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Hybridity and liminality in selected examples of contemporary South African creative glass practice.

By

Thabang Monoa

Submitted in partial fulfillment for the degree

MAGISTER TECHNOLOGIAE: FINE ART

In the

Department of Fine Art

Faculty of Art Design and Architecture

University of Johannesburg

Supervisor: Prof. Leora Farber

Co-Supervisor: Mr. Gordon Froud

2016
Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation, which I submit for the degree Magister Technologiae (Fine Art) in the Department of Visual Art, Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture at the University of Johannesburg, is my own original work and has not been submitted to any other institution of higher education.

Thabang Monoa

……………………

Date

……………………
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dedicate this study to the memories of Judith and Paul Monoa, Elias Mahome, Spencer Mahome and Baltimore Makhudu.
Abstract

In my theoretical and practical research I explore the notion that a particular strand of contemporary South African creative glass practice,¹ that I have identified, occupies liminal and hybrid spaces that are located within varying categories. Historically, the hierarchical classifications of fine art versus craft have been the predominant categories in which glass practice has been located. I posit that my identified strand of creatively intentioned glass works is non-fixed, mutable and fluid; thus having associations with different categories enabling ‘in-betweenness’ across varying categories² such as design, fine art, craft, decorative, and studio glass.

The theoretical component of the research which takes the form of a dissertation is complemented by a curated exhibition of selected works by glass practitioners, all of whom are South African based and whose works may be argued to display characteristics of hybridity and liminality.

I briefly outline the history of the glass medium (within a South African context) in order to foreground how the various modes of glass practice have developed from their foremost uses in industrial spaces to their subsequent use in artistic endeavors. I discuss these approaches by looking at work by selected glass practitioners namely, American Dale Chihuly, Southern Africans Bongani Dlamini, Lothar Böttcher, Martli Jansen van Rensburg, Retief van Wyk and my own work.

I locate my study within a post-modern and post-colonial paradigm. The notions of liminality and hybridity are the conceptual tenets upon which I base my arguments. I draw upon the writings of anthropologists Arnold van Gennep (1909), and Victor Turner (1967,1960), as well as post-colonial theorist Homi K Bhabha (1994) to support the basis of my theoretical premise. I use the same conceptual tenets to posit the argument that the formal elements of the glass work[s] informs its presentation from a curatorial

¹ For the purpose of this study, I use the term ‘glass practice’ to refer to the process of using the glass medium for aesthetic purposes and achieving aesthetic appeal, irrespective of whether the product or object is designated in fine art, design, craft, decorative and studio glass.

² The terms fine ‘art ’,‘ craft ’,‘ design ’,‘ decorative art ’ and ‘studio glass’ are used to refer to the varying categories.
perspective. This underpins the envisioned discourse to emanate from a curated glass exhibition that accompanies this dissertation.
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Glossary of Terms

Casting

- The process of dripping molten glass into a mould (Coetsee 2002:135).

Craft

- According to Behrens (1984:3) the word craft denotes artworks that are created for functional or decorative purposes.

Crash cooling

- Crash-cooling entails opening the kiln once it has reached maximum temperature and letting air into the kiln until it drops to fewer than 680 degrees. The three main reasons for crash cooling are to (i) avoid devitrification (ii) prepare the kiln for the next firing process and (iii) observe whether the glass piece has slumped to the maker's satisfaction or not.

Decorative art

- Art that is used to decorate or embellish an object that has a practical purpose; as opposed to fine art, which exists as an end in itself (Clarke 2001:74).

Design

- According to Behrens (1984:3) design refers to anything that is planned, arranged, constructed and organised with some intent or goal in mind.

Devitrification

- Crystallisation in glass, which takes place when glass is held at high temperatures (Hemp 1995:173).

Fine art

- Fine arts according to Pooke and Newall (2008:4) has been traditionally been used to differentiate between art that was heavily pioneered by the academy namely paintings, sculptures, drawings and Craft based art.

Gather

- The process of collecting a gob of molten glass from the furnace on to a blowing iron, the iron is then turned until the metal builds up on the tip (Bray 1995:121).
Glass blowing
- The process of shaping glass from a furnace by blowing into a blow pipe (Coetsee 2002:135).

Glass fusing
- The process of heating glass pieces together until they become one, or flow into one another (Coetsee 2002:135).

Slumping
- The process of shaping already fused glass over a mould (Coetsee 2002:135).

Utilitarian
- The Macmillian dictionary (2002:1650) defines utilitarian as something that is designed to be useful rather than attractive.

UV Bonding
- A process where two pieces of glass are glued together using ultra-violet light or activator (Coetsee 2002:135).
Introduction

Background to the study

Creative glass practice can be said to be relatively new in South Africa. In comparison to European countries such as France, and Italy, we do not have a strong tradition of glass practice generally (Pretorius 2000:56). In fact, the earliest signs of glass practice, in the form of ‘studio glass’, can be traced back to the beginning of the 1990s (Pretorius 2002:60).

Magdelene Pretorius (2002:56) notes that in contrast to other countries which have been practicing the art of glassmaking for centuries, and in some cases thousands of years, South Africa only started manufacturing glass in the late eighteenth century. According to Pretorius (2002:57), glass first entered South Africa in the form of beads and ornaments that were used to barter for gold, iron and cattle. Later glass products were imported from other countries. She (Pretorius 2002:57) notes that the arrival of the first Europeans not only saw the colonisation of Southern Africa’s indigenous people, but also the influx of foreign trade taking place. This, to a large extent, also affected indigenous peoples. With the increased number of Europeans settling in South Africa, particularly after the Industrial Revolution, a need for glass products grew significantly (Pretorius 2002:57). Pretorius (2002:57) further mentions that with the industrial boom of gold and diamonds taking place during the nineteenth century, glass containers were imported into the country. This subsequently led to the establishment of the first glass factories.

According to Pretorius (2002:58) the actual manufacturing of glass in South Africa started in the eighteenth century with the pioneer being the South African Glass Company. The next major manufacturer established, in 1883, was named Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek followed by the Cape Glass Company in 1902. Other establishments followed the success of the Cape Glass Company, most notably a glass factory named Pretoria Glass that was started in 1937. This particular factory was important as it subsequently became the nucleus of a company called Consolidated
Glass Works, which today is commonly referred to as Consol. Consol made a major contribution towards establishing the foundation for studio glass in South Africa (Pretorius 2002:60).

Pretorius (2002:60) highlights that studio glass was a late bloomer within South African contemporary fine art and craft; it only emerged as a distinct branch of mainstream fine art and craft in the late 1980s and early 1990s. This dichotomy, which has been at the centre of debates regarding the classification of glass practice, has its foundation firmly rooted in the Renaissance era whereby, in the 15th century, Europe was shaped by notions of intellectual knowledge and individuality. The visual arts were thus viewed as central to the rebirth of the Florentine spirit (Janson and Janson 2004:408).

According to Janson and Janson (2004:408), when Renaissance artists gained admission to a select group of Humanists, they were perceived as people of ideas as opposed to people who merely manipulated materials. Thus, artworks came to be synonymous with being, and were observed as records of creative minds. Emille de Blanche (2011) explains that the idea of a craftsman as a tool, or mere worker, was originally established during the Middle-Ages and thus became popularised during the Renaissance period. The belief was that the craftsman or apprentice focused solely on imitation; that is learning by copying (De Blanche 2014:4).

This dichotomy was even entrenched during the Modernist era during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. It was during this time that the aspect of functionality and user friendliness became one of the key elements in the designing and making of products (De Blanche 2011:9). Fundamentally, the separation of making from meaning and the separation of the arts into categories of higher and lower ultimately put craft, and all that it is associated with, into the least favorable position regarding means of artistic expression (De Blanche 2011:9). According to Norma Broude (1994:208), the concepts of the “decorative” and the “domestic” have, throughout the history of Modernism, always been considered to be “women’s work”. This notion relegated the ‘decorative’ to a form of “low art” from which the Western “high art”, with its supposed moral and spiritual content, was seen as separate and superior. Broude (1994:208) further notes that with the advent of abstract art which gained prominence in the
twentieth century, this dichotomised hierarchy between art and craft, high art and low art, the ‘meaningful’ and the ‘merely decorative’ became difficult to maintain. Broude (1994:208) states that “the struggle to do so became dependent on rhetoric that was both sexist and racist in its insistence upon the ‘virility’ and transcendence of the Western high art tradition and the superiority of that tradition over all non-Western visual expressions”.

The debate was further challenged with the emergence of feminist art in the late 1960s. Roszika Parker (1996:95) notes how the division of art forms into a hierarchical classification of arts and crafts is usually ascribed to factors within the economic and social system, separating artists from artisans. Whilst the fine arts (painting and sculpture) are considered the proper sphere of the privileged classes, craft or the applied arts are associated with the working class. Parker (1996:95) further highlights how the split between art and craft was reflected in the changes in art education from craft based workshops to academies during the eighteenth century at the time when an ideology of femininity as natural to women was evolving.

Seemingly, these categories of art and craft have been historically contested; arguably, this contestation makes it difficult to enable any form of classification. Ingrid Stevens (2007) highlights how renowned theorist William Morris differentiates between the categories of art and craft when clarity and subject demanded it. She notes how, in “The lesser arts”, Morris refers to the “great arts commonly referred to as sculpture and painting” and later in the article takes account of architecture along with these (Morris cited in Stevens 2007:333). He contrasts so-called ‘great arts’ with the ‘crafts’ of house-building, painting, joinery and carpentry, smith’s work, pottery work and glass-making, weaving amongst others (Stevens 2007:333).

According to Stevens (2007:333), efforts at classification need not suggest that one is counter to the dissolving of barriers between cultural forms which is distinctive of both Morris’s approach and of postmodernism. She contends that, in postmodernity, barriers between art, craft design and popular culture have become permeable and are dissolving so that writers, critics and philosophers give attention to a wide range of products and genres.
Stevens (2007:334) exemplifies this dissolution between barriers by invoking aesthetician Richard Wollheim who claims that art can be used as an evaluative term, and has been traditionally used like this in Western art since the Renaissance. In other words, to refer to something as art was in effect to imply that it was excellent. Therefore, a particularly good craft object was given the name ‘art’ but the term should not according to Wollheim (cited in Stevens 2007:334), be used as a term of classification. In that sense, a craft object can be art in an evaluative sense but not in a classificatory sense.

Stevens (2007:333) points out the complexity of defining these two terms that are art and craft. She refers to Robin George Collingwood (1979) who establishes that the definitions of these terms have shifted throughout history (Stevens 2007:334). For the purpose of my study I, however, use some of Collingwood’s explanations in defining these various categories. Collingwood (cited in Stevens 2007:336) defines ‘art’ as the construction of an imaginary object which can be shared through imagination. Similarly, he describes craft as the power to “produce a preconceived result by means of consciously controlled or directed action”. He argues that craft involves a distinction between means and end (once the end or product has been reached, then the means, that is the methods, tools, machines and so on, cease to be off importance), between planning and execution (the result is preconceived before being arrived at); and between the raw material and the finished product. In that understanding, design or preplanning is an aspect of this definition of craft. Thus, craft is an integral part of design.¹

The understanding of creative glass practice as either art or craft is still a discourse of critical engagement. Internationally as well, movements such as Glass Secessionism²

¹ Stevens (2007:336) writes that design can be defined as a noun, i.e. “a plan or scheme conceived in the mind and intended for execution; the preliminary conception of an idea that is to be carried into effect by action, a pattern, the artistic idea as executed, adaptation of means to ends the outline process of work etc., or simply a verb, i.e. to make a preliminary sketch which workmen follow”.

² “Glass Secessionism” is a movement initially started by Tim Tate on Facebook with the purpose of creating a space for showing, discussing and defining secessionist works, for example works that are based in mix media and time based electronics (Tate 2013:[sp]). Tate (2013:[sp]) states: “Its objective is to advance glass as applied to
uphold similar views that suggest that creative glass practice is at a point in its trajectory where it is now fully integrated into ‘fine art’. Drawing inspiration from Photo-Secessionism, Glass Secessionism moves away from the technique dominated culture of studio glass. Founder of the movement Tim Tate (2013:sp) states:

We respect good technique, and understand its importance in creating great art from glass. However, we believe that great art should be driven primarily by artistic vision, and technique should facilitate the vision. For too long, technique has driven the majority of studio glass. As Secessionists we do not seek to isolate ourselves from other artists working in glass, but to enhance the field as a whole.

Tate (2013:sp) claims that there are a few things he, as a creative glass practitioner, seceded from; one of them being “the continual tedious discussion of the ‘art’ and ‘craft’ binary.” Taking cognisance of differing definitions and varying interpretations around these terms, I posit that nearly three decades on, contemporary South African creative glass practice has arguably evolved beyond the parameters of these two categories. This dichotomy has become somewhat outdated in locating the practice within the broad South African visual arts landscape. I question where contemporary South African creative glass practice can be located and if it is possible to conceive of a selected strand of works as having associations with various categories such fine art, craft, studio glass, design, and decorative art?

My dissertation is thus based on the notion that a selected strand of contemporary South African creative glass practice that I have identified, occupies a space of ‘in-sculptural expression; to draw together those glass artists practicing or otherwise interested in the arts, and to discuss specific examples of the Glass-Secession or other narrative work”.

3 Michael Langford (1982:334,336) remarks that Photo-Secessionism, in comparison to other secessionist movements of Photography was dedicated to the promotion of American photography largely in competition with European and British work. Secondly, it was dominated by one person, Alfred Stieglitz, rather than by the group. Under Stieglitz’s influence, Photo-Secessionist photographers sought to elevate photography from the scientific realm into an art form.

4 For the purpose of this study, I use the term ‘creative glass practice’ to refer to the process of using the glass medium for aesthetic purposes and achieving aesthetic appeal, irrespective of whether the product or object is designated in fine art, design, craft, decorative art and/or studio glass.
betweenness’ across varying categories. This space is explored mainly through the concepts of liminality and hybridity. I argue that this selected body of glass work eludes fixed classification and therefore has associations with categories such as design, fine art, craft, decorative art, and studio glass. Historically, the hierarchical classifications of fine art versus craft have been the predominant categories in which glass practice has been located. For that reason, I contextualise this strand as being placed in a space of ‘in-betweenness’ across varying categories\(^5\) that extend beyond the fine art and craft dichotomy.

Through the interrogation of selected works by specific glass practitioners, namely American Dale Chihuly, and Southern Africans\(^6\) Bongani Dlamini, Lothar Böttcher, Martli Jansen van Rensburg, Retief van Wyk, and myself, I argue how selected works by these practitioners could be rendered non-fixed, fluid, liminal and hybrid. The rationale behind choosing these practitioners lies in the different ways in which they make their glassworks. They are skilled professionals who employ diverse approaches such as blowing, casting, polishing, UV bonding, slumping\(^7\) and kiln forming amongst others. My investigation of their technical/conceptual processes is essential to my argument which posits their works as ‘in-between’.

Chihuly is internationally acclaimed for his monumental glass installations which are mostly blown. His works are renowned for having the versatility of being exhibited in galleries, museums, hotels, and parks. Dlamini, Van Wyk, and Jansen van Rensburg are glass practitioners who mainly employ glass blowing to create works that have associations with categories of fine arts, craft and design. Böttcher is a practitioner who is highly versed in the intricate processes of glass cutting, polishing, grinding and UV bonding. He is renowned for his sculptural forms which are mainly considered fine art

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\(^5\) Throughout this study, I use the terms fine art, design, craft, decorative art and studio glass to refer to these varying categories.

\(^6\) I use the term ‘Southern African’ in consideration of the fact that Dlamini is a Swaziland national who lives and practices in South Africa.

\(^7\) According to Coetsee (2002:sp), slumping involves shaping already fused glass over into a mould. With regards to slumping in relation to my glass sculptures, slumping involves shaping already fused glass over a wire structure.
due to their presentation in a gallery context. Lastly, my works are more sculptural and
could also be argued to have associations with categories such as fine art, craft, and
studio glass. I believe selected works by these practitioners contextualise what I term a
selected body of work in a space of ‘in-betweenness’.

Research statement

Contemporary glass practice in South Africa seems to be precariously positioned in
terms of its hierarchy within creative artistic practice. The prevailing notion seems to be
that it is positioned in the categories of fine art or craft. My study posits that a strand of
selected works, by specific glass practitioners in contemporary South African creative
glass practice could be considered to be fluid, to elude fixed categorisation and thus
reside in a space of ‘in-betweenness’, wherein the works have associations with
categories such as fine art, craft, design, decorative art and studio glass. Additionally,
the curation of these works could also be considered as ‘in-between’ with regards to the
actual space wherein they are curated.

Rationale

Within the broader context of arts in South Africa, glass practice has historically been
regarded as ‘craft’ and as such deemed an inferior practice in comparison to the so-called ‘high arts’ of painting and sculpture. This is largely due to its infant existence as a
formalised practice.

The South African historical and contemporary theoretical discourse is largely devoid of
a discourse on glass practice. There is minimal literature that expands on the practice of
contemporary creative glass, and even less on its curation. The need for my study is
validated on this premise; there is yet to be a fully-fledged scholarly discourse that
critically engages with contemporary creative glass practice. My study is thus timely, as
an overview of contemporary South African art production suggests that there is an

Interestingly, section 1 of the Principal Act of the newly published Copyright Amendment Bill, denotes glass work,
along with works of pottery, sewing, knitting, crochet, jewellery, tapestry, woodwork, lace work, embroidery,
paper tolling, folk art and hand-made toys as ‘craft works’. This amended version was published on the 27 of July
2015 for broader public comments.
emergence of glass practice, and that more artists are employing the glass medium in their artistic productions than ever before.

My personal investment in this study is rooted in my observations and experiences from when I was a student who majored in glass during my undergraduate studies at the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT). As part of the ‘Work Integrated learning’ programme (WIL)\(^9\) initiated by the institution, I worked with glass lecturer and subject leader, Retief van Wyk between 2012 and 2013. I observed that the range of glassworks he produced varied with regards to classification. The objects differed, from glass paperweights, trophies, blown vessels, and blown plates, to name but a few. Although the glass objects were mainly made for specific clients, his personal work could be associated with categories such as fine art, design, and decorative art. Consequently, these objects were also different in their pricing. I thus began to speculate that the works he produced were not bound to fixed categories. For me, they were non-fixed and fluid. They seemingly straddled between various categories based on different associations.

**Theoretical framework**

My study is positioned within a post-colonial and post-modern framework. I strategically use post-colonial theory to structure an argument that posits a selected strand of works that I have identified, made in glass, as non-fixed and fluid thus occupying an ‘in-between’ space across different categories. Furthermore, I contend that the curation of this strand can also be considered ‘in-between’ based on the actual space where the exhibition takes place.

My study broadly foregrounds the notion of ‘in-betweenness’. This notion is explored through the overarching concepts of liminality and hybridity as theoretical frames. With regards to liminality, I employ Victor Turner’s (1967, 1969) conception of liminality which augments Arnold van Gennep’s (1909) earlier articulation which explains three stages in the process of initiation (also referred to as the rights of passage) that denotes the

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\(^9\) The WIL programme at TUT was aimed at encouraging students to gain experience mainly in the subjects they majored in. I carried out my WIL under the mentorship of the subject leader and glass lecturer Retief van Wyk who has his own glass studio located at the institution’s glass department.
transition from boyhood to adulthood namely the pre-liminal, liminal and post-liminal (Adjaye cited in Kruger 2011:158).

