, How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (Yale University Press, New Haven, London, 1998).

[208] Gus Gerneke, 'From Brazil to Pretoria, The Second Wave of the Modern Movement', in Fisher, le Roux, and Maré (eds), (1998), pp. 218, sourced in Freschi, 2020. The Brazilian influence was apparently so pervasive that Sir Nikolaus Pevsner after touring South Africa in 1953 famously referred to the 'existence of a little Brazil in the Commonwealth'.

[209] https://www.artefacts.co.za/main/Buildings/chaps.php?chapid=507.

[210] Hellmut Wilhelm Ernst Stauch (1910–1970) came to South Africa in 1935 after completing his technical training at the Itten-Schule (an offshoot of the Bauhaus in Weimar) under mentor Johannes Itten in Berlin. He also partly worked with Marcel Breuer and Walter Gropius on housing schemes. He joined the University of Pretoria School of Architecture in 1943 when it was established.

African Architectural Record in 1952 led by W. Duncan Howie, who stated that the

building 'clearly points to what can be done to free official architecture from the heavy

hand of convention and outmoded tradition'.[211] The Meat Board building effectively

became a clarion call to young architects and nationalist idealogues calling upon them

to imagine a new kind of *volksargitektuur* (people's architecture) for their capital:

> [...] one whose confident embrace of a progressive future would allow the ever-strengthening
>
> Afrikaner nation to assert itself on an international stage.[212]

The Pretoria School of Architecture was quick to respond to the call in design of

buildings for its campus and throughout the 1950s the dominant architectural idiom on

campus was Brazilian, with a rapid increase of sculptural buildings raised on slender

concrete *pilotis* sporting free-standing spiral staircases with *brise-soleils* and glazed

tiles and mosaics replacing applied figurative ornament.[213] Between 1978 and 1984 I lived

in the suburb of Hillcrest, practically in, and amongst the sprawling campus of the

Pretoria University. The campus by then had turned into a laboratory for architectural

ideas designed exclusively by Afrikaner architects who were all in one way or another

concerned with the idea of forging an Afrikaner culture and identity that soon became

synonymous with Pretoria Regionalism. This new *volksargitektuur* spread like wildfire

from the campus to the growing city, its suburbs and beyond, and found expression in

most of the major state-sponsored projects of the time.[214]

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[211] Gus Gerneke, pp. 217, sourced in Freschi, 2020, pp. 75.
[212] Federico Freschi, 2020, pp. 75. (See original source, *South African Architectural Record*, Vol. 37, September 1952.)
[213] Federico Freschi 2020, pp. 75.
[214] Ibid.

A building I know particularly well from growing up in Pretoria, but then only

from the outside is the Transvaal Provincial Administration building (TPA) (1962) 'which

places a definitive stamp of official sanction of Brazilian-inspired modernism' (Fig. 62).[215]

The building would become a highly visible symbol of progress in South Africa

consolidating fourteen disparate provincial departments scattered in different locations

across the capital. This was an attempt by the Nationalists to strike a coherent image of

a new and efficient administration capable of overseeing the Transvaal province.[216]

Completed the year after the establishment of the South African Republic, the TPA

building set the standard in civic architecture comprising an entire city block and was

the largest official public commission of the decade that was also widely emulated in

the country's rapidly expanding cities and towns.[217] Along similar lines to the Meat

Board building the TPA echo's the modernist Brazilian-inspired regionalism on a

monumental scale balanced in its detail by a restraint and rationality worthy of Mies

van der Rohe.[218] It was designed by a team led by A.L. Meiring, who was professor and

chair at the University of Pretoria.[219] The building dominated the city centre with its

uncompromising façade forming a background to historical buildings, among others,

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[215] Judin, 2021, pp. 8–16.
[216] Ibid.
[217] Freschi, 2020, pp. 79.
[218] Ibid.
[219] Adriaan Louw Meiring (1904–1974) was first professor of Architecture at the University of Pretoria in 1943. He studied architecture at the University of Liverpool School of Architecture between 1929 and 1932. Whilst working on the Transvaal Provincial Administration Building, he managed the offices of Meiring & Naudé and Moerdijk & Watson.

89

the Raadsaal (Old Council Chambers) the old seat of the Boer Republics government
(Fig. 3).[220]

> With hindsight this juxtaposition of the old and the new administrative centres of the 'old' and
> 'new' Boer Republics reads as a grand triumphal gesture in the mode of what Homi Bhabha
> (1990, 294) refers to as a 'double time of a nation', where the nation legitimises itself by
> simultaneously positioning ancient origins and progressive futurity. Having inserted its
> bureaucratic monolith into this historically significant site, the nationalist government in effect
> claimed legitimacy in the present, doing so through the imagined inevitability of history.[221]

The TPA building appeared to interrupt and dramatically reproach surrounding historical buildings, rebuking old ways of shaping things with symbols and allusions to an imperial past pushed aside to make way for the new order.[222] Of course, Meiring was well aware of the importance of this commission and in an interview for the South African *Panorama* magazine in February 1964 he stated that the TPA, 'would be no ordinary building, but would… by reason of its function, immediately be raised to the status of one of the most important buildings in the country'.[223] Situated on the western boundary of Church Square the building also has all the hallmarks of the Ministry of Education and Public Health Building (now Palace of Culture) with fins on a grid to accommodate flexible dry partitioning, *pilotis,* an articulated roofscape, and 'wings' forming free-standing volumes in urban space.[224] According to Gus Gerneke, the façade

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[220] Federico Freschi, 2020, pp. 79.

[221] Ibid., See Homi K. Bhabha (ed), *Nation and Narration,* (Routledge, London, 1991), pp. 294.

[222] Judin, 2021, pp. 9.

[223] Hilton Judin '…*Their Own Pure Cultural Possession', 'Architectural Regional Modernism, and Afrikaner Cultural Nationalism in the Apartheid Capital Pretoria 1957–1966',* (PhD diss., University of the Witwatersrand 2016), pp. 148, sourced in Freschi, 2020, pp. 79.

[224] Gerneke, 1998, pp. 218.

follows a similar pattern used by Niemeyer in his Banco de Boa Vista 1946 building in Rio de Janeiro including *brise soleil* of horizontal louvres north, and vertical ones west with an unprotected glass curtain wall spanning the full height of the south façade.[225] With a rational design and ambitious in scale, the TPA building further distinguishes itself through meticulous attention to detail, including the then new technologies of air conditioning and fluorescent lightning.[226]

> A massive office building with open-plan-floors sat firmly across an entire city block with a thinner slightly angled slab in front and a series of three parallel half-slabs running to the other end of the block. Between the massive front and intermediary slab, a narrow lightwell ran the length of the building sheathed on either side by curtain walls to form a glass canyon. The concrete column structure stood with walls at the outer ends of the extended linear slabs, freeing up the curtain wall glass edges for light and extended views to either side of the Pretoria city bowl. Each slab was made up of a stack of open floorplans to accommodate row upon row of desks seating neatly hired bureaucrats, officials deployed to manage growing provincial departments from education and buildings to hospitals and so-called 'Bantu Affairs'. Each department had its own cluster of secretaries, engineers, accountants, auditors, and inspectors.[227]

The building's symbolic importance was also further strengthened by the inclusion of an extensive decorative programme featuring the work of a selected group of celebrated White contemporary South African artists.[228] William Nicol, who chaired the decoration committee, expressed in an inauguration brochure for the building that,

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[225] Ibid.
[226] Freschi, 2020, pp. 79.
[227] Judin, 2021, pp.13.
[228] Freschi, 2020, pp. 80.

'from the start the Administration felt that the new Provincial Building should fulfil not only a utilitarian function but should also satisfy the cultural needs of the nation'.[229] According to the brochure it was important to cater for every taste:

> There are a couple of very realistic works that could be understood without troubling the imagination. On the other hand, there are symbolic representations that will require deeper thought in order to be appreciated.[230]

The 'overtly representational' works, mostly aimed at a White audience included, among other themes, the ubiquitous Voortrekker myths which reinforced the idea that the Afrikaners' mass migration was an honest search for a new home rather than a 'raid by fortune seekers who wanted to enrich themselves'.[231] Titled *Ons vir jou Suid Afrika* (We for Thee South Africa) and designed by W.H. Coetzer, the mural was intended to remind modern bureaucrats about the important work they were doing in the service of the descendants of God's chosen people.[232] Another notable mural was Alexis Preller's *Die Ontdekking* (The Discovery) that engaged with various themes of progress and a sense of place and, in particular, the theme of 'discovery' by European explorers of a sea route around Africa to the East, in the process apparently answering 'the most difficult question relating to Africa that Europe ever had to confront'.[233] Installed at the time in the boardroom on the eighth floor the mural was intended to envisage to those

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[229] Quoted in Freschi (2020, pp. 80) and translated from Afrikaans to English; cited in Transvaal Provincial Administration 1963, 3.
[230] Freschi, 2020, pp. 80.
[231] Ibid., pp. 81.
[232] Ibid.
[233] Ibid.

present with the idea, 'just as the great question of the sea route was solved in the fifteenth century, so an answer could be found to all their questions in the twentieth century and after'.[234] The mural in effect evokes the triumph of European civilisation in Africa, embodied by the new Republic in a style that was at once modern and forward looking and yet figurative and accessible.[235]

The only 'abstract' work, a mosaic grid of intersecting geometric forms titled _Bantoe-Afrika_ (Bantu Africa) by Armando Baldinelli was installed at the 'non-white' entrance to the building (Fig. 63).[236] Federico Freschi states that seen in the context of apartheid South Africa it is somewhat ironic that the African references of Preller's mural were aimed at a White audience while Baldinelli's abstract mosaic was intended for a Black audience. He further suggests that what Preller's figuration does is show how that enforces notions of so-called exotic otherness with paternalistic attitudes towards Black people and their cultures. Any attempt to reference deeply embedded cultural meanings of indigenous art forms were entirely disregarded and at best reduced to mere expressions of pattern and colour.[237] According to the inauguration brochure:

[234] Ibid.
[235] Ibid.
[236] There was a clear hierarchy of two entrances: one for the White civil servants and visitors and a separate for the Black visiting public.
[237] Freschi, 2020, pp. 82.

Baldinelli's contemporary mosaic technique of enamelled glass combined with natural stone and marble, filtered through his sophisticated, European sensibility, resulted in a work in which the spirit and the emotional life of the Bantu effervesces.[238]

Although the mural, in terms of formal abstraction, is noted for its elegance and restraint, in the context of the building its mute abstraction speaks volumes about the absence and invisibility of any authentic African voices, thus illustrating the exclusion of black South Africans from public life.[239] Collectively the decorative programme showed how it conformed to the prevailing moralistic values set for public art by the Afrikaner cultural establishment that is, 'modernistic but not avant-garde, "African" (or indeed "Afrikaner") in its reference points, and with sufficient figurative content to reinforce the notion that art has a higher moral purpose'.[240] Like many subsequent examples the TPA decorative collection participated in the narrative of regionalist authenticity that to all intents and purposes informed the architectural programme as a whole, without, according to Freschi, 'destabilising its claims to rationalism and internationalist modernity'.[241]

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[238] Quoted in Freschi, 2020, pp. 83 from Transvaal Provincial Administration 1963, 19.
[239] Ibid.
[240] Federico Frecschi, 'Afrikaner Nationalism, Modernity, and the Changing Canon of "High Art"' in *Visual Century* Volume 2, edited by Lize van Robbroeck (Wits University Press, Johannesburg, 2011), pp. 9–25.
[241] Freschi, 2020, pp. 84.

From the International Style to Apartheid Brutalism

Towards the end of the 1960s, the period that saw the slow beginning of the end of Afrikaner nationalist hegemony, *volksargitektuur* had become immutably internationalist in style. In terms of architectural structures, the wholesome embrace of the principles of the International Style that morphed into Brutalism meant, according to Doreen Greig, a complete rejection of symbolically loaded decorated facades in favour of a formalist approach.[242] She argued that this approach was remarkable for:

> [...] its frank display of exposed structure of great, curved reinforced concrete beams' and its imaginative use of 'expressive plastic forms and contrasting geometrics that can be produced in reinforced concrete'.[243]

According to Judin, by giving physical expression to the apparatuses of state bureaucracy, architects of this generation 'felt no obvious need for display of gratuitous populist expression or overt symbolism in the architecture itself'.[244] The objective and its impact were clear: 'this was a rhetoric of internationalism in the service of constructing an image of a modern nation state'.[245]

During the late 1960s and early 70s much of the monumental, state-commissioned architecture was influenced by the work of Louis I. Kahn (1901–1974). This is very evident in the design for the Rand Afrikaans University (RAU) originally built as a protector of Afrikaner culture (Fig. 64). Now called Johannesburg University, it is a

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[242] Greig 1971, quoted in Freschi, 2020, pp. 84.
[243] Ibid.
[244] Judin, 2016, sourced in Freschi, 2020, pp. 84.
[245] Ibid.

thriving non-racial metropolitan campus, however, during the 1960s and 70s it exhibited

many of the principles of apartheid construction.[246] A series of blocks surround a vast

amphitheatre and students who are meant to assemble here seldom do; 'for one feels

dwarfed by the encircling structure and being watched from every window'.[247] This is

grandiose architecture and according to Daniel Herwitz it is ironic that the architect

Willie Meyer, was a pupil of Louis Kahn. Here Meyer imports Kahn's meditative

elemental spaces to the periphery to legitimate Afrikaner nationalist identity.[248]

Crucially, for Afrikaner nationalism this circular arrangement of buildings and tightly

enclosed interiors was not only panoptic but reminiscent of the *laager*, a strategy that

the Voortrekkers used in drawing their ox wagons in a protective circle as a defence

against attacks.[249] Similarly to the Voortrekker Monument, when Afrikaner nationalism

demanded a return to mythic origins, the Great Trek and the laager were obsessively

mythologised as the originating event of the founding of the nation, 'the means

through which the land was truly occupied and conquered, the nationalists claimed

ownership of South Africa and asserted their entitlement to rule' (Fig. 65).[250] The Kahn

influence ultimately overshadowed the Brazilian-inspired regionalism of the 40s and 50s

and the grace and refinement of the latter gave way to a self-conscious monumentality

that unequivocally demonstrated 'the arrogant triumphalism of the apartheid state'.[251]

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[246] Herwitz, 1998, pp. 415.
[247] Ibid.
[248] Ibid.
[249] Ibid., pp. 417.
[250] Ibid.
[251] Freschi, 2020, pp. 84.

Another example of this particular form of monumental modern architecture is the church at Welkom West designed by Roelof Sarel Uytenbogaardt, who studied at the University of Pennsylvania School of Design, where Kahn was professor of architecture.[252] This form of monumental modernity spilled over into church buildings and was not a new concept in the design for Dutch Reform churches in South Africa.[253] In fact this Modernism was an accepted statement of sophisticated modernity in particular from the 1950s onwards, and in many cases had the direct intention of identifying Afrikaner architecture from its pre-existing colonial forms, writes Melinda Silverman.[254] Importantly too, South Africa in the 1960s was under high apartheid during which confident Whites emerged. 'South Africa was not only about white domination, but also about which whites would dominate.'[255] Rising out of the flat Free State landscape this alien 'cubist construction' was apparently conceived as an abstract sculptural object set in a grassland plain, writes Noëleen Murray (Fig. 66). While the

[252] Noëleen Murray, *Architectural Modernism and Apartheid Modernity in South Africa: A critical inquiry into the work of architect and urban designer Roelf Uytenbogaardt, 1960–2009,* (PhD thesis, University of Cape Town, 2012), pp. 78. See also John Lobell, *Between Silence, and Light, Spirit in the Architecture of Louis Kahn* (Shambala Publications, Boulder, Colorado, 1979). This association was to become a lifelong theme for Uytenbogaardt and, as his church design enters into a dialogue with many of Louis Kahn's ideas such as light and form, the creation of 'place' and order, it recalls a clear lineage that belongs to Khan's Rochester Church building in particular, and stretches even further back to Frank Lloyd Wright's Unity Temple, built between 1905 and 1908; considered by many architects as the first modern building in the world, because of its consolidation of aesthetic intent and structure through the use of a single material, that is, reinforced concrete. Khan was known for creating a style that was monumental and monolithic; his buildings deliberately revealing their weight, materials, and the way they are assembled.
[253] Murray, 2012, pp. 96.
[254] Melinda Silverman, 'Ons bou vir die Bank: Nationalism, Architecture and Volkskas Bank', in H. Judin and I. Vladislavic (eds), *Blank: Architecture,* 1998, pp. 129–143.
[255] Hermann Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People* (Tafelberg, Cape Town, 2003), pp. 487 in Noëleen Murray, 2012, pp. 76.

97

landscape surrounding of the church has changed considerably, the character of the architecture remains unaltered.[256] The architecture is one of solidity and mass, articulated through an exposed structural reinforced concrete framework, with red brick infill panels. Formally, the building comprises three principal components; essentially a massive square within a square that houses the worship space supported on the four corners with four smaller concrete towers. On the west wing protrudes a massive rectangular bridge structure containing the church hall, which ends in an austere concrete bell tower. The geometric quality of the space is almost over emphasised in every detail. There are several different floor levels that define the relationship between the internal and external square plan shapes, and the seating arrangements divide the space into even smaller geometric units.[257]

During the mid-1960s when the church was being constructed, evidence of the 'arrogant triumphalism of the apartheid state' became more defensive and less secure. Judging the windowless bunker-like structure of the Welkom West church clearly reflected a mood of insecurity present and evident in the country at the time.[258] The result was that church buildings became more enclosed and 'inward-looking rather than outward thrusting'.[259] David Goldblatt observes that, 'no longer did the Word go out to

[256] The following text is rephrased from Noëleen Murray, 2012, pp. 90–91.
[257] Ibid.
[258] Judging from the images of the church at Welkom West, one is immediately struck by its defensiveness. I feel parallels can be drawn with bunker-like fortifications that Paul Virilio photographed and described as 'special construction' in his book *Bunker Archaeology*. Defensive architecture, he states, exists 'less in itself than with a view to "doing" something: waiting, watching, then acting or, rather, reacting.' See Paul Virilio, 'The Monolith' *in Bunker Archaeology* (Princeton Architectural Press, New York), pp. 37–47.
[259] David Goldblatt, *South Africa: The Structure of Things Then* (Oxford University Press 1998), pp. 7–20.

the world, it went only to the Elect, the faithful within the laager'.[260] The enclosed

nature of these buildings of worship would have been contrary to the triumphant spirit

of the time between the 1950s and part of the 60s. At the time of building the church at

Welkom West during the mid-1960s, the ascendancy of Christian Nationalism was

starting to become less certain; there was confusion and an increasing hunger for

security. The advantages of windowless churches now became convincingly apparent.[261]

This chapter provides a historical framework for my research and shows how

modernist apartheid architecture serves as a point of departure for my practice. The

following chapters will focus on delivering a particular indictment of Modernism,

modulated in my practice through modernist domestic houses that I argue encapsulate

a hierarchical colonial framework as an embodiment for the entanglement of

colonialism and Modernism. I was born in the 1960s South Africa within a generation

that had become operative recipients of a nationalist dynamic that, through its use of

applied Modernism, was showing signs of failing.[262] Through modernist architecture

Afrikaner nationalism found that they could readily use pure forms of abstraction in

combination with concrete blocks and curtain wall towers, which was at the time

prevalent across the globe in the form of the International Style. [263] The appropriation of

these particular modernist architectural aesthetics which were used as a tool for

[260] Ibid.
[261] Ibid.
[262] Adapted from Liam Gillick, *How Are You Going to Behave? A Kitchen Cat Speaks*. Deutscher Pavillion 53. Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte – La Biennale di Venezia 2009 (Sternberg Press, Berlin/New York, 2009), pp. 97.
[263] Hilton Judin, 2021, pp. xx.

segregation is what my research and practice aims to lay out and reinterpret. South Africa became more and more defensive due to the country's apartheid policies and rising levels of crime. As a result, windowless churches, for example, reflected the mood and the insecurity of the country at that time. Examined through writing, painting, and sculpture, the visual manifestations of modernist traditions and legacies that are prevalent in South Africa's architecture are also traced through other geopolitical environments of Europe, America, and Asia. Contextualised through colonial and postcolonial references, a visual language emerges which is common to both South African and International Modernism to contribute and participate in debates that show how colonialism and Modernism are two sides of the same coin.

I am particularly interested in how 'abstraction' has the ability whereby its inherent ambiguity can be easily manipulated. Ian Bourland, for example, proposes that abstraction is 'an artistic zone in which purity has long been staged against the imminent or the social; in which dark is pitted against light, good against evil, presence against void'.[264] The endurance of abstraction as Liam Gillick claims is 'rooted in this desire to keep showing the impossibility and elusiveness of the abstract'.[265] Peter Halley writes that post-war abstraction chronicles 'the emotional blankness, emptiness and numbness of an abstract world, where social relations have become untethered as

[264] Ian Bourland, 'Blackness in Abstraction', Pace Gallery, *New York in Reviews,* Frieze, 30 July 2016.
[265] Liam Gillick, *Abstraction, Documents of Contemporary Art* edited by Maria Lind (Whitechapel Gallery London, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2013), pp. 211–214.

technology has'.[266] 'When one speaks of abstract art, it is essential to remember that it is only a reflection of a physical environment that has also become essentially abstract.'[267]

This research project is for me a way to also speak out against apartheid through forms of Modernism and abstraction. The now abandoned TPA building's segregated 'Bantu' entrance with Baldinelli's mural claiming his so-called insight into African culture, is a clear example of how abstraction in South Africa was often used as an empty gesture. It had nothing to do with any of South Africa's indigenous population, which it was supposedly meant to reflect. In contemporary South Africa the racist regimes of operation have not fully retreated and continue to operate, 'though in subdued but exhausting and debilitating ways'.[268] The impact of other segregationist and apartheid infrastructure exists to this day and that is what my practice visually intends to reconceptualise and face up to.

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[266] Peter Halley, *Abstraction, Documents of Contemporary Art* edited by Maria Lind (Whitechapel Gallery London, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2013), pp. 137–142.
[267] Ibid., pp. 141.
[268] Judin (ed), 2021, pp. 3.

Chapter Three

Models and Paintings

In this chapter I travel over the landscape of South Africa's oppressive spatial past from memory and lived experiences and consider the relation of my practice to a colonial substructure inherent to architectural Modernism. I have arrived at this point in my thinking through questions of a series of homeless and raft paintings, including fictional monument proposals as outlined in the Introduction and discussed in Chapter One. The monument proposals that were the initial trigger for this research project in turn led me to South Africa's unique modernist architecture whilst researching structural forms to make and inform my paintings. This chapter will consider how the modernist architecture of South Africa that was more closely aligned to the principles of the International Style are modulated through an architectural model-making/sculptural and painting practice. I have selected two architects' houses; one from the pre-apartheid era and one that was built at the height of apartheid by two of South Africa's most acclaimed modernists. I have built architect's models of both of these houses with the intention to confront what Hilton Judin refers to as the 'uncomfortable and nagging presence' of former colonial and apartheid structures.[269] The first architectural model I constructed is based on architect and Le Corbusier disciple Rex Martienssen's Greenside House (1940) or, as presently referred to as

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[269] Hilton Judin, *Architecture, State Modernism, and Cultural Nationalism in the Apartheid Capital* (Routledge, Oxford, 2021), pp. xxi.

102

House Martienssen (Fig. 56). I was particularly drawn to this house because of the striking sculptural balance of the façade of low relief abstracted forms that integrate a combination of grids, squares, and rectangles at various depths (Figs. 8, 9, 71, 77, 78). These comprise a grid and box windows, a hood, a ramp, and wire mesh balustrade for the main entrance including a small balcony. In 1940, Martienssen described the façade of his house as having a transitional role inasmuch as it provides a mechanism, among other things, a unity between house and site. He stated that 'it has a palpable; depth that encloses and draws into its embrace the space which enfolds the house'. Furthermore, the arrangement of the elements of the façade are not arbitrary either and he suggested that was because these are primarily disciplined by the interior ordinance of the house expressed on the exterior façade through 'abstraction'.[270]

> The analogy of painting again suggests itself, and a statement made recently by Kandinsky offers an apt commentary on the 'optical aspects of arrangement'. I cannot omit some mention of the importance of the place occupied on the canvas by a form," writes Kandinsky, "... I have attempted to give an analysis of the 'tensions' of the empty canvas, that is of the latent forces inherent in it, and I think I have arrived at several just definitions of the essentially different tensions of the top and the bottom, of the right and the left.[271]

However, aesthetics aside, shortly before Martienssen built his house he was reminded in 1937 by some of his former students, who had turned against the purism of Le Corbusier's architecture, that in South Africa's industrial heartland, environmental, social, and political circumstances demanded more robust, politically engaged

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[270] Rex Martienssen, 'The Evolution of an Architects House 1940', in *South African Architectural Record* Vol. 27, No. 2 (February 1942).
[271] Ibid.

architectural practices that paid more attention to urban spatial organisation than to formal modernist aesthetics.[272] Martienssen's modernist inspired house was built at a time of chaotic urban planning in Johannesburg which became particularly acute during the 1930s.[273] His modernist house stands in stark contrast to the massive influxes from rural areas of Whites displaced by the Depression and Africans displaced by new land laws. This impacted Johannesburg far more than South Africa's other cities. However, it is worth noting that Martienssen had actually been considering the challenges of Black urbanisation since 1931 when he had participated in a competition to design the first 'model native township' south of Johannesburg, which eventually became the nucleus (and template) for Soweto. When, for example, Orlando Township, which is part of the urban area of Soweto, was built in 1937, it was deemed highly modern; in fact, it was laid out using garden city principles; its houses separated by expansive thoroughfares and public open spaces. This layout soon proved to be inappropriate for those living in the townships because the housing not only failed basic modern standards, but it also overlooked the population's practical and social relations with each other and the city.[274] I will return to this point in Chapter Four in more detail in regard to how the South African Modern Movement in their attempts to alleviate the housing crisis at the same time also reinforced conditions of segregation.

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[272] Jeremy Foster, 'Archaeology, Aviation, and the Topographical Projection of "Paradoxical Modernism" in 1940s South Africa', *Architectural Research Quarterly* Vol. 19, No. 2 (Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 133–148.

[273] In 1939, Le Corbusier was planning to visit South Africa, partly to help draw up and address a new plan for Johannesburg, but the trip was cancelled due to the outbreak of the Second World War.

[274] Noor Nieftagodien and Sally Gaule, *Orlando West Soweto: An Illustrated History* (Wits University Press, Johannesburg, 2012), pp. 6.

The appropriation and mutation of Modernism in Pretoria during the 1950s' apartheid era is explored in two of architect Hellmut Stauch's designs. The first is his own private house named *Hakahana* constructed in 1952 (Figs. 67, 68). The second house is referred to as House Kellerman (1950–59), on which the architectural model/sculpture *Composition with Blue* is based (Figs. 69, 70).[275] House Kellerman was essentially an attenuated plan whereby Stauch recycled the *Hakahana* concept on a much-contracted scale. *Hakahana*, was the final house Stauch built for himself located near Hartbeespoort Dam, eighteen km west of the centre of Pretoria, and according to his admirers, a domestic masterpiece. I am focusing on House *Hakahana* for the purposes of this chapter as its relation to elements of indigenous culture is of particular relevance to this research project. For example, he chose *Hakahana* for its name; a name which recalled his Namibian ties, it being the Herero word for 'quick' because of the urgency of construction required.[276] In integrating the built structure with the site,

[275] The *Hakahana* layout produced a similar plan for House Kellerman built between 1950 and 1959 in Brooklyn, Pretoria. This house is of comparable importance and incorporates a significant spatial advance on a low budget. In this case the plan is a split-level T-shape, containing a bedroom on the upper stem of the T and in *Hakahana* fashion, covering a sitting space and study beneath. The rear section is mono pitched to take clerestory advantage of the favourable northern sunlight aspect. This house is a clear example of modernist architecture mutating into regionalism which has more to do with a sense of place and belonging. Regionalism was not part of Stauch's initial training which would have emphasised functional and rational ultimately aimed at efficiency and universality.
The architectural model for Martienssen's house is based on plans that I downloaded from the Witwatersrand University website *WIReDSpace*, including various images from the internet. See also Gilbert Herbert, *Martienssen and the International Style* (A.A. Balkema / Cape Town / Rotterdam, 1975). The plans for Stauch's House *Hakahana* and House Kellerman can be found in *Architecture of the Transvaal* (1998). High resolution elevation plans and through sections for House *Hakahana* and House Kellerman were generously provided by the Architecture Archives of the University of Pretoria.
[276] In 1929, Stauch built the first example of the modern International Style of architecture in the whole of Southern Africa, on one of his father's farms, Dordabis, south-east of Windhoek.

Stauch recycled slate quarried from the excavations for the house and pool in the walling and flooring for the living, dining, and entrance spaces including the high plinth to the house.[277] The plinth of *Hakahana* serves externally as a visual base, the bulk of the building sits above this and is articulated from it by way of the continuous high-level strip window which emerges as the glass wall to the dining room. In the formal design of the northern façade and the inclined framing to the bedroom block, which thrusts forward from the mass of the building, images reminiscent of Brazilian Modernism are evoked. This is particularly evident when one considers Oscar Niemeyer's *Pampulha* residence softened by the inclusion of natural materials and garden design by Roberto Burle Marx.[278] The view from the back of the house above the upper pool connected to the outside bedroom wall had an Ndebele wall painting commission carried out by an unidentified Mapoch woman, apparently with a toothbrush and oil paint (Fig. 68).[279] Here the juxtaposition of the name of the house *Hakahana* and the Ndebele wall painting develop together into some kind of tribal myth-making based on a general romanticised idea of Africa, not unlike Norman Eaton's concept of the tribal village at Greenwood House or Armando Baldinelli's abstracted mosaic for the segregated 'Bantu entrance' for the TPA building, as discussed earlier in Chapter Two. At *Hakahana*, cultural elements of the Herero and Ndebele tribes are thus conflated and claimed and

[277] The following text is rephrased from Walter Peters, 'Houses for Pretoria: An Appreciation of the Houses of the 1950s by Hellmut Stauch' in Fisher, le Roux, and Maré (eds), 1998, pp. 174–195.
[278] Ibid.
[279] Shelagh Suzanne Nation, *The Background, Architectural Philosophy, and Work of Hellmut Wilhelm Ernst Stauch*, (Master of Architecture thesis, Faculty of Mathematics and Science University of Pretoria, February 1985).

conspicuously displayed and affirmed, framing a modernist White family home with servants' quarters.[280] Stauch's close relations with the development of European Modernism which developed out of so-called 'primitive' forms comes full circle in his *Hakahana* house, communicating a form of 'essentialist primitivizing' perpetuating hierarchies of White master and Black servant.[281]

Methods and Theories Part 3 – Relation to Practice

The architectural models based on Martienssen and Stauch's domestic constructions were initially intended to act as 'models' for my paintings only (Figs. 71, 72). However, the hybridity of these models has opened up a process whereby adding and combining various objects, such as columns, fences, pallets, satellite dishes, 'lightning conductors', rocks, crystals, and rubble among others has allowed for a certain

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[280] Mozambique-born artist Ângela Ferreira's practice precisely reveals a similar side of Modernism and its complexity with colonialism. In 2007, Ferreira compared the modernist object; in this case Jean Prouvé's *Les Maisons Tropicales* (Tropical House) with the architecture of the Tuareg woman, thus revaluating it with the 'other'. By placing the vernacular architecture of the Tuareg woman in relation to Prouvé's aluminium house Ferreira shows the complexity of Modernism in Europe's domination of Africa. She represents the so-called modern man – Jean Prouvé – who, in spite of his power of reflexivity and elegance of design, ultimately 'produced the same hierarchies of white and black, colonised and savage, civilised and savage'. The Tuareg are traditionally nomadic pastoralists, descendants of a large Berber ethnic group that principally inhabit the Sahara in a vast area stretching from far south-western Libya to southern Algeria, Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso. 'The juxtaposition of Prouvé's tropical house with the Tuareg's nomadic dwellings reminds us of the age-old modernist fascination with primitivism. Ferreira's practice questions this simplistic representation of Africa as primitive; the Other as the raw material for the reflexive inspiration for artists in the West. From a philosophical perspective, she shows that the Tuareg's nomadic houses are more practical than Prouvé's tropical houses, because they pay attention to the environment; they emphasise primarily a spiritual and poetic relation to the dwellings, instead of an objective and scientific relation to the object.' See Manthia Diawara, 'Architecture as Colonial Discourse: Ângela Ferreira's Maisons Tropicales', *Journal of Contemporary African Art* Vols. 22/23, Spring/Summer (Duke University Press, 2008), pp. 20–27.

[281] Stauch trained between 1926–1929 in Berlin under Johannes Itten at the Itten-Schule which was to lay the foundation from where he would develop his architectural approach which would eventually influence the architecture of South Africa.

107

dialogue between these objects. I see these models as part of a sculptural practice

which has been useful in opening this particular strand of modernist content up.

'Fiction', and in particular 'science fiction', is applied as a construct that enables one to

anachronistically situate these works outside their time. This is done to allow for a

certain detachment from its South African vernacular content by making the work less

parochial and inventing a space in which my practice can operate. The staging of

various modernist references in dialogue with other made and found objects creates

what Hal Foster calls a 'counter hegemonic archive' that allows for interpretation to be

steered down a variety of paths for further 'endless thinking'.[282] The 'sculptures' and

models have become artworks in their own right but are also inherently part of my

painting practice; in other words, a reciprocal process facilitated by photography as the

intermediate medium between the two.[283] I think of the paintings first and foremost as

post-apartheid/apocalyptic landscapes; in the psychological sense of the anticipation of

an end, a continual crisis that Frank Kermode articulates as 'apocalyptic utopianism'. He

equates it to a form of political revolution, a continually revolving end-dominated crisis

that informs the mood of our lives. As such, the paintings provide a critique and a

reflection on the progressive nature of modernist ideology that has installed the

anxiety and the continued state of exception as its vision and a predicament for the

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[282] Hal Foster, *Bad New Days: Art, Criticism, Emergency* (Verso Books, London, New York, 2015) pp. 39.
[283] Henri Neuendorf, 'People Are Too Stupid for Great Art: Painter Markus Lüpertz on Why the Avant-Garde Will Always Fail', *Artnet News* (5 June 2017), https://news.artnet.com/art-world/markus-lupertz-interview-970580. There is, according to the German painter Markus Lüpertz, a term called 'painters-sculpture' that is part of a long tradition of painters such as Degas, Matisse, Picasso, Modigliani, and expressionists such as Beckman and Kirchner who tried to portray their paintings as physical objects.

108

future. Kermode uses William Yeats to illustrate this point further. Yeats associated war with the apocalypse and filled his poems with images of horror and decadence. He did, however, also see war rather ignorantly as a means of 'renewal'. What interests me is that he saw it as a time of transition the last moment before a new annunciation. He called it a 'gradual coming and increase', an 'antithetical multiform influx'. Kermode suggests that the dialectic of Yeats' gyres in essence, is that they are a figure for the co-existence of past and future at the time of transition.

> The fiction of transition is our way of registering the conviction that the end is immanent
>
> rather than imminent; it reflects our lack of confidence in ends, our mistrust of the
>
> apportioning of history to epochs of this and that.[284]

In the painting *Composition with Grid A (Lozenge)* (2021), the modernist architectural form stands as a misplaced utopia describing the aftermath of South Africa's nationalist past and its colonial legacy (Fig. 73). However, this research project is not simply just a critique of South African Modernism, but also a method to blur reality with fiction, 'overlaying different narratives on a given landscape'.[285]

The architectural models are made from card, wood, polystyrene, and acrylic paint, and I rely on cutting, scoring, folding, and painting (including spray-painting) as a method of making. By activating these haptic relationships of cutting and folding, interventions are created that Paul Vivian suggests allows for a reconnection with the

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[284] Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 2000), pp. 101.
[285] Adapted from David Burrows and Simon O'Sullivan, *Fictioning, The Myth-Functions of Contemporary Art and Philosophy* (Edinburgh University Press, 2019), pp. 125.

real as opposed to the space simulated within the image.[286] Such simple gestures championed by Josef Albers during his Bauhaus teaching are in a sense representative of our basic need to impose upon the authority of an image, to dismantle its space and create a physical mark by which we can assume territorial presence and responsibility.[287] These concerns are often used in relation to photographic images, however, I employ these techniques to construct not only a physical methodology but a practice situated within 'post-conceptual revivals of painting with a diversification of research, production and presentation'. In other words where ends (ends of painting, end/s of apartheid, its goals, the monument's destruction) and beginnings (origins of apartheid within the modern, origins of the modern as 'sutured' to colonial violence, the model as plan [for townships, for paintings], and grid as infinite series, are reconsidered. My research is further expounded through writing/mapping (Africa and Europe), rethinking modernity (colonial Modernism), exposing a 'multisided episteme'/past, present, and future.[288]

The models specifically enable diagrammatic and spatial solutions where definite architectural references, such as windows and doors are used in correlation to modernist abstraction. Rosalind Krauss in her essay on 'Grids' writes:

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[286] Paul Vivian, 'The Territorial Role of a Cut, Fold and Tear', in June Jordaan, Carl Haddrell and Christene Alegria (eds,) *Dialectics of Space and Place across Virtual and Corporeal Topographies* (2016), pp. 317–324. http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/9781848885103

[287] Ibid.

[288] Kojo Abudu, Interview: 'Artist Ângela Ferreira Examines Modern Architecture and Colonialism', 2021. https://archive.pinupmagazine.org/articles/interview-angela-ferreira-modern-architecture-colonialism

If the window is the matrix of ambi – or multivalence and the bars of the windows – the grid –

are what help us to see, to focus on, this matrix they are themselves the symbol of the

symbolist work of art. They function as the multilevel representation through which the work

of art can allude, and even reconstitute, the forms of Being. [289]

The models in other words are used as frameworks for a sculpture/painting

hybrid where modernist visual tropes are 'collaged' into symbolic 'openings' in order to

'seal' the houses shut (Fig. 70). This is done to allude to the idea that Paul Virilio calls

'defensive architecture'.[290] High levels of crime and the fear of crime have given rise to

major changes in the South African urban landscape where the middle classes have

fortified themselves by surrounding their homes and businesses with walls, razor wire,

electrified fencing, security gates, intercoms, cameras, and an armed human response

to blank out the criminal reality of the public realm.[291] South Africa's crime problem is

[289] Rosalind Krauss, 'Grids', Vol. 9 (The MIT Press, October 1979), pp. 51–64.

[290] Paul Virilio, *Bunker Archaeology, The Monolith* (Princeton Architectural Press, New York), pp. 37–47.

[291] Lindsey Bremner, '*Crime, and the Emerging Landscape of Post-apartheid South Africa*', in H. Judin and I. Vladislavic (eds) *Blank: Architecture,* 1998, pp. 48–63. Bremner states that neighbourliness has been replaced by isolation as a laager mentality reasserts itself with new barriers being erected and new definitions of the urban are enacted. New cities are being constructed where speculators and estate agents combine nostalgia for lost suburbia. Advertisements conjure up aspirations for lifestyles divorced from any reality – Victorian, Tudor, Mediterranean, Medieval, or Modern. Thus 'style' becomes a vehicle for denying the violent context of the city and creating an image of a preferred lifestyle. The city has become a giant theme park, an assemblage of fortified and styled enclaves; all residential, commercial, retail, or leisure to which access is guarded and selectively granted. These so-called 'Planned Community Projects' or 'Security Parks' sprawl over the slopes of northern Johannesburg obliterating public space from the urban realm. The spaces between are simply movement channels along which bodies pass in the process of moving from one insulated enclave to another: which further fragments, disperses and divides. See also 'Karina Landman, 'Gated Communities in South Africa: Building Bridges or Barriers', (ResearchGate, University of Pretoria), 2002,
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228802441_Gated_communities_in_South_Africa_Building_bridges_or_barriers
Landman suggests that high levels of crime and the fear of crime has led to a specific approach to urban design in a specific period of time. Whereas in modernist design 'form follows function', in postmodern design 'form follows fiction, fear, finesse and finance'. Gated communities in South Africa are a typical example of where the creation of

111

not a recent phenomenon either (Fig. 74). Under apartheid, crime levels were high,

however, remained largely unseen and unrecorded given their concentration amongst

poor and Black communities. Studies of high levels of crime were attributed during

apartheid in particular, to overcrowding, and poor infrastructure, pointing out that vast

areas with no lights were conducive to robberies and assaults perpetrated at will. In

other words, social dislocation as a result of apartheid policies gave rise to conditions of

criminality.[292] Agents of the state created crimes in its concern to erect moral,

economic, and political boundaries between the statutory defined races. As apartheid

boundaries began to erode away and finally collapse, crime moved out of the

townships and into the suburbs, where it was more than likely to be recorded.[293] My

architectural models thus frame a 'modernist abstract language' intentionally in 'an

attempt to conflate Modernism's über-idealism with the harsh make-do ethos' of

insulating oneself from crime.[294]

Architectural historian Richard Pommer alludes to the multivariate nature of the

architectural model and its inherent tension as a form of representation and how and

secured and peaceful spaces with a distinctive identity and style ensures a specific lifestyle and provides social and
economic control.

[292] Mark Shaw, *Crime and Policing in Post-Apartheid South Africa: Transforming under Fire* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington Indianapolis, 2002), pp. 5.

[293] Ibid., pp. 1.

[294] Adapted from 'Chapter One, Methods, and Theories Part 1 – Relation to Practice'. Original source Michael Graham Smith, 'Review' *The Man Who Wasn't There*, Günther Herbst at Gallery AOP 2012.
http://artthrob.co.za/Reviews/Michael_Smith_reviews_The_Man_Who_Wasnt_There_by_Gunther_Herbst_at_Gallery_AOP.aspx

what it represents is further complicated by its relationship to a built structure.[295] The architectural models based on elitist modernist structures are borne out of the historic violence and inequality that persists to this day in the built environment in South Africa that continues to bear the legacy of segregation and colonialism which manifested itself in the development of separate areas for different sections of the population based on race groups. The model is often regarded as a surrogate for the built structures it represents. Translated from two-dimensional plans and drawings to three dimensions they act as semi-fictional accounts of architecture that convey information not only about the building to be constructed but also about the practice of creating and shaping space.[296] The model, according to Pommer, is simultaneously a singular object with its own inherent three-dimensional materiality and one of many elements in an architect's design process. Both sculpture and architecture have continued to intersect, thereby fracturing and expanding as genres of practice that further complicate the relationship between the model and what and how it is represented.[297] Architectural historian Stanislaus von Moos writes about the work of artists Peter Fischli and David Weiss and remarks on the 'movement in their work from architectural project to sculpture'. He notes that their sculpture *Haus* (1987), for example, functions in 'the

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[295] Maristella Casciato and Emily Pugh, 'The Model, Objet à Réaction Poétique 'in Valerie Verhack (ed), Thomas Demand, *House of Card,* M Leuven Art Museum, 9 October 2020–18 April 2021 (Mack and M Leuven, Belgium), pp. 40–50.

[296] Ibid.

[297] Ibid.

113

"no-man's-land" between architecture, urban planning, and sculpture'.[298] It is, however, El Lissitsky's *Proun Rooms* that are seen even more clearly as the starting point for the evolution of this complicated set of relations between structure, model, object, and representation. It has the status of both – and – simultaneity: in other words, it is sculpture and architecture but also image – 'at once spatial and visual'.[299] Architect and historian Christian Hubert suggests that the *'Proun Rooms* announce a new relationship between painting, sculpture and architecture in which works are no longer contained within exhibition spaces but continues with them'.[300] With the *Proun* he claims that El Lissitsky sought to explore the relations between object and referent between the concrete and the abstract and between his viewers' perception of illusion and reality. Hubert further states that this is where the architectural model can prove to be a useful tool. This becomes nowhere more apparent than in the photography of models with the manipulation of materials playing a key role that negotiates between reality and illusion that appears at once not fake and not real. Photography allows materials to appear as almost anything; 'paper can look like stone and plastic like glass'.[301] Scale becomes

[298] Stanilaus von Moos, Haus. 'Notes on Fischli / Weiss, Art, and Industry' in *Peter Fischli, David Weiss: Haus* (Walter König, Cologne, 2020), pp. 12–15; initially sourced from Maristella Casciato and Emily Pugh, 2020, pp. 40–50.
[299] Maristella Casciato and Emily Pugh, 2020, pp. 40–50. See also https://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2010/online/#works/01/19. Prouns is an acronym in Russian for 'project of affirmation of the new'. Between 1919 and 1927, El Lissitzky produced a large body of paintings, drawings, and prints that he referred to as Prouns. These works were prototypes that were transformed from two-dimensional into three-dimensional inhabitable 'abstract rooms'.
[300] Christian Hubert, 'The Ruins of Representation', (Revisited in OASE 84, 2011), Users/guntherherbst/Downloads/OASE%2084%20%2011%20The%20Ruins%20of%20Representation%20Revisited%20(1).pdf
[301] Ibid.

interchangeable in relation to the world outside the photo. The model thus moves from image into object and back again becoming neither but both. Hubert writes 'the model is neither wholly inside nor wholly outside, neither pure representation, nor transcended object. It claims a certain autonomous objecthood, yet this condition is always incomplete'.[302] The model is also always a model of, writes Maristella Casciato and Emily Pugh. They argue that the contingent state Hubert describes is true not only of the model but any form of architectural representation. Even a building is not a wholly autonomous object and relies on other forms of representation for its creation, presentation, and interpretation and this is where the model and in particular photography of it make the point obvious.[303]

In his book *Warped Space* Anthony Vidler conceptualises the emergence of mass social space in the modern period from the Enlightenment to the present reflecting on a profound sense of anxiety and psychological alienisation.[304] He explores these anxious visions through painterly, filmic, digital, and photographic theorisation of the modern subject caught in spatial systems beyond its control. A psychological space which is a repository of neuroses and phobias that is full of disturbing forms, including those of architecture and the city. Vidler refers to a kind of warping that is produced when artists break the boundaries of architectural genre in an attempt to depict space in new ways and what happens when, by implication, one is critical of received

[302] Ibid.

[303] Maristella Casciato and Emily Pugh, 2020, pp. 40–50.

[304] The following text is rephrased from Anthony Vidler, *Warped Space, Art Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture* (The MIT Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, London, 2001), pp. 159–171.

architectural theory and practice. He states that minimalism, installation art, performance art, and land art have all engaged spatial concerns both metaphorically, as in the case of Hans Haacke's critique of the institution of art, and literally, as in the case of Robert Smithson's experiences of working in an 'expanded field', and someone like Gordon Matta Clark directly acting on the architectural object.[305] Furthermore, the ability of art to construct a critical model for architectural practice has also been evident since the Renaissance reinvention of perspectival space. This also includes Baroque *tromp l'oeil*, nineteenth-century panoramas, and the invention of film that reinforce the especially provocative role of innovations in the representational arts for architecture.[306]

Mike Kelley's *Educational Complex* signals this long tradition of mutual spatial influence between art and architecture; however, his interest was more autobiographical, exploring contemporary theories of 'repressed memory syndrome' (Fig. 75).[307] This arrangement of architectural models was an attempt, according to Kelley, to recover the memory of buildings in which he had been educated and to map in combination with actual architectural forms and memory a complex three-dimensional model. As an artwork it appears to comment on the realm of architecture, taking on the shape of an architectural project in the form of meticulously designed and built architectural models. In his effort to build the models from memory, Kelley came

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[305] Ibid.
[306] Ibid.
[307] The following text is rephrased from Vidler, 2001.

to realise that at least 80% of the memory of these buildings had been 'lost'. He

ultimately decided to use architectural plans in relation to the 'gaps' in his memory.

These 'gaps' modelled as solid blocks were, according to him, endowed with more

potential significance and so the inaccessibility of this repressed space turns something

home-like now rendered by repression 'full of potential for darkness and hostile

abuse...' and becoming an exercise in reconstructing an architectural unconscious.[308]

Kelley also makes a formal connection with modernist abstract painting and his

architectural models in *Educational Complex* that are arranged to him in homage to

Hans Hofmann's 'theories of push-pull'.[309] Hofmann's abstract expressionist work heavily

impacted on the University of Michigan's curriculum during the 1970s when Kelley

attended there, in particular his spatial theories that suggested abstract art had its

origin in nature and a belief in the spiritual value of art. 'In the model, I see the blocks of

"repressed space" as formally analogous to the rectangular blocks of paint in some of

Hofmann's paintings' (Fig. 76).[310] In Hofmann's paintings, 'unstructured' organic paint

application is balanced by the superimposition of geometric forms.[311] Thus... 'it's not just

in its representations that *Educational Complex* is about Kelley's schooling, but in its

method and its form'.[312] Kelley's use of architectural models in *Educational Complex*,

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[308] Ibid.