Turner (1969:95) problematises and re-establishes the importance of the middle or transitory phase during the rights of passage during which liminal personae elude or slip a network of classifications that normally locate both states and positions in cultural space. Similarly, I use some of the key terms and concepts employed in post-colonial theory by seminal post-colonial theorist, Homi K Bhabha (1994) to further foreground this ‘in-betweenness’. His concepts of ambivalence, mimicry and the ‘Third Space of Enunciation’ (hereafter the ‘Third Space’) form an integral part of my argument that give a rounded account of his interpretation of hybridity.

Bhabha, who is widely acknowledged as a post-structuralist theorist, provides the appropriate vocabulary to support my argument that a particular strand of contemporary South African creative glass practice, that I have identified, is fluid and non-fixed. In Bhabha’s sense, “hybridity is the process by which the colonial governing authority assumes to translate the identity of the colonised ‘Other’ within a singular universal framework” (Meredith 1998:2). Paul Meredith (1998) contends that a new hybrid identity emerges from the process of elements interweaving between the coloniser and the colonized (Meredith 1998:2). Bhabha’s hybridity is closely linked to his assertion of the ‘Third Space’ which he posits as an interrogative space whereby new forms of cultural meaning take place. Subsequently these meanings blur the limitations of existing boundaries and call established categorisations of culture and identity into question (Meredith 1998:2).

I particularly use Bhabha’s articulation of hybridity for its difference in comparison to other conceptions of the term. In the colonial sense, the term hybridity carries a negative connotation that represents a kind of ‘mongrelisation’ that disrupts racial purity (Van Wyk 2015:18).

To augment this argument, I further employ Bhabha’s ideas of mimicry and ambivalence. The idea of mimicry broadly denotes a ‘copying’ of sorts. However, mimicry does not merely refer to imitation (Becker 2009:25). Bhabha (cited in Becker
2009:25) affirms this by denoting that mimicry is the exaggeration of the copying of ideas, language, manners and culture of the dominant culture that subsequently differentiates it from mere imitation. Similarly, Bhabha’s idea of colonial ambivalence, drawing from Fanonian and Freudian understandings, foregrounds an ‘in-between’ space that engenders the process of hybridisation.

**Literature Review**

**Writings on contemporary South African glass practice**

In my study, I acknowledge that there is a significant gap in scholarship around contemporary South African creative glass practice. Due to this paucity, there is minimal literature that engages with works by the practitioners discussed in this study.\(^\text{10}\) However, I highlight three Master’s dissertations by Doreen Hemp (1995) Magdelene Pretorius (2002) and Marileen van Wyk nee Benhardt (2005) as seminal. The first two dissertations are arguably concerned with discussing the development of ‘glass art’ whereas Benhardt’s dissertation is focused more on exploring the possibility of ‘glass art’ becoming an academic qualification in a higher institution in South Africa. However, I draw mostly from Pretorius’ text which provides an expansive background concerning the development of creative glass practice in South Africa from its earliest use in industrial spaces to studio glass practice. Similarly, I draw partly from Hemp’s dissertation which focuses on techniques and processes in contemporary glass art.

**Liminality and Hybridity**

In my broad discussion of ‘in-betweenness’, I review works by Victor Turner (1967, 1969, 1982) and Homi Bhabha. The selected texts by these two theorists provide sound theoretical basis on which I anchor my arguments throughout the dissertation. As a precedent to Turner’s work, I also foreground Van Gennep whose inaugural text that discusses three phases of the initiation process, inspired Turner’s work which problematises the middle or second phase of the rites of passage. As an extension of

\(^{10}\) I make brief mention of *Leading Trends in Studio Glass* (2005); a catalogue that showcases works by some of the practitioners engaged with in my study such as Lothar Böttcher, Retief van Wyk and Martli Jansen van Rensburg. Van Wyk’s foreword in the catalogue sheds some light into the trends in studio glass practice.
Turner work, I use Arpad Szakolczai’s (2000) treatise which, in contrast to Turner’s application of liminality as a ‘phase’, explores the possibility of liminality being a ‘permanent state’. This is particularly relevant to some of the discussions carried out in my third chapter where permanent liminality is claimed to be operational in selected works.

I further explore ‘in-betweenness’, in the form of hybridity, through some of Bhabha’s other notable ideas such as the ‘Third Space’, ambivalence and mimicry. I acknowledge other accounts of hybridity in Robert Young’s (1995) historical overview of the term stemming from a colonial context, and Nicholas Papastergiadis (1995) summary of cultural hybridity in colonial and post-colonial contexts (Van Wyk 2015:23). However, I specifically use Bhabha’s account of hybridity for its close relation to the idea of the ‘Third Space’ which is grounded on Bhabha’s ideas of ambivalence and mimicry, which expand on identities and their non-fixities. In addition to this, I also predicate Bhabha’s conception of hybridity on Young’s (1995) discussion of Mikhail Bakhtin’s (1981) model of linguistic hybridity that I apply in my discussions of processes of making and selected works by practitioners such as Chihuly and Dlamini. In the same vein, I apply Bhabha’s understanding of hybridity to my explanation of the space which hosts my MTech exhibition.

To strengthen my own understanding of my argument on contemporary South African creative glass practice occupying an ‘in-between’ space across varying categories and furthermore, the interface between liquidity and solidity, I acknowledge an article by scholar Keith Dietrich (2011) and review another by Andrew Brewerton (2004). Dietrich (2011:5) employs the same theoretical frames of liminality and hybridity to locate artist’s books within varying categories. He states: “artists’ books lie at an intersection of disciplines in visual arts, literature, poetry, illustration, graphic novels etcetera. Henceforth they transgress boundaries of orthodox book forms entering fields of sculpture, installation and performance etcetera. I am particularly interested in Dietrich’s approach which argues for the non-fixity and fluidity of artist books beyond certain categories. Similarly, Brewerton (2004) expands on the lost wax process in relation to the glassworks of French glass practitioner Antoine Lepelier. In his essay ‘Touching the
‘Void’, Brewerton explores the interface between liquidity and solidity found in the latter’s work, which are ideas also operational in my own work.

Curatorship

The practical component of my study takes the form of a curated glass exhibition. Herein, I also acknowledge the paucity of literature that specifically deals with the curatorship of contemporary South African creative glass practice. However, I formulate my discussion around the notion of the white cube hang system. I use Brian O’Doherty’s (1976) text to expand on how the white cube is a mode of curation that my study is antithetical to, and instead gestures towards a more explorative curatorial process. My discussion of this explorative mode of curation, which I posit as subversive towards the white cube, is substantiated on Bhabha’s notion of mimicry.

Methodology

In this study, my theoretical component is conducted within a qualitative paradigm and is conducted within both post-modern and post-colonial frameworks. My study is multidisciplinary as I draw from theories related to anthropology, sociology, post-colonialism and art. I undertake my research through visual analyses, critical literature analyses, primary and explorative research.

I conduct critical literature analysis of the definitions of key terms and theories surrounding the notions of liminality and hybridity as espoused by Van Gennep, Turner, and Bhabha. In addition to these, through selected works by Szakolczai and Bakhtin (discussed by Young), notions of permanent liminality and organic and intentional hybridity are also explored in order to construct an argument around the premise of the study. Similarly, the visual analyses I undertake is to examine the formal qualities of the works, and the processes undertaken in making the works in order to locate aspects of ‘in-betweenness’.

I use primary research in the form of unstructured and semi-structured interviews and in some instances observation as methods of acquiring information on how the practitioners work, and what approaches they employ when making their works?
Observation is particularly relevant to the glass practitioners who employ glass blowing in their creative practice. In the practical component of my study, I use exploratory research wherein the outcomes of my curation are unknown due to the organic nature of the curatorial process. As a result, the process in itself is hypothetical with the results being unknown.

**Project description**

The practical component of my research consists of a curated glass exhibition comprising of works by Böttcher, Dlamini, Jansen van Rensburg, Van Wyk, myself and other invited glass practitioners, such as Rina Myburgh, Kgotso Pati, Mike Hyam, Greg Miller, Ryan Manuel, Iwan van Blerk, Liesl Roos, Chonat Getz, Pfunzo Sidogi and Marileen van Wyk.

The premise behind my exhibition is to communicate the idea of ‘in-betweenness’, through the presentation of the works. My curation thus employs the notions of liminality and hybridity in relation to the space in which the works will be exhibited. To extend this thread of ‘in-betweenness’, I use various methods and devices such as lighting, hanging, and presenting the works on alternative materials in order to subvert traditional white cube conventions. This is the context in which mimicry and hybridity are predicated; likewise liminality is used to argue how the exhibition can be conceived to be in an ‘in-between’ space that enables the subversion of hierarchies as manifest Turner’s idea of *communitas*.

**Aims and Objectives**

My underlying aim in this study is to argue that a selected strand of works in contemporary South African creative glass practice is fluid and thus non-fixed in terms of classifications and therefore occupies a space of ‘in-betweenness’ across various categories simultaneously. Based on this conjecture, this strand of glass practice and its curation occupies liminal and hybrid spaces. My primary objectives are to:
• Formally analyse works by Chihuly, Böttcher, Dlamini, Jansen van Rensburg, Van Wyk and my own in an attempt to argue the fluidity of this selected strand across varying categories.
• Discuss the intentions, processes, approaches and conceptual narratives in the practitioner’s works.
• Set up a theoretical framework for this strand of glass practice based on the notions of liminality and hybridity.
• Curate a comprehensive glass exhibition of works by selected contemporary Southern African creative glass practitioners whose works I contend communicate this ‘in-betweenness’ across varying categories.

Chapter Outline

In this introduction, I present the nature of my study. I explain my research statement, subsequently detailing my rationale, aims and objectives, methodology, literature review, project description and theoretical framework that underpins the study. In addition, I include a brief discussion that highlights the limitations of the study.

In the first chapter, I discuss the broad notion of ‘in-betweenness’ using mainly the theories of liminality and hybridity as articulated by Van Gennep, Turner, Bakhtin and Bhabha, respectively. I further draw from the writings of Szakolczai who discusses the idea of permanent liminality as an extension of Turner’s conception of liminality. Additionally, I explicate Bhabha’s concepts of the ‘Third Space’, mimicry and ambivalence in order to advance a holistic understanding of the term hybridity and how it is applied in my study. Furthermore, this explication of Bhaba’s application of hybridity is anchored in Bakhtin’s conception of linguistic hybridity. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a theoretical framework for my arguments that follow in Chapter Two.

In the second chapter, I undertake a visual analysis of selected works (including my own) and make use of semi-structured interviews with the practitioners who made the works. I do this in order to argue how this selected strand of glass practice could be considered fluid, mutable, and non-fixed, thus residing in a space of ‘in-betweenness’ across varying categories. I examine various approaches by each practitioner and offer
an explanation of how the conceptual and technical uses of the medium indicates how the specified works can be either liminal and/or hybrid.

In the third chapter I discuss the practical component of my study and focus on the curation of works that are arguably ‘in-between’. In addition, I also explore the ‘in-betweenness’ of the space in which these works are exhibited. In my discussion, I foreground the white cube system of presentation and argue how my curation attempts to communicate a sense of ‘in-betweenness,’ and is thus different to the former system. Following this chapter, I provide brief concluding notes.

**Limitations of the study**

My intention in this study is not to provide an extensive historical overview of contemporary South African glass creative practice as done by Pretorius’, nor do I focus on its educational aspect as does Benhardt. Though, Hemp’s dissertation is useful in as far as providing insight into processes and techniques in studio glass, and in some cases insight into the processes of practitioner Chihuly, her text nonetheless problematises glass as ‘art’ which I am not doing in my study. These three studies\(^\text{11}\) can be considered seminal in this field; however, the addressed concerns of these respective studies are not within the scope of my research.

My research is further restricted to the glass practitioners whose works I discuss in the study. I acknowledge that there are other glass practitioners such as David Reade and Nelius Britz who practice and have studios in spaces such as Cape Town and Durban. However, I engage strictly with selected glass practitioners located in Gauteng, a decision based on the logistics and practicality of easy access to their studios and exhibited works.

\(^{11}\) Benhardt (2005) undertook a research project that explored the possibility of introducing and developing a fully-fledged glass course in a higher education institution in South Africa. Her dissertation, completed at the Tshwane University of Technology, is titled *Glass Art as an academic qualification in a higher Education Institution in South Africa*. Similarly, Pretorius’ (2002) dissertation was also completed at the Tshwane University of Technology (then Technikon Pretoria). Her’s was titled *Studio glass in South Africa*. And lastly, Hemp’s (1995) dissertation, titled *Process in Glass: a study of some technical and conceptual issues*, was completed at the University of South Africa.
In the practical component of my study, I do not conduct an extensive historical overview of exhibitions of craft objects. However, I highlight an exhibition by Ricky Burnett (1985) which is widely considered to be the first South African exhibition to showcase craft work alongside fine art in a traditional gallery space as well as exhibitions by Gordon Froud (2004), Retief van Wyk (2005, 2013), and the ArtEC Gallery (2013) that showcased contemporary glass art.\footnote{See chapter 4 for more clarification of these acknowledged glass exhibitions.}
Chapter One

Defining ‘in-betweenness’

Introduction

Is it liquid or solid? Is it ‘art’, ‘craft’ or more?

The two aforementioned questions have contextualised both my theoretical and practical pre-occupation with a selected strand of contemporary South African creative glass practice. In this chapter I provide an explication of the theories of liminality and hybridity which I employ throughout my study.

Historically, drawing from Magdelene Pretorius’ dissertation, there is a solid suggestion that glass, as a material, was mostly utilised in industrial spaces, and thus the earliest use of the material was for creating functional, industry-manufactured, products (Pretorius 2002:57-58). However, as the material developed, expanded and was utilised in other fields such as fine art, craft, design, decorative art, studio glass and functional artefacts, the categorical classifications of creative glass endeavors have become widely contested.

The premise of my argument is that the simplistic classification of glass artefacts as being either ‘art’ or ‘craft’ has become obsolete. This dichotomous framework of reference is, in my opinion, problematic as it renders the creative use of the glass material within a binary structure. Whilst acknowledging this binary, my study, instead, argues for the fluidity of a selected strand of glass works across varying categories. As a glass practitioner, I have observed the fluid nature of the material whereby an object, made with creative intention, attains characteristics of, and associations with, various categories. In this non-fixed state, the object is arguably suspended in an ‘in-between’ space. Extensive reading around, and application of the terms liminality and hybridity, accompany this configuration.

These theoretical tenets are the frameworks from which I argue that a selected strand of works in contemporary South African creative glass practice, and its curation thereof, resides within a liminal and hybrid space. Thus, my aim in this chapter is to deconstruct
these two theories and apply them to my selected strand existing (in) between varying categories.

It is important to note that the theoretical models I employ are articulated from different frameworks, mainly anthropology and post-colonial theory. Accordingly, I discuss the notion of liminality as understood and applied in anthropology and sociology by theorists such as Van Gennep, Turner and Szakolczai. I do the same with the notion of hybridity with reference to selected theories by Homi Bhabha and Mikhael Bakhtin. The former theorist occupies greater presence in this chapter because I also employ his ideas of mimicry, ambivalence and the ‘Third Space’. Thus, the scope of this chapter is limited to the aforementioned theories unless otherwise stated.  

**Liminality**

Liminality broadly denotes a state of ‘in-betweenness’. The word is derived from the Latin word ‘limen’ that refers to threshold (Liminality [sa]). This notion was first articulated by anthropologist Arnold van Gennep. Van Gennep’s conception of liminality unfolds in his expansive study of initiation rites such as those carried out by the Ndembu tribe of Zambia. In his seminal text titled *Rites of Passage* (1909), he foregrounds the process that takes place when neophytes undergo a process of initiation from boyhood to manhood. According to Turner (1982:24), Van Gennep explores this process of initiation through three phases, namely: separation, transition and incorporation. The first phase (which is also known as the pre-liminal phase) of separation demarcates a sacred space and time that stands apart from profane or secular space and time. It includes symbolic behavior, particularly symbols of reversal or inversion of things, relationships and processes.

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13 The theories I engage with in this chapter are to some extent concerned with the notion of identities and their (non) fixity. In this regard, I acknowledge other theories that engage with non-fixed identities such as Stuart Hall’s constructivist identity theory (1994, 1996, and 1997). However, I reiterate that my scope in this chapter is limited to the discussed theories and theorists.

14 The word threshold according to the Macmillian English dictionary (2002:1560) means (a) a level at which something happens (b) a limit at which an arrangement changes.
which represents the detachment of the ritual subjects (novices, candidates, neophytes or initiands) from their previous social statuses.

Turner (1982:24) claims that the intervention (second) phase, which is also referred to as the "marginal" or "limen" is in Van Gennep’s conceptualisation the phase where the ritual subjects pass through a period and territory of ambiguity, a form of social limbo which has some attributes of either the preceding or subsequent profane social statuses or cultural states. He (Turner 1982:24) further claims that the third phase which Van Gennep refers to as “reaggregation” or “incorporation”, includes symbolic phenomena and actions which represent the return of the subjects to their new relatively stable and defined position.

Turner is generally recognised as having rediscovered the importance of the second (transitional) phase of Van Gennep’s analysis. Turner (1969:95) claims: “[T]he attributes of liminality or liminal personae (‘threshold people’) are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through a network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space”. According to Turner (1969:95) “liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are ‘betwixt and between the positions’ assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention and ceremonial”. Turner likens liminality to occurrences such as death, being in the womb, invisibility and eclipse of the sun or moon.

Turner (1969:168) distinguishes between two types of liminality, (i) liminality that characterises ‘rituals of status elevation’, wherein the ritual subject or neophyte is being irreversibly conveyed from a lower to a higher position within an institutionalised system of positions and (ii) liminality frequently found in cyclical and calendric ritual, usually of a collective kind, in which at certain culturally defined points in a seasonal cycle, groups or categories of persons who habitually occupy low status in a social structure are positively enjoined to exercise ritual authority over their superiors; they, in turn, must accept with will their ritual degradation. He describes this as ‘rituals of status reversal’.

To put it more succinctly, Turner contrasts the liminality of the strong (and getting stronger) with that of the liminality of the permanently weak. In effect, the liminality of
those going up usually involves a putting down or humbling of the neophyte as its principle cultural constituent; simultaneously, the liminality of the structural inferior has a symbolic elevation of the ritual subjects (neophytes) to positions of eminent authority (Turner 1969:168). The stronger are made weaker; the weak act as though they are strong. Thus the liminality of the strong is socially unstructured or simply structured; that of the weak represents fantasy of structural superiority (Turner 1969:168). “Liminality implies that the high could be not be high unless the low existed, and he who is high must experience what it is like to be low” (Turner 1969:97).

It is important to note that during the liminal stage normally accepted differences between participants such as social class and hierarchies are de-emphasised or disregarded (Turner 1969:97). I posit that this process of hierarchical proliferation presents an interesting aspect in Turner’s thought. His dialectic incorporates an ‘unstructured’ or rudimentarily structured community within the liminal period; he uses the Latin term ‘communitas’,\textsuperscript{15} which broadly connotes an ‘area of common living’ to refer to this manifestation (Turner 1969:96). Turner (1969:126, emphasis added) clarifies; “for me, communitas emerges where social structure is not”. It is therefore conceivable to render communitas as the product of ‘anti-structure’ or that being the refusal of structure.

Turner’s configuration of the neophyte occupying an ‘in-between’ space is applicable to my postulation which speculates that a selected strand of glass works has associations with various categories. I operationalise his idea of ‘rituals of status elevation’ in the curatorial aspect of my study wherein works are displayed in a manner that is arguably

\textsuperscript{15} Turner (1969:132) distinguishes between three forms of communitas, namely spontaneous (or existential), normative and ideological communitas. He claims that both normative and ideological communitas are already within the domain of structure. He gives meaning to these three terms and identifies: (I) spontaneous communitas by making reference to what the hippies would call “a happening” and what William Blake might have referred to as “the winged moment as it flies (Turner 1969:132) (2) Normative communitas occurs when, under the influence of time, a need to mobilize and organise resources, and the necessity for social control amongst the members of the group in pursuance of these goals, the existential (‘happening’) becomes organised into a perduring social system and (3) Ideological communitas, which is a labeling one to variety of utopian models of societies based on existential communitas. Turner (1969:132-133) notes that structure tends to be pragmatic and this-worldly; communitas is often speculative and generates imagery and philosophical ideas. An example of this contrast is the kind of normative communitas that characterises the liminal phase of tribal initiation rites. Therein lies great simplification of social structure which is accompanied by a rich proliferation of ideological structure.
devoid of hierarchies. In this sense, hierarchical proliferation abounds, which consequently brings about his idea of *communitas*.

In his seminal texts, Turner (1967, 1969) identifies liminality as both a ‘phase’ and a ‘state’. Whilst the former can be said to denote the transitory stage during rites of passage as initially conceived by Van Gennep, Turner proposes, in the latter, “a relatively fixed or stable condition” thus foregrounding the possibility of liminality becoming permanent (Turner 1967:93). This idea, I posit, is a significant yet often unexplored point of departure in Turnerian thought. I explore this trajectory and link it to my discussion of Bhabha’s concept of the ‘Third Space’.

**Hybridity**

Felipe Hernandez (2010) explains that the term hybridity can be traced to biology whereby it refers to the mixture of two species (Hernandez 2010:58). Leora Farber (2012:37) expands on this and asserts that the term has its origins in the nineteenth century as part of a convention of rational choices wherein it was used to refer to mixed-race offspring. Farber, paraphrasing Robert C Young (2012:37), writes that hybridity was closely linked to Social Darwinism, which was prevalent from 1860 and promoted racial purity and the concept of white supremacy. My discursive interest, however, lies in exploring this notion from a post-colonial perspective. Accordingly, I employ the conceptual tenets inherent in post-colonial theory, as espoused by Bhabha.

Hybridity has various connotations that go beyond the generalised understanding which posits that the mixture of two or more elements combine to form a new one. On the contrary, Bhabha’s application of the term posits that it refers to “a site of cultural productivity that emerges on the margins of culture, between cultures, and as such,

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16 See chapter 4 for a greater explication of this discussion.

17 The notion of permanent liminality, which I discuss later in this chapter, may be attributed to sociologist Arpad Szakolczai. Szakolczai (2000:218) upholds the necessity to expand the concept of liminality from its narrow application and meaning as the middle phase of rites of passage into a broader concept, arguing that modernity is in a state on permanent liminality. His treatise (2000) gives credence to the comparability and familiarity of concepts of structure, order and institution in relation to those espoused in rites of passage. However, for developing the notion into a proper conceptual tool, he proposes that the concept needs to develop from small scale ritual settings and be extended to real-world large scale liminality (Szakolczai 2000:218).
becomes a site or space where culture constantly undergoes re-articulation and reconstitution" (Hernandez 2010:58). Conversely, this reading also suggests that hybridity could be considered as a sign of impurity, the result of a mixture of a combination which does not have the same status as the original (Hernandez 2010:58).

Nikos Papastergiadis (1995)\textsuperscript{18} and Mikhail Bakhtin (cited in Young 1995) also present critiques of hybridity; whilst I acknowledge both interpretations, I engage with Bakhtin who augments the use, meaning and application, of the term hybridity from a linguistic perspective to Bhabha’s. Bakhtin (cited in Young 1995:20) problematises the notion of hybridisation, which he refers to as a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousness’s, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by another factor.

Bakhtin (cited in Young 1995:20) subsequently describes hybridity as the process whereby there is “authorial unmasking of another’s speech, through language that is ‘double-accented’ and ‘double styled’. He distinguishes this concept by fragmenting it into two dissimilar strands, namely intentional hybridity and unconscious (or organic) hybridity. In organic hybridisation, there is mixing and fusion, yet in such situations; the mixture remains mute and opaque, never making use of conscious contrasts and oppositions. He suggests that this unconscious form of hybridity gives form to new forms of amalgamation rather than contestation and likens this to the term ‘creolisation’\textsuperscript{19} (Bakhtin cited in Young 1995:21-22).

Bakhtin (cited in Young 1995:22), is, however, also concerned with a form of hybridity that has been challenged and politicised, that is, hybridity as separation and division. In contrast to organic hybridity whereby the mixture merges and fuses into a new language, world view or object, intentional hybridity sets different points of view against

\textsuperscript{18} Sophia van Wyk (2015:23) notes that Papastergiadis summarises the history of cultural hybridity in colonial and post-colonial contexts and identifies subtle differences and shifts in how the term has been applied in these contexts. See Restless Hybrids (1995), pages 9-18 for a more expansive reading of this summary.

\textsuperscript{19} Young (1995:21) describes the term ‘creolisation’ as the imperceptible process whereby two or more cultures merge into a new mode.
each other in a conflictual structure, which retains a “certain elemental, organic energy and openendedness”. Young (1995:22) clarifies that Bakhtin’s double form of hybridity provides a dialectical model for cultural interaction: an organic hybridity which tends towards fusion. This is in conflict with intentional hybridity which engenders contestatory activity; a politicised setting of cultural differences against each other dialogically. According to Young (1995:22), the very concept of hybridity is in itself an example of hybridity, a ‘doubleness’ that merges together, fuses, but also maintains separation.

Young (1995:22) points out that for Bakhtin, the crucial effect of hybridisation comes with the political category, the moment whereby one voice is able to unmask the other within a single discourse. This is the juncture where authoritative discourse becomes undone. Authoritative discourse, as Bakhtin argues, “is by its very nature incapable of being ‘double-voiced’, for if it were, then its single-voiced authority would be immediately undermined, therefore, it must be singular” (Bakhtin cited in Young 1995:22).²⁰

Bakhtin’s ideas, particularly organic hybridity, are useful for my explications on the processes deployed by the various practitioners. I use organic hybridity to explain how their making processes, both conceptual and technical, are arguably hybrid. This idea is particularly relevant to the practitioners who specialise in glass blowing. I argue that their works are carried out through a hybrid process that is arguably mechanical and conceptual, and straddles between planned and non-planned.

For the purpose of my study, Bakhtin’s literary model of hybridity can be understood to be a precursor, or similar, to Bhabha’s interpretation of the concept. Young (1995:22-23) discerns that Bhabha has shifted the subversion of authority through hybridisation to the dialogical situation of colonialism, where it describes a process that that “reveals the

²⁰ According to Fred Evans (2008:86), Bakhtin uses the terms ‘monoglossia’ and ‘heteroglossia’ to define these phenomena (single and double voiced authority). He associates ‘monoglossia’ with the development of a “unitary master language” and the processes of socio-political and cultural centrification. Furthermore, he associates the term ‘heteroglossia’ with the stratification of social languages and the ongoing development of generational, professional, and other forms of social differentiation. David Paton (2012:6) contends that ‘heteroglossia’ takes two general forms, firstly the form of social languages and, secondly, of different national languages within the same expression.
ambivalence at the source of traditional discourses on authority”. Young (1995:22) comments that in Bhabha’s sense, “hybridity becomes the moment in which the discourse of colonial authority loses its univocal meaning and finds itself open to the trace of language of the other.”

In order to facilitate a holistic reading of Bhabha’s conception of hybridity as an ‘in-between’ space, I briefly discuss some of his other notable and equally important ideas. These include mimicry, ambivalence and the ‘Third Space’ all of which are relevant to my research.

**Mimicry**

Hernandez (2010:65) abbreviates Bhabha’s concept of mimicry in order to contextualise the emergence of hybridity as mimetic colonial strategy. He highlights that a critical examination of Bhabha’s two essays, namely *Of mimicry and Man* (1994) and *Signs taken for Wonders* (1994), reveal that both concepts are theorised along the same methodological framework, and both have the same purpose, namely to unsettle the basis upon which claims for colonial authority are made.

Accordingly, I employ a similar approach as I move into a fully-fledged discussion of Bhabha’s hybridity. Hernandez (2010:65) asserts that if the notion of mimicry refers to the process of doubling (the purpose of the civilising mission); hybridity represents the cultural products of such an imbalanced and contradictory (ambivalent) process.

Expanding on his conception of mimicry, Bhabha (1994:122) writes that the menace of mimicry is its double vision which in revealing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts authority, yet simultaneously, mimicry conceals no presence or identity behind its mask. Under the maxim ‘almost the same but not quite’, Bhabha (1994:123) explains that mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of negation. This truism, however, does not merely ‘rupture’ the discourse, but

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21 According to the Macmillian English dictionary (2002:952), the word mimetic denotes copying the movements, appearance, or style of something.
becomes transformed into an uncertainty which fixes the colonial subject as a ‘partial’ present. Mimicry is thus “the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline appropriates ‘the Other’ as it visualises power, therein lies its effectiveness” (Bhabha 1994:122).

For Bhabha, colonial mimicry implies the desire for a ‘reformed’ ‘Other’, as a subject of difference that is ‘almost the same but not quite’ (Hernandez 2010:64). It emerges that mimicry, as a demonstration of the coloniser’s strategy to create a ‘double’ of itself in the colonised subject, functions as the very indication by which this ‘almost the same’ is acknowledged as being ‘not quite’ and, therefore unsuitable. Therefore if mimicry is the desire for a subject who is ‘almost the same but not quite’, then hybridity is the term Bhabha uses to represent those discriminated identities which signal the ambivalence of the colonial project (Hernandez 2010:65). Bhabha (1994:122) clarifies this in his assertion that “the concept of mimicry is constructed along an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference.” It is this area of slippage and difference that I am interested in with regards to my discussions on this selected strand of contemporary South African glass practice.

**Ambivalence**

The notion of ambivalence, as applied by Bhabha, can be traced to or located in psychoanalysis. Hernandez (2010:40) explicates that the use of psychoanalytic

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22 By ‘partial’ Bhabha (1994:123) suggests that mimicry becomes ‘incomplete’ or ‘virtual’.

23 My application of the term ambivalence does not relate to the term ambiguity. The latter, according to the Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy (1994:13) connotes having one meaning, where a single term has two meanings.

24 The term psychoanalysis broadly connotes various theories that are related to conscious and unconscious psychological processes (Jordaan and Jordaan 1989:23-24). Austrian born psychologist Sigmund Freud was largely integral to the formation and thus the development of the concept. Freud acknowledged that consciousness comprised thought, emotional and desire processes, but insisted that these processes occur unconsciously. This means that whatever a person does or experiences consciously, or by accident, even that which a person dreams, is in actual fact a result of unconscious desires, wishes and feelings. This position brought about an important shift of emphasis that can best be described as the ‘discovery of the unconscious’. Several branches developed from Freud’s position, amongst others the individual psychology of Alfred Adler, the analytic psychology of Carl Jung, and the socio-psychological views of neo-Freudians such as Karen Horney, Harry Sullivan and Eric Fromm (Jordaan and Jordaan 1989:23-24).
theories, particularly in critiques of colonialism, is not limited to the work of Bhabha. He mentions Frantz Fanon, Gayatri Spivak, Stuart Hall and Edward Said as post-colonial theorists who have also employed the use of psychoanalysis in order to advance critiques of colonialism as well as other forms of domination such as neocolonialism and imperialism. Fanon’s work, however, is integral in contextualising the broad understanding of colonial ambivalence that Bhabha draws from.

Hernandez (2010:40) highlights Fanon’s inaugural treatise *Black Skins White Masks* (1952) as an essential text that presents a contradictory condition in the position of the black self in relation to the white other. Furthermore, it reveals an internal conflict in the colonised subject who speaks, behaves and dresses like the ‘white master’ (that being the mask), but remains differentiated (discriminated against) on the basis of the colour of their skin. Seemingly, being black remains a sign of variance and a reminder of inferiority (Hernandez 2010:40).

Hernandez (2010:40) posits that the title of Fanon’s book demonstrates the impossibility of fully realising the colonial enterprise of creating colonised subjects who are different by skin colour but European in their education manners and taste. I find this assertion resonant with Bhabha’s (1994:123) maxim ‘almost the same but not quite’. What emerges from this predicament is a subject caught ‘in-between’, simultaneously integrated and rejected by the dominant system yet unable to return to any previous state prior to colonisation; a state from which colonial subjects have been removed permanently. 

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25 This Fanonian understanding can further be traced back to sociologists’ William Edward Burghardt Du Bois’ (commonly referred to as W.E.B. Du Bois) notion of ‘doubleness’ or more specifically ‘double consciousness’, particularly in consideration of the idea of identity. Rutledge Dennis (2003:15) notes that Du Bois transforms the idea of double consciousness from its nineteenth-century psychological and literary contexts and applies it to what he perceives to be the persistent duality of African-American life in the United States. Dennis (20013:15) further highlights two distinct ‘double consciousness’ themes presented by Du Bois that can be deciphered; one being the nature of two opposing forces, namely the African and the European; the second offers the possibility of a synthesis of the two opposing forces suggesting that unity may yet emerge from great disunity. Dennis subsequently argues that the first theme represents a strand of Du Bois’ thought that remained nationalistic and race-specific in its overtures, whilst the second represented a more generalised and universal approach.
It is this specific contradiction inherent within colonial discourse that constitutes Bhabha’s ambivalence (Hernandez 2010:41). Whilst it is important to establish that Fanon’s critique places focus on an internal conflict that is experienced by the colonised subject, that being the desire to be white, he, simultaneously, acknowledges a discrimination that prevents the realisation of that desire, Bhabha, however, situates ambivalence in the contradiction between the colonisers’ desire to see themselves repeated in the colonised subject and the rejection of that repeated ‘Other-the’ translation, or copy in order to retain their authority (Hernandez 2010:41). In this sense, Bhabha’s notion of ambivalence accurately problematises the self/other dichotomy which can be further explored through psychoanalysis.

Freudian psychoanalytic theory argues that no identity is distinct or complete, on the contrary, all identities are torn within themselves, occupied by external conflicts and contradictions: hence they are ambivalent. This explains one of Bhabha’s most celebrated contributions to post-colonial discourse: the dismantling of the dichotomy between self and other, which is represented in the identities of the coloniser and the colonised (Hernandez 2010:41). In this strand of psychoanalysis, ambivalence refers to the coexistence of two contradictory instincts, or desires, particularly love and essential hate; furthermore it is different from indecision, wanting one thing whilst simultaneously coveting another. In Bhabha’s critique, colonial discourse is characterised by an inherent contradiction, an ambivalence that occurs in the process of constructing authority through the representation of colonised subjects (Hernandez 2010:45).

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26 Bhabha uses the term ‘narcissistic demand’ to refer to this phenomenon.

27 Hernandez (2010:24-26) explains that the idea of translation brings forth a wide range of issues regarding the relationship between colonised and the coloniser. He points out that for Bhabha, the concept of translation is instrumental in developing a deconstructive critique of colonialism; that is a critique that reverses the position of two primary participants in the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised. This, as Hernandez notes, is extremely useful in challenging the predominance assigned to the ‘original’, which in his work amounts to the coloniser’s culture.

28 Hernandez (2010:45) posits that an early manifestation of ambivalence occurs during the Oedipus phase; when the child adores one of their parents and consequently dislikes the other; boys adore their mothers and see their fathers as sexual rivals while girls love their fathers and perceive their mothers as contenders for their father’s love.
The concept of ambivalence is particularly applicable to my discussion of my own work wherein I posit its functionality. Similarly, I use the idea of mimicry in my discussion of the actual exhibition space *Art it is,*²⁹ wherein I argue how certain aspects of the space have similarities to the white cube mode of presenting artworks but it is not a conventional white cube gallery. In this vein, mimicry is operationalised to denote how my curation is almost like the white cube but not quite. However, in this chapter, discussions of these two concepts are precursors to Bhabha’s notion of the ‘Third Space’ and hybridity.

**The ‘Third Space’**

The term ‘Third Space’ is another of Bhabha’s key concepts. Hernandez (2010:89) observes that Bhabha does not offer an extensive explanation of this concept, though, he presents it as the “precondition for the articulation of cultural meaning”, thereby situating the ‘Third Space’ in the middle of his discussions on cultural difference and cultural productivity.

Bhabha’s theorisation of the ‘Third Space’ can be equated to his explication of the concept of hybridity. Bhabha (cited in Hernandez 2010:89) claims that “hybridity is the ‘Third Space’ which enables other positions to emerge”. These two concepts can be easily confused and conflated with one another however Bhabha argues that the ‘Third Space’ is an attempt to ‘spatialise’ the liminal position it represents; in other words it gives tangibility to the ‘in-between’ space where hybridisation occurs, and from where hybrid designations emerge (Hernandez 2010:90).

In light of this assertion, I posit that fixed categories become disputed in the ‘Third Space’. Bhabha (1994:54) states: “the intervention of the ‘Third Space’ destroys a mirror process of representation in which cultural knowledge is revealed as an integrated, open and expanding code”. This results from the structure of meaning and reference being an ambivalent process. For Bhabha, it is only when we understand that all systems are constructed in this contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation that

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²⁹ *Art it is,* is a multipurpose space which I am planning to use for my MTech exhibition (*Thresholds (in) between Glasses*). The space, located in the suburban area of Parkwood, Johannesburg, is used as a residential space, an architectural firm and an art gallery. I discuss this space in Chapter Three.
we can begin to understand why the hierarchical claims to the originality or purity of cultures become untenable (Bhabha 1994:54).

Bhabha (1994:55) asserts: “[i]t is in fact this Third Space, though unrepresentable, that constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that meanings and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated; translated rehistoricised and read anew”. Acheraiou (2011:90) augments this by stating that in its actual formulation, the ‘Third Space’, like hybridity, engenders a space where subversion, displacement, and newness disclose, thereby allowing for new possibilities.

Seemingly, the ‘Third Space’ is not a space that can be entered nor left; the view that the ‘Third Space’, in fact, has no physicality,30 Hernandez (2010:93) notes that Bhabha himself renders it as unrepresentable, more importantly he designates it as a site of negotiation, contestation and re-articulation. His interpretation is solidified in his assertion that continuous/constant negotiation is a pertinent feature of this space.