[309] Howard Singerman, 'The Educational Complex: Mike Kelley's Cultural Studies', *October Magazine*, Vol. 126, (Fall 2008), pp. 44–68.

[310] John C. Welchman (ed), 'Missing Space/Time: A Conversation between Mike Kelley, Kim Colin, and Mark Stiles', in Mike Kelley, *Minor Histories: Statements, Conversations, Proposals* (MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 2004), pp. 329. Initial source Singerman, 2008, pp. 49.

[311] Ibid.

[312] Singerman, 2008, pp. 44–68.

including the overall arrangement of the structures in a non-biographical manner with references to the work as a compositional exercise overlaying the painterly abstract language of Hans Hofmann, echoes strong similarities with my own practice. My work with architects' models similar to Kelley's aims to implicate abstract Modernist painting references as a framework for the context of the work. Whereas Kelley recalls Hofmann's painterly geometry, my architectural models use minimalist abstraction references to seal the openings shut, commenting on a crime epidemic that has turned South African houses into fortresses. Where Kelley's is a self-referential artwork about his education in relation to an architectural unconsciousness linked to repressed memory syndrome; my work with architectural models is more about colonial modernist structures that comment on the trajectory of Modernism that developed out of African artefacts in an attempt to reverse the gaze from a colonial point of view. In other words, looking at the European avant-garde traditions with a (southern and defensive) 'African eye'.[313]

Further references to other explorations with architectural models and the idea of cultural collaging as a way of addressing the past, memory, and the gaps therein; Sam Durant's sculptural/models are also both full of potential for repressed histories and toy literally and metaphorically with architectural dimensions. Durant's *Case House Study Models* based on houses designed between 1945 to 1966 by well-known

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[313] Adapted from 'IncarNations – Nkisi We Trust', essay by Kendell Geers in *IncarNations African Art as Philosophy*, exhibition held at Centre for Fine Arts Bozar Belgium, 28 June–6 October 2019, curated by Kendell Geers and Sindaka Dokolo (Silvana Editoriale S.p.A, Milan), pp. 9–14.

modernist architects such as Richard Neutra, Pierre Koening, and Craig Ellwood, among others, are made from foam core, Plexiglas, plywood, and card and are displayed on flimsy tables. Associated with Southern California, the models are burned, gouged, and graffitied in some kind of class outrage, acting out an aggressive response to the repressive formalism of these structures.[314] These houses recall the early twentieth-century writings of Adolf Loos who, in *Ornament and Crime* associates White geometric form with hygiene and socialist ideals and ornament, a category that includes graffiti, with degeneracy.[315] Similar to the models, Durant's humorous photocollages of these particular houses also mock their high modernist intentions, thereby ruining the dream of transcendental good taste.[316] In a classic Julius Schulman photograph of a Koening house, two beer bong drinkers and cheap furniture 'degrade the "less is more" interiors with signifiers of excess and vulgarity'.[317] According to Hal Foster the implication of Durant connecting clean avatars with unruly bodies is as if he is unplugging cultural blockages. In other words, he stages fantasies of revenge against pristine machines for living, both old and new.[318]

The preparatory photographs that consist of a model of Martienssen's house surrounded with various interchangeable objects that are arranged on platforms can be seen in Figures, 8, 71, 77, and 78. One of the objects is a column placed either on top of

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[314] Hal Foster in *Bad New Days, Art Criticism, Emergency* (Verso, London, New York 2015), pp. 55.
[315] James Meyer, 'Impure Thoughts: The Art of Sam Durant', *Artforum* Vol. 38, No. 8 (April 2000), pp. 116.
[316] Hal Foster, 2015, pp. 55.
[317] James Meyer, 2000, pp. 116.
[318] Hal Foster, 2015, pp. 55–56.

the roof or behind the house, and is made from stacked lozenge-shaped cubes or rhomboids paying homage to Constantin Brancusi's (1876–1957) endless columns and is intended as a vertical modernist axis for the space around it.[319] The column is also connected to the house with a cable that gives it the appearance of some kind of lightning rod or conductor, however, its actual function is ambiguous, which allows for other linguistic and representational interpretations. Brancusi's column for example could be compared to Angela Bulloch's (1966–) current stacked columns of MDF or steel polyhedra, suggesting an *Endless Column* as if refracted through vector graphics emphasising a sense of 'retro-futurity' (Fig. 79). In 2021 on the Simon Lee Gallery website it stated that Bulloch's stacked columns are conceived and designed within a digital imaging program and their stylised geometry, electronic glow, and manufactured sheen might seem to channel new wave science fiction – a genre characterised by its inaccurate notions of science and technology.[320]

Sidney Geist, a leading authority on Brancusi, for example, has extensively pointed out that in spite of its compressed symmetrical state, one of serration or

[319] Amelia Miholca, *Constantin Brancusi's Primitivism* (Master's Thesis, Arizona State University, December 2014) pp. 37. The 96-foot high Endless Column (1938) is part of a monument ensemble at Târgu-Jiu in Romania. Scholars have argued that it conveys certain qualities of Romanian folk art, such as funerary or decorative significance, that rise into the air and are constructed of multiple square rhomboids. The Endless Column stands tall in the memorial park dedicated to the fallen Romanian soldiers of World War I. In order to support the thin, vertical form, Brancusi designed the column with an iron core and polychromed it with molten bronze. This gives the appearance of a shimmering, gold stairway leading to another cosmic world.
[320] The following text had been rephrased from the Simon Lee Gallery website. However, the gallery went into court ordered administration on 23 July 2023, which accounts for the lack of a more specific reference here.

dentation, the *Endless Column* is quintessentially 'African in appearance'.[321] No further explanation or evidence is given that explains a direct comparison between the *Endless Column* and African art apart from it having an 'African look' and that it looks like other 'folk-art' traditions.[322] Thus the significance of the column is that it could be seen as

[321] Gary N. van Wyk, *African Painted Houses, Basotho Dwellings of Southern Africa* (Abrahams Books, New York, 1998). This motif is also predominantly found in the patterns of the Basotho people at the heart of South Africa, on a high plateau called the Highveld. The most visible appearance of this zigzag motif according to a traditional Basotho (Sotho) view has associations with lightning that bridges heaven and earth and is seen as both a rift and a seam. It is believed in this context that the zigzag has deep significance, not only as a term for the creator of rain but also used as a verb in the construction of a house describing the action of winding something; a term applied, for example, to such an activity as thatching a roof. Research, van Wyk states, reveal some specific meanings that are ascribed to certain ancient motifs today – dots apparently represent seeds and curving lines symbolise rivers. It is difficult to find a 'universal language' that describes these motifs and very often specific meanings are quite contradictory. One researcher suggests the upward pointing triangles in Basotho art are phallic signs of fertility whereas another claims the same triangular symbol is female. Van Wyk further suggests that he was particularly fascinated by the problem of the meaning of triangles in his research because they are so frequently used in many different combinations ranging from triangles that create lozenges, to squares and zigzags. Being frustrated by the fact that none of the Basotho painters were able to provide him with interpretations and meanings of triangles he turned to the interpretation of the name applied to the zigzag motif, *ditswedike*. The noun refers to zigzags, curves and things that wind around; in the verb form it describes the action of winding something, as stated earlier. The same root, *tswedi* also forms the noun *motswedi* which appears to fall into the special class of 'me-mo' nouns. Nouns bearing these prefixes are often related to sacred or ineffable things, such as Modimo (God), or fire, smoke, mist, wind, and lightning (*mollo, mosi, mohadi, moya*, and *mane*). Motswedi has two meanings van Wyk suggests; 'source' and 'an unidentified bird that must not be killed'. In Sotho mythology, Modimo's special messenger is the Lightning Bird who is also the carrier of rain. Source is a concept believed to be associated with origin and with Modimo one of the praise names for the source. In the traditional Basotho view the most visible appearance of Modimo is in the form of lightning which is Modimo returning to its source in the earth, thus completing a cycle. It is clear these linguistic connotations of zigzag motifs hold deep significance and taken to its deepest level, according to van Wyk the root meaning of the word and the motif can be interpreted as describing a cosmic path of constant change, reverse, alternation, and opposition. Finally, interlocking triangles that create zigzags often decorate transitional zones of houses such as around 'windows' and 'doorways' that suggest a broader implication of transition and alternation. The zigzag is thus a charge between one state of being and another, a charge that occupies the threshold where one thing becomes another: a visually charged frontier between zones of difference – an unpresented representation, an undecidable line.

[322] Sidney Geist, 'Brancusi', in W. Rubin (ed), *Primitivism in 20th Century Art, Affinity of the Tribal, and the Modern* Vol.2 (Thames and Hudson, London, 5th printed, 1994), pp. 344–367. Sidney Geist, 'Brancusi: The "Endless Column"', *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies* Vol. 16, No. 1 (1990), pp. 70–87, 95. See also Katherine Jánsky Michaelsen, 'Brancusi and African Art', *Artforum*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (November 1971), pp. 72–77. There seems to be a fair number of conflicting accounts of when Brancusi was deemed to have first seen African sculpture but one of the urban myths is

both a modernist or 'primitive trope' (African or folk art), and is used as a recurring motif in my research to re-emphasise the point that the development of European Modernism happened through so-called 'primitive' art forms and in this instance implicates colonialist modernist architecture. For the purposes of this thesis, I limit my focus on Brancusi 's endless columns in relation to folk art traditions and to establish an African link. What I have found is that academics generally argue that Romanian folk art and African art were the two main sources of influence on Brancusi's 'primitivism'. On one hand, William Rubin, Robert Goldwater, and Sidney Geist have all argued for an African influence/affinity in Brancusi's early work. On the other hand, Edith Balas and Carola Giedion-Welcker have instead argued for the importance of Romanian folk art in his work. I would conclude, as Amelia Miholca has proposed, that art historians need to

that he was introduced to it by Amedeo Modigliani. It is also assumed by Sidney Geist in all probability that the germ for the *Endless Column* could have taken root from a hanging or drape of Moroccan or African origin that hung in the house of Doctor Paul Alexandre when Modigliani painted his portrait there (Fig. 80). Because of Brancusi's friendship with both Modigliani and Alexandre it is safe to assume he knew the hanging from either the painting or visits to the house. In many folk-art works, Geist points out, the motif usually takes the form of a string of squares or lozenges, which is somewhat different to the stacked rhomboids in Modigliani's painting, a design that persists in the column. When Brancusi turned to sculpture in wood, the medium mostly associated with African sculpture, the first work that started this trajectory appears to be *The First Step* (1913). As Geist states, it owes much to African sculpture and is completely 'Brancusian', however, the influence of African sculpture can be felt. The sculptures that follow*, Little French Girl, Madame L.R.* (1914–18), *Caryatid* (1915), *Standing Woman* (1916), and *Adam* (1917), among other works all, according to Geist, evince a clear assimilation of African art to a Western tradition. It is apparently during his blossoming 'African' period between 1910–1920 that the first elements of what eventually became the *Endless Column* can be found. The serration or dentation that begins to appear in Brancusi's sculpture from this moment onward is assumed to have started off as bases for the above-mentioned and other sculptures of this period, and are a constant decorative and formal element in African art. See also Edith Balas, *Brancusi, and Romanian Folk Traditions* (Columbia University Press, New York, 1987). The influence and comparisons between Brancusi and African sculpture is a view that is emphatically disputed by Balas in her doctoral thesis. She states that the geometric configurations reminiscent of the *Endless Column* can be found throughout Brancusi's native Oltenia, in the form of porch pillars and death poles of peasant cemeteries that may have inspired the notion of rhythmic pulsating formal repetition in the endless columns.

122

accept the idea that there is both some African and some Romanian folk art in Brancusi's formal and conceptual creation of his sculpture.[323]

To briefly illustrate this point further from a South African perspective: two journal covers for the *South African Architectural Record* during the 1940s included so-called 'African imagery' to illustrate their leading articles about native housing. Both incorporated zigzag motifs within their overall design layouts and although they are mostly horizontally placed alongside images of vernacular structures, they do clearly echo the serration and indentation applied in a Brancusi column (Figs. 81, 82).[324] What interests me are the visual similarities, because the covers were more than likely designed by White designers making use of a 'generic African visual language'. When an idea of Africa is required, it is often accompanied by the ubiquitous zigzag. My interest in the endless column motif lies precisely in its universality. My sculptures may 'evoke' Brancusi, but they certainly are not Brancusi, in other words, a simulation of what has been produced before. This condition was of course first introduced by Jean Baudrillard in his popular 1981 book *Simulacra and Simulation* as the notion of hyperreality; a reality

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[323] Miholca, 2014, pp. 20.

[324] James Walton, 'South African Peasant Architecture: Southern Sotho Folk Building', *South African Architectural Record* Vol. 34 (January 1949), pp. 7. The only reference to these forms is in the 1949 issue and suggests that the 'national mode' of painting amongst the various tribes, all widely separated from each other, such as Batlapin, Bahurutsi, and Bakuena of Mosheh, whose houses are represented in the article, are confined to the representation of lines spots, lozenges, curves, circles, and zigzags. The article then suggests that it becomes an interesting subject for speculation whether the attempt to represent animal life in these isolated cases was a spontaneous development by the artists or whether it was a hereditary talent displayed through contact with people of either the Bachoana or Basuto race. See also Isaac Schapera, 'The Bantu-Speaking Tribes of South Africa, An Ethnographical Survey', edited by W. Duncan Howie for the South Africa Inter-University Committee for African Studies (Maskew Miller Limited, Cape Town, 1959).

in which the original has been either lost or even forgotten.[325] Baudrillard compared our experiences in a postmodern society to a hyperreality, where all reality and meaning has been replaced with signs and symbols making our daily human experience a simulation of reality.

In the painting *Composition with Grid A (Lozenge)*, the verticality of the column is echoed by a second smaller vertical rod hooked up to a concrete cone mounted on a pallet (Fig. 73). Also connected to the cone with a thin cable is a satellite dish fixed to a plank of wood suggesting some kind of makeshift technological contraption that is generating energy to communicate with 'outside forces'. The base of the 'stage' is surrounded by a neat fence recalling memories of my upbringing in South Africa. Rubble and debris are scattered in front of the house alluding to neglect and abandonment. My preparatory work leading up to painting involves a process of staging singular architectural models with a variety of singular sculptural objects. Arranged on platforms and palettes these compositions are lit with candles to create an eerie artificial scene of strong contrasts between light and dark and are photographed as part of my painting practice. I use photography as a source material for graphic references to make the paintings. I choose to make paintings from the photographic documentation that is carefully constructed and lit in order to convey a sense of imagined fictional environment and place. The preparatory photographs with the Greenside architectural model show Martienssen's house as a shell without windows or a front door (Figs. 71,

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[325] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (University of Michigan Press, USA, 1994).

124

77, 78). The idea developed from how the first so-called model native townships such as Orlando were proposed to have been designed on a 'garden city' plan but were actually underdeveloped constructions with no running water, no electricity and, in some cases, without cemented floors and un-plastered walls. People were essentially given a shell to live in:

> It was threaded through by dusty, unpaved roads along which were erected monotonous ranks of identical, small, temporary, single 'matchbox' houses (predominantly between 40 m^2 and 44 m^2 in size) lit by candles and oil lamps, where cooking was done on paraffin and coal stoves.[326]

The shadowy light of candles illuminating the architectural models is intended to similarly suggest a lack of basic modern facilities. By overlaying these conditions onto elitist designer houses I aim to communicate the often-unscrupulous methods of modern construction, and how these are often exploited by those who want cheap solutions to building. These issues will be further discussed in Chapter Four to show how the abuse of Modernism through colonialism became a universal problem as well as indicative of neoliberal policies, regardless of political affiliations.

The titles for the models and paintings are co-opted from similarly titled paintings by Piet Mondrian, underpinning a deliberate visual link with the development of European modernist abstract painting (Figs. 83, 98).[327] By co-opting Mondrian's titles,

[326] Noor Nieftagodien and Sally Gaule, *Orlando West Soweto: An Illustrated History* (Wits University Press, Johannesburg, 2012), p. 7.
[327] Yve-Alain Bois, Joop Joosten, Angelica Zander Rudenstine, and Hans Janssen, *Piet Mondrian 1872–1944*, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore (Spa, Verona, 1994); Yve-Alain Bois, 'The De Stijl Idea' in *Painting as Model* (MITT Press Massachusetts, 1993), pp. 101–122. It's generally accepted within the trajectory of Modernism that Mondrian assimilated the lessons from cubism much faster than the other members of De Stijl to resolve the question of

the architectural models gesture toward their own construction and, more specifically, the windows and doors act as frameworks for a modernist abstract language. This form of mediation, from the architectural model to the flattened, abstracted representation that is finalised through a process of painting is a deliberate strategy on my part; one that stages and extracts different visual narratives through a process of reimaging and reconstructing, adding to the notion of 'fictioning' as a method and a document of temporal fragmenting that is evocative of colonial infrastructure and function. The concept of 'fictioning' and mode of operation is common to mythopoesis, myth-science, and mythotechnesis, each of which fiction reality in different ways, writes David Burrows and Simon O' Sullivan in their book, *Fictioning*.[328] By using the term fiction as a verb, they state that they:

> [...] refer to writing, imagining, performing or other material instantiation of worlds or social bodies that mark out trajectories different to those engendered by the dominant organisations

abstraction. Harry Holzman and Martin S. James (ed. and trans.), *The New Art – The New Life: The Collected Writings of Piet Mondrian* (G. K. Hall, Boston, 1986); Joop Joosten, 'Mondrian: Between Cubism and Abstraction in *Piet Mondrian Centennial Exhibition* (The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York, 1971); Michel Seuphor, *Piet Mondrian: Life and Work* (Thames and Hudson, London, 1956). Paul Wood, 'Chapter 8, The Idea of an Abstract Art, The Impact of Cubism', in *Art of the Avant-Gardes* (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2004), pp. 246–258. Mondrian's main concern in 1912–14 after his choice of primary colour, was to unite figure and ground into an inseparable entity, thus avoiding a binary solution. This evolution led him to his first breakthrough canvases in 1917; *Composition in Colour A, Composition in Colour B*, and *Composition with Black Lines* and from there to neo-plasticism. The balancing of coloured rectangles of primary colour in relation to black bars of varying thickness subsume in a pictorial totality that represent a plastic equivalent for universal harmony.

[328] David Burrows and Simon O'Sullivan, *Fictioning, The Myth-Functions of Contemporary Art and Philosophy* (Edinburgh University Press, 2019), pp. 1–2. These three terms, according to Burrows and O'Sullivan, are what they call the myth-functions of contemporary art and philosophy. 'Mythopoesis is proposed as productive of worlds people and communities to come, often drawing upon residual and emergent cultures. Myth-science functions by producing alternate perspectives and models, revealing habits of thought concerning physical, historical, and social realities as yet more myths. Mythotechnesis concerns ways in which technology enters into discourse and life, through projections of the existing and future influence of machines.'

of life currently in existence. Or to put it another way, we are interested in exploring those

fictions that involve potential realities to come… …as well as the more general idea of fiction as

intervention in, and augmentation of, existing reality. In this, we are also concerned with how

fictioning can take on a critical power when it is set against or foregrounded with a given

reality.[329]

By removing the placement of objects from one visual environment (models and

sculptures) into a holding space of photography and determining its final outcome in a

space of painting as its final destination, the question of authenticity as a form of

singularity is no longer considered from a perspective of actuality but that of misplaced

veracity, undermined through the loss of origin and framed as a document of doubt and

a form of disobedient behaviour that stands in the way of historicity.

I am further involved in this notion of model in relation to Yve-Alain Bois'

concept of understanding painting not as the illustration of a theory, but as a model, a

theoretical model in itself.[330] By adopting Mondrian's painting titles for my practice sees

painting as a model not to be taken upon the value of the pictorial alone but taken on

the value of a model. Painting is thus no longer just about representation alone; it

becomes a model; a model for revealing itself as a method which is more than just

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[329] David Burrows and Simon O'Sullivan, 2019, pp. 1–2. The term 'fictioning' is not Burrows or O'Sullivan's invention. They reference Jeffrey A. Bell who articulates fiction as a verb in his book *Philosophy at the Edge of Chaos: Gilles Deleuze and the Philosophy of Difference* (2006). In the book, Nietzsche's rejection of Plato's caution regarding poetry is cited when Bell suggests that Plato is disturbed by the fictioning essence of poetry, 'for such inventions should only belong to the Gods'. For Plato, the fictioning of 'ideas' occurs in the supersensuous realm 'above heaven'; however, according to Nietzsche, fictioning occurs in the sensuous realm of life, and it is only as a consequence of life that the notion of the supersensuous 'ideas' comes about (i.e. are fictioned).
[330] Yve-Alain Bois, 1993, pp. 101–122.

pictorial. This process begins with cutting, scoring, and folding to construct, followed by photographing the objects/models, which are then turned into paintings. The question then is why not just leave these images as photographs? The point is the process of mediation because that explicates the model itself, that is, the context, meaning, and its veracity. The practice is not about a singular works of art, it is about the process it undertakes. The indictment of Modernism in this project is in a sense highlighting and recognising forms of manipulation, the same form of manipulation my practice is applying. Fiction, as Burrows and O'Sullivan point out, is a term that has increasing valence, especially the new terminology in the wider contemporary political reality: 'post fact and post truth'. Reality, they state, is itself an increasing relative term on this terrain, with ideas of perception management replacing any idea of truth.[331]

Science Fiction and Colonialism

> Art can have ideas in it but shouldn't be about those ideas. It should be made with ideas in mind but not to illustrate them, but rather embody them, and that implies a certain detachment and separation. I am interested in X and made painting Y + Z. X is the interaction between Y+ Z but Y + Z is not about X. Y + Z is about a + b which is a whole other alphabet.[332]

The South African architectural references in my practice are from a very clear historical background of colonialism. However, my practice isn't just about South

[331] Burrows and O'Sullivan, 2019, pp. 10.

[332] Richard Aldrich, *Too Often the Art, and Ideas Exist on the Same Plane*, 2018 (text 2006), Oil, wax, and fabric on linen 213.4 x 147.3 cm. https://modernart.net/artists/richard-aldrich#s-3

[332] Thomas C. Sutton, and Marilyn Sutton, 'Science Fiction as Mythology', *Western Folklore* Vol. 28, No. 4 (1969), pp. 230–237. https://doi.org/10.2307/1499217.

African Modernism or colonialism. It is also informed by personal experiences as a kind

of witness to certain events of apartheid. Through a process of fictionalising, I rely on

both modernist strategies and tropes that focus on architectural models and the

subsequent paintings I make from these models. Out of the ruins and decline of

colonialism I hope to think that 'different futures can be imagined' and science fiction

plays a role as resource.[333] By appropriating a language of science fiction the historical

apartheid content in my practice I believe is made more universal and accessible and

allows for multiple interpretations. Since both myth and science reflect man's

irrepressible curiosity about his origins and his destiny, they can be seen as a particular

human means of structuring the universe. In other words, science becomes myth

despite its rational autonomy.[334]

Science fiction in a colonial context has been highly constructive inasmuch as it

shows our experience of time and the future as something that is subjective and a

socially constructed phenomenon. One could argue that it is 'a self-conscious form of

myth in which man intentionally mythologises scientific narrative'.[335] John Rieder in his

book *Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction* writes that those searching for

the origins of science fiction in English have often pointed to classical and European

marvellous journeys to other worlds as an important part of this genealogy. Europeans

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[333] Burrows and O'Sullivan, 2019, pp. 143.
[334] Thomas C. Sutton, and Marilyn Sutton, 1969, pp. 230–237.
[335] Ibid.; It is not infrequent to find themes, for example, from Biblical mythologies, serving a subplot for science fiction narratives. This is evident in Frank Herbert's 1965 novel *Dune*, where he weaves together knowledge of ecology with allusions to Old Testament myths.

mapped the non-European world, set up colonies in it, mined it, farmed it, enslaved it, and ruled over it. This process also led to a scientific discourse about culture and mankind and an understanding between culture and technology that played a strong part in the works of H.G. Wells and his contemporaries that came to be called science fiction.[336] In a review of Pamela Lee's book *Chronophobia*, Robert Slifkin writes in his opening paragraph that:

> As the earth's rotation and our own mortality make daily and perhaps disturbingly evident, there are few subjects seemingly as timeless as time itself.[337]

Beneath its often-superficial appeal science fiction is responsible for opening up a variety of legitimate and strategic cultural discourses and, according to Patricia Kerslake in her book *Science Fiction and Empire*, it is in its analysis that we discover the fundamental power and rationale of a genre that ultimately contributes to the knowledge and awareness humanity has of itself.[338] In our everyday lives, the future is often predicated to respond to what the future could look like; take, for example, the Martian invasion of *War of the Worlds* or the dystopian future in relation to climate change of *Blade Runner 2049*, that assume a visual identity we think of as futuristic (Fig. 84). The impulse to forecast and, in this particular case, speculate on the future has been with us as long as we have checked on the movement of the stars, read lines in the palm of one's hand, cast stones, shells, and tea leaves. We as a species have

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[336] John Rieder, *Colonialism, and the Emergence of Science Fiction*, (Wesleyan University Press, Connecticut, 2008), p. 2.

[337] Robert Slifkin, 'Fast Times: Chronophobia: On Time in the Art of the 1960s', Review by Pamela M. Lee, *Art Journal*, Vol. 64, No. 1 (Spring, 2005), pp. 109–111.

[338] Patricia Kerslake, *Science Fiction and Empire* (Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 2007) pp. 1.

practised some quasi-science for as long as we have been on planet Earth.[339] Lee writes

that modernity's track record in the business of prophecy has proven especially

impressive, and that set a general template for technological prognostication that

became critical to futurologists in the 1960s. Reinhart Koselleck, who has attended to

the question of the 'end-time' in modernity, described modernity as a 'peculiar form of

acceleration' in which the art of forecasting took on a heightened significance in the

progressively fractious encounter between religion and politics. The secularisation of

time no doubt played a significant role in this history and, in particular, the question of

an end of time in relation to expectations of salvation that served as a flashpoint during

the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. Salvational expectation would increasingly

run counter to the practice of rational prediction and indeed at the beginning of the

fifteenth century the notion of 'rational' prognosis developed against the church in the

matter of prophesy, as would an emerging philosophy of history. Forged in the crucible

of modern politics during the Renaissance in Italy, rational prognosis became a

'conscious element of political action for those who engaged in it'.[340]

> In opposition to apocalyptic prophecy, which destroys time through its fixation on the End,
>
> 'rational prognosis' can be seen to be [an] integrating factor of the state that transgresses the
>
> limited future of the world to which it has been entrusted. The future became a domain of
>
> finite possibilities Koselleck wrote, arranged according to their greater or lesser probability.
>
> Weighing the probability of forthcoming or non-occurring events in the first instance

[339] Pamela M. Lee, *Chronophobia: On Time in the Art of the 1960s,* (The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, 2006), pp. 264.

[340] Pamela M. Lee, 2006, pp. 264–265. Reinhardt Kosseleck, 'Modernity and the Planes of Historicity' in *Futures Past: On Semantics of Historical Time* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1985).

eliminated a conception of the future that was taken for granted by religious factions: the

certainty of the Last Judgement would enforce a simple alternative between Good and Evil

through the establishment of a sole principle of behaviour.[341]

It's worth making a link here between religion and politics in South Africa

especially amongst the Afrikaners who were for the most part ordinary 'practical'

people who were not given to abstruse thought and discussion but poured an

enormous amount of effort into erecting structures to an abstract concept such as a

god.[342] Their world was the 'world of Afrikaner Nationalism', and The Word was Christian

Nationalism, a set of principles by which Afrikaner hegemony would take South Africa

into a new and just dispensation. The paradox of ultra-conservative religious bodies still

imbued with an 1800 world view that embraced an extremely radical architecture, in

particular their church structures, was no paradox. This was a modern message with

reprehensible intent. Under the policy of apartheid, Christian Nationalism approached

near apotheosis. After 1948 it became more systematic and above all seen as 'just' and

consenting to Christian ethics that were actively supported and propagated by

Afrikaner Protestant churches. This was achieved by an administrative and ideological

system of immense complexity that was applied with dedication and in particular

towards Black people with considerable violence for over 40 years.[343]

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[341] Ibid.

[342] Rephrased from David Goldblatt, *South Africa: The Structure of Things Then*, (Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 7–20.

[343] Ibid.

In Christian religion the certainty of the Last Judgement enforces a simple alternative between Good and Evil through the establishment of a sole principle of behaviour.

John Reider further writes that:

> [...] it makes sense that if science fiction has anything to do with modern science... the Copernican shift from a geocentric (earth as centre) to a heliocentric (sun as centre) understanding of the solar system provides a crucial point where the ancient plot of the marvellous journey starts becoming something like science fiction, because the Copernican shift radically changed the status of other worlds in relation to our own. An earth no longer placed at the centre of the universe became, potentially, just one more among the incalculable plurality of worlds.[344]

When Europeans during the Middle Ages began to visualise Africa beyond the Saharan desert, the continent they imagined was a dreamscape and a site for fearsome otherworldly fantasies. Ranulf Higden, for example, an English chronicler and Benedictine monk who mapped the world in about 1350, claimed that Africa contained one-eyed people who used their feet to cover their eyes.[345] It was not until the fifteenth century at the dawn of the age of ocean navigation that Europeans with the Portuguese in the lead began to systematically venture further south, along the West African coast, made possible by developments in shipbuilding techniques and advancements in map-making technology.[346] Rieder states that evolutionary theory and

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[344] John Rieder, 2008, pp. 1.

[345] Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (Pan Books, London, 2012) pp.6

[346] Ibid., pp. 7.

133

anthropology are both acutely intertwined with colonial ideology and history and 'are especially important to early science fiction from the mid-nineteenth century on'.[347] Ideas about the nature of humankind are central to any form of literature, but in science fiction, scientific accounts of humanity's origins and its possible or probable futures are basic essentials. Social Darwinian ideologies that pervade early science fiction serve as frameworks for a complex mixture of ideas about competition, adaptation, race, and destiny. To see colonialism in a context for early science fiction is, according to Rieder, not extravagant. Most historians of science fiction agree that utopian and satirical representations of encounters between European travellers and non-Europeans such as Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) form a major part of this prehistory. Science fiction appears first in countries most heavily involved in imperialist projects – France and England – and gains popularity in the USA, Germany, and Russia as these countries enter into more and more serious imperial competition. At the outset in H.G. Well's *War of the Worlds* published in 1898, Wells asks his readers to compare the Martian invasion of Earth with that of the European genocidal invasion of the Tasmanians at the beginning of the 1800s.[348]

Seen in the context laid out above I propose that the colonisation of South Africa by Europeans in the seventeenth century that eventually led to apartheid can be seen along similar lines; the only difference is that the 'invasion by an alien civilisation with vastly superior technology' was not the 'products of the fevered imaginations of

[347] The following text is rephrased from John Rieder, 2008, pp. 2–5.
[348] Ibid.

134

science fiction writers'.[349] This is, rather, a historical fact of what happened to non-Europeans after they were 'discovered' by Europeans and assimilated into the capitalist world economic system.[350] Seen in the context of colonialism and South Africa's unique modernist architecture, my research argues that an invasion of imported and appropriated architectural European Modernism with its origins in Cubism, De Stijl, and the Bauhaus, was turned into a nefarious development that created the conditions for an architectural 'welfare' project of racial segregation and social inequality that persists to this day. The aesthetic transfer begins with Pablo Picasso's encounter with African art in 1907 that led to a transforming presence of African art in painting and the subsequent origination of Cubism that influenced Piet Mondrian to finally expunge all traces of traditional representation from his paintings (Fig. 85). I will return to this point in more detail in Chapter Four, however, it is worth noting that it is a cruel irony that in the visual arts the role of African ways of seeing would become pivotal in a manner unprecedented in the history of European aesthetics, whilst at the same time the most unspeakable atrocities were being committed by Europeans on Africans in the scramble for their colonies. The architectural methods adopted by the Bauhaus and described as following the lines of modern German art, consisting mainly of straight lines that were evolving new patterns and designs, were also adopted by the South African Modern Movement in Architecture and Planning. Rather than longing for a lost rural idyll, Afrikaner officials and architects expressed their modernity and legitimacy through a

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[349] Ibid.
[350] Ibid., pp. 124.

growing and seldom contested adoption of a Modernism inspired by cultural

nationalism.[351]

In a South African context, the term Modernism operates as a contradiction. On

the one hand you have 'high end' modernist architecture that was embraced and

designed by White elitist architects during the apartheid years, intended to promote a

certain form of respectability and sophistication within its White population. On the

other hand, the policy of segregation created townships or locations consisting of low-

cost housing projects that were underdeveloped modernist enterprises reserved for

Indians, Africans, and people of mixed ethnicities. Federico Freschi states that this self-

conscious embrace of modernity during the 1940s and 60s underscored by the victory

of the Nationalist Party in 1948 was more than merely a response to the government's

programme of modernisation and urbanisation: rather it was linked implicitly to the

construction of a particular imaginary of White Afrikaner nationhood. One can argue

that the urban projects and buildings commissioned by the state fed an imaginary of

modernity and success. From monolithic monuments and government administration

buildings, civic centres to performing arts complexes, airports, and Dutch Reformed

churches, the overwhelming architectural message, particularly during the 1960s, was of

a government and nation that had 'arrived'; whose claims to progress and modernity

[351] Hilton Judin, *Architecture, State Modernism,* 2021, pp. xx.

were unassailable and could consequently take their rightful place in the international community.[352]

The warped society that was created by apartheid has now become rather unexpectedly one of cinema's most fertile territories. *District 9* a New Zealand/South African/American co-production is a sci-fi film ostensibly concerned with the arrival of extra-terrestrials in Johannesburg that 'explores notions of regulatory control and economic supremacy in 21st century neoliberal South Africa'.[353] It is a powerful sci-fi film 'through which to think about the structural, spatial and cultural failures of post-apartheid South Africa'.[354] The allegorical overtones are inescapable in a plot about aliens, pejoratively referred to as 'prawns' whose spaceship had become stranded over Johannesburg and who have to endure on a daily basis a routine of unemployment, violence, and xenophobia in a squalid shantytown named Chiawelo. Landi Raubenheimer in her PhD *Nostalgic Dystopia in Neill Blomkamp's District 9*, argues that the idiom she identifies as the nostalgic dystopian idiom that emerges after apartheid, is particularly evident in the film. This is characterised by a backward-looking visual vocabulary, depicting the city of Johannesburg as a dated, gritty urban landscape.[355] The contradictory dynamic or tension of nostalgia and dystopia seems, to Raubenheimer,

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[352] Federico Frecschi, 'Afrikaner Nationalism, Modernity, and the Changing Canon of "High Art"', in *Visual Century* Volume 2, Lize van Robbroeck (ed) (Wits University Press, Johannesburg, 2011), pp. 66–91.

[353] Keith B. Wagener, 'District 9, Race, and Neoliberalism in Post-Apartheid Johannesburg, in *Race and Class', Institute of Race Relations*, Vol. 57, No. 2 (2015), pp. 43–59.

[354] Ibid.

[355] The following text is rephrased from Landi Raubenheimer, *Nostalgic Dystopia in Neill Blomkamp's District 9: An Emerging Idiom of Johannesburg as Landscape in Film, Photography, and Popular Media 1994–2018*, (PhD thesis, University of Groningen, 2021), pp. 1–16.

reminiscent of the tensions at work in the sublime as aesthetic category. She references Jennifer Peeples' article on the toxic sublime where viewers of sublime forces of nature are simultaneously attracted and repulsed[356]. The film clearly portrays and exaggerates the dystopian aspects of the city of Johannesburg, and it has also been analysed for its nostalgic portrayal of Johannesburg and the apartheid past. Dennis Walder points out that depictions such as *District 9* reveal that nostalgia is prevalent in former colonised societies that are dealing with national trauma, and this indeed applies to post-apartheid South Africa.[357]

> Nostalgia is thus very particular in the idiom and has to be approached accordingly to grasp the nuance inherent in the contradictory qualities of this vocabulary.[358]

David Cox, in a film review for *The Guardian* newspaper writes that with poverty as a backdrop *District 9* perhaps reminds its audiences today less of apartheid's victims, than of the ongoing Zimbabwean refugees who, in recent years, have been flooding into South Africa and are welcomed by 12-ft electric fences topped by razor wire. Scores who have managed to breach these defences have been murdered by South Africans fearful of the newcomers' supposed design on their property and jobs. Survivors eventually find themselves herded into insanitary, shelter less camps; an encamped alien population that has come to be numbered in millions. Similar scenes

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[356] Jennifer Peeples, 'Toxic Sublime: Imaging Contaminated Landscapes', Environmental Communication: *A Journal of Nature and Culture* Vol. 5, No. 4 (2011), pp. 373–392.

[357] Landi Raubenheimer, *Nostalgic Dystopia,* 2021.

[358] Ibid., pp. 8.

are played out on a daily basis across the world where their displaced counterparts may be billions strong and it's time we foresee what that future is going to entail.[359]

Moving from the otherworldliness of row upon row of corrugated metal to the modernist skyscraper looming over these scenes in *District 9*, one is struck by the dialectical play on its edifices.[360] Its sleek and functional modernist structure also elicits the scope of apartheid, reminiscent of a systematic bureaucracy. The MNU building acts as the headquarters from where the radicalised protagonist of the film, Wikus van der Merwe, and his unit prepared for the eviction of the aliens in the shantytown. Whereas the shantytown is a hive buzzing with activity, the MNU headquarters is a network of approved regulatory procedures that stricture movement and reinforce the eviction process. An unmistakable modernist architectural structure, this landmark of Johannesburg is a potent symbol of the apartheid system and its yet to be eradicated legacies.[361]

This chapter shows how my current practice is a response to forms of elitist modernist architecture and colonialism in South Africa. I have thus far focused mostly on modernist influences on domestic architecture as these sites are a further

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[359] David Cox, '*District 9* Warns Us of a Dangerous Future', *The Guardian*, Monday 7 September 2009. See also W. Ian Bourland, 'Afronauts, Race in Space', *Third Text* Vol. 34, No. 2 (2020), pp. 222–224. Zimbabwean Afronaut Gerald Machona's work takes up the prevalence of inter-African xenophobia and the so-called elusiveness of what he calls the' afro-utopia' that was meant to be the birthright of the postcolonial generation. His 'textile works' or space suits are made from Zimbabwean 'bank notes', foam, padding, rubber tubing, nylon thread, gold leaf, and a black bell jar helmet. In his videos the suit is revealed as some kind of a functional armour protecting the wearer from 'real' or mostly symbolic dangers lurking in the unknown South African landscape or urban environment.
[360] The following text is rephrased from Wagener, 2015, pp. 43–59.
[361] Ibid.

methodological development from my previous painting practice of focusing on homeless shelters. The architectural model constructed from card such as *Composition with Blue 2022* is combined with a variety of modernist influences ranging from modernist abstraction to a column reminiscent of Constantin Brancusi (Fig. 70). Domestic architecture consists of sites where the complex relationships of master and servant are revealed, especially in a South African context. This relation can also be viewed as an analogy for the embodiment of European Modernism that developed out of African artforms. It's historically well documented how European artists appropriated aesthetic forms from other cultures to reinvigorate their own practices, thus communicating an 'essentialist primitivizing' perpetuating hierarchies through colonialism as an indivisible feature of Modernism.

These compositions are further combined with platforms, rocks, and all kinds of debris to create a post-apartheid apocalyptic landscape that also 'encapsulates' and communicates a particular strand of the development of Modernism through colonialism. I have used apocalypse references in relation to these landscapes as a way not just of describing a psychological state but also a way to open up the content for further interpretations. These compositions are photographed for structural and graphic references to inform my painting practice. I see the lozenge/rhomboid stacked columns as both a modernist and African trope, used as a perpetuating motif encapsulating a never-ending cycle of appropriation through so-called 'primitive' artforms and, in this instance, implicates colonialist modernist architecture. Although my practice is informed by a very particular colonial substructure of architectural Modernism, the

140

arrangement of models with columns and other objects is typical enough to be easily

identified. My painting practice refers to a tradition of landscape painting that suggests

an arena where the arrangement of objects in relation to each other creates a dialogue,

thus creating an open context for fiction. Fiction and, in particular, science fiction's

relation to colonialism is useful here and helps to expand the content further. It allows

for the difficult historical apartheid content to become less parochial alongside

modernist references that allow for multiple interpretations. The aim of my study is not

to attribute blame or point a finger but rather to highlight hierarchical structures

between Western Modernism and, arguably, 'the postcolonial South' as genealogised

by David Joselit. The category of postcolonial modern, in Joselit's terminology, is,

'typical of areas that experienced settler colonialism, as in Africa where artists were

both alienated from indigenous traditions and excluded from European training'.[362] As

an artist who belongs to both paradigms of the postcolonial South and Western

Modernism my intentions span and unravel both narratives that beyond appropriation

itself speak of the temporal shifts and inconsistences that are best described as

fictional, projecting the in-between spaces that are visibly accounted for in both my

paintings and sculptures. I see this as a contextual framework for the practice, which is

further conceptualised into a strategy of appropriation in the form of references that

are signposting historical traditions in the visual arts in an attempt to reverse the gaze

and reinterpret European avant-garde traditions from a postcolonial point of view.

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[362] David Joselit, *Heritage and Debt: Art in Globalisation (October Books)*, (The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, 2020), pp. xxi.

141

Chapter Four

Apartheid Modernism

This chapter considers forms of 'low-cost modernist' architecture, or what I call apartheid Modernism, that was developed by the South African Modern Movement in townships built in South Africa during the 1930s through to the 1950s.[363] I consider this particular form of low-cost modernity by weaving imperial histories together with the development of European Modernism in order to find ways to articulate a visual language that interrogates and comments on the legacy of colonialism in the postcolonial present.

Modernism in the 20th century has been frequently used to support and justify all kinds of nefarious political aspirations and agendas.[364] Despite many conflicting views during its early development, Modernism achieved a global reach which, until fairly recently, standard history books have generally failed to problematise, assuming that its spread was natural and spontaneous. Discussions have always been from a Western historical context, evoking notions of dissemination, progress, and enlightenment.[365] What Modernism in a colonial context reveals, argues Duanfang Lu, is that the globalism embodied in Modernism has a much more complicated meaning beyond

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[363] The term Apartheid Modernism is used in relation to 'modernist' architecture that was built after 1948 when apartheid was officially introduced and refers in particular to modern township construction during the 1950s. I would also apply the term to modernist civic architecture of the same period as a result of spatial segregation, i.e., separate entrances, exits, and departments for the Black and White population respectively.

[364] Errol Haarhoff, 'Appropriating Modernism' (2011), pp. 184–195.

[365] Duanfang Lu, *Third World Modernism, Architecture, and Identity* (Routledge, Oxford, 2011), pp. 6.

those constructed by early modernists. James Scott has argued in his book *Seeing Like a State* that high Modernism was about 'interests as well as faith'. He asserts that:

> Its carriers, even when they were capitalist entrepreneurs, required state action to realize their plans. In most cases, they were powerful officials and heads of state. They tended to prefer certain forms of social organisation (such as huge dams, centralized communication and transportation hubs, large factories and farms and grid cities), because these forms fit snugly into a high-modernist view and also answered their political interests as state officials. Like any ideology, high Modernism had a particular temporal and social context. Not surprisingly, its most fertile social soil was to be found amongst planners, engineers, architects, scientists and technicians whose skills and status celebrated the designers of the new order. High-modernist faith was no respecter of traditional political boundaries; it could be found across the political spectrum from left to right but particularly among those who wanted to use state power to bring about huge utopian changes in peoples' work habits, living patterns, moral conduct, and worldview.[366]

Noëleen Murray suggests that Scott's term 'late colonial rule' can be applied to South Africa under apartheid.[367] In such a context, high Modernism provided the desire, and the authoritarian state the determination to act on that desire while 'an incapacitated civil society provides the levelled social terrain on which to build'.[368]

The South African Modern Movement, an alignment of prominent White architects defined by European modernist aesthetics and techniques, had little interest in their application to social problems. Apartheid as a term, the official policy or system

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[366] James Scott, 'Introduction' to *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (Yale University Press, 1998), pp. 4–5; sourced from Noëleen Murray, *Architectural Modernism and Apartheid Modernity in South Africa: A critical inquiry into the work of architect and urban designer Roelf Uytenbogaardt, 1960–2009,* (PhD thesis, University of Cape Town, 2012), pp. 19–20.

[367] Scott source text cited in Noëleen Murray, 2012, pp. 20.

[368] Ibid.

143

introduced by the Nationalist government after 1948, discriminated on the grounds of race and manifested itself spatially, in particular the urban environment. The 'solution to local problems' in South Africa under apartheid was twofold. First, there was the 'need' to design urban spaces for a segregated society and second, secure the demand for Black labour to maintain cities and suburbs as the preserve of White capital and privilege.[369] The way around this was the implementation of low-cost mass-housing programmes located on the urban peripheries in designated zones essentially as massive reservoirs of Black labour.[370] This was further facilitated by the unequal division of land between the Black and White population. Before apartheid became official in 1948, The Land Act of 1913, for example, prohibited the purchase of land outside 'scheduled reserves' and made provisions for the prevention of other means of independent Black access to land such as squatting, leasing, sharecropping, or labour tenancy.[371] The Urban Areas Act of 1923 conveniently placed the responsibilities for providing housing for the displaced Black population on local authorities, but it is recorded that very little was built, and those who did build used unregulated standards, planning, and construction methods.[372] The urban housing crisis became particularly acute during the 1930s due to the continued industrialisation that was triggered by the discovery of gold in 1884 and the Great Depression during the 1930s. This also caused a

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[369] Errol Haarhoff, 2011, pp. 185.

[370] Ibid., pp. 2. See also Glenn Mills, 'Space and Power in South Africa: The Township as a Mechanism of Control', *Ekistics* Vol. 56, Nos. 334/335 (1989), pp. 65–74.

[371] A. J. Christopher, *The Atlas of Apartheid* (Routledge, London, New York, 1995), pp. 32–35.

[372] Derek Japha, 'The Social Programme of the South African Modern Movement', in H. Judin and I. Vladislavic (eds)., *Blank: Architecture,* 1998, pp. 423.

massive influx of Whites from rural areas, coupled with a series of new land laws which displaced Africans even further, with the biggest impact felt in Johannesburg and its surrounding areas. A particular cruel indifference towards tackling the housing crisis were the accepted conditions urban black Africans simply had to endure.

What makes South Africa in particular a unique place to examine the nature of the transference and reception of modern architectural ideas (as opposed to anywhere else in the world) is that it is:

> [...] a place where the project of modernity was made material through the application of modernist planning ideas in the service of the apartheid state and as a means to implement segregationist legislation such as the Group Areas Act.[373]

Since the end of the nineteenth century landless black Africans supplied labour for White European-owned farms and the mining industry where they were employed as migrant labourers working on yearly contracts.[374] Diamond mines, such as those in Kimberley and Johannesburg, introduced housing areas known as compounds for their workers. These compounds confined the workers in all-male complexes from which they could not freely leave, thus restricting their movements in an effort to prevent the

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[373] Noëleen Murray, 2012, pp. 49. The Group Areas Act of 1950 introduced by the National Party was 'one of the major measures to preserve White South Africa' by dividing the country into segregated residential and business areas. Thousands of black South Africans, a group of people of mixed ethnicities derogatively referred to as Coloureds, and people of Indian origins were removed from areas that became classified as White occupation. It was deliberately intended to effect the total urban spatial segregation of all the different population groups dividing towns and cities into group areas 'for the exclusive ownership and occupation of a designated group'. Rephrased and quoted from A.J. Christopher, 1995, pp.105.

[374] The following text is rephrased from Elisa Dainese's essay 'Histories of Exchange: Indigenous South Africa in the South African Architectural Record and the Architectural Review', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* Vol. 74, No. 4 (December 2015), pp. 443–463.

theft of diamonds. The increasing intensity of industrialisation and greater migration to industrial sites escalated compound building that overtook the early types in Kimberley and Johannesburg. Africans in search of mining jobs established themselves on the peripheries of these industrial properties or settled on nearby wastelands in some instances adjacent to garbage dumps, writes Elisa Dainese. South African municipalities concerned about the unsanitary conditions caused by their own neglect destroyed these first settlements and removed thousands of workers into 'temporary segregation camps developed on the compound model'.[375] After the introduction of the Native Urban Areas Act of 1923, these ghettos expanded into townships and became the segregated urban housing areas for migrant workers. What began as the seasonal movement of male African miners turned into a regular diaspora of diggers and domestic servants picking up jobs in the city and living in the townships. Townships such as Sophiatown and Orlando in Johannesburg and Marabastad and Bantule near Pretoria among others, became segregated dormitory zones where people from rural areas lived in appalling conditions of absolute poverty without sewerage or electricity or any other form of services. It was only after the Second World War that architect Paul Connell began to address the problem of providing housing for the massive number of black South Africans in the townships in more urgent terms.[376] Connell graduated from Witwatersrand University in 1938 and was one of the co-

[375] Ibid., pp. 451.
[376] Ibid.

146

authors/designers of the acclaimed thesis *Native Housing: A Collective Thesis* that became the model for modernist townships in the 1950s (Fig. 86).

The Model Native Township

The origins of the model native township began during the mid-1930s when a change in attitude towards the social mission of architecture was beginning to set in, and by 1937 students at Witwatersrand University were beginning to challenge the nature of the relationship between Modernism and its European association.[377] Derek Japha claims they argued that by neglecting the social aspect of modernist architecture they missed the point entirely in the design for housing which was a problem of critical importance. Kurt Jonas, one of the prime movers in the development of this new consciousness, deplored the aestheticism of the Le Corbusier inspired *Le Groupe Transvaal* as the product of an unacceptably narrow definition of architecture; one which avoided the question of whether it is worthwhile to only produce luxury commodities, or whether there is not a bigger task of altering and designing the living conditions of the masses.[378] Japha further states that Jonas made clear his belief that it was incumbent on South African modernists to recover the lost political dimension of European Modernism and to work for social transformation, although he recognised the difficulties of progressive architects confronting this challenge in capitalist societies. The bitter irony was that by deliberately avoiding the South African context of racism

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[377] Derek Japha, 1998, pp. 424.

[378] Kurt Jonas, 'The Architecture and the Social System', *South African Architectural Record* (SAAR 1938), pp. 213. Sourced in Derek Japha, 1998, pp. 424.

and exploitation, he exposed the prevalent hypocrisy amongst members of the South

African Modern Movement and suggested that working within the system was

pointless because it was a fallacy to believe society could be changed by architecture.

Jonas argued that Corbusian town planning schemes, in his view, could never be

implemented in a capitalist state because they were unprofitable and would change

the mental make-up of someone being moved from a slum to a town designed by Le

Corbusier, stating that this 'would be an end to capitalist society'. [379] Therefore, this

rationale

> [...] contained a hidden agenda in political and environmental terms, one that substituted a
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> utopia of unrealizable intentions for the utopia of the unrealizable plan. This thinking was to
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> set the pattern for the work of the following years.[380]

On 25 June 1938, the proposed *Native Housing: A Collective Thesis* was delivered

by Roy Kantorowich, one of its designers, at a conference for town planning at

Witwatersrand University.[381] Rex Martienssen, by then a member of the university's

architectural staff, remained supportive of Le Corbusier and presented the 'master's'

drawings, themes, and an opening message, even though his aesthetic and functionalist

appeal was just starting to rapidly decline amongst members of the South African

Modern Movement. The conference included sociologists and psychologists that

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[379] Ibid.

[380] Japha, 1998, pp. 426.

[381] 'Congress Scheme for A Model Native Township for 20 000 Inhabitants', designed by P. Connell, C. Irvine-Smith, R. Kantorowich, J. Wepener, and K. Jonas, *Journal of The South African Architectural Record* Vol. 23, No. 9 (September 1938), pp. 342–352.

See P. Connell, C. Irvine-Smith, R. Kantorowich, J. Wepener and K. Jonas, *Native Housing a Collective Thesis* (Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg 1939).

provided an 'approach'; practitioners and academics contributed 'theses'; and self-

avowed modernists gave papers and 'demonstrations' on the application of modern

planning ideas to hypothetical projects which, amongst all these topics, included the

Scheme for a Native Township.[382] What stood out from the conference is how

Kantorowich in his address discussed the 'particular problem' of housing the native

population.[383] What this conference ultimately exposed were the contradictions

between the ideas of modern planning as a vehicle for social change and the

acceptance of the prevailing order of racial segregation and inequalities in South

Africa.[384] All that *Native Housing: A Collective Thesis* achieved was that it reflected the

work of the European Modern Movement inasmuch as the standardisation of housing

types, rational and geometric designs, and landscaped settings. Ironically the

standardisation of these housing types was also a leaf straight out of the modernist

movement's handbook, that is, rational and geometric design, no ornamentation, and

the use of 'good materials', which require little maintenance. Ironically, this also

suggested a particular modernist position articulated by Le Corbusier on how to

humanise your surroundings through landscaping and individual gardening, which was

avidly cited, but instead of green parks the buildings were separated by vast desolate

spaces.[385]

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[382] Alan Mabin and Dan Smit, 'Reconstructing South Africa's Cities? The Making of Urban Planning 1900–2000', *Planning Perspectives*, Vol. 12 (1997), pp. 193–223. Originally sourced in Errol Haarhoff, 2011, p. 186.
[383] Roy Kantorowich, et al., September 1938, pp. 342–352.
[384] Errol Haarhoff, 2011, p. 186.
[385] Ibid., pp. 191–192.

The 'model native township' produced as a thesis by students from Witwatersrand University reflected urban modernist planning based on ideas emanating from Germany, in particular the row housing by Ernst May.[386] In 1925 May directed the construction of public housing in Frankfurt and it is his '*New Frankfurt*' (Neue Frankfurt 1925–1930) that is most often referred to as the origin of modern housing development.[387] Hannah le Roux writes that it was Jonas's residential projects in the townships that reflected May's *Frankfurt* housing development programme. Jonas lived and studied in Frankfurt and Berlin between 1918 and 1934 before returning to South Africa to study architecture. As a consequence, the collective thesis *Native Housing* produced by Jonas with his four colleagues between 1937 and 1939 was a seminal local moment in linking South African architecture to housing issues and modern European town planning discourse.[388] The NBRI (National Building Research Institute) housing shows a particular influence of row housing with allotments such as

[386] Hannah le Roux, 'Designing KwaThema: Cultural Inscriptions in the Model Township', *Journal of Southern African Studies* Vol. 45, No. 2 (Routledge, 2019), pp. 12.

[387] Andrew Herscher, *Displacements Architecture and Refugee, Critical Spatial Practice 9*, Nikolaus Hirsch and Markus Miessen (eds) (Sternberg Press, Berlin, 2017), pp. 55–59. Herscher writes that before Ernst May took over the Frankfurt Housing Scheme, he worked in the German Province of Silesia from 1919–1925 and was responsible for housing Polish refugees who were flooding into Germany after partitioning. After the Treaty of Versailles decommissioned the German Army many empty unused German military buildings became available. May's office was given these buildings to reconstruct as housing for refugees. The standardisation, rationalisation, and industrialisation of May's refugee housing could be understood in both military and welfare contexts. Thus, architecture's encounter with refugees was therefore one of the contexts of its modernisation, that is, modern architecture was to an extent a refugee architecture. May described how the standardisation of military barracks allowed for easy reuse of materials and construction, enabling a process from one project to another, especially where similar new row construction was needed.

[388] Hannah le Roux, 2019, pp. 11.

those at Römerstadt which provided a scalar and occupational transition between urban and rural lifestyles in South Africa.[389]

However, by the 1950s White bureaucrats would lay claim to the native housing project in which White designers and Black leaders initially played an intense role. This relegated Black bodies, the landscape, and the contribution of indigenous culture to the background.[390]At its centre is the foundation of a basic three-roomed semi-detached house, the NE51/6, which, along with other house types including the NBRI's 51/8, 51/9, and 51/10, made up the township neighbourhoods of Riverside, Phomolo, Overline and Highlands (Fig. 87).[391] The core document behind this repetition was the *Minimum Standards of Housing Accommodation for Non-Europeans*. These standard plan types, building materials, standardised plot sizes, road widths, and open grass fields dotted with sparse public buildings, le Roux writes, would be repeated in most other Witwatersrand townships of Soweto, Daveyton, Thokoza, Vosloorus, and Tsakane and further afield in South Africa with smaller neighbourhoods constructed in Witbank and Vereeniging. Elements of the KwaThema Township became the model for South Africa's massive state-sponsored programme of several hundred thousand houses for

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[389] Ibid., pp. 12. Römerstadt was a new satellite town constructed after the First World War outside Frankfurt, Germany to elevate the housing crisis. Lead architect Ernst May based his design on a philosophy similar to the English Garden City Movement.

[390] Ibid., pp. 2.

[391] The drawing number, NE reflects the abbreviation 'non-European'. The number 51 is the year that the design was finalised – that is, 1951 – and the number after the forward slash would often reflect the month the design was finalised or describe the type of house. The known series of NE plans includes 51/6, 51/8, 51/9, 51/10, 51/11, 51/12 A, 51/13, 51/20 A, and 51/24 and were illustrated (except for the NE51/24) in *NBRI Bulletin* Vol. 7 (Pretoria, South African Council for Scientific and Industrial Research [CSIR], December 1951), pp. 84–91. Rephrased from le Roux, 2019, pp. 2.

black Africans in segregated neighbourhoods from around 1953 onwards.[392] Le Roux further states that while the four-roomed plan had its roots in a pragmatic extension of late colonial design, its translation from a stand-alone house to a semi-detached type is congruent with the NBRI's preference for row housing.[393] Comparative density studies of row housing started to appear at the NBRI offices around 1949 for Witbank Township, the smaller predecessor of KwaThema Township (Figs. 88, 89). The row house achieved cheaper building costs through the party wall and shorter service runs, and a higher density than the stand-alone dwellings.[394]

KwaThema

In 1951, the NBRI began intense work on these experimental modernist housing projects at Witbank and KwaThema, triggered mostly by the ongoing industrialisation due to mass exodus from rural areas to the cities where no housing was provided, resulting in an escalation of very visible slum conditions.[395] KwaTthema, the township which is the focus of this project, was established when the apartheid state decided to resettle black Africans from Payneville, considering them as some sources suggest, to be living too close to a White town called Springs (Figs. 90, 91). The Springs Town Council requested the NBRI's assistance in planning 'a new and separate' township, to

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[392] Hannah le Roux, 2019, pp. 3–4.
[393] Ibid., pp. 11.
[394] Ibid., pp. 13.
[395] Japha, 1998, pp. 423–437. Witbank is situated on the Highveld in the province of Mpumalanga, formerly known during the apartheid years as Eastern Transvaal, and is 145.5 km from Johannesburg. KwaThema is situated on the East Rand in the province of Gauteng, formerly known as Transvaal and is 41 km from Johannesburg.

'relieve' the existing overcrowded area of Payneville. These forced removals directed at the Springs 'blackspot' were disguised as a so-called 'relief' effort, authorised through the infamous Group Areas Act.[396]

Built along similar lines of European modernist social housing estates, the form of housing introduced at KwaThema is generally referred to as sub-economic, sub-sub-economic, or low-cost housing. KwaThema was not the first planned Black township in South Africa, but it was one of the first to integrate modernist approaches to housing, layout, procurement, and management.[397] This impetus to provide urban houses for Black people at this particular time in South Africa's history, and that it came from the Department of Native Affairs after it had been taken over by Afrikaner nationalist Hendrik Verwoerd, has been a curious topic of research for historians, writes Derek Japha. Various explanations have been offered for the intervention by the government, among others:

> [...] that it served the economic interests of large building companies and that it was required for the production of labour for commerce and industry; that it was the spatial matrix of the 'power of apartheid', creating the physical conditions for surveillance and the preconditions for the implementation of influx control and the Group Areas Act.[398]

Envisaged as a township of 6,000 dwellings, the site at KwaThema was in part surrounded by eucalyptus trees, grown on farms that provided the wood for struts to

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[396] Jonathan Cane, *Civilising Grass: The Art of the Lawn on the South African Highveld* (Wits University Press, Johannesburg 2019), pp. 138.
[397] Hannah le Roux, 2019, pp. 10.
[398] Derek Japha, 1998, pp. 423.

153

be used in three adjacent gold mines, the workplaces of many of its future residents.[399]

KwaThema is also where the ubiquitous NE51/9 housing model was finally introduced

that influenced apartheid's subsequent housing stock for black South Africans (Fig.

92).[400] For the previous three decades, attempts to regulate and supply urban housing

for Africans had been in effect a resounding failure. Hannah le Roux, who has conducted

extensive research on all aspects of KwaThema life, states that along with smaller

neighbourhoods constructed in Witbank and Vereeniging, elements of KwaThema

became the model for South Africa's massive state-sponsored programme of several

hundred thousand houses for black Africans in segregated neighbourhoods from 1953

onwards.[401] The mass production of these houses underpinned by the core document,

the *Minimum Standards of Housing Accommodation for Non-Europeans,* was laid out in

D.M. Calderwood's 1953 doctoral thesis *Native Housing in South Africa*.[402] The NE51/9

housing type illustrated in his thesis demonstrated, according to the NBRI, a 'rational

design process' laying out factors that influence house design in 'scientific terms', such

as social aspects which include space organisation, protection against the elements,

construction methods and materials, psychological influences, economics, and

landscaping, as well as aesthetic considerations that influence planning for family

living.[403] Calderwood describes the standards of Native Housing prior to 1947 as varied

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399 Hannah le Roux, 2019, pp.1.

400 Ibid., pp. 2.

401 Ibid., pp 4

402 Derek Japha, 1998, pp. 423–437.

403 Douglas Calderwood, *Native Housing in South Africa* (PhD thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1953).

and as examples where the wastage of space and lack of privacy was very marked.

Crucially of course, Calderwood's thesis was mainly intended to focus on the then

prevailing issue of how the South African government was going to implement the post

Second World War township building programme at absolute minimum cost. What his

thesis also did was to neatly exclude the thorny issue of apartheid by framing the urban

housing crisis in scientific findings to pave the way to a 'solution' and suggested that

'the technical, the social and economics must be looked at together'.[404] His thesis

produced an argument so compelling that his ideas remain a model for low-cost

housing in South Africa even today, writes Jonathan Cane. Ironically, 41 years after its

publication, the African National Congress's (ANC) Reconstruction and Development

Programme (RDP) in 1994, applied Calderwood's principles as a template for post-

apartheid housing expansion.[405] Le Roux suggests that what remains today of this built

experiment is a reductive and abstract model. A process of resignification she argues

has contributed to the ever-diminished definition of the township house. It has become

a banal spatial design that is reproduced almost entirely by commercial developers

using engineers and draughtsmen such as Windmill Park in Vosloorus, 30 km south-east

of Johannesburg.[406]

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[404] Ibid.; See also Douglas Calderwood, *An Investigation into the Planning of Urban Native Housing in South Africa* (D. Arch. thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1953).
[405] Jonathan Cane, 2019, pp. 138.
[406] Hannah le Roux, 2019, pp. 29.

One particular house model during the late 1940s proved to be exceptionally economical.[407] The N48/4, a three-roomed house that included a kitchen and bathroom was designed and used in a housing scheme near Vereeniging in the southern Transvaal in 1946. This model drew attention for the cost savings it effected and further savings made by using Black artisans; an approach the government and NBRI no doubt highly promoted.[408] The established N48 design was ultimately redrawn at the NBRI offices in Pretoria considering several physical and nonphysical planning variables.[409] Examined among others were the economics of state development; circulation patterns inside houses; minimum space standards; the layout of houses; density of housing schemes; alternative building materials; a 'rational' exploitation of Black labour; construction methods and environmental performance standards for houses. Out of these guidelines the NE/51 standard house designs developed, including the all-pervasive free-standing NE51/6 and NE51/9 that subsequently led to variants of row housing; the NE51/8 and NE51/10, 11, 12, 13, and 20 types (Figs. 87, 92, 93).[410] It's important to also point out that the project for KwaThema never reached its full fruition and the failures were glossed over in Calderwood's text.

> The obstacles faced by the NBRI designers included the resistance to the row housing types by
> some Springs council members and decisions of the new government that cut back spending
> on black housing and adopted significant ideological shifts that were to crush black
> advancement. A close reading of the compromises forced on the programme suggests a

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[407] Ibid., pp. 10.

[408] Ibid.

[409] Douglas Calderwood, 1953, pp. 29–38.

[410] Ibid.

transition in the course of the KwaThema's realisation during which the designed experiment

with its roots in the Union government ended, and the altered, reductive model aligned with

the National Party's post-1948 apartheid policies was implemented.[411]

KwaThema clearly shows the link that can be traced back all the way to the

development of European Modernism and defines what we know as the form and

character of the apartheid city, that is still visible today. The proposed minimal, but

comprehensive, public infrastructure that was proposed by Calderwood, such as

schools and churches took decades to be completely constructed. Only half of a

proposed civic centre imagined at KwaThema, as an urban zone, with a medium area

density of flats, combined with living and retail units, a hotel, sports facilities, a soccer

stadium, and civic hall were eventually developed and constructed by 1970.[412] None of

the planned high-density residential types such as flats and hotels materialised leaving

a central zone of windswept soil and grass to remain open for 50 years.[413]

Power and Control

Part of the design of townships was the crude racial zoning patterns that were

required by planners to demarcate and enforce a system of control and segregation.

The visible rational grid of plot, block, and street occupied by the ubiquitous 'matchbox'

township houses, would allow the authorities to control access to, within, and from the

[411] Hannah le Roux, 2019, pp. 6.
[412] Ibid., pp. 25
[413] Ibid.

remodelled township.[414] This would result in much better control of the residents and, according to the *Daily Dispatch* newspaper of 1949 ' throw out a lot of people who should not be there and balance movement between location and reserve areas'.[415] The inventors of this modern space had ambitious aims envisaging how urban African space would be redefined and produce new family orientated citizens within stable communities.[416] André van Graan in his essay 'Modernism as a Mechanism of Power and Control' writes that the link here between modern housing and mechanisms of control in townships were clearly apparent. 'The spaces were rendered visible'.[417] Foucault considered architecture as 'not only an element of space…[it] is especially thought of as a plunge into a field of social relations in which it brings certain effects'.[418]

Van Graan further states that Foucault:

[…] focusses attention on the spatiality of the actually lived and socially produced space of sites and the relations between them and refers to these real, heterogeneous spaces as 'heterotopias' in contrast to planned 'utopias'[419]

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[414] Gary Minkley, 'Corpses behind Screens: Native Space in the City', in H. Judin and I. Vladislavic (eds) *Blank: Architecture,* 1998, pp. 210.

[415] *Daily Dispatch* 15 July 1949, pp. 12, sourced from Gary Minkley, 1998, pp. 210.

[416] Minkley, 1998, pp. 210–211.

[417] The following text is rephrased from André van Graan, 'Modernism as a Mechanism of Power and Control in Colonial Contexts: The Project of Modernity in the Cape' in Tuuli Lähdesmäki (ed)*Time and Transformation in Architecture* (Brill Rodopi, Leiden/Boston, 2018), pp. 91–109.

[418] Michel Foucault quoted by van Graan, *Power,* ed. James D. Faubion, trans. Robert Hurley et al. (London, Penguin Books, 1994), pp. 362.

[419] van Graan, 2018, pp. 92.

In other words, 'utopias' are places designed in denial of reality.[420] Foucault is thus fundamental to an understanding of architecture as the visible politics of a colonial society.[421] Whereas Modernism in Europe was a vehicle for developing a new socialist architectural vision of a utopian egalitarian society broadly based on Marxist principles; in South Africa the project of modernity relied on scientific, technological solutions to spatial and social concerns van Graan writes. The instrumentalisation of segregation in South Africa's society, rooted in a racist values-based project was thus both bureaucratic and technocratic. It's spatial manifestation was therefore also technocratic and produced by planners rather than ambiguously negotiated by its inhabitants.[422] The discourse of architectural Modernism in a colonial South African context is therefore without doubt strongly grounded in theories of power, power relations, mechanisms of control, and terrains of contestation and negotiation of difference. European Modernism on the one hand was a discourse grounded in a paradigmatic shift in thinking about the way that space was constructed and perceived and that established a new modernist architectural discourse. That shift, van Graan claims, reunited a schism that had developed between spatial production related to function and building form or style.[423] Modernism in South Africa led to the creation of hybrid identities that were based on power relations. The strengthening of Afrikaner nationalism and increasingly

[420] June Jordaan, 'Architectural Agency and "Place-Making" in a Transformative Post-Apartheid South African Landscape' in Lähdesmäki (2018), pp. 112.
[421] van Graan, 2018, pp. 92.
[422] Following text is rephrased from van Graan, 2018, pp. 92–93.
[423] Ibid., pp. 91.

159

overt racism during apartheid; a simple division of Self and Other is inadequate as a basis for the multiplicity of identities that emerged or were officially created.[424]

Glen Mills, in his essay 'Space and Power in South Africa: The Township as Mechanism of Control', writes that although townships during the apartheid era were characteristically overcrowded, polluted, and a monotonous wasteland, it would be wrong to assume they were not effective. For its latent or non-discursive purpose of creating an anti-social and controlled environment it was highly effective. The township in other words was indeed well suited to the underlying aims it was established to satisfy.[425] Mills adopts the argument that any building is at least a 'domain of knowledge' inasmuch as it embodies a spatial ordering of categories and a 'domain of control' in the sense that it is a certain ordering of boundaries.[426] Syntactically the township plan was a strategic device by which a particular form of 'power-knowledge' was realised.[427] That form of power-knowledge was shaped by the ruling White minority who, since the arrival of the first European settlers in the 17th century systematically elaborated a particular view of society that created a system based on White supremacy, racial segregation, and Christian Nationalism.[428] This model of the apartheid city was so inherently spatial that a stringent pattern of segregation and differentiation

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[424] Ibid., pp. 95.

[425] Glen Mills, 'Space and Power in South Africa: The Township as a Mechanism of Control', *Ekistics* Vol. 56, No. 334/335, 1989), pp. 65.

[426] Ibid., pp. 65; original source Bill Hillier and Julienne Hanson, *The Social Logic of Space* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984).

[427] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment*, (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1977), originally cited in Glen Mills, 1989, pp. 65.

[428] The following text is rephrased from Glen Mills, 1989, pp. 65–74.

between categories of people would never have worked without the urban townships and the regional compartmentalisation of society into discrete national states. In short, the township 'works' not for the people it is meant to house, but for the state, because of the repetition of identical forms which, coupled to the creation of a rather segregated layout, leads to confusion as one cannot decide one's position in the system from the facts which are available at any one point. The power of space in the township is fully exploited to separate and neutralise social differences and categories. Its regimented spatial system provides the orthodox township with the very means whereby large numbers of people can be concentrated together and easily controlled. By spatially isolating neighbours and whole neighbourhoods from one another, the township in effect prevents a rich, informal, and dense pattern of social encounters from being formed and maintained. This is in stark contrast to the socio-spatial pattern in the so-called squatter settlements that are now becoming a common feature of the South African landscape. Both in terms of its massive size and in the syntactical blueprint that is imposed to structure it as a unified, undifferentiated whole, the township stands out strikingly as the most visible dimension of the ideology that it helped to create and materialise.[429]

Ten years after the Conference for Town Planning, the National Party came to power in 1948 signalling the dawn of apartheid in South Africa and proceeded to implement with renewed urgency further segregationist legislation within a country

[429] Ibid.

161

already deeply immersed in colonial segregation. This culminated in large-scale forced removals of sections of the population, and the redrawing of the internal political structures of the state. Race became the dominant element for the population to determining its rights, political and legal. The map of South Africa and its towns and cities were redrawn on racial lines with different rights assigned to different ethnic groups within different zones. Following years of neglect the then newly elected Nationalist government had no choice but to attempt to deal with the escalating housing crisis along more serious lines. Two of the township projects built, Witbank and KwaThema, are where the ideas of the *Native Housing* thesis were finally put into practice adopting the generic aesthetics of modernist patterns of domestic European architecture.[430] The South African Modern Movement's attempts, which were motivated by similar concerns that had made the problem of social housing central to European Modernism, however, looked very different on paper to what was eventually built. The crucial point to underline here is the 'profound affinity that existed between modernism and apartheid'.[431] Instead of providing housing along relatively similar lines to their European models, cheap, underdeveloped enterprises were built. Connell, who in *Native Housing* proposed a European model, now argued that these developments ultimately failed the Black population's transition from rural to urban areas, resulting in the destruction of any sense of communal life. In fact, most of townships developed on

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[430] *Native Housing a Collective Thesis*, designed by P. Connell, C. Irvine-Smith, K. Jonas, R. Kantorowich, and F.J. Wepener (Witwatersrand University Press, 1939).
[431] Jonathan Cane, 2019, pp. 112.

this system were unsuitable for South Africa's urban native population and should have been built along more indigenous styles.[432] The apartheid state was resolute in their opposition to such housing which ultimately exacerbated the development of slum conditions.

Indigenous Models

In Elisa Dainese's 'Histories of Exchange' she touches on some of the research conducted by Betty Spence, a student of architecture at the University of the Witwatersrand during the 1940s who maintained in an article 'Native Architecture' that, 'the indigenous architecture, that of the Native has never been considered at all'.[433]

Spence criticised the architectural establishment for neglecting indigenous architecture and affirmed that South Africans were too inclined to look to European and the Western world for inspiration. She seemed genuinely enthralled by the tribal homes she visited and for her indigenous architecture was 'an example of untouched purity equivalent to classical culture'.[434] She does, however, also refer to European influences on indigenous architecture pointing out significant changes in rural indigenous habitats, where round traditional huts were mixed with square ones (Fig. 94).

> This to my eye, possibly because it is a European eye, is more pleasing in the square than in the round huts. It is so surprising that Native architecture should improve by the impact of such a

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[432] Elisa Dainese, 'Histories of Exchange', 2015, pp. 453.

[433] Ibid., pp. 444. Original source, Betty Spence, 'Native Architecture', *South Africa Architectural Record* Vol. 25, No. 11 (November 1940), pp. 387.

[434] Elisa Dainese, 2015, pp. 460.

163

completely foreign civilisation, especially when, in all other respects, the result has been one of demoralisation.[435]

It is worth noting that in this period these concerns corresponded with a growing interest in Britain in African culture.[436] In October 1944 the *Architectural Review* published an issue devoted entirely to South African architecture tracing a historical trajectory from Cape Dutch homesteads to Georgian houses and neoclassical monuments, domes, colonnades, and various infrastructure projects. Traditional native settlements were in a separate section under indigenous buildings that also included images of the abject poverty of townships housing migrant workers. In 1946 *The Architectural Record* under Nikolaus Pevsner published 'The Architecture of Swaziland' by Hilda Beemer Kuper, a renowned anthropologist. Three key structures were recognised by Kuper in the architecture of local homesteads: the cattle byre, the great hut, and the bachelors' quarter. She focused in particular on the construction of what she called the 'living hut' and the preparatory religious treatment of the site, describing the sequence of building the hut, its form, and the social significance of rituals. The circular huts were made out of grass that were tied into bundles and covered with thatching mats. After completion a reed fence was built to screen each individual group of huts. The article concluded describing the settlement's morphology and the process of moving these non-permanent, nomadic homesteads. Pevsner, who wrote the short introduction to the article, emphasised the fact that Kuper's was the first detailed

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[435] Betty Spence, 1940, pp. 388.
[436] The following text is rephrased from Elisa Dainese, 2015, pp. 449–450.

description of any indigenous south-eastern Bantu construction to be published in the

Architectural Review. Pevsner noted that, 'Physical construction does not complete the

Swazi home', and in his opinion the hut was part of a broader cultural framework

serving as an expression of the Swazi community's complexity and zeitgeist.[437] After

Pevsner visited South Africa in 1952, he shared similar concerns as Connell about the

failure of South African architects involved in the project to deliver modern housing for

the African population.[438] He felt that the recommendations for building flats to house

African workers, for example, was a particularly bad idea because the contrast with the

character of traditional village life was too great. Both shared the view that the

repetition of conventional street patterns and the superimposition of European style

individualised houses destroyed social cohesiveness in the indigenous population even

when community centres were being provided, leaving residents no incentive to

participate in community life. As a result, shantytowns continued to develop around

Johannesburg, and Connell argued that this did not support the transition from rural to

urban areas. Modern townships were simply unsuitable because authorities adopted

patterns of European domestic development based on gridiron plans which blatantly

ignored any form of African culture.[439] The influences of African and hybrid spatial

[437] Ibid. What Kuper's article also articulated was the development of cultural relativism and the growing interest in race relations in post-war Britain. This was based on what Elisa Dainese calls the interracial relations that developed in Britain amongst liberals at the beginning of the twentieth century. The aftermath of World War I also saw a gradual increase in the awareness of race relations connected to Britain's declining position as a world power. Similarly, a growing interest in the immigrants coming to Britain from Africa marked the emergence of a new field of political debate.
[438] The following text is rephrased from Elisa Dainese, 'Histories of Exchange', 2015, pp. 453.
[439] Ibid.

165

practices were thus in direct conflict with the monotony and repression of township life.[440] Hannah le Roux points out that counter to the political narratives around townships, the pilot project in KwaThema reveals a few fragile acts of creativity by three architects. The first stages of the township design, for example, 'considers Barrie Biermann's interest in hybrid Cape housing vernaculars, Betty Spence's documentation of indigenous spatial cultures, and Douglas Calderwood's consideration of labour and landscape'.[441] Le Roux suggests these should be 'considered as latencies that in turn allowed a township identity to emerge through use'.[442] Ultimately, the township is a tale of Modernism extended to Africans in South Africa, whose main function was to service the mining economy. The unemployed, considered a burden to the state, were moved to rural homelands or Bantustans to eke out a living there. These homelands were the solution the apartheid regime established in order to permanently remove and separate the Black population from White South Africa.[443]

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[440] Hannah le Roux, 2019, pp. 28.

[441] Ibid., pp. 1.

[442] Ibid., pp. 27.

[443] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bantustan; https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/homelands
Bantustans or homelands were territories established by the apartheid state, essentially as ethnic puppet states. The ten territories in South Africa were: Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Ciskei, Venda, Gazankulu, KaNgwane, KwaNdebele, KwaZulu, Lebowa, and QwaQwa. These territories served a dual role: (1) to advance native Black populations by granting them token self-determination in rural areas whilst ensuring (2) that actual power remained in the central Pretoria government. The industrialised economy of the South African Republic grew rapidly, and with that growth, the demand for unskilled labour performed by Blacks increased. The segregationist policy of apartheid was a politics of space and a further expression of state control prohibiting Black labourers from permanently living in their place of work, especially in the urban environment. These spatial restrictions forced rural natives to become migrant labourers, a temporary exploited workforce that was seasonally employed.

Hilton Judin writes that notions of Modernism and tradition during apartheid were widely used in architecture without stable meaning but with continuing influence on building thwarted by racism.[444] Historic indigenous traditions were systematically examined and categorised, yet these differences exposed a fear applied towards Black opponents in relation to land. These 'others' possessed indigenous and deeply entrenched relations to the land that Whites were seeking for themselves. A so-called 'Respect for other cultures' actually involved a calculated effort by the apartheid state to distinguish those classified as 'European' from 'Non-European'. Judin further argues that through a brutal process of 'separate development' and a complex discriminatory system, traditional vernacular architecture was addressed by White architects and anthropologists through a narrow ethnographic view as decorative, superficial embellishment. Traditional building in other words was seen to be limited to decorative use of materials, patterns, and shapes in the vernacular. These were ultimately only interpreted without consideration for complex social relations of property, labour, or resources. Any familiar indigenous materials and methods gave way to imported and industrially manufactured goods that were supplied to rural communities at the expense of these local resources and traditional ways of doing things. There was no room given for Black artists or architects to innovate and any resistance or endurance

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[444] The following text is rephrased from Hilton Judin, *Architecture, State Modernism, and Cultural Nationalism in the Apartheid Capital* (Routledge, Oxford, 2021), pp. 82–114.

could only be understood in terms of succumbing to the universalising trends of Modernism.[445]

Methods and Theories Part 4 – Relation to Practice

In this chapter so far, I have provided a historical framework as context for my research, which at the same time also facilitates me to extract data (visual structural content) to inform my practice. My initial methodologies have involved sampling images from the internet to make and inform a series of paintings based on houses found in particular townships. I have used Google Earth for references and locations and chosen images of houses from various South African estate agent websites. The painting *Chatsworth House P24* (2019) is based on a house located in Havenside (Unit 1), Chatsworth Durban (Fig. 95).[446] As stated in the Introduction, the township was constructed during the 1960s as an apartheid 'race zone' to where Indian families were compelled to move after the establishment of the Group Areas Act. It was mainly intended to create a buffer between the White suburbs of Durban to the north and the Black townships of Durban to the south. Chatsworth was planned according to European modernist building and density standards and consequently presented aesthetically a monotonous living environment due to the repetitive and uniform

[445] Ibid.

[446] The Chatsworth township is divided into Units numbered 1–11 and for reasons no one can explain, Unit 8 doesn't exist. The units are in numerical order: Havenside, Bayview, Westcliff, Mobeni, Croftdene, Arena Park, Montford, Moorton, Woodhurst, and Crossmoor. In the post-apartheid area the area has developed into a full-fledged suburb of the Durban eThekwini Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal.

architectural styles employed.[447] The name 'Chatsworth' in the title of the painting is

chosen for site-specific reasons and to make a direct link with the palatial Chatsworth

House in Derbyshire, England, which stands in strong contrast to the township's low-

cost housing units. The name and images of these particular low-cost houses in

Chatsworth are used in my paintings to weave together subject matter with British

imperial and colonial histories and references.[448] A series of similar paintings from the

same surrounding area such as Newlands East have been given other British palatial

titles such as *House Windsor* (2020), *House Kensington* (2019), *and House Sandringham*

(2020) (Figs. 16, 18, 96). These works aim to negotiate a complex world, seen through the

obfuscating lens of postcolonial Britain mourning the loss of empire at the same time

holding on to the last vestiges of global influence that was once grounded in real

economic power and unquestioned moral authority.[449] In Chatsworth, Durban, the

rigidities of British imperial history bear down on the petty everyday domestic

economies of the least advantaged.[450]

Chatsworth House P24, House Windsor, House Kensington, and House

Sandringham are small paintings with ambitious intentions. Their aim is to visualise how

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[447] Ashwin Desai and Goolam Vahed (eds), *Chatsworth, The Making of a South African Township*, (University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, 2013), pp. 42.

[448] The Chatsworth township covers an area that was once a farm called Chatsworth, part of Witteklip located 14 km southwest of the Durban city centre. It was acquired and named Chatsworth in 1848 by one Samuel Bennington, a British immigrant.

[449] Adapted from Jon Thompson, 'Doing battle with decomposition: the work of Mark Wallinger, 1985–1995', Exhibition catalogue, Ikon Gallery Birmingham, 25 February–1 April 1995, and Serpentine Gallery London 10 May–11 June 1995 (Balding and Mansell, Peterborough, 1995), pp. 7–22.

[450] Ibid.

169

modernist art, alongside new technological advances in architecture and design, were 'radically reframing cultural and aesthetic discourses, weaving a complex web of ideologies' building on late 19th century reproductions using a 'language shrewdly celebrating both "primitive" vitality and modern technological sophistication'.[451] In Chatsworth Township, however, the 'technological advances' were manipulated in ways to produce cheap building materials to construct sub-economic housing in order to create a buffer zone of racial segregation. The houses in the paintings along with references to modernist abstraction, stand as memorials to the often-unacknowledged relation between Modernism and colonialism. An 'endless column', painted onto the roof of each house is intended to act as a ritualised/memorial prop 'mourning' the death of Modernism.

Accordingly, our ability to identify with what lies at the of heart of much ritual in non-Western traditions may explain why the avant-garde of the early twentieth century became so obsessed with the so-called 'primitive' art of varying African and Oceanic peoples.[452] Jean and John Comaroff in their book *Modernity and its Malcontents* state that 'ritual has long been a mark, in Western social thought, of all that separates rational modernity from the culture(s) of tradition'.[453] They further suggest that ritual may be phrased as follows:

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[451] Lize van Robbroeck, 'Afrikaner Nationalism and Other Settler Imaginaries at the 1936 Empire Exhibition' in Freschi, Schmahmann, and van Robbroeck (eds.) (2020), pp. 44.

[452] Oliver Basciano, 'The Sleep of Reason', *in Djordje Ozbolt, Questions of Faith* (Hauser & Wirth Publishers, Somerset England, 2017), pp. 74.

[453] Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, *Modernity and its Malcontents: Ritual and Power in Postcolonial Africa* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1993), pp. xv.

[...] ritual, as an experimenting technology intended to affect the flow of power in the universe, is an especially likely response to contradictions created and (literally) engendered by processes of social, material, and cultural transformation, processes re-presented, rationalised, and authorised in the name of modernity and its various alibis ("civilisation," "social progress," "economic development," "conversion," and the like). For modernity a Eurocentric vision of universal teleology, carries its own historical irony, its own cosmic oxymoron: the more rationalistic and disenchanted the terms in which it is presented to "others," the more magical, impenetrable, inscrutable, uncontrollable, darkly dangerous seem its signs, commodities, and practices. It is in this fissure between assertive rationalities and perceived magicalities that malcontent gathers, giving rise to ritual efforts to penetrate the impenetrable, to unscrew the inscrutable, to recapture the forces suspected of redirecting the flow of power in the world. These forces also create huge chasms between material enticements and the often-diabolical costs of new forms of transnational cultural capital; between, as some would have it, desire and (im)possibility. In these circumstances, ritual practice typically appears to its practitioners as an entirely pragmatic, secular means to bridge those chasms, to plumb the magicalities of modernity.[454]

Oliver Basciano who writes about a series of portraits titled *Les Visiteurs* (2014) by the Serbian artist Djordje Ozbolt, in which the sitters are unnervingly masked, sums up similar concerns my paintings aim to articulate. Basciano suggests that these portraits disrupt the opening between the sensible world and the nonsensical which pragmatic rationalism had closed'.[455] 'Modern art alone', the German sociologist Jürgen Habermas determined, 'can communicate with the archaic sources of social integration that have been sealed off within modernity'.[456] In other words, we generally accept that

[454] Ibid., pp. xxx.
[455] Ibid., pp. 65–76.
[456] Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, translated by Frederick G. Lawrence (MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1987), quoted by Oliver Basciano, 2017, pp. 74.

based on Greek philosophy Western civilisation explored nature rationally and developed theories about the universe in a holistic way combining science, philosophy, art, and politics. Strands of Modernism, in particular, the visual arts that developed out of these archaic sources or mythological perspectives, literally led to a clash of cultures. A good example put forward is that of David Joselit in his essay 'Heritage and Debt', whereby three aesthetic idioms are identified that substantiate the fragmentary strategies and localities of modernist traditions. Those are (1) the modern/postmodern which is tied into Western traditions, (2) the realist/mass cultural and, (3) the popular/indigenous associated with southern traditions.[457] The archaic source can thus be identified as belonging to southern traditions, in part due to its accent on community-based, ritualistic, and spiritual practices, and beliefs. I am inclined to conclude, following Habermas, that although those archaic sources may have been sealed off, even made invisible in the context of Western modernist traditions, they have nevertheless actively shaped and identified the complexity of modernist influence and its multivalent identities.

What my research in particular aims to unravel in this chapter, is how architectural Modernism was manipulated and mutated into cheaper and underdeveloped forms of town planning construction, with its roots in European Modernism. The preparatory work *Composition with Blue no.1* (2021) based on the ubiquitous NE51/9 township house aims to conjure up the aesthetics of such deficiency

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[457] David Joselit, *Heritage and Debt, Art in Globalisation (October Books)* (The MIT Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, London, 2020), pp. 3.

(Fig. 97). As suggested in Chapter Three on pages 124 and 125 in relation to *Composition with Grid A [Lozenge*]) (Fig. 73); the idea for this series of paintings developed from how the first so-called model native townships were proposed to have been designed on a 'garden city' plan but turned out to be underdeveloped constructions with none of the basic urban amenities.[458] In an attempt to find new significance in this historical content I again turn to references that could be interpreted as 'science fiction'/fictional technology in order for the historical apartheid content to be made more universal and accessible and allow for further interpretations. The various 'columns' act as 'conductors' or even lightning rods communicating multiple or even conflicting perspectives and, alongside a satellite dish, suggest communication in a world of globalised connectivity. The endless column is intended here again as a memorial prop and instead of symbolising infinity it is 'mourning' the death of Modernism in South Africa's underdeveloped townships. This, I contend, encapsulates or embodies the origins of the development of Modernism which developed out of archaic or mythological sources only to arrive as cheap housing and communal dereliction.

In many of South Africa's residential urban areas during apartheid the supply of electricity was either non-existent or fragmentary and candlelight or oil lamps were used as a light source and cooking was done on paraffin or coal stoves.[459] In the

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[458] Noor Nieftagodien and Sally Gaule, *Orlando West Soweto: An Illustrated History* (Wits University Press, Johannesburg 2012), pp. 6.

[459] Ibid.; Although a more complex subject in contemporary South Africa today, it is worth pointing out that since 2007, ongoing widespread rolling blackouts or loadshedding is used to conserve electricity as electricity supply falls behind demands almost on a daily basis, affecting the entire population. This is attributed to mismanagement, corruption, theft, incompetence, neglect, and crumbling infrastructure.

preparatory photograph *Composition with Blue no.1* (2021) the scene illuminated with

candlelight emanates a white, orange light emphasising and capturing the forms by

casting shadows creating an uncanny atmosphere. (Fig. 97).

In other words, the intention is to render Modernism as spectral. The title of the

preparatory photograph also makes direct references to modernist abstraction

developed from the European centre, and ultimately what interests me is the idea of

taking the history of apartheid Modernism out of context to create new narratives out

of the dark and complex relations between colonialism and Modernism.

> Considering the persistence of many structural inequalities and racial taxonomies forged
>
> during colonisation and institutionalised under apartheid, South Africa altogether figures as a
>
> haunted nation.[460]

Jacques Derrida's concept of hauntology offers a convincing framework for

reflecting on a relationship between spectral powers, post-apartheid Afrikaner

identities, and visual culture. One can argue that South African society's 'personal and

political ways of being, resemble the phenomenon of being haunted'.[461] Theo Sonnekus,

in his essay 'Afrikaner Identity in Contemporary Visual Art: A Study in Hauntology',

suggests that spectral readings of the South African landscape are, for example,

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[460] Theo Sonnekus, 'Afrikaner Identity in Contemporary Visual Art: A Study in Hauntology' in Freschi, Schmahmann, and van Robbroeck (eds.) (2020), pp. 92.
[461] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx, The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, translated from French by Peggy Kamuf, with 'Introduction' by Bernd Magnus and Stephen Cullenberg (Routledge, New York and London, 1994), sourced in Sonnekus, 2020, pp. 92.

proficient at grappling with the erasure and lingering traces of communities physically and psychologically displaced by apartheid.[462]

To answer to the demands of meaning I aim to create within my practice involves a process of 'constructing' reference material through photography and a form of 'cultural collaging' that ultimately also leads to 'deconstructing' historical narratives. This ties in similarly with Derrida's idea of hauntology, asserting there is no temporal point of pure origin but only always an absent present and like many Derridean terms are more or less concerned with the state of simultaneously being and not being, neither dead, nor alive.[463] I conclude that Derrida's proposal is thus a timeline of constant repetition with modernist references spliced up or displaced and reproduced with no beginning or end. It also ties in with what Frederic Jameson calls the 'nostalgia mode', a kind of nostalgia for Modernism. I further adapt Mark Fisher's commentary on Jameson's text to fit around my thinking, where the Brancusi-like column, for example:

> [...] serves at once to program the spectator to the appropriate 'nostalgia mode of reception'...
>
> ... and this brings home the 'enormity of a situation in which we seem increasingly incapable of fashioning representations of our own current experience.' By the twenty first century, the kind of pastiche which Jameson discusses was now no longer exceptional; in fact, it had become so taken for granted that it was not liable to be noticed anymore. [464]

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[462] Theo Sonnekus, 2020, pp. 92.

[463] Ibid.; See also Mark Fisher, *Ghosts of my Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures* (Alresford, Hants, UK: Zero Books, 2014), pp. 97–171.

[464] Frederic Jameson, *Postmodern or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Duke University Press, North Carolina USA, 1990), quoted by Mark Fisher in 'What is Hauntology?' *Film Quarterly* Vol. 66, No. 1 (Fall 2012), pp. 16–24.

The preparatory photograph *Composition with Blue no.1* thus aims to encapsulate and ultimately articulate the unequal development of Modernism in a particular colonial society.

From Bauhaus to Township House

The origins of apartheid Modernism I propose lie in the historical origins of the Bauhaus that can be traced well back into the 18th century. This begins with the devastating consequences of the Industrial Revolution first in England and later Germany and the subsequent development of the International Style or Modern Movement. Magdalena Droste, in her book *Bauhaus 1919-1933*, writes that countries on the European continent had been attempting to copy England's success in the field of industrial production with increasing industrialisation leading to social restructuring and the proletarianisation of broad sections of the population, which meant rationalised and cheaper goods production.[465] In the visual arts in particular the role of African

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[465] Magdalena Droste, *Bauhaus 1919–1933* (Bauhaus-Archiv Museum für Gestaltung, Taschen Berlin, 2006), pp. 10–19. See also Daniel Sturgis, *Bauhaus: Utopia in Crisis*, exhibition catalogue published for Camberwell Space (Camberwell College, 16 November–9 November 2019). In its desire to look forward to creating a new world Germany looked back via William Morris and the Arts and Craft Movement in England, which led to small private workshops emerging all over the country producing household goods, furniture, and metal utensils. And, whereas in England methods of machine production were rejected as a reaction against industrialisation, in Germany they embraced it with open arms. During the 1890s, Germany overtook England as the leading industrial nation and maintained this position until the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. Within a highly nationalistic climate Germans were beginning to search for a stylistic language which would complement its worldwide industrial reputation. The combination of economic, national, and cultural considerations led in 1907 to the German Werkbund that was intended to improve the quality of German products for export, bringing manufacturers, designers, and government authorities together around shared standards. Out of these events, in 1919 the Bauhaus school eventually came to champion and become synonymous with a particularly utilitarian design that focused on balanced forms and abstract shapes in its attempt to eliminate the old with all its fussy decorative and dusty bourgeois excesses and created a new vocabulary around the idea of mass production.

mythology would become pivotal in a manner unprecedented in the history of European aesthetics. From a Western art historical point of view the 'African masks' in Picasso's work offered a simplified ground on which the A B C of resemblance could be run through over and over again to a point of extreme redundancy.[466] The multiple planes and edges of the masks were the perfect way to geometrise the multiplicity of views.[467] After Picasso's encounter with African masks at the Trocadéro in 1907, it became clear to him that geometry was the language in which he could express the conceptual message of 'primitivism' and where the mechanics of illusionism would be reduced to bare essentials and made to play over simplified edges and volumes.[468] My aim here is to show related links between Picasso's invention of Cubism and Mondrian's conversion to Cubism, and show how that had an influence via the Bauhaus and the International Style on apartheid South Africa. Crucially, Piet Mondrian's significant collaboration with Theo van Doesburg in the Netherlands during the outbreak of the World War I that led to the launch of the *De Stijl* magazine in 1917 to advertise abstract art as the spiritual precursor of a utopian social harmony, is a key moment in the trajectory of modernist abstraction. This led to ideas emanating from *De Stijl* being taken up at the Bauhaus in Weimar and spread like a virus either infecting people with enthusiasm or sparking fierce resistance. Furthermore, Van Doesburg's radical

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[466] T.J. Clark, *Farewell to an Idea, Episodes from a History of Modernism* (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1999), pp. 194.