Thus, refuting any suggestion of this space being in any way resolute, Bhabha equates the ‘Third Space’ with a liminal site between contending and contradicting positions (Hernandez 2010:93-95). Farber (2012:39) augments this assertion by advancing that connections can indeed be made between the concepts of the ‘Third Space’ and liminality, with the idea of ‘in-betweenness’ being the common feature of the two. However, in consideration of Bhabha’s designation of the ‘Third Space’ as a site of constant/continuous negotiation, I propose, within the boundaries of my study, that the

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30 To qualify this assertion I invoke Edward Soja’s (cited in Hernandez 2010:96) conception of the ‘Third Space’ which is also informed by the ideas of theorist Henry Lefebvre. As a geographer, Soja is interested in exceeding the restrictions found in the polarity between first and second space. ‘First space’ is generally understood as all forms of direct spatial experience, that is, those spaces that can be measured and demonstrated cartographically. ‘Second space’, on the other hand, ‘refers to the spatial representations, cognitive processes as well as modes of construction, which gives rise to the birth of geographical imaginations’. Soja’s invocation of Lefebvre suggests that space is produced through three interconnected processes: spatial practice, representations of space and representational spaces. With this proposition, Hernandez (2010:96) highlights Lefebvre’s basis for ‘triallecal’ thinking; a way of conceiving space that includes not only its abstract qualities but also its historical and social dimensions. For Soja, the conception of the ‘Third Space’ provides a different kind of thinking about the meaning and significance of space and those related concepts that compose and compromise the inherent spatiality of human life: location, locality, landscape, environment, home, city, region, territory and geography (Hernandez 2010:96).
‘Third Space’ can also be considered to be a form of permanent condition or state. In this regard I invoke sociologist Arpad Szakolczai’s conception of permanent liminality which takes up the baton from Turner’s speculation of ‘fixed liminality’.

Szakolczai (2000:220) foregrounds situations which correspond to the three different, albeit speculative, types of permanent liminal situations which correspond with to the three phases of rites of passage, namely the phases of separation, transition and reaggregation. Liminality in Szakolczai’s sense becomes a permanent condition when any of these phases in this sequence becomes frozen or fixed. This can happen both with individuals undergoing an ‘initiation rite’ and with groups who are participating in a collective ritual or ‘a social drama’. If freezing should occur in the first phase, then the individuals or the collective of humans will be stuck in the rites of separation.

He (Szakolczai 2000:221) advances the possibility of individuals or groups being stuck permanently in the second phase of the rites of passage. He invokes Turner who argues that theatre performances are a closer analogy to actual rituals than the terminology of functionalist anthropology. He states: “[t]he latter takes for granted an understanding of rituals as being purely ceremonial, with the rehearsing of a fixed scenario written in certain decorum and not the actual performance of real humans.” In more specific terms, functionalist anthropology attempts to understand simple rituals from the perspective of a ritual where liminality has already become a permanent condition. The middle phase of a ritual is therefore, the actual performance or “the ‘staging’ of the ritual” (Szakolczai 2000:221).

Szakolczai (2000:222) goes on to present a speculative condition that happens when such a ritual becomes permanent; when individuals become stuck in their roles which they must ‘play’ onwards for the rest of their lives. He asserts that the ‘play’ character of the ritual dissolves. Individuals are henceforth required to identify with the roles they are thought to play all the time, all their lives and subsequently, their roles will become their lives. The mechanical performance as such then becomes permanent, which means that the ‘actors’ then remain in the presence of each other. For Szakolczai, everything

31 It is important to note that the discussion of permanent liminality by Szakolczai is from a modernist perspective and that he foregrounds modernity as being in a state of permanent liminality.
becomes visible and transparent to everyone else; human beings become interdependent due to the conditions of living on a stage.

Lastly, Szakolczai (2000:223) provides an example of a third type of permanent liminality by foregrounding the Soviet-type Bolshevism which he posits is another periphery of modernity. He argues that the communist regimes in Europe and Asia were established under a particular condition; the end of a world war. He advances that if wars are liminal situations in which the cycle of violence escalates, then the closing stages of a war, particularly the process of reconstruction that starts after warfare, can be conceived of as a rite of reaggregation.

This reading of both the ‘Third Space’ and permanent liminality underscores my discussion of Bhabha’s hybridity; “perhaps no other term has been more powerful in post-colonial theory than hybridity” (Hernandez 2010:58). Hernandez (2010:58) observes that Bhabha affords immense capacity to the notion of hybridity.

The generalised understanding of the concept merely posits it as a mixture between two or more elements in the formation of a ‘third’ or another one.\(^\text{32}\) This reductionist view is antithetical to Bhabha’s view which acknowledges multiple connotations which are intrinsic to the term. It refers to “a site of cultural productivity that emerges on the margins of culture, and between cultures” (Hernandez 2010:58). Akin to the notion of the ‘Third Space’ where cultural elements are re-articulated, reconstituted and negotiated within the process of hybridity, this process can be said to be constant or continuous. Henceforth, as opposed to disappearing in a merger, processes of cultural hybridisation perpetuate difference and, indeed, multiply it.\(^\text{33}\) Hernandez (2010:58-59)

\(^\text{32}\) Hernandez (2010:59) mentions that such an interpretation of hybridity may arise from the meaning it has in Biology where it refers to a mixture of species, for example a mule, the offspring of a male donkey and a female horse. This analogy he renders a fitting example as it shows how this interpretation puts an end to the process of hybridisation (as mules are almost always infertile). But more importantly, it confirms the idea of inferiority, because mules are not the same as horses which are the ‘pure’ and ‘original’, hence, the superior predecessor of the mule. Hernandez goes on to further clarify that this understanding of hybridity has negative effects in the era of colonialism when ‘mixed race’ peoples were heavily discriminated against and, often, considered dangerous precisely because they were neither black nor white.

\(^\text{33}\) Bhabha’s assertion may seem contradictory to the notion of organic hybridity as argued by Bakhtin (see pages 22-23) based on the latter’s pronouncement that it gives rise to new forms of amalgamation as opposed to contestation. I, however, reiterate that Bhabha’s explication – with its similarity to the idea of Third Space goes
comments that this subsequently places theoretical effects on the term hybridity itself; it helps to dismantle the binary systems of cultural analysis; furthermore it unsettles the idea that cultures are, or once were, homogenous.

Having foregrounded the conditions in which colonial hybridity emerges through my earlier discussions of Bhabha’s ideas, I deem it appropriate to reiterate Bhabha’s (1994:159-160) own definition(s) of the term. In his treatise Signs Taken for Wonders, he states:

Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (that is, the production of discriminatory identities that secure the ‘pure’ and original identity of authority). Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. It displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination. It unsettles the mimetic or narcissistic demands of colonial power but replicates its identifications in strategies of subversion that turn the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of the power.

This loaded definition strongly suggests a reversal or de-stabilising of sorts. Hernandez (2010:66) clarifies this by highlighting that hybridity changes from being derogatory to being subversive. In Bhabha’s view, hybridity is no longer the sign of the ‘inappropriate’ which implies the existence of a pure or original culture, but rather a sign of cultural productivity which destabilises both the ideas of originality and purity. In other words, Bhabha uses hybridity as a theoretical means to subvert the assumption that the ‘mother culture’ is a uniform cultural concept that is uninhibited by differences. Thenceforth, through heterogeneity, Bhabha opens up a field where the authoritarian text (or the authoritarian claim) can be misinterpreted, misread and misappropriated by a multiplicity of peoples (Hernandez 2010:65-66).

beyond organic hybridity in that it is, as Bhabha (cited in Hernandez 2010:93) declares, a site of continuous/constant negotiation, contestation and re-articulation. My intention is not to contest nor compare these ideas but to use them in their original contexts to anchor my discussions and applications of different forms of ‘in-betweenness’.

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What I find useful in Bhabha’s articulation of the ‘Third Space’ and hybridity is the dismantling of dichotomies or in this instance, binaries. Bhabha (cited in Farber 2012:38) writes that the hybrid strategy is synonymous with neither assimilation nor collaboration; rather it opens up a space of negotiation wherein power relations are imbalanced, enabling the emergence of an ‘interstitial’ agency that negates any form of binary representation.

My broad discussions of Bhabha’s concepts are predicated on this important aspect; the dismantling of the binary between art and craft. As mentioned earlier, this binary, in my opinion, has become obsolete in as far as critiquing creative glass practice. Drawing from his application of ambivalence, mimicry and the ‘Third Space’; my argument conceives an ‘in-between’ space of difference for a selected strand of contemporary South African creative glass practice.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, my main aim of this chapter, which is to discuss various theories around ‘in-betweenness’, has been realised through broad discussions of liminality and hybridity. At the centre of my discussions is the focus on foregrounding a marginal space that engenders aspects such as subversion, difference, contestation and newness. It is in this space that I posit a strand of works in contemporary South African creative glass practice as fluid, non-fixed and mutable. This selected strand can thus be understood to have associations with varying categories, beyond art and craft, such as fine art, design, craft, decorative art and studio glass.

I apply some of these theories in my next chapter wherein I discuss how they are operational in selected works. In the next chapter, I conduct both visual and descriptive analyses of selected glass works. I examine both the formal aspects of the glass artefacts and the way they are made in order to locate aspects of ‘in-betweenness’.
Chapter Two

Locating ‘in-betweenness’

Introduction

In this chapter I discuss how selected Southern African glass practitioners, namely, Lothar Böttcher, Retief van Wyk, Bongani Dlamini, Martli Jansen van Rensburg, myself, and American glass practitioner Dale Chihuly create glass works. In this chapter, I strategically position Dale Chihuly as an international practitioner whose works arguably straddle between various categories such as fine art, craft and studio glass. His inclusion in my study is premised on wanting to have an international comparison to the Southern African practitioners discussed in my study. Chihuly is also one of the foremost contemporary creative glass practitioners in the world. I consider the various conceptual and technical approaches employed by these glass practitioners in order to identify aspects of ‘in-betweenness’\(^{\text{34}}\) in both the working processes and the final works.

I make use of two distinct methodologies in primary research through observation, unstructured and semi-structured interviews,\(^{\text{35}}\) and visual research which consists of formal and conceptual analyses. This visual analysis is undertaken through descriptive and interpretive analysis of each of the selected glass artifacts. I combine these two methods in order to identify aspects of ‘in-betweenness’ in the works and the processes that inform the works; I probe both the design and technical processes of the glass makers as well as the conceptual aspects of the works in order locate the glass artefacts as ‘in-between’.

The works I discuss in this chapter can be considered as being fluid, mutable, and as such having associations with various categories such as fine art, design, decorative art, studio glass and craft, simultaneously. These include, though are not limited to,

\(^{34}\) By ‘in-betweenness’ I am specifically refer to some of the ideas discussed in Chapter One such as liminality, hybridity, mimicry, ambivalence, the ‘Third Space’ and permanent liminality.

\(^{35}\) Gary Thomas (2011:163) highlights that unstructured interviews are mostly conversational and have no fixed method. As a researcher, I find this approach useful as I notice that I get more information out of the interviewees using this approach. The glass practitioners seem to elaborate more during these informal conversations when there is no predetermined list of questions. However, semi-structured interviews were also employed to provide a detailed guideline of the research project.
blown glass vessels, slumped sculptures, and ground and polished sculptures. These works, I argue, contain aspects of ‘in-betweenness’ either from their categorical classifications and/or their technical attributes.\textsuperscript{36}

Within the parameters of this study, Van Wyk, Dlamini and Jansen van Rensburg stand out as practitioners who also undertake glass blowing in their practice. However, in Van Wyk’s case, I discuss his two dimensional kiln-formed work, and my practice can also be considered as falling within kiln working. Böttcher’s practice is situated in cold working. I reiterate that my selection of these specific practitioners is based on logistical and practical aspects such having access to their studios where I could observe their working processes as well as visit some of the gallery spaces which exhibit\textsuperscript{37} their work.

To my knowledge, these specific works by these glass practitioners, have not been identified or analysed from the perspective of this dissertation; that is by locating aspects of ‘in-betweenness’ in them. I use some of the theories explicated in Chapter One, such as liminality, permanent liminality, organic hybridity, ambivalence, the ‘Third Space’, and hybridity. Similar to my previous chapter, my discussions are limited to these theories unless otherwise stated.

To begin with, I discuss various aspects of Dale Chihuly’s practice by looking primarily at his \textit{Cylinders} series (2006) and highlighting the varied spaces where his works are exhibited, such as parks, galleries, theatres, and hotels to name a few. I believe Chihuly’s works elude categorical classification beyond the traditional dichotomy of art and craft and can be understood to exist in an ‘in-between’ space spanning various categories. Some of his works are strongly weighted in craft while others have greater leanings towards design and studio glass practice. It is this space where they elude and slip (in) between categories that I am interested in. Hemp (1995:64) posits that the physical and conceptual origins of Chihuly’s works are as important as his process; they are about glass, how it is made, about the non-functional vessel form and exploring

\textsuperscript{36} This hypothesis is evident in Dlamini’s blown work which I would argue straddles categories of fine art, craft and design and my own work which, from technical and conceptual senses, interrogates whether glass is a liquid or solid.

\textsuperscript{37} This is with the exception of Chihuly who is a glass practitioner based in America.
what can be done to it, the physical world to which the forms allude and the fantasies they illicit.

With regards to the suggested ‘in-betweenness’ in his work, Gerald Ward (2011:30) writes:

> In the course of his long career, Dale Chihuly has revolutionised the ancient art of blown glass, moving it into the realm of large-scale sculpture and establishing this inherently fragile but also surprisingly permanent material as a vehicle for installation and environmental art. Although many people think of Chihuly principally as the maker of individual pieces of studio glass, he has in fact been an installation artist since he began his work in the mid- and late 1960s...his projects have continued to expand in size and scope during the past four decades. These projects differ dramatically: some are long-term or permanent, many are ephemeral; some are outdoors, others transform museum or dealers’ galleries, while still others occupy the liminal space of a botanical garden or glasshouse; many are public, others enrich private homes and corporate offices.

Ward (2011:30) advances *The Cylinders series* (2006 Fig.1 A and B) as being one that distinguishes Chihuly’s technique from that of other practitioners. Ward (2011:30) writes “at the core of Chihuly’s early cylinders was the ‘pick-up drawing technique’ in which thin glass strands forming a drawing were laid out on a marver,\textsuperscript{38} and then picked up and transferred through to a hot cylinder through rolling.”\textsuperscript{39} According to Ward (2011:30), this technique revolutionised glass making in the sense that the image became “fully integrated into the form rather than laid or inlaid onto it a dramatic concept not just within the history of glass”; the glass vessels thus become “Chihuly’s canvasses”.

\textsuperscript{38} A marver is a flat rectangular surface made from steel that can be used to shape molten glass and attach colour (or any other glass-friendly material) onto a blowpipe which has liquid glass.

\textsuperscript{39} This ‘pick-up drawing technique’ can also be understood in a non-literal sense. Although the artist or maker of the object might not be using traditional drawing tools (i.e. pencils, charcoal etc.), they nonetheless design a composition on the marver using thin glass strands. Furthermore, although not all of these strands will stick to the hot blob of gathered glass on the blowpipe, the composition will be visible once the piece is blown to the satisfaction of the artist/maker of the object.
Ward (2011:30) highlights how technically, Chihuly manipulates glass as simply as possible, using a limited amount of tools and molds, and allowing gravity, movement and centrifugal force to act upon the molten material. Techniques such as manipulating the blowpipe, swirling a gather (a mass of molten glass), and inserting molten glass into glass molds, rolling and flattening gathers on a marver and shaping pieces with small hand tools are consistent in Chihuly’s practice (Ward 2011:30).

According to Ward (2011:31-33) many people are involved in the creation of Chihuly’s pieces during the blowing process but Chihuly retains aesthetic control of the object. He thinks of himself as a film director, or perhaps an orchestra conductor, who channels the unique talents and individual skills of his crew toward a unified goal, namely the realisation of his artistic vision. He often references his relationship to the ateliers of Renaissance masters, who likewise made use of skilled specialists while retaining aesthetic control. In these Renaissance shops, division of labor and use of specialists were common, but the final product usually bore the signature of the master (Ward 2011:31-33).40

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40 An artist employing craftsmen or skilled labour, yet retaining aesthetic control of the objects, is not uncommon in contemporary artistic practice. However, I stress this point in consideration of the fact that it is still a contentious debate within contemporary creative glass practice and certainly an area of inquiry within the premise of this study. In contemporary South African creative glass practice, this is still an important conversation as I have noticed, throughout my interviews with some of the glass practitioners, that how they identify themselves also informs how they identify their works in terms of categorical classification. Some practitioners identify their mass produced work (which in some instances they make with the help of other ‘skilled’ glass practitioners) as craft or decorative art, conversely they also identify their private or conceptually informed works with fine art.
Ward (2011:40) points out that another aspect that is worth consideration in Chihuly’s practice is the fact that he collects his own work. His collections have been linked to themes of ‘repetition and accumulation’ both being activities that personify his work in glass. In other instances, as with his collections of *Native American Northwest Coast baskets* and *Indian trade blankets* made by Pendleton and other firms there is a strong formal connection with his work, where the collected object serves as a springboard for his designs. This intersection is clearly seen in the glass drawings on his *Navajo Blanket Cylinders* (1995) which echo patterns of *Pendleton blankets* or the older forms of the *Tabac Baskets*. Arguably, this has some resonance with his Cylinders. There is seemingly a transfer of decorative motifs from the tapestries he collects to the glass objects he makes.


Some of these aspects discussed above, such as the processes carried out when making the *Cylinders*, the transference of decorative motifs from his tapestry collection to his glass objects and the presentation of his works in different spaces, allude to the

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41 Chihuly draws from Native American Blankets, using their colours and patterns to celebrate the Native American traditions. This is evident in his *Navajo Cylinders* series (Ward 2011:23).
underlying complexity of locating his work and overall practice within the reductionist art and craft dichotomy or any fixed category. Ward (2011:41) notes that Chihuly’s work is appreciated and acclaimed by critics, curators and art historians alike. Amongst them is Thomas Hoving (cited in Ward 2011:41) who comments that Chihuly is one of the most important artists America has ever produced and moreover, his art being not only beautiful but it also reflects “high intellectual creativity”.

Taking cognisance of Hoving’s assertion, I think Chihuly’s location within a specific category is still worthy of interrogation. Ward (2011:42) asks similar questions to those I pose: Is he an artist or a designer? Is he an artist or a craftsman? His location (in) between these two categories (and perhaps others such as design) remains unclear and highly contested. Chihuly (cited in Ward 2011:41) declares: “Call it art, call it craft. I don’t care what they call it. Somewhere down the line, long after I am dead, someone will figure out what it was and how important it was. In the meantime, I get kicks out seeing people seeing the work.” Janet Koplos and Bruce Metcalf (cited in Ward 2011:42) note that Chihuly’s work as art has been formalist in a period occupied with social message and precious when junk materials or intangibles are often employed. He is thus an imperfect fit in the contemporary art world, largely standing outside the modes, content, style and paradigms that many artists utilise and operate within.

In the same breath, Koplos and Metcalf (cited in Ward 2011:42) highlight that Chihuly’s work also presents a quandary for the field of contemporary craft. They claim that it is impossible to categorise his work as either art or craft. He is comfortable being classified as both artist and craftsman.