[467] Arthur I. Miller, *Einstein, Picasso – Space, Time, and the Beauty That Causes Havoc* (Basic Books, New York, 2001), pp. 106.

[468] Ibid.

abstraction offered a clear alternative to the *Bauhaus*, which was at that time still focused on expressionism and individual craftsmanship.[469] In his essay 'Living with Abstraction', Sven Lütticken writes that by implication Piet Mondrian in *1921–22* could never have foreseen whilst struggling with the question of a possible end to painting and the imminent integration of his neo-plasticist culture into architecture, that the messianic harmonious conception he envisaged of straight lines and a lack of ornamentation are economic imperatives and production methods that would be eagerly favoured by capitalists and therefore creating an anticipatory mockery of Mondrian's abstract future (Figs. 83, 98).[470] To Lütticken's text I would like to add that these same cheap production methods were eventually by default also applied by the apartheid state. The early township landscape was not only monotonous it was austere as a result of post-war building shortages, the introduction of reinforced concrete technology, and a predominance of modern functionalist aesthetics.[471]

In his essay 'Modernism at the Margins' Daniel Herwitz states that the International Style was not only the shared ideology of a group of architects but became the currency of builders and this is particularly important for modern construction at the margins in countries such as South Africa. As much as the style suited the few who were able to build expensively, propped up by vast amounts of

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[469] Gladys Fabre and Wintgens Hötte (eds) *Van Doesburg and the International Avant-Garde, Constructing a New World,* (Tate Publishing, London, 2009), pp. 11–12.

[470] Sven Lütticken, 'Living with Abstraction', *Texte zur Kunst*, Vol. 69 (March 2008) in Maria Lind (ed), *Abstraction, Documents of Contemporary Art* (Whitechapel Gallery, London, The MIT Press, Cambridge, 2013), pp. 142–150.

[471] Owen Crankshaw and Susan Parnell, 'Interpreting the 1994 African Township Landscape, in Judin and Vladislavic (eds) (1998), pp. 439–440.

178

capital, the International Style's principles were applied in the crudest possible ways with the cheapest possible materials, which suited many who wished to find cheap solutions to rapid urban construction.[472]

> It is a harsh irony that a style which arose in the name of avant-garde Marxist 'radical social planning and construction through new design' should have ended up delivering exactly what was required for profitable mass construction, bleak, and corroded products of which now stretch endlessly from São Paulo to Mexico City to Detroit to Warsaw to Rome to Johannesburg to Durban to Shanghai. In South Africa, as in other marginal societies, the cities have frequently been ruled by builders rather than architects.[473]

Townships were designed to provide mass housing to the poor and were not entirely unlike European rationalist utopian plans of the Modern Movement that related good housing to good citizenship; 'only here they were completely drained of any utopian promise or opportunity to a better life'.[474] The clear influence of European Modernism on Witwatersrand students and the subsequent design of the modest three-roomed house, the NE51/9, and its variants thus represent the prototype of apartheid Modernism in South Africa which developed out of a very different vision of European Modernism's attempts to deal with social housing. The housing was low cost; essentially a 'non-space' and based on principles of maximum utilisation of space and cheap materials.[475]

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[472] Rephrased from Daniel Herwitz, 'Modernism at the Margins' in Judin and Vladislavic (eds) (1998), pp. 410.
[473] Ibid. pp. 410.
[474] Judin, 2021, pp. 99.
[475] Desai and Vahed (eds), 2013, pp. 42.

179

Specific Colour [476]

Certain attitudes to colour and aspects of colour theory are brought together here to consider the political space in which colour has its reality in a South African context. During apartheid a life and quality of life would be determined by racial and colour classification.[477] These attitudes clearly persist to this day and in South Africa the concept of colour is loaded with significance and definitely not neutral. I have thus far responded to the history of apartheid Modernism within a framework of ambiguous abstract colour palettes as defensive architectural references, which has enabled me to work around the origins and consequences of this history. In Chapter Three, Methods and Theories Part 3 I referred to using architectural models as frameworks for a modernist abstract language. In addition, I propose that the windows and doors filled with primary colour also allow for a support structure with the intention to expose the moral ambiguities inherent in modernist abstraction. When one brings minimalist forms and colour palettes into conditions of inequality these abstract forms could become unwitting support for exclusion.[478] In other words, abstraction is a screen for projection whereupon humans are able to transfer their particular and specific belief systems.

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[476] The subheading 'Specific Colour, is taken from Ulrich Loock's essay on the paintings of Herbert Hamak: *At the Edge of Painting* (Kunsthalle, Bern, 1995), pp. 106–108.

[477] Alban Burke, 'Mental Health Care During Apartheid in South Africa: An Illustration of How "Science" Can be Abused'. In *Evil Law and the State*, Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill. doi: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789401201841_009 pp. 87–100.

The Population Registration Act of 1950, for example, was introduced in order to classify people according to their skin colour. Although this law may appear to be innocent enough, this racial classification would lead to one either gaining or being denied certain rights.

[478] Excerpt of an email exchange between Hannah le Roux and myself on 25 November 2019.

What abstraction allows for is a certain detachment from cultural content and by reducing the political agenda to abstract forms and minimalist colour palettes, 'these forms find a relational backdrop or context to specific activities, terrains, and interactions'.[479]

Figure 99 shows a circular painting based on the descriptions of a series of experiments from a chapter in Hendrik Verwoerd's PhD psychology thesis titled, *Die Afstomping van Gemoedsaandoeninge* (The Numbing of the Emotion) that was written in 1924 and awarded by the University of Stellenbosch. Verwoerd is often referred to as the 'architect of apartheid' because of his role in shaping the implementation of apartheid policy when he was Minister of Native Affairs in 1950 and then prime minister in 1958 of South Africa's Nationalist Government. He and his Nationalist Party felt that apartheid had been misunderstood and once described it as a 'policy of good neighbourliness'.[480]

> Accepting that there are differences between people, and that while these differences exist, and you have to acknowledge them, at the same time you can live together, aide one another, but that can best be done when you act as good neighbours always do.[481]

I have used the colour sequencing of his PhD experiments to create this 'colour wheel' painting titled *Circular Composition with Blue, Yellow, Red, Green, Dark Green,*

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[479] Adapted from Liam Gillick, 'Abstract', in *Microhistorias y Macromundos Vol. 3 – Abstract Possible*, ed. Maria Lind (Mexico City, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes y Literatura, 2011), pp. 158–166. Sourced in *Abstraction, Documents of Contemporary Art* edited by Maria Lind (Whitechapel Gallery, London, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2013), pp. 211–214.
[480] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vPCln9czoys&t=28 s
[481] Ibid.

Brown, Purple, Black, and Vermillion, (2023). In his thesis he describes a series of colour experiments including nonsense syllables that are presented to participants in rapid succession and who have to perform a given reaction-task in response.[482] The success or failure in the performance of a particular task under certain conditions becomes the causal antecedent for particular emotions to arise, such as compassion, shame embarrassment, malicious joy, anger, and vexation.[483] Verwoerd's analysis of these experiments, which consisted of little more than reiterating his subjects' verbatim comments, demonstrates that racist science is not based on evidence and uses poor methods. There was very little discussion of the nature of any theoretical problem, or the possibility of bias and no analysis of any statistical data was gathered.[484] The harsh irony is that Verwoerd researched colour psychology and went on to implement apartheid, thereby legislating the segregation of South Africa's population based on racial classification and the colour of people's skin.

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[482] Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd, 'A Method for the Experimental Production of Emotions', *The American Journal of Psychology* Vol. 37, No. 3 (University of Illinois Press, July 1926), pp. 357–371.

[483] Ibid. See also H.F. Verwoerd, *Die Afstomping van Gemoedsaandoeninge* (The Numbing of the Emotion), (PhD thesis, Stellenbosch University 1924), https://scholar.sun.ac.za/handle/10019.1/19365, pp. 60–76. The descriptions in Verwoerd's thesis (Chapter Four) are laid out under the subheading titled; *'n Eksperiment vir die Produksie van Gemoedsaandoeninge in aansluiting aan take met sinlose materiaal* (A Method for the Experimental Production of Emotions in Relation to Tasks with Pointless Material). The colours, for example, are presented to a participant by means of a Ranschburg memory apparatus with two reaction keys: one for the participant and one for the administrator. The discs are placed into the memory apparatus whose divisions are coloured according to a definite scheme and caused to revolve a section at a time every half- to three-quarter second by means of a contact clock. Punishment was administered by means of shocks from a small inductorium when the participant failed a certain task.

[484] Roberta Balstad Miller, 'Science and Society in the Early Career of H.F. Verwoerd', *Journal of Southern African Studies* Vol. 19, No. 4 (Taylor Francis, December 1993), pp. 634–661.

Verwoerd's use of an ideological colour theory based on an abstracted system to devise a punishment circuit based on pseudo-psychology of emotional responses predates the cruelty of his apartheid regime. In the fields of 'native' studies and Bantu administration there were close ties between Afrikaans universities and apartheid bureaucracy. His method I believe became a tool for exclusion, based on conflation between abstract thought and spiritualism. By realising the 'colour wheel' painting, Verwoerd's ambiguous system is placed in another perpetual motion and repetition, re-entering the dark doctrine of a colonial past in attempt to exorcise that spirit. I quote Gloria Moure in her essay 'Blinky Palermo or the Vitality of Abstraction', who gives further useful insight into the idea of the moral ambiguities inherent in abstraction.

> Therefore, the more ambiguous an object's function is and the more difficult it is to associate its image, the greater its aesthetic possibilities will be as a vehicle for abstraction, to the point where it becomes a polysemic symbol of infinite significance at the observer's disposal. In fact, it is the elusiveness of meaning that is at the heart of creativity in all the arts without exception.[485]

Moure further suggests that she does not aim to eliminate the semantic contents of objects and their images but instead rather aims to increase it.[486] As an example I consider here abstraction as the polysemic as opposed to apartheid's abstraction as the binary classification using the infinite spectrum of colour. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Mondrian develops the primary colours yellow,

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[485] Gloria Moure, 'Blinky Palermo, or the Vitality of Abstraction', in *Blinky Palermo*, Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona 13 December to 16 February 2003 and at the Serpentine Gallery in London from 26 March–18 May 2003 London (Ingoprint, Barcelona, 2003), pp. 14.
[486] Ibid.

blue, and red in painting as an expression of the basic structure underlying Western culture.[487] Increasingly our primary colours have become yellow, cyan, and magenta, the colours developed in printing processes to generate all other colours. Consider at the same time modern culture as 'marked by the romanticisation of traditional, "primitive" societies'.[488] Modernity, it can be argued, operates through abstraction: 'capitalism extracts people from their traditional social bonds and integrates them into a market where the bonds are predominantly abstract-monetary'.[489]

> This permanent decoding and deterritorialization led to an idealization of societies that had ostensibly escaped this process. In the economic version of this discourse, such societies are contrasted with capitalist modernity as gift economies. Marcel Mauss in hand, Bataille compared the modern cult of production unfavourably to the sacrifices and exorbitant gifts of traditional societies, and Jean Baudrillard used elements from Bataille and Situationist theory to arrive at an analysis that contrasts the reduction of everything to exchange value and sign value in capitalism contrasts with 'primitive' cultures of the 'symbolic exchange'. Symbolic exchange is based on a network of social relations in which the dead play a central part. The circulation of commodities in capitalism is based on a repression of death, which has become possible through the wall that monotheism has erected between the living and the dead; by contrast, the dead are an integral part of society in tribal cultures. In initiation rituals, young people die symbolically, to be reborn as adults. They thus circulate between the living and the dead, thereby forming the foundation of a regime in which the circulation of objects is tied to social and religious obligations towards the living as well as the dead – the ancestors, who are at least as real as the living. Such obligations are lacking in capitalism, in which the circulation

[487] Ine Gevers on Roy Villevoy, 'But Is It Art? But Does It Matter', in Ulrich Loock and Rein Wolfs, Exhibition catalogue *Am Rande der Malerei* (At the Edge of Painting) 6 September–15 October 1995 (1st part), 28 October– 3 December 1995 (2nd part), (Kunsthalle, Bern, 1995), pp. 111–118.
[488] Sven Lütticken, 'Roy Villevoy's Art of Exchange' in *Secret Publicity: Essays on Contemporary Art* (NAI, Publishers, Rotterdam, 2005).
[489] Ibid.

of commodities is regulated by abstract market mechanisms rather than concrete social and religious bonds.[490]

If modernity is abstraction, I equate apartheid similarly to the abstraction that developed through the entanglement of colonialism and Modernism. Apartheid operated on so many levels and on such a scale that it is impossible to measure and can only be acknowledged. Every aspect of South Africa's memory will stand forever in its shadow. By dissolving particular information into conversions of interchangeable units is, as Mondrian might say, 'freeing forms from their limitations and putting them in 'purer relationships'.[491] Sven Lütticken suggests that this is precisely the modus operandi of the capitalist economy.[492] Starting in the 1980s, Peter Halley decoded abstract art as being 'nothing other than the reality of the abstract world': abstraction in art was 'simply one manifestation of a universal impetus towards abstract concepts that has dominated twentieth century thought'.[493] What interests me is how Verwoerd's ideological descriptions of his colour experiments could be reinterpreted into abstracted colour palettes in order to produce something disguised as 'aesthetically pleasing'. To all intents and purposes my colour wheel painting appears to be abstract and ambiguous. However, when one considers the painting in relation to how Verwoerd became the 'architect of apartheid', anything associated with him will have sinister undertones.

[490] Ibid.
[491] Sven Lütticken, 2013, pp. 145.
[492] Ibid.
[493] Ibid., pp. 143.

Meadowlands Colour Experiment

During the 1950s and early 1960s, two colour projects in relation to township houses within close proximity to Johannesburg were realised, both with links to De Stijl and Bauhaus pedagogy. The first project was an attempt in Meadowlands Township, where a series of colour theory experiments were conducted in relation to a system of standardising colour. The second, a project that was ambitiously documented and written about by Julian Beinart, described how colour was used as a form of resistance by the inhabitants of the Western Native Township in Johannesburg. I am interested in these projects mainly in how they formally relate to my practice with particular significance to modernist township planning that is rooted in historic events linked to broader research of colonial modernity. In an attempt to combat the dreary repetition of identical housing units at Meadowlands Township, an experiment by the Natives Resettlement Board was laid out in a report preposterously titled 'The Correct use of Colour".[494] It is worth pointing out that Verwoerd spent the first two decades of his career studying and teaching social sciences at the University of Stellenbosch. During his tenure as Minister for Native Affairs from 1950–1958, which coincides within the time frame when the colour experiments at Meadowlands were being conducted, he developed and then applied the social engineering of an academic cultural distinction that he would finally enact through legislation. Hilton Judin writes that 'paternal authority rooted in the rural and traditional and set against a resistant black youth was

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[494] R. Merle Frean, 'Aesthetics in Planning and Layout of Low-Cost Native Housing', *South African Architectural Record* Vol. 42, No. 1 (January 1957).

186

for Verwoerd one of the foundations of a system of subjugation and control essential to urban apartheid'.[495]

The objective of the 'Correct use of Colour' experiment was essentially to create a contrast between the stock brickwork of individual houses by painting the window and door frames, for example, in *Meadowlands Pale Grey* or *Stone White* (Fig. 100).[496] On plastered or limewashed houses and paler brickwork, darker colours were suggested around the window and door frames. For row housing once a colour for the door was decided, it needed to be used on all doors of the unit for easy identification. The front doors on single or semi-detached houses should be emphasised by using brighter paint and the back doors painted in neutral colours apparently to simplify maintenance. The report also proposed that doors on houses at corners, on bends in the road or at pedestrian ways through blocks should all be used as accents. *Orchid Green* and *Meadowlands Yellow* was suggested but had to be used sparingly to prevent a 'violent reaction to their extreme visibility'. As far as roofs were concerned the report stated that 'a carpet of asbestos-cement roofs is a depressing spectacle because the colour is so uniform. Apart from the adverse effects on human health caused by asbestos the report 'optimistically' suggested that different nuances of grey would be achieved for houses in a block placed gable-end to the road while others parallel to the road cast different shadows. Clearly that wouldn't have made much difference. Ultimately red

[495] Hilton Judin, 2021, pp. 96.
[496] The following text is rephrased from R. Merle Frean, January 1957.

187

was the preferred colour for roofs as it showed up well especially on whitewashed walls. The report also proposed that apparently it would have been sufficient to paint one roof among 12 to 50.[497] There isn't any space here to go into these proposals in more depth and it is difficult to say whether the colour scheme in Meadowlands was fully implemented and how it was received by the inhabitants. My aim here is to show how the proposed Meadowlands paint colour range is linked to ways to standardise colour systems initiated in Europe in the early 1900s. There was at the time in South Africa no colour standard in terms of industrial paint. The use of Wilhelm Ostwald's colour manuals in naming some Meadowlands colours after his notations is a delicate link I draw here between the development of Modernism in Europe and apartheid South Africa. Ten colours were ultimately chosen that were deemed to look the best with the brickwork and were suitable with the surroundings of the township. (Fig. 101).[498] In order to facilitate standardisation, the colours were mixed where possible to fit an Ostwald colour equivalent because difficulty was experienced in naming the

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[497] Ibid.; According to Frean the objective of these first colour experiments was to evolve within the existing costs, a limited range of colours for most purposes, that could be combined in whichever way without clashing. The paints available on site were: three browns, red, maroon, yellow, medium green, three greys, white, light and dark cream, Portland stone, and blue stainer. The reaction by the tenants of the use of colour were noted as mainly favourable but there seems to have been disapproval voiced of the use of bright red and yellow on doors. Seventeen colours were finally modified from the available paints and submitted to Messrs. Plascon Paint and Chemical Industries Ltd. who were contracted to supply the paint to Meadowlands. The seventeen colours – light grey-green, yellow, dark grey blue, lime green, light grey, light cream, dark grey-green, turquoise, beige, P.W.D. brown, golden brown, mines grey, dark grey, wagon red, pale blue, door red, and tomato met all the technical standards and could be manufactured as stable commercial paints (apart from the last three colours) and at prices comparable with those already used at Meadowlands. However, it was felt that the range was still too large and unwieldly. Finally, ten colours were chosen that were deemed to look the best with the brickwork and that were suitable with the surroundings of the township.
[498] Ibid.

colours. Some were named after British Standard 1948, and some were British Colour

Council. The others, and there is unfortunately not a clear record of which colours, could

only be described by their Ostwald notation.[499] Ostwald's experiments with colour

systems interests me mainly for the influence he is meant to have had on the De Stijl

movement with his colour theories and his brief interactions with the Bauhaus.[500]

Oswald came to the attention of these major art movements when he began to

develop a systematic theory of colour as well as a quantitative colour science around

1914, that led to the publication of several books and publications, most notably among

others is *Die Farbenfibel* (The Colour Primer) in 1917.[501] It is worth pointing out that

Ostwald was also invited to test his colour theories at the Bauhaus in a series of

lectures, however, these were met with considerable scepticism and mixed reactions.

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[499] Ibid.

[500] John Gage, *Colour and Culture: Practice and Meaning from Antiquity to Abstraction* (Thames and Hudson, Singapore, 1993), pp. 247–268. John Gage suggests that Mondrian's handling of colour in 1917 and 1918 show a striking similarity to some of Ostwald's colour principles. In his early colour-plane paintings he is believed to have mixed a fair amount of white into the three primary colours in order to unite them tonally and to keep them as closely related to the picture plane. In 1918 Mondrian began a series of grey paintings and continued to use grey in a variety of tonal values as a prominent 'colour'. His 'grey period' lasted until the mid-1920s and most notably amongst these is *Composition with Grid 3: Lozenge Compositions 1918*. Mondrian regarded grey as part of his basic set of six colours inasmuch as, '...yellow, blue, and red can be mixed with white and remain a basic colour, so can black'. This, however, underlines the difficult concept of grey for the De Stijl movement and did not resolve the different viewpoints, with van Doesburg regarding grey as the non-chromatic equivalent to red. For Mondrian, it was simply a way of adjusting his colours to his present-day surroundings and stated that 'the time was not yet ripe for full primary statements'. However, according to Gage, two paintings of the 1919 *Composition with Grid 9: Chequerboard Composition, Light Colours* and *Composition with Grid 8: Chequerboard Composition Dark Colours* stand out as being strongly influenced by Ostwald's colour theories.

[501] Philip Ball and Mario Ruben, 'Colour Theory in Science and Art: Ostwald and the Bauhaus', *Angewandte Chemie, International Edition 43*, Wiley-VCH Verlag GmbH & Co. KGaA, Weinheim, 2004), pp. 4842–4846. https://www.academia.edu/27958671/Color_Theory_in_Science_and_Art_Ostwald_and_the_Bauhaus

Julian Beinart and the Western Native Township

In the penultimate part of this chapter, I describe how colour and abstract patterns were used as a form of resistance by the inhabitants of the Western Native Township (WNT) during the 1960s. These experiments were ambitiously documented and written about by Julian Beinart and crucially, there are connections here between Bauhaus pedagogy and townships. Beinart ambitiously documented the decorated facades of 2,000 WNT standardised government houses in Johannesburg and I feel this has a particular formal relevance to my research project, that is, the use of township houses combining abstraction and specific colour palettes (Fig. 102). However, what interests me is how the act of painting these houses in a particular way became here a political act; abstraction as an act of resistance. In an article on Beinart, Aya Levin writes about his work during the period 1961–1965 where she states how Beinart was greatly influenced by his studies at MIT in the USA under the instruction of Kevin Lynch and György Kepes.[502] Lynch and Kepes's research emphasised user perception of the urban environment, architecture as a visual language, and the study of commercial advertisements as a communication system. Alongside László Moholy Nagy, Kepes is known for having reformulated the Bauhaus school pedagogy, particularly the *Vorkurs* (Preliminary Course) into 'basic design' in a post-war American context. Influenced by African intelligentsia and pan-African debates, Beinart resisted the often-romantic view

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[502] The following text is rephrased from: Aya Levin, 'Basic Design and the Semiotics of Citizenship: Julian Beinart's Educational Experiments and Research on Wall Decoration in Early 1960's Nigeria and South Africa', *ABE Journal – Architecture Beyond Europe*, 2016), pp. 1–25.

of locking Africans into timeless traditions which the apartheid regime attempted to do by de-urbanising and re-tribalising black Africans into separate homelands far removed from urban centres to make ends meet. By using photography, analytical drawings, and diagrammatic maps Beinart created a counter archive against the apartheid state in which he interpreted the residents' beautification and improvement of their houses as acts of resistance and expression of pride where the urban poor performed citizenship under extreme social and economic pressure. By analysing the decoration as a system of communication that transcended ethnic traditions Beinart used them as an 'index of de-tribalization' that could set the creation of an African urban modernity. The colourful wall paintings of the WNT were an aesthetic eruption that not only interfered with the visual propriety of the city but also defied the very fundamentals of its political economy.[503]

Colour: David Batchelor and Gavin Jantjes

Apartheid operated on a particularly cruel micro level where the separation between members of different population groups were affected in the details and personal contact of daily life. Apart from the master/servant–employer/employee

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[503] Ibid. For example, Beinart believed that instead of regarding the Ndebele's imagery as contaminated by Western mass culture and consumerism, he referred to it as 'a new folk art' which could serve as an index of 'detribalisation' rather than a medium to excavate traces of ethnic identity. He identified a new unity in African society's rapid adjustment to modernity and believed that South Africa as the most industrialised country on the continent should have been able to lead the way were it not for the repressive system of apartheid. This language of resistance that Beinart identified in WNT was not an isolated case in South African history. For example, the 1980s saw the formation of a 'people's parks' movement in the townships, which involved landscaping, gardening, wall painting, and sculptures. Among the political slogans, one could find their evocations of faraway places via names such as, 'Las Vegas Park' and 'Lancaster Park', Aya Levin, 2016, pp. 22.

relationship, both were essentially viewed in White and Black terms. Attention was specifically focused upon the isolation of the White group from the Black group. For most personal apartheid matters there were, according to the state, only two salient groups; Whites and non-Whites, and this was mainly because of the racial dualism that was evident in personal apartheid. It periodically referred to all that were not regarded as White as non-White, no matter how demeaning the term was considered to be. A multitude of laws and regulations were issued to prevent those who were not classified as White from occupying and using declared White space. These terms were widely used in everything from government notices to park benches and beaches and in the provision of separate counters in post offices to separate entrances into public buildings, and separate restrooms, among others.[504] Segregationist policies in the built environment applied to every aspect of life and that included White suburbs and huge cultural complexes such as opera houses and state theatres, hospitals, schools, and universities. These were built to cement and celebrate the Afrikaner social elite's rise to ascendancy and control.[505] Public buildings in particular 'were explicitly and by law, for Whites only, and they were intended to represent the triumph of "the European" in Africa'.[506]

[504] Opening paragraph is rephrased from A. J. Christopher, *The Atlas of Apartheid*, (London, Routledge, 1994), pp. 141.
[505] Tony Morphet, 'The Work of Eaton and Biermann in Durban', in H. Judin and I. Vladislavic (eds) *Blank: Architecture*, pdf, 1998, pp. 148 – 162.
[506] Ibid.

This very clean white and orderly universe that lives in fear of 'corruption and contamination' is described in David Batchelor's book *Chromophobia*.[507] Although the book has nothing to do with apartheid it does in a sense encapsulate the segregationist apartheid policies of South Africa within the parameters of a domestic space. Batchelor writes about a minimalist interior of an art collector's house he was once invited to as: 'where everything was finished completed and strictly limited in a closed individuality that was not allowed to merge with the outside world'.[508] The uninterruptable endless emptiness of the white interior was impressive, elegant, and glamorous in a reductive kind of way, but it was also assertive, emphatic, and ostentatious.[509] He further describes the white of the interior as more than white, a kind of white that is not created by bleach but itself is bleach:

> The great white interior was empty even when it was full, because most of what was in it didn't belong in it and would soon be purged from it. This was people, mainly, and what they brought with them.[510]

The development of modernist architectural ideas initiated in Europe during the 1920s in relation to their appropriation in South Africa was specifically used to spatially perpetuate a form of racial exclusion based on the colour of people's skin. In post-apartheid South Africa, White South Africans who were born and reached maturity

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[507] David Batchelor, *Chromophobia*, (Reaktion Books, London, 2000).
[508] Ibid., pp. 9–10.
[509] Ibid.
[510] Ibid., pp. 10–11.

during apartheid tend to recognise only with hindsight the full impact of its effect.[511] By being exposed to a slanted rhetoric meant that even those who sought to criticise nationalistic views that supported the apartheid state were nevertheless influenced by its biases.[512]

> Post-apartheid whiteness is a set of complex discursive positionings, tied to apartheid's white supremacist ideologies yet refracted through the diffuse ideological, political, and cultural forces that characterise the present. Although the distribution of formal political power strongly suggests a shift towards a non-racial national context, the legacy of the country's racialisation is imbricated into all aspects of social and cultural life. Whiteness remains enmeshed in normative practices of power and rooted in material conditions of inequality and ongoing relations of social injustice…[513]

Scholars argue that the increasing growth in critical whiteness studies in the new millennium is tied to a need to interrogate and understand discourses prior to 1994, including visual ones.[514]

> It stands to reason that the current retrieval of a positive blackness from decades of systematically imposed inferiority should be accompanied by a critical reconsideration of whiteness and strategies of domination and control.[515]

However, while there can be no question of the enabling value of this wide-ranging scholarly research, it goes without saying that critical whiteness studies must

[511] Federico Freschi, Brenda Schmahmann, Lize van Robbroeck, *Troubling Images, Visual Culture and Politics of Afrikaner Nationalism* (Wits University Press, Johannesburg 2020), pp. 3.
[512] Ibid.
[513] Andy Carolin, Minesh Dass & Bridget Grogan, 'Introduction: Reading Post-Apartheid Whiteness', *Journal of Literary Studies* Vol. 36, No. 4 (2020), pp. 1–8.
[514] Federico Freschi, Brenda Schmahmann, van Lize van Robbroeck (eds.), 2021, pp. 3.
[515] Ibid.

always mediate the ever-present danger of recentring whiteness even as it attempts to deconstruct it. In other words, critical whiteness studies in South Africa face the same challenges common to all research and specifically to its distinctive context and history.[516]

> That being said, any attempts to fix notions of whiteness ultimately fails, as whiteness 'can be at the same time taken-for-granted entitlement, a desired social status, a perceived source of victimization and a tenuous situational identity'.[517]

The white Batchelor describes is an aggressive white but white as we all know is generally associated with light, goodness, innocence, purity, cleanliness, and virginity. As opposed to black, white is usually seen in positive terms. Christopher L. Miller, in his book *Blank Darkness, Africanist Discourse in French*, writes that discourse on blackness would appear to be a rock of negativity and that from Sanskrit and ancient Greek to modern European languages, black is mostly associated with dirt, degradation, and impurity.[518] Colour, Miller states occurs on a spectrum with infinite varieties of meaning, in other words they are symbols, and black and white are not part of this system, they are invariably negatives of colour. Thus, the meaning of blackness is altered as soon as it is associated with whiteness.

> Pure darkness is felt as a force so powerful that it must be repressed as a 'criterion for evaluating men'. The consequence of this, however, is that meaning itself will fall out of secure grounding in symbolism and be forced always to point somewhere else. Black and white

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[516] Carolin, Dass, and Grogan, 2020, pp. 2.

[517] France Twine and Charles Gallagher, 'The Future of Whiteness: A Map of the "Third Wave"', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* Vol. 31 (2008), pp. 4–24; quoted by Andy Carolin, Minesh Dass and Bridget Grogan, 2020, pp. 1.

[518] Christopher L. Miller, *Blank Darkness, Africanist Discourse in French* (The University of Chicago Press, London, 1985).

designate each other before they designate any meaning, and their meanings follow suit by

reversing constantly.[519]

The 'blankness' in the title of Miller's book refers to the literal definitions of black

and white: black he states is:

[...] the proper word used for a certain quality practically classed among the colours, but

consisting optically in the total absence of colour, due to the absence or total absorption of

light, as its opposite white arises from the reflection of all the rays of light. White is fully

luminous and devoid of any distinctive hues. That void is the point where white and black

meet and reverse; then black is full of emptiness (total absence). Both are blank, absent, the

null set of colours.[520]

The appropriately named French critic and colour theorist and sometime

Director of the Arts in 1848, Charles Blanc, identified colour with the 'feminine' in art; he

asserted the need to subordinate colour to the 'masculine' discipline of design or

drawing.[521] For Blanc, colour could not be ignored or dismissed because it was always

there, and he felt it needed to be contained and subordinated. Colour was a permanent

internal threat; an inner other which, if unleashed, would be the ruin of everything, the

fall of culture.[522]

It was mostly through black and white photography that apartheid became

globalised.[523] On 16 June 1976, a particular point of conflict came over the imposition of

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[519] Ibid., pp. 29.
[520] Ibid., pp. 30–31.
[521] David Batchelor, 2000, pp. 23.
[522] Ibid.
[523] Colin Richards, 'Retouching Apartheid: Intimacy, Interiority, and Photography', in Okwui Enwezor and Rory Bester (eds), *The Rise and Fall of Apartheid: Photography and the Bureaucracy of Everyday Life* (New York, Prestel, 2013), pp. 234.

196

new regulations that enforced the use of Afrikaans as the primary language of instruction in the Bantu Education programme. Schoolchildren across South Africa demonstrated against this imposition in Black schools and in the township of Soweto it wasn't long before a peaceful protest was met by a heavy militarised police presence. Shots were fired into the crowds of unarmed children sparking three days of shooting, mob violence, looting, and destruction of property. Known as The Soweto Uprising this event represents a landmark in the struggle against apartheid and the political awakening of a new generation of South Africans. The event was covered by photojournalists Peter Magubane and Sam Nzima, among others, and the impact their images had internationally, cannot be underestimated.[524] One year after the Soweto Uprising one of Magubane's iconic images appeared in two screen prints by the South African born artist Gavin Jantjes, who was classified by the apartheid state as a Cape Coloured – a designation for individuals of mixed-race background. Rendered in a blurry halftone reproduction the image of a young man clutching a rock seemingly poised for action and shielding himself with the metal lid of a garbage can contributes to the construction of the 'riot' as a media-generated visual trope (Fig. 103). Living in exile in Europe during the 1970s Jantjes was free to openly criticise the apartheid state. His use of images about the Soweto Uprising resonated and reverberated with anti-racist movements beyond South Africa, especially in Britain where Black youths in particular faced marginalisation and criminalisation by the press. A resistance was forged that

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[524] The following text is rephrased from Allison K. Young, 'Visualizing Apartheid Abroad: Gavin Jantjes's Screen prints of the 1970s', *Art Journal*, Vol. 76, Nos. 3–4 (2017), pp. 10–31.

identified with the struggles of South Africans and his use of the 'riot' as afro trope,

therefore transforming ways in which audiences both then and now can understand

and analyse representations of violence. In Hamburg, Jantjes produced his best-known

body of work, *A South African Colouring Book*, a work that referred to colour – the

concept central to race discrimination in South Africa as a way to introduce apartheid

to a European audience (Fig. 104). Toying with double meaning in the use of the word

'colour', he referenced the object of institutionalised racism as well as his own

classification by the state as 'Coloured'.[525] The screen-print *Whites Only* thus recounts

the history of the legitimisation of racism based on physical appearance with all the

involved in its practical enforcement, particularly in borderline cases where the

difference between 'White' and 'Coloured' is not self-evident.[526]

      The imaginary that Jantjes provides is developed through an intense experience

of loss and displacement. The work he produced attempts to come to terms with the

inhumanity of apartheid set against the struggle for liberation not only in Africa but

worldwide.[527] The voice that emerges brings to mind Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of*

the Earth that explicates the dehumanising effects of colonialism.[528] The same intense

anger and frustration is felt in the work of British artists such as Eddie Chambers, Keith

Piper, and Lubaina Himid. Like Jantjes, both Chambers and Piper concern themselves

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[525] Ibid.

[526] https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/jantjes-whites-only-p78646.

[527] *The Other Story, Afro-Asian Artists in Post War Britain*, curated by Rasheed Araeen, Hayward Gallery London (BAS, Over Wallop, Hampshire, 1989), pp. 64–68.

[528] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, (Penguin Books, Clays Ltd., St Ives, England, 1990).

with the history of African people, in particular their removal from Africa through the slave trade and their subsequent dispersal all over the world. Black people, Chambers states, '...on arriving from Africa, and through subsequent generations, were stripped of their dignity, history, culture, religion and identity as Black people'.[529] His work *Black Civilisation*, for example, confronts the challenges of the Black stereotype by using photographs of African cultural artefacts from anthropological journals challenging the European desire to civilise the so-called 'primitives' (Fig. 105). In a series of photomontages titled *Go West Young Man* 1988, Piper deals with autobiographical material, alongside the history of slavery and the displacement of African people (Fig. 106).[530] 'Piper combines visual and textual fragments to examine the disjuncture between the history of black people as a history of "documents" of oppression, and a history consisting of stereotyped representation of black bodies.'[531] The early 1980s also witnessed the emergence of the voice of an independent movement of Black women artists, whose politicisation came through both a Black consciousness and feminist perspective. The strength, resourcefulness, anger, and wit of an artist such as Lubaina Himid, in the face of double oppression of racism and sexism, is the central theme of much of her work. She employs satire, which she directs at White society and its heroes. Her work titled *The Carrot Piece*, refers to the question of Black and White sexuality. A

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[529] The Other Story, 1989, pp. 73.
[530] Ibid., 78.
[531] Ibid.

199

Black woman watches with disdain a White man dangling a carrot in an attempt to entice her. In a statement in 1987, Himid said:

> We will expose the lies by writing or painting about life. I want to show that we can take power, share skills, work together, change the world. In the past I have tried to use my work to change this world, to eradicate injustice and inequality: frankly it seems it was as effective as camomile tea and Elastoplast where the answer was a lifetime of care and commitment. With this new work I hope to try to be the equivalent of an apple a day, zest to be taken regularly, seriously, and with hope.[532]

In South Africa the unavoidable outcome of wrenching political ploys and policies of cultural manipulation was a traumatised and damaged society. For the Nationalist government, the absolute aim was to manage the influx of Black labourers and restrict them to segregated areas controlling Black urbanisation and preserving cities and suburbs exclusively for the White population.[533] The South African city continues to this day to be defined by spatial separation, fragmentation, and sprawling between different parts.[534] The contemporary urban environment functions with considerable social and economic inequalities which has led to the World Bank to characterise some of South Africa's cities as the most inefficient places in the world.[535]

In this chapter I focused in particular on townships that were built on a modernist planning grid such as KwaThema and Chatsworth. This was mass housing laid

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[532] 'No Maps', a statement by Lubaina Himid in *New Robes for MaShulan: Lubaina Himid: Work Past and Present*, Rochdale Art Gallery, 1987; originally cited in *The Other Story, Afro-Asian Artists in Post War Britain*, 1989, pp. 81.
[533] Judin, 2021, pp. 97.
[534] Alan Mabin, and Dan Smit, 'Reconstructing South Africa's Cities? The Making of Urban Planning 1900–2000', *Planning Perspectives* Vol. 12 (1997), pp. 193–223; originally sourced in Haarhoff, 'Appropriating Modernism (2011), pp. 194.
[535] Ibid.

out in row upon row of single plots on relentless orthogonal grids in desolate landscapes.[536] As a settlement type, the township is a particular site at the intersection of architectural knowledge and political practice.[537] By 1954 the 'solution' that was the township began increasingly to emerge as a dominant feature on the South African landscape, materially saturating the urban surface with ideology. As such, its plan is the tangible physical evidence of changing architectural ideas and mechanisms of social control which find their expression in it. What is meant by a failure in relation to townships and how could some balance be restored to the present asymmetrical power equation in South Africa? Glen Mills suggests:

> ... [the] reality of the socio-spatial division, by its very nature, is sufficient to ensure a morphological restructuring of the townships and with them the whole urban surface in South Africa.[538]

The difference between the 1950s and today is that African workers have become increasingly polarised into a class of unemployed and unskilled workers, and a class of reasonably well-paid skilled and white-collar workers. This growing inequality also corresponds to the differentiated township landscape. Whereas the state provided subsidised low-cost rental housing for African workers during apartheid, during the 1980s it turned to the private sector to account for the housing shortage. The inevitable outcome was that formal housing was occupied by African workers who were able to afford to buy their homes and the poor unskilled were left homeless contributing to the

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[536] Adapted from Judin, 2021, pp. 99.
[537] The following paragraph is rephrased from Glenn Mills, 1989, pp. 65–74.
[538] Mills, 1989, pp. 73.

201

rise of shanty towns. Thus, by interpreting the township landscape today, one has to acknowledge that it was not only produced by apartheid, but by its reform, and decline.[539]

The oppressed Black majority have been at the forefront of the struggle for a radically transformed society for a very long time, and the township is a major site for that continued struggle. Because townships are massive reservoirs of Black labour, organised labour, in the form of trade unions have become an extremely potent force for change in both the workplace and the political landscape. During the period 1948–1991, trade unions played an important part in developing political and economic resistance and this eventually led to the transition to an inclusive democratic government.[540] On the labour front, Mills writes, it is an important force that is suitably poised to reshape the spatial divisional structures of the urban living environment that so dominates the everyday lives of the majority of South Africans. The spatial alienation of the industrial proletariat is the most important apparatus whereby a transformed set of power relations can be realised and elaborated. It is indeed from the townships that a new democratic South Africa is slowly emerging and with it a radically transformed morphology of power/spatial relations.[541]

Njabulo Ndebele in his essay 'Arriving Home?' writes about the need to fracture the sense of structurally permanent processes cemented into the dormitory

[539] Adapted and rephrased from Owen Crankshaw and Susan Parnell, 'Interpreting the 1994 African Township Landscape, in Judin and Vladislavic (eds) (1998), pp. 443.
[540] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trade_unions_in_South_Africa.
[541] Mills, 1989, pp. 73.

202

settlements and townships of apartheid. Failure to do so would mean the persistence

and resilience of soul-wrecking settlements whose continued existence will have

devastating and corrosive consequences on the morale of newly enfranchised citizens.

The spatial landscape of segregation will not disappear overnight, and Ndebele calls for

township dwellers to be placed at the centre of self-organising initiatives in creating

thriving environments and urban identities. South Africans, he states, need to be

sensitive to rehabilitation, to confrontations of former victims and perpetrators and to

the healing that is struggling to take place. This includes the losses deeply embedded in

damaged buildings that have emerged out of the once oppressive landscape.[542] Empty,

forlorn, vacated, and revoked, these buildings have not disappeared.[543] Hilton Judin

writes that 'instead of presenting the hopelessness of apartheid planning we should see

how it was faced down with stoicism in which a nation turned "matchbox" houses and

deprived townships into intimate homes and vibrant neighbourhoods'.[544] In

Johannesburg, public resilience and activism remain strong and visible and for South

Africa's abandoned buildings to reflect urban realities, Judin suggests that 'the political

legacy of architecture needs to be drawn into the intricate details of its material

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[542] Njabulo S. Ndebele, 'Arriving Home? South Africa Beyond Transition and Reconciliation' in Fanie du Toit and Erik Doxtader (eds), *The Balance: South African Debate Reconciliation* (Johannesburg, Jacana, 2009). http://www.njabulondebele.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Beyond_transition_and_reconciliation_blue.pdf.
[543] Adapted from the essay by Hilton Judin, 'The Apartheid Pass Office in Johannesburg and a Heritage of Destruction' in Judin (ed), *Falling Monuments*, 2021, pp. 146.
[544] Ibid.

production, though even here some things are best left forgotten, and not all spaces

need to be revisited'.[545]

[545] Ibid.

Conclusion

By the time the #Rhodes Must Fall campaign began in March 2015 on the University of Cape Town (UCT) campus it soon became clear that the steady progress of symbolic reparation made elsewhere in the country was to be overtaken by the urgency of the movement. The central message of cultural alienation on former, mostly English university campuses such as UCT, found its symbolic target in the bronze statue of arch-imperialist Cecil John Rhodes.[546] Triggered by its removal this research project has been an attempt to simultaneously maintain 'multiple entry points' into forms of social and geographical dislocations as an indictment of Modernism.[547] The South African Modern Movement during the 1930s, as I have argued throughout this thesis, helped to create the spatial conditions for segregation in the country's modern built environment. Crucially, this research project examines how an aesthetic transfer of a socialist vision for a European egalitarian society of architectural modernity mutated into modernist structures that were specifically designed to keep the Black and White population segregated from each other.

The priority behind this research was to comprehend what is meant by Modernism in a culturally, economically, and politically specific area that is South Africa. Beyond this, it was indeed essential to ascertain different methodologies and strategies

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[546] Opening paragraph rephrased from Jonathan D Jansen, 'It's Not Even Past': Dealing with Monuments and Memorials on Divided Campuses' in Freschi, Schmahmann, and van Robbroeck (eds.) (2020), pp. 132.

[547] Part adapted from Liam Gillick, '*How Are You Going to Behave? A Kitchen Cat Speaks*', Deutscher Pavillon 53. Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte – La Biennale di Venezia 2009 (Sternberg Press, Berlin New York, 2009), pp. 108.

that influenced the historic definition of this period, one that as far as this research was concerned, had to go beyond the stereotypes of historicity that favours, and also glorifies generalised assumptions about race, nationhood and, above all, identity. This research shows through application of architectural forms and developments just how intrinsic and nuanced the connection is with the colonial thought and influence, unravelling the values, beliefs, and the forms of life that are indicative of South Africa today. This has been questioned throughout this research, opening up new conversations about how we might begin to untangle this ideological hierarchy and how to interpret the multiplicity of events and experiences that cannot be homogenised into a progressive future, and, under the circumstances, provide visibility to the often side-lined and deliberately excluded chapters of social and political life of South Africa. I would like to stress the importance of these circumstances that neither politically nor economically considered the native landscape or its people.

Suffice to say, this project of modernisation that overarched the global map of the twentieth century is by no means progressive, as this study comes to show. Its conception of temporality and duration as an incremental betterment of human life is conceived on technocratic grounds; institutionalised for bureaucratic and administrative purposes that informed the policies visible in the architecture and the social infrastructure of South Africa. The lack of investment in its infrastructure, the segregated lives and the terrifying precarity of life are the examples of technology that failed to live up to its promise. In many examples in this research, the references that are brought forward testify to an altogether different attitude and spirit that evolved

alongside official channels of power and point to technologies of life that are more ambiguous and fictitious. These narratives provided alternative solutions and affirmations of life on which my practice is premised.

In South Africa today its oppressive colonial and apartheid history is still visible through its historic imperial buildings and often abandoned and seemingly unremarkable modern buildings. I established how the instrumentalisation of segregation in South Africa's society is rooted, in a racist values-based project that was developed before and during apartheid through both bureaucratic and scientific/technocratic means. Aníbal Quijano's concept referred to as, 'the modernity/(de)coloniality shared project', and the transformation that it produced to the idea of modernity and further exemplified by Walter D. Mignolo, was key to my understanding of how coloniality and modernity are two sides of the same coin. Mignolo's basic thesis is the following:

> [...] 'modernity' is a European narrative that hides its darker side, 'coloniality'. Coloniality, in other words, is constitutive of modernity — there is no modernity without coloniality…
>
> 'Coloniality' in other words is one of the most tragic 'consequences of modernity' and at the same time the most hopeful in that it has engendered the global march toward de-coloniality.[548]

David Joselit offers one such particular locus in what he calls a cultural recalibration and argues that art's globalisation has the promise to 'redress Western

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[548] Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Duke University Press, North Carolina, USA, 2011), pp. 1–24.

Modernism's cultural dispossession of the Global South'.[549] Many of us are familiar with how European Modernism freed itself from centuries-old traditions whilst conveniently appropriating non-Western art forms, claiming their ownership, and then dismissing it as cultural heritage that was irrelevant to any contemporary debate.

I draw parallels with the appropriation of European architectural modernity by South African architects who designed and built mostly exclusive constructions for a White clientele thereby 'attaching itself to European models and refusing to assimilate', with the broader community. This created the conditions for segregation and social inequality, further facilitated by a complete lack of acknowledgement other than European culture which expressed the settlers' so-called superior cultural difference from and indifference to the native population. Hilton Judin writes that for the nationalists, architecture in particular during apartheid became one of the more visible ways to announce to the world their arrival and fortitude whilst confirming their accomplishment for themselves. This validated their 'civilising mission' in Africa as they ceaselessly expressed it.[550] By transforming themselves and the country, they provided a 'foundation' that would secure their position on the continent.[551]

It is worth noting that since I have started this PhD research project, South Africa's cultural and architectural past in the era of decolonisation has become of great interest to scholars identifying and coming to terms with the rise and fall of Afrikaner

[549] David Joselit, *Heritage and Debt: Art in Globalisation (October Books)* (The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, 2020), pp. xvii.
[550] Hilton Judin, *Architecture, State Modernism,* 2021, pp. xxviii.
[551] Ibid.

nationalism. The International Style after a fairly brief period of intense following during the 1930s gave way globally to a recognition of national culture and regional differences. Global debate and architectural expression shifted from Europe and became centred in South America and Asia, and these were not lost on young South African architects in particular at the University of Pretoria. Growing Afrikaner nationalism together with the booming economy and political crackdown gave rise to a proliferation of state-sponsored public buildings, transforming South Africa into what Nikolaus Pevsner in 1953 famously referred to as the 'existence of a little Brazil in the Commonwealth'.[552] This is the architecture I grew up with in the sub-tropical apartheid capital, and that I am most familiar with. It was a time of economic and social advancement of Afrikaners who, up to that point, had been mostly self-defined through everyday family rituals, songs, and symbolic monuments. In Pretoria they felt secure, a city they could call their own which provided them with the conditions to fulfil their professional aspirations.[553] Yet behind the self-confidence in an environment of their 'own' creation lay a vulnerability and anxiety about their place on the continent as much as their claim to nationhood. This uneasiness was further reinforced during the 1960s as apartheid imploded and the country became more and more isolated and stigmatised as a global pariah.[554]

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[552] Gus Gerneke, 'From Brazil to Pretoria, The Second Wave of the Modern Movement', in Fisher, le Roux, and Maré (eds), (1998), pp. 218. Original source, Freschi, Schmahmann and van Robbroeck (eds.) (2020), pp. 74.
[553] Judin, 2021, pp. xviii–xxxvii.
[554] Ibid., pp. 181.

In South Africa, Modernism became a tool for segregation and was manipulated as a form of social engineering. One of the results was the construction of large-scale township projects on the outer peripheries of urban developments. This is one of the main concerns of this research project. Modernist townships were created that allowed the authorities easy access as a mechanism of control, thus rendering the spaces 'visible'.[555] However, a grid layout of row upon row of generic box-like housing units in mostly desolate landscapes made these developments both interchangeably invisible and visible at the same time, depending on what underlying aim needed to be satisfied. The concept of the colonial 'Other' forms an important part of postcolonial theory and explains how the colonised were dealt with as outsiders.

Hannah le Roux has also suggested that we should be wary to discount the absolute lack of meaning the township environment held and still holds for its residents. After all, le Roux writes, apartheid severely restricted the conditions under which any other ways of using or even changing these houses could be realised, thus 'maintaining many as the frame for bare life'.[556] A similar example is put forward in Jacob

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[555] André van Graan, 'Modernism as a Mechanism of Power and Control in Colonial Contexts: The Project of Modernity in the Cape' in Lähdesmäki (2018) pp. 91–109.

[556] Hannah le Roux, 'Designing KwaThema: Cultural Inscriptions in the Model Township', *Journal of Southern African Studies* Vol. 45, No. 2 (Routledge, 2019), pp. 29. Original source Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1998). See also Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus, Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*, (Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2014). 'Weheliye posits Black feminist theories of modern humanity as useful correctives to the "bare life and biopolitics discourse" exemplified by the works of Giorgio Agamben and Michel Foucault, which, Weheliye contends, vastly underestimate the conceptual, and political significance of race in constructions of the human. Habeas Viscus reveals the pressing need to make the insights of Black studies and Black feminism foundational to the study of modern humanity.' https://www.dukeupress.edu/habeas-viscus.

Dlamini's controversial book *Native Nostalgia* (2009) where he reminisces in a reluctant and ironic manner about his apartheid-era childhood in Katlehong, a township near Johannesburg.[557] The dreary repetition of these housing units based on a superimposition of European style social housing destroyed any social cohesiveness and general community life amongst the urban Black population because it simply ignored African culture. Indigenous or vernacular building methods were considered by the architectural establishment and anthropologists but were never implemented due to a combination of discriminatory and narrow ethnographic views relegating century-old traditions to mere decorative use of patterns and materials.[558] The appropriation of architectural Modernism in South Africa in relation to township construction that led to underdeveloped and highly controlled zones by the apartheid state is a clear example of the failures of the colonial / modernist project. In South Africa, capitalism coupled with nationalism made a complete mockery of a modern and more equal society: 'the idea that the ultimate, hidden truth of the world is that it is something that we make and could just as easily make differently'.[559] My particular research interest in township development focuses on the brief period during the late 1940s and 50s when a form of Modernism was applied to its planning and construction. All that remains today of this

[557] Jacob Dlamini, *Native Nostalgia* (Jacana Media, Auckland Park, Johannesburg, 2009). Originally sourced in Landi Raubenheimer, *Nostalgic Dystopia' in Neill Blomkamp's District 9: An Emerging Idiom of Johannesburg as Landscape in Film, Photography, and Popular Media 1994–2018*, (University of Groningen, 2021), pp. 8.
[558] Hilton Judin, 2021, pp. 83.
[559] David Graeber, *The Utopia of Rules, On Technology, Stupidity and the Secret Joys of Bureaucracy* (Melville House, Brooklyn, London, 2015).

scientific and technocratic built experiment is a 'reductive and abstract model' which

has now been co-opted by commercial developers and estate agents.[560]

Colonialism might be technically over, but its legacy exists today in offshore tax

havens coupled with an increase in nationalism and right-wing politics. Artist and writer

Morgan Quaintance, for example, has 'challenged this reductive and partial conception

of the decolonial project' and Achille Mbembe in his book *On the Postcolony* has

renewed 'our understanding of power and subjectivity in Africa'.[561] Mozambique-born

artist Ângela Ferreira examines modern architecture and colonialism and is at the

forefront of unravelling this fragmentary uneven and multi-sited episteme constituted

by the ravages of imperialism with her sculpture, video, and photography practice.[562]

Ferreira states that she is more interested in the architecture of 1980s South Africa: 'a

very turbulent time, near the end of apartheid'.[563] My research interest lies more in the

appropriation of architectural Modernism, both exclusive and underdeveloped, into

South Africa during the 1930s and spans a period up to the late 1960s. I realised that

there was a gap that hadn't been explored between South African architectural

Modernism and a more formalist probing of this period. Hayden Proud, for example, has

written that assessing the significance of formalism for South African art in the

twentieth century is a problematic task. For one, he states, it draws attention to the

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[560] Hannah le Roux, 2019, pp. 29.
[561] See Morgan Quaintance in 'Decolonising Decolonialism' in *Art Monthly* Vol. 435 (April 2020), pp. 6–11, and Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, (University of California Press, Berkley, Los Angeles, London, 2001).
[562] Kojo Abudu, Interview: 'Artist Ângela Ferreira Examines Modern Architecture and Colonialism', 2021.
[563] Ibid.

212

relationship of the South African periphery linked to a European and American artistic 'centre'... 'in which a provincial avant-garde worked at a second-hand geographical and psychological remove from the dominant Western discourse of Modernism'.[564] South African formalism has also always heavily depended on British, European, and post-1945 American models. The majority of art criticism was amateurish and reinforced with narrow White settler views that were generally hostile to modernist tendencies. However, once formalist modes were accepted, they did seem to offer a key to the international mainstream. The problem with this acceptance was that given the nature of international formalist approaches, the lack of any theoretical underpinning made South African formalist abstraction to some extent a superficial and inconsistent endeavour.[565]

My research is an attempt to contribute to dismantling perceived assumptions of the project of Modernism informed purely from a Eurocentric point of view. In 1998 Sieglinde Lemke argued that there could have been no Modernism without 'Primitivism' and no 'Primitivism' without Modernism.[566] This, she states, is by no means intended to 'offer a monocausal account of the shaping of modernism'.[567] What is, however, evidently clear is how Black culture through colonialism played a significant role in the emergence of a new aesthetic paradigm: 'modernism includes the presence of the so-

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[564] Hayden Proud, 'Chapter 8, Formalism in Twentieth Century South African Art', in Gavin Jantjes author, Lize van Robbroeck (eds), *Visual Century Volume 2: 1945–1976: South African Art in Context* (Wits University Press, 2015).
[565] Ibid.
[566] Sieglinde Lemke, *Primitivist Modernism: Black Culture and the Origins of Transatlantic Modernism* (Oxford University Press, USA, 1998), pp. 144.
[567] Ibid.

213

called primitive at its heart'.[568] In this thesis I have explored some of the consequences of the modernist project in relation to a colonial substructure borne out of the International Style or Modern Movement. The ramifications of this narrative are mostly attributed to how in the first decade of the previous century Pablo Picasso and his colleagues became interested in *l'art primitif* and *l'art nègre*. After Picasso's encounter with African masks at the Trocadéro he too became embroiled in a cultural trade with other modernising artists who found African 'primitivism' a vastly rich and powerful renewing resource. These young artists, Lemke writes, 'discovered in black art a symbolic weapon to attack post romanticist aesthetics'.[569] Picasso specifically and certainly responded powerfully to African 'primitivism' throughout his career, thus illustrating what many years later would come to be called hybridity or postcolonial theory; two very different experiences coming together to create a third way.

> It is significant that the productive capacities of this Third Space have a colonial or postcolonial provenance. For a willingness to descend into that alien territory – where I have led you – may reveal that the theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualizing an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity.[570]

Painted by Picasso in 1907, *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* is generally regarded as the gateway to Cubism. Here the Spanish artist 'struck a chord with young European architects intent on revolutionising their slow, venerable, and often stubborn subject

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[568] Ibid.
[569] Ibid.
[570] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (Routledge London and New York, 1994), pp. 56.

matter'.[571] The link between Cubist painting and modern architecture is not direct or simple but most notably the connections were construed analogically, by reference to shared formal qualities such as fragmentation, spatial ambiguity, overlap, transparency, and multiplicity.[572] The repercussions of what Picasso and others have accomplished are still not fully perceivable and what is often less well understood is its colonial ramifications. It is here that I aim to contribute to an artistic and academic field in terms of process, form, and content. Colonialism and Modernism are inextricably linked and through my practice I intend to acknowledge and communicate how the project of 'modernity is a truly world-historical event'.[573]

In terms of housing, Modernism, and ideologies of colour, I remark on a journey that I hope will allow for a reappraisal of architecture and its relation to Modernism. The primary concern of this research project is driven by my practice. It aims to show how the appropriation of modernist abstraction references together with South African architectural Modernism articulate a cycle that begins with Cubism and its relation to African art, leading to De Stijl which in turn offers its radical abstraction as an alternative to the Bauhaus. This had a further influence on the International Style where it ultimately gets reappropriated by the South African Modern Movement and is co-opted by nationalism. In other words, here the embodiment of European Modernism is

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[571] Jonathan Glancey, Frank Gehry, 'Architecture: The Blue Period', *The Guardian*, 22 March 2004.
[572] Eve Blau and Phyllis Lambert, *Architecture and Cubism*, (MIT Press, Reprint edition, 2002), pp. 12.
[573] Kojo Abudu, Interview: 'Artist Ângela Ferreira Examines Modern Architecture and Colonialism', 2021.
https://archive.pinupmagazine.org/articles/interview-angela-ferreira-modern-architecture-colonialism

presented through a trajectory which developed from archaic and mythological artefacts and returns to Africa as a form of social segregation. The columns rendered on the roofs of the houses in my sculptures and paintings are appropriated from Constantin Brancusi and are intended to evoke ritualised folk traditions that act as monument/memorial proposals that mourn the tragic consequences of Modernism through colonialism. This is done in an attempt to intensify an analogy with the development of European Modernism in relation to African art (archaic and mythological) and link that with colonialist apartheid Modernism in order to find a visual language that probes into the legacy of colonialism in the postcolonial present. This research project should be understood not as a historical narrative but rather as a way of articulating a colonial substructure inherent to architectural Modernism with the aim of constructing an aesthetic discourse.

John Rieder's book *Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction* and Patricia Kerslake's *Science Fiction and Empire* were instrumental in establishing a relationship between my practice and science fiction. I had concerns that a vernacular probing into a particular unknown strand of architectural modernity would question the relevance of my research and relegate it to a status of parochiality. A well-known science fiction narrative of an alien invasion with superior knowledge and technology in the context of an imperial/colonial occupation of South Africa by European explorers has been well established by Afrofuturist scholars, artists, and writers. In relation to my painting practice this has been particularly important as it allowed for the historical content to be opened up and facilitate multiple interpretations.

I conclude my research with colour, usually the elephant in the room, and as cited before, is never neutral within a South African context. Primary colour palettes are mostly applied in my practice in relation to modernist abstraction that allow for the ambiguity of abstraction to be exploited. Similarly, I propose that the use of abstraction to seal the architectural models/sculptures shut should be seen as a 'third space' that can be 'entered' and offers an alternative future. In other words, I use a language of abstraction as a way to say something against apartheid and its consequences. Abstract forms and patterns were similarly used by the inhabitants of the Western Native Township as a form of resistance against apartheid (cited in Chapter Four, pp. 190- 191 and Figs. 25, 102).

In the Preface, I referred to Edgar Allen Poe's literary fiction *The Fall of the House of Usher* as an analogy for the notion of nationhood and origin that can be understood as a confined space that, like Poe's house, carries the evidence of crime within its geography and landscape. In South Africa there was a modernist promise bound within the idea of origin and the idea of belonging. The paintings of the architectural models *Composition with Grid (Rhomboids)* (2022) and *Composition with Yellow Red and Blue (Rhomboids)* (2022) lit by candlelight and similar to Poe's house, are an attempt to evoke a ghost-like presence that is a memory of a promise that never came to be (Figs. A7, A8). The models/sculptures and the paintings are thus a statement of intent, encapsulating or embodying the promise of Modernism and the crimes of colonialism.

My contribution to knowledge consists of both visual and theoretical strands of this research, and it communicates beyond an academic framework alone. It has

217

evolved into a personal journey, supported by evidence and a first-hand lived experience of how European Modernism and its influences were appropriated into the geopolitical environment of South Africa. The visual aspect of my research draws attention to an unknown modernist architectural phenomenon appropriated through a process of state and cultural nationalism. Viewed from a decolonial perspective, well-known European avant-garde traditions such as abstract modernist references are referred to in my practice in order to acknowledge Africa from the epicentre of modernity as opposed to be seen evolving from the margins. Africa's influences are omnipresent and its influence on Western culture is copious.[574]

This project started as research to underpin my making processes in an attempt to reconfigure the recent apartheid past. This has involved navigating between accounting for the condemnation of South Africa's architectural state Modernism and the tension created by a desire to visually express it.[575] The visual side of this research is a silent witness to temporalities of change, including a resistance and willingness to define a space that no longer grieves for the promise of a better future, but actively produces the conditions for its rethink. Seen through the lens of fiction meeting concrete history, my practice is a visualisation of South African Modernism and modernist practices from the European centre in an attempt to bring these two historical 'events' together into the present. In other words, the margins of Modernism

[574] Adapted from a quote by Hank Willis Thomas in 'IncarNations – Nkisi We Trust', essay by Kendell Geers in *IncarNations African Art as Philosophy*, exhibition held at Centre for Fine Arts Bozar Belgium, 28 June–6 October 2019, curated by Kendell Geers and Sindaka Dokolo (Silvana Editoriale, S.p.A., Milan), pp. 11.
[575] Adapted from Liam Gillick, 2009, pp. 97.

in South Africa give cause to re-evaluate the centres of Modernism in Europe; with my project re-practising legacies that are not yet concluded and need to be worked through. My practice therefore opens a window to the theoretical reasoning of coloniality and modernist aesthetics, providing a contextual ground for what is a critique of Modernism and its inextricable relation to colonialism. The two are inseparable and, for the purpose of this research, should be understood as a holistic study that journeys into the murky waters of origin and belonging.

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222

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Figures

Figures – Introduction

Figure 1. 80 Albert Street, Johannesburg 2012. Back entrance to Pass Office hall from waiting yard. Photo credit: Jo Ractliffe.

Figure 2. 209 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg Gauteng 2021. Photo credit: David Edwards.

Figure 3. In the background is the abandoned Modernist Transvaal Provincial Administration Building in Pretoria, viewed from Church Square in 2012. Architect team led by A.L. Meiring 1962. In the foreground is the statue of Paul Kruger surrounded by prominent Voortrekker leaders. To the left (partially obscured) is the Raadsaal (Old Council Chambers) 1891, designed by Dutch architect Sytze Wierda in a Renaissance Revival Style. Visible to the right is the Netherlands Bank of South Africa 1897, designed by Dutch architect Willem de Zwaan, and built in Jugendstil, a version of German Art Nouveau. A succession of other colonial styles are present, notably amongst others (not visible here) are Tudor Chambers 1904 designed by George Heys and Herbert Baker's stone fortress-like Reserve Bank in a Classical Revival style completed in 1930. iStock, Photo credit: THEGIFT777.
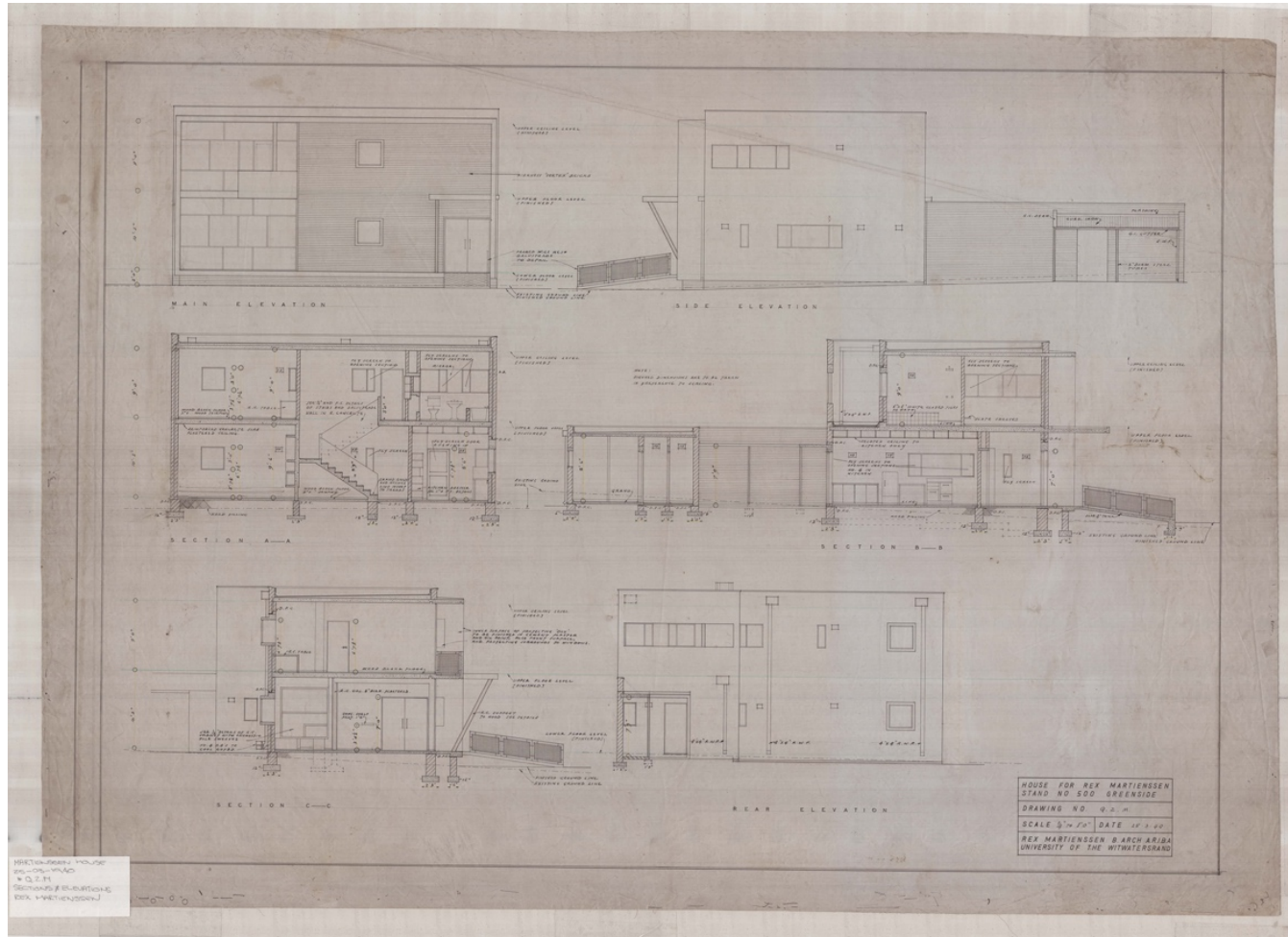
Figure 4. Greenside or Martienssen House, 25.03.1940, # Q.2.M, Sections and Elevations. Architect: Rex Martienssen. *WIReDSpace.*

Figure 5. Non- European House with three rooms, bath, and kitchen / dining (562 sq. ft.). D.M. Calderwood (Approved). National Building Research Institute: South African Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (Pretoria) BR-C 397. 24 September 1951. Retraced from NE51/9 house plans. *WIReDSpace*.
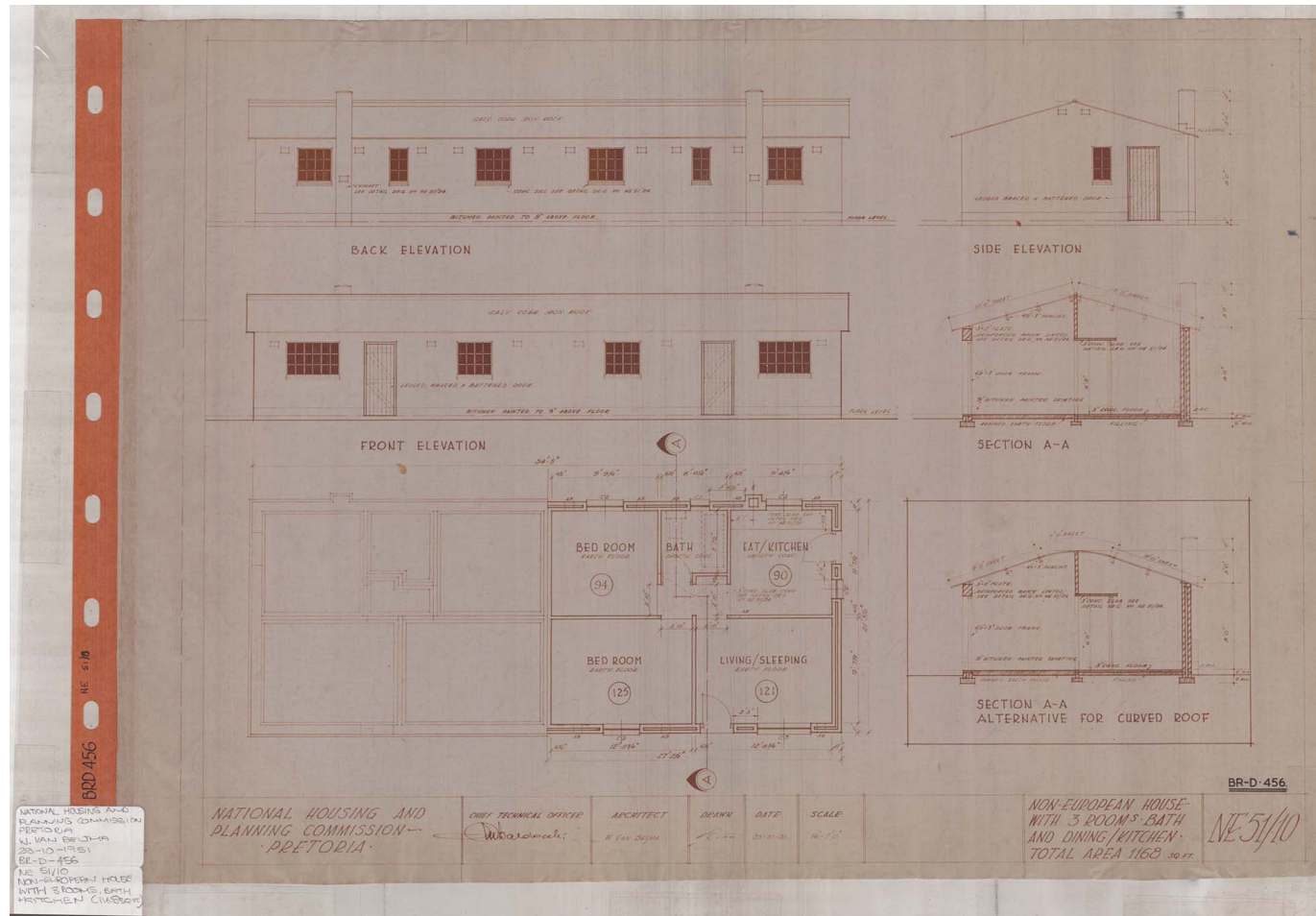
Figure 6. NE51/10 Three-roomed Non- European Row House with bath, dining, and kitchen. Architect: W. van Beijma, 25 October 1951, National Building Research Institute, Pretoria. *WIReDSpace*.

234
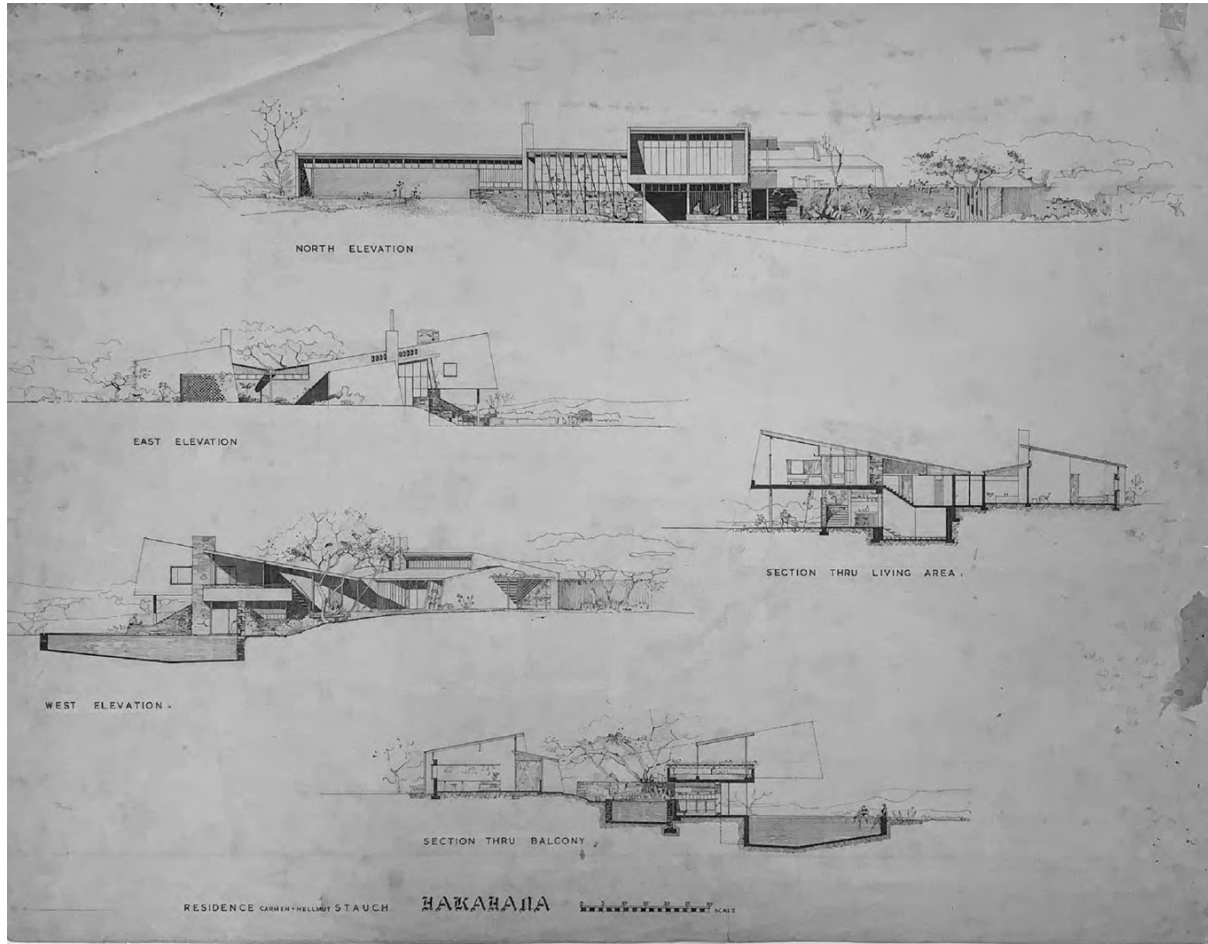
Figure 7. House *Hakahana,* Residence of Carmen and Hellmut Stauch, Hartbeespoort Dam, district of Brits 1952, Architect Hellmut Stauch. North, east, and west elevations including section through living area and section through balcony. Courtesy of the Architecture Archives Pretoria University.
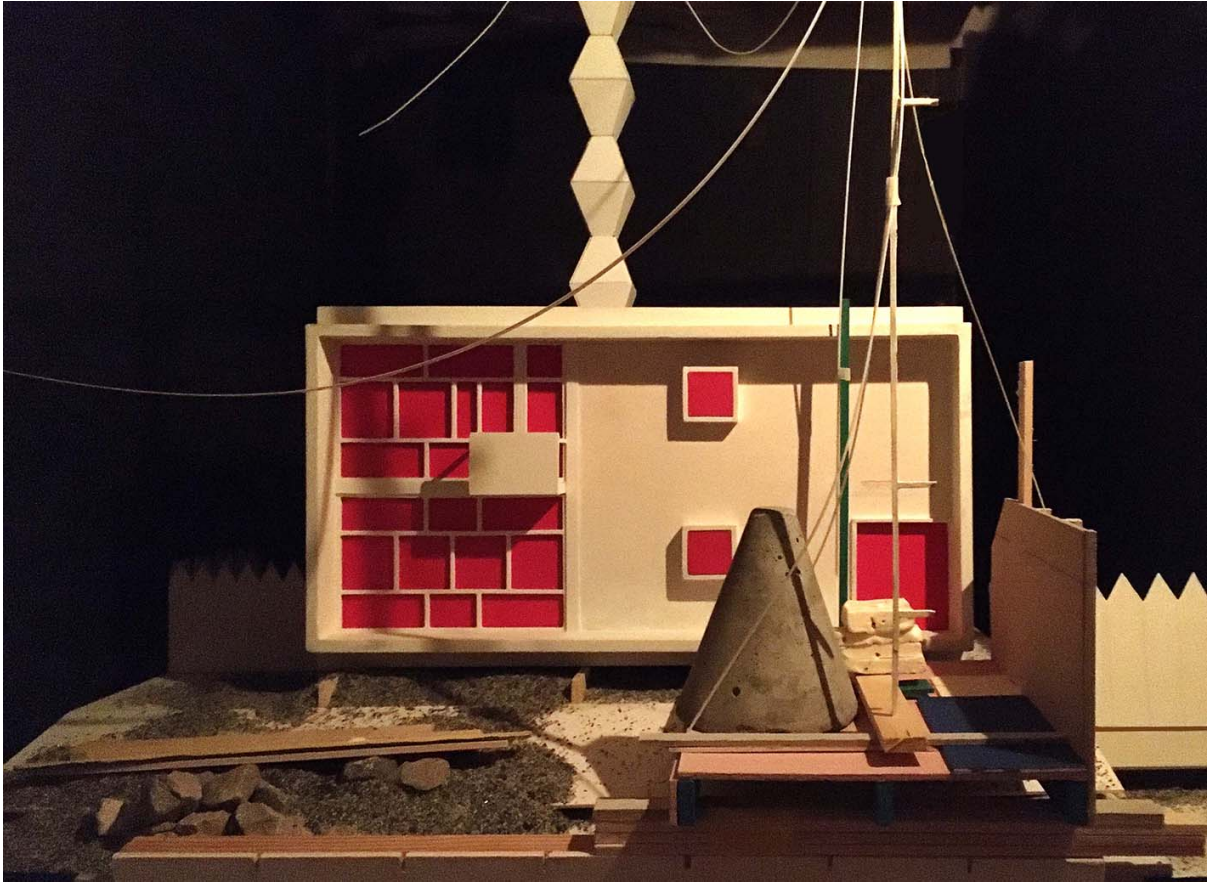
Figure 8. Günther Herbst, Model of Rex Martienssen's Greenside House (working title, *Composition with Red* 2021), Card, wood, concrete, gravel, stones, styrene, and acrylic paint 2022. Preparatory photographic source material.

Figure 9. Günther Herbst*, Composition with Fluorescent Red and Blue* 2022. Card, wood, styrene, and acrylic paint, on plywood and MDF table, 150.18 (h) x 90 (l) x 60 (d) cm. Photo credit: Jonathan Bassett.

237
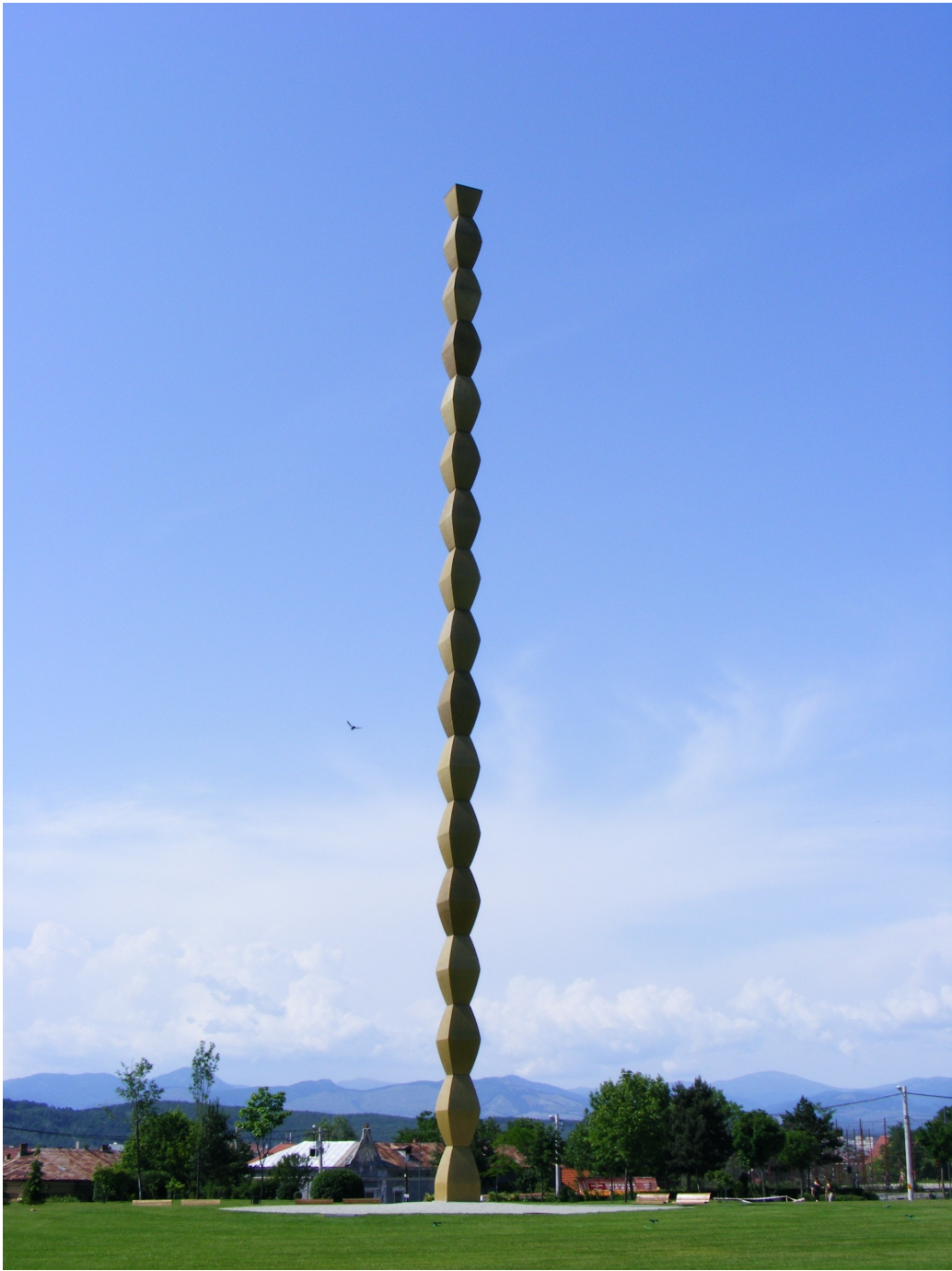
Figure 10. Constantin Brancusi, *Endless Column* 1938, Târgu-Jiu, Romania. Source https://pixabay.com/photos/column-sculpture-brancusi-endless-87553/.

Figure 11. Bakoena Wall Decoration (External) Rama-Roke's Kraal (A kraal is an enclosure for livestock within a South African village settlement), British Bechuanaland, 10 October 1877.
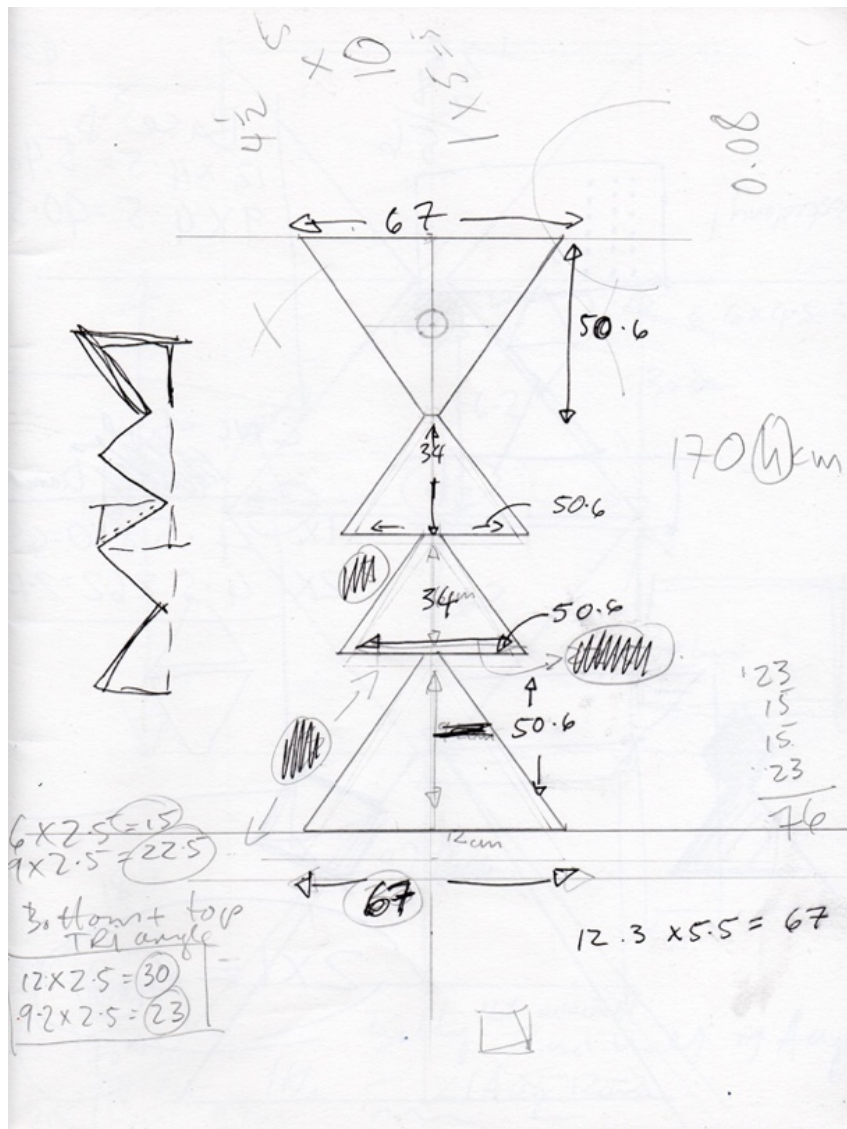
Figure 12. Günther Herbst, Working drawing 2019, 29.7 x 21 cm.

239

Figure 13. Günther Herbst, *Untitled* 2019, Work in Progress, MDF 170h x 67w x 67d cm.
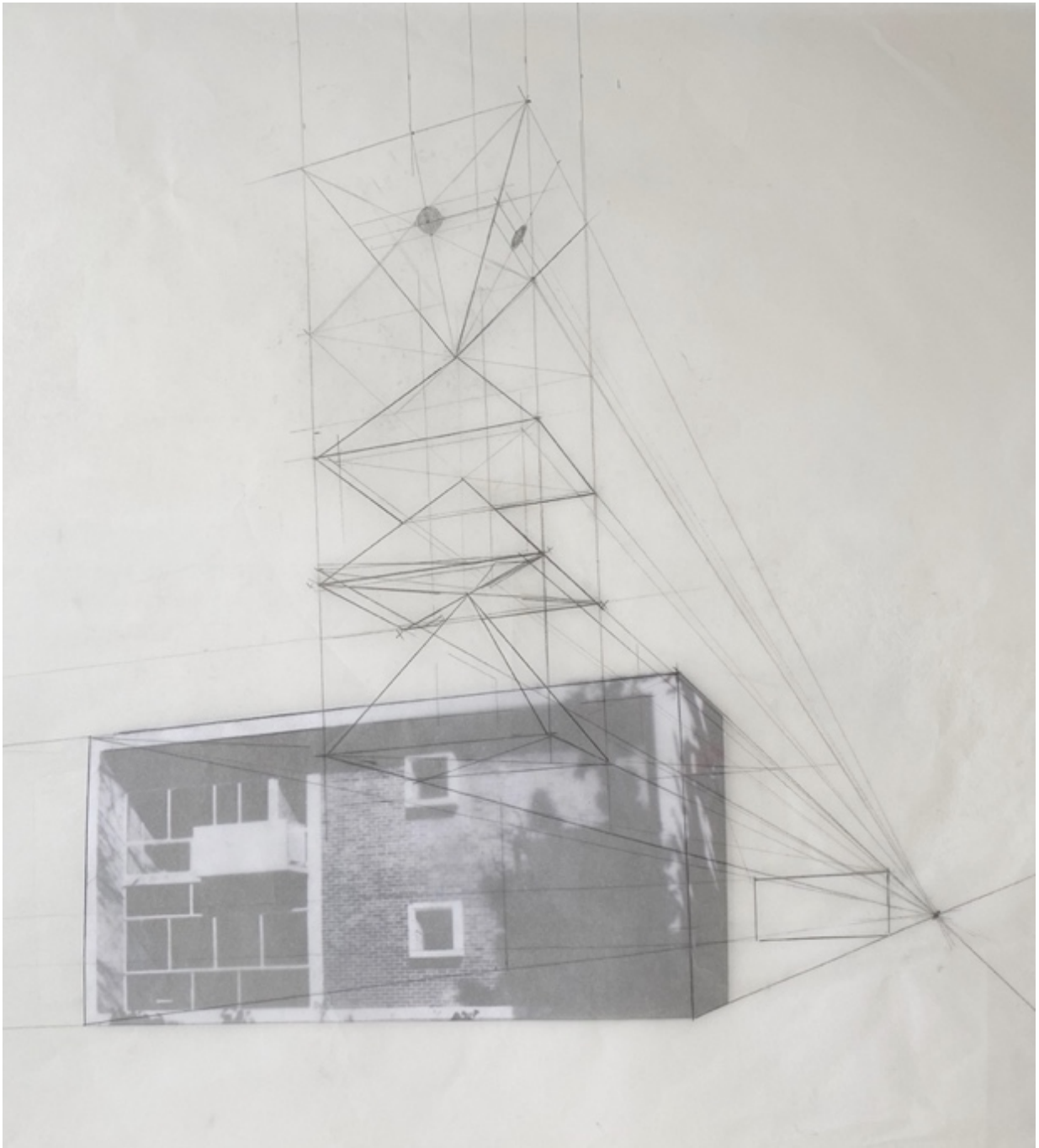
Figure 14. Günther Herbst, Working drawing 2021. Collage on tracing paper, 40.2 x 46 cm.

241
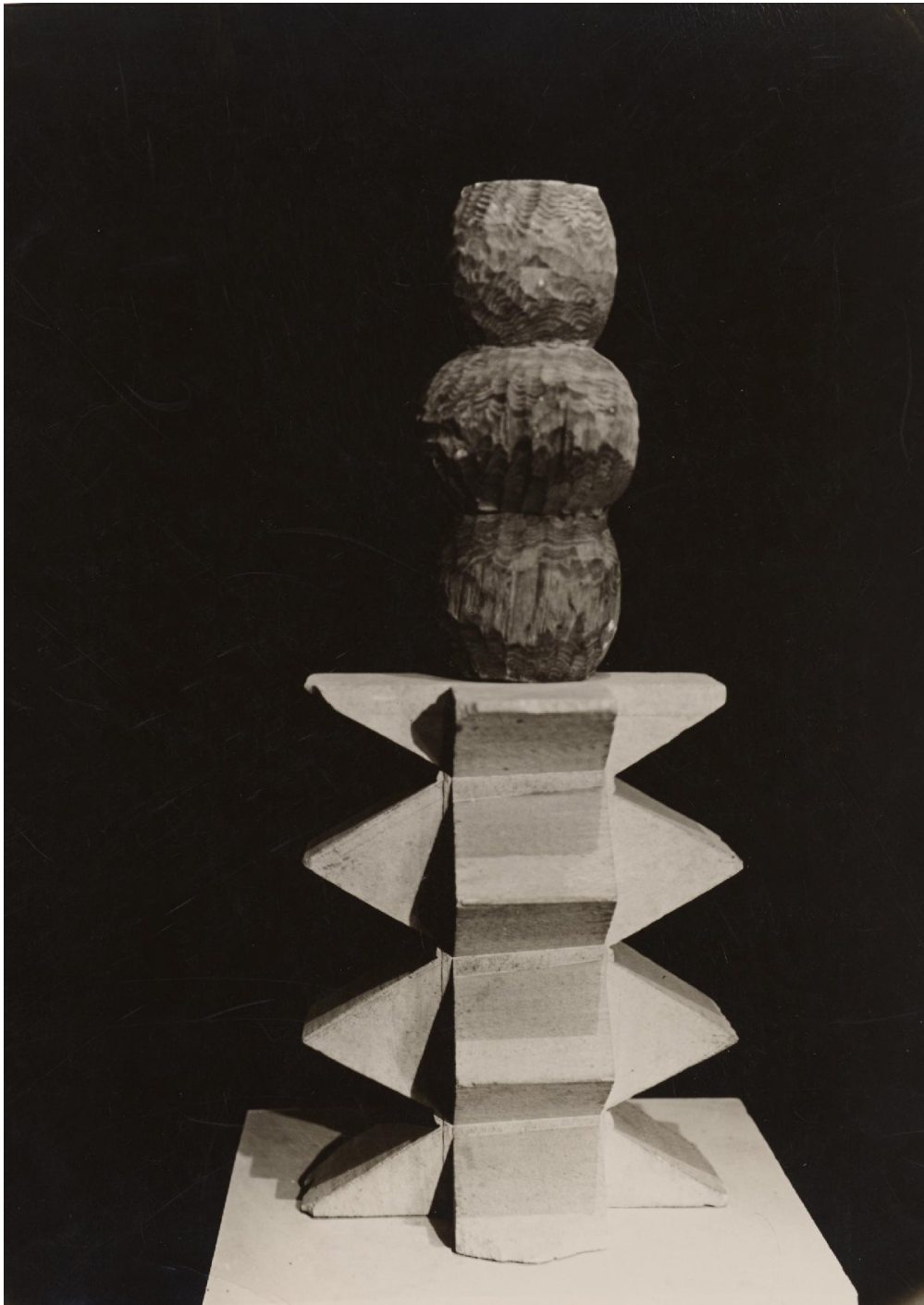
Figure 15. Constantin Brancusi, *Exotic Plant* 1920. Wood, approximately 45 cm high. Philadelphia Museum of Art: The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection, 1950, 1950-134-999. © Succession Brancusi - All rights reserved. ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2023.

Figure 16. Günther Herbst, *House Windsor* 2020, Acrylic on paper, 34 x 50.2 cm. Private Collection.