In providing a summation of these various discussions around Chihuly’s practice, I take into consideration the above-mentioned aspects such as his creative process evident in his Cylinder series, the spaces in which his works are exhibited, and the influences he draws from in other forms of creative practice, such as the Navajo blankets that he collects which inform the designs of the visual elements on his Cylinder series. I advance that all these aspects suggest some form of ‘in-betweenness’.
I contend that a form of Bakhtinian organic hybridity is evinced through the process of designing the compositions through drawing while completing the work through the traditional mode of glass blowing which is a highly mechanical process that can be associated with craft. As Bakhtin (cited in Young 1995:22) suggests in organic hybridity, “the mixture merges and fuses into a language, world view or object”. My application of organic hybridity in relation to Chihuly’s practice is premised on this arrangement that sees two processes; that is the mechanical⁴² process of blowing and shaping molten glass mix with the conceptual process of designing a composition using glass strands. In my opinion, these two aspects should be regarded as equally important as they are seemingly dependent upon each other.

I further posit that while Chihuly retains aesthetic control of the object, the fact that he does not physically make these objects himself also contributes to the complexity of understanding his work as fine art, craft and/or studio glass practice. His work arguably has associations with these three categories simultaneously. The concept of liminality as a manifestation of ‘in-betweenness’ is again operational here. Similar associations can be deduced from Chihuly’s practice and applied to Dlamini’s overall practice whose work I analyse in the discussion to follow.

Facing challenges in a white dominated class from 2006, I always felt that I would never make good work that would sell or be appreciated, nor succeed in manipulating the medium (glass) in any manner I desired to. When I managed to manipulate or rather express my thoughts perfectly and get the shapes in glass as I imagined them several times not just by luck, I felt like it was my first ‘miracle’ that I managed to perform in consideration of the long journey of glass making that was ahead of me. It marked the beginning of my career, just like Jesus turning water into wine was the first miracle recorded of him which marked the journey he was to take till his death on the cross and his resurrection (Dlamini 2015).⁴³

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⁴² I apply the word ‘mechanical’ in the strictest sense to denote that this part of the making process is devoid of any conceptual underpinning, largely predetermined and undertaken physically.

⁴³ This anecdote is provided as an explication of the glass practitioner’s concept behind the work.
The work Dlamini refers to in the above quote is titled *Marriage at Cana* (*John 2:1-11*) (2012 Fig.3). The concept behind it is carefully constructed along this Biblical narrative. The work consists of five blown vessels that vary in shape and size. The clear vessels, which are immaculately polished, are thoughtfully placed on the floor in close proximity to each another. Inside three of the vessels is a mixture of red oxide and water. At the tips or mouths of selected vessels, Dlamini has placed ice cubes, which gradually drip onto the powdery oxide to create a liquid. The largest vessel has two openings, the second of which is found on its side. The largest opening is large enough to allow an adult’s hand in.

In my consideration of the mediums used i.e. the glass, oxide and ice cubes, I find this concept well communicated (see Fig.3). His use of ice cubes gradually melting and dripping onto the powdery oxide is, in my opinion, a successful metaphor for ‘turning water into wine’. This gradual dripping renders a performative quality to the work. With the vessels being devoid of any colour on their actual surfaces, the work, as a whole, is considerably minimalist and compels the viewer to inquire about the concept behind it.

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44 The term ‘performative’ is applied in a literal sense and should not be misconstrued with Judith Butlers (1999, 2004) notion of gender performativity. The latter argues that as opposed to it being a fixed attribute, gender should be seen as a fluid which shifts and changes in different contexts and times. In that understanding, ‘gender performativity’ argues for the performances of gender as being “outside of oneself, beyond oneself in a sociality that has no single author” (Butler cited in Zietsman 2013:5). I, instead, use the term to suggest a form of enactment that Dlamini sets up in the work.
However, I argue that the work is difficult to locate in a fixed category such as fine art or craft. I consider the fact that it is rooted in some form of idea or concept and thus, arguably, conceptual. It is therefore not implausible to identify it with fine art. Yet conversely, these forms resemble those of clay pots that in some African cultures are commonly used for decorative and/or utilitarian purposes such as for instance the forms made in Basotho pottery. Walter Battiss (1958) notes that the designs on Basotho pottery bear a close resemblance to the designs on their walls and floors, which true to the recurrent geometrical pattern in Basotho art, are typically composed of triangles and curves (Battiss 1958:91).

45 According to Monique Baque, Pierre Baque, Yves Becmeur, Sylvian Bernard, Jacques Cordeau, Henriette Gonse, Maurice Laroche, Helene Mars, Andre Servois, and Claude Troger (1968:78) to decorate is to call on “all techniques”; these include clay arts, glass arts, metal arts, graphic arts and textile arts. Baque et al (1968:79) claim that to decorate is in essence to embellish a form by respecting its character, accentuating it and modifying its appearance.
I find this passage on Basotho pottery vital to the understanding of the speculatively 'in-between' nature of Dlamini’s work. Observing once again the forms in his works, I reiterate the absence of any decorative pattern[s] on the surfaces of the individual glass vessels (see Fig.3). The simplicity of the vessels suggests to me that the practitioner’s intention was not to communicate or apply a decorative motif; rather, the intention was to place emphasis on the clarity of the vessels and more importantly the contents (oxide and water) in three of them. Conversely, I posit that the aforementioned context cannot be disregarded; from a formalist point of view, the shapes of the vessels certainly connote that of clay pots and thus present a particular reading of the work that leans towards craft. Herein lies a point of tension for me; the complexity of locating this work is premised on this argument. The speculation of ‘in-betweenness’ in the work is predicated on this basis. However, in order to present a holistic hypothesis, I further attempt to locate aspects of ‘in-betweenness’ in Dlamini’s making process.

All five of the pieces of *Marriage at Cana (John 2:1-12)* are hand blown. Dlamini specialises in glass blowing; a technique that involves using a blowpipe to inflate or expand molten⁴⁶ glass into a bubble. This process unfolds through the constant shaping and gathering over of the molten glass using molten glass. The nature of glass blowing

⁴⁶ The term molten here is used to denote glass in its liquid state.
usually requires an assistant, who, depending on the complexity of the work, becomes integral to its making. Dlamini’s process of working/making a glass work is individualistic. He (Dlamini 2015) mentions that he gives as little responsibility as possible to his assistants as he wants to have as much control over the process as he can.

The manner in which the pieces are made is arguably twofold. He (Dlamini 2015) first goes through a conceptual process wherein he designs the type of work he is planning to make, what function the piece will serve and how best to go about making it. A considerable amount of research goes into this process. As part of his research, he also studies glass blowing techniques by internationally renowned masters such as Venetian glass blower Lino Tagliapietra and Chihuly.

This process of making an object entails further theorisation of the concept; making preliminary sketches and notes which at times, if necessary, he communicates to his assistant. Additional to this is the consideration of principles of art and design and how

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47 The assistants’ function, depending on their level of proficiency, mostly entails aiding the main blower with aspects of the process that s/he cannot do individually. These include (but are not limited to) blowing through the pipe whilst the piece is being shaped, opening the furnace door when gathering molten glass, and shielding the glass blower from heat burn.
they are fundamental to his work. These include symmetry, balance, harmony, and proportion (Dlamini 2015).

Parallel to this conceptual undertaking is a densely orientated technical process which entails the physical making of the work; that is blowing, shaping, cutting etcetera, and at times, using gravity to elongate the piece. This aspect of the making is arguably organic in that it is solely based on a physical process that requires or employs minimal intellectual intervention and is therefore primarily mechanical. Herein I find an aspect of complexity in Dlamini’s overall process, whereas the conceptual process seems organised in terms of planning through sketches, note taking, and viewing of different videos etcetera, the actual making of the object is so mechanical that it is arguably devoid of any thought process and seemingly pre-determined (Dlamini 2015).

Taking into consideration these aspects namely, the narrative behind the work, the formal qualities of the work, which can be connoted with craft and the actual making processes of the pieces, I suggest that various forms of ‘in-betweenness’ are implied in Dlamini’s practice and that the simplistic location of the work in a fixed category is thus inadequate. I posit Turnerian liminality as being operational with regard to the classification of *Marriage at Cana* (John 2:1-12). I invoke his axiom “neither here nor there” (Turner 1969:95) as a metaphor to exemplify how the work cannot be regarded as strictly fine art, nor craft. Instead the work could be understood to reside in a liminal space between these categories. The work is fluid in that sense, its location is illusive and difficult to fix.

In organic hybridity, another form of ‘in-betweenness’ is suggested in this work but more specifically in the process. This is foregrounded in the construction of the work which I posit straddles between being controlled and non-controlled, as this process entails both rigorous conceptualisation and designing – a mechanical process that strictly involves physically making what is envisioned through conceptual and design. Bakhtin’s organic hybridity, which connotes the merger of two mixtures to fuse into a new language, world-view or object, is thus applied here to denote a procedure that infuses two different processes in order to create a new hybridised one. For Bakhtin (cited in
Young (1995:22), this unconscious arrangement of hybridity gives form to new methods of amalgamation rather than contestation.

Parallels can be drawn between Dlamini’s process and the next work I discuss which is by Lothar Böttcher, titled *Of wings and things* (2013 Fig.6). The work, which was done in the cold-working⁴⁸ process, consists of three parts that are not structurally attached to one another and can be separated. These parts include a circular wooden base, on which a square brick of glass that has been cut and ground and polished to resemble a mask is placed. This square brick subsequently acts as a support for the top section of the sculpture, which consists of three solid parts that make up the horns of the piece. Each component has undergone a process of grinding and polishing yet they are dissimilar from the square mask in that they have been glued together through ultra-violet⁴⁹ bonding – a process where two pieces of glass are glued together using UV light or UV activator.

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48 Cold-working denotes a process of working with glass that involves the use of water and other machinery to cut, drill through, grind and polish glass objects or glass surfaces. It differs from working in the hot-shop in that the latter involves manipulating-shaping molten glass into desired shapes and constantly re-heating it in a glory hole (a machine that re-heats glass).

49 A process where two pieces of glass are glued together using ultra-violet light or a ultra-violet activator (Coetsee 2002:135).
Böttcher’s process in making this sculpture is a process of cutting float glass into strips and laminating these together through UV-bonding. He then shapes the head or what was then the ‘block’ which he cut, using a diamond saw. The cutting is a lengthy process that requires careful handling of the sharp cut and shattered glass.\footnote{The work shown in this nine-step process is not the actual piece of “Of wings and things”. I am using it as an example to depict how Böttcher goes about his technical/making process.}
Step 4 - Finally the head emerges…

Step 5 - Now the eyes are ground. This is done using a silicon carbide stone.

Step 6 - After the rough grind the “sand” needs to be cut out with a sand stone wheel.

Step 7 - Pre-polishing is done with a poplar wood wheel and polishing paste.

Step 8 - The high gloss polish is done with a felt wheel and cerium oxide.

Step 9 - Finally the head is held on the large iron disk and ground with silicon carbide grit to determine the angle of the base.

Figures 7. (Step 1-9). Lothar Böttcher, An example of how the mask is made, 2013. (Photographs courtesy of the artist).

Böttcher’s process can thus be identified as careful and attentive negotiation in the form of cutting, grinding away and polishing. He (Böttcher 2015) places emphasis on workmanship and believes that it is essential for a glass practitioner to develop a ‘skills set’. Since glass is an ‘unforgiving medium’, one has to be sufficiently skilled within that particular process of glass practice, be it glass blowing or polishing (Böttcher 2015). Likewise, this emphasis of workmanship unfolds in his own practice wherein the ‘raw object’ (the glass block in its primal form) undergoes rigorous cutting and polishing in what he calls a “process of continuous exploration” (Böttcher 2015). Böttcher (2015) claims:

Wings is an assemblage of different parts and the meaning should keep an ambiguous flavour. Most of my work is intended to not have clear-cut borders of interpretation. The crystal head of Wings grew from a sculptural challenge to carve glass in a very traditional sculptural way. The techniques used may not be considered by many purists in the glass ‘scene’ as quite orthodox, as the surface
stays pitted and scratched with the marks made by the tool/machine. My intention was never to make a pristine polished sparkly piece of pretty glass. My intention was to carve marks that resemble a face, to sculpt the material.

Böttcher’s process of making such pieces might be associated with craft. From this above statement, it seems as though he is concerned with process; which in this instance denotes the act of working rigorously on the object and not focusing on concept per se. However, based on the following quotation, it is plausible to assume that the work – or an aspect of it which is the head – is rooted in some form of concept. He (Böttcher 2015) mentions:

> The overall narrative has a totemic nuance, referring to man and nature (similar to the Haida totems of the US West Coast, this sculpture also is carved). My personal narrative (after seeing what I did by combining three separately manufactured elements) is maybe a reflection of myself. I was venturing into a new creative phase during that period, honing my skills in a nontraditional yet intuitive way of sculpting glass. The wooden base grounds me, as it is a direct part from nature. The head is me. Maybe a slight bit schizophrenic with the three faces flowing over to another, or just constantly in flux.

I find the above explication critical for my argument, which is concerned with making visible the complexity of locating this work in a fixed category. To qualify this, I focus on a particular aspect of the sculpture, namely the mask itself. Böttcher (2015) claims that the work has a totemic nuance that has its roots in Haida totems of the United States of America’s West coast; however, based on some of the formal/compositional elements such as the elaborately carved out eyes, the nose etcetera. I associate this mask with the Otobo mask of the Ekine Society in Benin (see Fig.8).
It could be argued that there is an element of spirituality that Böttcher alludes to in his reference of Haida totems. This, in turn, suggests a religious functionality inherent in the work. I use Frank Willet’s (1993) examination of religious functionality in African masks to better communicate my argument about Böttcher work. Willet (1993:164) notes there are prevailing claims that notions of ‘art for art’s sake’ are elusive in African art. He states that in comparison to Western art, which embraces the idea of ‘art for art’s sake’, African art has a religious function whereby it is used to communicate with, or venerate certain spirits. Willet (1993:168) writes:

Nevertheless, it is true that a great deal of African art has a religious purpose, yet even within the field of religious sculpture there is a great variety of practices. It is usual for the act of carving itself to be hedged around rituals, since the tree that provides the wood is generally regarded as the home of a spirit, which needs to be placated.

This quote brings to my attention two critical aspects regarding artifacts of this nature; firstly, in the particular context of this work, a wood carver is considered as the artist behind the object. Secondly, these artifacts are created to have a religious function. I question whether the work can be categorised, and if so, where? I focus on the latter aspect, that being the religious functionality of the object. It could be argued that the ‘concept’ in Böttcher’s work is rooted in some aspect of spirituality and religious functionality. Additionally, the fact that the work is made in glass and not wood is also
worth considering. It has, nonetheless, been created through a similar mechanical, craft – orientated process.

Similar to Dlamini’s work (see Fig.3), I argue that ‘in-betweenness’ is implied as a result of this complexity; that being the uncleanness concerning the classification of the work; the religious functionality, which Böttcher also alludes to through his reference of Haida totems, is, in my opinion, insufficient basis for identifying the work as strictly fine art. Equally, there are some aspects that suggest that the work has leanings towards craft. I reiterate that it was made through a rigorous mechanical process that involved cutting and grinding which, in this instance, may be equated to woodcarving. Additionally, the work also has connotations with studio glass practice. As Pretorius (2002:40-43) suggests studio glass connotes the creative use of glass beyond practicality (functionalism) and leans towards a greater emphasis on the more abstract and sculptural. I thus argue that it is not implausible to interpret this work as occupying different categories simultaneously. Interpreted in this sense, the work shifts between various categories but does not necessarily reside in any specific one. As in Dlamini’s work, Turner’s articulation of liminality is effective. His axiom “neither here nor there” (Turner 1969:95) can be used to exemplify the non-fixity of the work across various categories.

The next work I analysed is one of my own pieces titled *Stasis and flows* (2015 Fig.10), made from fusing two glass sheets of different thicknesses (6mm, 4mm) that are placed on a wire armature that subsequently informs its curvilinear structure. Colour fields

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51 This work was made for an exhibition at the recently opened gallery *Art it is*. The theme of the exhibition was premised on embracing all things within and about Johannesburg. This particular piece was inspired by an article written by Runette Kruger titled *The global bodies in sites: stasis and flows* (2012). In the article, Kruger investigates the effect of globalisation on six global bodies namely the cosmopolitan, the neo-nomad, the worker, the migrant worker, the homeless person and the protestor. These bodies are discussed in relation to the architectural environment and more specifically in terms of the centre/periphery model. Kruger (2012:[sa]) broadly suggests that through movement (some) of these bodies in fact occupy ‘in-between’ spaces within certain architectural environments/dwellings such as airports, train stations etc. With regards to the conceptual narrative behind my glass piece, I took inspiration from Kruger’s investigation and put forth the idea that Johannesburg is a space that arguably has all these six global bodies, likewise, these global bodies also occupy in-between spaces in the city. I posit this preamble as an example of how ‘in-betweenness’ is operational in my work.
layered arbitrarily on top of one another dominate the work. These colours range from indigo (blue), cherry (red), white, yellow and green.

The process that I use to make these sculptures involves creating a rectangular steel armature, which is inserted into a slumping kiln (see Fig. 9). This armature is usually constructed according to the specifications of the kiln (i.e. to the capacity of the kiln in terms of length, height and width). I then place wire across all four sides of the armature wherein the glass will be placed. The next step in my process involves putting wet ceramic fibre onto the wire armature. This serves as a release agent between the glass and the wire once the firing process has completed.

I then place the glass, which has been pre-fired with colour pigments or powder, onto the armature. Once the preparation process has been done, the glass is placed in the kiln to slowly melt. The hottest temperature set is 750 degrees which gradually cools down to room temperature of below 60 degrees.53

In my practice, ‘in-betweenness’ is firstly located in the technical aspect, which also informs my conceptual narrative. Conceptually, this work is concerned with exploring the interface between ‘liquidity’ and ‘solidity’; I try to depict the glass in both these states simultaneously (see Fig.10). Andrew Brewerton (2004), in discussing the glass works of sculptor Antoine Lepelier, also interrogates this duality. In questioning whether glass is liquid or solid, Gibbs (cited in Brewerton 2004:4) comments that:

There is no clear answer to the question. In terms of molecular dynamics and thermodynamics, it is possible to justify various views that glass is a highly viscous liquid, an amorphous solid, or simply that glass is another state of matter that is neither liquid nor solid.

52 The term ‘slumping’ describes a process of heating glass until it bends to alter to a shape defined by the use of a mould or by supporting wires or rods (Bray 1995:204).

53 An essential part of the firing/slumping process is crash-cooling. Crash-cooling entails opening the kiln once it has reached maximum temperature and letting air into the kiln until it drops to fewer than 680 degrees. The three main reasons for crash cooling are to: (i) avoid devitrification: crystallisation in glass, which takes place when glass is held at high temperatures (Hemp 1995:173) (ii) prepare the kiln for the next firing process and (iii) observe whether the glass piece has slumped to the maker’s satisfaction or not.
Brewerton (2004:4) highlights that in terms of molecular physics, glass is technically distinguished from the crystalline solid and from liquid states in that glass molecules configure in a disordered but rigidly bound arrangement, sharing properties of both liquid (although firmly bound) and solid (although lacking a regular lattice form). In my work, I am not interested in resolving this duality, rather; I am more interested in upholding that creative/technical tension that suggests that both states (i.e. liquid and solid) can exist simultaneously. In a literal sense this configuration could be argued to be ambiguous; however, I find and use Bhabha’s notion of ambivalence, as a form of ‘in-betweenness’, to be operative in this instance.

Bhabha draws his idea of colonial ambivalence from a Fanonian understanding that can be further traced back to Freudian psychoanalysis. Consequently, this psychoanalytic interpretation suggests that identities are not distinct or complete, on the contrary, all identities are torn within themselves, occupied by external conflicts and contradictions – hence their ambivalence (Hernandez 2010:40-41). Hernandez (2010:45) elucidates that

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54 Ambiguity in this sense denotes something that is not clear because it has more than one possible meaning (Rundell 2007:46).
in psychoanalysis, ambivalence denotes the coexistence of two contradictory instincts, or desires, such as love and hate. My application of ambivalence advances that both identities; that is liquid and solid, could be considered to be in a state of co-existence.55

Figure 10 (A and B). Thabang Monoa, *Stasis and flows*, 2015. Glass and glass powder. 88cm x45cm. (Photographs by the author).

Under intense heat, glass has the potential to ‘over-slump’, which might make it too fine and brittle. From a technical perspective, this is not desirable as it makes the work fragile. I thus employ colour, which stretches with the glass when slumping and thus acts as an illusion that demonstrates this liquid/solid duality. What I often find from this process is that colour, which stretches with the slumping glass, is successful in creating an effect that makes it difficult to decipher whether the piece is still solid or not. Looking at the spine of the sculpture (see Fig.10), various colours elongate as if stretched and pulled down vertically. This can be attributed to the manner in which the colour stretches as it slumps under heat. Seemingly, the solid mimics a state of being liquid. This is considerably paradoxical in itself as I am making movement static and liquid solid. It is this ‘in-betweenness’ inherent within this duality (liquid/solid) that I seek to permanently fix in my work. In this understanding, I propose that both Bhabha’s and

55 See Chapter 2 for a more descriptive reading of ambivalence as explored by Fanon and Bhabha.
Szakolczai’s concepts of the ‘Third Space’ and permanent liminality are operational in this work.

In my previous chapter, I hypothesised that due to it being a site of constant/continuous negotiation, the ‘Third Space’ could be considered to be a form of permanent liminality; I maintain that position and further apply it to the discussion of Stasis and flows. I argue that the coexistence of the liquid/solid duality can be understood to be residing in a constant /continuous flux. Based on this, I think it is adequate to associate this particular narrative with the ‘Third Space’. In addition, I posit permanent liminality as equally effective in this work. I substantiate this assertion by reiterating that the intention in my work is not to resolve the liquid/solid duality, but rather to trap that moment where it is no longer possible to distinguish whether the object is liquid or solid – in other words to permanently fix it in a state of ‘in-betweenness’.

In Szakolczai’s conception of permanent liminality, ‘in-betweenness’ manifests when certain events/occurrences/rituals are permanently fixed in each phase of the rites of passage.\textsuperscript{56} Szakolczai (2000:221) speculates the middle phase of the rites of passage to be an actual performance or staging of the ritual. For Szakolczai, this space engenders the possibility for ‘individuals’ to become permanently fixed. I apply certain aspects from this pronouncement to my glass work such as the fact that the idea of permanence is strongly denoted. Since my objects are constantly/continuously negotiating between liquid and solid, they can be understood to be residing in this middle phase\textsuperscript{57} which thus becomes permanently fixed.

I now refocus my discussion on the instability of the object in as far as its classification and its speculated fluidity across various categories. In a similar way to my discussion of Dlamini’s work where I argue that the rootedness of the work in a concept engenders associations with fine art, I further advance that the work has characteristics of craft and/or decorative art. To qualify this, I briefly discuss some aspects of the formal

\textsuperscript{56} See Chapter One (pages 30-31) for a descriptive reading of permanent liminality.

\textsuperscript{57} This middle phase is also referred to as the ‘transition phase’.
elements of *Stasis and flows*. I highlight a crucial aspect of my production process, which is the application of the colour on the object.

![Image of splattering process](image)

Figure 11 (A and B). Splattering process of powder. 2015. (Photograph by the author).

During this process, I freely splatter different colours (in the form of powder) on what is then a flat glass surface. Often, my intention is just to cover the surface area in colour – rarely do I design intricate compositions on it. What I do rather is attempt too make straight, wavy or irregular lines on the surface and create some sort of repetition (see Fig.10). Monique Baque, Pierre Baque, Yves Becmeur, Sylvain Bernard, Jacque Cordeau, Henriette Gonse, Maurice Laroche, Helene Mars, Andre Servois, Claude Troger (1968:85) note that repetition is one of the most common and effective decorative principles. I would agree with this sentiment, as in my practice, I am concerned with making the surface area of the glass piece visually appealing, despite it having gone through a slumping process. Thus, I create repetitive lines and textures to activate the surface area of the glass despite not having an idea what these lines will look like once the piece has slumped.

This act, which to a large extent, affects how the composition will look after the slumping process could be argued to be a decorative process. Baque *et al* (1968:78-85) define decoration along formalist principles. They claim that a decorative composition is an arrangement of lines, areas, volumes, colours, and textures that work together to form a harmonious whole. In their definition, which may be construed as limited given that decorative arts has a long and complex history globally posits that the “decorative arts” are the arts applied to the decoration of common or luxury products. I would argue that
Stasis and flows does not fit this description but could rather be classified as abstract, based on the idea that the piece does not resemble anything realistic and is autonomous.

I thus query possible readings under which Stasis and flows could be classified. Looking at the form and abstract quality of the work, I suggest that associations can be made with studio glass practice on the basis of it being an abstract/sculptural work which is made in glass and goes beyond functionalism. However, I also contend that the conceptual narrative behind the piece arguably engenders leanings towards fine art as well. Furthermore, given the suggested decorative elements found during the making (in the form of splattering the colour) and other compositional elements such as the irregular/wavy linework, the work could be argued to be characteristic of craft and/or decorative art. In consideration of these aspects, this work arguably eludes fixed categorisation. It is seemingly transiting in/out of various categories; ‘In-betweenness’, which I advance through Tunerian liminality, is thus argued on this basis.

I now examine the work titled Cone analysis (2007 Fig.12) by Martli Jansen van Rensburg. My discussion is based on the conceptual narrative that informs her work. This narrative centers on the notion of duality and ways of depicting the ‘infinite’ in geometrical form. In addition, I discuss how the work could be rendered as ‘in-between’ in as far as it does not reside comfortably in a fixed or particular category. I draw from Runette Kruger’s (2007)\footnote{Kruger (2007) problematises the notion of duality from different perspectives, drawing from various schools of thought such as Platonism, Kantian noumena, Hegel’s absolute, Blavatsky’s theosophy and the oriental concept of Dao (to name but a few). It is however her articulation of Oupensky’s explication of the fourth dimension or ‘hyperspace’ that is essential to my discussion of the work. I use this explication of the fourth dimension to argue for the speculative ‘in-betweenness’ of the object from a conceptual perspective.} text to unpack how the work could be considered ‘in-between’ particularly in relation to the inherent concept of dualities, as foregrounded by the practitioner.
This piece resembles a cone placed on a wooden table. The work is minimalist in its composition. As is consistent with a cone, it has a small circular hole on one end and a bigger hole at the other end. The inner part of the object is a flat red colour, in contrast to the outer part which is a flat blue colour. This physical arrangement of the piece speaks to the conceptual narrative which is concerned with the idea of duality. Jansen van Rensburg (2015) states:

I am actually interested in communicating or making audiences aware of certain dualities that we encounter as humans. These are things such as Christianity and Atheism, or men and women…I am not necessarily interested in resolving this duality, my intention is to merely make it visible.

In *Cone analysis*, Jansen van Rensburg (2015) further explores how, for her, geometric shapes such as cones suggest the idea of ‘infinity’. She reasons that conceptually, a cone consists of two lines that intersect at one end and continue infinitely in space. Both of these ideas have a strong resonance with what Kruger articulates to be the ‘fourth dimension’ or so-called ‘hyperspace’, which I suggest is a space that could be considered as ‘in-between’. To explain this concept of the fourth dimension or hyperspace, I draw on twentieth-century philosopher Peter Demianovich Ouspensky’s interpretations thereof.
To simplify this abstract concept, Ouspensky (cited in Kruger 2007:157) associates the three dimensions with each other by comparing the relations between a point and a line, between a line and a plane and between a plane and a three dimensional solid, and, eventually a solid and a ‘form’ in the fourth dimension. For Ouspensky (cited in Kruger 2007:29) a line consists of an infinite number of points, in the same breath, a plane consists of an infinite number of lines and that a solid consists of an infinite number of planes. Consequently, a four dimensional body consists of an infinite number of three-dimensional bodies.

In continuing this analogy in consideration of spatial phenomena, Ouspensky (cited in Kruger 2007:29-30) further problematises the notion of reality in relation to time and space, stating that: “reality is continuous and constant”. Based on Oupensky’s hypothesis, Kruger (2007:29) states:

> It would be logical to assume that events do not come from and disappear into nowhere. Rather, everything, the past, present and future, exists as it is, in a continuous present, which we are inadequately equipped to see in its entirety. Our erroneous perception of time causes us to experience it as a series of segments of a line, rather than as a whole.

Kruger (2007:30) remarks that Ouspensky’s task urges the viewer to “transcend this line and, instead, perceive time as a plane. Upon seeing time as a plane, our time sense is transformed into space sense. The now which we experience as fleeting expands into the ever-existing infinity, referred to in oriental philosophy as the Eternal Now, “a universe in which there is no before and no after but only the present, known and unknown” (Kruger 2007:30).

For me this statement and the manner in which this fourth dimension or hyperspace is expounded implies a form of ‘in-betweenness’. I find resonance in Oupensky’s assertion, with both the concepts of liminality and permanent liminality as applied by Turner and Szakolczai. Conceptually, as Kruger, following Ouspensky, articulates, the

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59 Throughout the text, Kruger writes with a certain degree of non-specificity wherein she employs terms such as “we” and “us”, presumably to refer to the reader.
fourth dimension is manifest in an abstract space that exists (in) between the past and the future, where subsequently the present is eternalised and made permanent.

In my application, Turnerian liminality best contextualises this ‘in-between’ space wherein I posit the fourth dimensional body resides: neither in the past nor in the future. But, since this space is continuously constant, the notion of permanent liminality is herein applied to translate the permanent fixing of what I speculate to be the middle or transitory phase of the rites of passage as originally argued by Szakolczai (2000:222). It is in this discussion that problematises the concept behind the work that I locate aspects of ‘in-betweenness’. From here on, however, I further discuss how the work cannot be classified within fixed categories. I refocus my discussion on the object itself and discuss specific aspects of it, in an interpretive analysis, in order to elucidates on its ‘in-betweenness’.

Minimalism, I reiterate, is an idea that comes through strongly in Jansen van Rensburg’s work. The flat monochromatic colours of red and blue on the inside and outside allude to this. I associate this work with the modernist artist’s Kazimir Malevich Black square (1915 Fig.13). The stylistic similarities between the two works, in the flat monochromatic colour, offer a point of departure in as far as arguing ‘in-betweenness’ in Jansen van Rensburg’s work.

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60 The words ‘continuous’ and ‘constant’ have, within my articulation of in-betweenness, resonance to Bhabha’s ‘Third Space’. I, however, am cautious of applying this concept in the discussion of Jansen van Rensburg’s work on the basis that the concept itself, as it is rooted in post-colonial theory, connotes other ideas such as contestation, displacement, subversion and newness (to name a few), which are not necessarily applicable to this argument (Acheraiou 2011:91). In this vein I, instead, use Szakolczai’s permanent liminality and not Bhabha’s ‘Third Space’ although I argue their theoretical similarities in Chapter One.
I explore an alternative reading of the object which suggests that it also has the quality of being functional/utilitarian and possibly decorative. If one were to present the work upright; with the small circular hole at the bottom and the big hole at the top, its form would possibly connote that of a vase, which within contemporary creative glass practice has leanings with the decorative arts (see Fig.12).

Yet conversely, the object is intentionally placed horizontally on a table and thus rendered as sculptural. In a similar way to my work (see Fig.10), this sculptural aspect of the object engenders associations with studio glass practice wherein the work is intentioned to transcend functionality. Herein, the implausibility of fixed categorisation resurfaces. It is this non-defined space of fluidity and mutability that I emphasise. It acquires leanings towards fine art with its strong conceptual intention which reflects dualities; conversely, it could be read as an object that has a utilitarian/decorative function and it could also has associations with studio glass practice on the premise that it is an expression of glass making that extends beyond functionality and enters the realm of sculpture. Seemingly, the work is suspended in a liminal space as it upholds multiple readings.

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61 I contend that stylistically, the form resembles that of a vase but the utilitarian function is removed as it has a hole at the bottom.
In contrast to the works I have discussed thus far, which are three-dimensional, I now analyse Retief van Wyk’s two-dimensional works and discuss some aspects of his practice. Van Wyk is an artist/glass practitioner whose practice arguably straddles between categories of fine art, craft, and design, although he primarily identifies himself as a fine artist. With his extensive training in printmaking, ceramics and glass, I find his pronouncement worth probing. Tellingly, he establishes that within his glass practice, there are works that are ‘craft’ and likewise works that he would consider ‘fine art’.

I analyse the work Postcards from Utopia 2# (2013 Fig.14) which according to Van Wyk (2015) falls within the realm of fine art. I suspect this to be contestable and endeavor to argue how the work is fluid in that it has characteristics of design although it is rooted in some sort of conceptual narrative that is suggestive of fine art. Thus it is difficult to pin down in a fixed category.

The work was made through a process that is arguably design orientated and involves cutting sections of bulls-eye glass, fusing it and infusing it with silkscreen and finally sandblasting certain areas within the composition. The work is two-dimensional, consisting of differently coloured glass sheets that have been fused together in a collage-like manner. The object has a colour range consisting of sections of flat reds, whites, blues and a touch of pink. The work has, what I would argue to be a pictorial centre or inner two-dimensionality to it demarcated by lines or planes that are black at the top and bottom, red on the left and white on the right. Within this inner two-dimensional demarcation lies a composition consisting of a printed landscape depicting mountains in the background, unidentifiable figures in the middle ground and what looks like a male figure in the frontal-right section of the inner composition.
Van Wyk (2015) mentions that the work was made in reference to the South African war fought between the Afrikaners and British colloquially termed the Anglo-Boer war. His primary concern is transferring some of the imagery that was usually found on postcards during and after the war onto the glass. The use of glass in this regard is by no means arbitrary. As Van Wyk (2015) points out, glass allows for a unique spatial trickery within the composition. Whereas normal post-cards on paper can be easily damaged or discarded, glass enables one to intervene (in) between the glass sheets, thus this process involves a considerable amount of layering through careful design.

The aspect of ‘in-betweenness’ has a particular focus within the narrative of the work. Van Wyk highlights the participation of natives during the war as he queries their ‘in-between’ positioning in a war fought by settler tribes in a foreign land. Speculatively, he (Van Wyk 2015) posits that both tribes were in search of a utopia to settle in but instead they found themselves in a land that became contested between the Boers, British and the Blacks, subsequently manifesting as a dystopia.
Aside from van Wyk’s own articulation of aspects of ‘in-betweenness’ inherent in the piece from a narrative based perspective, I bring into focus various facets of the work that suggest fluidity between categories. Firstly, the work is executed in a collage manner; collages are mostly associated with the fine arts. I re-emphasise the importance of the pictorial center in the collage composition which narrativises what is seemingly the Anglo-Boer war. This is quite critical in as far as acknowledging that the work is anchored in some form of concept or idea which in my opinion engenders associations with fine art. However, the aspect of design also features quite strongly in the work. Going back to the composition, I posit that the different glass sheets are not arbitrarily juxtaposed next to one another, but their placement is carefully considered, which in my opinion, suggests an awareness of design by Van Wyk.

In her discussion of William Morris’s work, Stevens (2007:393) remarks that design as part of Morris’s making or production incorporates a number of aspects. These are craftsmanship, considerations of materials and appropriate techniques to control the quality of the product. Stevens (2007:395) further expounds that design may be seen to include the origination, the planning, the process of making, and the finalising of the object or product. Stevens (2007:334), drawing from Collingwood, observes that design is inseparable from craft as the process of designing and planning is integral to craft. In this understanding, these terms are interchangeable.

In addition to this, I posit that the work also has associations with studio glass practice as it is made through kiln-working whereby some aspects of design, as discussed above are applicable. Pretorius (2002:9-10) notes that kiln-working requires a careful approach to the preparation and organisation of components. She highlights that creative techniques in glass demand an awareness of the behavior of the materials in process, therefore, visual control and the ability to predict the behavior of the glass

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62 In this discussion, I use Stevens’ definition of design where she cites The Oxford English Dictionary, Vol III (1978:243-244) which states: design can be defined as a noun, i.e. “a plan or scheme conceived in the mind or intended for subsequent execution; the preliminary conception of an idea that is to be carried out into effect by action; a pattern; the artistic idea as executed; adaptation as a means to an end; the outline piece of work after which the actual structure and texture is to be completed”. 
when heated are requisites for kiln processes. These aspects as I have argued are evident in the work itself. It is in this vein that I argue for the shifting ‘in-betweenness’ of the work. *Postcards from Utopia 2#* seems to straddle between categories of design, craft, fine art, and studio glass. The liminal space is proposed as a non-fixed and non-resolute space where the work resides.

**Conclusion**

To summarise, I have, in this chapter, undertaken a discussion of selected works by glass practitioners Dale Chihuly, Lothar Böttcher, Bongani Dlamini, Martli Jansen van Rensburg, Retief van Wyk and myself. I have argued how these selected works made by these practitioners elude or slip classification and categorisation, particularly in terms of the art and craft binary. I posit that these works cannot be considered to be fixed and can therefore be considered to be ‘in-between’ varying categories such as fine art, craft, design, decorative art and studio glass.

I have argued that the ‘in-betweenness’ of these works, from looking at the concepts that inform them and their technical processes. I have drawn from my previous chapter which discusses various forms of ‘in-betweenness’ using different theories such as liminality, the ‘Third Space’, permanent liminality, ambivalence, and organic hybridity, to name a few. Using these theories, my claim is that these works have inherent characteristics that engender a sense of fluidity and mutability. They obtain associations with various categories simultaneously. However, it would seem that all these works have a common association with studio glass on the premise that they draw from studio glass techniques and more importantly these techniques are assimilated into a creative practice of glass that is beyond functionalism.