243
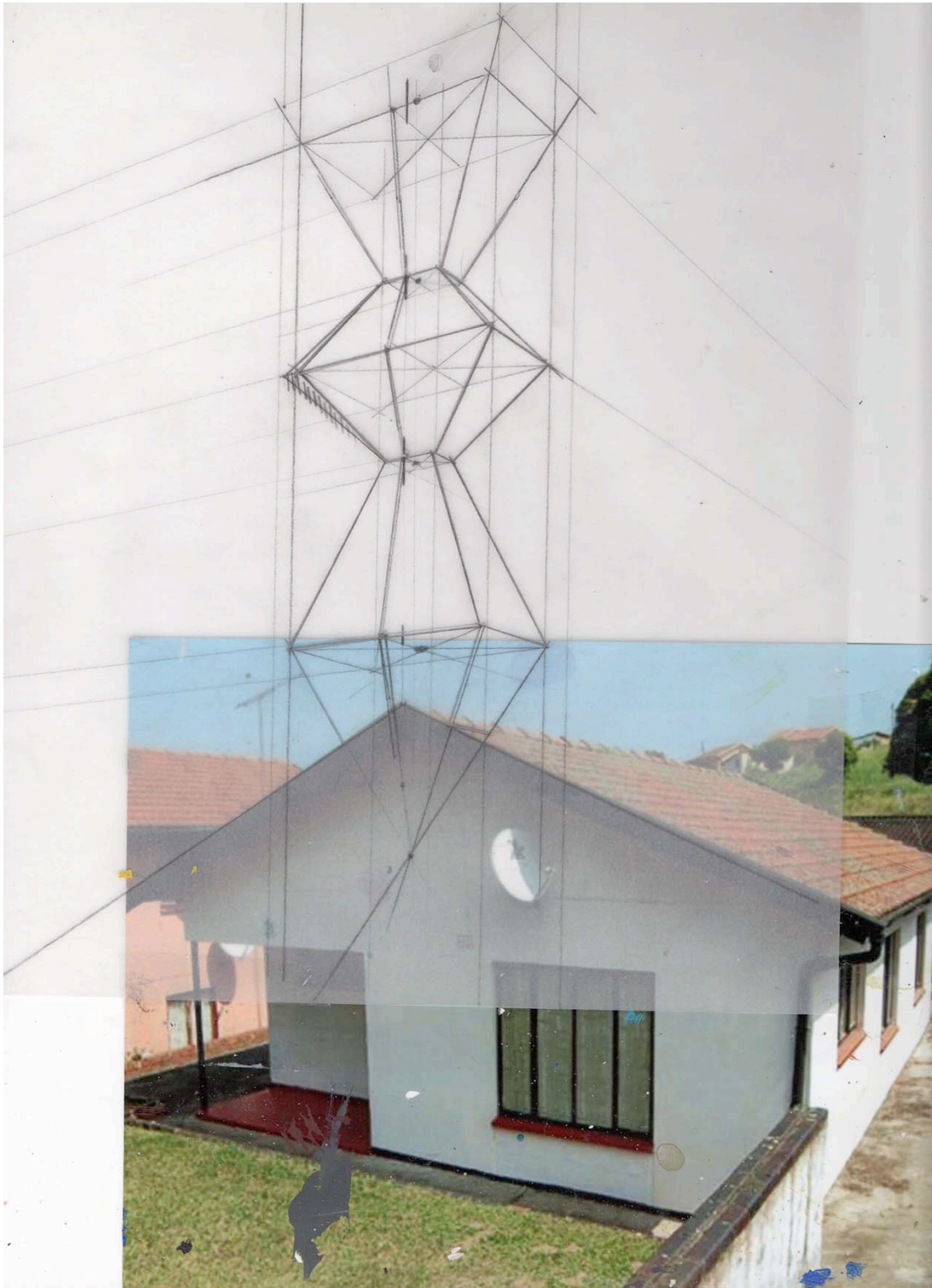
Figure 17. Günther Herbst, Working drawing 2020. Collage and tracing paper.

Figure 18. Günther Herbst, *House Kensington* 2019, Acrylic on paper, 37.4 x 55.2 cm.

245

Figure 19. Google Earth reference 5 June 2019, Chatsworth

246

Figure 20. Günther Herbst, *Monument Proposal nr. 2 V* 2017. Paper, card, sponge, cloth, sponge foam, acrylic paint, 25.5h x 22w x 20d cm.

Figure 21. Günther Herbst *Monument Proposal nr. 2 V* 2017. Paper, card, sponge, cloth, sponge foam, acrylic paint, 25.5h x 22w x 20d cm. View from the top.

248
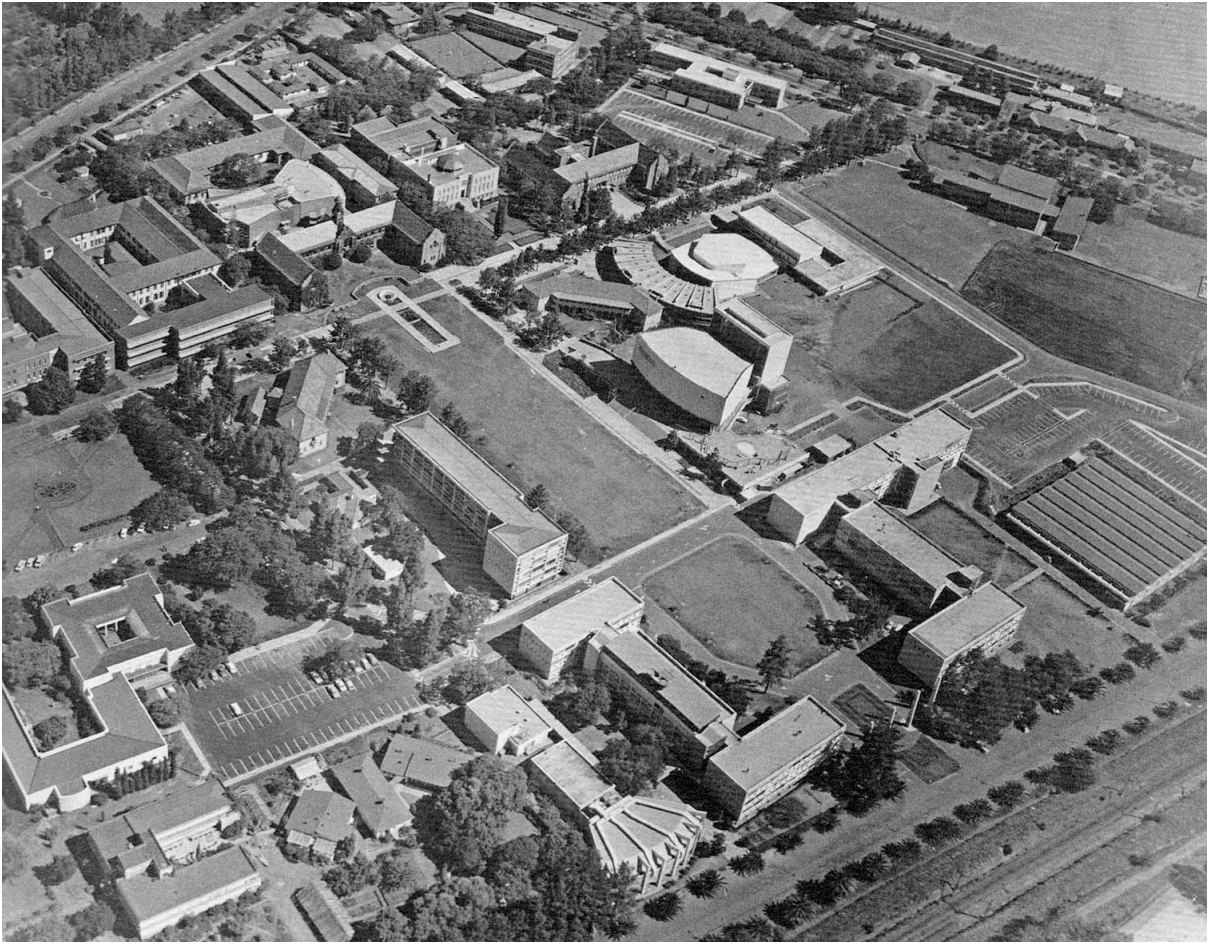
Figure 22. Aerial view of the University of Pretoria Campus circa 1960s. © Dotman Pretorius Photographic Collection, Ditsong National Cultural History Museum.

Figure 23. Günther Herbst, Model of Helmut Stauch's House Kellerman (1950 – 1959), titled *Composition with Blue* 2022. Card, wood, styrene, and acrylic paint, 130.18 (h) x 120 (l). Photo credit: Jonathan Bassett.

250
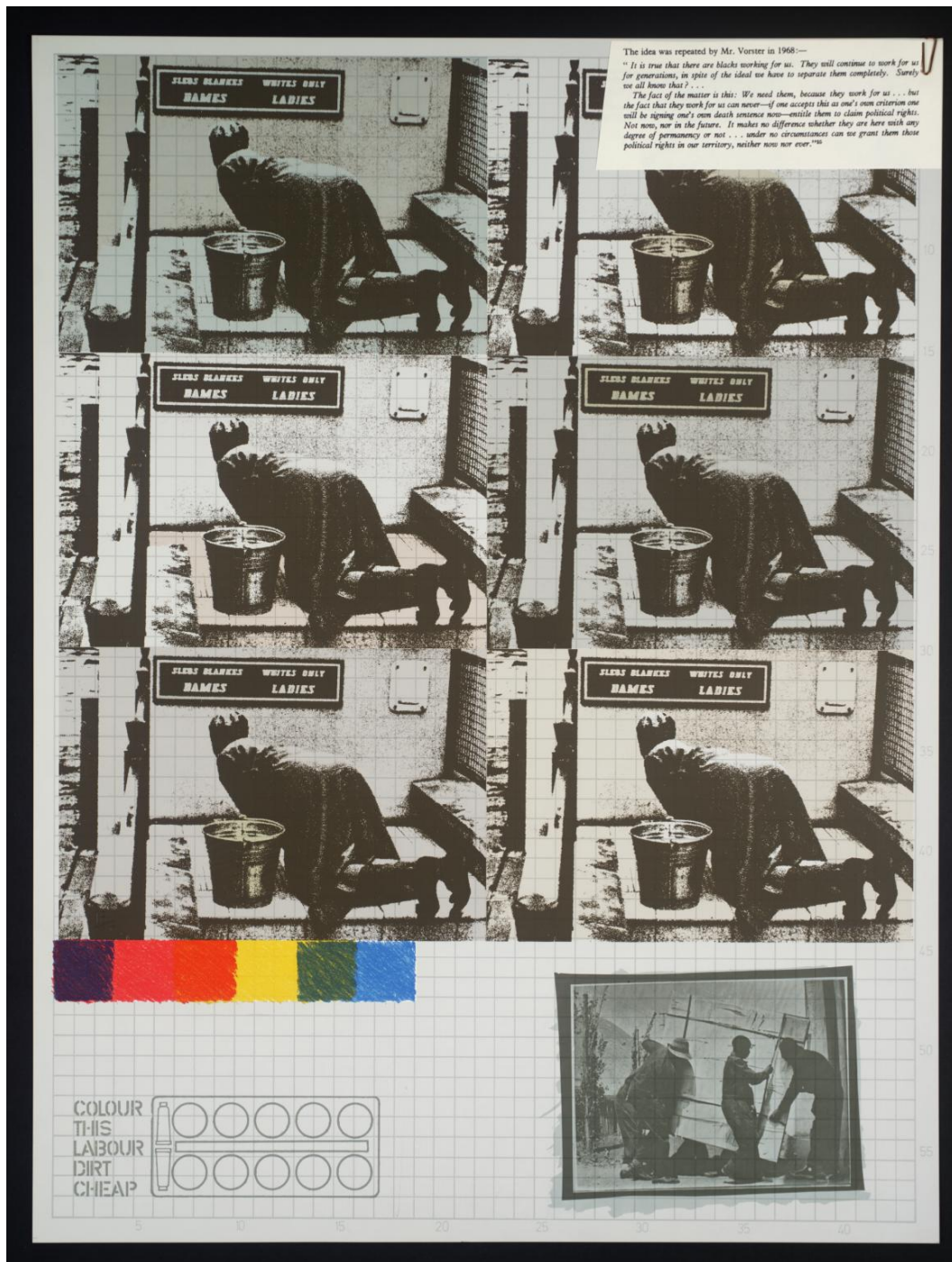
Figure 24. Gavin Jantjes *A South African Colouring Book* 1974–75. Number 5 of 11 silkscreen prints, 60 x 45 cm each. All Rights Reserved, DACS/Artimage. 2023. The full work is illustrated on pp. 329.
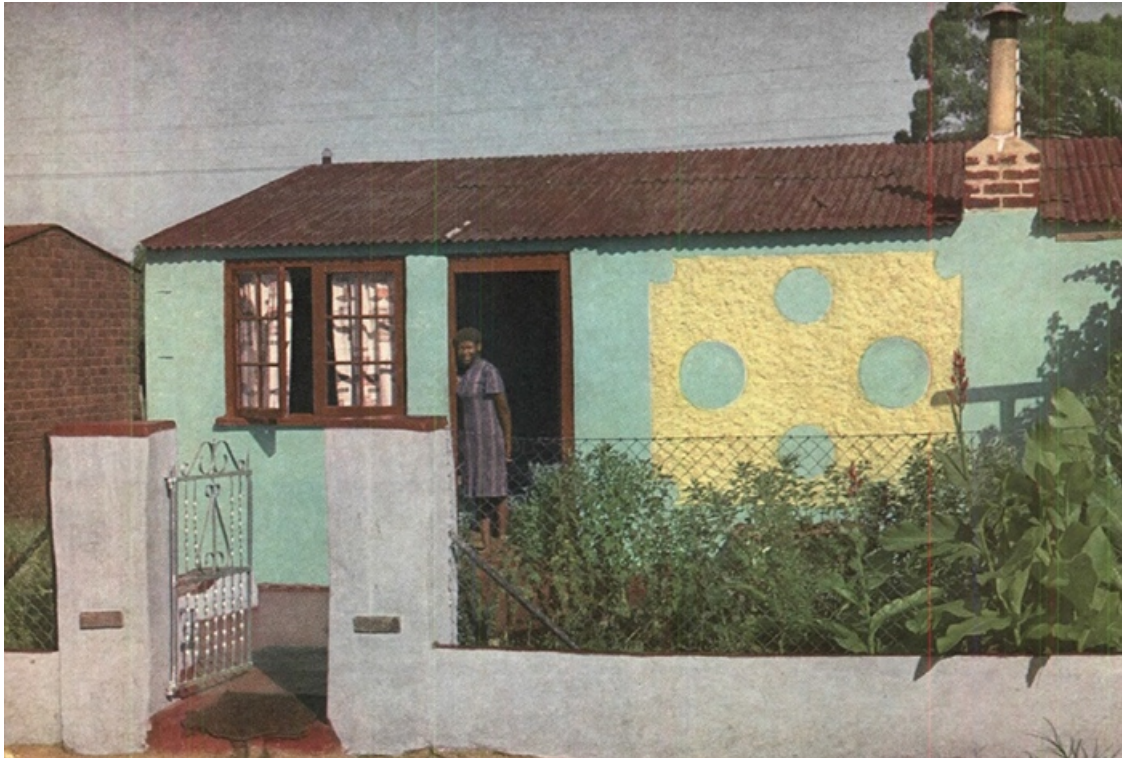
Figure 25. Wall decoration as a form of resistance in Western Native Township. September 1966, *The Architectural Forum*, Vol. 25, No. 2. Courtesy of Peter Beinart.

Figures – Chapter One
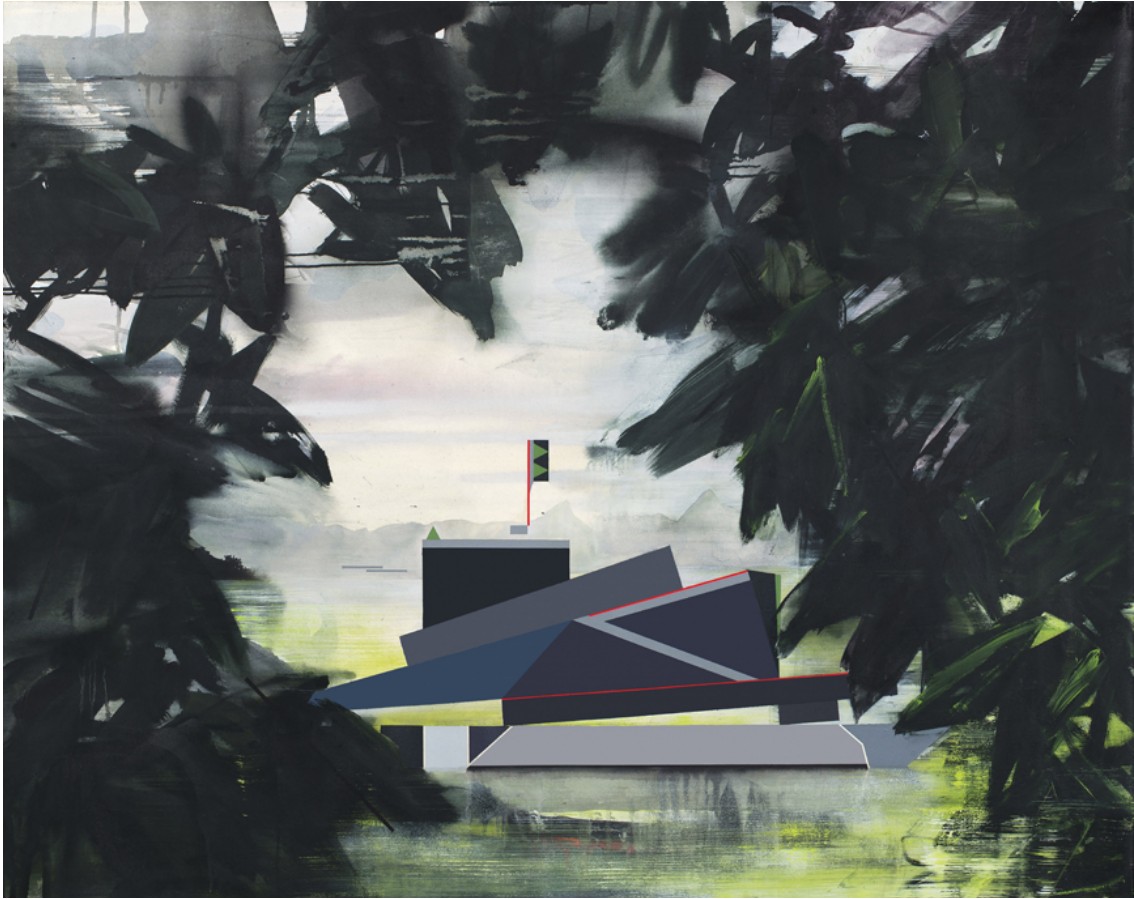
Figure 26. Günther Herbst, *Blueprint* (Malevich) 2015. Acrylic on canvas, 144.5 x 179 cm. Private Collection.

Figure 27. Aerial view of Pretoria 1968 with the new and proposed buildings surrounding Church Square. © Dotman Pretorius Photographic Collection, Ditsong National Cultural History Museum.

Figure 28. Günther Herbst, *High Holborn* 1998. Initial site / reference.

Figure 29. Günther Herbst, *High Holborn* 2006. Oil on canvas, 66.5 x 44.5 cm. Private Collection.

Figure 30. Günther Herbst, *New Oxford Street* 2007. Acrylic on paper, 35 x 42 cm. The New Gallery Walsall Collection.

Figure 31. William Hodges, *Tahitian War Galleys in Matavai Bay, Tahiti* 1776, Oil on canvas, 91.4 x 137.2 cm. Yale Centre for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection.

258
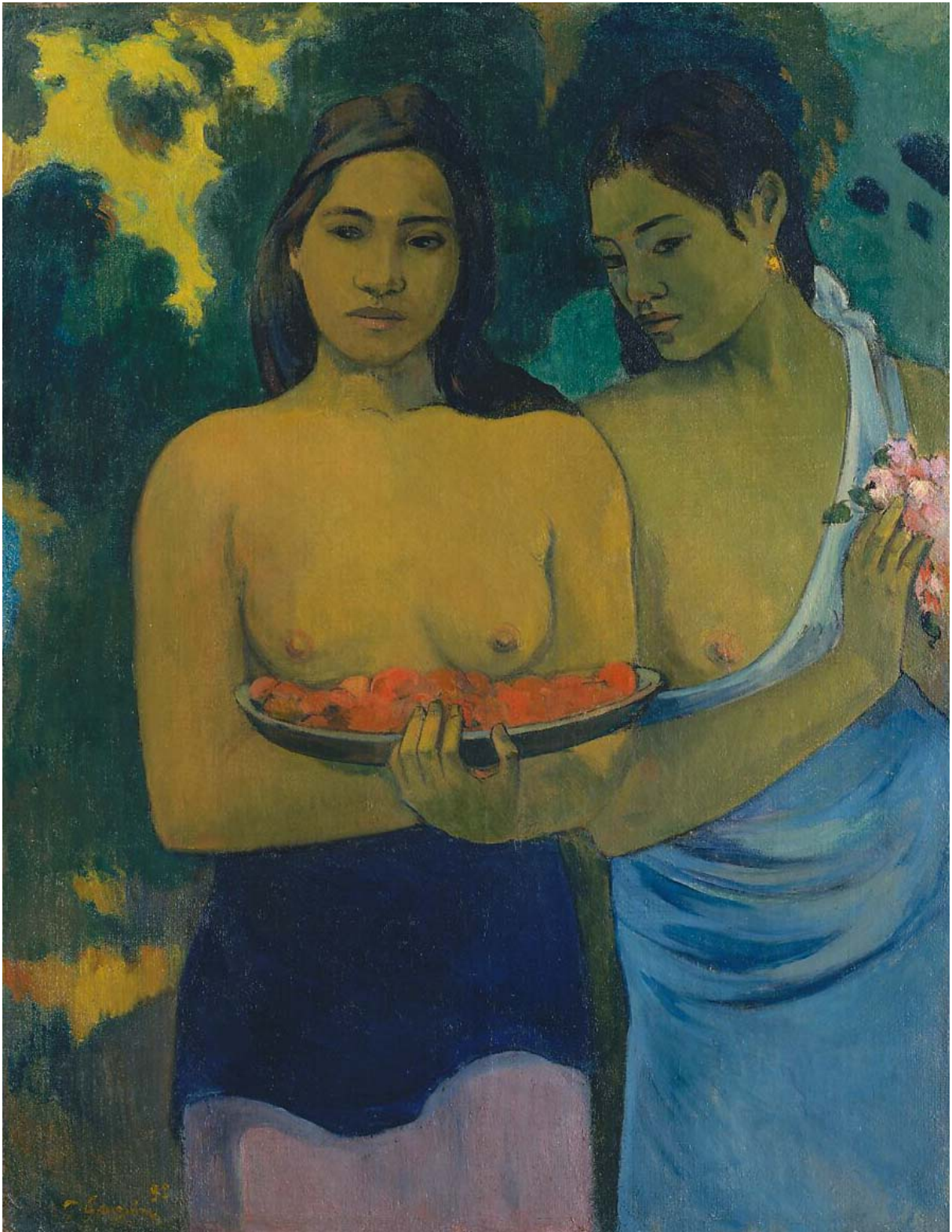
Figure 32. Paul Gauguin, *Two Tahitian Women* 1899, Oil on canvas, 94 x 72.4 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art New York.

259

Figure 33. Engraving by B.T. Pouncy 1777, from a drawing by William Hodges, *The Ice Islands* seen by the Resolution on 9 January 1773. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zeeland.

Figure 34. Günther Herbst, *Raft Collages* 2014. Reassembled images of paintings by Frank Stella's *Untitled* 1966, and Barnett Newman's *Who's afraid of Red, Yellow, and Blue II* 1967. 24.09 x 13.55 cm.

260

Figure 35. Günther Herbst, *The Ice Islands #2* 2014. Oil and acrylic on canvas, 86 x 112 cm. Private Collection.
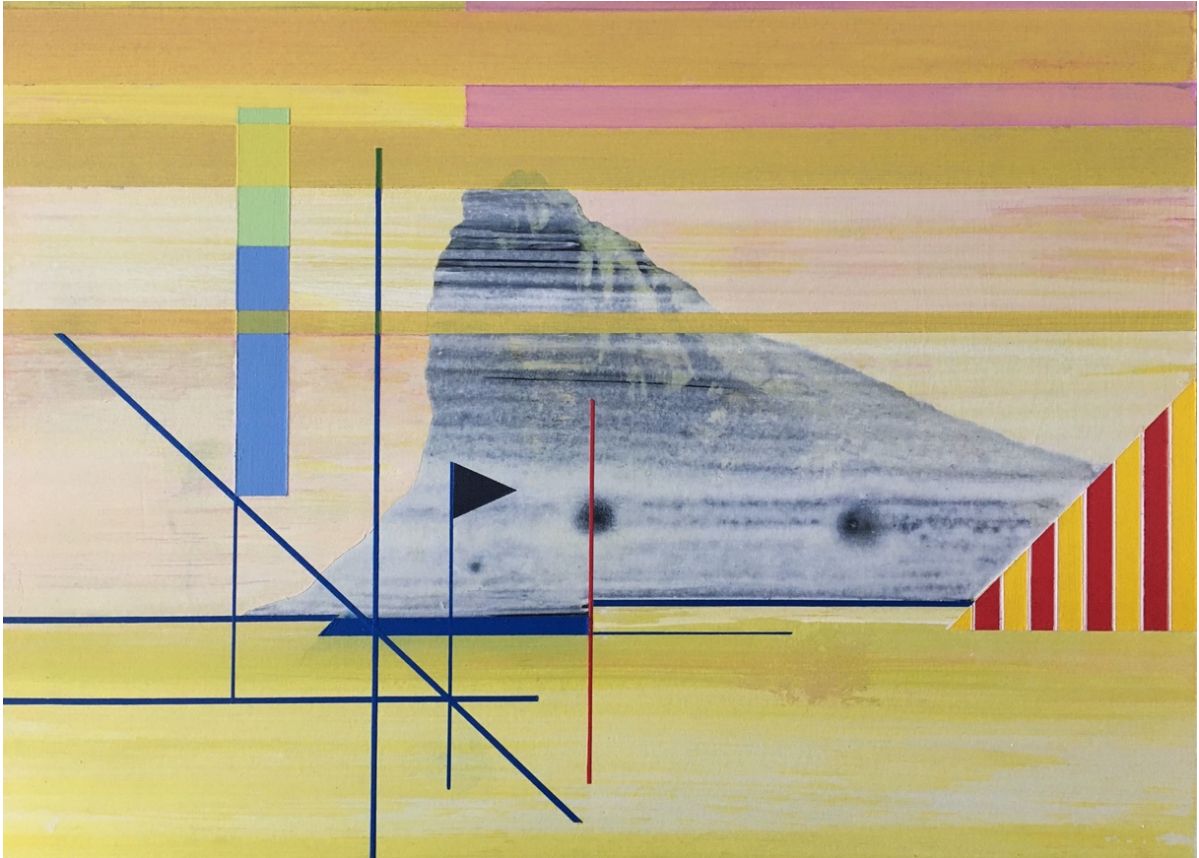
Figure 36. Günther Herbst, *Invader #1* 2020. Acrylic on paper 23 x 32 cm. Private Collection.
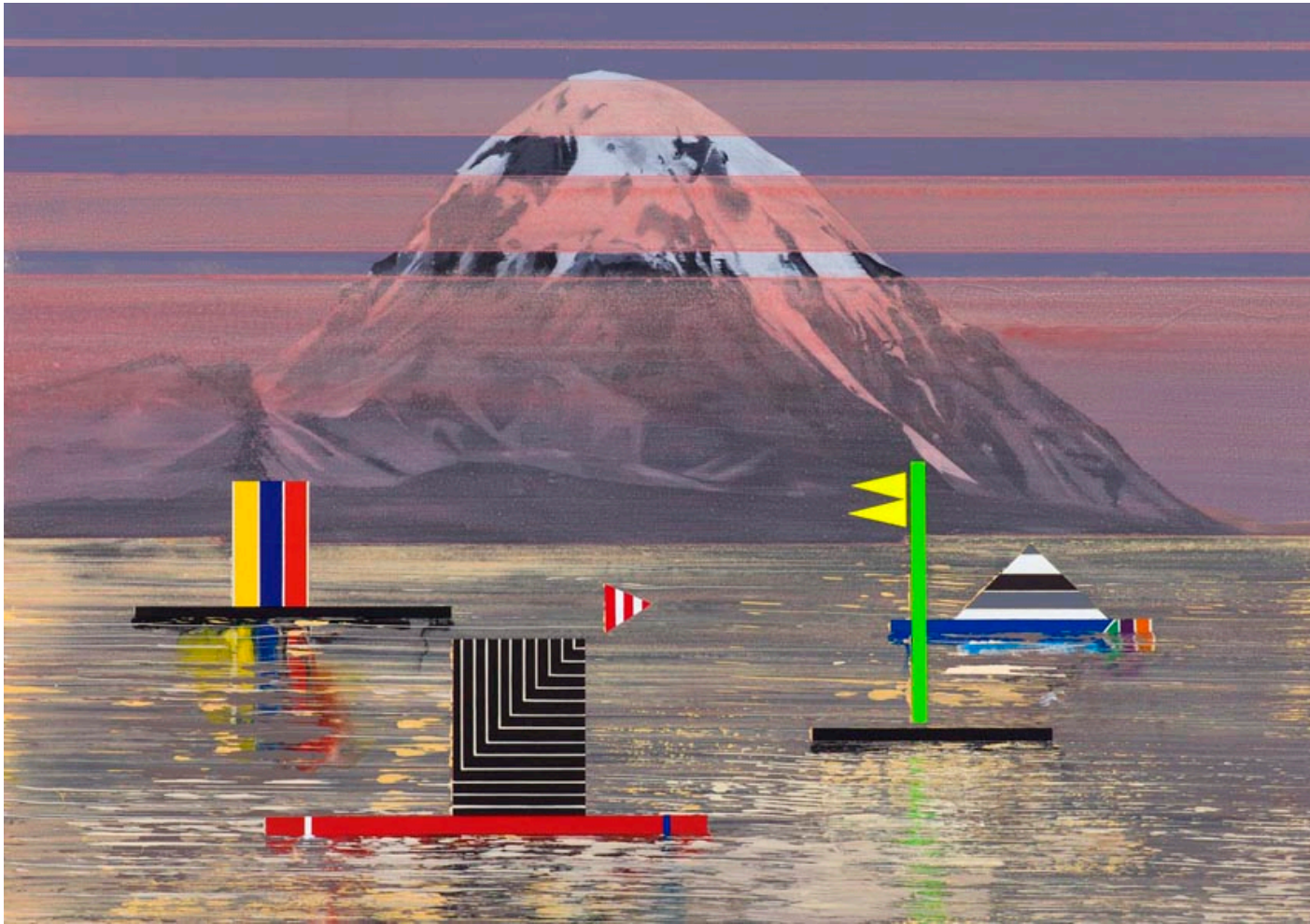
Figure 37. Günther Herbst, *Who is afraid of Lygia Pape* 2015. Acrylic on paper, 32.2 x 46.6 cm. Private Collection.

Figure 38. Cigdem Aydemir *Plastic Histories* 2014. Johann Moolman's C.R. Swart monument covered in plastic and in the process of being sprayed pink. University of the Free State. Photo credit: Paul Mills.
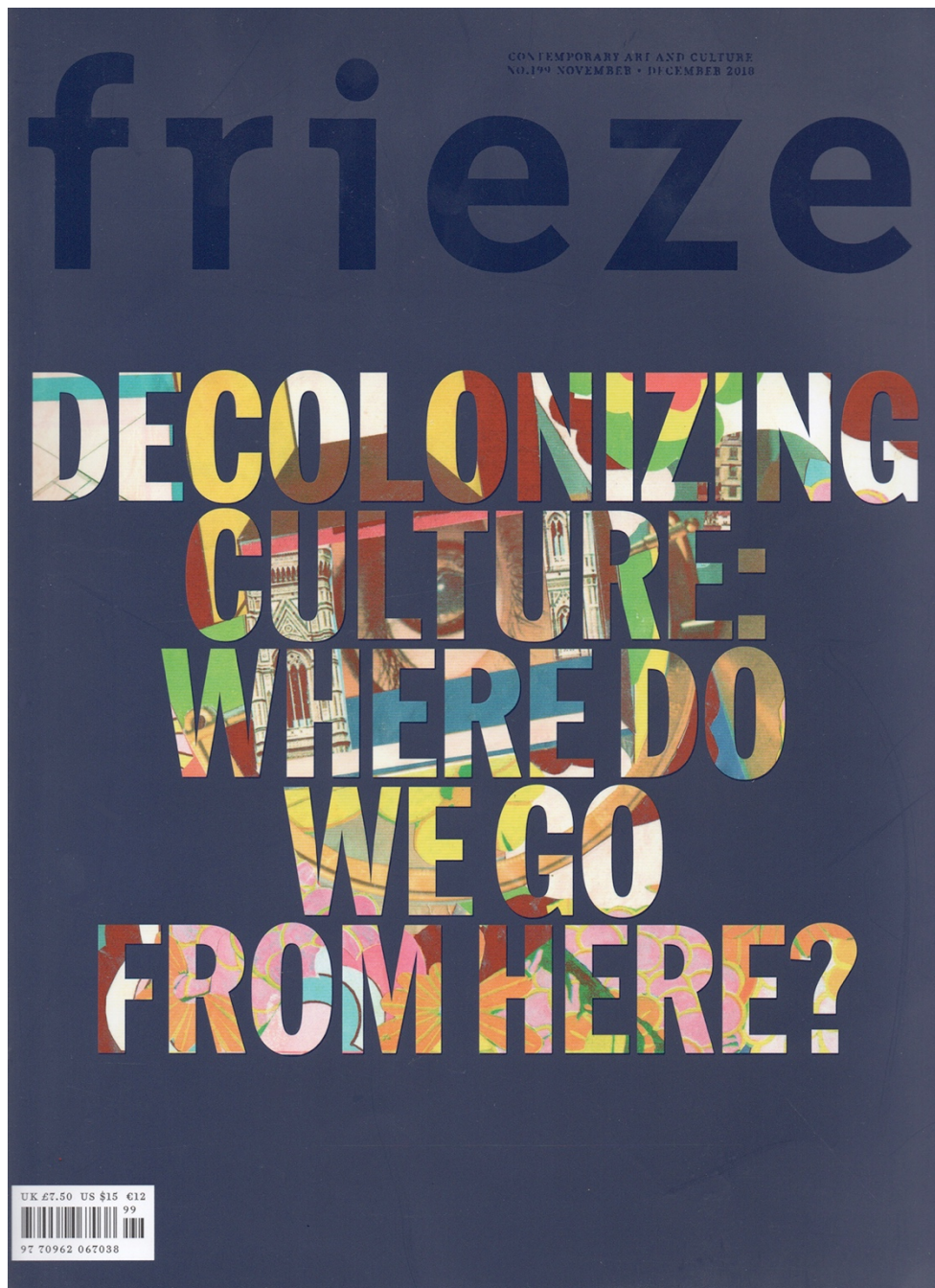
Figure 39. *Frieze Magazine*, Issue 199, Nov–Dec 2018. © *FRIEZE.*

Figure 40. Günther Herbst, *Monument Proposal #1* 2016. Paper, card sponge cloth, mirror, stones, acrylic paint, 34 x 20 x 25.5 cm.
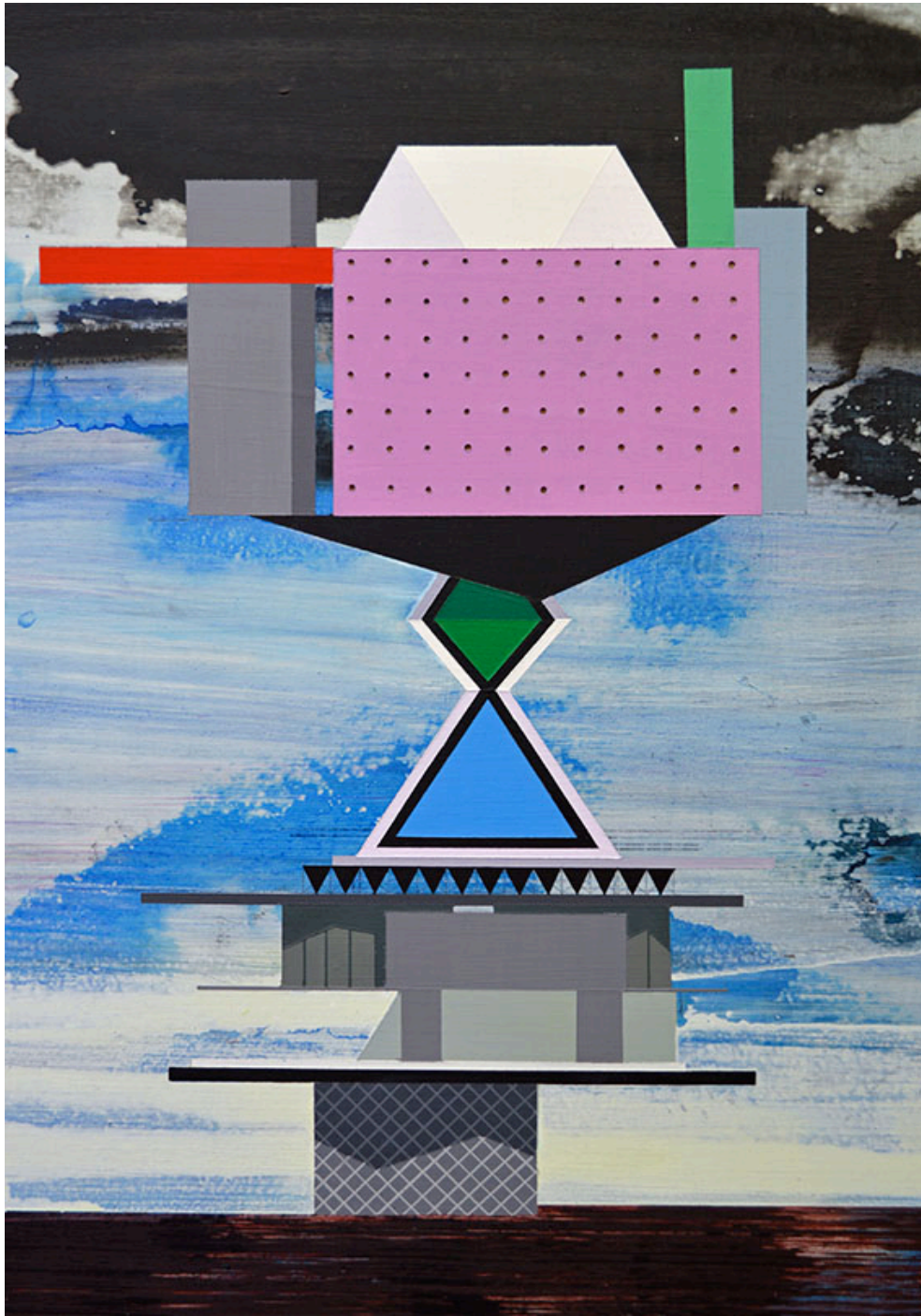
Figure 41. Günther Herbst, *Monument Proposal # 1X* 2017. Acrylic on paper, 41 x 29.5 cm. Private Collection.
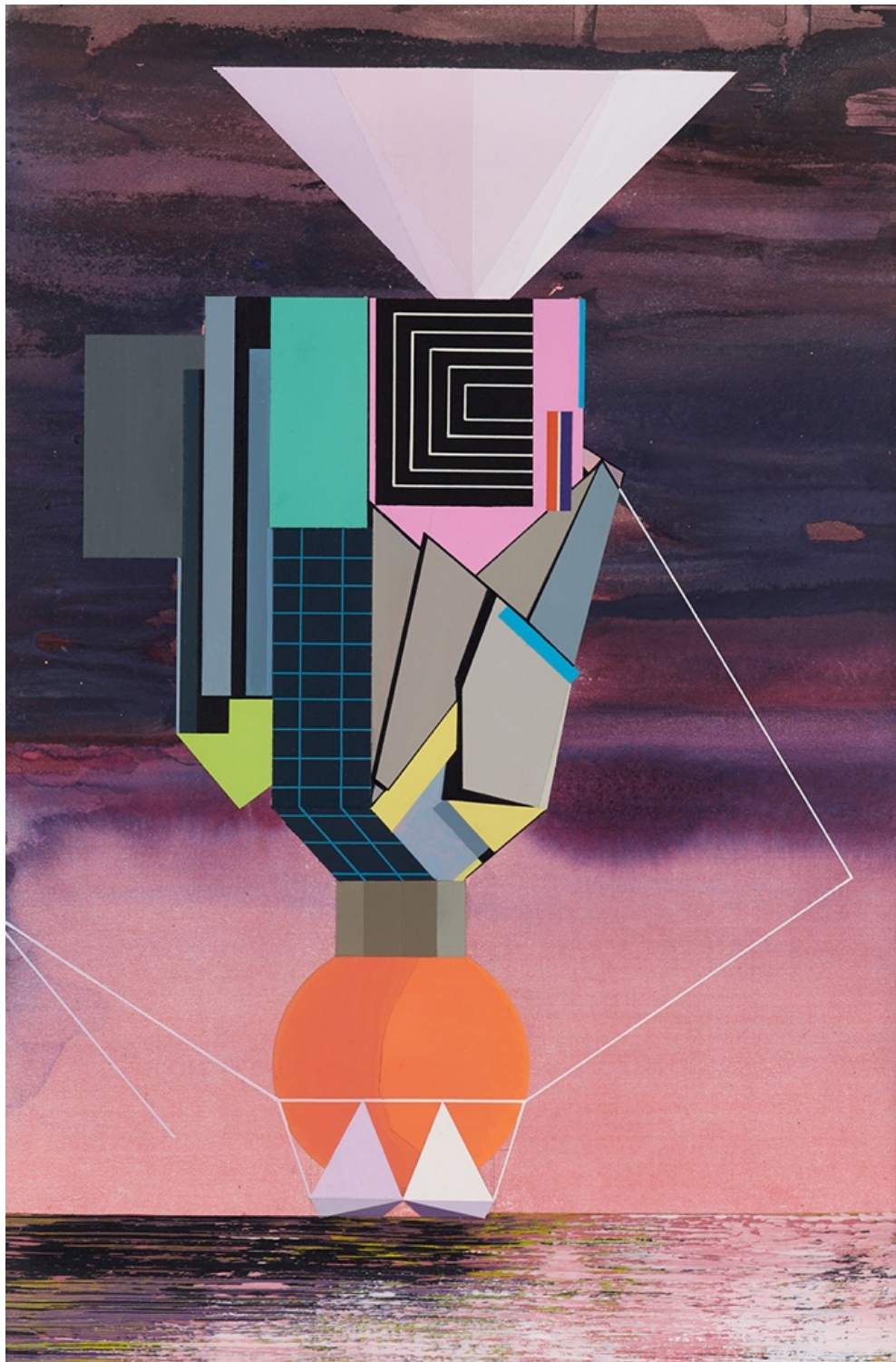
Figure 42. Günther Herbst, *Monument Proposal #3Y* 2017. Acrylic paint on paper, 54.5 x 38 cm.

Figure 43. Günther Herbst, *Monument Proposal no.3Y* 2017. Card sponge cloth, canvas, acrylic paint, and plastic float, 49h x 22w x 15d.
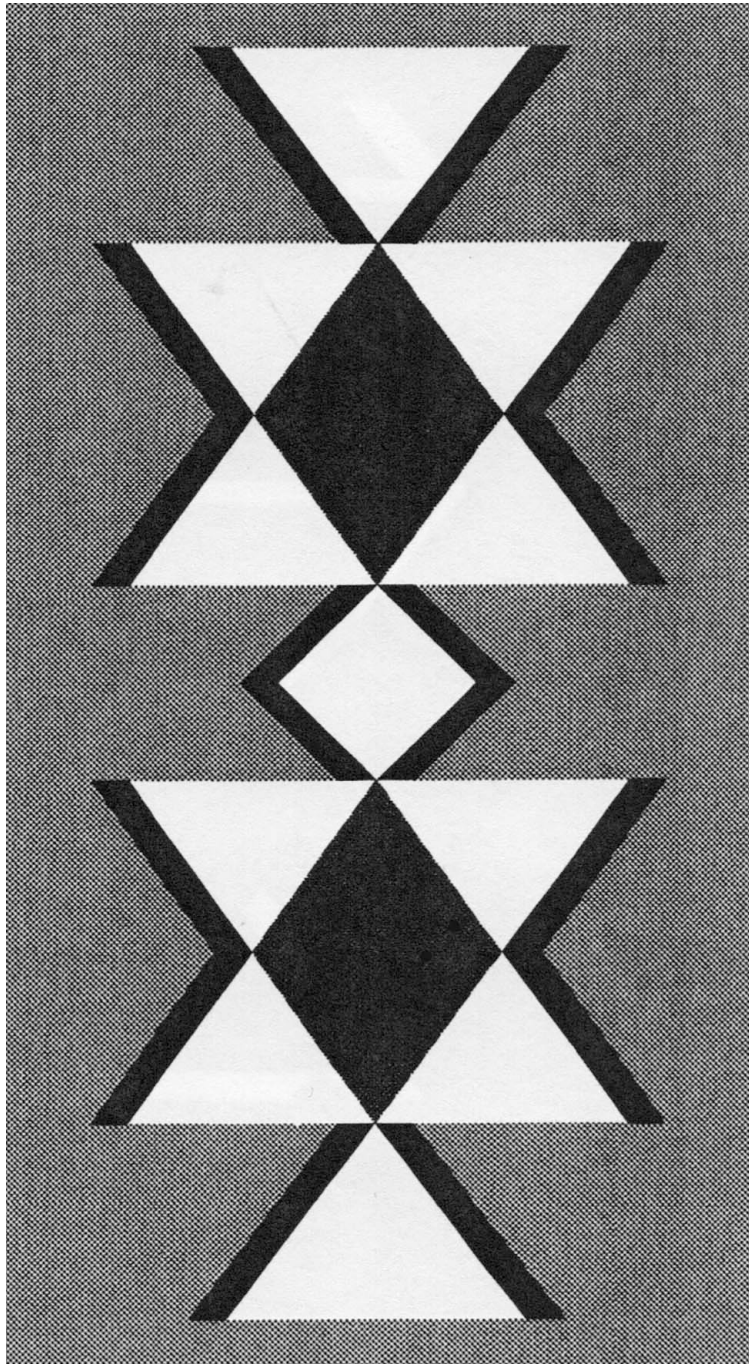
Figure 44. Venda mat pattern displaying double horizontal and vertical axial symmetry.

Woven from raw wool. North of South Africa near the border of Zimbabwe.

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Figure 45. *The Inhuman / Difficult Transition* group installation view, 4 – 20 May 2019, Thames Side Studios. *Monument Proposal, Yellow / Black,* 2019. Acrylic paint on plywood and pine, 1.30h x 1.79w x 1.16d cm. *Monument Proposal, Pink / Grey* 2019. Acrylic paint on plywood, MDF and pine, 143h x 55.8w x 55.8d cm. Paintings from left to right by Robert Holyhead, Shaan Syed and Scott McCracken. Photo credit: Jonathan Bassett.
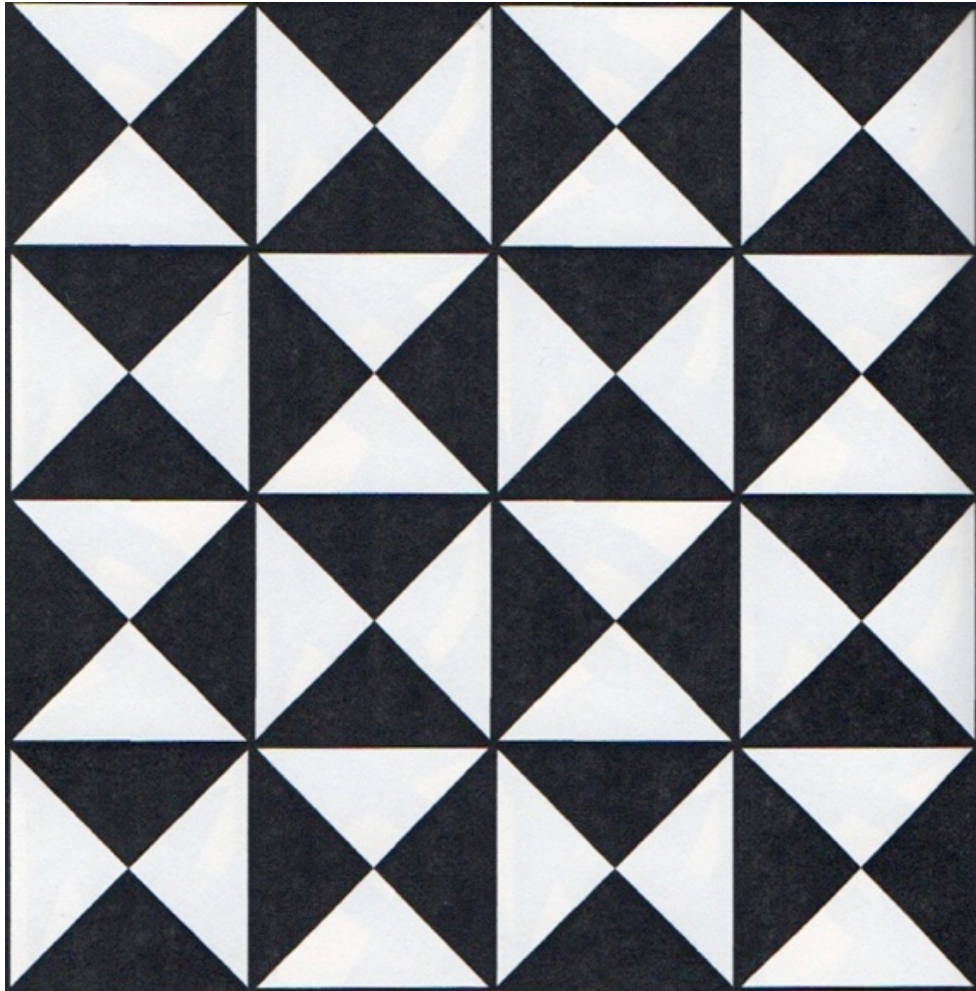
Figure 46. Mural Decoration Pattern, Sotho, Gauteng, Free State border. Reproduced with kind permission by African World Press https://africaworldpressbooks.com

Figure 47. Aina Onabolu, *Portrait of a Man*, 1955 Watercolour on board, 48.5 x 38.5cm. © Yemisi Shyllon Museum of Art, Pan-Atlantic University.