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63 In my previous pronouncements of studio glass being a possible category that some of these works could be associated with, I had based my statement on Pretorius’ (2002:43-44) assertion that studio glass is based in a creative form of glass practice that goes beyond functionalism through the making of works that are abstract and sculptural. Herein, I also locate two-dimensional works, like van Wyk’s, as falling within studio glass practice based on again Pretorius’ (2002:9-10) explication. According to Pretorius (2002:9-10) kiln-working techniques include the fusing, slumping and sagging of glass which is based on the principle that glass deforms (bends, stretches or flows) under the influence of heat and gravity. I, however, isolate, in Pretorius’ definition, the term fusing which she clarifies is when compatible vitreous materials are heated until they bond. Fusing, according to Pretorius (2002:10), is often used with other related techniques such as inclusions and laminating.
This chapter is therefore a precursor to my final chapter which is concerned with the curation of this body of work speculated to be ‘in-between’. I problematise, in this next chapter the actual space where the exhibition takes place and further argue for its ‘in-betweenness’.
Chapter Three

Curating ‘in-betweenness’

Introduction

In this final chapter I focus on the practical component of my study which entails the curation of a glass exhibition comprising of works by the practitioners discussed in the study as well as other invited practitioners whose work can be considered ‘in-between’. My MTech exhibition *Thresholds (in) between Glass(es)* takes place at *Art it is* from the fourth to the eighteenth of February 2016 in Johannesburg, which is predicated on an exhibition I curated at the *Clover Aardklop Festival* (hereafter *Aardklop* festival), from the sixth to the tenth of October 2015 in Potchefstroom, South Africa; the exhibition was titled *Betwixt and Between Glass(es): a contemporary glass exhibition*. These exhibitions, however, differ as the *Aardklop* exhibition was presented in a white cube space, while my MTech exhibition takes place in what I argue to be a hybrid space. The curatorial process for this exhibition is largely speculative as it takes place towards the end of my study.

In addition to the Southern African practitioners discussed in my study, other invited creative glass practitioners include Mike Hyam, Chonat Getz, Kgotso Pati, Marileen van Wyk, Pfunzo Sidogi, Liesl Roos, Rina Myburgh, Ryan Manuel, Greg Miller, and Iwan van Blerk, all of whom are based in Gauteng. My justification for selecting these specific practitioners is founded on my familiarity with the type of works that they make. These works have similarities with the works discussed in my study and more importantly I associate their works with the overarching theme of ‘in-betweenness’ which I explore in this study. In addition to this, I have selected these specific practitioners for logistical and practical reasons, such as being close to their studio environments and most importantly they are close to *Art it is* – the space where my exhibition takes place.

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64 With the exception of Rina Myburgh, Chonat Getz and Greg Miller, all these practitioners, including those discussed in Chapter Two (except Chihuly), studied glass at the Tshwane University of Technology. Jansen van Rensburg and Hyam currently run a glass blowing studio (*Smelt*) in Norwood, Johannesburg, where Pati and Dlamini also work. Miller, Manuel, and van Blerk have a glass blowing studio in Benoni called *The Crucible*. Pretoria based Marileen van Wyk and Retief van Wyk run *The Glass Forming Academy* (GFA) which specialises in making a
The selected body of work for this exhibition varies in range in that it comprises blown glass pieces, slumped sculptures, and solid pieces, to name but a few. In line with the underpinning argument in this dissertation, I propose that this body of work could be considered to have multiple readings and therefore occupies a space of ‘in-betweenness’ across varying categories. I further contend that curation of this selected body of work also takes place in an ‘in-between’ space. This contention is premised on various aspects of the actual space which is a multipurpose building being used as a residential space, offices for an architectural firm and a gallery. I explore ‘in-betweenness’, in particular reference to the curatorial component, using two theoretical arguments, namely Turner’s broad discussion of liminality and *communitas* and Bhabha’s concepts of mimicry and hybridity.

In this chapter, my objectives are to (i) acknowledge specific curatorial interventions in South Africa that have broadly showcased craft and more specifically glass art in an exhibition format (ii) to provide a context for the ‘in-between’ (or non-traditional gallery space) in which the selected works are exhibited, and (iii) to discuss curatorial devices such as lighting and various display methods that I use to communicate aspects of ‘in-betweenness’ in the exhibition space, and its relation to the space in which the work is shown.

As in Chapter Two, I make use of two distinct methodologies namely primary research wherein I interview gallery owner Jandre Pieters and I also conduct a critical literature analysis whereby I discuss a text by the theorist Brian O’Doherty (1999).

I do not intend to rewrite the history of curations in contemporary South African creative glass practice as that would entail doing a historical overview which is not within the scope of my study. My focus is based on discussing the curation of this selected body of work (and other similar works) in this speculated hybrid space. I do, however, acknowledge curations by Ricky Burnett whose seminal show *Tributaries* (1985), is widely acknowledged as the first exhibition to showcase craft works together with fine art in a traditional gallery. Additionally, I acknowledge curatorial interventions by Gordon range of works from glass beads, blown objects and kiln formed objects. And lastly, Sidogi, Myburgh, Roos, and Getz can be considered to be independent glass practitioners who work in their private studios.
Froud\textsuperscript{65} (2004), Retief van Wyk (2005, 2013) and the ArtEC gallery (2013) for hosting exhibitions that showcased ‘glass as art’.\textsuperscript{66}

I reiterate that the uniqueness of my study is in how the works discussed and those included by other practitioners in the show, have not, within contemporary South African creative glass practice, been identified and curated in this particular way. In that sense, this could be highlighted as a strength in my study.

**Curating in the ‘white cube’**

In order to understand issues of ‘in-betweenness’ within the context of the actual space of the exhibition at *Art it is*, I first foreground the white cube display system as a mode of curation. Glenn Ward (1997:59), briefly, enlightens on what distinguishes the white cube:

> We tend to think of paintings and sculptures as being viewed in relatively exclusive spaces such as galleries and museums. Some writers (notably sociologist Pierre Bourdieu) have examined how these spaces are often organised in a way that encourages specific, modernist notions of what art is and how to look at it. In the first place, it is argued, the selection and showing of certain objects by galleries and museums instantly loads these objects with cultural baggage: it confers the status of art upon them. But, beyond that, the way art is generally exhibited (and discussed) promotes the modernist idea that

\textsuperscript{65}In my study, I also acknowledge Froud as a curator who pioneers the notion of *Democratic Curatorship*; a methodology of displaying artistic objects. His idea is strictly concerned with “de-emphasising hierarchies in contemporary art practice” (Froud 2015). He translates this methodology into his curatorial practice wherein works are displayed in a manner that is arguably devoid of creating preferences and hierarchies, and is, instead, based on aspects such as formal qualities, visual dialogues and the overall professional attributes of the works. I find links between his method and my application of the Turnerian concepts of liminality and *communitas* (discussed in Chapter Two) in that the works, regardless of who made them, are given equal prominence in the exhibition space. In this understanding, the exhibition could be conceived as a liminal space with *communitas* thus being a product of that space; that being a space where structure and hierarchies no longer persist or are temporarily suspended.

\textsuperscript{66}Using the term ‘glass art’, I contend that the impetus in these highlighted exhibitions was to present glassworks within the fine art category. These exhibitions were titled *SAGAS glass festival* (2004) by Froud, *Leading Trends in Studio Glass and Conversations with King* (2005, 2013) by Van Wyk and *Reveal* (2013) by the ArtEC Gallery. However, my study is not in line with this premise i.e. presenting creative glass as ‘art’, instead I posit a selected strand of works as being non-fixed, fluid and having associations with categories of fine art, design, craft, decorative art and studio glass.
works of art naturally exist in the realm of experience independent of the rest of life. Works of art are traditionally meant to be experienced at first by a specific, restricted audience in a specially designed high culture environment.

This assertion by Ward brings into focus what could be considered to be the dominant presentation style of exhibitions stemming from the modernism era. Ward (1997:59) explicates further that:

Modernist theories of art fostered the impression that a work of art can and should be experienced in its right, on its own terms, and for its own sake, without preference to other subjects in the world. They are regularly presented as though they are permanent, timeless artifacts, requiring no external justifications, and free from any ‘outside’ influence. The art works are somehow meant to emit a sense of their own presence.

At the centre of this mode of presentation style is the notion of the ‘white cube’ gallery; a style which, having taken root during the modernist era, problematises the ‘space’ in which the art is exhibited. Brian O’Doherty (1976) writes that the history of modernism is well framed by that space; or rather the history of modern art can be correlated with changes in that space and in which it may be seen. According to O’Doherty (1976:14)

we have reached a point where we do not see the art but the space first. An image comes to mind of a white, ideal space that, more than any single picture, may be the archetypal image of twentieth century art; it clarifies itself through a process of historical inevitability usually attached to the art it contains.

In the white cube style, the ideal gallery takes from the artwork all cues that interfere with the fact that it is ‘art’, thereby giving the artwork full prominence. The work is isolated from anything that would detract from its own evaluation of itself (O’Doherty 1976:14). O’Doherty (1976:15) remarks that a gallery is constructed along laws as rigorous as those for building a medieval church. The outside world must not come in, so the windows are usually sealed off. Walls are painted white so that the artwork is read against a blank ground ensuring that colour does not distract from the work on display.
In this sense, the art is free literally “to take on its own life” (O’Doherty 1976:15). With the space being white, un-shadowed (unless shadows have purposefully been created to enhance aspect of the work), and clean, it becomes devoted to the technology of aesthetics. Works of art are mounted, hung, or scattered for study. In this expression, ‘art’ exists in a kind of eternity of display. Writing further on this, O’Doherty (1976:79) notes that during the 1960s and 1970s, much emphasis was placed on the ‘wall’; that is how much space should a work of art have (as the phrase went and sometimes still goes) to ‘breathe’? The wall thus becomes an aesthetic force on its own. O’Doherty (1976:79) states:

> With post-modernism, the gallery is no longer ‘neutral’. The wall becomes a membrane through which esthetic and commercial values exchange. The walls assimilate; the art discharges. This adds to the gallery’s mythification. The white wall’s apparent neutrality is an illusion. It stands for a community with common ideas and assumptions. The development of the pristine, placeless, white cube is one of modernisms triumphs – a development of the commercial, aesthetic, and technological.

This brief summation of the white cube style provides the context in which art of the modernism era has been presented and is intended to highlight the fact that my exhibition is not in line with this mode of curation. To contextualise this, I highlight *Betwixt and Between Glass[es]: a contemporary glass exhibition* (2015) which I curated in a space that has similarities to the white cube setting and try to show how an alternative space, that is not a white cube, is better suited to communicate the ‘in-betweenness’ of this selected body of glass works. This exhibition could be considered as a first iteration to my official master’s show.\(^\text{67}\)

My method of curation for this was mostly explorative and my overarching aim was to investigate how ‘in-betweenness’ can be communicated through the presentation of the

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\(^{67}\) *Betwixt and Between Glass[es]: a contemporary glass exhibition* is an exhibition I curated at the Clover Aardklop Festival (6-10 October 2015) in Potchefstroom, South Africa. This exhibition was not a case study in the strictest understanding of the term; however, I did work on it during the course of my study and thus use it as a part of my research. The show was categorised within the visual arts category, and my overarching intention was to test how the idea ‘in-betweenness’ could be operational in a white cube like setting, particularly when curating a selected body of contemporary glass works.
selected glass works. In consideration of this, one of the things that immediately caught my attention was the relationship between the scale of the exhibition space and the objects being displayed. Froud (2007:76) remarks that scale becomes an important factor particularly in terms of the specific site in which sculptures are installed. Another consideration was the relationship between the objects, which determined their positioning. Approximately thirty works were exhibited; aside from three of Van Wyk’s two-dimensional pieces, they were mostly sculptural and therefore needed considerable ‘breathing’ space between them in order for visitors to be able to move around them.

The exhibition took place in one of the large rooms at Alumini Hall (North West University in Potchefstroom). The actual space has associations with the white cube in that its interior walls are painted white, there are plinths (which were also painted white) used for the display of works and a rail is used as a hanging system. However, when viewing the interior from the entrance, the space is not a cube. On the right-hand side there appears to be a ‘dark area’ as a result of the awkward curvilinear shape of the space. The space also has a glass door that separates the interior and exterior, leading onto a balcony outside (thus allowing the outside in).

Throughout the installation process, I was aware of and took advantage of some of these distinguishing factors, such as the awkward shape of the space on the right side, the balcony in the exterior and the fact that during day, the space allowed a considerable amount of light through the windows. For me, the curatorial process became a negotiation between two different issues: exploring modes of displaying the objects in a manner that communicates ‘in-betweenness’ and creating an interesting visual dialogue through the placement of the objects in relation to one another whilst at the same time being cognisant of the peculiarities of the space. These factors therefore became a kind of hypothetical basis that influenced my overall curation.

I focused on the physical component/architectural qualities of the space, and how I could use these to best advantage. These were aspects like the white painted walls, white plinths and hanging rails on the white walls. Hanging the glass works did not seem like an aspect that I could fully exploit as there were only three two-dimensional
pieces included in this exhibition. However, I explored the possibility of hanging Dlamini’s three-dimensional works.\textsuperscript{68}

Figure 15. Installation of Dlamini’s blown works hung similar to two-dimensional pieces. 2015. (Photograph by the author).

For me, this not only presented a solution with regards to the shortage of plinths, but it was a dynamic way of displaying three dimensional objects. I advance that this could be contextualised using Turner’s liminality of ‘rituals of status reversals’. In Turnerian terms, this idea suggests the subversion of power between the neophytes and masters of ceremonies within the liminal phase; that is “conveying neophytes\textsuperscript{69} from a lower to a higher position within an institutionalised system of positions” (Turner 1969:168).

My application herein suggests that subversion happens when an object that would typically be presented on the floor or on a plinth as it is three-dimensional, is thus elevated to a higher position which in this case is manifest in the hanging of it. I employed this idea by placing selected works at the centre of the exhibition space instead of the periphery. I grouped these specific pieces together based on the fact that

\textsuperscript{68} These pieces are in fact blown vessels that would typically be exhibited on a flat surface so that one can move around them a full 360 degrees, as they are three dimensional and are made to be viewed from all sides. However Dlamini made them with glass hooks to which cord can be attached thus enabling them to be hung on a wall.

\textsuperscript{69} The term ‘neophyte’, in Turner’s application, denotes intiands who during the middle phase of the rites of passage, are conveyed from lower to higher positions (Turner 1969:168). However, in my application I use the word to denote the glass objects that were on show.
even though they were glass works, they included other materials such as wood steel and rock.

This placement of works was based on my interest in exploring a conversation that engages with how glass relates to and complements other materials. I therefore intentionally placed them at the center of the space to emphasise the contrasts in the materials of these works, such glass and natural wood, timber, stone and steel (see Appendix B).

In some cases trying to highlight the ‘in-between’ nature of the works through display was problematic. For example with Böttcher’s piece Of Wings and Things, the trouble in presenting this work lay in the clearness and transparency of the glass in relation to the white background. As O’Doherty (1976:14-15) notes, the white cube gives the utmost prominence to artworks by providing a clear and neutral background. The mask and the wings on top of Of Wings and Things have no colour and so the detail on the mask was lost. I felt that the placement of the sculpture might have read as arbitrary and unconsidered as important aspects of it were not visible (see Fig.16).

As a solution to this, I placed Of wings and Things in front of Böttcher’s other piece The Untitled Robot (2013) (see Fig.17 A and B). This piece has a particular focus, the neon-lit silhouette of what is seemingly a human figure. The red light emitted from this

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70 This work is made from hand blown, cut and polished glass, optical crystal, neon and wood. It is also accompanied by a large steel stand on which a wooden base, which also acts a platform for the robot, is inserted.
figure was significantly bright, and proceeded to reflect onto the robot made from the hand blown, cut and polished glass.

As this piece was displayed in the part of the space I refer to as the ‘dark area’, the brightness of the red neon silhouette further lit up that section of the space. Taking cognisance of this, I decided to display Böttcher’s *Of Wings and Things* in close proximity to *Untitled Robot* in an attempt to see whether the light would have an impact on it.

![Figures 17 (A and B). Installation of Böttcher’s two works and how light creates dialogue between both works. 2015. (Photograph by the author).](image)

When looking at *Of wings and Things* from the front, there was now a considerable difference to the work as the detail on the mask became a lot more visible (see Fig. 17 B). The red neon light shone through the transparent mask and rendered subtle details of the masks suggested facial features such as the forehead and cheek bones (see Figs. 17 and 18).

For me, this was a triumph in that firstly the object could now be viewed holistically and the viewer could circumnavigate it as opposed to my previous placement where the white background limited the viewing of the object to a frontal view. Secondly, the intervention of the neon light in the arrangement of both works created an interesting visual dialogue wherein it was not easy to distinguish whether it was one work separated into two pieces or whether they were separate pieces merely placed next to one another? In this instance, light thus became an integral device for creating a sense of unclearleness which I would argue engenders a sense of ‘in-betweenness’.
In some instances, I found challenges in communicating a sense of ‘in-betweenness’ through the display of certain works. For example, my presentation of Van Wyk’s three works was no different from how other two-dimensional works, such as paintings, would be typically displayed in a gallery; that is against a wall. This challenge was partly due to the limitation of the exhibition space itself as I was not allowed to hang works from the ceiling or drill holes into the walls. An afterthought occurred to me that, for my exhibition Thresholds (in) between Glasses, I could hang some of the pieces a few centimeters away from the wall. In a literal sense, this placement could be understood to connote an ‘in-between’ space of being not quite on the wall.

Amidst these curatorial gestures, it was difficult to ascertain the reception of the show from the myriad of audiences that visited my exhibition. The question beckons, what responses did the show illicit? It must be noted that this was the first time glass had been shown at the Aardklop festival. Most of the general public seemed to be unaware that glass could be exhibited as ‘art’ in a gallery. However, presenting glass as an ‘art’ form was not my intention as I wanted to communicate the ‘in-betweenness’ of the works and their possible associations with various categories. In this sense, the context of the space, that being the ‘white cube’ proved to be the main obstacle in communicating this. People automatically associated these works, and perhaps the exhibition as a whole, with ‘art’ based on the space in which it was exhibited.
Subsequently, remarks about the exhibition tended to be that it was ‘nice’ or ‘good’. But on a more critical level, what exactly is meant by these terms?

These proclamations are in my opinion open-ended and overly simplistic; I doubt they were informed by any form of critical analyses. At best, the most critical feedback I got acknowledged the ‘coherence’ of the show. The focus, however, of this feedback was on the placement of works according to similar colour compositions and not having works displayed in an unconventional manner, despite that being partly my intention (as seen with Dlamini’s installation, Fig.15). For me, this response to the exhibition reiterates some of the ideological foundations on which the white cube is founded; aspects such as giving the artwork ultimate prominence in the gallery space and the space itself being neutral and allowing for order and coherence to prevail. I find this inconsistent with my articulation regarding this strand of work occupying an ‘in-between’ space within the exhibition space.

Liminality in Turnerian terms broadly connotes instability and subversion. It is during the liminal phase where contestation between hierarchies abounds. Thus, what I think is a simplistic reading of the exhibition in as far as it being ‘nice’ or ‘good’ and obtaining a sense of coherence is not enough to make a definite conjecture on whether the awareness of ‘in-betweenness’ was achieved. It therefore became difficult to measure the success of my adaptations in the show.

Not so ‘white cube’

In this part of my chapter, I discuss two main aspects of the actual space where my exhibition Thresholds (in) between Glasses takes place. These include the architecture of the building, more specifically the materials used for the building, and the functionality of the space. Furthermore, I contextualise my curation in this space using Bhabha’s notions of mimicry and hybridity and Turner’s communitas. I bring into focus the ‘in-betweenness’ of the space in terms of its functionality and the materials used in the building.

71 These comments were spoken and not written.
The space currently functions as a residential space, an architectural firm and an art gallery called Art it is. Co-owner of the space Jandre Pieters (2015) points out that the multi-functionality of the space was intentional and is thus an important aspect of it. According to Pieters (2015), the space was created to serve different functions, henceforth the design of the building was premised on this factor. To me, this suggests that the space could be manipulated to serve different functions.

I, however, am interested in the functionality of the space as a gallery although it could be considered not to be a traditional gallery within the broad understanding of the ‘white cube’. In comparison to a white cube space which is mostly composed of smooth white clean walls, high ceilings and uses white plinths in its mode of exhibition, this particular space also has a high ceiling and is composed of raw brick walls which are not white and smooth but employs, in its architecture, alternative materials such as glass, steel (see Figs.19 and 20). Furthermore, materials such as wire cubes, wood, steel stands and a glass table are used for displaying objects.

Figure 19. Outside view of Art it is. 2015. (Photograph by the author).

72 The building is about three storeys high.
Based on these aspects, there are arguably craft elements in the gallery; the fact that it employs unorthodox materials to display works alludes to that. For instance, the glass table, on which my sculptures are displayed (see Fig.21), could be considered as a sort of ‘big plinth’. The table in itself has a utilitarian function as a dining room table, but when used in the exhibition it became a form of plinth; it was used to display four sculptures. The same can be highlighted with the wire cubes which in this instance also function as plinths.

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73 Figure 24 depicts my installation of sculptures which were shown at the galleries’ inaugural sculptural exhibition titled Jozi Pty Ltd (2015).
One could argue that the purpose of a plinth in a gallery context is to provide a base for an object. What is different in this discussion is the fact that this is not a white painted plinth, such as one would expect to see in a white cube setting; it is still a plinth but made of compressed wire. Visually, I find an interesting tension between the object being displayed and what it is placed on thus changing/adding to the work. This is an experience contrary to a white painted plinth which is intended not to obstruct or take away any attention from the object it accommodates as the compressed wire plinth warrants its own attention (see Fig.20) and seems to interact with the glass. Certain compositional aspects of the wire cube such as the wavy and irregular lines are in themselves visually appealing. With this in mind, I posit that a viewer is confronted with two visual aspects to consider, that being the object and the base on which it sits. It is not clear which object which should take precedence and which is therefore of greater importance – thus the question beckons, are they to be viewed in isolation from each other or as a ‘whole’? In this discussion, this would denote that the wire cubed plinth is merely in service of the object that sits on top of it. However, as I have argued, that is not entirely accurate as the wire cube is itself visually appealing and creative. It is this unclearness and non-specificity that I argue suggests ‘in-betweenness’. Aspects such as these discussed above are in my opinion resonant with Bhabha’s notion of mimicry.

I find Bhabha’s concept of mimicry, evinced through his axiom ‘almost the same but not quite’, and as a form of in-betweenness, applicable to my discussion of Art it is. From a theoretical perspective, it could be argued that Art it is has aspects that mimic traditional gallery conventions of the white cube in aspects such the high ceiling, wall space for hanging, rail system also for hanging and so on. However, within and beyond these, some distinguishing factors also come into focus; these include factors such as the walls being mostly raw throughout the space, the use of unorthodox plinths, in the form of the glass table and the compressed wire cubes as display tools, and the glass façade towards the left of the entrance. These aspects, I posit, allude to the ‘not quite’ in Bhabha’s configuration – thus rendering a subversive character to the space. Reiterating Bhabha’s (1994:122) words: “the construction of mimicry is constructed along an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference.” For me, it is in this space of excess, slippage and
difference that I posit *Art it is* as being almost the same as the white cube but not quite like it. Mimicry thus becomes a precursor to Bhabha’s idea of hybridity. As highlighted earlier by Hernandez (2010:65): “if mimicry is the desire for a subject who is ‘almost the same but not quite’, then hybridity is the term Bhabha uses to represent those discriminated identities which signal the ambivalence of the colonial project.” The application of hybridity, as another form of ‘in-betweenness’ is therefore predicated on this factor.

My exhibition *Thresholds (in) between Glasses* is likely to comprise of two-dimensional and three-dimensional works. Considering the number of practitioners participating in the show, my speculation is that it will comprise of approximately thirty to forty works. As this is partly a theoretical study, some of the works, such as Böttcher’s two pieces (see Figs.22 and 23) are specifically selected by me. In other cases, I encourage the practitioners to submit works that are aligned with the exhibition brief.74

I am planning to communicate the ‘in-between’ through various strategies such as suspending the glass works from beams, hanging them from rails, or displaying them on plinths. However, taking cognisance of some lessons from my exhibition at the *Aardklop* festival, I suspect that my planning prior to the actual exhibition is likely to change significantly during the process of installing when I am in the space and have the works at my disposal. Consequently, my discussion of this show is largely hypothetical.

My first instinct is to place the works according to narratives that complement one another visually, and perhaps to also exhibit the works according to their formal qualities. Taking cognisance of observations from the *Aardklop* festival exhibition, I note how subversion was achieved through displaying certain works in an unconventional manner. A case in point would be Dlamini’s installation (see Fig.19) wherein blown pieces were hung from a rail instead of being exhibited on a plinth. This for me is an effective device that can be applied to different three-dimensional objects. I suspect the same could be applied to two-dimensional glass pieces such as those by Van Wyk. In this curation, I would like to explore the possibility of hanging two-dimensional objects a

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74 See Appendix C for exhibition brief.
considerable distance away from the wall, to create a large enough space for a person to walk around them. I think this could be useful in communicating ‘in-betweeness’.

Another device which I think could also be successful in this regard is using the actual works to demarcate and/or disrupt certain areas of the space. Drawing from my experience at the Aardklop festival, I notice that orthodox modes of displaying, as consistent with the white cube, are steeped in establishing some sort of ‘coherence’ within the exhibition space. This is usually carried out through either presenting the works in a manner that is orderly, and in some instances grouping certain works together.

To counter this premise, I am thinking of using selected works to control the movements of the audience and the angles from which the works are viewed. I think this type of intervention could be successful in conveying the ‘in-between’ aspects of the works and the gallery space as I posit its subversion of order and coherence. For this curation, the disruption of space is important for I argue its resonance with a particular form of ‘in-betweenness’ in Turner’s liminality. Sey (2011:6) states that “liminal spaces are those in which normal rules and mores of society are suspended, thus allowing for transformation and confluence to happen”. In this sense, the exhibition itself can be understood to be a mediation of how the audience negotiates the space when viewing the works. Aspects of the works may be deliberately hidden from viewers whilst others are made available to them.

Accompanying this strategy is the way in which light can be used in the exhibition space. As observed from my exhibition at the Aardklop festival with Böttcher’s two works, light plays an integral role in the exhibition space; more specifically in relation to glass objects. For this curation I am thinking of employing more of this strategy and using light as a common device for all the works. As light can be controlled and manipulated, I can position the lights to shine onto certain objects with subtle variations, and in some instances I can have strong lighting projected on certain objects. The purpose in doing so is to emphasise and detract from certain visual qualities inherent in the works. My observations from the Aardklop festival exhibition highlighted how certain works diminish within the exhibition space due to their qualities. I refer back to my
earlier discussion of Böttcher’s two works whereby the second piece *Of Wings and Things* was ‘structurally elevated’ to a better position within the exhibition space thus acquiring equal prominence with his other work *Untitled Robot*. Extending on Turner’s liminality, I propose *communitas* as a product of this liminal space. With ‘subversion’ being an important and definitive feature in my curation, I argue that the subversion of order, coherence, and various uses of light allude to the idea of ‘anti-structure’; whereby in the broadest sense, works are given equal prominence in the exhibition. In effect, the exhibition itself becomes an ‘area of common living’ as consistent with Turner’s (1969:126) articulation.

Another aspect that is of importance in this curation is the safety of the works. Glass, being a ‘fussy’ material is not like other materials in that damages are easily noticeable. Aspects such as scratches on the surface, chips on the edges, cracks, and unpolished edges and so on, affect, to some degree, the presentation of the works. However, what is of importance to me is the safety of the works within the exhibition space. As my curation is predicated on an ‘unorthodox’ mode of curation that seeks to unsettle white cube conventions such as instilling a sense of ‘coherence’ within the exhibition space, I speculate that one of the distinguishing factors with regards to the success of the exhibition might be how effective my explorative curatorial process is. In quite a few exhibitions I have seen where glass was presented as ‘art’, notably the *Conversations with King* (2013), wherein the success of the exhibition was partly predicated on the fact that not a single work was damaged during the installation process or the course of the exhibition. This was largely due to the ‘careful’ nature in which the works were presented. Ideas of creating disturbance and demarcating spaces by using the actual works were not, in my opinion, operational.

The same could be said of the exhibition I curated at the *Aardklop* festival; I speculate that one of the triumphs of the exhibition was that the works were installed in a manner that enabled abundant viewing without them being bumped over or damaged in any

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75 For the ‘*Conversations with King*’ exhibition (2013), I was an assistant to Retief van Wyk who curated the exhibition at the gallery of the Tshwane University of Technology. The exhibition, in my opinion, adhered to white cube conventions in that although the walls and the plinths were painted grey at the time, the curatorial sentiment was largely based on aspects such as creating a sense of coherence within the space, affording each work considerable ‘breathing space’ and not having anything else disturb the work.
way. This could perhaps be attributed to the controlled environment of the white cube in that works are carefully displayed in relation to one another and most importantly the space itself. For my MTech exhibition however, a particular sense of dynamism is suggested. This comes in the form of spatial disruptions and demarcations wherein the actual works are used to achieve this. Therefore, amidst this dynamism, safety is paramount. My stance is that the dynamism of the exhibition should not impose on the safety of the works.

Additionally, this suggested dynamism echoes an important aspect in my curation and my overall study; that being that these works, although some of them have been exhibited before, have largely been presented as ‘art’ whereas my intervention argues their fluidity across various categories. From this, a possible implication for my explorative curation is that most of the works might have highly conceptual underpinnings. This can perhaps be considered as both positive and negative in the sense that the intention in my curation is not to imitate art or to present an ‘art exhibition of glass works’. On the other hand, the positive aspect arises from arguing how highly conceptually underpinned glass works have associations with other categories.

To conclude this chapter, I reiterate that the curation of my MTech exhibition *Thresholds (in) between Glasses*, though explorative – with unknown results, problematises the notion of ‘in-betweenness’ through distinct theories. I contextualise this curation in relation to my first iteration in my curated exhibition *Betwixt and Between Glass[es]: a contemporary glass exhibition* which tested the functionality of ‘in-betweenness’ in a white-cube space in order to see how selected works could be read as fluid, non-fixed and having associations with various categories.

**Conclusion**

To summarise, the focus of my study is based on exploring aspects of ‘in-betweenness’ within a selected strand of works in contemporary South African creative glass practice. In a broad sense, my study questions the possibility of conceiving a selected strand of glass works, made with creative intention, occupying a space of ‘in-betweenness’. My primary aim is to argue how this strand has associations with categories that go beyond
the typical art and craft dichotomy. As such, I argue that these works are fluid, non-fixed and mutable and thus claim that these objects may have associations with more than one of the following categories: fine art, design, craft, decorative art and studio glass. In addition, the curation, of an exhibition containing works of this strand, also obtains aspects of ‘in-betweenness’ based on the actual space in which the curation takes place.

This postulation is based on my interrogation of selected works by six glass practitioners: American Chihuly, and Southern Africans: Jansen van Rensburg, Böttcher, Van Wyk, Dlamini, and my own work. Employing the concepts of liminality and hybridity, I foreground a theoretical context in my first chapter that discusses various strands of ‘in-betweenness’ within the parameters of these two concepts. I draw mainly from theorists such as Van Gennep, Turner, Szakolczai, Bakhtin and Bhabha.

My study is mainly carried out through primary, visual and explorative research. In primary research, I conduct interviews (structured and unstructured) and make observations to attain information about the practitioners’ approaches and processes that inform their works.

These investigations inform the visual research I undertake that is carried out through descriptive and interpretive analyses of the works presented in my second chapter. In this chapter I argue for the functionality of these concepts in the selected works. Evidently, these works all have some rootedness with studio glass practice based on technical aspects involved in the making process.

Explorative research is applied in my third chapter which discusses the practical component of my study; which is the curation of an exhibition in a speculated hybrid space. In this last chapter, particular focus is placed on Turner’s and Bhabha’s applications of liminality and mimicry.

The necessity of my study is largely determined by the opinion that there is a great paucity with regards to literature concerning contemporary South African creative glass practice. However, what could also be considered advantageous with regards to my dissertation is that these works have not been discussed nor curated in this manner.
before. Whilst earlier interventions, both academic and curatorial, have acknowledged contemporary South African creative glass practice as ‘art’, my intervention argues not for the veneration of particular or specific categories but instead suggests a fluidity for a selected strand of glass works across varying categories. Thus, within the parameters of my study, these categories are considered to be equal.

**Suggestions for further research**

My contention is that the exploration of this particular topic in this configuration opens a new space for critical engagement both in South African scholarly discourse and curatorial practice. I intend to continue writing critically on this subject of ‘in-betweenness’ looking at specific works by practitioners such as Böttcher who amongst the practitioners discussed in my study, is one of the few who exhibits consistently. This is particularly important in as far as augmenting the paucity of literature in contemporary South African creative glass practice. Additionally, I intend to explore the possibility of doing similar scholarly interventions in the form of academic articles, looking at works by certain practitioners such as David Reade and Nelius Breitz, still interrogating the notion of ‘in-betweenness’. My objective would be, as I have done in this study, to try and identify aspects of ‘in-betweenness’ in their works.

At this point in its trajectory, I am of the opinion that greater emphasis should be placed on exploring more dynamic forms of curatorship in contemporary South African creative glass practice. Extending this from my dissertation, I plan to start curating more glass exhibitions in spaces that are not typically ‘white cube’ spaces which I believe is somewhat of a ‘turn’ in the glass practice of this country. As an extension to this, It would also be to worthwhile undertake research into the presence of contemporary creative glass practice at arts festivals. My intervention, in the form of my curated exhibition *Betwixt and Between Glass[es]: a contemporary glass exhibition* at the *Clover Aardklop* festival was arguably the first to happen on the African continent. A point of focus would therefore be how glass is curated in art festivals.

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76 Reade and Breitz are practitioner who work in Cape Town, South Africa. They were not included in my study for reasons concerned with logistics.
SOURCES CONSULTED


Van Wyk, R, Subject leader at the Tshwane University of Technology. 2015. Interview by author. [Recording]. 29 August 2015. Pretoria.


Appendix A

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR M TECH DISSERTATION
FOR POSTGRADUATE DEGREE MTECH: FINE ART

Study Title:
Hybridity and liminality in selected examples of contemporary South African creative glass practice.

Researcher:
Thabang Monoa, M.Tech candidate, Fine Art, University of Johannesburg.

Purpose of Research:
M.Tech (Fine Art) Dissertation & Exhibition.

Research Abstract:
In my research I explore the notion that a designated strand of South African contemporary creative glass practice occupies a space of ‘in-betweenness’ across various categories. The typical classifications of art and craft have been the predominant categories in which glass practice has been located in. My study is positioned antithetically to this premise in that I argue that the practice in fact overlaps between other varying categories such as design, utilitarian, craft, studio glass, fine art etc. I further contend that the curation of this strand takes place in an in-between space that is not a traditional gallery. My dissertation therefore contextualises a strand of
South African contemporary creative glass practice across varying categories that extend beyond the art and craft dichotomy.

Dear Interviewee,

Thank you for participating in this research study.

This informed consent form is to ensure that you understand the purpose of your participation in the study and that your rights will be protected during the gathering of information through this interview. Kindly read the following conditions and if the terms are agreeable to you, acknowledge your consent to participate in the interview by signing at the end of the consent form. Please note that your involvement in this study is voluntary and you may terminate the interview at any time, furthermore, as participants, this study requires that your names be published therefore there will be minimal privacy or anonymity in this regard.

1 The core objective of this study is to research the how glass practice overlaps into various categories such as studio glass, art, design, craft, decorative, utilitarian etc. I posit that a designated strand of glass practice, and the curation thereof, occupies a liminal and hybrid space between these varying categories.

2 The interview is in close relation to your practice, and examines how you assume your working process.

3 Therefore, your input will be required as a practitioner to whom these difficulties in terms of practice are relevant.

4. The content of the interview will be transcribed and critically analysed by the researcher within the context of the study, for inclusion in the dissertation of the study.
5. If you have questions about the research in general or about your role in the study, please feel free to contact Prof. Leora Farber (leoraf@uj.ac.za-011 559 1393) and Gordon Froud (fgordon@uj.ac.za- 011 559 1135 ) of the Visual Arts at University of Johannesburg during office hours.

I, ____________________________ , have read, understood and accept the terms described above and agree to voluntarily participate in the interview.

........................................
Signed

........................................
Date

........................................
Place

........................................
Signature of Researcher
Interview questions for the glass practitioners.

* Please note that this interview is unstructured. These questions therefore act as a guideline*

- When did you start making glass, and how has the environment changed since then? Particularly with reference to South African contemporary glass practice?
- Visually, what is your work about or concerned with?
- Describe your process of working.
- Do you think the overall practice of glass fits into different categories, if so, then where would you designate your work?
- Are there any references to the idea of ‘in-betweeness’ in your works?
- What is this particular work about (conceptually)?
- Are there technical aspects that affect the aesthetical presentation of the work?
- Considering that some of your works straddle between fine art and design, where would you designate your work in terms of space?
Appendix B

Glassworks in the center of the exhibition space.

Figure 20 A. Ryan Manuel, *Organic Synergy (Orange bloom)*, 2013. Blown glass and natural wood. (Photograph by the author).
Figure 20 B. Ryan Manuel, *Organic Synergy (Blue gyre)*, 2013. Blown glass and natural wood. (Photograph by the author).

Figure 20 C. Mike Hyam, *Frenzy*, undated. Blown glass and timber. (Photograph by the author).
Figure 20 D. Mike Hyam, Torrent, undated. Blown glass and timber. (Photograph by the author).

Figure 20 E. Lothar Böttcher, Rock Blossom, 2014. Hand blown, cut, and polished glass, steel and stone. (Photograph by the author).
Appendix C

Thresholds (in)between Glasses:

a master's degree exhibition by Thabang Monoa.

Concept

This exhibition is based on an idea that a selected body of work in contemporary South African contemporary glass practice occupies a space of in-betweenness across various categories such as fine art, design, craft, studio glass and decorative art. Equally, the curation of this body of work takes place in an in-between space. As this is for an academic study, the works are selected using this theoretical basis.

Scope
This exhibition is strictly confined to South African glass practice. Henceforth, it will only present glassworks from selected glass practitioners.

- Catalogue
  The contents of the catalogue will include;
  - Curatorial remarks
  - An essay by [Pfunzo Sidogi]
  - Images and list of artworks exhibited.
  - Credits page
  - Section on the gallery spaces [Aardklop & Art it is!]

**Suggested practitioners participating**

- Lothar Böttcher
- Martli Jansen van Rensburg
- Retief van Wyk
- Iwan van Blerk
- Mike Hyam
- Thabang Monoa
- Pfunzo Sidogi
- Liesl Roos
- Rina Myburgh
- Kgotso Pati
- Bongani Dlamini
• Ryan Manuel

• Marileen van Wyk

• Chonat Getz

Duration

4 February 2016 – 18 February (2 weeks).

Exhibition range (Pricing)

R 2000 – R 75 000

Insurance

Works to be insured only in the gallery space once they have all been valued.