Figure 48. Jacob Hendrik Pierneef, *View of Louis Trichardt*, 1932. Oil on canvas, 140 x 148.75 cm.

Figure 49. Alexis Preller, *Grand Mapogga 1*, 1951, Oil on canvas, 55 x 45.5 cm. Courtesy of the Alexis Preller Estate at the Norval Foundation.

275

Figure 50. Ndebele Women and baby, Pretoria, South Africa, Photograph by Constance Stuart Larrabee, ca. 1936-1949, EEPA 1998-060370, Constance Stuart Larrabee Collection Eliot Elisofon Photographic Archives, National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Figure 51. Candice Breitz, *Ghost Series #10*, 1994, Tippex on Tourist Postcard, 10,5 x 14,8cm.

277

Figures – Chapter Two

Figure 52. The old Raadsaal (Council Chambers) in Pretoria designed by Dutch architect Sytze Wierda at the end of the nineteenth century in a Renaissance Rival style. It housed the Volksraad, the parliament of South Africa from 1891 to 1902.

Here the Raadsaal forms a background for a crowd of approximately 40,000 gathered in Kerkplein (Church Square) to see C.R. Swart after he became State President of South Africa on 31 May 1961. The Brazilian-inspired modernist Transvaal Provincial Administration Building can be seen newly emerging on the right-hand side of the picture. *South African Panorama*, July 1961.

Figure 53. Duplex house (Weissenhof Museum) and House Citrohan 2016. Architects: Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeannert, Weissenhofsiedlung (Weissenhof Estate), Stuttgart. Constructed in 1927. Source PJT56 / Wikimedia Commons / CC BY-SA 4.0.

Figure 54. House Munro, Pretoria 1932. Architect: W.G. McIntosh.

Figure 55. House Stern, Johannesburg 1934–35. Architects: Martienssen Fassler, Cooke.

Figure 56. Greenside House, Johannesburg 1940. Architect: R Martienssen. © RIBA Collections.

Figure 57. House Stern 1966 with a pitched roof.

Figure 58. Third Vernacular, House in Brooklyn Pretoria, 1936–37. Architect: W. Gordon McIntosh.

Figure 59. Greenwood House 1950, Entrance. Architect: Norman Eaton. Photo credit: Morné Pienaar 2012.

Figure 60. Greenwood House 1967. Thatched 'Staff Quarters'. Photo credit: Dick Latimer.

Figure 61. The Meat Board Building (now NIPILAR House), Pretoria, 1950. Architect: Hellmut Stauch. Photo credit: Federico Freschi.

Figure 62. The Transvaal Provincial Administration Building, Pretoria 1962. Architects Moerdyk and Watson, Meiring and Naudé.

Dotman Pretorius Photographic Collection, Ditsong National Cultural Museum. Photo credit: Dotman Pretorius.
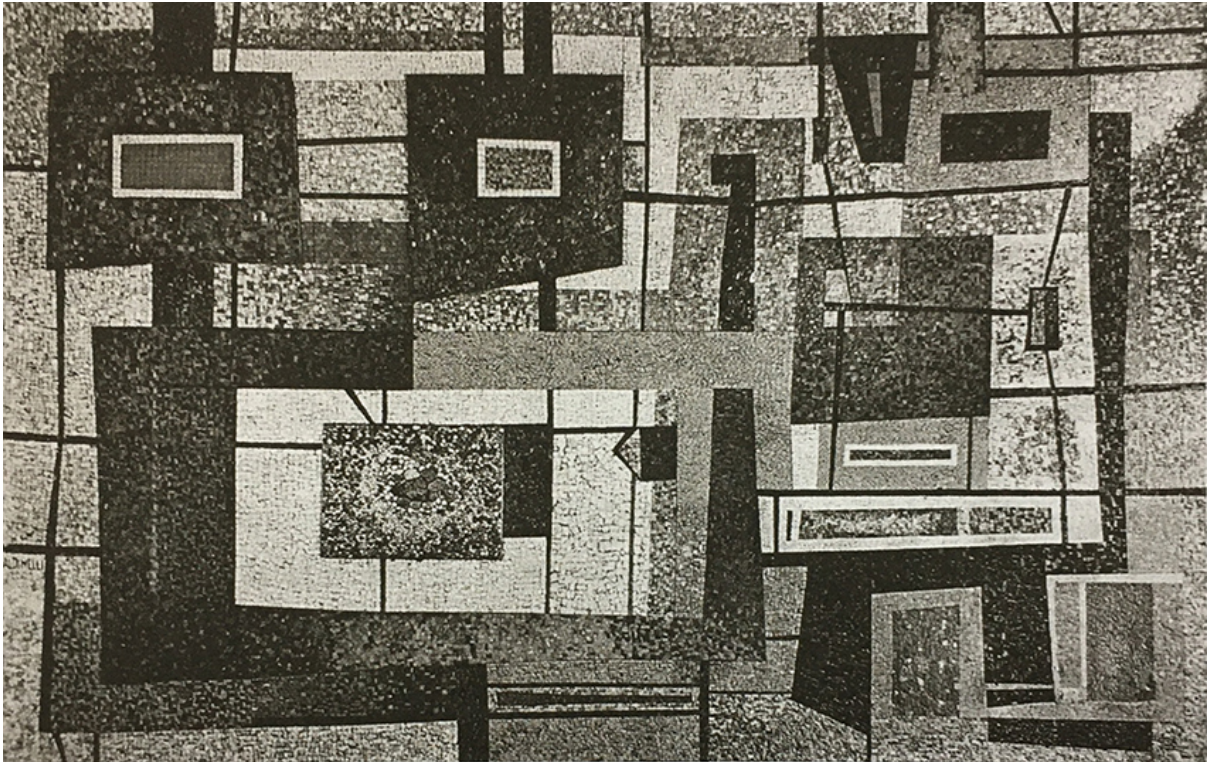
Figure 63. Armando Baldinelli, *Bantoe-Afrika* (Bantu Africa) 1962. Mosaic, Transvaal Provincial Administration Building. Photo credit: Anon. Source Freschi, F., Schmahmann, B. and van Robbroeck, L. (eds.), *Troubling Images Visual Culture and the Politics of Afrikaner Nationalism*, Chapter Three, 'From Volksargitektuur to Boere Brazil: Afrikaner Nationalism and the Architectural Imaginary of Modernity, 1936 – 1966', pp. 83. Wits University Press, Johannesburg, 2020.

Figure 64. Rand Afrikaans University (now Johannesburg University), 1968. Architect: Willie Meyer. Photo credit: Hilton T.

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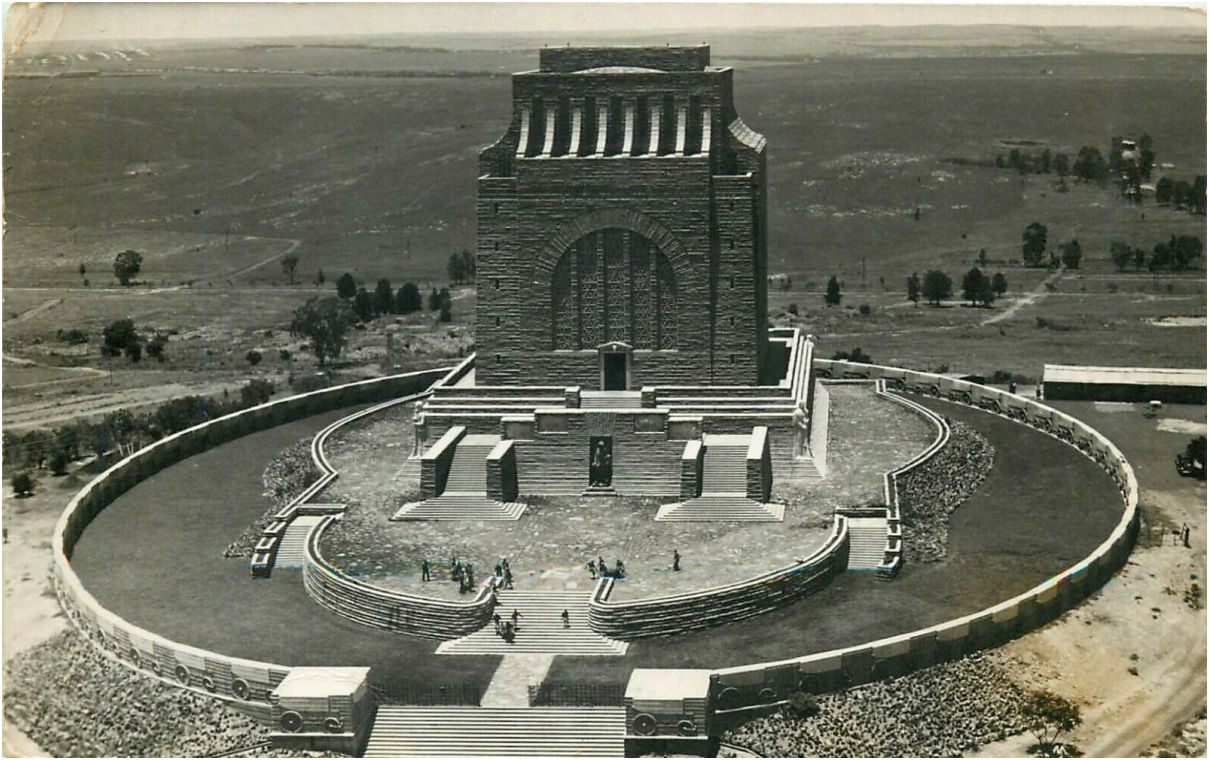
Figure 65. Postcard of an aerial view of the Voortrekker Monument Pretoria, 1936–1949. Architect: Gerhard Moerdijk.
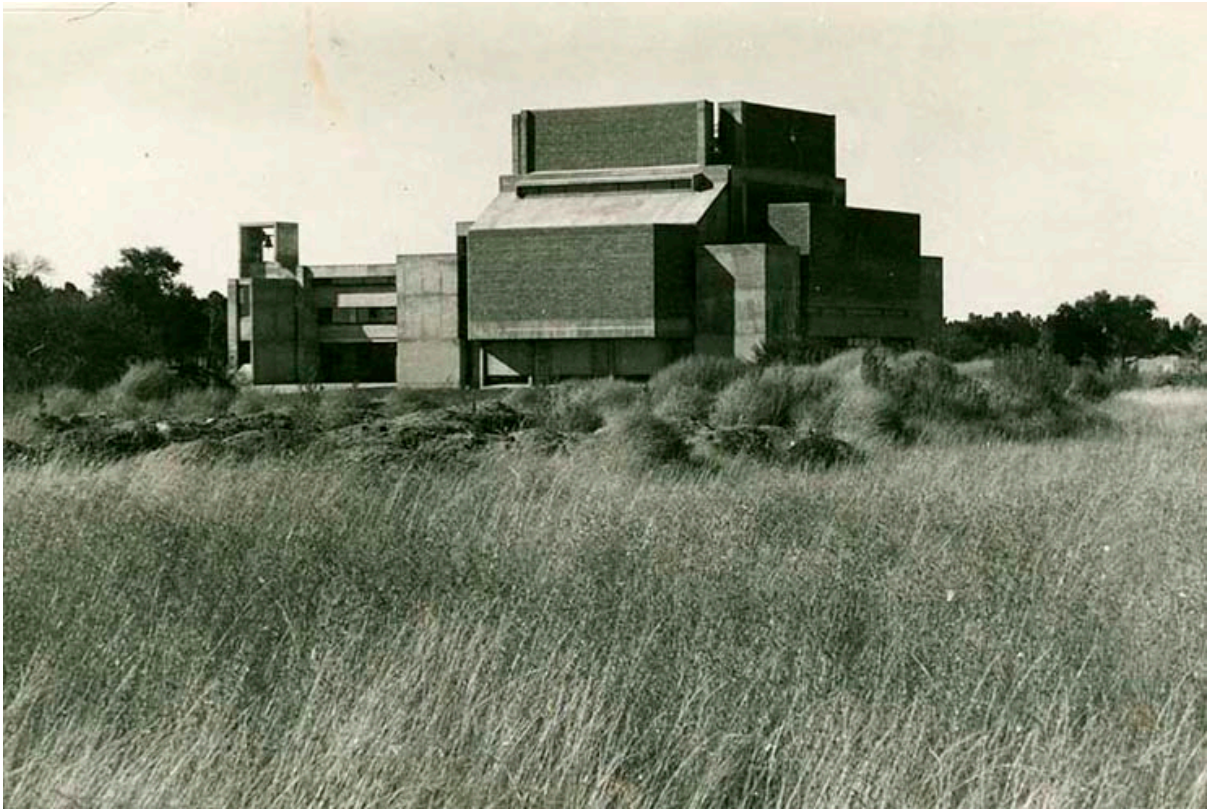
Figure 66. Field view, Dutch Reformed Church in Welkom West 1965. Special Collections, Courtesy of University of Cape Town Libraries (unpublished). Roelof Uytenbogaardt Papers, BC1264, J4.2.2. Architect: Roelof Uytenbogaardt.

Figures – Chapter Three

Figure 67. Helmut Stauch home and gardens, Pretoria, South Africa, Photograph by Constance Stuart Larrabee, 1960, EEPA 1998-065341, Constance Stuart Larrabee Collection, Eliot Elisofon Photographic Archives, National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Figure 68. Helmut Stauch home and gardens, Pretoria, South Africa, Photograph by Constance Stuart Larrabee, 1960, EEPA 1998-065344, Constance Stuart Larrabee Collection, Eliot Elisofon Photographic Archives, National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Figure 69. House Kellerman, Brooklyn Pretoria 1950 and 1959, Architect Hellmut Stauch. Ground floor and upper floor plan including east elevation plan and section. Northern elevation with all living areas benefitting from northern light. Courtesy of the Architecture Archives, Pretoria University.
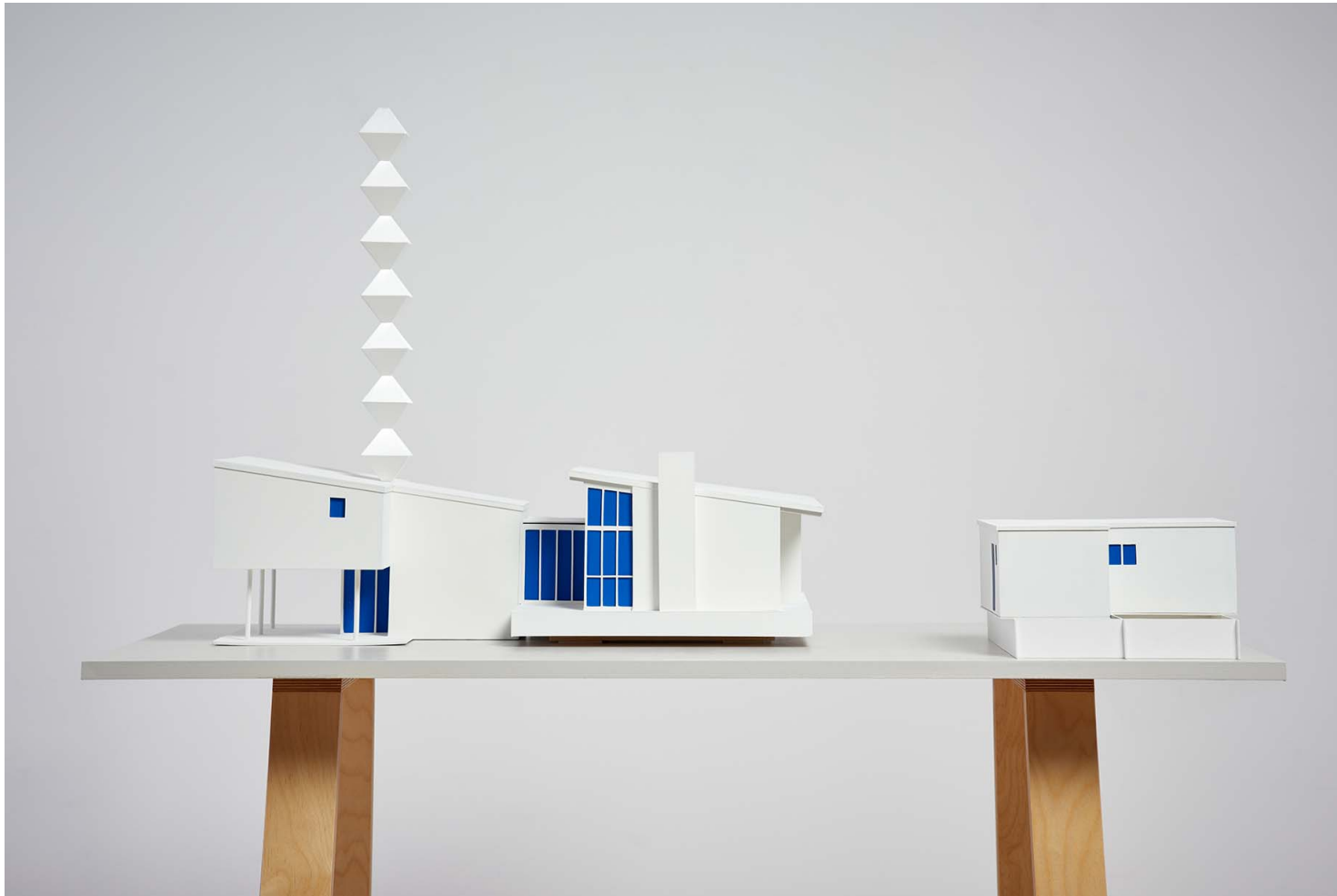
Figure 70. Günther Herbst, model of Helmut Stauch's House Kellerman (1950–1959), titled *Composition with Blue* 2022. Card, wood, styrene, and acrylic paint, 130.18 (h) x 120 (l).
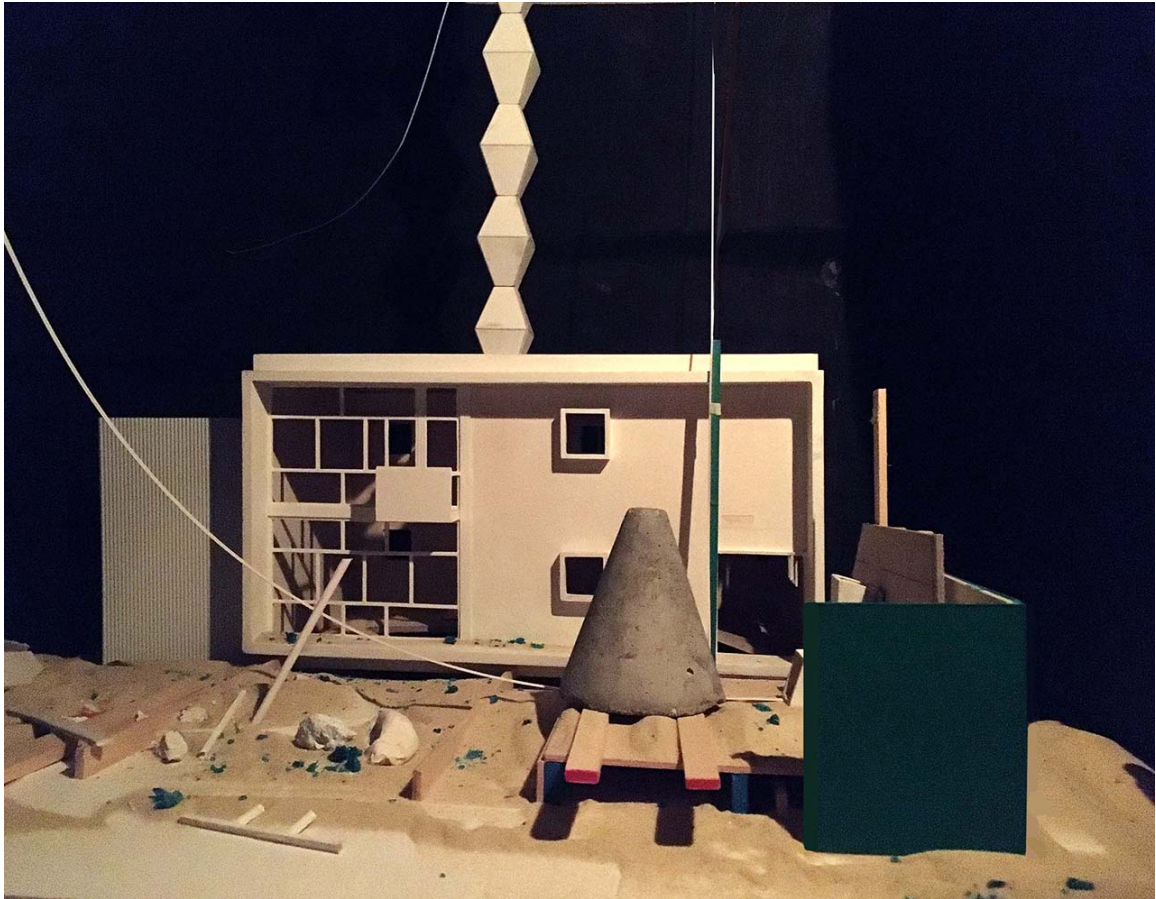
Figure 71. Günther Herbst, Greenside House model 2022, photographic reference 7390. Card, polystyrene, wood, sand, and acrylic paint. Preparatory work for painting.

Figure 72. Günther Herbst, House Kellerman model 2022, photographic reference 7551. Card, wood, styrene, granite ballast and acrylic paint. Preparatory work for painting.

Figure 73. Günther Herbst, *Composition with Grid A (Lozenge*) 2021. Watercolour on paper, 20 x 25.5 cm. Private Collection.

299

Figure 74. Melville, Johannesburg 2008. Photo credit: Graeme Williams.

Figure 75. Mike Kelly, *Educational Complex* 1995. Painted foam core, fibreglass, plywood, wood, Plexiglas and mattress. 146.7 x 488.2 x 244.2 cm. Exhibition view, *Educational Complex Onwards: 1995 – 2008*, Wiels, Brussels (B), 2008.

Source https://www.flickr.com/photos/marcwathieu/with/2567033024/.
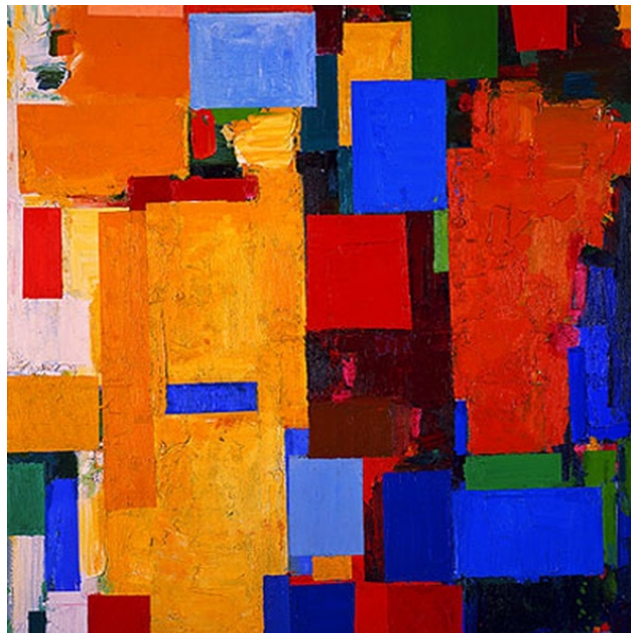
Figure 76. Hans Hofmann, *Equinox* 1958. Oil on canvas, 183 x 153 cm. University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive; Gift of Hans Hofmann 1965.12.

Figure 77. Günther Herbst, Greenside House model. Photographic reference 5546, 2020. Card, wood, concrete rubble, styrene, and acrylic paint. Preparatory work for painting.

Figure 78. Günther Herbst, Greenside House model. Photographic reference 5564, 2020. Card, wood, concrete rubble styrene, and acrylic paint. Preparatory work for painting.
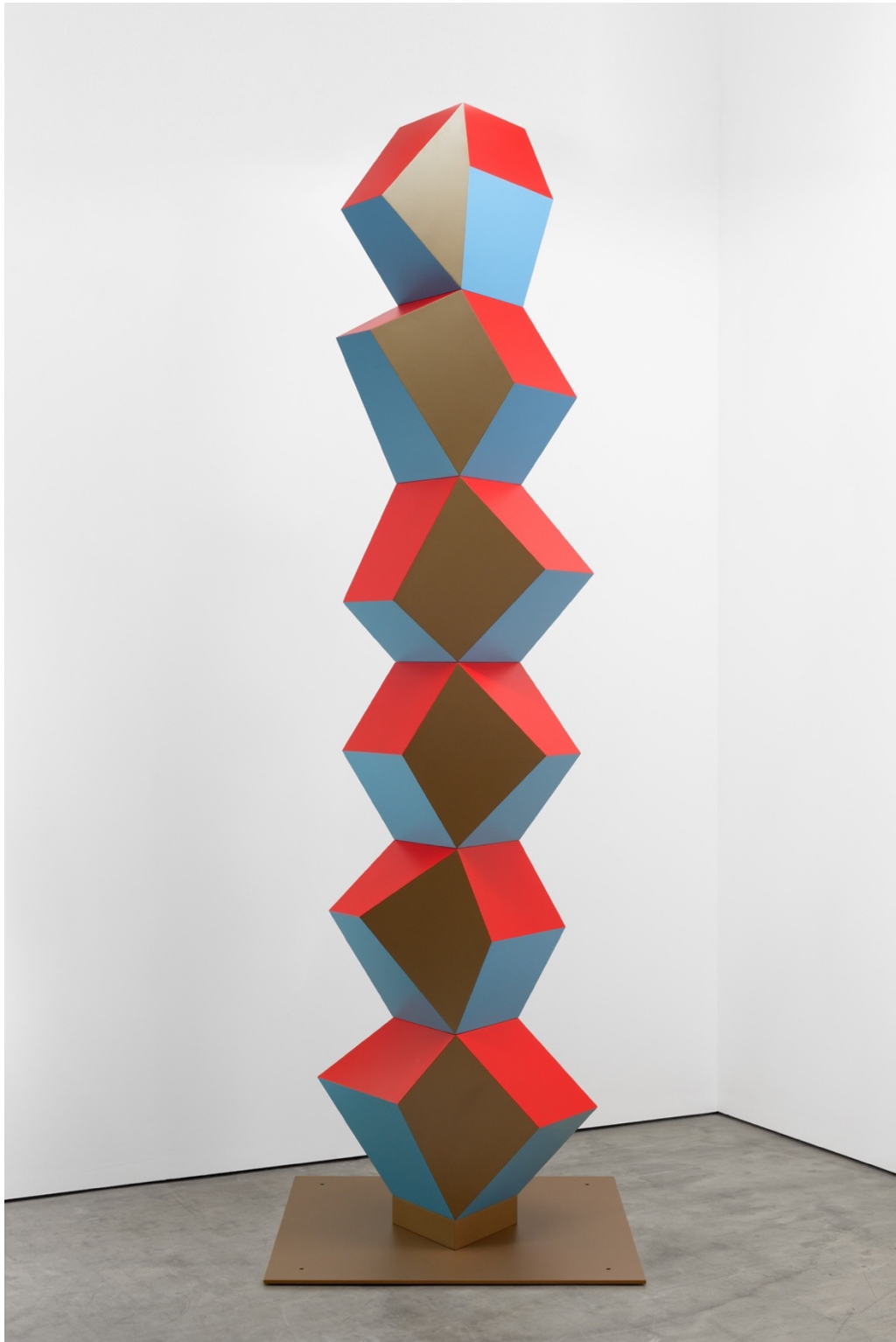
Figure 79. Angela Bulloch *Heavy Metal Stack of Six: Red, Gold & Blue* 2023. Stainless steel, paint, 309 x 80 x 50 cm (overall) 50 x 80 x 50 cm (1 module), 1 x 98 x 98 cm (baseplate). Courtesy the artist and Esther Schipper Berlin/Paris/Seoul Photo © Eberle & Eisfeld.

Figure 80. Amedeo Modigliani, *Portrait of Dr Paul Alexandre* 1911–12. Oil on canvas, 92.1 59.1 cm.
Private Collection. See footnote 322 on pp. 121 and 122.
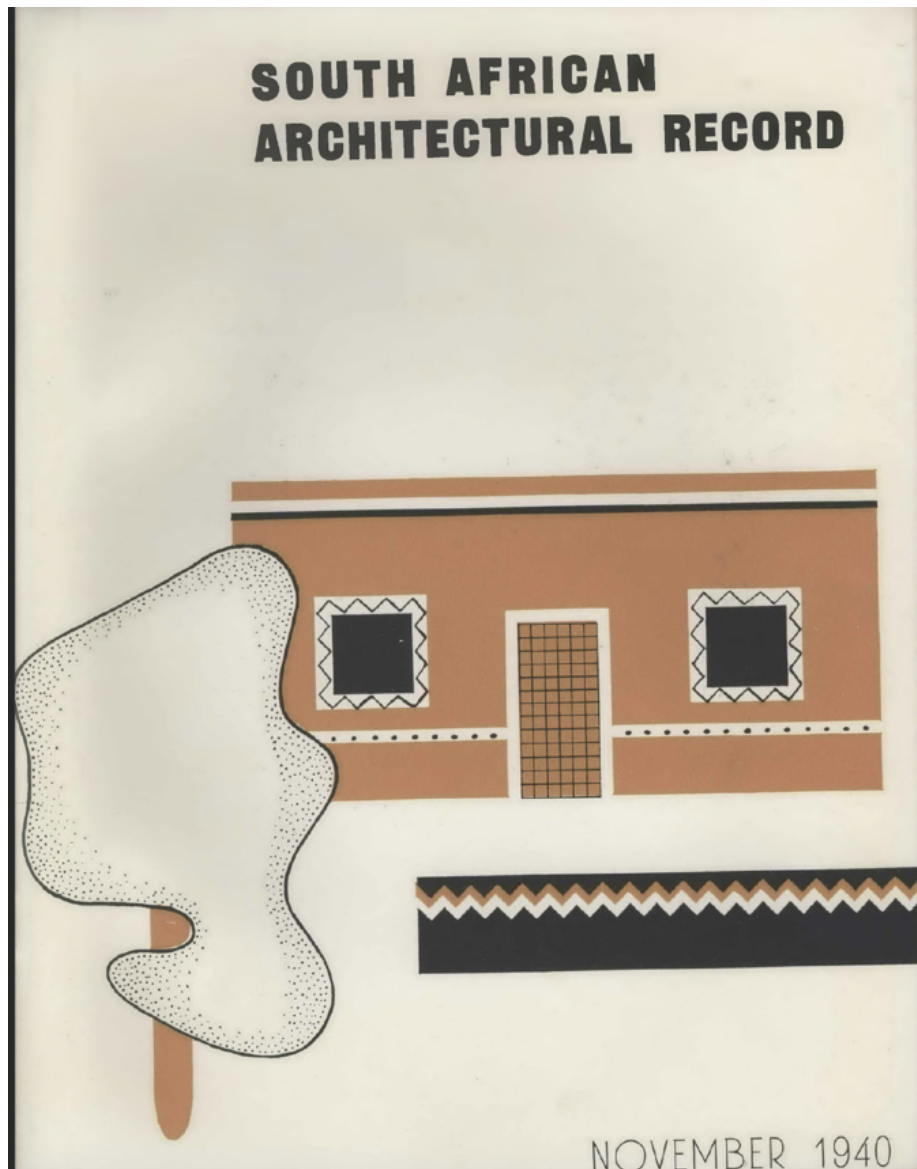
Figure 81. Cover of the *South African Architectural Record*, November 1940, Vol. 25, No. 11. Leading article; 'Native Housing' by Betty Spence.
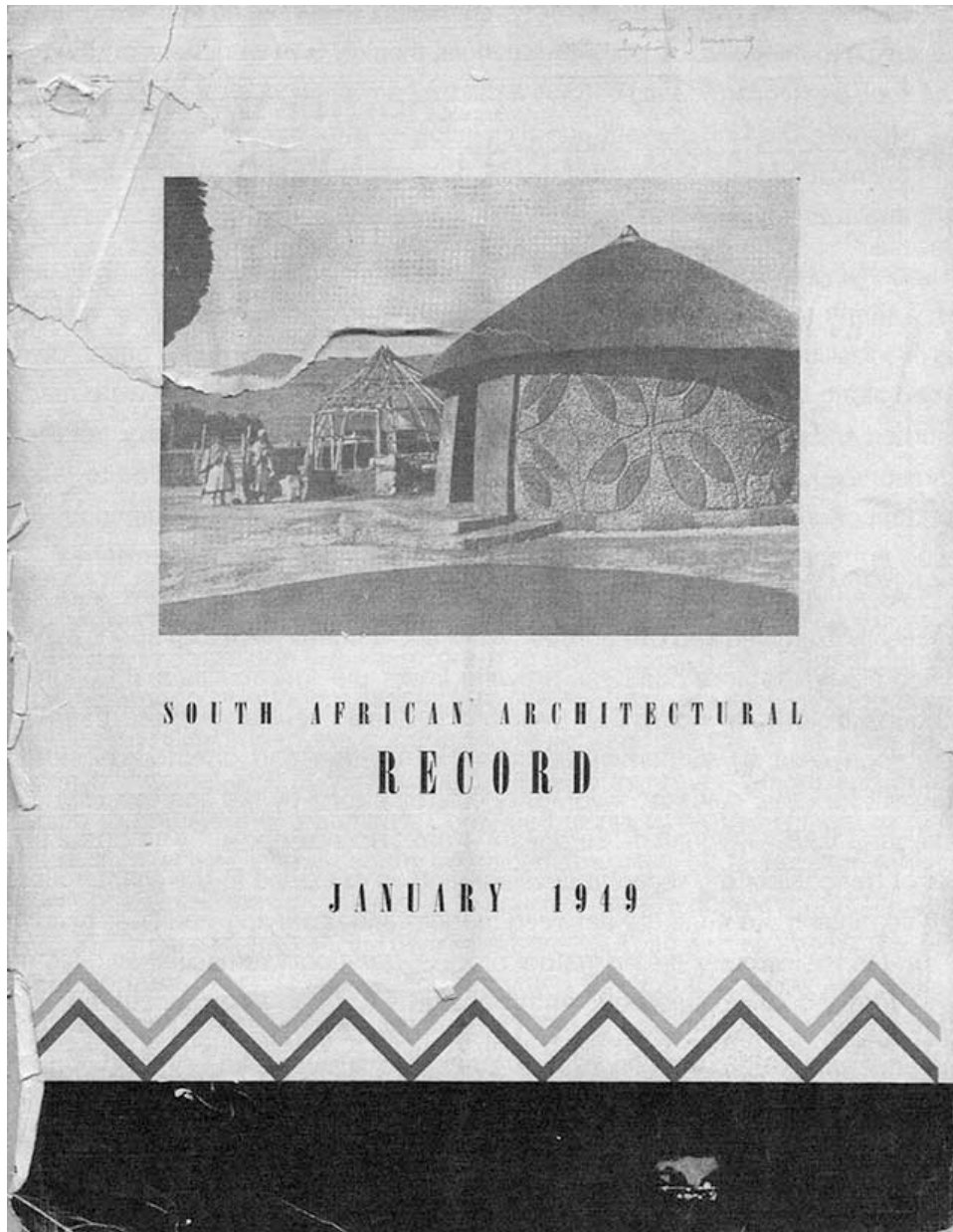
Figure 82. Cover of the *South African Architectural Record*, Vol. 34, January 1949. Leading articles; 'South African Peasant Architecture — Southern Sotho folk building', by James Walton. 'Rural Native Housing at Ndabakazi – A Report', by Gilbert Herbert.

307
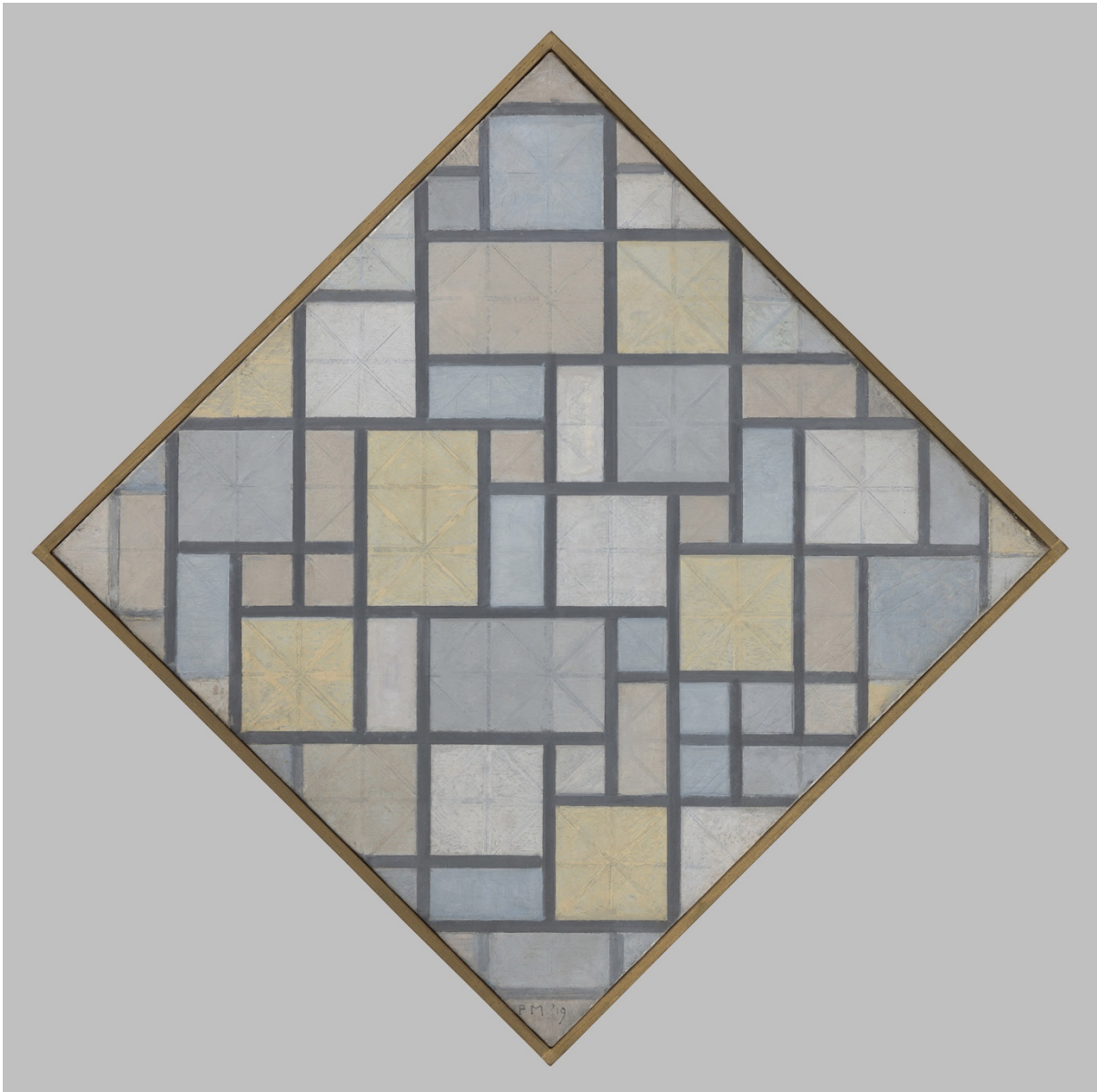
Figure 83. Piet Mondrian, *Composition with Grid 5 (Lozenge), Composition with Colours* 1919. Oil on canvas 63 x 63 cm. © Collection Kröller – Müller Museum, Otterlo, the Netherlands. Photo by Rik Klein Gotink.

Figure 84. Frank R Paul, front cover illustration, August 1927. *Amazing Stories*.

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309
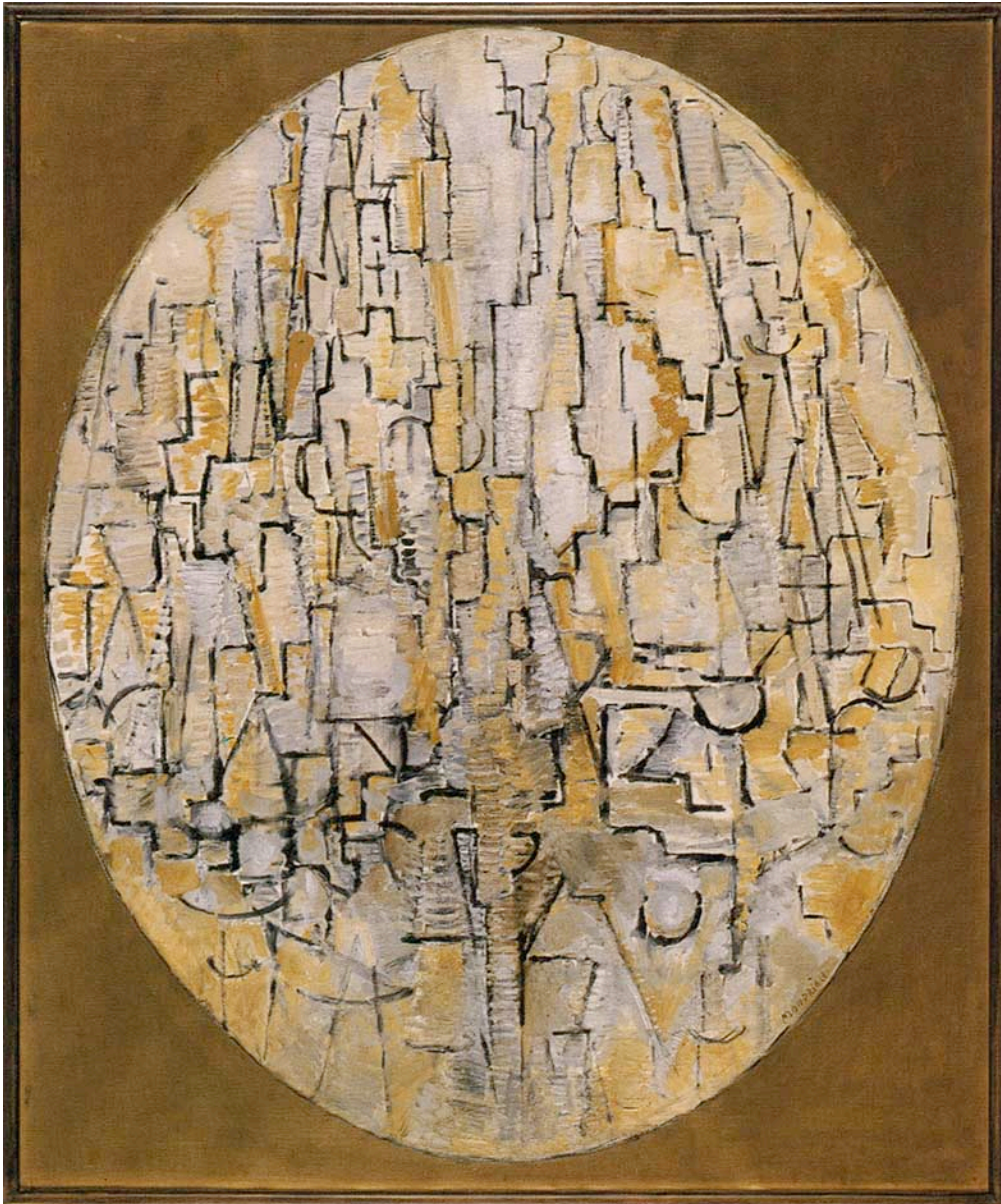
Figure 85. Piet Mondrian *Tableau No.3; Composition in Oval* 1913. Oil on canvas, 94 x 78 cm. © Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam. A6043.
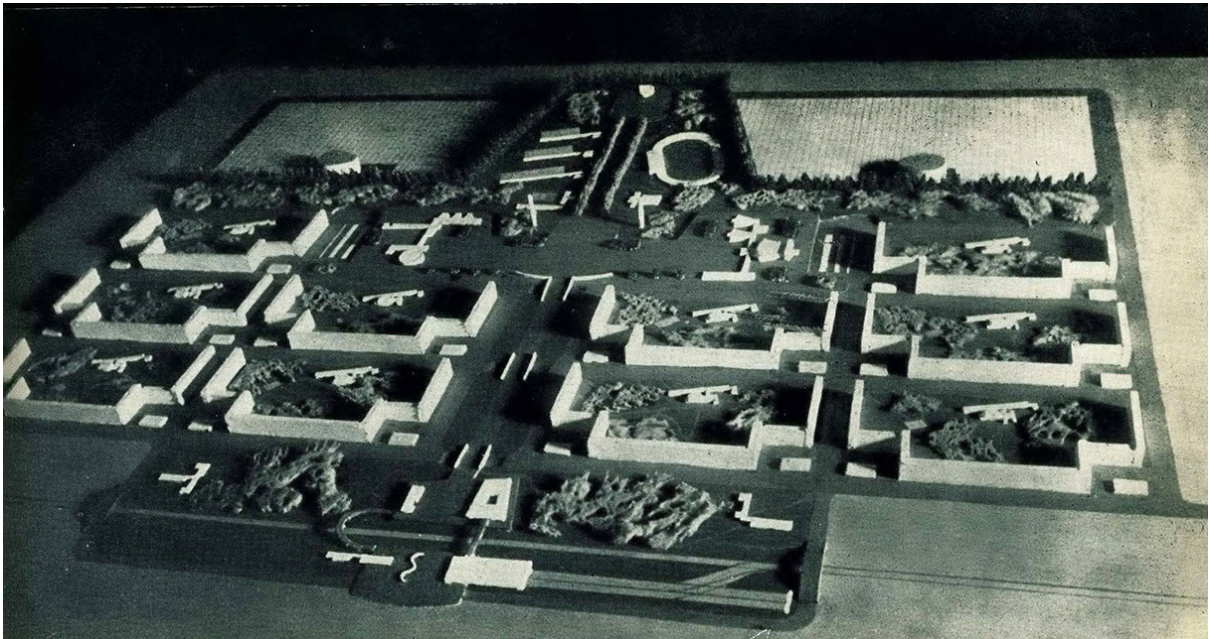
Figure 86. A Model Native Township for 20,000 Inhabitants 1938. Designed by P. Connell, C. Irvine-Smith, R. Kantorowich, J. Wepener and K. Jonas.

VIEW FROM ROAD.

ELEVATION

PLAN

SCALE IN FEET.

BR 1
125

BR.2
94

DK
90

L.
121

3 ROOMED HOUSE.
NE 51/6.

Fig. 14.

29
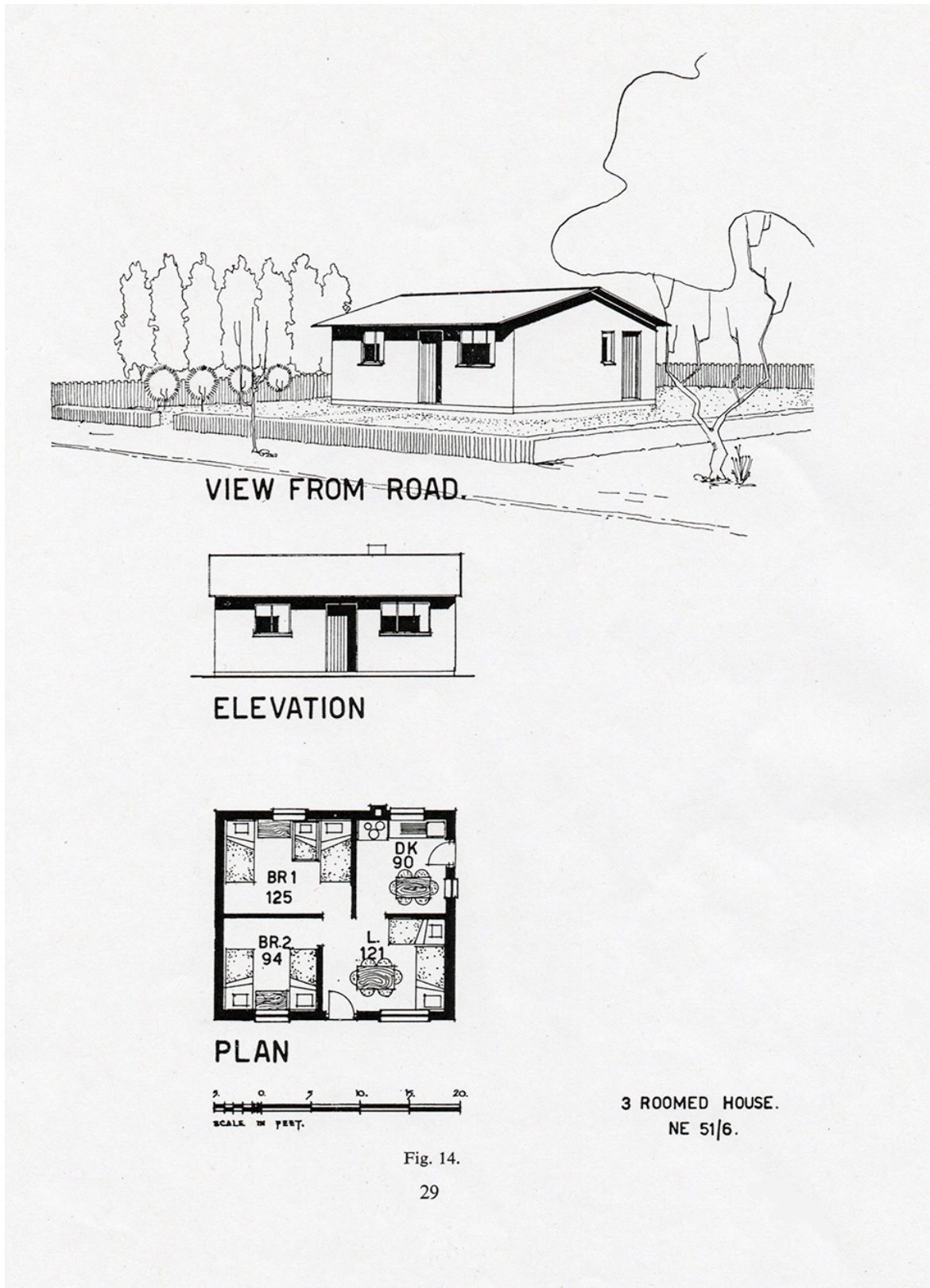
Figure 87. Three-Roomed House NE51/6. D.M. Calderwood 1953 PhD thesis *Native Housing of South Africa.*

312
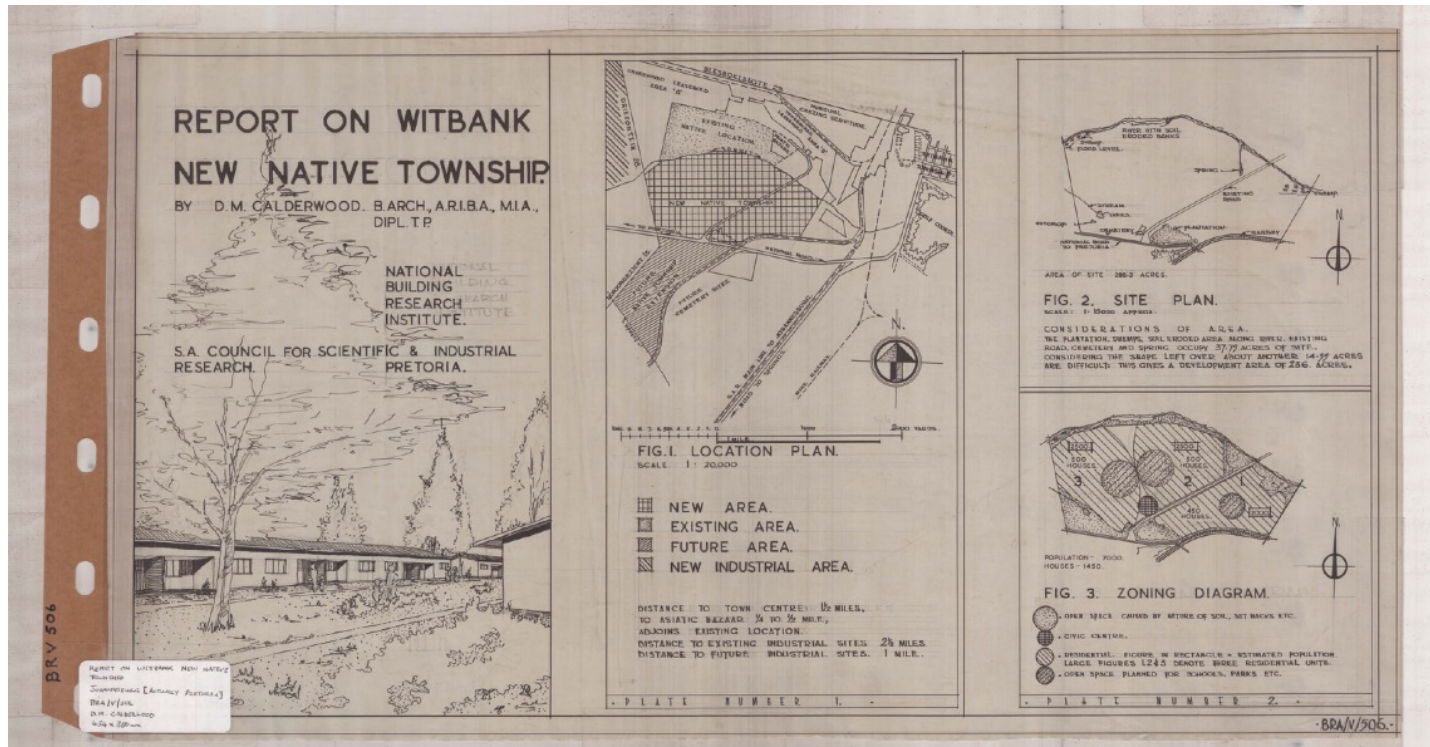
Figure 88. Report on Witbank New Native Township (and Pretoria), National Building Research Institute Pretoria 1949. D.M. Calderwood. Construction started on 1 December 1950. *WIReDSpace.*
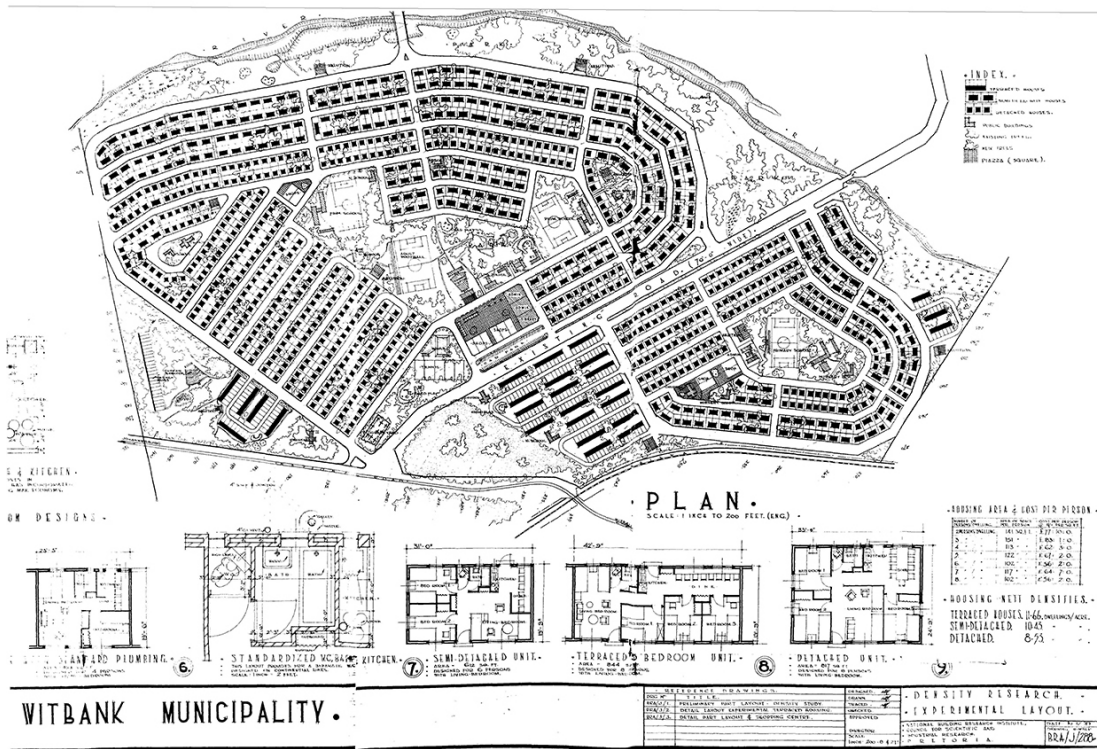
Figure 89. Comparative density studies of terraced, semi-detached, and detached houses for the New Native Township Witbank, 1949. National Building Research Institute Pretoria. *WIReDSpace*.
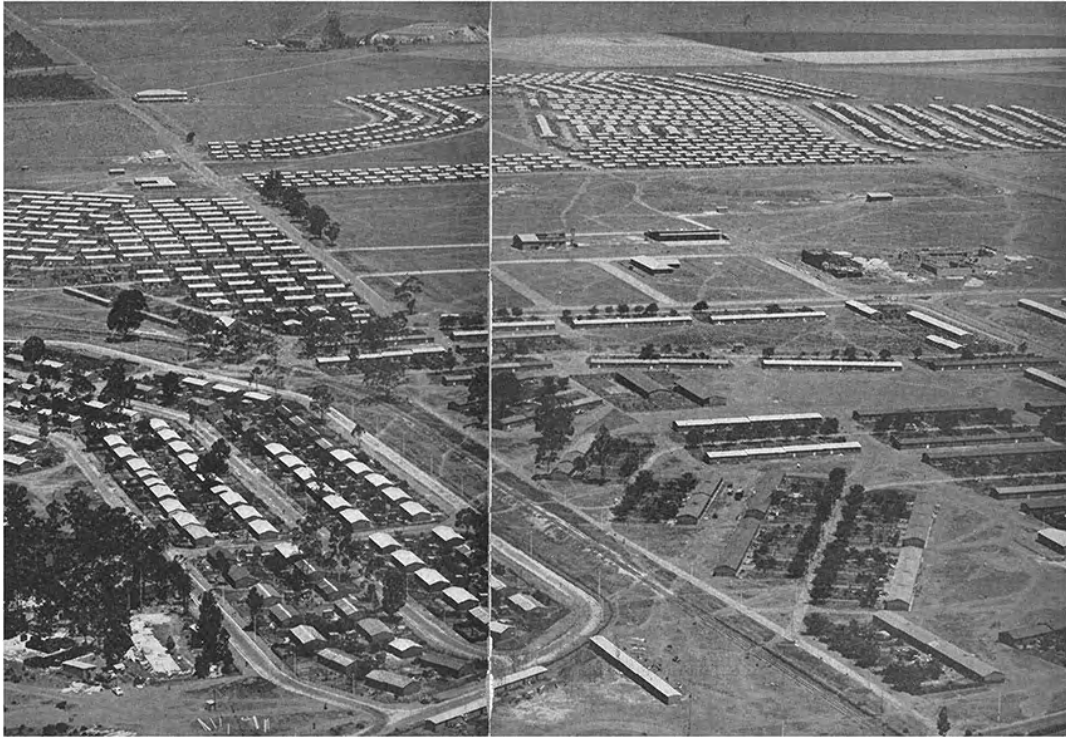
314

Figure 90. Aerial photo of first neighbourhoods in KwaThema, circa 1952. Photo credit: Anon. Springs Chamber of Commerce and Industries, Springs: 25 Years of Industrial Progress (Johannesburg, Felstar Publishing, 1960).
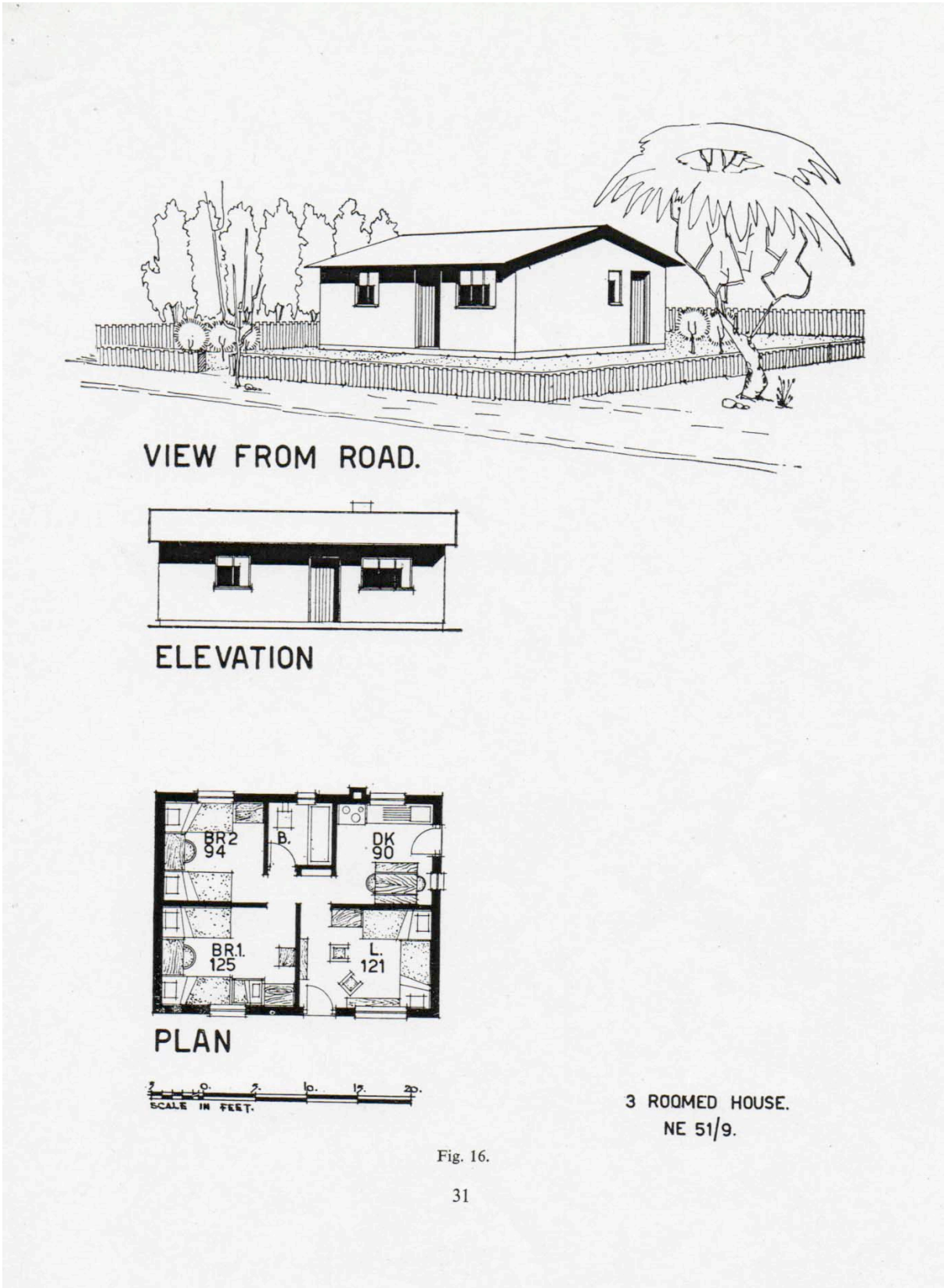
Figure 91. Proposed Row Houses for KwaThema township 1952. Approved by D.M. Calderwood, National Building Research Institute Pretoria. *WIReDSpace.*

VIEW FROM ROAD.

ELEVATION

PLAN

SCALE IN FEET.

3 ROOMED HOUSE.
NE 51/9.

Fig. 16.

31

Figure 92. Three-Roomed House: NE51/9, in D.M. Calderwood's 1953 PhD thesis *Native Housing of South Africa*.

317

Figure 93. NE51/11 Three-roomed non-European Row House with bath, store, dining, and kitchen 6 November 1951 Architect: W. van Beijma. National Building Research Institute Pretoria. *WIReDSpace.*

Figure 94. A square on plan Ndebele Chiefs Hut with murals circa 1940. Approximately 22.5 km from Johannesburg. Leading article; 'Native Housing' by Betty Spence. November 1940, *South African Architectural Record,* Vol. 25, No. 11.
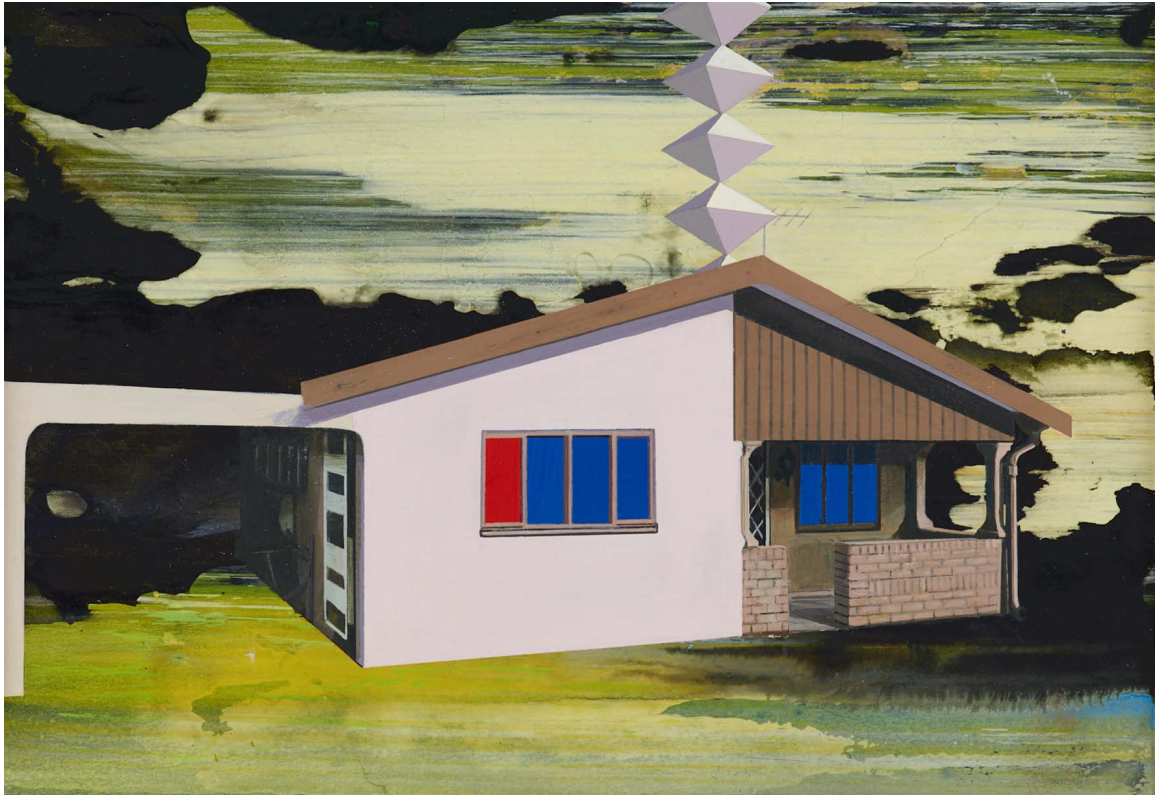
Figure 95. Günther Herbst, *Chatsworth House P24* 2019. Acrylic on paper, 17.5 x 25.5.

Figure 96. Günther Herbst, *House Sandringham* 2020. Acrylic on paper, 27 x 35.6 cm.

Figure 97. Günther Herbst, *Composition with Blue no.1* 2021. NE51/9 house model. Card clay, plasticene, styrene and acrylic paint. Preparatory work in progress for painting.
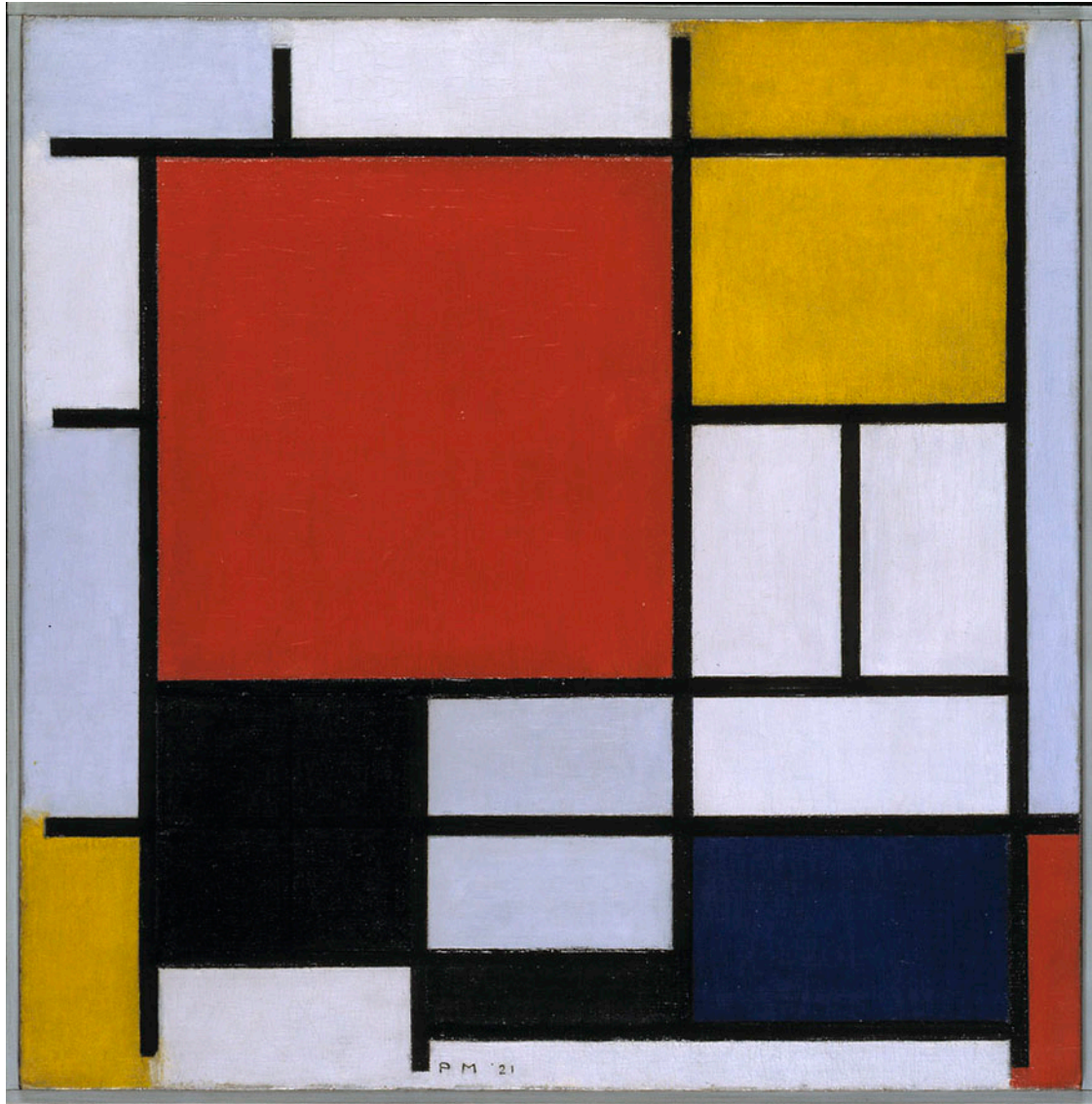
Figure 98. Piet Mondrian, *Composition with Red, Yellow, Blue, and Black* 1921. Oil on canvas, 59.5 x 59.5 cm. Kunstmuseum Den Haag.

323

Figure 99. Günther Herbst, *Circular Composition with Blue, Yellow, Red, Green, Dark Green, Brown, Purple, Black and Vermillion*, 2023. Acrylic on Plywood, 1 m ø. Private Collection.

324

Nearest Ostwald Notation	Nearest Munsell Notation	Colour name	Nearest B.S.S. or B.C.C.	Reflection Factor	Remarks
—	N 9/0	Meadowlands Pale Grey	—	72%	Cool. Neutral. Warm Brickwork.
—		Stone White	B.C.C.223	75%	Warm. Neutral. Cool Brickwork.
g	N 5/0	Meadowlands Medium Grey	—	20%	Cool. Neutral. Receding.
2 gc	10·0YR 7/5	Light Stone	B.S.S.361	43%	Warm. Neutral. Advancing.
5 pg	2·5YR 3/6	Orange Brown	B.S.S.439	11%	Warm. Advancing.
1 pe	7·5Y 6/8	Orchid Green	B.C.C.236	30%	Cool/Warm. Advancing. For accents.
6 pi	±7·5R 3/6	Copper Leaf	B.C.C.204	6%	Warm. Advancing.
23 li	2·5G 4/2	Meadowlands Green	—	12%	Cool. Receding.
15 ie	5·0B 4 or 5/2	Moon Grey	B.C.C.273	16%	Cool. Receding. Fades to 16 ig or 2·5B 5/2. R.F. = 20%.
2 ia	2·5Y 8/10	Meadowlands Yellow	—	59%	Warm. Advancing. For accents.

Above: Table of colour names and standard references.

5. Meadowlands colours, showing correct and incorrect use of contrast.

Figure 100. Top: Meadowlands colour names after nearest Ostwald and Munsell notations.

Below: 'The Correct use of Colour' January 1957, *South African Architectural Record* Vol. 42, No. 1.
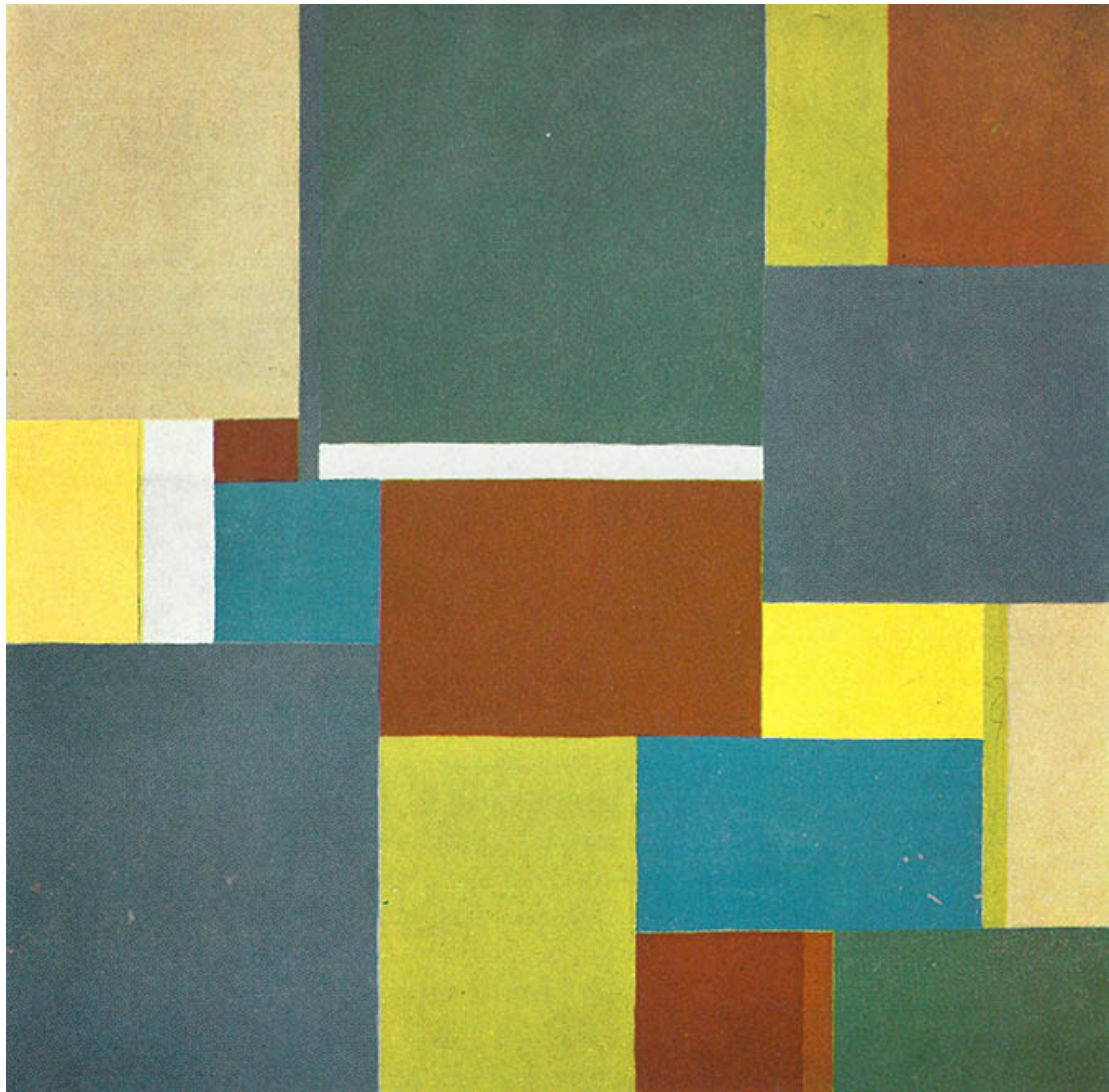
Figure 101. Meadowlands Colour Range, Plascon Paint and Chemical Industries. Experiment to see whether each colour could be placed beside every other colour. January 1957, *South African Architectural Record* Vol. 42, No. 1.

Families of symbols: half-circle...

full circle...

sun...

and rectangle (razor blade).

Figure 102. Wall decoration as a form of resistance in Western Native Township. September 1966, *The Architectural Forum* Vol. 25, No. 2. Courtesy of Peter Beinart.
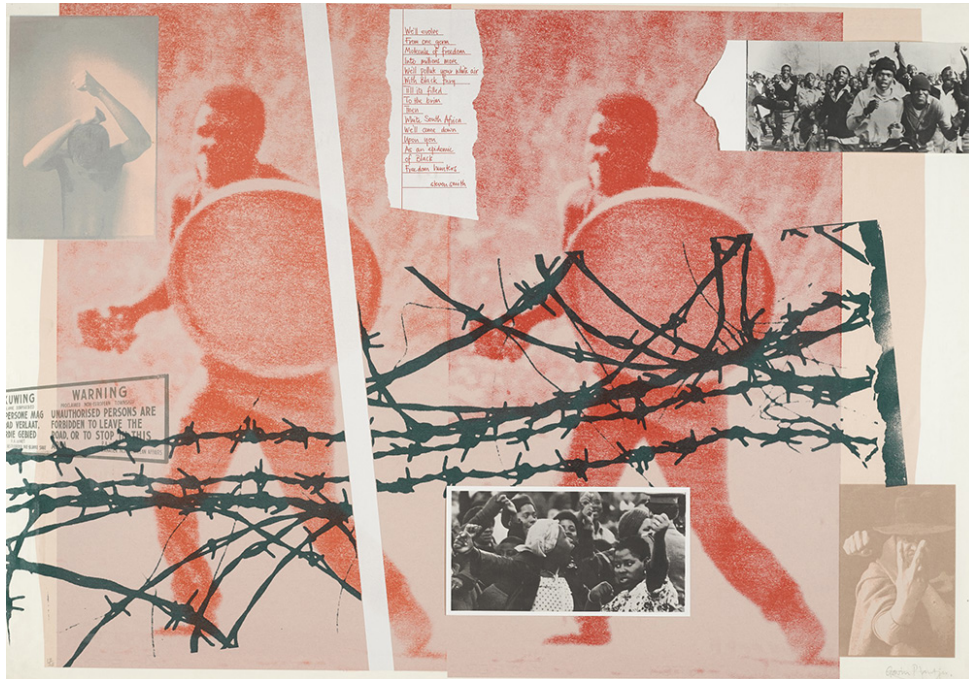
327

Figure 103. Gavin Jantjes, *Freedom Hunters* 1977, screen-print with collage, 68.8 x 100.2 cm. Prints, Drawings and Paintings Collection, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, E.333-1982. © Gavin Jantjes. All Rights Reserved, DACS/Artimage. 2023.

Figure 104. Gavin Jantjes *A South African Colouring Book* 1974–75. Twelve screen-prints on card. Each image 60.2 x 45.2 cm. Tate Collection, purchased 2002. Reference P78646. © Gavin Jantjes. All Rights Reserved, DACS/Artimage. 2023.
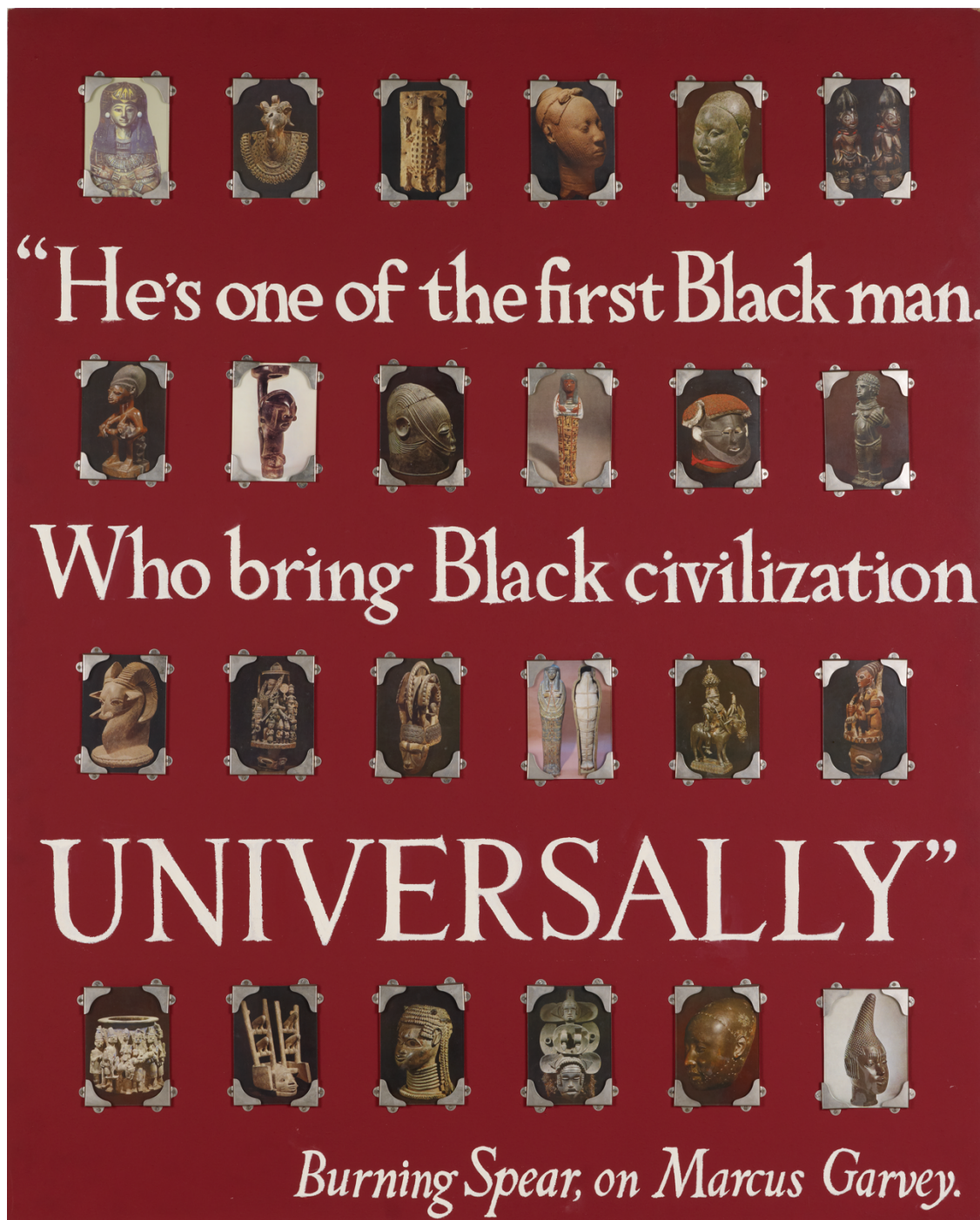
329

Figure 105. Eddie Chambers, *Black Civilisation*, 1988. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © Eddie Chambers.

Figure 106. Keith Piper, *Go West Young Man* 1987, 14 photographs, gelatin silver print on paper mounted onto board, 14 parts, each: 84 × 56 cm, Tate Collection. © Keith Piper.

331

Figures – Appendix

Photographic documentation of Günther Herbst solo exhibition *The Absence of Myth*.

12 January–7 February 2023

Morley Gallery, 61 Westminster Bridge Rd, London SE1 7HT

Photo credit: Jonathan Basset

Figure A1. *The Absence of Myth* installation view 1, 12 February–7 February 2023, Morley Gallery.

Figure A2. *The Absence of Myth* installation view 2, 12 February–7 February 2023 Morley Gallery.

333

Figure A3. *The Absence of Myth* installation view 3, 12 February– 7 February 2023, Morley Gallery.

334

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Figure A4. Installation view of *Circular Composition with Blue, Yellow, Red, Green, Dark Green, Brown, Purple, Black and Vermillion* 2023.
Acrylic paint on Plywood, 1 m ø. 12 February– 7 February 2023, Morley Gallery. Private Collection.

335

Figure A5. *Composition with Blue* 2022. Card, wood, styrene, and acrylic paint, 130.18 (h) x 120 (l) x 60 (d) cm.

Figure A6. *Composition with Fluorescent Red and Blue* 2022. Card, wood, styrene, and acrylic paint, 150.18 (h) x 90 (l) x 60 (d) cm.

Figure A7. *Composition with Grid (Rhomboids*) 2022. Acrylic paint on canvas, 126 x 162 cm.

338

Figure A8. *Composition with Yellow Red and Blue (Rhomboids)* 2022. Acrylic paint on canvas, 126 x 162 cm.

Figure A9. *Chatsworth House P24* 2019. Acrylic paint on paper, 24.8 x 32.8 cm.

Figure A10. *Composition with Grid A (Lozenge)* 2021. Watercolour on paper, 26.3 x 31.6 cm. Private Collection.

Figure A11. *House Kensington* 2019. Acrylic paint on paper, 37.4 x 55.2 cm.

342

Figure A12. *House Windsor* 2020. Acrylic paint on paper, 41.5 x 57.4 cm. Private Collection.

Figure A13. *House Sandringham* 2020. Acrylic paint on paper, 32.5 x 40 cm.

344

Figure A14. *Good Hope* 2022. Acrylic paint on plywood, 45 x 60 cm.

Figure A15. *Monument Proposal #2V* 2017. Acrylic paint on paper, 55.7 x 40 cm.

Figure A16. *Monument Proposal #3Y* 2017. Acrylic paint on paper, 54.5 x 38 cm.

Figure A17. *Tottenham Court Road #3* 2009 – 2022. Acrylic paint on gesso board, 30.4 x 30.4 cm.

Visual documentation showing work in progress for an architectural model of the Dutch

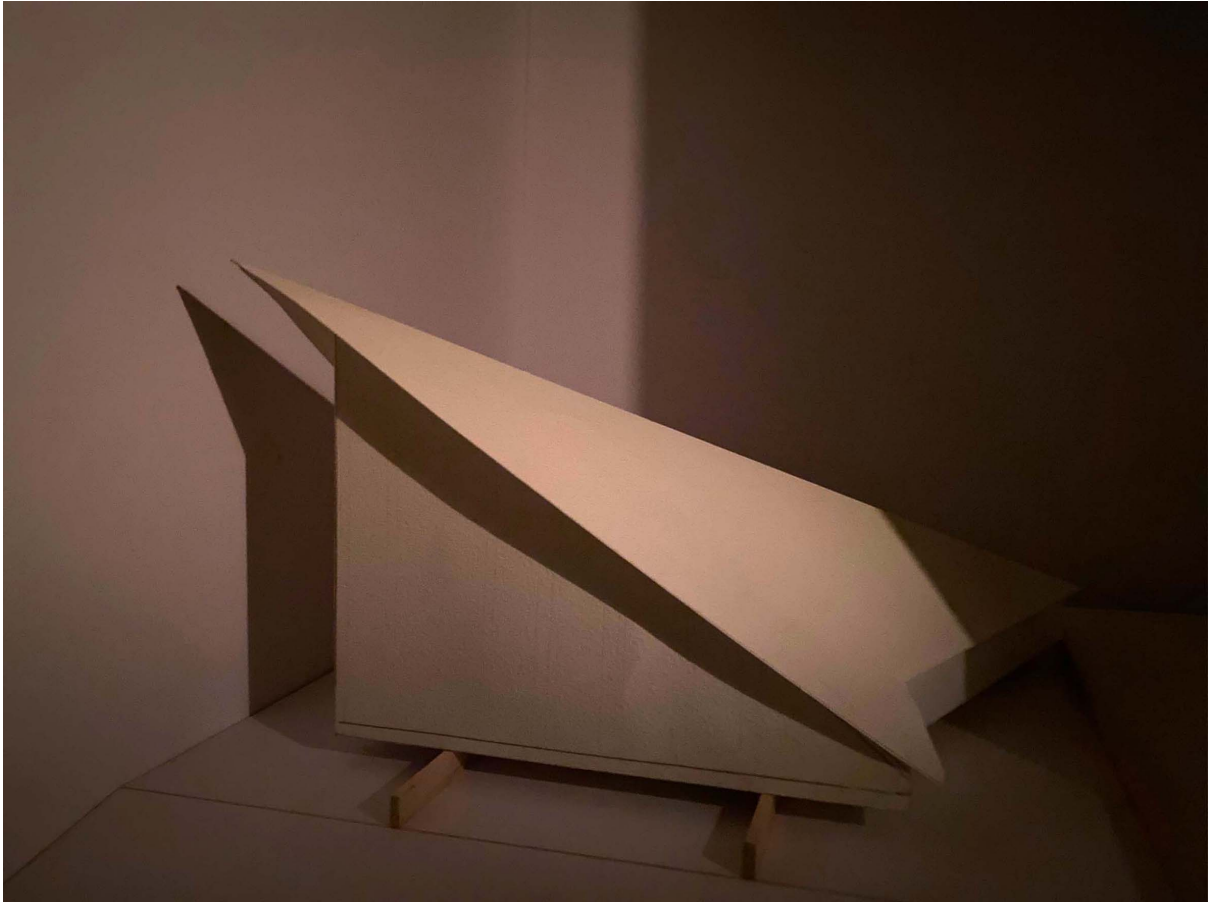Reform Church, Totiusdal, Pretoria. Preparatory work, drawings, and photographic

source material.

Figure A18. Paper and card preparatory model of the Dutch Reform Church, Totiusdal, Pretoria, lit with candlelight 2023. 15.5 cm (h) x
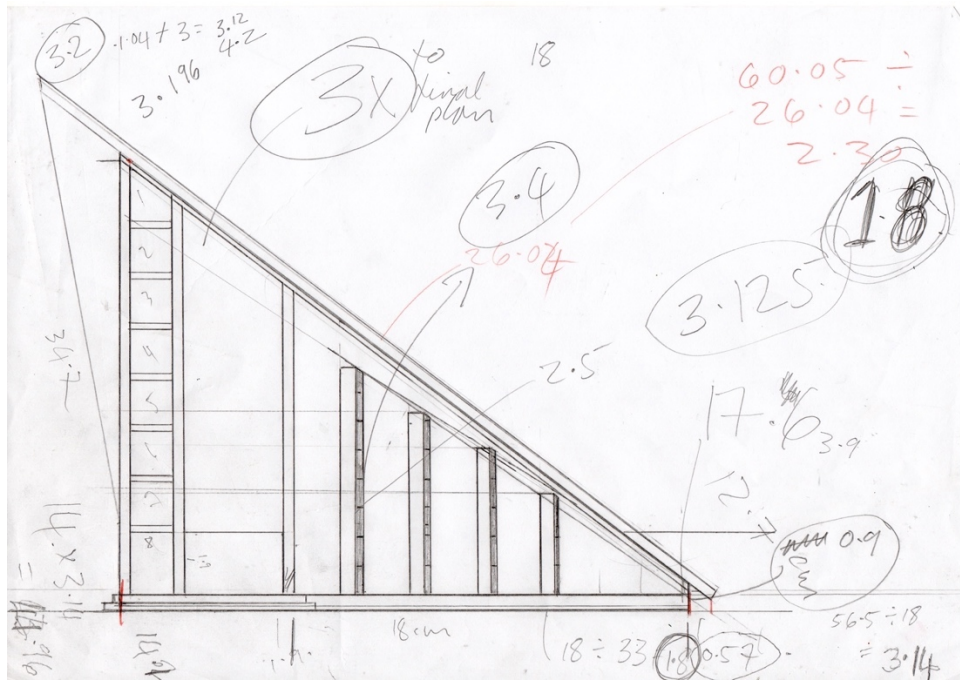26.5 (w) x 35.9 (d) cm.

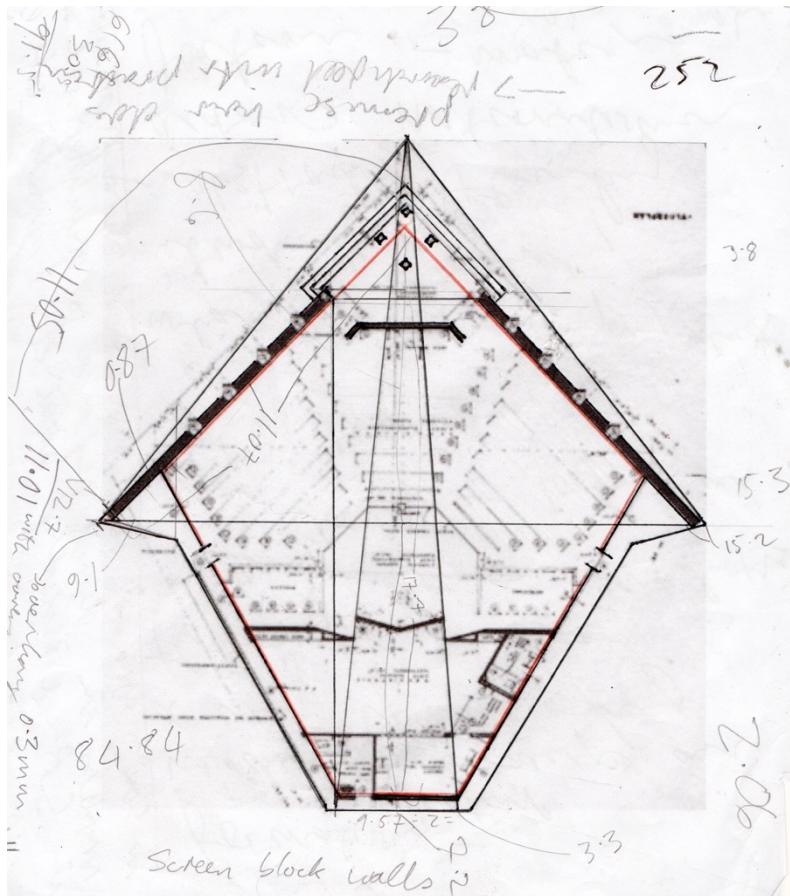Figure A19. Working elevation drawing 2023, 21 x 29.7 cm.

Figure A20. Working floor plan drawing 2023, 23.5 x 21 cm.

350

Figure A21. Gereformeerde Kerk, (Dutch Reform Church) Totiusdal, 6 December 1959, Architect Johan de Ridder.

Photo credit: Anon.

Figure A22. Google Earth reference 31 May 2023. Dutch Reform Church, Totiusdal, Pretoria.

Figure A23. Google Earth reference 31 May 2023. Dutch Reform Church, Totiusdal, Pretoria.